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Volume 1, by Beverley Nichols**

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BALLADS — VOLUME 1 ***

A BOOK OF OLD BALLADS

Selected and with an Introduction

by

BEVERLEY NICHOLS

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OLD BALLADS

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Illustrated by

HMBROCK-RI



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The remainder of the ballads in this book, with the exception of "John Brown's Body", are from *Percy's Reliques*, Volumes I and II.

CONTENTS

[FOREWORD](#)

[MANDALAY](#)

THE FROLICKSOME DUKE

THE KNIGHT AND SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER

KING ESTMERE

KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY

BARBARA ALLEN'S CRUELTY

FAIR ROSAMOND

ROBIN HOOD AND GUY OF GISBORNE

THE BOY AND THE MANTLE

The source of these ballads will be found in the Appendix at the end of this book.

LIST OF COLOUR PLATES

[KING ESTMERE](#)
[BARBARA ALLEN'S CRUELTY](#)
[FAIR ROSAMOND](#)
[THE BOY AND THE MANTLE](#)

FOREWORD

By

Beverley Nichols

These poems are the very essence of the British spirit. They are, to literature, what the bloom of the heather is to the Scot, and the smell of the sea to the Englishman. All that is beautiful in the old word "patriotism" ... a word which, of late, has been twisted to such ignoble purposes ... is latent in these gay and full-blooded measures.

But it is not only for these reasons that they are so valuable to the modern spirit. It is rather for their tonic qualities that they should be prescribed in 1934. The post-war vintage of poetry is the thinnest and the most watery that England has ever produced. But here, in these ballads, are great draughts of poetry which have lost none of their sparkle and none of their bouquet.

It is worth while asking ourselves why this should be-- why these poems should "keep", apparently for ever, when the average modern poem turns sour overnight. And though all generalizations are dangerous I believe there is one which explains our problem, a very simple one.... namely, that the eyes of the old ballad-singers were turned outwards, while the eyes of the modern lyric-writer are turned inwards.

The authors of the old ballads wrote when the world was young, and

infinitely exciting, when nobody knew what mystery
might not lie on the
other side of the hill, when the moon was a golden
lamp, lit by a
personal God, when giants and monsters stalked,
without the slightest
doubt, in the valleys over the river. In such a world,
what could a man
do but stare about him, with bright eyes, searching the
horizon, while
his heart beat fast in the rhythm of a song?

But now--the mysteries have gone. We know, all too
well, what lies on
the other side of the hill. The scientists have long ago
puffed out,
scornfully, the golden lamp of the night ... leaving us in
the uttermost
darkness. The giants and the monsters have either
skulked away or have
been tamed, and are engaged in writing their memoirs
for the popular
press. And so, in a world where everything is known
(and nothing
understood), the modern lyric-writer wearily averts his
eyes, and stares
into his own heart.

That way madness lies. All madmen are ferocious
egotists, and so are all
modern lyric-writers. That is the first and most vital
difference
between these ballads and their modern counterparts.
The old
ballad-singers hardly ever used the first person
singular. The modern
lyric-writer hardly ever uses anything else.

II

This is really such an important point that it is worth
labouring.

Why is ballad-making a lost art? That it *is* a lost art
there can
be no question. Nobody who is painfully acquainted
with the rambling,
egotistical pieces of dreary versification, passing for
modern
"ballads", will deny it.

Ballad-making is a lost art for a very simple reason.
Which is, that we
are all, nowadays, too sicklied o'er with the pale cast of

thought to
receive emotions directly, without self-consciousness. If
we are
wounded, we are no longer able to sing a song about a
clean sword, and a
great cause, and a black enemy, and a waving flag. No--
we must needs go
into long descriptions of our pain, and abstruse
calculations about its
effect upon our souls.

It is not "we" who have changed. It is life that has
changed. "We" are
still men, with the same legs, arms and eyes as our
ancestors. But life
has so twisted things that there are no longer any clean
swords nor
great causes, nor black enemies. And the flags do not
know which way to
flutter, so contrary are the winds of the modern world.
All is doubt.
And doubt's colour is grey.

Grey is no colour for a ballad. Ballads are woven from
stuff of
primitive hue ... the red blood gushing, the gold sun
shining, the green
grass growing, the white snow falling. Never will you
find grey in a
ballad. You will find the black of the night and the
raven's wing,
and the silver of a thousand stars. You will find the blue
of many
summer skies. But you will not find grey.

III

That is why ballad-making is a lost art. Or almost a lost
art. For even
in this odd and musty world of phantoms which we call
the twentieth
century, there are times when a man finds himself in a
certain place at
a certain hour and something happens to him which
takes him out of
himself. And a song is born, simply and sweetly, a song
which other
men can sing, for all time, and forget themselves.

Such a song was once written by a master at my old
school, Marlborough.
He was a Scot. But he loved Marlborough with the sort
of love which the
old ballad-mongers must have had-the sort of love

which takes a man on
wings, far from his foolish little body.

He wrote a song called "The Scotch Marlburian".

Here it is:--

Oh Marlborough, she's a toun o' touns
We will say that and mair,
We that ha' walked along her douns
And snuffed her Wiltshire air.
A weary way ye'll hae to tramp
Afore ye match the green
O' Savernake and Barbery Camp
And a' that lies atween!

The infinite beauty of that phrase ... "and a' that lies
atween"! The
infinite beauty as it is roared by seven hundred young
throats in
unison! For in that phrase there drifts a whole pageant
of boyhood--the
sound of cheers as a race is run on a stormy day in
March, the tolling
of the Chapel bell, the crack of ball against bat, the
sighs of sleep
in a long white dormitory.

But you may say "What is all this to me? I wasn't at
Maryborough. I
don't like schoolboys ... they strike me as dirty, noisy,
and usually
foul-minded. Why should I go into raptures about such
a song, which
seems only to express a highly debatable approval of a
certain method of
education?"

If you are asking yourself that sort of question, you are
obviously in
very grave need of the tonic properties of this book.
For after you have
read it, you will wonder why you ever asked it.

IV

I go back and back to the same point, at the risk of
boring you to
distraction. For it is a point which has much more "to"
it than the
average modern will care to admit, unless he is forced
to do so.

You remember the generalization about the eyes ... how

they used to look
out, but now look *in*? Well, listen to this....

*I'm feeling blue,
I don't know what to do,
'Cos I love you
And you don't love me.*

The above masterpiece is, as far as I am aware, imaginary. But it represents a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of thousands of lyrics which have been echoing over the post-war world. Nearly all these lyrics are melancholy, with the profound and primitive melancholy of the negro swamp, and they are all violently egotistical.

Now this, in the long run, is an influence of far greater evil than one would be inclined at first to admit. If countless young men, every night, are to clasp countless young women to their bosoms, and rotate over countless dancing-floors, muttering "I'm feeling blue ... *I don't know what to do*", it is not unreasonable to suppose that they will subconsciously apply some of the lyric's mournful egotism to themselves.

Anybody who has even a nodding acquaintance with modern psychological science will be aware of the significance of "conditioning", as applied to the human temperament. The late M. Coué "conditioned" people into happiness by making them repeat, over and over again, the phrase "Every day in every way I grow better and better and better."

The modern lyric-monger exactly reverses M. Coué's doctrine. He makes the patient repeat "Every night, with all my might, I grow worse and worse and worse." Of course the "I" of the lyric-writer is an imaginary "I", but if any man sings "*I'm feeling blue*", often enough, to a catchy tune, he will be a superman if he does not eventually apply that "I" to himself.

But the "blueness" is really beside the point. It is the *egotism* of the modern ballad which is the trouble. Even when, as they

occasionally do, the modern lyric-writers discover, to their astonishment, that they are feeling happy, they make the happiness such a personal issue that half its tonic value is destroyed. It is not, like the old ballads, just an outburst of delight, a sudden rapture at the warmth of the sun, or the song of the birds, or the glint of moonlight on a sword, or the dew in a woman's eyes. It is not an emotion so sweet and soaring that self is left behind, like a dull chrysalis, while the butterfly of the spirit flutters free. No ... the chrysalis is never left behind, the "I", "I", "I", continues, in a maddening monotone. And we get this sort of thing...

*I want to be happy,
But I can't be happy
Till I've made you happy too.*

And that, if you please, is one of the jolliest lyrics of the last decade! That was a song which made us all smile and set all our feet dancing!

Even when their tale was woven out of the stuff of tragedy, the old ballads were not tarnished with such morbid speculations. Read the tale of the beggar's daughter of Bethnal Green. One shudders to think what a modern lyric-writer would make of it. We should all be in tears before the end of the first chorus.

But here, a lovely girl leaves her blind father to search for fortune. She has many adventures, and in the end, she marries a knight. The ballad ends with words of almost childish simplicity, but they are words which ring with the true tone of happiness:--

Thus was the feast ended with joye and delighte
A bridegroome most happy then was the young
knighte
In joy and felicitie long lived hee
All with his faire ladye, the pretty Bessee.

