



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Robert Burns

Complete Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

DELPHI POETS SERIES

Robert Burns

(1759-1796)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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DELPHI POETS SERIES

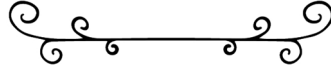
Robert Burns



By Delphi Classics, 2015

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Robert Burns - Delphi Poets Series



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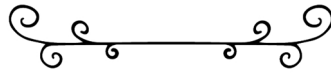
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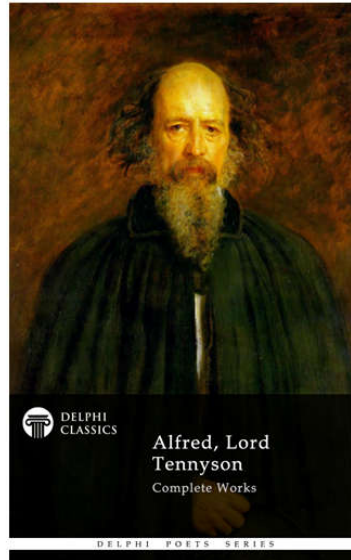
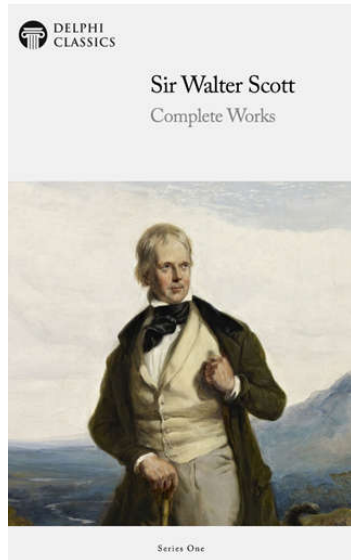
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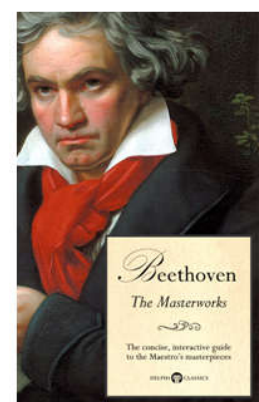
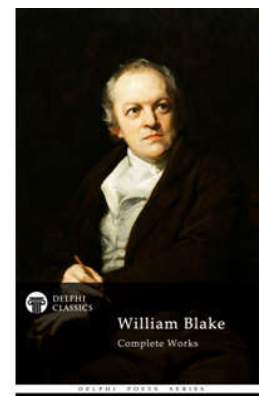
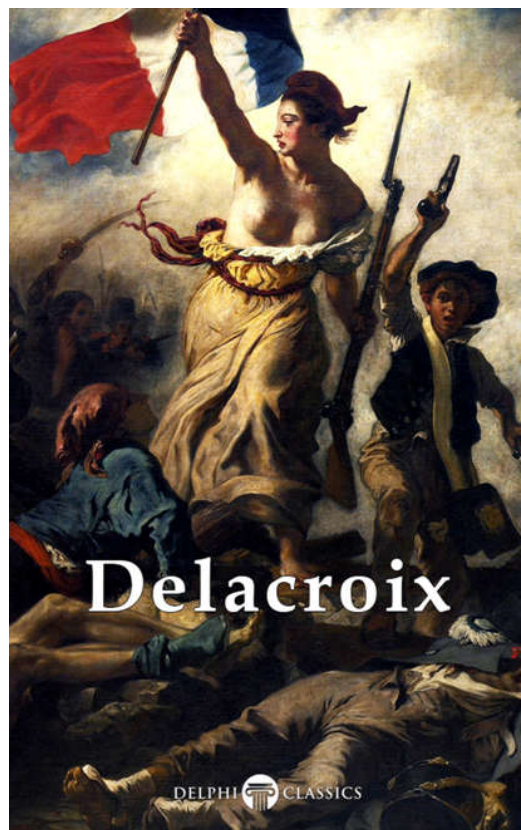


WHEN READING POETRY on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

THE ROMANTICS



Explore the world of the Romantics at Delphi Classics...



