

Robert Burns (1759-96)

2 *The Carle of Kellyburn Braes*

There lived a carle on Kellyburn braes

(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

And he had a wife was the plague o' his days;

And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

Ae day as the carle gaed up the lang glen

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(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

He met wi' the Devil; says, 'How do you fen?'

And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

'I've got a bad wife, sir; that 's a' my complaint'

(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

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'For, saving your presence, to her ye're a saint;'

And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

'It's neither your stot nor your staig I shall crave

(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

'But gie me your wife, man, for her I must have;'

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And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

'O welcome, most kindly,' the blythe carle said

(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

'But if ye can match her, ye're waur nor ye're ca'd;'

And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

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The Devil has got the auld wife on his back

(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

And, like a poor pedlar, he 's carried his pack;

And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

He 's carried her hame to his ain hallan-door 25
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),
Syne bade her gae in, for a bitch and a whore;
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

Then straight he makes fifty, the pick o' his band
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme), 30
Turn out on her guard in the clap of a hand;
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

The carlin gaed thro' them like ony wud bear
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),
Whae'er she gat hands on came near her nae mair; 35
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

A reekit wee Devil looks over the wa'
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),
'O, help, master, help, or she'll ruin us a';
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime. 40

The Devil he swore by the edge o' his knife
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),
He pitied the man that was tied to a wife;
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

The Devil he swore by the kirk and the bell 45
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),
He was not in wedlock, thank heav'n, but in hell;
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

Then Satan has travell'd again wi' his pack
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme), 50
And to her auld husband he 's carried her back;
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

'I hae been a Devil the feck o' my life'
(Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme),

'But ne'er was in hell, till I met wi' a wife'

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And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

1794

(From *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns*. Ed. J. Logie Robertson. Oxford UP, 1904)