

THE ANNUITY

AIR—" *Duncan Davidson* "

I GAED to spend a week in Fife—
An unco week it proved to be—
For there I met a waesome wife
Lamentin' her viduity.
Her grief brak out sae fierce and fell,
I thought her heart wad burst its shell,
And—I was sae left to mysel'—
I sell't her an annuity.

The bargain lookit fair eneugh—
She just was turned o' saxty-three;
I couldna guessed she'd prove sae teugh,
By human ingenuity.
But years hae come, and years hae gane,
An' there she's yet as stieve's a stane—
The limmer's growin' young again,
Since she got her annuity.

She's crined awa' to bane an' skin,
But that it seems is nought to me;
She's like to live—although she's in
The last stage o' tenuity.
She munches wi' her wizened gums,
An' stumps about on legs o' thrums,
But comes—as sure as Christmas comes—
To ca' for her annuity.

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She jokes her joke, an' cracks her crack,
As spunkie as a growin' flea—
An' there she sits upon my back,
A livin' perpetuity.
She hurkles by her ingle side,
An' toasts an' tans her wrunkled hide—
Lord kens how lang she yet may bide
To ca' for her annuity!

I read the tables drawn wi' care
For an Insurance Company;
Her chance o' life was stated there,
Wi' perfect perspicuity.
But tables here or tables there,
She's lived ten years ayont her share,
An's like to live a dizzen mair,
To ca' for her annuity.

I gat the loon that drew the deed—
We spelled it o'er right carefully;—
In vain he yerked his souple head,
To find an ambiguity:
It's dated—tested—a' complete—
The proper stamp—nae word delete—
And diligence, as on decret,
May pass for her annuity.

Last Yule she had a fearfu' hoast—
I thought a kink might set me free:

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I led her out, 'mang snaw and frost,
Wi' constant assiduity.
But Deil ma' care—the blast gaed by,
And missed the auld anatomy;
It just cost me a tooth, forbye
Discharging her annuity.

I thought that grief might gar her quit—
Her only son was lost at sea—
But aff her wits behuved to flit,
An' leave her in fatuity!
She threeps, an' threeps, he's livin' yet,
For a' the tellin' she can get;
But catch the doited runt forget
To ca' for her annuity!

If there's a sough o' cholera
Or typhus—wha sae gleg as she?
She buys up baths, an' drugs, an' a',
In siccan superfluity!
She disna need—she's fever proof—
The pest gaed o'er her very roof;
She tauld me sae—an' then her loof
Held out for her annuity.

Ae day she fell—her arm she brak,—
A compound fracture as could be;
Nae Leech the cure wad undertak,
Whate'er was the gratuity.

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It's cured!—She handles't like a flail—
It does as weel in bits as hale;
But I'm a broken man mysel'
Wi' her and her annuity.

Her broozled flesh, and broken banes,
Are weel as flesh an' banes can be.
She beats the taeds that live in stanes,
An' fatten in vacuity!
They die when they're exposed to air—
They canna thole the atmosphere;
But her!—expose her onywhere—
She lives for her annuity.

If mortal means could nick her thread,
Sma' crime it wad appear to me;
Ca't murder—or ca't homicide—
I'd justify't,—an' do it tae.
But how to fell a withered wife
That's carved out o' the tree o' life—
The timmer limmer daurs the knife
To settle her annuity.

I'd try a shot.—But whar's the mark?—
Her vital parts are hid frae me;
Her backbane wanders through her sark
In an unkenn'd corkscrewity.

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She falsified—an' shakes her head
Sae fast about, ye scarce can see't;
It's past the power o' steel or lead
To settle her annuity.

She might be drowned;—but go she'll not
Within a mile o' loch or sea;—
Or hanged—if cord could grip a throat
O' siccan exiguity.
It's fitter far to hang the rope—
It draws out like a telescope;
'Twad tak a dreadfu' length o' drop
To settle her annuity.

Will puzion do't?—It has been tried;
But, be't in hash or fricassee,
That's just the dish she can't abide,
Whatever kind o' *goût* it hae.
It's needless to assail her doubts,—
She gangs by instinct—like the brutes—
An' only eats an' drinks what suits
Hersel' an' her annuity.

The Bible says the age o' man
Threescore an' ten perchance may be;
She's ninety-four;—let them wha can
Explain the incongruity.

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She should hae lived afore the Flood—
She's come o' Patriarchal blood—
She's some auld Pagan, mummified
 Alive for her annuity.

She's been embalmed inside and out—
 She's sauted to the last degree—
There's pickle in her very snout
 Sae caper-like an' cruetty;
Lot's wife was fresh compared to her;
They've kyanised the useless knir—
She canna decompose—nae mair
 Than her accursed annuity.

The water-drap wears out the rock
 As this eternal jaud wears me;
I could withstand the single shock,
 But no the continuity.
It's pay me here—an' pay me there—
An' pay me, pay me, evermair;
I'll gang demented wi' despair—
 I'm *charged* for her annuity!