The Poetry of Robert Burns



Alloway, Ayrshire — Burns' birthplace



Another view of the birthplace, which now serves as a museum



Burns' cottage in 1910



The room in which the great poet was born

Robert Burns: A Brief Introduction



Widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland, Robert Burns (1759–1796) is celebrated worldwide as a pioneer of the Romantic movement and one of the most gifted poets the world has ever produced. Best known for having written in the Scots dialect, his work has transcended national boundaries, establishing a worldwide audience and an everlasting fame.

Burns was born in Alloway, South Ayrshire, the eldest of the seven children of William Burnes, a self-educated tenant farmer from Dunnottar, and Agnes Broun, the daughter of a tenant farmer from Kirkoswald, South Ayrshire. The young Burns had little regular schooling and received much of his education from his father, who taught his children reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history. After a few years of home education, Burns was sent to Dalrymple Parish School during the summer of 1772, before returning at harvest time to full-time farm labouring until 1773, when he was sent to lodge with Murdoch for three weeks to study grammar, French and Latin.

Aged 15, Burns was the principal labourer at Mount Oliphant. During the harvest of 1774, he was assisted by Nelly Kilpatrick, who inspired him to write his first poem, *O, Once I Lov'd A Bonnie Lass*. In the summer of 1775, Burns was sent to finish his education with a tutor at Kirkoswald, where he met Peggy Thompson, to whom he wrote two songs, *Now Westlin' Winds* and *I Dream'd I Lay*.

Despite his ability as a farmer, William Burnes was consistently unfortunate, often compelled to move his large family from farm to farm without ever being able to improve their circumstances. At Whitsun, 1777, he removed his large family from the unfavourable conditions of Mount Oliphant to the 130-acre farm at Lochlea, near Tarbolton, where they stayed until the father's death in 1784.

Burns continued to write poems and songs and began a commonplace book in 1783, while his father fought a legal dispute with his landlord. The case went to the Court of Session and Burnes was upheld in January 1784, a fortnight before he died. Robert made an ineffectual struggle to keep on the farm, but after this failure he moved to the farm at Mossgiel, near Mauchline, which he struggled to work on for the next four years. During the summer of 1784, Burns came to know a group of girls known collectively as The Belles of Mauchline, one of whom was Jean Armour, the daughter of a stonemason from Mauchline.

Burns' many romantic involvements with women have been well documented over the years, with his first child being born to his mother's servant, Elizabeth Paton, while he was embarking on a relationship with Jean Armour, who became pregnant with twins in March 1786. Burns signed a paper attesting his marriage to Jean, but her parents sent her to live with her uncle in Paisley to avoid the disgrace. Although Armour's father initially forbade their marriage, they were eventually wed in 1788. In time, Armour bore Burns nine children, only three of whom survived infancy.

In the meantime, Burns was in financial difficulties due to his lack of success in farming, so, to make enough money to support a family, he took up a friend's offer of work in Jamaica at a salary of £30 per annum, as a bookkeeper on a slave plantation. At about the same time, Burns fell in love with Mary Campbell, whom he had seen in church while he was still living in Tarbolton. She was born near Dunoon and had

lived in Campbeltown before moving to work in Ayrshire. The poet dedicated some of his most celebrated poems to this beauty, including *The Highland Lassie O*, *Highland Mary* and *To Mary in Heaven*. Although some historians now believe that Burns and Mary planned to elope together to Jamaica, she shortly left her work in Ayrshire, to sail home to her parents in Campbeltown. Sadly, she died of typhus in October, 1786.

As Burns lacked the funds to pay for his passage to the West Indies, Gavin Hamilton suggested that he should publish his poems by subscription, providing money for the journey. On 3 April, Burns sent proposals for publishing his Scotch Poems to John Wilson, a local printer in Kilmarnock, who published them on 14 April 1786, on the same day that Jean Armour's father tore up the paper in which Burns attested his marriage to Jean.

On 31 July 1786, John Wilson published the volume of works by Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish dialect*. Now known as the Kilmarnock volume, the collection sold for three shillings and contained much of Burn's greatest poems, including *The Twa Dogs*; *Address to the Deil*; *Halloween*; *The Cotter's Saturday Night*; *To a Mouse*; *Epitaph for James Smith* and *To a Mountain Daisy*. The success of the book was immediate and Burns was suddenly famous across the country.

