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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOLLIE CHARANE, AND OTHER BALLADS

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MOLLIE CHARANE AND OTHER BALLADS

BY
GEORGE BORROW

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1913

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p. 4

MOLLIE CHARANE [5]

p. 5

“O, Mollie Charane, where got you your gold?”

Lone, lone you have left me here.

“O not in the curragh, deep under the mould.”

Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

“O, Mollie Charane, where got you your stock?”

Lone, lone you have left me here.

“O not in the curragh from under a block.”

Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

“O, Mollie Charane, where got you your goods?”

Lone, lone you have left me here.

“O not in the curragh from under two sods.”

Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

p. 6

Two pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes—

Lone, lone you have left me here—

For twenty-six years old Mollie did use.

Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

His stockings were white, but his sandals, alack!—

Lone, lone you have left me here—

Were not of one colour, one white, t’other black.

Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

One sandal was white and t’other dark brown—

Lone, lone you have left me here;—
But he'd two of one colour for kirk and for town.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

"O, father, I really can't walk by your side"—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
"If you go to the church in those sandals of hide."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

"O, daughter, my dear, if my brogues give you pain"—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
"There's that in the coffer will make you look fain."
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

A million of curses on Mollie Charane—
Lone, lone you have left me here—
The first who gave tocher to daughter in Man.
Lone, lone, and void of cheer.

p. 7

THE DANES OF YORE

p. 8

Well we know from saga
And from scaldic lore,
That heroic warriors
Were the Danes of yore.
That the noble schildings,
And the men they led,
Oft for Danish honour
Stoutly fought and bled.

What a time for Athelings,
What a time for thanes!
What a time for yeomen,
True devoted Danes!
But I'll say with pleasure
That, in ancient days,
Death did not annihilate
All that noble race.

Frederic see, exalted
On his father's throne,
Sits a splendid monarch,
Brighter never shone.
Long to him be granted
That of Grendel's kin
He may check the cruel
Cursed deeds of sin.

p. 9

And that long may flourish
Round about the King,
They who love gold treasures
All around to fling.
Lords, the first of heroes,
With their trenchant swords;
Counsellors held in honour,
For their golden words.

To the Lord of angels
Praise devout I'll sing,
That from out the grave-hill
'Twas my lot to bring
Golden dishes, goblets,
Things of mighty worth,
Which for thousand winters
Lay entombed in earth.

p. 10

That men in gold smithery
Cunning, might from them
For the grey haired hero
Frame a diadem.
Under which his grey locks
Might all glorious shine,
Whilst the sun, bright flaming,
Seeks the western brine.

Until, tired of glory,
Such as meets it here,
Soars the hero's spirit
To a higher sphere;
Where, with souls united
Of departed friends,
'Twill experience glory
Such as never ends.

A SURVEY OF DEATH

p. 11

My blood is freezing, my senses reel,
So horror stricken at heart I feel;
Thinking how like a fast stream we range
Nearer and nearer to that dread change,
When the body becomes so stark and cold,
And man doth crumble away to mould.

Boast not, proud maid, for the grave doth gape,
And strangely altered reflects thy shape;
No dainty charms it doth disclose,
Death will ravish thy beauty's rose;
And all the rest will leave to thee
When dug thy chilly grave shall be.

O, ye who are tripping the floor so light,
In delicate robes as the lily white,
Think of the fading funeral wreath,
The dying struggle, the sweat of death—
Think on the dismal death array,
When the pallid corse is consigned to clay!

p. 12

O, ye who in quest of riches roam,
Reflect that ashes ye must become;
And the wealth ye win will brightly shine
When buried are ye and all your line;
For your many chests of much loved gold
You'll nothing obtain but a little mould!

DESIDERABILIA VITÆ [13]

p. 13

Give me the haunch of a buck to eat,
And to drink Madeira old;
And a gentle wife to rest with,
And in my arms to fold.

An Arabic book to study,
A gipsy pony to ride;
And a house to live in shaded by trees,
Near to a river's side.

With such good things around me,
And with good health withal,
Though I should live for a hundred years
For death I would not call.

SAINT JACOB

p. 14

Saint Jacob he takes our blest Lord by the hand:
"I gladly would Christianize Garsia land."

"O how wilt thou bring it within Christian pale?
No ship hast thou here o'er the salt sea to sail."

"Thy power, O Lord, is so wondrously great,
Full quickly a ship Thou for me canst create."

