To a Mouse
by Robert Burns
modern English translation by Michael R. Burch

Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie,
Sleek, tiny, timorous, cowering beast,
O, what panic's in thy breastie!
why's such panic in your breast?
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Why dash away, so quick, so rash,
Wi' bikering brattle!
in a frenzied flash
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
when I would be loath to run after you
Wi' murd'ring pattle!
with a murderous plowstaff!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
has broken Nature's social union,
And justifies that ill opinion,
and justifies that bad opinion
Which makes thee startle,
which makes you startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
when I'm your poor, earth-born companion
And fellow mortal!
and fellow mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thie;
I have no doubt you sometimes thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
What of it, friend? You too must live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
A random corn-ear in a shock's
'S a sma' request:
'a small behest; it-
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
'I'll give me a blessing to know such a loss;
An' never miss't!
I'll never miss it!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!
Your tiny house lies in a ruin,
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
its fragile walls wind-rent and strewn!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
Now nothing's left to construct you a new one
O' foggage green!
of mosses green
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
since bleak December's winds, ensuing,
Baith snell an' keen!
blow fast and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,
You saw your fields laid bare and waste
An' weary Winter comin fast,
with weary winter closing fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
and cozy here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
you thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
till crash! the cruel iron ploughshare passed
Out thro' thy cell.
straight through your cell!

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
That flimsy heap of leaves and stubble
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
had cost you many a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
Now you're turned out, for all your trouble,
But house or hald.
less house and hold.
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,
to endure cold winter's icy dribble
An' cranreuch cauld!
and hoarfrosts cold!

But Mousie, thou are no thy-lane,
But mouse-friend, you are not alone
In proving foresight may be vain:
in proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,
the best-laid schemes of Mice and Men
Gang ait agley,
go off awry,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
and leave us only grief and pain,
For promis'd joy!
for promised joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
Still, friend, you're blessed compared with me!
The present only toucheth thee:
Only present dangers make you flee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
But, ouch!, behind me I can see
On prospects drear!
grim prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
While forward-looking seers, we
I guess an' fear!
humans guess and fear!