

Epistle To John Rankine: Enclosing Some Poems

O Rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun an' drinkin!
There's mony godly folks are thinkin,
Your dreams and tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin
Straught to auld Nick's.

Ye hae saw mony cracks an' cants,
And in your wicked, drucken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
An' fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare't for their sakes, wha aften wear it-
The lads in black;
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives't aff their back.

Think, wicked Sinner, wha ye're skaithing:
It's just the Blue-gown badge an' claithing
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by
Frae ony unregenerate heathen,
Like you or I.

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for, an' mair;
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect,
Yon sang ye'll sen't, wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing;
I've play'd mysel a bonie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gaen an' sair't the king,
At Bunkjer's Hill.

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,
I gaed a rovin' wi' the gun,
An' brought a paitrick to the grun'-
A bonie hen;
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor, wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin they wad fash me for't;
But, Deil-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court
The hale affair.

Some auld, us'd hands had taen a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whistle o' my groat,
An' pay't the fee.

But by my gun, o' guns the wale,
An' by my pouter an' my hail,

An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay, o'er muir an' dale,
For this, niest year.

As soon's the clockin-time is by,
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,
Lord, I'se hae sporting by an' by
For my gowd guinea,
Tho' I should herd the buckskin kye
For't in Virginia.

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame,
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a yellow George to claim,
An' thole their blethers!

It pits me aye as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.