

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)

16 *Tim Turpin*

A Pathetic Ballad

Tim Turpin he was gravel blind,  
And ne'er had seen the skies:  
For Nature, when his head was made,  
Forgot to dot his eyes.

So, like a Christmas pedagogue, 5  
Poor Tim was forc'd to do —  
Look out for pupils, for he had  
A vacancy for two.

There's some have specs to help their sight 10  
Of objects dim and small:  
But Tim had *specks* within his eyes,  
And could not see at all.

Now Tim he woo'd a servant-maid,  
And took her to his arms;  
For he, like Pyramus, had cast 15  
A wall-eye on her charms.

By day she led him up and down  
Where'er he wish'd to jog,  
A happy wife, altho' she led  
The life of any dog. 20

But just when Tim had liv'd a month  
In honey with his wife,  
A surgeon ope'd his Milton eyes,  
Like oysters, with a knife.

But when his eyes were open'd thus, 25  
He wish'd them dark again:  
For when he look'd upon his wife,  
He saw her very plain.

Her face was bad, her figure worse,  
He couldn't bear to eat: 30  
For she was any thing but like  
A Grace before his meat.

Now Tim he was a feeling man:  
For when his sight was thick,  
It made him feel for everything, — 35  
But that was with a stick.

So with a cudgel in his hand —  
It was not light or slim —  
He knocked at his wife's head until  
It open'd unto him. 40

And when the corpse was stiff and cold,  
He took his slaughter'd spouse,  
And laid her in a heap with all  
The ashes of her house.

But like a wicked murderer, 45  
He liv'd in constant fear  
From day to day, and so he cut  
His throat from ear to ear.

The neighbours fetch'd a doctor in:  
Said he, this wound I dread 50  
Can hardly be sew'd up — his life  
Is hanging on a thread.

But when another week was gone,  
He gave him stronger hope —  
Instead of hanging on a thread, 55  
Of hanging on a rope.

Ah! when he hid his bloody work  
In ashes round about,  
How little he supposed the truth  
Would soon be sifted out. 60

But when the parish dustman came,  
His rubbish to withdraw,  
He found more dust within the heap  
Than he contracted for!

A dozen men to try the fact, 65  
Were sworn that very day;  
But though they all were jurors, yet  
No conjurors were they.

Said Tim unto those jurymen, 70  
You need not waste your breath,  
For I confess myself at once  
The author of her death.

And, oh! when I reflect upon 75  
The blood that I have spilt,  
Just like a button is my soul,  
Inscrib'd with double *guilt!*

Then turning round his head again, 80  
He saw before his eyes,  
A great judge, and a little judge,  
The judges of a-size!

The great judge took his judgment cap,  
And put it on his head,  
And sentenc'd Tim by law to hang  
'Till he was three times dead.

So he was tried, and he was hung 85  
(Fit punishment for such)  
On Horsham-drop, and none can say  
It was a drop too much.

1827

(From *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood*.  
Ed. with Notes by Walter Jerrold. Oxford UP, 1911)