

Robert Burns – Address to Edinburgh



Robert Burns wrote this poem shortly after he arrived in the capital in November 1786.

It is written in English Augustan verse, which was a popular form of composition at the end of the eighteenth century.

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!

All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,

Where once beneath a Monarch's feet,

Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!

From marking wildly-scatt'ed flow'rs,

As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,

And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,

I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

Here Wealth still swells the golden tide,

As busy Trade his labours plies;

There Architecture's noble pride

Bids elegance and splendour rise:

Here Justice, from her native skies,

High wields her balance and her rod;
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,
Seeks Science in her coy abode.

Thy sons, Edina, social, kind,
With open arms the stranger hail;
Their views enlarg'd, their lib'ral mind,
Above the narrow, rural vale:
Attentive still to Sorrow's wail,
Or modest Merit's silent claim;
And never may their sources fail!
And never envy blot their name!

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn,
Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy, milk-white thorn,
Dear as the raptur'd thrill of joy!
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heav'n's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own His work indeed divine!

There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold vet'ran, grey in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:
The pond'rous wall and massy bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,
Have oft withstood assailing war,
And oft repell'd th' Invader's shock.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,
I view that noble, stately Dome,
Where Scotia's kings of other years,
Fam'd heroes! had their royal home:
Alas, how chang'd the times to come!
Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild-wand'ring roam!
Tho' rigid Law cries out 'twas just!

Wild-beats my heart to trace your steps,
Whose ancestors, in days of yore,
Thro' hostile ranks and ruin'd gaps
Old Scotia's bloody lion bore:

Ev'n I who sing in rustic lore,
Haply my Sires have left their shed,
And fac'd grim Danger's loudest roar,
Bold – following where your fathers led!

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,
Where once, beneath a Monarch's feet,
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs:
From marking wildly-scatt'ed flow'rs,
As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter in thy honor'd shade.