



A Lowden Sabbath Morn

A LOWDEN SABBATH MORN

BY

ROBERT
LOUIS
STEVENSON

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

I

The clinkum-clank o' Sabbath bells
Noo to the hoastin' rookery swells,
Noo faintin' laigh in shady dells,
 Sounds far an' near,
An' through the simmer kintry tells
 Its tale o' cheer.

II

An' noo, to that melodious play,
A' deidly awn the quiet sway--
A' ken their solemn holiday,
 Bestial an' human,
The singin' lintie on the brae,
 The restin' plou'man.

III

He, mair than a' the lave o' men,
His week completit joys to ken;
Half-dressed, he daunders out an' in,
 Perplext wi' leisure;
An' his raxt limbs he'll rax again
 Wi' painfü' plesure.

IV

The steerin' mither strang afit
Noo shoos the bairnies but a bit;
Noo cries them ben, their Sinday shüit
 To scart upon them,
Or sweeties in their pouch to pit,
 Wi' blessin's on them.

V

The lasses, clean frae tap to taes,
Are busked in crunklin' underclaes;
The gartened hose, the weel-filled stays,
 The nakit shift,
A' bleached on bonny greens for days
 An' white's the drift.

VI

An' noo to face the kirkward mile:
The guidman's hat o' dacent style,

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

The blackit shoon, we noo maun fyle
As white's the miller:
A waefü' peety tae, to spile
The warth o' siller.

VII

Our Marg'et, aye sae keen to crack,
Douce-stappin' in the stoury track,
Her emerald gown a' kiltit back
Frae snawy coats,
White-ankled, leads the kirkward pack
Wi' Dauvit Groats.

VIII

A thocht ahint, in runkled breeks,
A' spiled wi' lyin' by for weeks,
The guidman follows closs, an' cleiks
The sonsie missis;
His sarious face at aince bespeaks
The day that this is.

IX

And aye an' while we nearer draw
To whaur the kirkton lies alaw,
Mair neebours, comin' saft an' slaw
Frae here an' there,
The thicker thrang the gate, an' caw
The stour in air.

X

But hark! the bells frae nearer clang;
To rowst the slaw, their sides they bang;
An' see! black coats a'ready thrang
The green kirkyaird;
And at the yett, the chestnuts spang
That brocht the laird.

XI

The solemn elders at the plate
Stand drinkin' deep the pride o' state:
The practised hands as gash an' great
As Lords o' Session;
The later named, a wee thing blate
In their expression.

XII

The prentit stanes that mark the deid,
Wi' lengthened lip, the sarious read;
Syne wag a moraleesin' heid,
An' then an' there
Their hirplin' practice an' their creed
Try hard to square.

XIII

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

It's here our Merren lang has lain,
A wee bewast the table-stane;
An' yon's the grave o' Sandy Blane;
 An' further ower,
The mither's brithers, dacent men!
 Lie a' the fower.

XIV

Here the guidman sall bide awee
To dwell amang the deid; to see
Auld faces clear in fancy's e'e;
 Belike to hear
Auld voices fa'in saft an' slee
 On fancy's ear.

XV

Thus, on the day o' solemn things,
The bell that in the steeple swings
To fauld a scaattered faim'ly rings
 Its walcome screed;
An' just a wee thing nearer brings
 The quick an' deid.

XVI

But noo the bell is ringin' in;
To tak their places, folk begin;
The minister himsel' will shüne
 Be up the gate,
Filled fu' wi' clavers about sin
 An' man's estate.

XVII

The tūnes are up--_French_, to be shüre,
The faithfü' _French_, an' twa-three mair;
The auld prezenter, hoastin' sair,
 Wales out the portions,
An' yirks the tūne into the air
 Wi' queer contortions.

XVIII

Follows the prayer, the readin' next,
An' than the fisslin' for the text--
The twa-three last to find it, vext
 But kind o' proud;
An' than the peppermints are raxed,
 An' southernwood.

XIX

For noo's the time whan pows are seen
Nid-noddin' like a mandareen;
When tenty mithers stap a preen
 In sleepin' weans;
An' nearly half the parochine
 Forget their pains.

