



T H E

COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. A****, Esq;

*Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur bear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the Poor.*

GRAY.

I.

MY lov'd, my honor'd, much respected
friend,

No mercenary Bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and
praise:

To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
 The *lowly train* in life's sequester'd scene;
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways,
 What A**** in a *Cottage* would have been;
 Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier
 there I ween!

II.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry fugh;
 The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
 The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
 The black'ning trains o' craws to their
 repose:

The toil-worn COTTER frae his labor goes,
 This night his weekly moil is at an end,
 Collects his *spades*, his *mattocks* and his *boes*,
 Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
 And weary, o'er the moor, his course does
 hameward bend.

III.

At length his lonely *Cot* appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;

The expectant *wee-things*, toddlan, stacher
through

To meet their *Dad*, wi' flichterin noise
and glee.

His wee-bit ingle, blinkan bonilie,

His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty *Wifie's*
smile,

The *lissing infant*, prattling on his knee,

Does a' his weary *kiaugh* and care beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labor and
his toil.

VI.

Belyve, the *elder bairns* come drapping in,

At *Service* out, amang the Farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie
rin

A cannie errand to a neebor town:

Their eldest hope, their *Jenny*, woman-grown,

In youthfu' bloom, Love sparkling in her
e'e,

Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new
gown,

Or depofite her fair-won penny-fee,
To help her *Parents* dear, if they in hard-
fhip be.

V.

With joy unfeign'd, *brothers* and *sifters* meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly fpiers:
The focial hours, fwift-wing'd, unnotic'd
fleet;

Each tells the uncos that he fees or hears.
The *Parents* partial eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The *Mother*, wi' her needle and her fheers,
Gars auld claes look amaift as weel's the
new;
The *Father* mixes a' wi' admonition due.

VI.

Their *Master's* and their *Miftrefs's* command,
The *youngkers* a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er, tho' out o' fight, to jauk or play:

‘ And O! be fure to fear the LORD al-
way!

‘ And mind your *duty*, duely, morn and
night!

‘ Left in temptation’s path ye gang astray,

‘ Implore his *counsel* and assisting *might*:

‘ They never fought in vain that fought the
LORD aright.’

VII.

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;

Jenny, wha kens the meaning o’ the fame,

Tells how a neebor lad came o’er the moor,

To do some errands, and convoy her hame.

The wily Mother sees the *conscious flame*

Sparkle in *Jenny’s* e’e, and flush her cheek,

With heart-struck, anxious care enquires
his name,

While *Jenny* hafflins is afraid to speak;

Weel-pleas’d the Mother hears, it’s nae wild,
worthless *Rake*.

VIII.

With kindly welcome, *Jenny* brings him ben;
A *strappan youth*; he takes the Mother's eye;
Blythe *Jenny* sees the *visit's* no ill taen;
The Father cracks of horses, pleughs
and kye.

The *Youngster's* artless heart o'erflows wi' joy;
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel
behave;

The Mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the *youth* fae bashfu' and
fae grave;

Weel-pleas'd to think her *bairn's* respected
like the lave.

IX.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! blifs beyond com-
pare!

I've paced much this weary, *mortal round*,
And sage EXPERIENCE bids me this
declare—

‘ If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure
spare,
‘ One *cordial* in this melancholy *Vale*,
‘ ’Tis when a youthful, loving, *modest* Pair,
‘ In other’s arms, breathe out the tender
tale,
‘ Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents
the ev’ning gale.’

X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A Wretch! a Villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny’s unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur’d arts! dissembling
smooth!

Are *Honor*, *Virtue*, *Conscience*, all exil’d?
Is there no Pity, no relenting Ruth,
Points to the Parents fondling o’er their
Child?

Then paints the *ruin’d Maid*, and *their* dif-
fraction wild!

XI.

