

BALLAD ON THE AMERICAN WAR

BY ROBERT BURNS

When Guildford good our pilot stood,
An' did our hellim thraw, man;
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,
Within America, man;
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,
And in the sea did jaw, man;
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man;
Down Lowrie's Burn¹ he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man;
But yet, whatreck, he, at Quebec,
Montgomery-like² did fa', man.
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage within a cage
Was kept at Boston-ha', man;
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe
For Philadelphia, man;
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid christian bluid to draw, man;
But at New-York, wi' knife an' fork,
Sir-Loin³ he hackèd sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw, man.
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,

¹*Lowrie's Burn* is a pseudonym for the St. Lawrence river.

²The Montgomeries of Coilsfield were friends and patrons of Burns.

³Refers to a raid ordered by General Howe at Peekskill in which a great many head of cattle of the Colonists were killed.

An' did the buckskins claw, man;
 But Clinton's glaive grae rust to save,
 He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, an' Guildford too,
 Began to fear a fa', man;
 And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure,
 The German chief⁴ to thraw, man:
 For Paddy Burke,⁵ like ony Turk,
 Nae mercy had at a', man:
 An Charlie Fox threw by the box,
 An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

Then Rockingham took up the game;
 Till death did on him ca', man;
 When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,
 Conform to gospel law, man:
 Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
 They did his measures thraw, man;
 For North an' Fox united stocks,
 An bore him to the wa', man.⁶

Then clubs and hearts were Charlie's cartes,
 He swept the stakes awa', man,
 Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
 Led him a sair faux pas, man:
 The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,
 On Chatham's boy did ca', man;
 An' Scotland drew her pipe an' blew,
 "Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"⁷

Behind the throne then Granville's gone,
 A secret word or twa, man;
 While slee Dundas, arousd' the class

⁴General Steuben.

⁵Edmund Burke.

⁶The administration of Lord North was followed by that of the Marquis of Rockingham: after his death, he was succeeded by Lord Shelburne; later Mr. Fox and Lord North made a coalition which forced Shelburne's resignation.

⁷A Scottish song, popular at the time.

Be-north the Roman wa', man:
 An' Chatham's wraith, in heav'nly graith,
 (Inspired bardies saw, man),
 Wi' kindling eyes, cry'd, "Willie, rise!
 Would I hae fear'd them a', man?"

But, word an' blow, North, Fox and Co.
 Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man;
 Till Suthron raise, an coost their claise
 Behind him in a raw, man:
 An' Caledon threw by the drone,
 An' did her whittle draw, man:
 An' swear fu' rude, thro' dirt an' bluid,
 To mak it guid in law, man.

GLOSSARY OF SCOTS WORDS:

Ae, one; *bardies*, poets; *bluid*, blood; *ca'*, call; *dought*, was able; *dour*, stubborn; *drone*, bagpipe; *fa'*, fall; *graiith*, harness; *guid*, good; *hellim*, helm; *jav*, pour; *knowe*, high ground; *loos'd*, unloosed; *maskin-pat*, tea-pot; *shaw*, forest; *slaw*, slow; *slec*, sly; *stoure*, dust; *swoor*, swore; *thraw*, thwart or twist; *waur*, worst; *whatreck*, of what avail; *whittle*, sword; *wraith*, spirit.