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

XX

There's just a waukrif' twa or three:
Thrawn commentators sweer to 'gree,
weans glowrin' at the bumlin' bee
 On windie-glasses,
Or lads that tak a keek a-gee
 At sonsie lasses.

XXI

Himself, meanwhile, frae whaur he cocks
An' bobs below the soundin'-box,
The treasures of his words unlocks
 Wi' prodigality,
An' deals some unco dingin' knocks
 To infidelity.

XXII

Wi' sappy unction, hoo he burkes
The hopes o' men that trust in works,
Expounds the fau'ts o' ither kirks,
 An' shaws the best o' them
No muckle better than mere Turks,
 When a's confessed o' them.

XXIII

Bethankit! what a bonny creed!
What mair would ony Christian need?--
The braw words rumm'le ower his heid,
 Nor steer the sleeper;
And in their restin' graves, the deid
 Sleep aye the deeper.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It may be guessed by some that I had a certain parish in my eye, and this makes it proper I should add a word of disclamation. In my time there have been two ministers in that parish. Of the first I have a special reason to speak well, even had there been any to think ill. The second I have often met in private and long (in the due phrase) "sat under" in his church, and neither here nor there have I heard an unkind or ugly word upon his lips. The preacher of the text had thus no original in that particular parish; but when I was a boy he might have been observed in many others; he was then (like the schoolmaster) abroad; and by recent advices, it would seem he has not yet entirely disappeared.

ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

I am not certain of the particular parish Stevenson had in his mind when he wrote this poem, but I am certain that the description is typical of almost any Scottish rural parish, Lowden (that is, Lothian) or other. In illustrating the verses it has seemed to me, therefore, unnecessary to make portraits from any one locality. I fancy the writer looked back

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

to the period of his boyhood and to the people he knew in more than one part of his native country, so I have tried to depict that period and that class of people as I remember them in various counties of his land and mine.

A. S. B.

[Illustration]

_The clinkum-clank o' sabbath bells
Noo to the hoastin' rookery swells,
Noo faintin' laigh in shady dells,
 Sounds far an' near,
An' through the simmer kintry tells
 its tale o' cheer._

[Illustration]

_An' noo, to that melodious play,
A' deidly awn the quiet sway--
A' ken their solemn holiday,
 Bestial an' human,
The singin' lintie on the brae,
 The restin' plou'man._

[Illustration]

_He, mair than a' the lave o' men,
His week completit joys to ken;
Half-dressed, he daunders out an' in,
 Perplext wi' leisure;
An' his raxt limbs he'll rax again
 wi' painfü' plesure._

[Illustration]

_The steerin' mither strang afit
Noo shoos the bairnies but a bit;
Noo cries them ben, their sinday shüit
 To scart upon them,
Or sweeties in their pouch to pit,
 wi' blessin's on them._

[Illustration]

_The lasses, clean frae tap to taes,
Are busked in crunklin' underclaes;
The gartened hose, the weel-filled stays,
 The nakit shift,
A' bleached on bonny greens for days,
 An' white's the drift._

[Illustration]

_An' noo to face the kirkward mile:
The guidman's hat o' dacent style,
The blackit shoon, we noo maun fyle
 As white's the miller:
A waefü' peety tae, to spile
 The warth o' siller._

[Illustration]

_Our Marg'et, aye sae keen to crack,
Douce-stappin' in the stoury track,
Her emerald gown a' kiltit back
 Frae snawy coats,
white-ankled, leads the kirkward pack

A Lowden Sabbath Morn
Wi' Dauvit Groats._

_A thocht ahint, in runkled breeks,
A' spiled wi' lyin' by for weeks,
The guidman follows closs, an' cleiks
The sonsie missis;
His sarious face at aince bespeaks
The day that this is._

[Illustration]

_And aye an' while we nearer draw
To whaur the kirkton lies alaw,
Mair neebours, comin saft an' slaw
Frae here an' there,
The thicker thrang the gate, an' caw
The stour in air._

[Illustration]

_But hark! the bells frae nearer clang;
To rowst the slaw, their sides they bang;
An' see! black coats a'ready thrang
The green kirkyaird;
And at the yett, the chestnuts spang
That brocht the laird._

[Illustration]