I said that the words were of almost childish simplicity. But the student of language, and the would-be writer, might do

worse than study
those words, if only to see how the cumulative effect of
brightness and
radiance is gained. You may think the words are
artless, but just
ponder, for a moment, the number of brilliant verbal
symbols which are
collected into that tiny verse. There are only four lines.
But those
lines contain these words ...

Feast, joy, delight, bridegroom, happy, joy, young,
felicity, fair,
pretty.

Is that quite so artless, after all? Is it not rather like an
old and
primitive plaque, where colour is piled on colour till
you would say
the very wood will burst into flame ... and yet, the total
effect is one
of happy simplicity?

V

How were the early ballads born? Who made them?
One man or many? Were
they written down, when they were still young, or was
it only after the
lapse of many generations, when their rhymes had
been sharpened and
their metres polished by constant repetition, that they
were finally
copied out?

To answer these questions would be one of the most
fascinating tasks
which the detective in letters could set himself. Grimm,
listening
in his fairyland, heard some of the earliest ballads,
loved them,
pondered on them, and suddenly startled the world by
announcing that
most ballads were not the work of a single author, but
of the people at
large. *Das Volk dichtet*, he said. And that phrase got
him into a
lot of trouble. People told him to get back to his
fairyland and not
make such ridiculous suggestions. For how, they asked,
could a whole
people make a poem? You might as well tell a thousand
men to make a
tune, limiting each of them to one note!

To invest Grimm's words with such an intention is quite unfair.

[Footnote: For a discussion of Grimm's theories, together with much interesting speculation on the origin of the ballads, the reader should study the admirable introduction to *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, published by George Harrap & Co., Ltd.] Obviously a multitude of people could not, deliberately, make a single poem any more than a multitude of people could, deliberately, make a single picture, one man doing the nose, one man an eye and so on. Such a suggestion is grotesque, and Grimm never meant it. If I might guess at what he meant, I would suggest that he was thinking that the origin of ballads must have been similar to the origin of the dance, (which was probably the earliest form of aesthetic expression known to man).

The dance was invented because it provided a means of prolonging ecstasy by art. It may have been an ecstasy of sex or an ecstasy of victory ... that doesn't matter. The point is that it gave to a group of people an ordered means of expressing their delight instead of just leaping about and making loud cries, like the animals. And you may be sure that as the primitive dance began, there was always some member of the tribe a little more agile than the rest--some man who kicked a little higher or wriggled his body in an amusing way. And the rest of them copied him, and incorporated his step into their own.

Apply this analogy to the origin of ballads. It fits perfectly.

There has been a successful raid, or a wedding, or some great deed of daring, or some other phenomenal thing, natural or supernatural. And now that this day, which will ever linger in their memories, is drawing to its close, the members of the tribe draw round the fire and begin to make merry. The wine passes ... and tongues are loosened. And someone says a phrase which has rhythm and a sparkle to it, and the phrase is

caught up and goes round the fire, and is repeated from mouth to mouth.

And then the local wit caps it with another phrase and a rhyme is born.

For there is always a local wit in every community, however primitive.

There is even a local wit in the monkey house at the zoo.

And once you have that single rhyme and that little piece of rhythm, you

have the genesis of the whole thing. It may not be worked out that

night, nor even by the men who first made it. The fire may long have

died before the ballad is completed, and tall trees may stand over the

men and women who were the first to tell the tale. But rhyme and rhythm

are indestructible, if they are based on reality. "Not marble nor the

gilded monuments of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme."

And so it is that some of the loveliest poems in the language will ever

remain anonymous. Needless to say, *all* the poems are not

anonymous. As society became more civilized it was inevitable that the

peculiar circumstances from which the earlier ballads sprang should

become less frequent. Nevertheless, about nearly all of the ballads

there is "a common touch", as though even the most self-conscious author

had drunk deep of the well of tradition, that sparkling well in which so

much beauty is distilled.

VI

But though the author or authors of most of the ballads may be lost in

the lists of time, we know a good deal about the minstrels who sang

them. And it is a happy thought that those minstrels were such

considerable persons, so honourably treated, so generously esteemed.

The modern mind, accustomed to think of the singer of popular songs

either as a highly paid music-hall artist, at the top of the ladder, or

a shivering street-singer, at the bottom of it, may find it difficult to

conceive of a minstrel as a sort of ambassador of song,

moving from
court to court with dignity and ceremony.

Yet this was actually the case. In the ballad of King Estmere, for example, we see the minstrel finely mounted, and accompanied by a harpist, who sings his songs for him. This minstrel, too, moves among kings without any ceremony. As Percy has pointed out, "The further we carry our enquiries back, the greater respect we find paid to the professors of poetry and music among all the Celtic and Gothic nations. Their character was deemed so sacred that under its sanction our famous King Alfred made no scruple to enter the Danish camp, and was at once admitted to the king's headquarters."

And even so late as the time of Froissart, we have minstrels and heralds mentioned together, as those who might securely go into an enemy's country.

The reader will perhaps forgive me if I harp back, once more, to our present day and age, in view of the quite astonishing change in national psychology which that revelation implies. Minstrels and heralds were once allowed safe conduct into the enemy's country, in time of war. Yet, in the last war, it was considered right and proper to hiss the work of Beethoven off the stage, and responsible newspapers seriously suggested that never again should a note of German music, of however great antiquity, be heard in England! We are supposed to have progressed towards internationalism, nowadays. Whereas, in reality, we have grown more and more frenziedly national. We are very far behind the age of Froissart, when there was a true internationalism--the internationalism of art.

To some of us that is still a very real internationalism. When we hear a Beethoven sonata we do not think of it as issuing from the brain of a "Teuton" but as blowing from the eternal heights of music whose winds

list nothing of frontiers.

Man *needs* song, for he is a singing animal. Moreover, he needs communal song, for he is a social animal. The military authorities realized this very cleverly, and they encouraged the troops, during the war, to sing on every possible occasion. Crazy pacifists, like myself, may find it almost unbearably bitter to think that on each side of various frontiers young men were being trained to sing themselves to death, in a struggle which was hideously impersonal, a struggle of machinery, in which the only winners were the armament manufacturers. And crazy pacifists might draw a very sharp line indeed between the songs which celebrated real personal struggles in the tiny wars of the past, and the songs which were merely the prelude to thousands of puzzled young men suddenly finding themselves choking in chlorine gas, in the wars of the present.

But even the craziest pacifist could not fail to be moved by some of the ballads of the last war. To me, "Tipperary" is still the most moving tune in the world. It happens to be a very good tune, from the musician's point of view, a tune that Handel would not have been ashamed to write, but that is not the point. Its emotional qualities are due to its associations. Perhaps that is how it has always been, with ballads. From the standard of pure aesthetics, one ought not to consider "associations" in judging a poem or a tune, but with a song like "Tipperary" you would be an inhuman prig if you didn't. We all have our "associations" with this particular tune. For me, it recalls a window in Hampstead, on a grey day in October 1914. I had been having the measles, and had not been allowed to go back to school. Then suddenly, down the street, that tune echoed. And they came marching, and marching, and marching. And they were all so happy.

So happy.

VII

"Tipperary" is a true ballad, which is why it is included in this book.

So is "John Brown's Body". They were not written as ballads but they have been promoted to that proud position by popular vote.

It will now be clear, from the foregoing remarks, that there are thousands of poems, labelled "ballads" from the eighteenth century, through the romantic movement, and onwards, which are not ballads at all. Swinburne's ballads, which so shocked our grandparents, bore about as much relation to the true ballads as a vase of wax fruit to a hawker's barrow. They were lovely patterns of words, woven like some exquisite, foaming lace, but they were Swinburne, Swinburne all the time. They had nothing to do with the common people. The common people would not have understood a word of them.

Ballads *must* be popular. And that is why it will always remain one of the weirdest paradoxes of literature that the only man, except Kipling, who has written a true ballad in the last fifty years is the man who despised the people, who shrank from them, and jeered at them, from his little gilded niche in Piccadilly. I refer, of course, to Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol." It was a true ballad, and it was the best thing he ever wrote. For it was written *de profundis*, when his hands were bloody with labour and his tortured spirit had been down to the level of the lowest, to the level of the pavement ... nay, lower ... to the gutter itself. And in the gutter, with agony, he learned the meaning of song.

Ballads begin and end with the people. You cannot escape that fact. And therefore, if I wished to collect the ballads of the future, the songs which will endure into the next century (if there *is* any

song in
the next century), I should not rake through the
contemporary poets, in
the hope of finding gems of lasting brilliance. No. I
should go to the
music-halls. I should listen to the sort of thing they sing
when the
faded lady with the high bust steps forward and shouts,
"Now then, boys,
all together!"

Unless you can write the words "Now then, boys, all
together", at the
top of a ballad, it is not really a ballad at all. That may
sound a
sweeping statement, but it is true.

In the present-day music-halls, although they have
fallen from their
high estate, we should find a number of these songs
which seem destined
for immortality. One of these is "Don't 'ave any more,
Mrs. Moore."

Do you remember it?

Don't 'ave any more, Mrs. Moore!
Mrs. Moore, oh don't 'ave any more!
Too many double gins
Give the ladies double chins,
So don't 'ave any more, Mrs. Moore!

The whole of English "low life" (which is much the most
exciting part of
English life) is in that lyric. It is as vivid as a
Rowlandson cartoon.
How well we know Mrs. Moore! How plainly we see her
... the amiable,
coarse-mouthed, generous-hearted tippler, with her
elbow on countless
counters, her damp coppers clutched in her rough
hands, her eyes
staring, a little vacantly, about her. Some may think it
is a sordid
picture, but I am sure that they cannot know Mrs.
Moore very well if
they think that. They cannot know her bitter struggles,
her silent
heroisms, nor her sardonic humour.

Lyrics such as these will, I believe, endure long after
many of the most
renowned and fashionable poets of to-day are
forgotten. They all have
the same quality, that they can be prefaced by that
inspiring sentence,
"Now then, boys--all together!" Or to put it another

way, as in the
ballad of George Barnwell,

All youths of fair England
That dwell both far and near,
Regard my story that I tell
And to my song give ear.

That may sound more dignified, but it amounts to the
same thing!

VIII

But if the generation to come will learn a great deal
from the few
popular ballads which we are still creating in our
music-halls, how much
more shall we learn of history from these ballads,
which rang through
the whole country, and were impregnated with the
spirit of a whole
people! These ballads *are* history, and as such they
should be
recognised.

It has always seemed to me that we teach history in the
wrong way. We
give boys the impression that it is an affair only of
kings and queens
and great statesmen, of generals and admirals, and
such-like bores.
Thousands of boys could probably draw you a map of
many pettifogging
little campaigns, with startling accuracy, but not one in
a thousand
could tell you what the private soldier carried in his
knapsack. You
could get sheaves of competent essays, from any
school, dealing with
such things as the Elizabethan ecclesiastical
settlement, but how many
boys could tell you, even vaguely, what an English
home was like, what
they ate, what coins were used, how their rooms were
lit, and what they
paid their servants?

In other words, how many history masters ever take
the trouble to sketch
in the great background, the life of the common
people? How many even
realize their *existence*, except on occasions of national
disaster, such as the Black Plague?

A proper study of the ballads would go a long way towards remedying this defect. Thomas Percy, whose *Reliques* must ever be the main source of our information on all questions connected with ballads, has pointed out that all the great events of the country have, sooner or later, found their way into the country's song-book. But it is not only the resounding names that are celebrated. In the ballads we hear the echoes of the street, the rude laughter and the pointed jests. Sometimes these ring so plainly that they need no explanation. At other times, we have to go to Percy or to some of his successors to realize the true significance of the song.

For example, the famous ballad "John Anderson my Jo" seems, at first sight, to be innocent of any polemical intention. But it was written during the Reformation when, as Percy dryly observes, "the Muses were deeply engaged in religious controversy." The zeal of the Scottish reformers was at its height, and this zeal found vent in many a pasquil discharged at Popery. It caused them, indeed, in their frenzy, to compose songs which were grossly licentious, and to sing these songs in rasping voices to the tunes of some of the most popular hymns in the Latin Service.

"John Anderson my Jo" was such a ballad composed for such an occasion. And Percy, who was more qualified than any other man to read between the lines, has pointed out that the first stanza contains a satirical allusion to the luxury of the popish clergy, while the second, which makes an apparently light reference to "seven bairns", is actually concerned with the seven sacraments, five of which were the spurious offspring of Mother Church.

Thus it was in a thousand cases. The ballads, even the lightest and most blossoming of them, were deep-rooted in the soil of English history. How different from anything that we possess to-day! Great

causes do not lead
men to song, nowadays they lead them to write letters
to the newspapers.

A national thanksgiving cannot call forth a single
rhyme or a single bar
of music. Who can remember a solitary verse of
thanksgiving, from any of
our poets, in commemoration of any of the victories of
the Great War?
Who can recall even a fragment of verse in praise of
the long-deferred
coming of Peace?

Very deeply significant is it that our only method of
commemorating
Armistice Day was by a two minutes silence. No song.
No music. Nothing.
The best thing we could do, we felt, was to keep quiet.

MANDALAY



By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the
sea,

There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o'
me;

For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells
they say:

'Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to
Mandalay!'

Come you back to Mandalay,

Where the old Flotilla lay:

Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to
Mandalay?

On the road to Mandalay,

Where the flyin'-fishes play,

An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crosst
the Bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat--jes' the same as
Theebaw's Queen,

An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin' white
cheroot,

An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:

Bloomin' idol made o' mud--

Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd--

Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er
where she stud!

On the road to Mandalay...

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was
droppin' slow,

She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing '*Kulla-lo-lo!*'

With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek agin my
cheek

We useter watch the steamers an' the *hathis* pilin'
teak.

Elephints a-pilin' teak

In the sludgy, squdgy creek,

Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was 'arf
afraid to speak!

On the road to Mandalay...

But that's all shove be'ind me--long ago an' fur away,

An' there ain't no 'busses runnin' from the Bank to
Mandalay;

An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year
soldier tells:

'If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed
naught

else.'

No! you won't 'eed nothin' else

But them spicy garlic smells,

An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the tinkly
temple-bells;

On the road to Mandalay...

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-
stones,

An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever in my
bones;

Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the
Strand,

An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they
understand?

Beefy face an' grubby 'and--

Law! wot do they understand?

I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener
land!

On the road to Mandalay ...

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is
like the worst,

Where there aren't no Ten Commandments an' a man
can raise a thirst;

For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that I
would be--

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea;
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when we went
to Mandalay!

O the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China
'crost the Bay!

THE FROLICKSOME DUKE

or

THE TINKER'S GOOD FORTUNE



Now as fame does report a young duke keeps a court,
One that pleases his fancy with frolicksome sport:
But amongst all the rest, here is one I protest,
Which will make you to smile when you hear the true
jest:

A poor tinker he found, lying drunk on the ground,
As secure in a sleep as if laid in a swoond.

The Duke said to his men, William, Richard, and Ben,
Take him home to my palace, we'll sport with him
then.

O'er a horse he was laid, and with care soon convey'd
To the palace, altho' he was poorly arrai'd:
Then they stript off his cloaths, both his shirt, shoes
and hose,
And they put him to bed for to take his repose.

Having pull'd off his shirt, which was all over durt,
They did give him clean holland, this was no great
hurt:

On a bed of soft down, like a lord of renown,
They did lay him to sleep the drink out of his crown.
In the morning when day, then admiring he lay,
For to see the rich chamber both gaudy and gay.

Now he lay something late, in his rich bed of state,
Till at last knights and squires they on him did wait;
And the chamberling bare, then did likewise declare,
He desired to know what apparel he'd ware:
The poor tinker amaz'd on the gentleman gaz'd,
And admired how he to this honour was rais'd.

Tho' he seem'd something mute, yet he chose a rich
suit,
Which he straitways put on without longer dispute;
With a star on his side, which the tinker oft ey'd,
And it seem'd for to swell him "no" little with pride;
For he said to himself, Where is Joan my sweet wife?
Sure she never did see me so fine in her life.

From a convenient place, the right duke his good
grace

Did observe his behaviour in every case.

To a garden of state, on the tinker they wait,

Trumpets sounding before him: thought he, this is
great:

Where an hour or two, pleasant walks he did view,
With commanders and squires in scarlet and blew.

A fine dinner was drest, both for him and his guests,
He was plac'd at the table above all the rest,
In a rich chair "or bed," lin'd with fine crimson red,
With a rich golden canopy over his head:
As he sat at his meat, the musick play'd sweet,
With the choicest of singing his joys to compleat.

While the tinker did dine, he had plenty of wine,
Rich canary with sherry and tent superfine.
Like a right honest soul, faith, he took off his bowl,
Till at last he began for to tumble and roul

From his chair to the floor, where he sleeping did
snore,

Being seven times drunker than ever before.

Then the duke did ordain, they should strip him
amain,

And restore him his old leather garments again:

'T was a point next the worst, yet perform it they
must,

And they carry'd him strait, where they found him at
first;

There he slept all the night, as indeed well he might;
But when he did waken, his joys took their flight.

For his glory "to him" so pleasant did seem,

That he thought it to be but a meer golden dream;
Till at length he was brought to the duke, where he
sought

For a pardon, as fearing he had set him at nought;
But his highness he said, Thou 'rt a jolly bold blade,
Such a frolick before I think never was plaid.

Then his highness bespoke him a new suit and cloak,
Which he gave for the sake of this frolicksome joak;
Nay, and five-hundred pound, with ten acres of
ground,

Thou shalt never, said he, range the counteries round,
Crying old brass to mend, for I'll be thy good friend,
Nay, and Joan thy sweet wife shall my duchess attend.

Then the tinker reply'd, What! must Joan my sweet
bride

Be a lady in chariots of pleasure to ride?
Must we have gold and land ev'ry day at command?
Then I shall be a squire I well understand:

Well I thank your good grace, and your love I
embrace,

I was never before in so happy a case.



THE KNIGHT & SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER



There was a shepherd's daughter
Came tripping on the waye;
And there by chance a knighte shee mett,
Which caused her to stayer.

Good morrowe to you, beauteous maide,
These words pronounced hee:
O I shall dye this daye, he sayd,
If Ive not my wille of thee.

The Lord forbid, the maide replyde,
That you shold waxe so wode!
"But for all that shee could do or saye,
He wold not be withstood."

Sith you have had your wille of mee,
And put me to open shame,
Now, if you are a courteous knighte,
Tell me what is your name?

Some do call mee Jacke, sweet heart,
And some do call mee Jille;
But when I come to the kings faire courte
They call me Wilfulle Wille.

He sett his foot into the stirrup,
And awaye then he did ride;
She tuckt her girdle about her middle,
And ranne close by his side.

But when she came to the brode water,
She sett her brest and swamme;
And when she was got out againe,
She tooke to her heels and ranne.

He never was the courteous knighte,
To saye, faire maide, will ye ride?
"And she was ever too loving a maide
To saye, sir knighte abide."

When she came to the kings faire courte,
She knocked at the ring;
So readye was the king himself
To let this faire maide in.

Now Christ you save, my gracious liege,
Now Christ you save and see,
You have a knighte within your courte,
This daye hath robbed mee.

What hath he robbed thee of, sweet heart?
Of purple or of pall?
Or hath he took thy gaye gold ring
From off thy finger small?

He hath not robbed mee, my liege,
Of purple nor of pall:
But he hath gotten my maiden head,
Which grieves mee worst of all.

Now if he be a batchelor,
His bodye He give to thee;
But if he be a married man,

High hanged he shall bee.

He called downe his merrye men all,
By one, by two, by three;
Sir William used to bee the first,
But nowe the last came hee.

He brought her downe full fortye pounce,
Tyed up withinne a glove:
Faire maide, He give the same to thee;
Go, seeke thee another love.

O Ile have none of your gold, she sayde,
Nor Ile have none of your fee;
But your faire bodye I must have,
The king hath granted mee.

Sir William ranne and fetched her then
Five hundred pound in golde,
Saying, faire maide, take this to thee,
Thy fault will never be tolde.

Tis not the gold that shall mee tempt,
These words then answered shee,
But your own bodye I must have,
The king hath granted mee.

Would I had dranke the water cleare,
When I did drinke the wine,
Rather than any shepherds brat
Shold bee a ladye of mine!

Would I had drank the puddle foule,
When I did drink the ale,
Rather than ever a shepherds brat
Shold tell me such a tale!

A shepherds brat even as I was,
You mote have let me bee,
I never had come to the kings faire courte,
To crave any love of thee.

He sett her on a milk-white steede,
And himself upon a graye;
He hung a bugle about his necke,
And soe they rode awaye.

But when they came unto the place,
Where marriage-rites were done,
She proved herself a dukes daughtèr,
And he but a squires sonne.

Now marrye me, or not, sir knight,
Your pleasure shall be free:
If you make me ladye of one good towne,
He make you lord of three.

Ah! cursed bee the gold, he sayd,

If thou hadst not been trewe,
I shold have forsaken my sweet love,
And have changed her for a newe.

And now their hearts being linked fast,
They joynd hand in hande:
Thus he had both purse, and person too,
And all at his commande.

KING ESTMERE





Hearken to me, gentlemen,
Come and you shall heare;
Ile tell you of two of the boldest brethren
That ever borne y-were.

The tone of them was Adler younge,
The tother was kyng Estmere;
The were as bolde men in their deeds,
As any were farr and neare.

As they were drinking ale and wine
Within kyng Estmeres halle:
When will ye marry a wyfe, brothèr,
A wyfe to glad us all?

Then bespake him kyng Estmere,
And answered him hastilee:
I know not that ladye in any land
That's able to marrye with mee.

Kyng Adland hath a daughter, brother,
Men call her bright and sheene;
If I were kyng here in your stead,
That ladye shold be my queene.

Saies, Reade me, reade me, deare brother,
Throughout merry England,
Where we might find a messenger
Betwixt us towe to sende.

Saies, You shal ryde yourselfe, brothèr,
Ile beare you companye;
Many throughe fals messengers are deceived,
And I feare lest soe shold wee.

Thus the renisht them to ryde
Of twoe good renisht steeds,
And when the came to kyng Adlands halle,
Of redd gold shone their weeds.

And when the came to kyng Adlands hall
Before the goodlye gate,
There they found good kyng Adlånd
Rearing himselfe theratt.

Now Christ thee save, good kyng Adland;
Now Christ you save and see.
Sayd, You be welcome, kyng Estmere,
Right hartilye to mee.

You have a daughter, said Adler younge,
Men call her bright and sheene,
My brother wold marrye her to his wiffe,
Of Englande to be queene.

Yesterday was att my deere daughter
Syr Bremor the kyng of Spayne;
And then she nicked him of naye,
And I doubt sheele do you the same.

The kyng of Spayne is a foule paynim,
And 'leeveth on Mahound;
And pitye it were that fayre ladye
Shold marrye a heathen hound.

But grant to me, sayes kyng Estmere,
For my love I you praye;
That I may see your daughter deere
Before I goe hence awaye.

Although itt is seven yeers and more
Since my daughter was in halle,
She shall come once downe for your sake

To glad my guestes alle.

Downe then came that mayden fayre,
With ladyes laced in pall,
And halfe a hundred of bold knightes,
To bring her from bowre to hall;
And as many gentle squiers,
To tend upon them all.

The talents of golde were on her head sette,
Hanged low downe to her knee;
And everye ring on her small fingèr
Shone of the chrystall free.

Saies, God you save, my deere madam;
Saies, God you save and see.
Said, You be welcome, kyng Estmere,
Right welcome unto mee.

And if you love me, as you saye,
Soe well and hartilye,
All that ever you are comin about
Sooner sped now itt shal bee.

Then bespake her father deare:
My daughter, I saye naye;
Remember well the kyng of Spayne,
What he sayd yesterday.

He wold pull downe my haies and castles,
And reeve me of my life.
I cannot blame him if he doe,
If I reave him of his wyfe.

Your castles and your towres, father,
Are stronglye built aboute;
And therefore of the king of Spaine
Wee neede not stande in doubt.

Plight me your troth, nowe, kyng Estmère,
By heaven and your righte hand,
That you will marrye me to your wyfe,
And make me queene of your land.

Then kyng Estmere he plight his troth
By heaven and his righte hand,
That he wolde marrye her to his wyfe,
And make her queene of his land.

And he tooke leave of that ladye fayre,
To goe to his owne countree,
To fetche him dukes and lordes and knightes,
That married the might bee.

They had not ridden scant a myle,
A myle forthe of the towne,
But in did come the kyng of Spayne,
With kempès many one.

But in did come the kyng of Spayne,
With manye a bold barone,
Tone day to marrye kyng Adlands daughter,
Tother daye to carrye her home.

Shee sent one after kyng Estmere
In all the spede might bee,
That he must either turne againe and fighte,
Or goe home and loose his ladye.

One whyle then the page he went,
Another while he ranne;
Tull he had oretaken king Estmere,
I wis, he never blanne.

Tydings, tydings, kyng Estmere!
What tydinges nowe, my boye?
O tydinges I can tell to you,
That will you sore annoye.

You had not ridden scant a mile,
A mile out of the towne,
But in did come the kyng of Spayne
With kempès many a one:

But in did come the kyng of Spayne
With manye a bold barone,
Tone daye to marrye king Adlands daughter,
Tother daye to carry her home.

My ladye fayre she greetes you well,
And ever-more well by mee:
You must either turne againe and fighte,
Or goe home and loose your ladyè.

Saies, Reade me, reade me, deere brother,
My reade shall ryde at thee,
Whether it is better to turne and fighte,
Or goe home and loose my ladye.

Now hearken to me, sayes Adler yonge,
And your reade must rise at me,
I quicklye will devise a waye
To sette thy ladye free.

My mother was a westerne woman,
And learned in gramaryè,
And when I learned at the schole,
Something she taught itt mee.

There growes an hearbe within this field,
And iff it were but knowne,
His color, which is whyte and redd,
It will make blacke and browne:

His color, which is browne and blacke,
Itt will make redd and whyte;
That sworde is not in all Englande,

Upon his coate will byte.

