The Mouse’s Reply

When Burns’s plough turned up a mouse’s nest, the incident led him to compose a much-quoted poem. But, it occurred to Mrs. May Harper of Keith, that this was a one-sided philosophy which Burns was proclaiming and she was led to compose the following verses. They were written for a Keith Townswomens' Guild competition, six or seven years ago, but my friend, Mrs. Harper thought they were not good enough to enter. Her sister-in-law, however, had a higher opinion of them than the composer and the verses were read at the Burns Supper of Mulben W.R.I., last year. That was the poem’s first airing.

Mrs. Harper has kindly said that the Chronicle might print it, if it were thought good enough. Perhaps it should be added that Mrs. Harper was, at the time (2 years ago), 85 years of age.

Ye muckle thochtless, hammerin’ brute,
How could ye cruelly turn me oot
O’ ma ain wee hoose, sae snug and cute,
This caul’ caul’ night?
I would richt fain gie ye a clout
Wi a’ ma miclt.

Ye speak o’ nature’s social union
Which coonts fur nocht, in ma opinion;
Fur weel ye ken, its man’s dominion
O’er a’ the earth,
That causes a’ the strife an trouble
As shair as death.

Ye speak o’ thievin’, Rabbie man;
T’was a’ dished oot, wi’ generous haun
By Him abune wha made the plan,
E’en for a moose
Tae get a nibble noo an’ then
In his ain wee hoose.

Ma hoosie’s scattered far an’ wide,
I dinna ken whaur I can bide.
There’s naething fur’t but rin an’ hide
In some quate neuk.
Far shelter has been promised a’
In His Big Book.

Ye think I’m blessed compared wi’ thee –
The truth o’ that I canna see.
If ye had just behaved like me
O’er a’ the years;
There’s naething noo, wad worry ye,
Or cause ye tears.