Burns postponed his planned emigration to Jamaica and was at Mossgiel when he learnt that Jean Armour had given birth to twins. On 4 September, Thomas Blacklock wrote a letter expressing admiration for the poetry in the Kilmarnock volume, and suggested an enlarged second edition. Burns later recalled:

"I had taken the last farewell of my few friends, my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Scotland – 'The Gloomy night is gathering fast' – when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The Doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction."

On 14 December, William Creech issued subscription bills for the first Edinburgh edition of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish dialect*, which was published on 17 April 1787. Within a week Burns had sold his copyright to Creech for 100 guineas. In Edinburgh, he was received as an equal by the city's men of letters and was a guest at aristocratic gatherings, where he was recorded as bearing himself with unaffected dignity. It was here that he encountered, and made a lasting impression on, the 16-year-old Walter Scott, who described him later with great admiration:

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish, a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of its effect perhaps from knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are presented in Mr Nasmyth's picture but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits ... there was a strong expression of shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and literally glowed when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time."

The new edition of poems brought Burns £400 and won the poet much renown. While staying in the city, Burns embarked on a relationship with the separated Agnes "Nancy" McLehose, with whom he exchanged passionate letters under pseudonyms. When it became clear that Nancy would not be easily seduced into a physical relationship, Burns moved on to Nancy's domestic servant, who bore him a son,

Robert Burns Clow, in 1788. The poet also had an affair with a servant girl called Margaret “May” Cameron. His relationship with Nancy concluded in 1791 with a final meeting in Edinburgh, before she set sail for Jamaica to meet her estranged husband. Before she left, Burns sent her the manuscript of *Ae Fond Kiss*, one of his most beautiful poems, as a farewell gift.

In Edinburgh, early 1787, Burns met James Johnson, a struggling music engraver and music seller, with a love of old Scots songs and a determination to preserve them. Burns shared this interest and became an enthusiastic contributor to *The Scots Musical Museum*. The first volume was published in 1787 and included three songs by Burns. He contributed 40 songs to Volume II and he resulted in being responsible for a third of the 600 songs in the whole collection, as well as making a considerable editorial contribution. The final volume was published in 1803.

On his return to Ayrshire in February 1788, Burns resumed his relationship with Jean Armour and took a lease on the farm of Ellisland, near Dumfries, but trained as a Gauger or exciseman, in case farming continued to prove unsuccessful. He was appointed to duties in Customs and Excise in 1789 and eventually gave up the farm in 1791. Meanwhile, in November 1790, he had written *Tam O’ Shanter*, a supernatural and humorous ballad, which would later become his most famous work.

After giving up his farm he removed to Dumfries. It was at this time he was requested to write lyrics for *The Melodies of Scotland* and so responded by contributing over 100 songs. He made major contributions to George Thomson’s *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice* as well as to James Johnson’s *The Scots Musical Museum*. These volumes established his reputation and secured his immortal fame, placing him in the front rank of lyric poets.

At this time, Burns’ prospects were better than they had ever been; but he had become bitter at times and had alienated many of his best friends by freely expressing sympathy with the French Revolution and the unpopular advocates of reform in Scotland. As his health began to deteriorate, he began to age prematurely and fell into fits of depression. Some sources alleged that his tendency to drink large amounts of alcohol aggravated his long-standing rheumatic heart condition. In the winter of 1795, Burns died suddenly, following a dental extraction, at the age of 37. The funeral took place on Monday 25 July 1796, on the same day that his son Maxwell was born. He was at first buried in the far corner of St. Michael’s Churchyard in Dumfries, but his body was later moved to its final location in the same cemetery, the Burns Mausoleum, in September 1815. The body of his widow Jean Armour was buried beside him in 1834.

