

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday April 21 2024

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Buzzard



Bill Warner

Bill has been a supporter of the Ode from the beginning. I've featured some of his photography in the past but here's his explanation for one of his watercolors.

In 2020, Ellen and I took a watercolor class at the local technical college. I figured if I was ever going to get halfway proficient in this difficult medium, I might do well to take

a few lessons. Well, the learning curve was slow, for sure. Or, I might say, what I learned from the start was how much I had to learn. Thus, most of the work I did there was pretty awful.

"Buzz" was our final classroom assignment. The instructor projected the photograph of the creature onto a screen and gave us a time limit in which to complete an image—twenty or thirty minutes, or something like that. My heart was not really in it at that point. I just wanted to get it over and done with.

I made a very light, loose pencil sketch and then started painting it in. I marked a couple of areas to remain largely untouched—the highlight in the eyeball and the surface along the forehead. Then I just started plopping down paint in a sort of rough pointillistic way. There's no broad layering of wash that I can see aside from the background. And the only "lift" I remember is along the top of the critter's beak. Before each new application of pigment, I used a hair drier to get everything set.

So, initially, I really didn't think about it much beyond just letting my hand have its way. Like I say, I just wanted to get done with it and go home. But then all of a sudden, well, I think my model winked at me, and I thought, dang, the dude's kind of cool. Maybe I can do some justice to this fella's beaming countenance after all. With minutes to spare, I added those dark brown areas and roughed in the "shoulders," or wings, or whatever they are.

For years now, I've been calling him Buzz, thanks to my misperception of him as a turkey buzzard, which he definitely is not. As near as I can tell, he was based on a photo of a cinereous vulture, one of the old-world varieties of flying doofuses. A lot of details were left out, though, as you might see by pulling up any photo of a cinereous vulture—mine's not exactly what you'd call Audubon accurate or anything. But I like it anyway. He has a rather jaunty look in his eye, and every now and then I'm sure I catch him winking, so maybe I brought out a bit of his character. At any rate, he's always excellent company, Buzz is.

I stopped painting in watercolor right after this one, taking it up again only recently—now working a lot with Japanese sumi-e, which actually is a kind of toned ink if I'm not mistaken. I still have a long way to go, but I'm enjoying the trip even more than ever. For one thing, I have more of an idea in mind for what I want to convey and how I want it to appear, so maybe that will make a difference.

There's one recent sumi still life posted on my ["Lamoreaux" Flickr site](#), along with a couple of other sumi works from 2020. And more to come.

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Major Los Angeles Highway to Undergo Weeks of Closures to Construct Large Wildlife Crossing



The Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing will offer safe passage for animals, reptiles and insects over the 101 Freeway

Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images/File

Start April 22nd , all southbound lanes of the highway in the Agoura Hills area will be closed from Cheseboro Road to Liberty Canyon Road for about five hours beginning at 11:59 p.m. PT on weekdays, according to Caltrans.

Closures will shift to northbound lanes as work on the crossing progresses, the department said.

“These closures are for the safety of the public while crews place girders over the freeway to construct the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, a vegetated bridge across Highway 101 to reconnect wildlife habitat,” Caltrans said.

The schedule is subject to change because of weather conditions or operational reasons, and detours on local streets will be provided.

<https://bit.ly/3JHv589>

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**I don't know if
Facebook has ever
caused the lame to
walk but it has sure
caused the dumb to
speak.**

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3D Printing Homes on Earth, Someday the Moon



raconteur.net

A Texas company — driven by a mission to create faster, better and more affordable housing — is 3D printing homes. It's also working with NASA to 3D print on the Moon.

https://youtu.be/dXUX6dv2_Yo?t=1

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Ahhh. VW makes wheels for the masses.

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When Your Vision and Hearing Decline with Age



readersdigest.co.uk

If you want to feel like you're getting old, visit an optometrist and be told you that in 6 to 12 months you won't be able to read things up close and you'll need bifocals.

While fewer people use hearing aids than wear glasses/contacts, the curves for difficulty hearing suggest that people just deal with hearing less over time.

<https://bit.ly/4cO9oR9>

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Postal Service Seeks to Hike Cost of First-Class Stamp to 73 Cents



WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Postal Service signaled plans Tuesday for a rate increase that includes hiking the cost of a first-class stamp from 68 cents to 73 cents, part of an overall 7.8% increase to take effect this summer.

The request was made to the Postal Regulatory Commission, which must approve the proposed increase that the Postal Service contends is necessary to achieve financial stability. If approved, the 5-cent increase for a “forever” stamp and similar increases for postcards, metered letters and international mail would take effect July 14.

