

Allan Cunningham (1784-1842)

1 *The Bonnie Bairns*

The lady she walk'd in yon wild wood  
Aneath the hollin tree,  
And she was aware of two bonnie bairns  
Were running at her knee.  
The tane it pull'd a red, red rose, 5  
With a hand as soft as silk;  
The other, it pull'd the lily pale,  
With a hand mair white than milk.

Now, why pull ye the rose, fair bairns?  
And why the white lilie? 10  
O we sue wi' them at the seat of grace,  
For the soul of thee, ladie!  
O bide wi' me, my twa bonnie bairns!  
I'll cleed ye rich and fine;  
And all for the blaeberreries of the wood, 15  
Yese hae white bread and wine.

She heard a voice, a sweet low voice,  
Say, weans, ye tarry lang—  
She stretch'd her hand to the youngest bairn,  
Kiss me before ye gang. 20  
She sought to take a lily hand,  
And kiss a rosie chin—  
O, nought sae pure can bide the touch  
Of a hand red-wet wi' sin!

The stars were shooting to and fro, 25  
And wild fire fill'd the air,  
As that lady follow'd thae bonnie bairns

For three lang hours and mair.  
O! where dwell ye, my ain sweet bairns?  
I'm woe and weary grown! 30  
O! lady, we live where woe never is,  
In a land to flesh unknown.

There came a shape which seemed to her  
As a rainbow mang the rain,  
And sair these sweet babes pled for her, 35  
And they pled and pled in vain.  
And O! and O! said the youngest babe,  
My mother maun come in:  
And O! and O! said the eldest babe,  
Wash her twa hands frae sin. 40

And O! and O! said the youngest babe,  
She nursed me on her knee:  
And O! and O! said the eldest babe,  
She's a mither yet to me.  
And O! and O! said thae babes baith, 45  
Take her where waters rin,  
And white as the milk of her white breast,  
Wash her twa hands from sin.

*1825*

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