

William Soutar

SCOTLAND

The Birthday

There were three men o' Scotland
Wha rade intill the nicht
Wi' nae müne lifted owre their crouns
Nor onie stern for licht:

Nane but the herryin' houlet
The broun mouse, and the taed,
Kent whan their horses clapper'd by
And whatna road they rade.

houlet - owl
taed - toad

Nae man spak to his brither,
Nor ruggit at the rein;
But drave straucht on owre burn and brae
Or half the nicht was gaen.

rug - tug
burn – stream; brae - hill

Nae man spak to his brither,
Nor lat his hand draw in;
But drave straucht on owre ford and fell
Or nicht was nearly düne.

There cam a flaucht o' levin
That brocht nae thunner ca'
But left ahint a lanely lowe
That wudna gang awa.

flaucht o' levin - lightning flash

And richt afore the horsemen,
Whaur grumly nicht had been,
Stüde a' the Grampian Mountains
Wi' the dark howes atween.

grumly-grim
howes - hollows

Up craigie cleuch and corrie
They rade wi' stany soun',
And saftly through the licted mirk
The switherin' snaw cam down.

mirk - darkness

They gaed by birk and rowan,
They gaed by pine and fir;
Aye on they gaed or nocht but snaw
And the roch whin was there.

birk - birch
roch - rough

Nae man brac'd back the bridle
Yet ilka fit stüde still
As thru the fichterin' floichan-drift
A beast cam down the hill.

floichan-drift - snowstorm

It steppit like a stallion,
Wha's heid hauds up a horn,
And weel the men o' Scotland kent
It was the unicorn.

It steppit like a stallion,
Snaw-white and siller-bricht,
And on its back there was a bairn
Wha low'd in his ain licht.

siller - silver

lowe - glow

As baith gaed by richt glegly
As day was at the daw;
And glisterin' owre hicht and howe
They saftly smool'd awa.

glegly - quickly

daw - dawn

hicht - height

smool - slip away

Nae man but socht his brither
And look't him in the een,
And sware that he wud gang a' gates
To cry what he had seen.

socht - sought

een - eyes

gang a' gates - travel all roads

There were three men o' Scotland
A' fraizit and forforn;
But on the Grampian Mountains
They saw the unicorn.

fraizit - astonished

forforn - tired

Scotland

Atween the world o' licht
And the world that is to be
A man wi' unco sicht
Sees whaur he canna see:

unco - unusual

Gangs whaur he canna walk:
Recks whaur he canna read:
Hauds what he canna tak:
Mells wi' the unborn dead.

reck - look closely

mell - mix

Atween the world o' licht
And the world that is to be
A man wi' unco sicht
Monie a saul maun see:

Sauls that are stark and nesh:
Sauls that wud dree the day:
Sauls that are fain for flesh
But canna win the wey.

nesh - sensitive

dree - endure

fain - craving

win the wey - find the way

Hae ye the unco sicht
That sees atween and atween
This world that lowes in licht:
Yon world that hasna been?

lowes - glows

It is owre late for fear,
Owre early for disclaim;
Whan ye come hameless here
And ken ye are at hame.