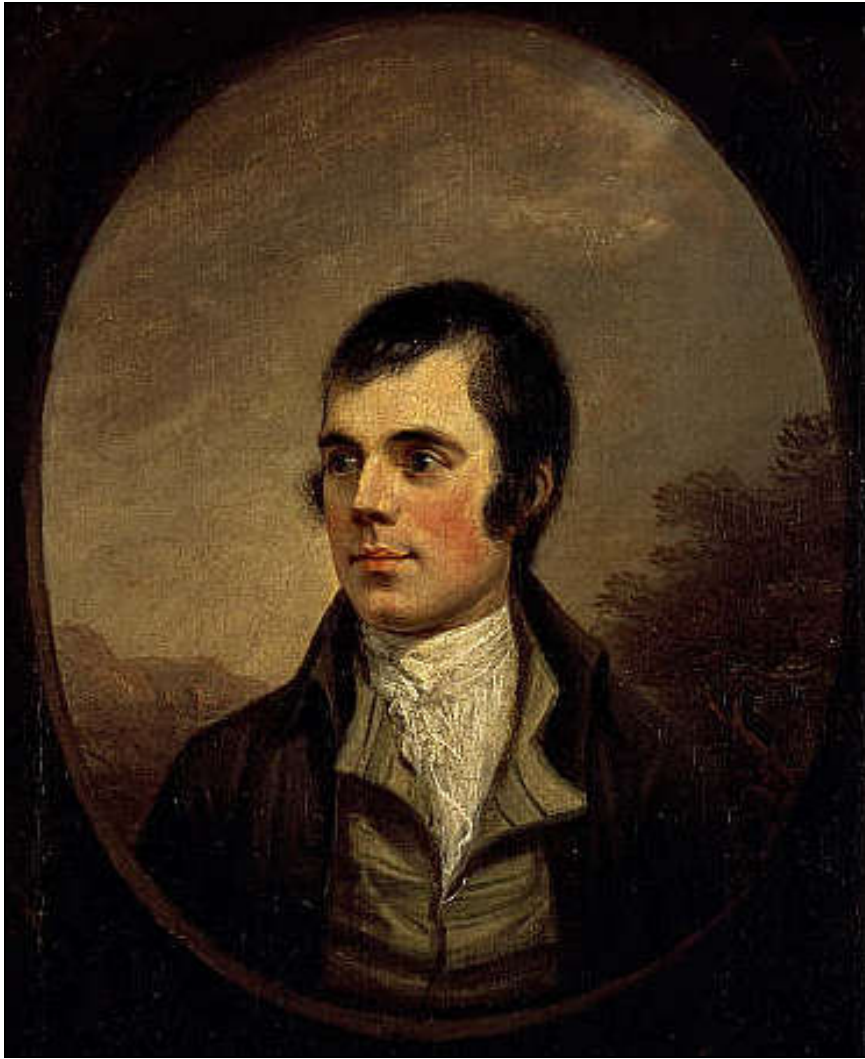
In a comparatively short life, Burns left behind a large corpus of over 550 poems, which have since influenced writers, as well as everyday people, from across the world. As testament to his enduring popularity, Burns suppers are held annually on the poet’s birthday, 25 January, which has become traditionally known as Burns Night. These evenings are commonly celebrated in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Burns Clubs, Scottish Societies and in countless other households worldwide. The first suppers were held in Ayrshire at the end of the 18th century by Robert Burns’ friends on the anniversary of his death, 21 July, and they have been a regular occurrence ever since. Burns suppers usually include haggis, Scotch whisky and the recitation of Burns’ poetry, particularly his apposite *Address to a Haggis*.

The style of Burns’ poetry is marked by spontaneity, directness and sincerity, ranging from sensitive depth to entertaining humour. Burns’ writings often draw upon a substantial knowledge of Classical, Biblical and English literature, as well as the Scottish Makar tradition. The themes of his poems include republicanism, Radicalism

- as revealed in *Scots Wha Hae*, Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, class inequalities, gender roles, poverty and sexuality. Serving as a major inspiration of Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley, Burns also popularised the use of Scots dialect in poetry, influencing the works of Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. Now, Burns is regarded as a world poet, his works holding an almost sacred importance for the people of Scotland and an unquestioned respect from all admirer's of fine literature.