“Saint Jacob, hie down to the salt ocean strand,
There standeth so little a stone by the land.”

Saint Jacob he taketh a book in his hand,
And down he proceeds to the salt ocean strand.

Saint Jacob he made o’er the stone the cross-mark,
From the land straight it floated, as though ’twere a bark.

p. 15

It rode o’er the billows so rapid and free,
Right, right towards Garsia promontoree.

So rapid the stone to glide thither began,
A hundred miles space in one short hour it ran.

In comes a foot-boy, to the King doffs his bonnet:
“Here cometh a stone, and a man sits upon it.”

A woman rushed in, in her eyes wonder shone:
“Here cometh a man, and he sits on a stone.”

King Garsia taketh his axe in his hand,
And down he proceeds to the salt ocean strand.

“Now hear thou, Saint Jacob, I say unto thee,
What hast thou in this land, in this land here with me?”

“Unto thee I am come to this land ’cross the brine,
Because that my Maker is greater than thine.”

p. 16

“O how can thy Maker be greater than mine?
Mine drinks every day the brown mead and the wine.”

“O then my Creator is greater than thine,
For mine can the water convert into wine.

“My Maker can turn the black mould into bread,
Can give life back to them who long, long have been dead.”

“If thou canst restore me my dearly loved son,
I’ll trust in thy Maker, and no other one.

“If I again view him, with flesh and hair dight,
As he fifteen years since disappeared from my sight;

“If I get him again both with hawk and with hound,
Just, just as he sank in the depths of the sound;

“With hair on his head, and with flesh on his bone,
As though he the pang of death never had known.”

p. 17

Then the blessed Saint Jacob upon his book pored:
“’Twill be no easy matter to get him restored.”

When he had stood reading a wee little time,
He raised up the man from hell’s sorrowful clime.

“Now again thou hast got him with flesh and hair dight,
As he fifteen years since disappeared from thy sight.

“Thou hast got him again, both with hawk and with hound,
Just, just as he sank in the ocean profound.

“With hair on his head, and with flesh on his bone,
As though he the pang of death never had known.”

“Now hear thou, my dear son, so fine and so fair,
What news from thy journey afar dost thou bear?”

p. 18

“The news which I bring from the far distant place,
Is that one little knows of the other’s hard case.

“There the woman, who’s hated the child of her womb,
Out of the snake-tower can ne’er hope to come.

“There the cruel step-mother, her child who has slain,
Goes begirt with a sword fraught with festering bane.

“The merchants who here in heaps money up-rake,
There hiss in the likeness of serpent and snake.

“The Sysselmen, wretches with hearts hard as stone,
There in the snake-tower despairingly moan.”

Now pay ye the heed that is fitting,
 Whilst I sing ye the Iran adventure;
 The pasha on sofa was sitting,
 Midst his harem's glorious centre.

Greek sang, and Tcherkass, for his pleasure,
 And Kergoosian captive is dancing;
 In the eyes of the first heaven's azure,
 In the others black Eblis is glancing.

But the pasha's attention is failing,
 O'er his visage his fair turban stealeth;
 From chebouk he sleep is inhaling,
 Whilst around him sweet vapours he dealeth.

What rumour without is there breeding?
 Ye fair ranks asunder why wend ye?
 Kyslar Aga, a strange captive leading,
 Cometh forward, and crieth "Efendy."

"Whose face has the power when present
 'Mong the stars round the divan which muster?
 Who amidst the gems of night's crescent
 Has the blaze of Aldeboran's lustre?"

p. 20

"Glance nearer, bright star! I have tiding,
 Glad tiding. Behold how in duty
 From far Lehistan the wind, gliding,
 Has brought this fresh tribute of beauty.

"In the padishaw's garden there bloometh
 In proud Istambul no such blossom;
 From the wintry regions she cometh,
 Whose memory so lives in thy bosom."

Then the gauzes removes he which shade her,
 At her beauty all wonder intensely;
 One moment the pasha surveyed her,
 Then, dropping his chebouk, without sense lay.

His turban has fallen from his forehead,
 To assist him the bystanders started.
 His mouth foams, his face blackens horrid,—
 See, the Renegade's soul has departed!

AN IMPROMPTU

And darest thou thyself compare
 With one who quaffs at Helicon;
 Whose playfellows the Muses are,
 And whom Apollo calleth son?
 Who, had he lived in olden day,
 With some fierce host had strode along;
 Like Taillefer to Hasting's fray,
 Cheering the Normans with his song.

