The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (Child Ballads)
Sung and with Notes by Ewan MacColl  Folkways Records FG 3509
The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (Child Ballads)
ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS

CHILD BALLADS

sung by Ewan MacColl

TRADITIONAL BALLADS by Ewan MacColl

"Defined in its simplest terms, the ballad is a folk-song that tells a story. Whatever may be added to this statement is by way of amplification, to explain and clarify, merely, since the whole truth of the matter is in it. What we have come to call a ballad is always a narrative, and is always sung to a rounded melody, and is always learned from the lips of others rather than by reading."

Gerould: The Ballad of Tradition.

Gerould might also have added that the traditional ballad form is one which has proved extremely durable. Not only has it survived social upheaval, revolutions in science and technology, profound changes in public taste and fashion; it has even survived the collectors, anthologists, 'improvers' and concert singers.

This extraordinary capacity for survival appears to have escaped the notice of the most brilliant ballad scholars. Professor Child in a letter to the Danish savant, Svend Grundtvig, wrote: "The sources of British ballads are dried up forever. Thirty five years later Cecil Sharp observed: "The English ballad is moribund, its account is well nigh closed."

Fortunately, these obituary notices have proved premature for while it is true that the TV set has usurped the function of the village storyteller and ballad singer, it is equally true that the occasional intelligent use of TV and radio has introduced the traditional ballad and ballad singer to a large new audience. Furthermore, with the advent of the tape-recorder and the LP disc, the story of the complete ballad form (words and music together) has reached a completely new stage.

SIDE 1, Track 1. JOHNNIE O' BREADTLELEY (114)

The Debatable Land, as the lands fringing the English-Scottish border were sometimes called, are the scene of some of the greatest popular ballads. Child described this stirring piece as a "precious specimen of the unpoached traditional ballad".

Child published 13 texts.

Learned from the singing of John Strachan of Syvie, Aberdeenshire.

Johnnie rose on a May morning,
C'd for water to wash his hands,
Says, Gee loo'we to me my two grey dogs
That lie bound in iron chains,
That lie bound in iron chains.

Ye'll bussk, ye'll bussk my noble dogs,
Ye'll bussk and mak them boun',
For I'm awa to the Broadspier Hill
To ding the dun deer doon, doon,
To ding the dun deer doon.

When Johnnie's mither she heard o' this,
Her hands wi' dool she wrang.
Says, Johnnie, for yer venison
To the green woods dinna gang, gang,
To the green woods dinna gang.

It's we hae plenty o' guld white breid
And plenty o' guld reid wine;
So, Johnnie, for yer venison
To the green woods dinna gang, gang,
To the green woods dinna gang.

But Johnnie has brekit his guld benbow,
His arrows ower one by one,
And he's awa to the gay green woods
To pull the dun deer doon, doon,
To pull the dun deer doon.

Johnnie shot - the dun deer lap,
She was wounded in the side,
And a'men the water and the wood
The greyhounds laid her pride, pride,
The greyhounds laid her pride.

Johnnie ate o' the venison,
And the dogs drank o' the leid,
An' they a' lay down and fell aseep,
Asleep as though they'd been deid, deid,
Asleep as though they'd been deid.

Then by there cam a silly old man,
And a silly old man was he,
And he's awa to the king's forster,
For to tell on young Johnnie, -ie.
For to tell on young Johnnie.

Then up and spak the King's forster,
And an aury ne was he:
Says, if this be Johnnie o' Breadtley,
My faith, we'll gar him lee, lee,
My faith, we'll gar him dee.

Stand oot, stand oot, my noble dogs,
Stand oot and dinna flee.
Stand fast, stand fast, my guld grey hounds
And we will mak them dee, dee,
And we will mak them dee.

Johnnie shot sax o' them,
And the seventh he wounded mar,
And he swung his bough o' her horse back,
And he swore that he would hunt mar, mar,
And he swore that he would hunt mar.
SIDE I, Band 2: THE DOWIE DENNS OF YARROW (2b)

Sir Walter Scott in whose Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border this tragic ballad was first published, claimed that it referred to a duel fought at the beginning of the 17th century between John Scott of Tunniclief and Walter Scott of Throckmorton. Child and other authorities have drawn attention to the inaccuracies of this theory.

Child published 19 texts.

Learned from the singer's father.

There was a lady in the North, I ne'er could find her marrow;
She was courted by nine gentleman
And a ploughboy lad frae Yarrow.

These nine sat drinking at the vine,
Sat drinking wine at Yarrow;
They ba' made a vow among themselves
To fecht for her on Yarrow.

She's washed his face and kaimed his hair,
As oft she'd done afore o',
And made him like a knight so bright,
To fecht for her on Yarrow.

As he walked up by the high, high hills
And doon by the houses o' Yarrow,
There he saw nine armed men
Come to fecht wi' him on Yarrow.

And there they flew and there they slew,
And there he wounded many,
Till her brother, John, came in beyond
And wounded him maist foully.

"O father, dear, I dreamed a dream,
A dream I'd dule and sorrow;
I dreamed I was pu'ing the heather bells
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

"O, dochter dear, I read your dream,
I doubt it will bring sorrow,
For your ain true love lies pale and wan
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

As she walked up yon high, high hill
And doon by the houses o' Yarrow;
And there she saw her true love
Lying pale and wan on Yarrow.

Her hair it being three-quarters lang,
The colour it was yellow,
She wrappit it round his middle sae sma'
And bore him doon to Yarrow.

"O, father dear, ye've seven sons,
Ye may wed them a tomorrow,
But the fairest dowers among them a'
Was the lad I wooed on Yarrow."

"What happened to your bloodhounds, Lord Randall,
your son?
What happened to your bloodhounds, my bonnie young man?"
"O, they swelled and they died, mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and I fain would lie doon."

"What had ye to your supper, Lord Randall, my son?
What had ye to your supper, my bonnie young man?"
"I 'a' eels boil'd in bro', mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and I fain would lie doon."

"O, I fear that ye are poisoned, Lord Randall, my son!
I fear that ye are poisoned, my bonnie young man!
"O, aye, I am poisoned, mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart and I fain would lie doon."

"What will ye leave your brither, Lord Randall, my son?
What will ye leave your brither, my bonnie young man?"
"My horse and my saddle that hings in your stable,
For I'm sick at the heart and I fain would lie doon."

"What will ye leave your sweetheart, Lord Randall, my son?
What will ye leave your sweetheart, my bonnie young man?"
"The tow and the halter that hings on your tree,
And there let her hang for the poisoning of me."

SIDE I, Band 3: LORD RANDALL (12)

Known throughout Europe and America in substantially the same form, Randall is a perfect example of the question-and-answer ballad. The name of the hero varies a good deal from version to version.

Child published 15 texts.

Learned from the singer's mother.

0 where hae ye been, Lord Randall my son?
0 where hae ye been, my bonnie young man?
I've been tae the wild wood mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and I fain would lie doon.

"Whaur gat ye your supper, Lord Randall, my son?
Whaur gat ye your supper, my bonnie young man?"
"I dined wi' my true love, mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and I fain would lie doon."

SIDE I, Band 4: SIR PATRICK SPENS (58)

Motherwell has suggested that this fine ballad may be based upon the events following the marriage of Margaret, daughter of Alexander III of Scotland to Eric, King of Norway in 1281. Many of the nobles who conducted the young queen to Norway were drowned on the return voyage.

Child publishes 10 versions of this ballad.

Learned from the singer's father.

The King sits in Dunfermline toon,
A-drinking at the wine,
And he was called for the finest skipper
In Fife and all the land.

Then oot it spak an auld skene,
Stood by the King's ain knee;
Said, "Patrick Spens is the strangest sailor
That ever sailed the sea."

The King has sower a braud letter
And signed it wi's ain hand;
And sent it to young Patrick Spens,
Was walking on Leith Sands.

To Norrow' to Norrow' to Norrow' to Norrow'
To Norrow' over the fenn;
The King's dochter o' Norrow',
'Tis ye ma' bring her name.

When he leukt the letter on
A muckle laugh gied he,
But ere he'd done the reading o't
The tears blinded his e'e.

0, who is it's done this fell deed
And told the King o' me?
Although it were my ain father
An ill death may be swe'.

They had been in Norrow'
A week but barely three
When the lords o' Norrow'
Did up and spak me free.
"These outland Scots waste our King's dowl
And swallow our Queen's fee."
"Heary ra' the tongue that spak
Sir a muckle lee."

"How can this be?" said Patrick Spens,
"I pray ye tell to me.
The bows o' my ship are wound wi' good
And there's twa kists o' white monee."

"Tak' tent! Tak' tent, my guidemen a',
And mind ye be weel form,
For come it wind or come it hail,
Our guid ship sails the morn."

Then out it spak the weatherman
"I fear we'll a' be drowned,
For I saw the new mune late yeestreen
Wi' the Cardn made in her aires."

They hadna sailed abune an hour,
An hour but and a half,
When the lift grew leich an' the wind blew haich,
And the ship it was a wreck.

'O where will I get a bonnie lad
To tak' my steer in hand,
While I climb up the high tappast
To see if I can spy land."

He naizina gave a step, a step,
A step but barely one,
When the taws o' our quily ship did brak,
And the smut sea can't in.

O laith, laith were our guid Scots lords
To wat their cork-heeled shoos,
But lang ere a' the play was done
They wat their rats abume.

O lang, lang will the ladies sit
Wi' their fans until their hands
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

Half owner, half owner to Aberdour,
Where the sea's so wide and deep,
It's there lies young Sir Patrick Spens
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

SIDE I, Band 5: THE BURNING OF AUICHENDOWN (103)

Following the murder of the Earl of Murray, the Maclochies of the Clan Chattan pillaged a castle and killed four men on an estate belonging to the Earl of Huntley. In retaliation, Huntley laid waste the lands of Clan Chattan. Returning home from this engagement, he surprised the Maclochies spilling his lands at Cabrahach and, in the ensuing fight, killed sixty of them.

Child published 2 texts.
Learned from the singer's father in a fragmentary form and collated with verses from Child's texts.

As I can' in by Fiddich Side
On a May mornin',
I spied Willie Macintosh.
An hour before the dawnin'.

Turn again, turn again, turn again I bid ye,
If ye burn Auichendown, Huntley he will ned ye!
Hold me or hang me, that shall never fear me;
I'll burn Auichendown the', the life leaves me.

As I can' in by Fiddich Side
On a May mornin',
Auichendown was in a breeze
An hour before the dawnin'.

Crawin', crawin',
For a' your crouse crawin',
Ye burn your crop and trim your wings
An hour before the dawnin'.

SIDE I, Band 6: OUR GUIDEMAN (274)

This is one of the most popular humorous ballads in the Child collection and is still fairly widespread in the Scots and English oral traditions. Child states that the Dutch, German, Scandinavian and Hungarian versions all derive from a single broadside.

Child published 2 texts.
Learned from the singer's father.

"O where will I get a bonnie lad
To tak' my steer in hand,
While I climb up the high tappast
To see if I can spy land."

"O laith, laith, were our guid Scots lords
To wat their cork-heeled shoos,
But lang ere a' the play was done
They wat their rats abume.

"O lang, lang will the ladies sit
Wi' their fans until their hands
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

Half owner, half owner to Aberdour,
Where the sea's so wide and deep,
It's there lies young Sir Patrick Spens
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

"Ye said blin' doited carcle,
And blin' er say ye be,
It's just a bonnie blanket,
My minnie sent to me."

"Par iae I travelled
And farther a's I been,
But akeene spurs on water stumps
Saw I never came."

"Ye said blin' doited carcle,
And blin' er say ye be,
It's just a bonnie blanket,
My minnie sent to me."

"O where will I get a bonnie lad
To tak' my steer in hand,
While I climb up the high tappast
To see if I can spy land."

"O laith, laith, were our guid Scots lords
To wat their cork-heeled shoos,
But lang ere a' the play was done
They wat their rats abume.

"O lang, lang will the ladies sit
Wi' their fans until their hands
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

Half owner, half owner to Aberdour,
Where the sea's so wide and deep,
It's there lies young Sir Patrick Spens
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet."

"Ye said blin' doited carcle,
And blin' er say ye be,
It's just a bonnie blanket,
My minnie sent to me."

"Par iae I travelled
And farther a's I been,
But akeene spurs on water stumps
Saw I never came."

Earl of Huntley in 1549.
Name cam' oor gudeman at e'en,  
And hame cam' he,  
And he got a man into the bed,  
Where me sum should be.  
"How's this and what's this,  
How cam' this to be?  
How cam' this man here,  
My minnie sent me."  
W'out the leaves o' me?  
"A man," quo' she,  
"A man," quo' he.  
"Ye said blin' dooted carles,  
And blin' er say ye be,  
It's but a bonnie milkmaid  
My minnie sent me."  
"Far hae I travelled,  
And far'er hae I been,  
But whiskers on a milkmaid  
Dow I never saw."

1 evening  
2 big, great  
3 with out  
4 blind  
5 foolish  
6 old man  
7 extremely  
8 cow  
9 mother  
10 none  
11 shoes  
12 jugs  
13 silver  
14 handsome  
15 such  
16 highland  
17 crested  
18 brooding  

And when he looked the letter on,  
But o', and he was sorry,  
"They've been cruel and fell' unkind,  
To my ain dear rantin' lassie."

"My father dear, he knows me not,  
Myither she ignores me,  
My friends and relations a' slight me,  
And the servants they quite hate me."

"One get to me five hundred men,  
And they'll ride out ane bonnie,  
And we'll bring the bonnie lassie back to Aboyne,  
My ain dear rantin' lassie."

When she was up a'hit his back,  
Wrapped in a hielan' plaidie,  
The birds in the trees sang not one sweet,  
As the bonnie, bonnie rantin' lassie.

And they rode on through Buchanashire,  
And Buchan it shone bonnie,  
"Rejoice, rejoice, ye bonnie mays,  
And me that ye be'na' sorry."

Gin ye lay your love on a lowland lad,  
Be sure that he'll betray ye,  
But lay your love on a hielan' lad,  
He'll do a' he can to raise ye.

1 have  
2 jovial  
3 must  
4 if  
5 errant boy  
6 dreadfully  
7 behind  
8 maids

SIDE I, Band 7: THE RANTIN' LADDIE (260)

This ballad is rare outside of Scotland, only one complete text having been reported from the United States. There appears to be no historical basis for the events described in the ballad.

Child published 4 texts.
Learned from the singer's father.

"Oft ha' I played at the cards and dice  
With my ain dear rantin' laddie,  
But no' I maun' sit in my father's ha'  
And sing ba' to my bastard baby.

"If I'd been wise as I've been nice,  
And done what my bonnie lad tauld me,  
I'd ha' been married a year or mair,  
And been wi' my rantin' laddie.

"My father dear he knows me not,  
An' myither she ignores me,  
My friends and relations a' slight me,  
And the servants they quite hate me.

"Gin I had ane horse at my command,  
As oft times I've had mair,  
I would ride it on to the gates o' Aboyne  
Wi' a letter to my rantin' laddie."

"Is your love a laird or is he a lord,  
Or is he but a cadgie?  
That ye see aft ca' on his name,  
Your ain dear rantin' laddie?"

Then oot and speak a kitchie boy,  
Says "Though I've but a cadgie,  
It's I will run to the gates o' Aboyne,  
Wi' a letter for your rantin' laddie."

When he was near the banks o' Dee,  
The birds they sang sae bonny,  
And there he spied the Earl o' Aboyne,  
That they ca' the rantin' laddie.

SIDE II, Band 1: BAWBEE ALLAN (274)

This is by far the most widespread of all the traditional ballads. It has been printed in chapbooks and broadsides and, on more than one occasion, has been used as a stage song. In spite of all this, however, its oral transmission has continued to produce an incredible number of variants.

Child published 4 versions.
Learned from the singer's mother.

It fell about the Marminus time,  
When the green leaves they were fallin',  
Then Sir John Graeme o' the North Country,  
Fell in love wi' Bawbee Allan."

He's sent his man through a' the toon,  
To the place where she was dwellin';  
"Och, doon, come doon to my master dear,  
Och your name be Bawbee Allan."

0, hooley, hooley rose she up,  
And slowly she gae to him,  
And when she cam' to his bedside,  
"Young man, I think you're dyin'."

"It's I am sick and very sick,  
And it's a' for Bawbee Allan",  
"It's better for me ye'll never be,  
For bonnie Bawbee Allan."

"When ye were in the tavern, sir,  
And at the wine was swillin',  
Ye made the toasts gang roond and roond,  
And ye alighted Bawbee Allan."

