

## 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**