A depiction of the Burns family in the birthplace museum



The famous portrait of Burns by Alexander Nasmyth, 1787

P O E M S.

CHIEFLY IN THE
SCOTTISH DIALECT,

B Y

R O B E R T B U R N S.

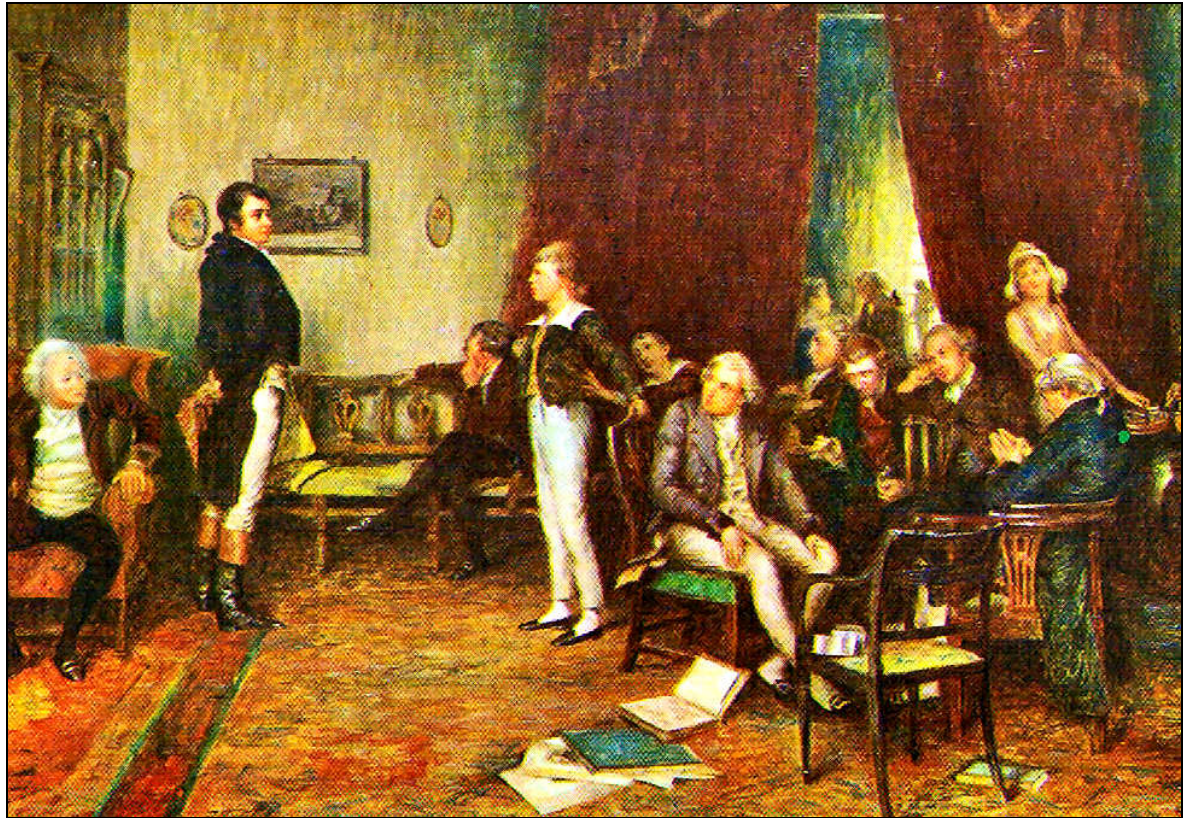
THE Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart :
And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.

ANONYMOUS.

KILMARNOCK:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON.

M,DCC,LXXXVI.

The original title page of the Kilmarnock Edition



The now famous meeting of Robert Burns (left) and a young Sir Walter Scott (centre left), painted by Charles Hardie, 1893

The Complete Poems



POEMS GROUPED BY YEARS

Juvenile Poems (1773–1779)

1780

1781

1783

1784

1785

1786

1787

1788

1789

1790

1791

1792

1793

1794

1795

Final Poems (1796)

Chronological List of Poems

Alphabetical List of Poems

Juvenile Poems (1773–1779)

1. DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample