

THE
CELEBRATED BALLAD

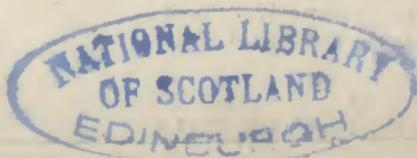
OF THE
LASS OF FAIR WONE;

OR, THE
PARSON'S DAUGHTER BETRAYED.



BRECHIN:
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THE LASS OF FAIR WONE.

BESIDE the parson's bower of yew
Why strays a troubled spright,
That peaks and pines, and dimly shines
Thro' curtains of the night?

Why steals along the pond of toads
A gliding fire so blue,
That lights a spot where grows no grass,
Where falls no rain nor dew?

The parson's daughter once was good,
And gentle as the dove,
And young and fair,—and many came
To win the damsel's love.

High o'er the hamlet, from the hill,
Beyond the winding stream,
The windows of a stately house
In sheen of evening gleam.

There dwelt, in riot, rout, and roar,
A lord so frank and free;
That oft, with inward joy of heart,
The maid beheld his glee.

Whether he met the dawning day,
In hunting trim so fine,
Or tapers, sparkling from his hall,
Beshone the midnight wine.

He sent the maid his picture, girt
 With diamond, pearl, and gold ;
 And silken paper, sweet with musk,
 This gentle message told :

“ Let go thy sweethearts, one and all ;
 “ Shalt thou be basely woo’d,
 “ That worthy art to gain the heart,
 “ Of youths of noble blood ?

“ The tale I would to thee bewray,
 “ In secret must be said—
 “ At midnight hour I’ll seek thy bower
 “ Fair lass be not afraid.

“ And when the amorous nightingale
 “ Sings sweetly to his mate,
 “ I’ll pipe my quailcall from the field :
 “ Be kind, nor make me wait.”

In cap and mantle clad he came,
 At night, with lonely tread ;
 Unseen, and silent as the mist,
 And hush’d the dogs with bread.

And when the amorous nightingale
 Sung sweetly to his mate,
 She heard his quailcall in the field,
 And, ah ! ne’er made him wait.

The words he whisper’d were so soft,
 They won her ear and heart—
 How soon will she, who loves, believe !
 How deep a lover’s art !

No lure, no soothing guise, he spar’d,
 To banish virtuous shame ;

He call'd on holy God above,
As witness to his flame.

He clasp'd her to his breast, and swore
To be for ever true :

“ O yield thee to my wishful arms,
“ Thy choice thou shalt not rue.”

And while she strove, he drew her on,
And led her to the bower

So still, so dim—and round about
Sweet smelt the beans in flower.

There beat her heart, and heav'd her breast,
And pleaded every sense ;

And there the glowing breath of lust
Did blast her innocence.

But when the fragrant beans began
Their fallow blooms to shed,

Her sparkling eyes their lustre lost ;
Her cheek its roses fled :

And when she saw the pods increase,
The ruddier cherries stain,

She felt her silken robe grow tight,
Her waist new weight sustain.

And when the mowers went afield,
The yellow corn to ted,

She felt her burden stir within,
And shook with tender dread.

And when the winds of autumn hist
Along the stubble field ;

Then could the damsel's piteous plight
No longer be conceal'd.

Her sire, a harsh and angry man,
 With furious voice revil'd:
 "Hence from my sight! I'll none of thee—
 "I harbour not thy child."
 And fast, amid her fluttering hair,
 With clenched fist he gripes,
 And seiz'd a leathern thong, and lash'd
 Her side with sounding stripes.
 Her lily skin, so soft and white,
 He ribb'd with bloody wales;
 And thrust her out, tho' black the night,
 Tho' sleet and storm assails.
 Up the harsh rock, on flinty paths,
 The maiden had to roam;
 On tottering feet she grop'd her way,
 And sought her lover's home.
 "A mother, thou hast made of me,
 "Before thou mad'st a wife;
 "For this, upon my tender breast,
 "These livid stripes are rife.
 "Behold!" And then, with bitter sobs,
 She sunk upon the floor—
 "Make good the evil thou hast wrought;
 "My injur'd name restore."
 "Poor soul! I'll have thee hous'd and nurs'd,
 "Thy terrors I lament;
 "Stay here; we'll have some further talk—
 "The old one shall repent."
 "I have no time to rest and wait;
 "That saves not my good name:

- " If thou with honest soul hast sworn,
 " O leave me not to shame ;
- " But at the holy altar be
 " Our union sanctified ;
- " Before the people and the priest
 " Receive me for thy bride."
- Unequal matches must not blot
 ' The honors of my line :
- Art thou of wealth or rank for me,
 ' To harbour thee as mine ?
- What's fit and fair I'll do for thee—
 ' Shalt yet retain my love—
- Shalt wed my huntsman—and we'll then
 ' Our former transports prove.'
- " Thy wicked soul, hard hearted man,
 " May pangs in hell await !
- " Sure, if not suited for thy bride,
 " I was not for thy mate.
- " Go, seek a spouse of nobler blood,
 " Nor God's just judgments dread—
- " So shall, ere long, some base born wretch
 " Defile thy marriage bed.
- " Then, traitor, feel how wretched they
 " In hopeless shame immerst ;
- " Then smite thy forehead on the wall,
 " While horrid curses burst.
- " Roll thy dry eyes in wild despair—
 " Unsooth'd thy grinning woe ;
- " Thro' thy pale temples fire the ball,
 " And sink to fiends below."

Collected, then, she started up,
 And thro' the hissing sleet.
 Thro' thorn and brier, thro' flood and mire,
 She fled with bleeding feet.

"Where now," she cried, "my gracious God!
 "What refuge have I left?"
 And reach'd the garden of her home,
 Of hope in man bereft.

On hand and foot she feebly crawl'd
 Beneath the bow'r unblest;
 Where withering leaves and gathering snow,
 Prepar'd her only rest.

There rending pains and darting throes
 Assail'd her shuddering frame;
 And from her womb a lovely boy,
 With wail and weeping came.

Forth from her hair a silver pin
 With hasty hand she drew,
 And prest against its tender heart—
 And the sweet babe she slew.

Whene'er the act of blood was done,
 Her soul its guilt abhorr'd;
 "My Jesus! what has been my deed?
 "Have mercy on me, Lord!"

With bloody nails, beside the pond,
 Its shallow grave she tore;
 "There rest in God—there shame and want
 "Thou can'st not suffer more:"

"Me vengeance waits. My poor, poor child,
 "Thy wound shall bleed afresh,

“ When ravens from the gallows tear
 “ Thy mother’s mould’ring flesh.”—

Hard by the bower her gibbet stands :

Her skull is still to show ;

It seems to eye the barren grave,

Three spans in length below.

That is the spot where grows no grass ;

Where falls no rain or dew ;

Whence steals along the pond of toads

A hovering fire so blue.

And nightly when the ravens come,

Her ghost is seen to glide ;

Pursues and tries to quench the flame,

And pines the pool beside.

FINIS.