And you shall be a harper, brother,
Out of the north countrye;
And He be your boy, soe faine of fighte,
And beare your harpe by your knee.

And you shal be the best harpèr,
That ever tooke harpe in hand;
And I wil be the best singèr,
That ever sung in this lande.

Itt shal be written on our forheads
All and in grammaryè,
That we towe are the boldest men,
That are in all Christentyè.

And thus they renisht them to ryde,
On tow good renish steedes;
And when they came to king Adlands hall,
Of redd gold shone their weedes.

And whan they came to kyng Adlands hall,
Untill the fayre hall yate,
There they found a proud portèr
Rearing himselfe thereatt.

Sayes, Christ thee save, thou proud portèr;
Sayes, Christ thee save and see.
Nowe you be welcome, sayd the portèr,
Of whatsoever land ye bee.

Wee beene harpers, sayd Adler younge,
Come out of the northe countrye;
Wee beene come hither untill this place,
This proud weddinge for to see.

Sayd, And your color were white and redd,
As it is blacke and browne,
I wold saye king Estmere and his brother,
Were comen untill this towne.

Then they pulled out a ryng of gold,
Layd itt on the porters arme:
And ever we will thee, proud porter,
Thow wilt saye us no harme.

Sore he looked on king Estmere,
And sore he handled the ryng,
Then opened to them the fayre hall yates,
He lett for no kind of thyng.

King Estmere he stabled his steede
Soe fayre att the hall bord;
The froth, that came from his brydle bitte,
Light in kyng Bremors beard.

Saies, Stable thy steed, thou proud harper,

Saies, Stable him in the stalle;
It doth not beseeme a proud harper
To stable 'him' in a kyngs halle.

My ladde he is no lither, he said,
He will doe nought that's meete;
And is there any man in this hall
Were able him to beate

Thou speakst proud words, sayes the king of Spaine,
Thou harper, here to mee:
There is a man within this halle
Will beate thy ladd and thee.

O let that man come downe, he said,
A sight of him wold I see;
And when hee hath beaten well my ladd,
Then he shall beate of mee.

Downe then came the kemperye man,
And looketh him in the eare;
For all the gold, that was under heaven,
He durst not neigh him neare.

And how nowe, kempe, said the Kyng of Spaine,
And how what aileth thee?
He saies, It is writt in his forehead
All and in gramaryè,
That for all the gold that is under heaven
I dare not neigh him nye.

Then Kyng Estmere pulld forth his harpe,
And plaid a pretty thinge:
The ladye upstart from the borde,
And wold have gone from the king.

Stay thy harpe, thou proud harper,
For Gods love I pray thee,
For and thou playes as thou beginns,
Thou'lt till my bryde from mee.

He stroake upon his harpe againe,
And playd a pretty thinge;
The ladye lough a loud laughter,
As shee sate by the king.

Saies, Sell me thy harpe, thou proud harper,
And thy stringes all,
For as many gold nobles 'thou shall have'
As heere bee ringes in the hall.

What wold ye doe with my harpe,' he sayd,'
If I did sell itt yee?
"To playe my wiffe and me a fitt,
When abed together wee bee."

Now sell me, quoth hee, thy bryde soe gay,
As shee sitts by thy knee,

And as many gold nobles I will give,
As leaves been on a tree.

And what wold ye doe with my bryde soe gay,
Iff I did sell her thee?
More seemelye it is for her fayre bodye
To lye by mee then thee.

Hee played agayne both loud and shrille,
And Adler he did syng,
"O ladye, this is thy owne true love;
Noe harper, but a kyng.

"O ladye, this is thy owne true love,
As playnlye thou mayest see;
And He rid thee of that foule paynim,
Who partes thy love and thee."

The ladye looked, the ladye blushte,
And blushte and lookt agayne,
While Adler he hath drawne his brande,
And hath the Sowdan slayne.

Up then rose the kemperye men,
And loud they gan to crye:
Ah; traytors, yee have slayne our kyng,
And therefore yee shall dye.

Kyng Estmere threwe the harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand;
And Estmere he, and Adler yonge
Right stiffe in slodr can stand.

And aye their swordes soe sore can byte,
Throughe help of Gramaryè,
That soone they have slayne the kempery men,
Or forst them forth to flee.

Kyng Estmere took that fayre ladye,
And marryed her to his wiffe,
And brought her home to merry England
With her to leade his life.



KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY



An ancient story Ile tell you anon
Of a notable prince, that was called King John;
And he ruled England with maine and with might,
For he did great wrong, and maintein'd little right.

And Ile tell you a story, a story so merrye,
Concerning the Abbot of Canturbùrye;
How for his house-keeping, and high renowne,
They rode poste for him to fair London towne.

An hundred men, the king did heare say,
The abbot kept in his house every day;
And fifty golde chaynes, without any doubt,
In velvet coates waited the abbot about.

How now, father abbot, I heare it of thee,
Thou keepest a farre better house than mee,
And for thy house-keeping and high renowne,
I feare thou work'st treason against my crown.

My liege, quo' the abbot, I would it were knowne,
I never spend nothing, but what is my owne;
And I trust, your grace will doe me no deere,
For spending of my owne true-gotten geere.

Yes, yes, father abbot, thy fault it is highe,
And now for the same thou needest must dye;
For except thou canst answer me questions three,
Thy head shall be smitten from thy bodie.

And first, quo' the king, when I'm in this stead,
With my crowne of golde so faire on my head,
Among all my liege-men so noble of birthe,
Thou must tell me to one penny what I am worthe.

Secondlye, tell me, without any doubt,
How soone I may ride the whole world about.
And at the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell me here truly what I do think.

O, these are hard questions for my shallow witt,
Nor I cannot answer your grace as yet:
But if you will give me but three weekes space,
Ile do my endeavour to answer your grace.

Now three weeks space to thee will I give,
And that is the longest time thou hast to live;
For if thou dost not answer my questions three,
Thy lands and thy livings are forfeit to mee.

Away rode the abbot all sad at that word,
And he rode to Cambridge, and Oxenford;
But never a doctor there was so wise,
That could with his learning an answer devise.

Then home rode the abbot of comfort so cold,
And he mett his shepheard a going to fold:
How now, my lord abbot, you are welcome home;
What newes do you bring us from good King John?

"Sad newes, sad newes, shepheard, I must give;
That I have but three days more to live:
For if I do not answer him questions three,
My head will be smitten from my bodie.

The first is to tell him there in that stead,
With his crowne of golde so fair on his head,
Among all his liege men so noble of birth,
To within one penny of all what he is worth.

The seconde, to tell him, without any doubt,
How soon he may ride this whole world about:
And at the third question I must not shrinke,
But tell him there truly what he does thinke."

Now cheare up, sire abbot, did you never hear yet,
That a fool he may learn a wise man witt?
Lend me horse, and serving men, and your apparel,
And I'll ride to London to answeere your quarrel.

Nay frowne not, if it hath bin told unto mee,
I am like your lordship, as ever may bee:
And if you will but lend me your gowne,
There is none shall knowe us at fair London towne.

Now horses, and serving-men thou shalt have,
With sumptuous array most gallant and brave;
With crozier, and miter, and rochet, and cope,
Fit to appeare 'fore our fader the pope.

Now welcome, sire abbott, the king he did say,
'Tis well thou'rt come back to keep thy day;
For and if thou canst answer my questions three,
Thy life and thy living both saved shall bee.

And first, when thou seest me here in this stead,
With my crowne of gold so fair on my head,
Among all my liege-men so noble of birthe,

Tell me to one penny what I am worth.

"For thirty pence our Saviour was sold
Amonge the false Jewes, as I have bin told;
And twenty nine is the worth of thee,
For I thinke, thou art one penny worser than hee."

The king he laughed, and swore by St. Bittel,
I did not thinke I had been worth so littel!
--Now secondly tell me, without any doubt,
How soon I may ride this whole world about.

"You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,
Until the next morning he riseth againe;
And then your grace need not make any doubt,
But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about."

The king he laughed, and swore by St. Jone,
I did not think, it could be gone so soone!
--Now from the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell me here truly what I do thinke.

"Yea, that shall I do, and make your grace merry:
You thinke I'm the Abbot of Canterbùry;
But I'm his poor shepheard, as plain you may see,
That am come to beg pardon for him and for mee."

The king he laughed, and swore by the masse,
He make thee lord abbot this day in his place!
"Now naye, my liege, be not in such speede,
For alacke I can neither write ne reade."

Four nobles a weeke, then I will give thee,
For this merry jest thou hast showne unto mee;
And tell the old abbot, when thou comest home,
Thou hast brought him a pardon from good King John.

BARBARA ALLEN'S CRUELTY





Barbara Allen's Cruelty

In Scarlet towne where I was borne,
There was a faire maid dwellin,
Made every youth crye, Wel-awaye!
Her name was Barbara Allen.

