

Auld Soctia, no doubt, as my birth-place I claim,
In the parish of Eccles, in Leitholm by name ;
In eighteen twenty-eight, the first month, and sixth
day

When I gave the first squack, so my mother did say.
My father was poor, but a good honest name,
Honest poverty bring no discredit nor shame.

Tho' he had not the rank, the gold, nor the soil,
He was blessed with good hands ever ready to toil.
He had ten needful children to clothe and to feed,
While I was the youngest, but one, of the breed.
Sweet cakes were untasted, and tea very rare,
But we always had plenty of plain Scottish fare.

At the time I had entered on my seventh year,
My father was seized with affliction severe ;
He lay four long months between hope and despair ;
He recovered—but infirmities still was his share.
Just then I had started to go to the school ;

To stammer my A B's I stood on a stool ;
The teacher he called me a thick-headed loon,
And often his ruler played crack o'er my croon ;
He welted my shoulders with strap and with stick,
If I had little brains, what I had he made quick ;
He threatened, he thrashed me, he made me look
smart,

Until books first and second, I could screed off by
heart.

He gave me a pen, strokes and letters to make,
If one was made wrong, he my shoulders would
shake ;

A pencil and slate he next handed to me,
But I got little farther than two and one's three.
Tho' small was my learning with pencil or pen,
My schooling was ended before I was ten ;
Then I went with my brother, a youth full of hope,
To dig drains, when my head scarcely reached to
the top.

I have thinned out the turnips and raked up the hay,
Gathered sticks and picked stanes, yes, for five-
pence a day ;

Cleaned the byers out in winter and fed all the kye,
Pulled the turnips in winter, when the cold made
me ery.

People here they might laugh at the very high wage,
That the farmers gave there to a boy of my age ;
I have told yon the wage, it seems hoarding up self ;
Yes, from five pence a day, and I boarded myse'f.

Just then in my head, I felt something begin,
Neither teacher nor learning could ever put in ;
The young poetic feeling began to diffuse,
Or as some people call it, the gift of the muse.
While at work I would stop, yes, and throw down
my tool,

When a voice whispered, Bill, you must go back
to school ;

But a sound saying, impossible, rang through my
head,

By the sweat of your brow, you must earn your
own bread.

Want of learning was one, and hard work was the
other,

That strove the young flame in my head thus to
smother ;

Forsooth, all their striving was greatly in vain,
Lest they cut off my head, or else scooped out my
brain.

So I rhymed without grammar in byre and in field,
My neighbors oft called me a wonderful chield ;
And oft at our work for a laugh and a jest,
They would give me some words, my young genius
to test.

I would then scratch my head, and in two minutes
time,

Just give them their answer instanter in rhyme ;
I used not a pen, nor a pencil of lead,

But I carried my manuscript all in my head.

When I saw the black snail with its two pointed
horns,

Or heard the blithe black-bird sing up on the
thorns ;

As I watched the cruel boys, killing bees for their
honey,

Every one got a verse, very simple, but funny.

In our own house at night, when I cleaned out my
bicker,

When my bones got a rest—O, my muse, it went
quicker,

If my brothers or sisters said ought unto me,
How they laughed, when their answer in rhyme I
did gie.

I longed for more learning, such a want I felt sore,
But of talents, my Maker gave me a good store ;

I tried to improve them, and did partly succeed,
Good neighbors supplied me with books for to read.

At my mother's fire-side, it was there I did get,
The little I know, its not very much yet ;

When the others retired, both to sleep and to snore,
I would sit up with my books, getting knowledge
in store.

As troubles and trials pressed hard in there train,
My father was seized with affliction again ;

When the first snows of winter clad all the green
sward,

He was laid in his grave, in Eccles church-yard.
Deprived of my father, at the age of eighteen,

I thought of the hardships that might intervene ;

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