

To a Mouse

by Robert Burns

Wee, sleeket, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickerin brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss 't!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary Winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!



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Read the poem below. Can you explain what the underlined Scots words or phrases mean? Don't worry if you don't know, use the words around to guess.

Wee, sleeket, cowerin, tim'rous beastie,

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Wi' bickerin brattle!

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Read the poem below. Write a translated version of what you think is being said.

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Wi' bickerin brattle!

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Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

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Translation

Small, sneaky, cowering, timorous beast,

Oh, such a panic in your breast!

You need not run away so fast,

With a quick scurry,

I am loathed to run and chase you,

With my murderous plough staff!

I am truly sorry that Man's rule,

Has broken the Nature's social union,

And justifies that bad opinion,

That gives you such a fright,

When I am your fellow earth-born companion,

And fellow living creature.

I have no doubt you sometimes steal,

What then? Poor beast, you must live!

An ear of corn from the sheath,

Is a small request:

I'll get my blessing with the leftovers,

And never miss it.

Your small house, too, is ruined!
Its weak walls blowing around in the wind!
And there is nothing left to build a new one,
Oh green grass.
And the bleak December winds are coming,
Both biting and sharp!

You saw the fields lying bare and wasted,
And a weary winter is approaching fast,
And cosy here, beneath the wind,
You thought to live,
Until crash! The cruel plough passed
Through your cell.

That small heap of leaves and stubble,
Has cost you many a tired nibble!
Now you are turned out for all your trouble,
No house and property.
To shelter you from the winter sleet,
And frosty cold!
But mouse, you are not alone,

In proving that planning is in vain,
The best laid plans of mice and men,
Often go awry,
And leave us only with grief and pain,
For the joy we hoped for.

Still, you are blessed compared with me!
You are only touched by the present:
But, ouch! I look back,
On dreary memories!
And although I can't see into the future,
I guess and fear!

