

Littérature anglophone | **“To A Mouse” by Robert Burns (1785)**

Original Scots	Standard English Translation
<p><i>On Turning up in Her Nest with the Plough, November, 1785</i></p> <p>Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie, O, what a pannic's in thy breastie! Thou need na start awa sae hasty, Wi' bickering brattle! I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee, Wi' murd'ring pattle!</p> <p>I'm truly sorry man's dominion, Has broken nature's social union, An' justifies that ill opinion, Which makes thee startle At me, thy poor, earth-born companion, An' fellow-mortal!</p> <p>I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve; What then? poor beastie, thou maun live! A daimen icker in a thrave 'S a sma' request; I'll get a blessin wi' the lave, An' never miss't!</p> <p>Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin! It's silly wa's the win's are strewin! An' naething, now, to big a new ane, O' foggage green An' bleak December's winds ensuin, Baith snell an' keen!</p> <p>Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste, An' weary winter comin fast, An' cozie here, beneath the blast, Thou thought to dwell- Till crash! the cruel coulter past Out thro' thy cell.</p> <p>Thy wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble, Has cost thee mony a weary nibble! Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble, But house or hald, To thole the winter's sleety dribble, An' cranreuch cauld!</p>	<p><i>It is November of 1785, and the speaker has just accidentally destroyed a mouse's nest with his plough [plow = US English].</i></p> <p>Little, cunning, cowering, timorous beast, Oh, what a panic is in your breast! You need not start away so hasty With bickering prattle! I would be loath to run and chase you, With murdering paddle!</p> <p>I'm truly sorry man's dominion Has broken Nature's social union, And justifies that ill opinion Which makes you startle At me, your poor, earth-born companion And fellow mortal!</p> <p>I doubt not, sometimes, that you may thieve; What then? Poor beast, you must live! An odd ear in twenty-four sheaves Is a small request; I will get a blessing with what is left, And never miss it.</p> <p>Your small house, too, in ruin! Its feeble walls the winds are scattering! And nothing now, to build a new one, Of coarse green foliage! And bleak December's winds ensuing, Both bitter and piercing!</p> <p>You saw the fields laid bare and empty, And weary winter coming fast, And cozy here, beneath the blast, You thought to dwell, Till crash! The cruel coulter passed Out through your cell.</p> <p>That small heap of leaves and stubble, Has cost you many a weary nibble! Now you are turned out, for all your trouble, Without house or holding, To endure the winter's sleety dribble, And hoar-frost cold.</p>

<p>But, Mousie, thou art no thy-lane, In proving foresight may be vain; The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promis'd joy!</p> <p>Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me The present only toucheth thee: But, Och! I backward cast my e'e. On prospects drear! An' forward, tho' I canna see, I guess an' fear!</p>	<p>But Mouse, you are not alone, In proving foresight may be vain: The best-laid schemes of mice and men Go oft awry, And leave us nothing but grief and pain, For promised joy!</p> <p>Still you are blessed, compared with me! The present only touches you: But oh! I backward cast my eye, On prospects dreary! And forward, though I cannot see, I guess and fear!</p>
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Analysis of Robert Burns's poem "To a Mouse"

"*To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest With the Plough*" is a Scots-language poem written by the well-known Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1785. It is written in the Scottish dialect.

The poem deals with the speaker's experience with a little and frightened mouse. The speaker in the poem is likely Robert Burns himself. He spends the majority of the poem apologizing to the mouse because he accidentally destroyed the mouse's nest with a plough. Moreover, the speaker argues that human beings and animals are connected since they are both part of the natural world: "*nature's social union*". Indeed, they are both vulnerable to forces that are beyond their control.

The speaker's message is clear: people should enjoy the present moments and not worry too much about the future ones. He admits that the mouse has an advantage over him because she does not prepare for the future, but rather lives for the present. Thus, the narrator implies that the mouse is fortunate. Contrary to the mouse, he lives in perpetual frustration and disappointment because he keeps thinking about his failures and stresses over his future plans. He is eaten up by many second thoughts about the past and fears about what will happen later in his life.

The mouse, on the other hand, takes grain without worrying about what might occur in the future. Thus, the purpose of the poem is to illustrate the fact that it is not always better to prepare for everything because our plans and nature's plans do not always turn out the way we expected or wanted them to be.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that John Steinbeck took the title of his 1937 novel "Of Mice and Men" from a line contained in the poem: "*The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley (...)*"