_The solemn elders at the plate
Stand drinkin' deep the pride o' state:
The practised hands as gash an' great
As Lords o' Session;
The later named, a wee thing blate
In their expression._

[Illustration]

_The prentit stanes that mark the deid,
Wi' lengthened lip, the sarious read;
Syne wag a moraleesin' heid,
An' then an' there
Their hirplin' practice an' their creed
Try hard to square._

[Illustration]

_It's here our Merren lang has lain,
A wee bewast the table-stane;
An' yon's the grave o' Sandy Blane;
An' further ower,
The mither's brithers, dacent men!
Lie a' the fower._

[Illustration]

_Here the guidman sall bide awee
To dwell amang the deid; to see
Auld faces clear in fancy's e'e;
Belike to hear
Auld voices fa'in saft an' slee
On fancy's ear._

[Illustration]

_Thus, on the day o' solemn things,
The bell that in the steeple swings
To fauld a scattered faim'ly rings

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

Its walcome screed;
An' just a wee thing nearer brings
The quick an' deid._

[Illustration]

_But noo the bell is ringin' in;
To tak their places, folk begin;_

[Illustration]

_The minister himsel' will shüene
Be up the gate,
Filled fu' wi' clavers about sin
An' man's estate._

[Illustration]

_The tünies are up--French, _to be shüre,
The faithfü' _ French, _an' twa-three mair;
The auld prezenator, hoastin' sair,
Wales out the portions,
An' yirks the tüne into the air
Wi' queer contortions._

[Illustration]

_Follows the prayer, the readin' next,
An' than the fisslin' for the text--
The twa-three last to find it, vext
But kind o' proud;_

[Illustration]

_An' than the peppermints are raxed,
An' southernwood._

[Illustration]

_For noo's the time whan pows are seen
Nid-noddin' like a mandareen;
When tenty mithers stap a preen
In sleepin' weans;
An' nearly half the parochine
Forget their pains._

[Illustration]

_There's just a waukrif' twa or three:
Thrawn commentators sweer to 'gree,_

[Illustration]

_Weans glowrin' at the bumlin' bee
On windie-glasses,
Or lads that tak a keek a-glee
At sonsie lasses._

[Illustration]

_Himsel', meanwhile, frae whaur he cocks
An' bobs belaw the soundin'-box,
The treesures of his words unlocks
Wi' prodigality,
An' deals some unco dingin' knocks
To infidelity._

[Illustration]

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

_Wi' sappy unction, hoo he burkes
The hopes o' men that trust in works,
Expounds the fau'ts o' ither kirks,
 An' shaws the best o' them
No muckle better than mere Turks,
 When a's confessed o' them._

_Bethankit! what a bonny creed!
What mair would ony Christian need?_--

[Illustration]

_The braw words rumm'le ower his heid,
Nor steer the sleeper;_

[Illustration]

_And in their restin' graves, the deid
Sleep aye the deeper._

[Illustration]

Works by Robert Louis Stevenson

AN INLAND VOYAGE.
EDINBURGH: PICTURESQUE NOTES.
TRAVELS WITH A DONKEY.
VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE.
FAMILIAR STUDIES OF MEN AND BOOKS.
NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS.
TREASURE ISLAND.
THE SILVERADO SQUATTERS.
A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES.
PRINCE OTTO.
THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE.
KIDNAPPED.
THE MERRY MEN.
UNDERWOODS.
MEMORIES AND PORTRAITS.
THE BLACK ARROW.
THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE.
FATHER DAMIEN: AN OPEN LETTER.
BALLADS.
ACROSS THE PLAINS.
ISLAND NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENTS.
A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY.
CATRIONA.
WEIR OF HERMISTON.
VAILIMA LETTERS.
FABLES.
SONGS OF TRAVEL.
ST. IVES.
IN THE SOUTH SEAS.
ESSAYS OF TRAVEL.
TALES AND FANTASIES.
THE ART OF WRITING.
PRAYERS WRITTEN AT VAILIMA.
A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

with Mrs. Stevenson

THE DYNAMITER.

A Lowden Sabbath Morn

with Lloyd Osbourne

THE WRONG BOX.

THE WRECKER.

THE EBB-TIDE.