

# **Sabbath Morn**

Robert Louis Stevenson



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# Sabbath Morn

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## Robert Louis Stevenson

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## A Lowden Sabbath Morn

I

THE clinkum—clank o' Sabbath bells  
Noo to the hoastin' rookery swells,  
Noo faintin' laigh in shady dells,  
Sounds far an' near,  
An' through the simmer kintry tells  
Its tale o' cheer.

II

An' noo, to that melodious play,  
A deidly awn the quiet sway—  
A' ken their solemn holiday,  
Bestial an' human,  
The singin' lintie on the brae,  
The restin' plou'man.

III

He, mair than a' the lave o' men,  
His week completit joys to ken;  
Half-dressed, he daunders out an' in,  
Perplext wi' leisure;  
An' his raxt limbs he'll rax again  
Wi' painfu' plesure.

IV

The steerin' mither strang afit  
Noo shoos the bairnies but a bit;  
Noo cries them ben, their Sindy shuit  
To scart upon them,  
Or sweeties in their pouch to pit,  
Wi' blessin's on them.

V

The lasses, clean frae tap to taes,  
Are busked in crunklin' underclaes;  
The gartened hose, the weel-filled stays,  
The nakit shift,  
A' bleached on bonny greens for days,  
An' white's the drift.

VI

An' noo to face the kirkward mile  
The guidman's hat o' dacent style,  
The blackit shoon, we noon maun fyle  
As white's the miller:  
A waefu' peety tae, to spile  
The warth o' siller.

VII

Our Marg'et, aye sae keen to crack,  
Douce–stappin' in the stoury track,  
Her emeralt gown a' kiltit back  
Frae snawy coats,  
White–ankled, leads the kirkward pack  
Wi' Dauvit Groats.

VIII

A thocht ahint, in runkled breeks,  
A' spiled wi' lyin' by for weeks,  
The guidman follows closs, an' cleiks  
The sonsie misses;  
His sarious face at aince bespeaks  
The day that this is.

IX

And aye an' while we nearer draw  
To whaur the kirkton lies alaw,  
Mair neebours, comin' saft an' slaw  
Frae here an' there,  
The thicker thrang the gate, an' caw  
The stour in air.

X

But hark! the bells frae nearer clang  
To rowst the slaw, their sides they bang  
An' see! black coats a'ready thrang  
The green kirkyaird;  
And at the yett, the chestnuts spang  
That brocht the laird.

XI

The solemn elders at the plate  
Stand drinkin' deep the pride o' state:  
The practised hands as gash an' great  
As Lords o' Session;

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The later named, a wee thing blate  
In their expression.

### XII

The prentit stanes that mark the deid,  
Wi' lengthened lip, the sarious read;  
Syne way a moraleesin' heid,  
An then an' there  
Their hirplin' practice an' their creed  
Try hard to square.

### XIII

It's here our Merren lang has lain,  
A wee bewast the table—stane;  
An' yon's the grave o' Sandy Blane;  
An' further ower,  
The mither's brithers, dacent men!  
Lie a' the fower.

### XIV

Here the guidman sall bide awee  
To dwell amang the deid; to see  
Auld faces clear in fancy's e'e;  
Belike to hear  
Auld voices fa'in saft an' slee  
On fancy's ear.

### XV

Thus, on the day o' solemn things,  
The bell that in the steeple swings  
To fauld a scaattered faim'ly rings  
Its walcome screed;  
An' just a wee thing nearer brings  
The quick an' deid.

### XVI

But noo the bell is ringin' in;  
To tak their places, folk begin;  
The minister himsel' will shune  
Be up the gate,  
Filled fu' wi' clavers about sin  
An' man's estate.

### XVII

The tunes are up—FRENCH, to be shure,

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The faithfu' FRENCH, an' twa–three mair;  
The auld presenter, hoastin' sair,  
Wales out the portions,  
An' yirks the tune into the air  
Wi' queer contortions.

### XVIII

Follows the prayer, the readin' next,  
An' than the fisslin' for the text—  
The twa–three last to find it, vext  
But kind o' proud;  
An' than the peppermints are raxed,  
An' southernwood.

### XIX

For noo's the time whan pows are seen  
Nid–noddin' like a mandareen;  
When tenty mithers stap a preen  
In sleepin' weans;  
An' nearly half the parochine  
Forget their pains.

### XX

There's just a waukrif' twa or three:  
Thrawn commentautors sweer to `gree,  
Weans glowrin' at the bumlin' bee  
On windie–glasses,  
Or lads that tak a keek a–glee  
At sonsie lasses.

### XXI

Himsel', meanwhile, frae whaur he cocks  
An' bobs below the soundin'–box,  
The treesures of his words unlocks  
Wi' prodigality,  
An' deals some unco dingin' knocks  
To infidelity.

### XXII

Wi' snappy unction, hoo he burkes  
The hopes o' men that trust in works,  
Expounds the fau'ts o' ither kirks,  
An' shaws the best o' them  
No muckle better than mere Turks,  
When a's confessed o' them.

XXIII

Bethankit! what a bonny creed!  
What mair would ony Christian need?—  
The braw words rumm'le ower his heid,  
Nor steer the sleeper;  
And in their restin' graves, the deid  
Sleep aye the deeper.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

It may be guessed by some that I had a certain parish in my eye, and this makes it proper I should add a word of disclamation. In my time there have been two ministers in that parish. Of the first I have a special reason to speak well, even had there been any to think ill. The second I have often met in private and long (in the due phrase) "sat under" in his church, and neither here nor there have I heard an unkind or ugly word upon his lips. The preacher of the text had thus no original in that particular parish; but when I was a boy he might have been observed in many others; he was then (like the schoolmaster) abroad; and by recent advices, it would seem he has not yet entirely disappeared.