He's turned his face unto the win',  
And death was wi' him deedin';  
"Then rare ye well, my dear friends a',  
But be kind to Bawbee Allan."
"Then pit your hand aneist the wa',
And there ye'll find a token;
Wi' my gold watch and my gold ring,
Gie that to Bawbee Allan."

Then pit your hand aneist my side,
And there ye'll find a warm'!;
And there ye'll get my blude red sark,
It bled for Bawbee Allan."

She had a gane a step a step,
When she heard the deiltibell knellin',
And ilka clap te deilt boll gied,
Said "Was to Bawbee Allan."

"O, mither, dear, you'll mak' my bed,
Ye'll mak' it saft and narrow;
My love has died for me this day,
I'll die for his tomorrow."

SIDE II, Band 2: LORD THOMAS AND FAIR ANNE (73)

Bishop Percy included a Scots version of this fine ballad in his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry and Child described it as "one of the most beautiful of our ballads, and indeed of all ballads."

Child published 8 texts. Learned from the singer's mother in fragmentary form and collated with stanzas in Greig's Traditional Ballads and Ballad Airs.

SIDE II, Band 3: THE THREE RAVENS (26)

The first printed copy of this ballad is in Ravenscroft's Heloïse, London 1611. In The Popular Music of the Olden Time, 1855, Chappell remarks that the Ballad was still so popular in some parts of the country that he had "been favoured with a variety of copies of it, written down from memory, and all differing in some respects, both as to words and tune, but with sufficient resemblance to prove a similar origin."

Nethercote in his Minstrelsy, 1827, describes it as being "very popular in Scotland", where it is more commonly known as The Trum Corbies.

The version given here is from Kidson's Traditional Tunes, 1891, and comes from the village of Stoney-Middleton, Derbyshire.

Child published 4 texts.

There were three ravens on a tree,
A-down, a-down, aerry down,
There were three ravens on a tree,
Heigh ho!
The middlemost raven said to me,
"There lies a dead man at yon tree."
A down, a down, aerry down,
Heigh ho!

There comes a lady full of woe,
A-down, a-down, aerry down,
There comes a lady full of woe,
Heigh ho!

There comes a lady full of woe,
Riding fast as she can go,
A down, a down, aerry down,
Heigh ho!

"Who's this that's killed my own true love,
A-down, a-down, aerry down,
Who's this that's killed my own true love,
Heigh ho!
I hope in heaven he'll never rest,
Nor e'er enjoy that blessed place,
A-down, a-down, aerry down,
Heigh ho!

SIDE II, Band 4: THE BONNY EARL OF MURRAY (181)

James Stewart, Earl of Murray, was murdered by the Earl of Huntley in 1592, after having been accused of conspiring with Bothwell against the king. The death of this very popular figure provoked a public outcry but Huntley was never punished for his part in the deed.

Child published only 2 texts. Learned by the singer from Private MacDonald, a soldier in the British Army, who learned it at school.

Ye hielin' 1 and ye lawlin',
0, wase 3 has, ye been?
They bae ta'en the Earl o' Murray
And laid him on the green.
He was a braw callant 7
And he played at the ring,
And the bonnie Earl o' Murray,
He might ha' been a king.

0, lang' will his ladie
Look frae 10 the castle door
Ere the bonnie Earl o' Murray
Comes soondin' 11 through the toon.

0, wael 12 betide ye Huntley,
And whaurfore did ye aise? 13
I bade ye bring him tae me
And forbade ye his to play.
He was a braw callant
And he played at the ba',
And the bonnie Earl o' Murray
Was the flooer 15 among them all.

1 Highlands
2 Lowlands
3 where
4 taken
5 handsome
6 gallant
7 might
8 long
9 from
10 down
11 with the sounds of trumpets or pipes
12 woe
13 why did you do so?
14 bell
15 flower
16 all

SIDE II, Band 5: THE BATTLE OF HARLAW (163)

The battle of Harlaw took place on July 24, 1411, when an army of Highlanders led by Donald of the Isles was beaten by the Earl of Moray's Lowland forces.

Child published 2 versions. Learned from Jeanie Robertson of Dundee.

As I cam by the Gerrie, man
And in by Betherie',
There were fifty thousand Hielin' men
A-marchin' the Harlaw.