All in the merrye month of May,
When greene buds they were swellin,
Yong Jemmye Grove on his death-bed lay,
For love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto her then,
To the town where shee was dwellin;
You must come to my master deare,
Giff your name be Barbara Alien.

For death is printed on his face,
And ore his harte is stealin:
Then haste away to comfort him,
O lovelye Barbara Alien.

Though death be printed on his face,
And ore his harte is stealin,
Yet little better shall he bee
For bonny Barbara Alien.

So slowly, slowly, she came up,
And slowly she came nye him;
And all she sayd, when there she came,
Yong man, I think y'are dying.

He turned his face unto her strait,
With deadlye sorrow sighing;
O lovelye maid, come pity mee,
Ime on my death-bed lying.

If on your death-bed you doe lye,
What needs the tale you are tellin;
I cannot keep you from your death;
Farewell, sayd Barbara Alien.

He turned his face unto the wall,
As deadlye pangs he fell in:
Adieu! adieu! adieu to you all,
Adieu to Barbara Allen.

As she was walking ore the fields,
She heard the bell a knellin;
And every stroke did seem to saye,
Unworthye Barbara Allen.

She turned her bodye round about,
And spied the corps a coming:
Laye down, lay down the corps, she sayd,
That I may look upon him.

With scornful eye she looked downe,
Her cheeke with laughter swellin;
Whilst all her friends cryd out amaine,
Unworthye Barbara Allen.

When he was dead, and laid in grave,
Her harte was struck with sorrowe,
O mother, mother, make my bed,
For I shall dye to-morrowe.

Hard-harted creature him to slight,
Who loved me so dearlye:
O that I had beene more kind to him
When he was alive and neare me!

She, on her death-bed as she laye,
Beg'd to be buried by him;
And sore repented of the daye,

That she did ere denye him.

Farewell, she sayd, ye virgins all,
And shun the fault I fell in:
Henceforth take warning by the fall
Of cruel Barbara Allen.

FAIR ROSAMOND





When as King Henry rulde this land,
The second of that name,
Besides the queene, he dearly lovde
A faire and comely dame.

Most peerlesse was her beautye founde,
Her favour, and her face;
A sweeter creature in this worlde
Could never prince embrace.

Her crisped lockes like threads of golde
Appeard to each mans sight;
Her sparkling eyes, like Orient pearles,
Did cast a heavenlye light.

The blood within her crystal cheekes
Did such a colour drive,
As though the lillye and the rose
For mastership did strive.

Yea Rosamonde, fair Rosamonde,
Her name was called so,
To whom our queene, dame Ellinor,
Was known a deadlye foe.

The king therefore, for her defence,
Against the furious queene,
At Woodstocke builded such a bower,
The like was never scene.

Most curiously that bower was built
Of stone and timber strong,
An hundred and fifty doors
Did to this bower belong:

And they so cunninglye contriv'd
With turnings round about,
That none but with a clue of thread,
Could enter in or out.

And for his love and ladyes sake,
That was so faire and brighte,
The keeping of this bower he gave
Unto a valiant knighte.

But fortune, that doth often frowne
Where she before did smile,
The kinges delighte and ladyes so
Full soon shee did beguile:

For why, the kinges ungracious sonne,
Whom he did high advance,
Against his father raised warres
Within the realme of France.

But yet before our comelye king
The English land forsooke,
Of Rosamond, his lady faire,
His farewell thus he tooke:

"My Rosamonde, my only Rose,
That pleasest best mine eye:
The fairest flower in all the worlde
To feed my fantasye:

The flower of mine affected heart,
Whose sweetness doth excelle:
My royal Rose, a thousand times
I bid thee nowe farewell!

For I must leave my fairest flower,
My sweetest Rose, a space,
And cross the seas to famous France,

Proud rebelles to abase.

But yet, my Rose, be sure thou shalt
My coming shortlye see,
And in my heart, when hence I am,
Ile beare my Rose with mee."

When Rosamond, that ladye brighte,
Did heare the king saye soe,
The sorrowe of her grieved heart
Her outward lookes did showe;

And from her cleare and crystall eyes
The teares gusht out apace,
Which like the silver-pearled dewe
Ranne downe her comely face.

Her lippes, erst like the corall redde,
Did waxe both wan and pale,
And for the sorrow she conceivde
Her vitall spirits faile;

And falling down all in a swoone
Before King Henryes face,
Full oft he in his princelye armes
Her bodye did embrace:

And twentye times, with watery eyes,
He kist her tender cheeke,
Untill he had revivde againe
Her senses milde and meeke.

Why grieves my Rose, my sweetest Rose?
The king did often say.
Because, quoth shee, to bloodye warres
My lord must part awaye.

But since your grace on forrayne coastes
Amonge your foes unkinde
Must goe to hazard life and limbe,
Why should I staye behinde?

Nay rather, let me, like a page,
Your sworde and target beare;
That on my breast the blowes may lighte,
Which would offend you there.

Or lett mee, in your royal tent,
Prepare your bed at nighte,
And with sweete baths refresh your grace,
Ar your returne from fighte.

So I your presence may enjoye
No toil I will refuse;
But wanting you, my life is death;
Nay, death Ild rather chuse!

"Content thy self, my dearest love;

Thy rest at home shall bee
In Englandes sweet and pleasant isle;
For travell fits not thee.

Faire ladies brooke not bloodye warres;
Soft peace their sexe delights;
Not rugged campes, but courtlye bowers;
Gay feastes, not cruell fights.'

My Rose shall safely here abide,
With musicke passe the daye;
Whilst I, amonge the piercing pikes,
My foes seeke far awaye.

My Rose shall shine in pearle, and golde,
Whilst I in armour dighte;
Gay galliards here my love shall dance,
Whilst I my foes goe fighte.

And you, Sir Thomas, whom I truste
To bee my loves defence;
Be careful of my gallant Rose
When I am parted hence."

And therewithall he fetcht a sigh,
As though his heart would breake:
And Rosamonde, for very grief,
Not one plaine word could speake.

And at their parting well they mighte
In heart be grieved sore:
After that daye faire Rosamonde
The king did see no more.

For when his grace had past the seas,
And into France was gone;
With envious heart, Queene Ellinor,
To Woodstocke came anone.

And forth she calls this trustye knighte,
In an unhappy houre;
Who with his clue of twined thread,
Came from this famous bower.

And when that they had wounded him,
The queene this thread did gette,
And went where Ladye Rosamonde
Was like an angell sette.

But when the queene with stedfast eye
Beheld her beauteous face,
She was amazed in her minde
At her exceeding grace.

Cast off from thee those robes, she said,
That riche and costlye bee;
And drinke thou up this deadlye draught,
Which I have brought to thee.

Then presently upon her knees
Sweet Rosamonde did fall;
And pardon of the queene she crav'd
For her offences all.

"Take pittie on my youthfull yeares,"
Faire Rosamonde did crye;
"And lett mee not with poison stronge
Enforced bee to dye.

I will renounce my sinfull life,
And in some cloyster bide;
Or else be banisht, if you please,
To range the world soe wide.

And for the fault which I have done,
Though I was forc'd thereto,
Preserve my life, and punish mee
As you thinke meet to doe."

And with these words, her lillie handes
She wrunge full often there;
And downe along her lovely face
Did trickle many a teare.

But nothing could this furious queene
Therewith appeased bee;
The cup of deadlye poyson stronge,
As she knelt on her knee,

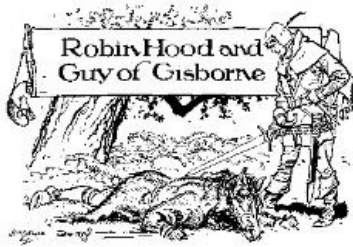
Shee gave this comelye dame to drinke;
Who tooke it in her hand,
And from her bended knee arose,
And on her feet did stand:

And casting up her eyes to heaven,
She did for mercye calle;
And drinking up the poison stronge,
Her life she lost withalle.

And when that death through everye limbe
Had showde its greatest spite,
Her chieffest foes did plaine confesse
Shee was a glorious wight.

Her body then they did entomb,
When life was fled away,
At Godstowe, neare to Oxford towne,
As may be scene this day.

ROBIN HOOD AND GUY OF GISBORNE



When shaws beene sheene, and shradds full fayre,
And leaves both large and longe,
Itt is merrye walking in the fayre forrest
To heare the small birdes songe.

The woodweele sang, and wold not cease,
Sitting upon the spraye,
Soe lowde, he wakened Robin Hood,
In the greenwood where he lay.

Now by my faye, sayd jollye Robin,
A sweaven I had this night;
I dreamt me of tow wighty yemen,
That fast with me can fight.

Methought they did mee beate and binde,
And tooke my bow mee froe;
If I be Robin alive in this lande,
He be wroken on them towe.

