

BURNS NIGHT  
SOCIETY OF SCOTTISH LAWYERS  
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Reply from the Lassies  
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City of :London

My New Year's Resolution is to be submissive and sweet. In future **nothing** will be too much trouble. A new me will emerge which will stun you all.

My new nature will astonish all who know me. Any request will be met with a gentle radiant smile of sheer joy – to serve my men folk.

I will have the slippers ready; the wine chilled. The news papers will be ironed and in order. No more tearing out of the diet sheets. The Spectator will have been retrieved from the dustbin, and ready. When asked for the umpteenth time – where is my other sock? I will not snap back: "In your boss's bottom drawer."

Every day I will study carefully the 1950 High School home economics textbook and take note of its advice on how to be a Good Wife.

It says:"Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before to have a delicious meal ready – on time.

"This is a way of letting him know you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs.

It says: "Prepare yourself . Put a ribbon in your hair, and be fresh looking. His boring day may need a lift.

"Clear away the clutter. Clean up the children. Change the little girl's frock. Wipe their faces and brush their hair. They are little treasures.

Minimise all noise. Turn off the washer, dryer, dishwasher, or vacuum cleaner. Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in an easy chair, or suggest he lie down in the bedroom. Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low soft and pleasant voice. Let him talk first.

“Never complain if he does not take you out to dinner or other pleasant entertainment. Instead try to understand his world of strain.

“Don’t greet him with problems. Don’t complain if he is late for dinner. Count this as minor to what he might have gone through that day.”

It may be my dear Sisters that to be such a paragon of virtue may be damaging to my health. If I kept such subservience going beyond February, I might break out in spots. So, I have an alternative strategy – which at any rate might make US happier.

We could become revolutionaries. Let us abandon the ironing and the household chores, girls. Leave the supermarket to the men – and curl up with our books of Robbie Burns poetry.

It has to be said that my heart does a tumble when I read the Bard’s poems. A close study makes you understand why romantic hearted girls would read his poems by torchlight.

I admit they set me aquiver.

How can you fail to be stirred by the lines he wrote:

“I have taken her into my arms. I have given her a mahogany bed. I have given her a guinea, and I have \*\*\*\*\* her ‘till she rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

One poem is far too explicit for delicate male company. It ends with the line:

“And oh for the joys of a long winter night!!!”

My dearest menfolk. Take a lesson from this gorgeous man. Ignore the straightlaced. Take US on a flight of sheer passion. Go to the gym clubs, get fit, swing that golf club with greater verve, show us the stuff you are made of. Model yourselves on Robbie Burns. He was rakishly handsome with hair tie back with a bow.

Follow that man and you too will be writing poetry. As Burns wrote:”I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once headily in love, and then Rhyme and Song were, in a manner the spontaneous language of my head.”

To the enduring embarrassment of the Calvinist Scots, their most famous poet and literary hero used to claim he could write good verse only when in the throes of passion.

The Elders of his Kirk were mortified by his romantic energies and did all they could to thwart him – especially after he made his future wife Jean Armour pregnant. Their provincial snobbery and Kirk morality however did not dim this God of Love.

Robert Burns may have been somewhat carnal and enthusiastic but there was a side to him that was deeply tender and caring.

The most poignant and romantic episode in the entire Burns legend was when his eye fell on – Highland Mary.

The daughter of a sea-captain, Mary Campbell was a nursemaid when they met. The courtship was intense and romantic. In the spring of 1786 they exchanged not kisses but Bibles in an innocent-sounding ceremony and plighted their troth.

The lovers stood on each side of a small babbling brook, and washed their hands in the limpid stream.

But tragedy was to befall the happy go lucky bard for the first time in his life. Within six months Mary was dead, officially from fever, unofficially according to local gossip she died in childbirth.

Her untimely death caused Burns a lasting sorrow which he expressed in his saddest poems.

His first love was a servant girl, Elizabeth Paton by whom he had a child. By the time he had finished aged 37 he had broken many a heart.

˘ Burns however did not always have it his own way. Sisters you will be glad to know we sometimes did have the last word. Burns proposed to landowners daughter Peggy Chalmers, a cultured woman he had met in Edinburgh.

She turned him down. Gloomily he wrote to her, "My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind."

˘ How could she have turned away from the line;

"She has my heart, she has my hand...."

An intense relationship did however develop with Nancy McLehose or 'Clarinda' as she became known. Deserted by her husband, petite, delicate hands and feet – a soft and pleasing voice – and of somewhat voluptuous beauty – or as one person wrote, 'fluffy and bosomy'. Surely lessons to be learnt here.

They met over tea in Edinburgh. She being sharply intelligent was the lever for a game of amorous shuttlecock – letters passing passionately – sometimes two a day (80 still exist) (makes an email seem soulless)

Clarinda loved him for one 'who could love me with tenderness yet unmixed with selfishness....'

Alas she too suffered the same fate as the others. He tiptoed away shamelessly leaving Clarinda forlorn in her emotional wreckage.

So beware my dear Sisters. These glorious loving Gods are also fire to play with. May be our TV couch potato at home slavishly watching football is a safer bet.

I know that Burns would approve of the time honoured definition of the good Scots wife.

She should be ‘frugal in the kitchen, fervent in chapel and frantic in bed.’

However a letter the other day in the Scotsman gives the update of a Scots husband.

“He is now frantic in the kitchen, fervent in the chapel and frugal in bed.”

I doubt that Robbie Burns would have followed the example of my friend Hamish.

He took an overnight train from Edinburgh, but had failed to book a sleeper. He asked the attendant if one might be available.

The attendant said he would have a look. Returned and said, “That’s fine. There is a spare berth in Cabin No.7.”

Hamish goes along. Opens the door and finds a stunning blonde in her twenties wearing nothing but a flimsy negligee.

“Oh I am so sorry. I thought there was a spare berth here.”

She said,”That’s no problem. The top bunk is available – please feel free to use it.”

So he prepared himself for thenight. Climbed into the top bunk, puffed up the pillow and was just about to switch off the light, when a little voice said,

“I am so cold down here. Would you mind asking the attendant for a blanket for me?”

Hamish replied,”Better than that. Would you like to play at being married to me?”

Girl replied,”Oh yes please, that would be nice”

Hamish then said,”Right, you can now get your own ruddy blanket.”

A lesson to you girls. Never despair when the object of your dreams is perverse. Jean Armour who bore many children to Burns waited years before they finally married.

Finally the great day came, and in a letter he said of Jean, "I am so enamoured with a certain girl's prolific twin-bearing spirit that I have given her legal title to the best blood in my body – an so farewell Rakery."

There you have it.

A toast to Our Men – God Bless Every One of Them – and especially Robbie Burns.