U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy previously warned postal customers to get used to “uncomfortable” rate hikes as the Postal Service seeks to become self-sufficient. He said price increases were overdue after “at least 10 years of a defective pricing model.”

In its filing, the Postal Service said it’s also seeking price adjustments on special services such as money order fees and certified mail. But there will be no price increase for post office box rentals, and postal insurance will be reduced by 10% when items are mailed, the postal service said.

You can never have too many forever stamps in your larder.

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An Interactive Timeline of History's Famous Figures.



catholictalkshow.com

<https://bit.ly/4ayPnMc>

No better example of why the dark ages were dark

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Models Suggest Rifts in Society Are Baked into Human Nature



Confirmation bias, or the tendency to look for evidence supporting existing beliefs, can cause polarization in a simulated population even without social interaction.

Image credit: Shutterstock / Lightspring.

As the ways that people consume information change and shift, society is becoming ever-more factious. A recent modeling study published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B suggests that the tendency toward polarization isn't just a result of the modern information landscape. Rather, it arises from deep-rooted biases in the human psyche—in particular, the urge to seek evidence supporting what we already suspect to be true. "Biologically, this tendency is already there, even before society," says cognitive neuroscientist and lead author Germain Lefebvre, a postdoc at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany.

<https://bit.ly/3VCM2aE>

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How Physicists Are Exploring — and Rethinking — Time



Quanta

Einstein famously quipped that time is what clocks measure. It's a snappy answer. But as physicists fiddle with ever more sophisticated clocks, they're frequently reminded that measuring something is very different from understanding it.

<https://www.quantamagazine.org/what-is-the-nature-of-time-20240229/>

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How Do Lasers Work?



(Image credit: EThamPhoto via Getty Images)

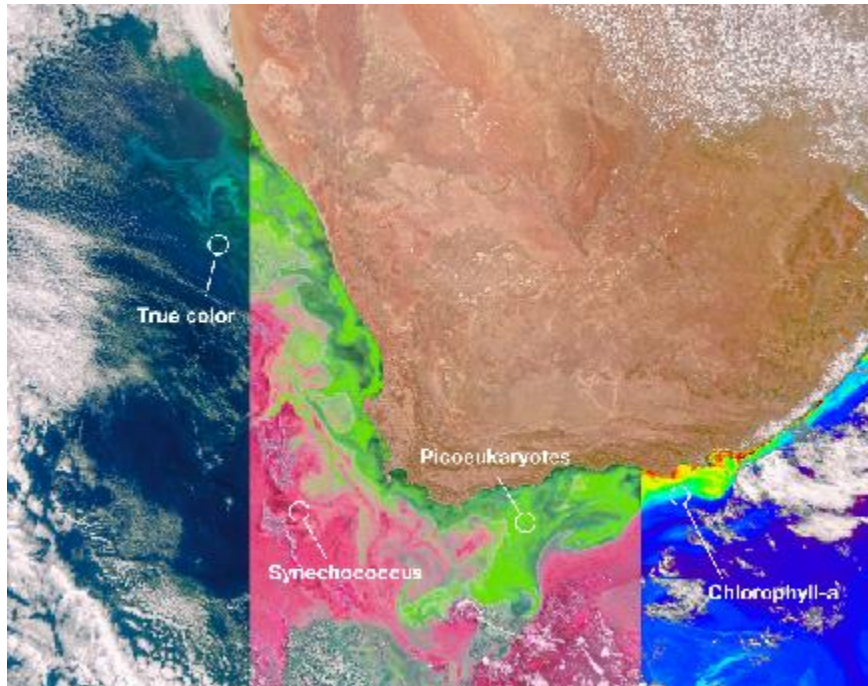
First predicted by Einstein more than a century ago, lasers have shaped our modern technological landscape. But how do they work?

Lasers are now used in everything from eye surgery to etching glass to the fiber-optic cables that enable global internet connection. They've even been instrumental in detecting ripples in space-time known as gravitational waves.

<https://bit.ly/3J3Yads>

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NASA's PACE Data on Ocean, Atmosphere, Climate Now Available



NASA's PACE satellite's Ocean Color Instrument (OCI) detects light across a hyperspectral range, which gives scientists new information to differentiate communities of phytoplankton – a unique ability of NASA's newest Earth-observing satellite. This first image released from OCI identifies two different communities of these microscopic marine organisms in the ocean off the coast of South Africa on Feb. 28, 2024. The central panel of this image shows Synechococcus in pink and picoeukaryotes in green. The left panel of this image shows a natural color view of the ocean, and the right panel displays the concentration of chlorophyll-a, a photosynthetic pigment used to identify the presence of phytoplankton.