CHORUS:
Slinging diddie-1-o
Sling fal a do
Sling diddie-1-o-i-ay.

An' did ye come fow the Hielan's, man?
An' did yer come a' the way?
An' did ye see MacDonald and his men?
As they marched fow Skye?

For I cam fow the Hielan's, man,
An' I came a' the way,
An' I saw MacDonald and his men
As they marched fow Skye.

Was ye near and near enough?
Did ye their numbers see?
And tell to me, John Hielen'man,
What might their numbers be?
I was near and near enough,
And I their numbers saw,
There was fifty thousand Heilan' men
A-marching to Harlaw.

For they went on and further on,
And doon and by Balquhain,
It's there I met Sir James the Rose
And Sir John the Graeme.

If that be true, said Sir James the Rose,
We'll no' come muckle speed,
We'll call upon war merry men
And we'll turn war horses' heads.

They went on and further on
And doon and by Harlaw,
They baited fast on lika side,
Sic straikes ye never saw.

The Heilan' men wi' their lang swords,
They laid about ru' sair,
An' they drove back war merry men
Three acres breadth and mair.

Lord Forbes unto his brother did say,
"O, brither, dinna ye see,
For they beat us back on every side
And we'll be forced to flee."

"O, may, O, may, my brither dear,
O, may, that munna be,
Ye'll tak' your guid sword in your hand,
And ye'll gan in wi' me."

Then the two brithers brave
Went in amongst the throng,
They smacked doon the Heilan' men
Wi' swords baith sharp and lang.

The first straik Lord Forbes gied,
The brave Macdonald reeled,
The second straik Lord Forbes fied,
The brave Macdonald fell.

Whit a cry among the Heilan' men
When they see'd their leader fa',
They lifted him and buried him
A lang mile frae Harlaw.

Glossary

Cam. = came.

The. = the.

Jo. = from.

Muckle. = great, much.

Our. = our.

Heids. = heads.

Both. = both.

Iike. = every.

Sic. = such.

Straikes. = strokes.

Pu'. = pull.

Mair. = more.

Dinna. = do not.

Guid. = good.

Shacked. = beat.

Gied. = gave.

Amang. = amongst.

Lang. = long.

SIDE II, Book 6: THOMAS RHYMOUR (37)

Thomas of Er المواد, the 13th century poet, was author of a long poem describing a visit to Eifland and the supernatural events which took place there. The poem served as a basis for the 15th century romance which, in turn, provided the raw material for this Ballad.

Child published 3 texts.

Learned from print.

True Thomas lay on Huntly bank,
A ferrie be spied wi' his e'e,
And there he saw a lady bright,
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

Her skirt was o' the grass-green ilk,
Her mantle o' the velvet yine,
At ilket o' her horse's mane
Hung fifty sillar bells and nine.

True Thomas he pull'd aff his cap
And louted low down to his knee:
"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For thy peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she said,
That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of far Eifland
That am hither come to visit thee.

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she said,
"Harp and carp along wi' me,
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your body I will be."

"Betide me weel, betide me woe,
That weird shall never daunton me;"
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

"Now ye maun go wi' me," she said,
"True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me,
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro' weal and woe, as may chance to be."

She mounted on her milk-white steed,
She's ta'en True Thomas up behind,
And by the while her bridle rung
The steed flew faster than the wind.

O they rade on, and further on
The steed grew swifter than the wind
Until they reached a desert wide,
And living land was left behind.

"Light down, light down now, True Thomas,
And lean your head upon my knee;
Abide and rest a little space,
And I will show you ferlakes three.

"O see ye not you narrow road,
So thick beset with thorns and briars?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho' after it but few enquires.

And see ye not that broad road
That lies across that lily leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho' some call it the road to heaves.

And see ye not that bonny road
That winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Eifland
Where thou and I this night maun gae.

"But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever ye may hear or see,
For if you speak word in Eiflyn land
Ye'll ne'er get back to your ain countrie."

Syne they came on to a garden green,
And there pu'd an apple frae a tree;
"Take this for thy wages, True Thomas,
It will give the tongue that can never lie."

"My tongue is mine ain," True Thomas said:
"A guidly gift ye wad gie to me!
I neither dought to buy or sell,
At fair or tryst where I may be.