

Caller Oysters

Of a' the waters that can hobble
A fishin yole or salmon coble,
And can reward the fisher's trouble,
Or south or north,
There's nae sae spacious and sae noble
As Firth o' Forth.

In her the skate and codlin sail,
The eel fou souple wags her tail,
Wi herrin, fleuk and mackarel,
And whitens dainty:
Their spindle-shanks the labsters trail,
Wi partans plenty.

Auld Reikie's sons blyth faces wear;
September's merry month is near,
That brings in Neptune's caller cheers,
New oysters fresh;
The halesomest and nicest gear
Of fish or flesh.

O! then we needna gie a plack
For dand'ring mountebank or quack,
Wha o' their drogs sae bauldly crack,
And spred sic notions,
As gar their feckless patient tak
Their stinkin potions.

Come prie, frail man! for gin thou art sick,
The oyster is a rare cathartic,
As ever doctor patient gart lick
To cure his ails;
Whether you hae the head or heart-ake,
It ay prevails.

Ye tiplers, open a' your poses,
Ye wha are faush'd wi plouky noses!
Fling owr your craig sufficient doses,
You'll thole a hunder,
To fleg awa your simmer doses,
And naething under.

Whan big as burns the gutters rin,
Gin ye hae catcht a droukit skin,
To Luckie Middlemist's loup in,
And sit fu snug
Owr oysters and a dram o' gin,
Or haddock lug.

When auld Saunt Giles, at aucht o'clock,
Gars merchant louns their chopies lock,
There we adjourn wi hearty fock
 To birl our bodles,
And get wharewi to crack our joke,
 And clear our noddles.

Whan Phoebus did his winnocks steek,
How aften at the ingle cheek
Did I my frosty fingers beek,
 And taste gude fare!
I trou there was nae hame tae seek
 Whan steghin there.

While glaikit fools, owr rife o' cash,
Pamper their weyms wi fousom trash,
I think a chiel may gayly pass
 He's no ill boden
That gusts his gab wi oyster sauce,
 And hen weel soden.

At Musselbrough, and eke Newhaven,
The fisher-wives will get top livin,
When lads gang out on Sunday's even
 To treat their joes,
And tak of fat pandours a prievin,
 Or mussel brose.

Than sometimes ere they flit their doup,
They'll aiblins a' their siller coup
For liquor clear frae cutty stoup,
 To weet their wizzen,
And swallow owr a dainty soup,
 For fear they gizzen.

A' ye wha canna stand sae sicker,
Whan twice you've toomed the big-ars'd bicker,
Mix caller oysters wi your liquor,
 And I'm your debtor,
If greedy priest or drouthy vicar
 Will thole it better.

**By Robert Fergusson
Read by Rab Wilson**