Credit: NASA

NASA is now publicly distributing science-quality data from its newest Earth-observing satellite, providing first-of-their-kind measurements of ocean health, air quality, and the effects of a changing climate.

The Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) satellite was launched on Feb. 8, and has been put through several weeks of in-orbit testing of the spacecraft and instruments to ensure proper functioning and data quality. The mission is gathering data that the [public now can access](#).

PACE data will allow researchers to study microscopic life in the ocean and particles in the air, advancing the understanding of issues including fisheries health, harmful algal blooms, air pollution, and wildfire smoke. With PACE, scientists also can investigate how the ocean and atmosphere interact with each other and are affected by a changing climate.

<https://bit.ly/49FhHLZ>

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Poetry Corner

Roadside Rhymes



A man, a miss,
A car, a curve.
He kissed the miss,
And missed the curve.

Burma Shave

Don't stick your elbow
Out so far
It may go home
In another car.

Burma Shave

Trains don't wander
All oer the map
'Cause nobody sits
In the engineer's lap.

Burma Shave

She kissed the hairbrush
By mistake
She thought it was
Her husband Jake.

Burma Shave



Don't lose your head
To gain a minute
You need your head
Your brains are in it.

Burma Shave

Drove too long
Driver snoozing
What happened next
Is not amusing.

Burma Shave

Brother speeder
Let's rehearse
All together
Good morning, nurse.

Burma Shave

Cautious rider
To her reckless dear
Let's have less bull
And a little more steer.

Burma Shave

Speed was high
Weather was not
Tires were thin
X marks the spot.

Burma Shave

The midnight ride
Of Paul for beer
Led to a warmer
Hemisphere.

Burma Shave

Around the curve
Lickety-split
Beautiful car
Wasn't it?

Burma Shave

No matter the price
No matter how new
The best safety device
In the car is you.

Burma Shave

A guy who drives
A car wide open
Is not thinkin'
E's just hopin'

Burma Shave

At intersections
Look each way
A harp sounds nice
But it's hard to play.

Burma Shave

Both hands on the wheel
Eyes on the road
That's the skillful
Driver's code.

Burma Shave

The one who drives
When he's been drinking
Depends on you
To do his thinking.

Burma Shave

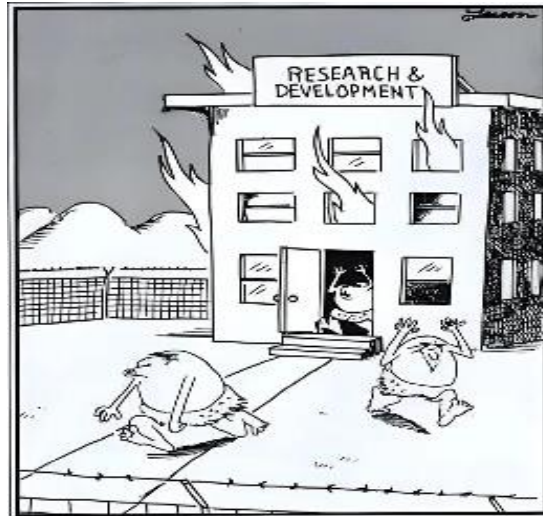
Car in ditch
Driver in tree
The moon was full
And so was he.

Burma Shave

Passing school zone
Take it slow
Let our little
Shavers grow.

Burma Shave

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Fire is invented.

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Study Alters Bonobos' Reputation as the 'Make Love not War' Ape



Male bonobos in Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve acted more aggressively than expected
(Credit: Maud Mougnot)

Although both bonobos and chimps both act aggressively to gain a mate, they each take a different approach to violence.

Male bonobos actually act more aggressively than male chimpanzees, but the way the two species uses violence or the threat of it differs dramatically, according to a [new study](#) in Current Biology.

<https://bit.ly/3Q5KAtP>

I suspect we haven't heard the last of this

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Chords & Riffs

Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989) in Moscow 1985



mubi.com

<https://youtu.be/Ad22A-mm8xM?t=2>

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Spring in Blossom Around the World



*People walk past a blooming cherry blossom tree at St James' Park in London, Britain March 7.
Reuters/Maja Smiejkowska*

Cherry trees bloom in springtime around the world

<https://bit.ly/3TOgDQk>

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A Comprehensive Guide to the Different Generations



Mary Long/ Istock

According to the [Pew Research Center](https://bit.ly/3TOgDQk), categorizing people into various generations provides a means of analyzing changes in perspectives over time. Global events, technological advances, and social shifts can influence how people see the world, particularly when those experiences take place during one's formative years.

