

William Morris (1834-96)

5 *Welland River*

Fair Ellayne she walk'd by Welland river,
Across the lily lee:
O, gentle Sir Robert, ye are not kind
To stay so long at sea.

Over the marshland none can see 5
Your scarlet pennon fair;
O, leave the Easterlings alone,
Because of my golden hair.

The day when over Stamford bridge 10
That dear pennon I see
Go up toward the goodly street,
'Twill be a fair day for me.

O, let the bonny pennon bide 15
At Stamford, the good town,
And let the Easterlings so free,
And their ships go up and down.

For every day that passes by 20
I wax both pale and green,
From gold to gold of my girdle
There is an inch between.

I sew'd it up with scarlet silk
Last night upon my knee,
And my heart grew sad and sore to think
Thy face I'd never see.

I sew'd it up with scarlet silk, 25
As I lay upon my bed:
Sorrow! the man I'll never see
That had my maidenhead.

But as Ellayne sat on her window-seat
And comb'd her yellow hair, 30
She saw come over Stamford bridge
The scarlet pennon fair.

As Ellayne lay and sicken'd sore,
The gold shoes on her feet,
She saw Sir Robert and his men 35
Ride up the Stamford street.

He had a coat of fine red gold,
And a bascinet of steel;
Take note his goodly Collayne sword
Smote the spur upon his heel. 40

And by his side, on a grey jennet,
There rode a fair lady,
For every ruby Ellayne wore,
I count she carried three.

Say, was not Ellayne's gold hair fine, 45
That fell to her middle free?
But that lady's hair down in the street,
Fell lower than her knee.

Fair Ellayne's face, from sorrow and grief,
Was waxen pale and green: 50
That lady's face was goodly red,
She had but little tene.

But as he pass'd by her window
He grew a little wroth:
O, why does yon pale face look at me 55
From out the golden cloth?

It is some burd, the fair dame said,
That aye rode him beside,
Has come to see your bonny face
This merry summer-tide. 60

But Ellayne let a lily-flower

Light on his cap of steel:
O, I have gotten two hounds, fair knight,
The one has served me well;

But the other, just an hour ago,
Has come from over sea, 65
And all his fell is sleek and fine,
But little he knows of me.

Now, which shall I let go, fair knight,
And which shall bide with me? 70
O, lady, have no doubt to keep
The one that best loveth thee.

O, Robert, see how sick I am!
Ye do not so by me.
Lie still, fair love, have ye gotten harm 75
While I was on the sea?

Of one gift, Robert, that ye gave,
I sicken to the death,
I pray you nurse-tend me, my knight,
Whiles that I have my breath. 80

Six fathoms from the Stamford bridge
He left that dame to stand,
And whiles she wept, and whiles she cursed
That she ever had taken land.

He has kiss'd sweet Ellayne on the mouth, 85
And fair she fell asleep,
And long and long days after that
Sir Robert's house she did keep.

1858

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