

AULD REIKIE

For TTBB Chorus and Piano Poems of Robert Fergusson Music by Bruce Trinkley

On the Music Bells Playing
The Lee-Rigg
On Seeing a Lady Paint Herself

NOTES

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) was born in Edinburgh and educated at St. Andrew's University, Scotland, at a time when the Scots dialect was held in little regard by poets. Fergusson took his native dialect and fashioned it into a vibrant literary language, demonstrating that colloquial Scots could be turned into a powerful poetic medium. Combining his University learning with his knowledge of common life, Fergusson wrote verse in which a Latin phrase could fit comfortably with homely Scottish expressions. Fergusson's work had a profound influence on Robert Burns.

Fergusson's verse is full of keen, and sometimes critical, observations of 18th century Edinburgh, from his disgust at the drunken parties that were held on the very spot of public executions to his wry bemusement with the simple vanity of mankind. Fergusson's major work is an unfinished poem entitled "Auld Reikie" whose title is an old playful nickname for Edinburgh. The present collection of settings bring together five short poems of Fergusson which all comment upon life in Fergusson's city, "Auld Reikie."

The Horace Ode ("Toot aff Your Horn") is Fergusson's very Scottish version of the "carpe diem" poem wherein he urges us to enjoy life while we may. The full title of "On the Music Bells Playing" is "On the Music Bells Playing Yesterday Forenoon, Prior to Brown and Wilson's Execution, on the Deacons Being Presented to Council" and refers to the public execution of two murderers. Fergusson's poem is more cynical than contemporary newspaper reports of the same execution which noted that the two condemned men, who had tried repeatedly to escape from prison, were at the last brought to pious repentance by the good work of the deacons and even made a short, moving speech before they were hanged. Fergusson's poem focuses more on the celebrating crowd that attended these public spectacles. The lady painting herself, in the poem of that title, is of course busily applying make-up to her own face.

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Auld Reikie is dedicated to the Arbroath Choral Society and their conductor, Helen Addison.

**On the Music Bells Playing Yesterday
Forenoon, Prior To Brown and Wilson's Execution, on the Deacons Being Presented
To Council**

Happy the folks that rule the roast!
Our council men are cheerful;
To mirth they now devote each toast,
And bells fill every ear full.

When man's condemn'd to suffer death
For his unlicens'd crimes,
Instead of psalms they quit their breath
To merry-making chimes

The Lee-Rigg

Will ye gan ovr the lee-rigg,
My ain kind deary O!
And cuddle there sae kindly
Wi me, my kind deary O!

At thornie-dike and birken-tree
We'll daff, and ne'er be weary O;
They'll scug ill een frae you and me,
Mine ain kind deary O.

Nae herds wi kent or colly there,
Shall ever come to fear ye O;
But lav-rocks, whistling in the air,
Shall woo, like me, their deary O!

While others heard their lambs and ewes,
And toil for world's gear, my jo,
Upon the lee my pleasure grows,
Wi you, my kind dearie O!

On Seeing a Lady Paint Herself

When, by some misadventure crost,
The banker hath his fortunes lost,
Credit his instant need supplies,
And for a moment blinds our eyes:
So Delia, when her beauty's flown,
Trades on a bottom not her own,
And labours to escape detection
By putting on a false complexion.