Sweavens are swift, Master, quoth John,
As the wind that blowes ore a hill;
For if itt be never so loude this night,
To-morrow itt may be still.

Buske yee, bowne yee, my merry men all,
And John shall goe with mee,
For Ile goe seeke yond wight yeomen,
In greenwood where the bee.

Then the cast on their gownes of grene,
And tooke theyr bowes each one;
And they away to the greene forrest
A shooting forth are gone;

Until they came to the merry greenwood,
Where they had gladdest bee,
There were the ware of a wight yeoman,
His body leaned to a tree.

A sword and a dagger he wore by his side,
Of manye a man the bane;

And he was clad in his capull hyde
Topp and tayll and mayne.

Stand you still, master, quoth Litle John,
Under this tree so grene,
And I will go to yond wight yeoman
To know what he doth meane.

Ah! John, by me thou settest noe store,
And that I farley finde:
How offt send I my men beffore
And tarry my selfe behinde?

It is no cunning a knave to ken,
And a man but heare him speake;
And itt were not for bursting of my bowe.
John, I thy head wold breake.

As often wordes they breeden bale,
So they parted Robin and John;
And John is gone to Barnesdale;
The gates he knoweth eche one.

But when he came to Barnesdale,
Great heavinesse there hee hadd,
For he found tow of his owne fellòwes
Were slaine both in a slade.

And Scarlette he was flyinge a-foote
Fast over stocke and stone,
For the sheriffe with seven score men
Fast after him is gone.

One shoote now I will shoote, quoth John,
With Christ his might and mayne:
Ile make yond fellow that flyes soe fast,
To stopp he shall be fayne.

Then John bent up his long bende-bowe,
And fetteled him to shoote:
The bow was made of a tender boughe,
And fell down to his foote.

Woe worth, woe worth thee, wicked wood,
That ere thou grew on a tree;
For now this day thou art my bale,
My boote when thou shold bee.

His shoote it was but loosely shott,
Yet flewe not the arrowe in vaine,
For itt mett one of the sheriffes men,
Good William a Trent was slaine.

It had bene better of William a Trent
To have bene abed with sorrowe,
Than to be that day in the green wood slade
To meet with Little Johns arrowe.

But as it is said, when men be mett
Fyve can doe more than three,
The sheriffe hath taken little John,
And bound him fast to a tree.

Thou shalt be drawn by dale and downe,
And hanged hie on a hill.
But thou mayst fayle of thy purpose, quoth John,
If itt be Christ his will.

Let us leave talking of Little John,
And thinke of Robin Hood,
How he is gone to the wight yeoman,
Where under the leaves he stood.

Good morrowe, good fellowe, sayd Robin so fayre,
Good morrowe, good fellow, quoth he:
Methinkes by this bowe thou beares in thy hande
A good archere thou sholdst bee.

I am wilfull of my waye, quo' the yeman,
And of my morning tyde.
He lead thee through the wood, sayd Robin;
Good fellow, He be thy guide.

I seeke an outlawe, the straunger sayd,
Men call him Robin Hood;
Rather Ild meet with that proud outlawe,
Than fortye pound so good.

Now come with me, thou wighty yeman,
And Robin thou soone shalt see:
But first let us some pastime find
Under the greenwood tree.

First let us some masterye make
Among the woods so even,
Wee may chance to meet with Robin Hood
Here att some unsett steven.

They cut them downe two summer shroggs,
That grew both under a breere,
And sett them threescore rood in twaine
To shoot the prickes y-fere:

Lead on, good fellowe, quoth Robin Hood,
Lead on, I doe bidd thee.
Nay by my faith, good fellowe, hee sayd,
My leader thou shalt bee.

The first time Robin shot at the pricke,
He mist but an inch it froe:
The yeoman he was an archer good,
But he cold never shoote soe.

The second shoote had the wightye yeman,
He shote within the garlände:
But Robin he shott far better than hee,

For he clave the good pricke wand.

A blessing upon thy heart, he sayd;
Good fellowe, thy shooting is goode;
For an thy hart be as good as thy hand,
Thou wert better then Robin Hoode.

Now tell me thy name, good fellowe, sayd he,
Under the leaves of lyne.
Nay by my faith, quoth bolde Robin,
Till thou have told me thine.

I dwell by dale and downe, quoth hee,
And Robin to take I me sworne;
And when I am called by my right name
I am Guye of good Gisborne.

My dwelling is in this wood, sayes Robin,
By thee I set right nought:
I am Robin Hood of Barnèsdale,
Whom thou so long hast sought.

He that hath neither beene kithe nor kin,
Might have scene a full fayre sight,
To see how together these yeomen went
With blades both browne and bright.

To see how these yeomen together they fought
Two howres of a summers day:
Yet neither Robin Hood nor Sir Guy
Them fettled to flye away.

Robin was reachles on a roote,
And stumbled at that tyde;
And Guy was quick and nimble with-all,
And hitt him ore the left side.

Ah deere Lady, sayd Robin Hood, 'thou
That art both mother and may,'
I think it was never mans destinye
To dye before his day.

Robin thought on our ladye deere,
And soone leapt up againe,
And strait he came with a 'backward' stroke,
And he Sir Guy hath slayne.

He took Sir Guys head by the hayre,
And sticked itt on his bowes end:
Thou hast beene a traytor all thy liffe,
Which thing must have an ende.

Robin pulled forth an Irish kniffe,
And nicked Sir Guy in the face,
That he was never on woman born,
Cold tell whose head it was.

Saies, Lye there, lye there, now Sir Guye,

And with me be not wrothe,
If thou have had the worst stroked at my hand,
Thou shalt have the better clothe.

Robin did off his gowne of greene,
And on Sir Guy did it throwe,
And hee put on that capull hyde,
That cladd him topp to toe.

The bowe, the arrowes, and litle home,
Now with me I will beare;
For I will away to Barnesdale,
To see how my men doe fare.

Robin Hood sett Guyes horne to his mouth.
And a loud blast in it did blow.
That beheard the sheriffe of Nottingham,
As he leaned under a lowe.

Hearken, hearken, sayd the sheriffe,
I heare now tydings good,
For yonder I heare Sir Guyes horne blowe,
And he hath slaine Robin Hoode.

Yonder I heare Sir Guyes home blowe,
Itt blowes soe well in tyde,
And yonder comes that wightye yeoman,
Cladd in his capull hyde.

Come hyther, come hyther, thou good Sir Guy,
Aske what thou wilt of mee.
O I will none of thy gold, sayd Robin,
Nor I will none of thy fee:

But now I have slaine the master, he sayes,
Let me go strike the knave;
This is all the rewarde I aske;
Nor noe other will I have.

Thou art a madman, said the sheriffe,
Thou sholdest have had a knights fee:
But seeing thy asking hath beene soe bad,
Well granted it shale be.

When Litle John heard his master speake,
Well knewe he it was his steven:
Now shall I be looset, quoth Litle John,
With Christ his might in heaven.

Fast Robin hee hyed him to Litle John,
He thought to loose him belive;
The sheriffe and all his companye
Fast after him did drive.
Stand abacke, stand abacke, sayd Robin;
Why draw you mee soe neere?
Itt was never the use in our countrye,
Ones shrift another shold heere.

But Robin pulled forth an Irysh kniffe,
And losed John hand and foote,
And gave him Sir Guyes bow into his hand,
And bade it be his boote.

