

HALLOW-FAIR

At *Hallowmas*, whan nights grow lang,
And starnies shine fu' clear,
Whan fock, the nippin cauld to bang,
Their winter *hapwarms* wear;
Near Edinburgh a fair there had,
I wat there's nane whase name is,
For strappin dames and sturdy lads,
And cap and stoup, mair famous,
Than it that day.

Upo' the tap o' ilka lum,
The sun began to keek,
And bad the trig-made maidens come,
A sightly jo to seek,
At *Hallow-fair*, whare browsters rare,
Keep gude ale on the gantries,
An dinna scrimp ye o' a skair,
O' kebbucks frae thair pantries,
Fu' saut that day.

Her country John in bannet blue,
An' eke his Sunday's claes on,
Rins efter Meg wi *rokelay* new,
An' sappy kisses lays on;
She'll tauntin say, Ye silly coof?
Be o'yer gab mair sparín;
He'll tak the hint, and criesh her loof,
Wi' what will buy her farin,
To chow that day.

Here chapman billies tak thair stand,
An' shaw their *bonny wallies*;
Wow, they lie fu' gleg aff hand,
To trick the silly fallows;
Heh, sirs! What cairds and tinklers come,
An' *ne'er-do-weel* horse-coupers,
An' spae-wives fenzying to be dumb,
Wi' a' siclike landloupers,
To thrive that day.

Here Sawny cries, frae Aberdeen,
 "Come ye to me fa need:
"The brawest *shanks* that e're were seen,
 "I'll sell ye cheap an' guid."
"I wyt they are as protty hose,
 "As come frae *weyer* or *leem*:
"Here tak a rug, an' shaw's yer pose;
 "Forseeth my ain's but teem,
 "An' light the day.

Ye wives, as ye gang thro' the fair,
 O mak yer bargains hooly!
O a' thir wylly lowns beware,
 Or fegs they will ye spulzie.
For fairn-year *Meg Thamsom* got,
 Frae thir mischievous villains,
A scaw'd bit o' a penny note,
 That lost a score o' shillins,
 To her that day.

The dinlin drums alarm our ears,
 The serjeant screech fu' loud,
"A' gentlemen an' volunteers,
 "That wish your country gude,
"Come her to me, and I sall gie,
 "Two guineas an' a crown,
"A bowl o' *punch* that like the sea,
 "Will soum a lang dragoon
 "Wi' ease this day."

Without the cuissers prance and nicker,
 An' o'er the ley-rig scud;
In tents the carles bend the bicker,
 An' rant an' roar like wud.
Then there's sic yellowchin an' din,
 Wi' wives an' wee-anes gablin,
That ane might trow they were a-kin,
 To a' the tongues o' Babylon,
 Confus'd that day.

Whan *Phoebus* ligs in *Thetis'* lap,
 Auld Reikie gies them shelter,
Whare cadgily they kiss the cap,
 An' ca't round helter-skelter.
Jock Bell gaed furth to play his freaks,
 Great cause he had to rue it,
For frae a stark *Lochaber* aix,
 He gat a *clamehewit*,
 Fu' sair that night.

“Ohon!” quo’ he, “I’d rather be,
“By *sword* or *bagnet* stickit,
“Than hae my crown or body wi’
Sic deadly weapons nickit.”
Wi’ that he gat anither straik,
Mair weighty than before,
That gar’d his feckless body aik,
An’ spew the reikin gore,
Fu’ red that night.

He peching on the cawsey lay,
O’ kicks and cuffs weel sair’d;
A *Highland* aith the serjeant gae:
“She maun pe see our gaurd.”
Out spak the weirlike corporal,
“Pring in ta drucken sot.”
They trail’d him ben, an’ by my saul,
He paid his drucken goat,
For that neist day.

Gude fock, as ye come frae the fair,
Bide yont frae this black squad;
There’s nae sic savages elsewhere
Allow’d to wear cockade.
Than the strong lion’s hungry maw,
Or tusk o’ Russian bear,
Frae their wanruly fellin paw,
Mair cause ye hae tae fear,
Your death that day.

A wee soup drink dis unco weel,
To had the heart aboon;
It’s gude as lang’s a canny chiel
Can stand steeve in his shoon,
But gin a birkie’s owr weel saird,
It gars him aften stammer
To *pleys* that bring him to the guard,
An’ eke the *Council-chaumir*,
Wi’ shame that day.

NOTES

Fergusson spells many of his words in common with English, as was the case in Older Scots, so it is not always apparent to the modern reader – schooled only to read and pronounce English - as to how they should be pronounced in Scots. In Fergusson's day it was clear to people in Scotland how to pronounce them as they generally only heard these words in Scots.

OU, OW and U' spellings

These can be the cause of much confusion today. Most of these are pronounced with an 'oo' sound in Scots, as in the following used by Fergusson –

Crown, fu', loud, lown, our, round, Russian, soum, trow, without.

So, for example, **crown, fu', round** and **trow** are pronounced as croon, foo, roon(d) and troo.

Other spellings with an OW are pronounced as they look, with an 'ow' sound. In particular **browsters, chow, grow, and wow.**

One or two with an OU spelling are pronounced with an 'ow' sound, such as **coupers**, and **landloupers**. Note that **stoup**, probably intended here as 'stowp', could also be pronounced as 'stoop' in some parts.

GH spellings

Sometimes called the 'guttural' (from the French for 'throat') or 'fricative' (meaning a sound produced by friction) it can be easy to forget the Scots way of pronouncing these words. In Older Scots – and Scots today – it is usual to spell these words with a 'ch' (same sound as in 'loch') but in the 18th and 19th centuries many writers in Scots used the spelling 'gh' in common with English.

Note that Fergusson uses the spellings **Highland, lights, might, nights** and **weighty**. These were/are pronounced in Scots as **licht, micht, nicht** and **wechty** with a sharp 'ch' as in the word loch. The word Highland was then pronounced **Heech-land**, but today is generally **Heelan**.

AW sound

A certain number of spellings used by Fergusson represent a long 'aw' sound such as **cawsey, chaumir, hads, hands, lads, stammer**, and **stand**, pronounced as caw-say, chaw-mer, haw-ds, haw-ns, law-ds, staw-mer and staw-nd. Today we would normally write them as **causay, chaumer, hauds, hauns**, and **staun**, while lads and stammer might be pronounced/written either **lads/lauds** or **stammer/staumer** depending on dialect.

EE sound

Note that some spellings such as **deadly** and **death** are pronounced in Scots as 'deedly' and 'deeth', normally written today as **deidly** and **deith**.

NORTH EAST

One of Fergusson's speakers is a North East character called Sawny (Alexander) who uses North East (Doric) forms such as **fa** (who), **leem** (loom) and **teem** (**tuim**, to empty). His spelling **guid** is intended to be pronounced as Northern Scots 'gweed'.

VARIOUS

Fergusson uses the spelling **gude** which he intends to be sounded as 'good', though in other parts of Scotland it is 'gid' and 'gweed'. He spells folk as **fock** and in verse 8 uses **wee-anes** – which today we pronounce as **weans**. Finally, in verse 12 the spelling **strong** appears. Since the Scots form is **strang**, this may have been a type set error that was repeated in all subsequent reprints.

For particular items of Scots vocabulary please refer to the standard reference work *The Concise Scots Dictionary* published by Scottish Language Dictionaries.