The laurel wreath Apollo gave
 I would not change for kingly crown;
 A King is but an exalted slave,
 Rebellion soon may hurl him down.
 But who can force me from the height
 Whereto I've soared on Eagle's wing?
 I leave to Monarchs ceaseless fright
 For what the coming day may bring.

Though poor I be, I've Minstrelsy,
 When fortune frowns I'll strike my lyre;
 Against the world's inclemency
 'Twill warm my soul with heavenly fire.
 Then wonder not if proud the air
 Of one who's high Apollo's son;

p. 22

Nor henceforth dare thyself compare
With one who quaffs at Helicon.

A HYMN

p. 23

O Jesus, Thou Fountain of solace and gladness
Of Heaven's high Three second person divine;
Forgive, O forgive me my blindness and madness,
And guide to Thy kingdom this spirit of mine.

Dearly, O Jesus,
Thou boughtest me,
Yon Friday dark
Upon the tree.

Thy foes were numerous,
Fierce and fell;
Few and weak those
Who wished Thee well.

Nigh stood Thy mother,
Full of fears,
Wringing her hands
And bathed in tears.

Often, O Jesus,
Wilfully
With my great sins
I've tortured Thee.

Causing Thy wounds
To open again,
Waking anew
The ancient pain.

All the kindness
Thou hast display'd,
With black ingratitude
I've repaid.

But Jesus, Creator of earth and of ocean,
Who me, a vile sinner, so dearly didst buy;
My damnable ignorance turn to devotion,
And guide my poor soul to Thy courts in the sky.

p. 24

THE TRANSFORMED DAMSEL. [25]

p. 25

My father up of the country rode,
A maiden he would wed;
And a foul witch he married then,
If the whole truth be said.

The first night they together slept,
She was a mother kind to me;
But when the second night arrived,
A cruel stepmother was she.

I was seated at my father's board
With dogs and whelps amused;
Towards me striding my stepmother came,
And cruelly me she used.

She changed me to a little hind,
Bade me into the forest wend;
My seven maids then she changed to wolves,
And ordered them my flesh to rend.

But my seven maids would rend me not,
So dearly me they loved;
Then vexed sore my step-dame was,
That no worse my fortune proved.

p. 26

Sir Orm he serves in the King's palace,
A Knight is he so fair;
He sighs for the maiden day and night,
But in secret he keeps his care.

Sir Orm he rode from the King's palace,
He could enjoy no peace;
He rode into the good green wood,
The hart and hind to chase.

Sir Orm set his bow his knee before,
He rode to the hind so near;
But the hind would not from the sleuth-hounds flee,
For the Knight to her was dear.

But the hounds advanced to the hind so near,
That the hind was forced to fly;
She changed herself to a little bird,
And flew high up in the sky.

Anon down flew the little bird,
Perched a linden bough upon;
Sir Orm he stood there down below,
And sorely did he moan.

Down flew the lovely little bird,
And 'gan on the bait to feast,
Which out of his bosom Sir Orm had cut,
So well it pleased her taste.

And then the lovely little bird
Dropped down on the yellow sand,
And she became the fairest damsel,
Was ever seen in the land.

The Damsel stood under the linden bough,
Freed was she now from thrall;
Sir Orm he stood so near thereby,
They related their sorrows all.

"Many thanks to thee, Sir Orm the bold
Thou'st freed me from my woe;
Except beside my snow-white side
Thou sleep shalt nevermoe."

Thanks be to him, Sir Orm the bold
He kept his faith so well;
The Monday morn thereafter
His bridal it befell.

* * * * *

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Footnotes:

[5] This ballad is founded on a real character—a miser—who by various means acquired a considerable property, and was the first person who ever left "tocher," that is fortune, to daughter in Man. His name was Mollie Charane, which words interpreted are "Praise the Lord." He lived and possessed an estate on the curragh, a tract of boggy ground, formerly a forest, on the northern side of the island, between the mighty mountains of the Snefell range and the sea.

[13] Previously printed, with a slightly different text, and arranged in six lines instead of in three four-line stanzas, in *Lavengro*, 1851, Vol. i, p. 306.

[25] This Ballad should be compared with *The Cruel Step-dame*, printed in *The Serpent Knight and Other Ballads*, 1913, pp. 30-33. Also with *The Transformed Damsel*, printed in *The Return of the Dead and Other Ballads*, 1913, pp. 13-14.

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