But now the Supper crowns their simple
board,

The healfome *Porritch*, chief of SCO-
TIA'S food :

The soupe their *only Hawkie* does afford,

That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her
cood :

The *Dame* brings forth, in complimental
mood,

To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd keb-
buck, fell,

And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid ;

The frugal *Wifie*, garrulous, will tell,

How 'twas a towmond auld, fin' Lint was
i' the bell.

XII.

The chearfu' Supper done, wi' ferious face,

They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;

The Sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,

The big *ba'-Bible*, ance his *Father's* pride :

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His *lyart baffets* wearing thin and bare;
 Those strains that once did sweet in ZION
 glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care;
 'And let us worship GOD!' he says with
 solemn air.

XIII.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
 They tune their *hearts*, by far the no-
 blest aim:
 Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
 Or noble *Elgin* beets the heaven-ward flame,
 The sweetest far of SCOTIA'S holy lays:
 Compar'd with these, *Italian trills* are tame;
 The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
 Nae unison hae they, with our CREA-
 TOR'S praise.

XIV.

The priest-like Father reads the sacred page,
How *Abram* was the Friend of GOD
on high;

Or, *Moses* bade eternal warfare wage,
With *Amalek's* ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal Bard* did groaning lye,
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging
ire;

Or *Job's* pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt *Isaiab's* wild, seraphic fire;
Or other *Holy Seers* that tune the *sacred lyre*.

XV.

Perhaps the *Christian Volume* is the theme,
How *guiltless blood* for *guilty man* was shed;
How HE, who bore in heaven the second
name,
Had not on Earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first *followers* and *servants* sped;
The *Precepts sage* they wrote to many a
land:

How *he*, who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
And heard great *Bab'lon's* doom pronounc'd
by Heaven's command.

XVI.

Then kneeling down to HEAVEN'S E-
TERNAL KING,
The *Saint*, the *Father*, and the *Husband*
prays :

Hope ' springs exulting on triumphant
wing,' *

That *thus* they all shall meet in future days:
There, ever bask in *uncreated rays*,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their CREATOR'S praise,
In *such society*, yet still more dear ;
While circling Time moves round in an e-
ternal sphere.

XVII.

Compar'd with *this*, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of *method*, and of *art*,

* Pope's Windsor Forest.

When men display to congregations wide,
 Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the *heart*!
 The POWER, incens'd, the Pageant will
 desert,
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
 But haply, in some *Cottage* far apart,
 May hear, well pleas'd, the language of
 the *Soul*;
 And in His *Book of Life* the Inmates poor
 enroll.

XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral
 way;
 The youngling *Cottagers* retire to rest:
 The Parent-pair their *secret homage* pay,
 And proffer up to Heaven the warm re-
 quest,
 That HE who stills the *raven's* clam'rous
 nest,
 And decks the *lily* fair in flow'ry pride,

Would, in the way *His Wisdom* sees the best,
 For *them* and for their *little ones* provide;
 But chiefly, in their hearts with *Grace di-*
vine preside.

XIX.

From scenes like these, old SCOTIA'S
 grandeur springs,
 That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd a-
 broad:

Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
 'An honest man's the noble work of GOD.'
 And *certes*, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,
 The *Cottage* leaves the *Palace* far behind:
 What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
 Disguising oft the *wretch* of human kind,
 Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd!

XX.

O SCOTIA! my dear, my native soil!
 For whom my warmest wish to heaven
 is sent!

Long may thy hardy sons of *rustic toil*,
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet
content!

And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From *Luxury's* contagion, weak and vile!
Then howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
A *virtuous Populace* may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-
lov'd ISLE.

XXI.

O THOU! who pour'd the *patriotic tide*,
That stream'd thro' great, unhappy WAL-
LACE' heart;
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or *nobly die*, the second glorious part:
(The Patriot's GOD, peculiarly thou art,
His *friend, inspirer, guardian* and *reward!*)
O never, never SCOTIA'S realm desert,
But still the *Patriot*, and the *Patriot-Bard*,
In bright succession raise, her *Ornament* and
Guard!

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