

## MEDIEVAL BALLADS

### The Three Ravens

There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
 Downe a downe, hay downe, hay downe  
 There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
 With a downe  
 There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
 They were as blacke as they might be.  
 With a downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe

The one of them said to his mate,  
 "Where shall we our bradefast take?"

"Downe in yonder greene field,  
 There lies a knight slain under his shield.

"His hounds they lie downe at his feete,  
 So well they can their master keepe.

"His haukes they flie so eagerly,  
 There's no fowle dare him to come nie."

Downe there come a fallow doe,  
 As great with young as she might goe.

She lift up his boudy hed,  
 And kist his wounds that were so red.

She got him up upon her backe,  
 And carried him to earthen lake.

She buried him before the prime,  
 She was dead herselfe ere even-song time.

God send every gentleman,  
 Such haukes, such hounds, and such a leman.

### Who is at my Window Weeping?

Who is at my window weeping,  
 Weeping there so bitterly?  
 "It's I, it's I, your own true loved one  
 Arise, arise and pity me."

"Darling, go and ask your mother  
 If thou my wedding bride will be

If she says no, return and tell me.  
No longer will I trouble thee."

"How can I go and ask my mother  
For I'm her only child and dear?  
Oh, darling, go and seek some other,"  
She softly whispered in his ear.

"Darling, go and ask your father  
If thou my wedding bride will be  
If he says no, return and tell me.  
No longer will I trouble thee."

"My father's on his bed a-sleeping  
With a shining sword placed on his breast  
All for to slay my own true loved one,  
To slay the lad that I love best."

Then William took the shining sword  
And pierced it through his aching heart  
"Adieu, adieu to all false loved ones.  
Adieu, adieu, we both shall part."

Then Mary took the blood-stained sword  
And pierced it through her lily white breast.  
"Adieu, adieu to my cruel parents.  
Adieu, adieu, we both shall rest."

### **Lord Randal**

"O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son!  
And where ha you been, my handsome young man!"  
"I ha been at the greenwood; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"An wha met ye there, Lord Randal, my son?  
An wha met you there, my handsome young man?"  
"O I met wi my true-love; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"And what did she give you, Lord Randal, my son?  
And what did she give you, my handsome young man?"  
"Eels fried in a pan; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"And wha gat your leavins, Lord Randal, my son?  
And wha gat your leavins, my handsome young man?"  
"My hawks and my hounds; mother, mak my bed soon,

For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"And what becam of them, Lord Randal, my son?  
And what becam of them, my handsome young man?"  
"They stretched their legs out and died; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down."

"O I fear you are poisoned, Lord Randal, my son!  
I fear you are poisoned, my handsome young man!"  
"O yes, I am poisoned; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down."

### **Fair Margaret and Sweet William**

As it fell out on a long summer's day,  
Two lovers they sat on a hill;  
They sat together that long summer's day,  
And could not talk their fill.

"I see no harm by you, Margarèt,  
And you see none by mee;  
Before to-morrow at eight o' the clock  
A rich wedding you shall see."

Fair Margaret sat in her bower-window,  
Combing her yellow hair;  
There she spyed sweet William and his bride,  
As they were a riding near.

Then down she layd her ivory combe,  
And braided her hair in twain:  
She went alive out of her bower,  
But ne'er came alive in't again.

When day was gone, and night was come,  
And all men fast asleep,  
Then came the spirit of Fair Marg'ret,  
And stood at William's feet.

"Are you awake, sweet William?" shee said,  
"Or, sweet William, are you asleep?  
God give you joy of your gay bride-bed,  
And me of my winding sheet."

When day was come, and night was gone,  
And all men wak'd from sleep,  
Sweet William to his lady sayd,  
"My dear, I have cause to weep.

"I dreamt a dream, my dear ladyè,  
 Such dreames are never good:  
 I dreamt my bower was full of red 'wine,'  
 And my bride-bed full of blood."

"Such dreams, such dreams, my honoured sir,  
 They never do prove good;  
 To dream thy bower was full of red 'wine,'  
 And thy bride-bed full of blood."

He called up his merry men all,  
 By one, by two, and by three;  
 Saying, "I'll away to fair Marg'ret's bower,  
 By the leave of my ladyè."

And when he came to fair Marg'ret's bower,  
 He knocked at the ring;  
 And who so ready as her seven breth'rèn  
 To let sweet William in.

Then he turned up the covering-sheet;  
 "Pray let me see the dead;  
 Methinks she looks all pale and wan.  
 She hath lost her cherry red.

"I'll do more for thee, Margarèt,  
 Than any of thy kin:  
 For I will kiss thy pale wan lips,  
 Though a smile I cannot win."

With that bespake the seven breth'rèn,  
 Making most piteous mone,  
 "You may go kiss your jolly brown bride,  
 And let our sister alone."

"If I do kiss my jolly brown bride,  
 I do but what is right;  
 I ne'er made a vow to yonder poor corpse,  
 By day, nor yet by night.

"Deal on, deal on, my merry men all,  
 Deal on your cake and your wine:  
 For whatever is dealt at her funeral to-day,  
 Shall be dealt to-morrow at mine."

Fair Margaret dyed to-day, to-day,  
 Sweet William dyed the morrow:  
 Fair Margaret dyed for pure true love,  
 Sweet William dyed for sorrow.

Margaret was buryed in the lower chancèl,  
 And William in the higher:  
 Out of her brest there sprang a rose,  
 And out of his a briar.

They grew till they grew unto the church top,  
 And then they could grow no higher;  
 And there they tyed in a true lover's knot,  
 Which made all the people admire.

Then came the clerk of the parish,  
 As you the truth shall hear,  
 And by misfortune cut them down,  
 Or they had now been there.

### **Bonnie George Campbell**

High upon Hielands and low upon Tay,  
 Bonnie George Campbell rode oot on a day.  
 Saddled and bridled, sae bonnie rode he,  
 Hame cam' his guid horse, but never came he.

Saddled and booted and bridled rode he,  
 A plume tae his helmet, a sword at his knee.  
 But toom came his saddle and bluidy tae see,  
 Hame cam' his guid horse, but never came he

Doon cam' his auld mither greetin' fu' sair,  
 Oot cam' his bonnie wife rivin' her hair.  
 "My meadows lie green and by corn is unshorn,  
 My barn it tae build and my baby's unborn."

High upon Hielands and low upon Tay,  
 Bonnie George Campbell rode oot on a day.  
 Saddled and bridled, sae bonnie rode he  
 Hame cam' his guid horse, but never came he.

*Meaning of unusual words:*

toom=empty

rivin'=tearing

### **The Wife of Usher's Well**

There lived a wife at Ushers Well,  
 And a wealthy wife was she;  
 She had three stout and stalwart sons,  
 And sent them o'er the sea.

They hadna been a week from her,  
 A week but barely ane,  
 Whan word came to the carline wife

That her three sons were gane.

They hadna been a week from her,  
 A week but barely three,  
 Whan word came to the carlin wife  
 That her sons she'd never see.

"I wish the wind May never cease,  
 Nor (fashes) in the flood,  
 Till my three sons come home to me,  
 In earthly flesh and blood,"

It fell about the Martinmass,  
 When nights are lang and mirk,  
 The carlin wife"s three sons came hame,  
 And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,  
 Nor yet in ony sheugh;  
 But at the gates o Paradise,  
 That birk grew fair enough

"Blow up the fire, my maidens!  
 Bring water from the well!  
 For a' my house hall feast this night,  
 Since my three sons are well."

And she has made to them a bed,  
 She's made it large and wide  
 And she's ta'en her mantle her about,  
 Sat down at the bed-side.

Up then crew the red, red cock,  
 And up and crew the gray;  
 The eldest to the youngest said,  
 "'Tis time we were away."

The cock he hadna craw'd but once,  
 And clapp'd his wings at a',  
 When the youngest to the eldest said,  
 "Brother, we must awa'.

"The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,  
 The channerin' worl'm doth chide;

Gin we be mist out o' our place,  
A sair pain we maun bide.

"Fare ye weel, my mother dear!  
Fareweel to barn and byre!  
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass  
That kindles my mother's fire.

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carlin wife = old woman

fashes = troubles

flood = sea

birk = birch

syke = trench

sheugh = furrow

daw = dawn

channerin = grumbling

A sair pain we maun bide: We must expect sore pain

byre: cow shed