

AN ODE TO LIBERTY

BY ROBERT BURNS

PART I.—A VISION

As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa'flower scents the dewy air,
Where the howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
And tells the midnight moon her care.

The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot along the sky;
The fox was howling on the hill,
And the distant echoing glens reply.

The stream, adown its hazelly path,
Was rushing by the ruin'd wa's,
To join yon river on the Strath,
Whase distant roaring swells and fa's.

The cauld blae North was streaming forth
Her lights, wi' hissing, eerie din;
Athwart the lift they start and shift,
Like Fortune's favors, tint as win.

By heedless chance I turn'd my eyes,
And, by the moonbeam, shook to see
A stern and stalwart ghaist arise,
Attir'd as Minstrels wont to be.

Had I a statue been o' stane,
His daring look had daunted me;
And on his bonnet grav'd was plain,
The sacred posy—"Libertie!"

And frae his harp sic strains did flow,
Might rous'd the slumb'ring Dead to hear;
But oh, it was a tale of woe,
As ever met a Briton's ear!

PART II.—THE ODE TO LIBERTY

The Song the Minstrel Sang

No Spartan tube, no Attic shell,
 No lyre Æolian I awake;
 'Tis liberty's bold note I swell,
 Thy harp, Columbia, let me take!

See gathering thousands, while I sing,
 A broken chain exulting bring,
 And dash it in a tyrant's face,
 And dare him to his very beard,
 And tell him he no more is feared—
 No more the despot of Columbia's race!
 A tyrant's proudest insults brav'd,
 They shout—a People freed! They hail an Empire saved.

Where is man's godlike form?
 Where is that brow erect and bold—
 That eye that can unmov'd behold
 The wildest rage, the loudest storm
 That e'er created fury dared to raise?

Avaunt! thou caitiff, servile, base,
 That tremblest at a despot's nod,
 Yet, crouching under the iron rod,
 Canst laud the hand that struck th' insulting blow!
 Art thou of man's Imperial line?
 Dost boast that countenance divine?
 Each skulking feature answers, No!

But come, ye sons of Liberty,
 Columbia's offspring, brave as free,
 In danger's hour still flaming in the van,
 Ye know, and dare maintain, the Royalty of Man!

Alfred! on thy starry throne,
 Surrounded by the tuneful choir,
 The bards that erst have struck the patriot lyre,
 And rous'd the freeborn Briton's soul of fire,
 No more thy England own!

Dare injured nations form the great design,
 To make detested tyrants bleed?
 Thy England execrates the glorious deed!
 Beneath her hostile banners waving,
 Every pang of honor braving,
 England in thunder calls, "The tyrant's cause is mine!"
 That hour accurst how did the fiends rejoice
 And hell, thro' all her confines, raise the exulting voice,
 That hour which saw the generous English name
 Linkt with such damned deeds of everlasting shame!

Thee, Caledonia! thy wild heaths among,
 Fam'd for the martial deed, the heaven-taught song,
 To thee I turn with swimming eyes;
 Where is that soul of Freedom fled?
 Immingled with the mighty dead,
 Beneath that hallow'd turf where Wallace lies!
 Hear it not, WALLACE! in thy bed of death.
 Ye babbling winds! in silence sweep,
 Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,
 Nor give the coward secret breath!
 Is this the ancient Caledonian form,
 Firm as the rock, resistless as the storm?
 Show me that eye which shot immortal hate,
 Blasting the despot's proudest bearing;
 Show me that arm which, nerv'd with thundering fate,
 Crushed usurpation's boldest daring—
 Dark quenched as yonder sinking star,
 No more that glance lightens afar;
 That arm no more whirls on the waste of War.

GLOSSARY OF SCOTS WORDS:

Blac, bleak; *lift*, sky; *sic*, such; *tint*, lost.