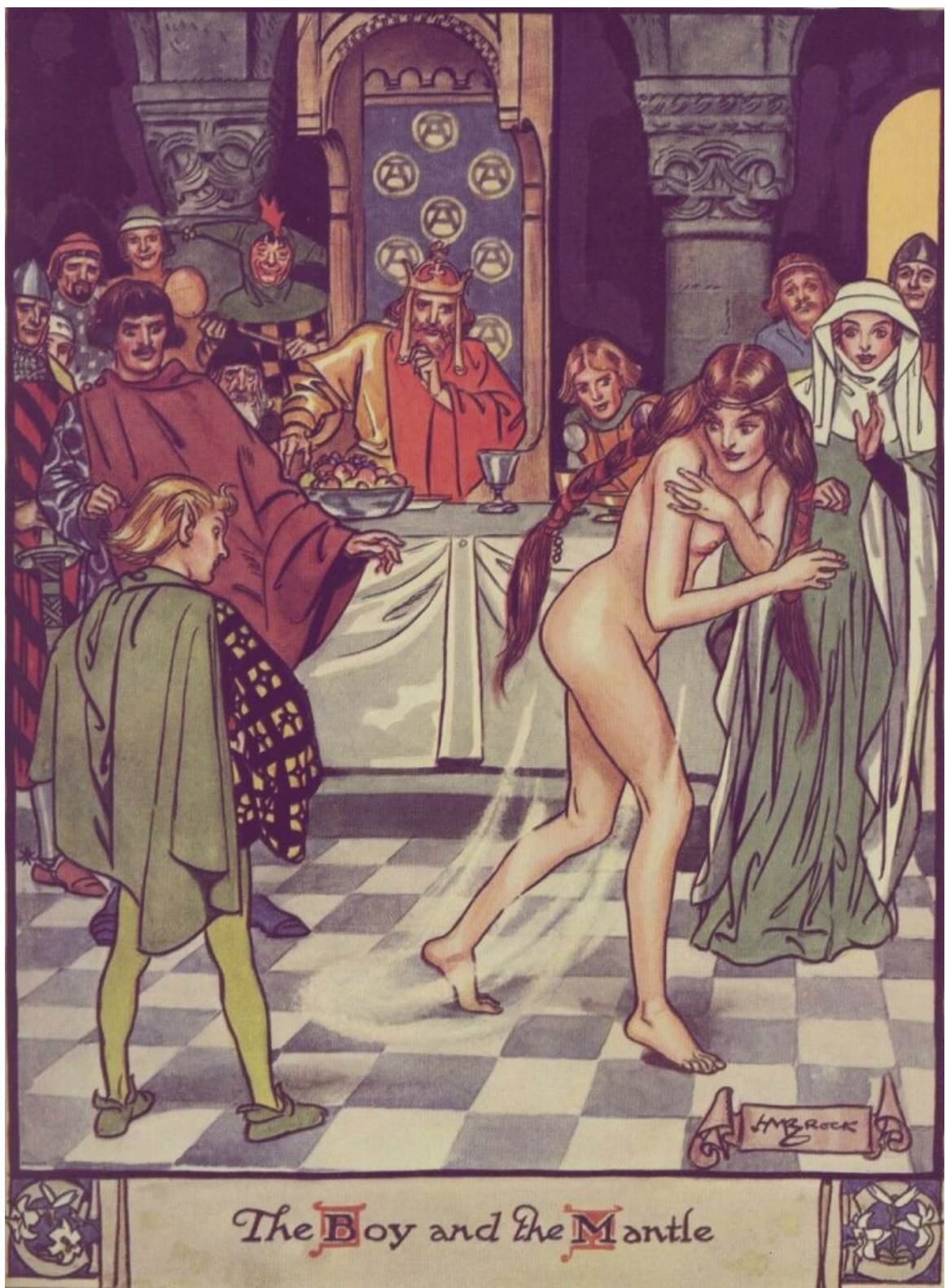
Then John he took Guyes bow in his hand,
His boltes and arrowes eche one:
When the sheriffe saw Little John bend his bow,
He fettled him to be gone.

Towards his house in Nottingham towne
He fled full fast away;
And soe did all his companye:
Not one behind wold stay.

But he cold neither runne soe fast,
Nor away soe fast cold ryde,
But Litle John with an arrowe soe broad
He shott him into the 'back'-syde.

THE BOY & THE MANTLE





The Boy and the Mantle

In Carleile dwelt King Arthur,
A prince of passing might;
And there maintain'd his table round,
Beset with many a knight.

And there he kept his Christmas
With mirth and princely cheare,
When, lo! a straunge and cunning boy
Before him did appear.

A kirtle and a mantle
This boy had him upon,
With brooches, rings, and owches,
Full daintily bedone.

He had a sarke of silk
About his middle meet;
And thus, with seemely curtesy,
He did King Arthur greet.

"God speed thee, brave King Arthur,
Thus feasting in thy bowre;
And Guenever thy goodly queen,
That fair and peerlesse flowre.

"Ye gallant lords, and lordings,
I wish you all take heed,
Lest, what ye deem a blooming rose,
Should prove a cankred weed."

Then straitway from his bosome
A little wand he drew;
And with it eke a mantle
Of wondrous shape and hew.

"Now have you here, King Arthur,
Have this here of mee,
And give unto thy comely queen,
All-shapen as you see.

"No wife it shall become,
That once hath been to blame."
Then every knight in Arthur's court
Slye glaunced at his dame.

And first came Lady Guenever,
The mantle she must trye.
This dame, she was new-fangled,
And of a roving eye.

When she had tane the mantle,
And all was with it cladde,
From top to toe it shiver'd down,
As tho' with sheers beshradde.

One while it was too long,
Another while too short,
And wrinkled on her shoulders
In most unseemly sort.

Now green, now red it seemed,
Then all of sable hue.
"Beshrew me," quoth King Arthur,
"I think thou beest not true."

Down she threw the mantle,
Ne longer would not stay;
But, storming like a fury,
To her chamber flung away.

She curst the whoreson weaver,
That had the mantle wrought:
And doubly curst the froward impe,

Who thither had it brought.

"I had rather live in desarts
Beneath the green-wood tree;
Than here, base king, among thy groomes,
The sport of them and thee."

Sir Kay call'd forth his lady,
And bade her to come near:
"Yet, dame, if thou be guilty,
I pray thee now forbear."

This lady, pertly gigling,
With forward step came on,
And boldly to the little boy
With fearless face is gone.

When she had tane the mantle,
With purpose for to wear;
It shrunk up to her shoulder,
And left her b--- side bare.

Then every merry knight,
That was in Arthur's court,
Gib'd, and laught, and flouted,
To see that pleasant sport.

Downe she threw the mantle,
No longer bold or gay,
But with a face all pale and wan,
To her chamber slunk away.

Then forth came an old knight,
A pattering o'er his creed;
And proffer'd to the little boy
Five nobles to his meed;

"And all the time of Christmass
Plumb-porridge shall be thine,
If thou wilt let my lady fair
Within the mantle shine."

A saint his lady seemed,
With step demure and slow,
And gravely to the mantle
With mincing pace doth goe.

When she the same had taken,
That was so fine and thin,
It shrivell'd all about her,
And show'd her dainty skin.

Ah! little did HER mincing,
Or HIS long prayers bestead;
She had no more hung on her,
Than a tassel and a thread.

Down she threwe the mantle,

With terror and dismay,
And, with a face of scarlet,
To her chamber hyed away.

Sir Cradock call'd his lady,
And bade her to come neare:
"Come, win this mantle, lady,
And do me credit here.

"Come, win this mantle, lady,
For now it shall be thine,
If thou hast never done amiss,
Sith first I made thee mine."

The lady, gently blushing,
With modest grace came on,
And now to trye the wondrous charm
Courageously is gone.

When she had tane the mantle,
And put it on her backe,
About the hem it seemed
To wrinkle and to cracke.

"Lye still," shee cryed, "O mantle!
And shame me not for nought,
I'll freely own whate'er amiss,
Or blameful I have wrought.

"Once I kist Sir Cradocke
Beneathe the green-wood tree:
Once I kist Sir Cradocke's mouth
Before he married mee."

When thus she had her shriven,
And her worst fault had told,
The mantle soon became her
Right comely as it shold.

Most rich and fair of colour,
Like gold it glittering shone:
And much the knights in Arthur's court
Admir'd her every one.

Then towards King Arthur's table
The boy he turn'd his eye:
Where stood a boar's head garnished
With bayes and rosemarye.

When thrice he o'er the boar's head
His little wand had drawne,
Quoth he, "There's never a cuckold's knife
Can carve this head of brawne."

Then some their whittles rubbed
On whetstone, and on hone:
Some threwe them under the table,
And swore that they had none.

Sir Cradock had a little knife,
Of steel and iron made;
And in an instant thro' the skull
He thrust the shining blade.

He thrust the shining blade
Full easily and fast;
And every knight in Arthur's court
A morsel had to taste.

The boy brought forth a horne,
All golden was the rim:
Saith he, "No cuckolde ever can
Set mouth unto the brim.

"No cuckold can this little horne
Lift fairly to his head;
But or on this, or that side,
He shall the liquor shed."

Some shed it on their shoulder,
Some shed it on their thigh;
And hee that could not hit his mouth,
Was sure to hit his eye.

Thus he, that was a cuckold,
Was known of every man:
But Cradock lifted easily,
And wan the golden can.

Thus boar's head, horn and mantle,
Were this fair couple's meed:
And all such constant lovers,
God send them well to speed.

Then down in rage came Guenever,
And thus could spiteful say,
"Sir Cradock's wife most wrongfully
Hath borne the prize away.

"See yonder shameless woman,
That makes herselfe so clean:
Yet from her pillow taken
Thrice five gallants have been.

"Priests, clarkes, and wedded men,
Have her lewd pillow prest:
Yet she the wonderous prize forsooth
Must beare from all the rest."

Then bespake the little boy,
Who had the same in hold:
"Chastize thy wife, King Arthur,
Of speech she is too bold:

"Of speech she is too bold,
Of carriage all too free;
Sir King, she hath within thy hall

A cuckold made of thee.

"All frolick light and wanton
She hath her carriage borne:
And given thee for a kingly crown
To wear a cuckold's horne."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BOOK OF OLD
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