<https://bit.ly/3xu0qYY>

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NASA Picks 3 Companies to Design Lunar Rover



*A concept of a Lunar Outpost moon rover.
(Image credit: Lunar Outpos*

Astronauts are expected to drive the Lunar Terrain Vehicle on the moon for the first time in 2030.

<https://bit.ly/3TOIT6h>

By the time EPA gets through adding its requirements it might not fit on the moon.

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You Will Never Be Able to Change a Man: By Monique Marvez



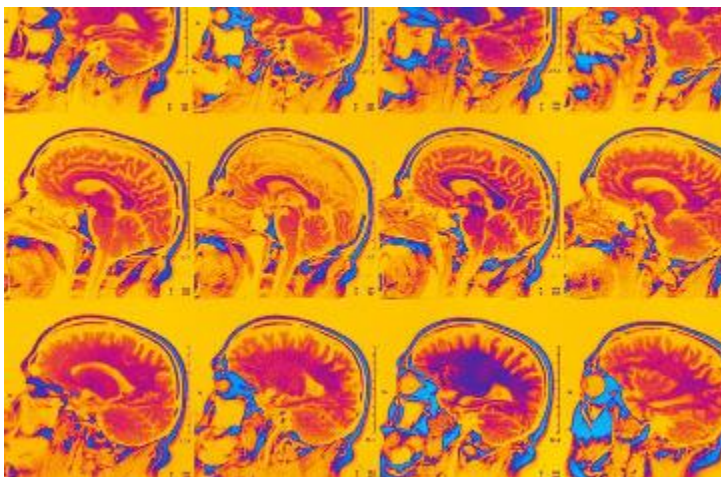
youtube

You will never be able to change a man, or at least that's what Monique Marvez says in this clip from her first ever Dry Bar Comedy special. In this clip Monique talks about the simplicity of men and why women will never be able to change them.

<https://youtu.be/UEh-RkzzV3Y>

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Human Brains Are Getting Bigger — What Does That Mean for Us?



dem10/ iStock

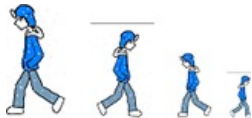
A recently published study found that the human brain is getting larger with time — research participants born in the 1970s had 6.6% larger brain volumes and nearly 15% larger brain surface areas compared to those born in the '30s. And the authors think that the size boost could be a contributing factor in the decreasing incidence of Alzheimer's disease.

"Larger brain structures like those observed in our study may reflect improved brain development and improved brain health," study lead Charles DeCarli said in a press release from the University of California, Davis. "A larger brain structure represents a larger brain reserve and may buffer the late-life effects of age-related brain diseases like Alzheimer's and related dementias."

The scientists collected their data from MRIs conducted on more than 3,200 people between 1999 and 2019. The increased brain size they observed may lead to an increased brain reserve that could reduce the risk of age-related dementia. Currently, cases of the disease are rising in number alongside America's aging population, but decreasing in terms of the incidence rate.

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My Walking Thoughts



For Sunday April 21 2024

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This week's ruminations began with this article in [Quanta Magazine...](#)

Insects and Other Animals Have Consciousness, Experts Declare

A group of prominent biologists and philosophers announced a new consensus: There's "a realistic possibility" that insects, octopuses, crustaceans, fish and other overlooked animals experience consciousness.

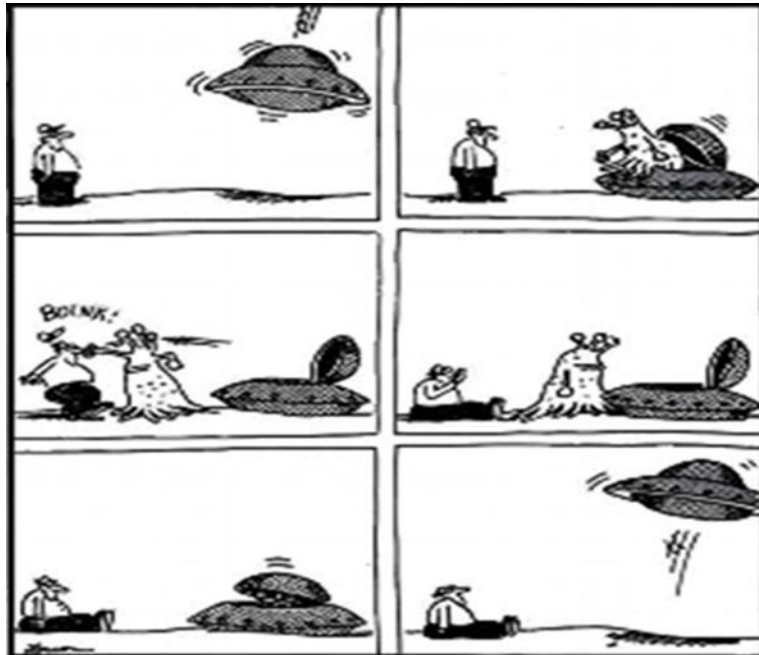
That led to:

My Conversations with Other Species

Walking across a broad hillside on Friday I encountered a very otherworldly-looking critter who seemed as interested in me as I in him (sorry if this offends you but I'm of an earlier age) so I sat down to satisfy both our curiosities.

After a bit it occurred to me that in a way our semi communion could just as well have been a meeting with an alien who just stepped out of an intergalactic Musk Mobile, both of us at a loss for what to do next.

"How do we communicate," I wondered, dismissing such silly thoughts as that my green and yellow fluff-covered buddy (I christened *Fluffy*) might rub his legs together to 'speak' English, or pop out silken ideographs from his spinnerets. Try as I might I seemed unable to find a way to engage him in any meaningful dialog. The issue for us both was the lack of anything approaching shared experience.



Still, I tried.

Mathematics, I thought, but how to phrase it in a way he might sense my purpose? "Well, her goes," I said aloud as I began by tapping the ground next to him in a line of expectancy;

dit dit dit...dah.....dit dit dit...dah.

I mean it worked for Beethoven didn't it? But after a minute when the attempt produced nothing more than scuffed up fingertips, I could tell this was not working on my companion.

"How about Pi?" which led me to trace 3.14 in front of him. Not so much as a wiggle or blink.

After a bit I changed tack, drawing a circle in the dirt. No go.

How about a square? Nope.

Divide it into a pair of triangles? Still nothing to show for my efforts but a sort of grin on my flummoxed audience's face...or maybe it was a grimace. It was hard to tell.

I was about to move on to a hexagram when *Fluffy* lost patience and bolted off into the undergrowth. My 'first contact' concluded with little headway other than the possible recognition that neither of us found it necessary to squash or blast the other into smithereens.

Walking farther along the hillside I sensed that communicating with genuine extraterrestrials--no matter how advanced their civilizations--would likely face greater challenges than mine with *Fluffy* because no matter how remote, he and I as Earthlings shared millions—perhaps trillions—bits of experience...materials, chemicals, habitat...yatta-yatta.

Later I came to a more positive vision of an alien encounter, thinking maybe NASA had it right in the first place putting a Chuck Berry song on Voyager's Gold Platter and waiting for an ET to respond.

You think?

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Thoughts Spawned by Robert Burns' "To A Mouse."

After tabling the alien conundrum for a century or two (it will take at least that much longer before our nearest neighbors know we're here and elect to organize a visit) I turned my thoughts to a pair of articles that caught my attention this week, both having to do with introducing mother nature to our superior intelligence. To wit...

Cloud Seeding in the Santa Ana River Watershed

Cloud seeding is a type of weather modification used to increase the amount of precipitation, including snow or rain, during the storm season. This process works through releasing particles of silver iodide into clouds, increasing the chances of droplet condensation.

According to a sample of experts, there are no unintended consequences.

Ditto the following:

Geoengineering Test Quietly Launches Salt Crystals into Atmosphere

A solar geoengineering experiment in San Francisco could lead to brighter clouds that reflect sunlight. The risks are numerous.

Unbeknownst to most people (including the people who live in the area) scientists have begun to conduct a secret experiment that involves shooting aerosols into the sky in the hope of preventing global warming.

I wish I had more faith in our technological achievements, but I can't help remembering USDA's introduction of Kudzu into the Southeastern US as a sure-fire erosion control measure as a poster child of the law of unintended consequences.

John Locke (1632-1704) may have been the first to formalize the law, but no one said it more persuasively than Robert Burns' "best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley," in his poem, "To a Mouse," (November 1785.)¹

Anyone wish to help put my concerns to rest?

¹ Oh hell, why not:

Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
 Wi' bickerin brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
 Wi' murd'ring pattle!

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!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou mayst 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!

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!

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.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee monie 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!

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!

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!

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