

William Edmondstoune Aytoun (1813-65)

6 *The Queen in France*

PART I.

It fell upon the August month,
When landsmen bide at hame,
That our gude Queen went out to sail
Upon the saut-sea faem.

And she has ta'en the silk and gowd, 5
The like was never seen;
And she has ta'en the Prince Albert,
And the bauld Lord Aberdeen.

“Ye'se bide at hame, Lord Wellington:
Ye daurna gang wi' me: 10
For ye hae been ance in the land o' France,
And that's eneuch for ye.

“Ye'se bide at hame, Sir Robert Peel,
To gather the red and the white monie;
And see that my men dinna eat me up 15
At Windsor wi' their gluttonie.”

They hadna sailed a league, a league,—
A league, but barely twa,
When the lift grew dark, and the waves grew wan,
And the wind began to blaw. 20

“O weel weel may the waters rise,
In welcome o' their Queen;
What gars ye look sae white, Albert?
What makes your ee sae green?”

“My heart is sick, my heid is sair: 25
 Gie me a glass o’ the gude brandie:
 To set my foot on the braid green sward,
 I’d gie the half o’ my yearly fee.

“It’s sweet to hunt the sprightly hare 30
 On the bonny slopes o’ Windsor lea,
 But O, it’s ill to bear the thud
 And pitching o’ the saut saut sea!”

And aye they sailed, and aye they sailed,
 Till England sank behind,
 And over to the coast of France 35
 They drave before the wind.

Then up and spak the King o’ France,
 Was birling at the wine;
 “O wha may be the gay ladye,
 That owns that ship sae fine? 40

“And wha may be that bonny lad,
 That looks sae pale and wan?
 I’ll wad my lands o’ Picardie,
 That he’s nae Englishman.”

Then up and spak an auld French lord, 45
 Was sitting beneath his knee,
 “It is the Queen o’ braid England
 That’s come across the sea.”

“And O an it be England’s Queen,
 She’s welcome here the day; 50
 I’d rather hae her for a friend
 Than for a deadly fae.

“Gae, kill the eerock in the yard,
 The auld sow in the sty,
 And bake for her the brockit calf, 55

But and the puddock-pie!"

And he has gane until the ship,
As sune as it drew near,
And he has ta'en her by the hand—
"Ye're kindly welcome here!" 60

And syne he kissed her on ae cheek,
And syne upon the ither;
And he ca'd her his sister dear,
And she ca'd him her brither.

"Light doun, light doun now, ladye mine, 65
Light doun upon the shore;
Nae English king has trodden here
This thousand years and more."

"And gin I lighted on your land, 70
As light fu' weel I may,
O am I free to feast wi' you,
And free to come and gae?"

And he has sworn by the Haly Rood,
And the black stane o' Dumblane,
That she is free to come and gae 75
Till twenty days are gane.

"I've lippened to a Frenchman's aith,"
Said gude Lord Aberdeen;
"But I'll never lippen to it again
Sae lang's the grass is green. 80

"Yet gae your ways, my sovereign liege,
Sin' better mayna be;
The wee bit bairns are safe at hame,
By the blessing o' Marie!"

Then doun she lighted frae the ship, 85

She lighted safe and sound;
And glad was our good Prince Albert
To step upon the ground.

“Is that your Queen, my Lord,” she said,
“That auld and buirdly dame? 90
I see the crown upon her head;
But I dinna ken her name.”

And she has kissed the Frenchman’s Queen,
And eke her daughters three,
And gien her hand to the young Princess, 95
That louted upon the knee.

And she has gane to the proud castle,
That’s biggit beside the sea:
But aye, when she thought o’ the bairns at hame,
The tear was in her ee. 100

She gied the King the Cheshire cheese,
But and the porter fine;
And he gied her the puddock-pies,
But and the blude-red wine.

Then up and spak the dourest prince, 105
An admiral was he;
“Let’s keep the Queen o’ England here,
Sin’ better mayna be!

“O mony is the dainty king
That we hae trappit here; 110
And mony is the English yerl
That’s in our dungeons drear!”

“You lee, you lee, ye graceless loon,
Sae loud’s I hear ye lee!
There never yet was Englishman 115
That came to skaith by me.

“Gae oot, gae oot, ye fause traitour!
Gae oot until the street;
It’s shame that Kings and Queens should sit
Wi’ sic a knave at meat!” 120

Then up and raise the young French lord,
In wrath and hie disdain—
“O ye may sit, and ye may eat
Your puddock-pies alane!

“But were I in my ain gude ship, 125
And sailing wi’ the wind,
And did I meet wi’ auld Napier,
I’d tell him o’ my mind.”

O then the Queen leuch loud and lang,
And her colour went and came; 130
“Gin ye meet wi’ Charlie on the sea,
Ye’d wish yersel at hame!”

And aye they birlit at the wine,
And drank richt merrilie,
Till the auld cock crawed in the castle-yard, 135
And the abbey bell struck three.

The Queen she gaed until her bed,
And Prince Albert likewise;
And the last word that gay ladye said
Was—“O thae puddock-pies!” 140

PART II.

The sun was high within the lift
Afore the French King raise;
And syne he louped intil his sark,
And warslit on his claes.

“Gae up, gae up, my little foot-page, 5
 Gae up until the toun;
 And gin ye meet wi’ the auld harper,
 Be sure ye bring him doun.”

And he has met wi’ the auld harper;
 O but his een were reid; 10
 And the bizzing o’ a swarm o’ bees
 Was singing in his heid.

“Alack! alack!” the harper said,
 “Tha this should e’er hae been!
 I daurna gang before my liege, 15
 For I was fou yestreen.”

“It’s ye maun come, ye auld harper:
 Ye daurna tarry lang;
 The King is just dementit-like
 For wanting o’ a sang.” 20

And when he came to the King’s chamber,
 He loutit on his knee,
 “O what may be your gracious will
 Wi’ an auld frail man like me?”

“I want a sang, harper,” he said, 25
 “I want a sang richt speedilie;
 And gin ye dinna make a sang,
 I’ll hang ye up on the gallows tree.”

“I canna do’t, my liege,” he said,
 “Hae mercy on my auld grey hair! 30
 But gin that I had got the words,
 I think that I might mak the air.”

“And wha’s to mak the words, fause loon,
 When minstrels we have barely twa;

And Lamartine is in Paris toun, 35
And Victor Hugo far awa?"

"The deil may gang for Lamartine,
And flee awa wi' auld Hugo,
For a better minstrel than them baith
Within this very toun I know. 40

"O kens my liege the gude Walter,
At hame they ca' him BON GAULTIER?
He'll rhyme ony day wi' True Thomas,
And he is in the castle here."

The French King first he lauchit loud, 45
And syne did he begin to sing;
"My een are auld, and my heart is cauld,
Or I suld hae known the minstrels' King.

"Gae take to him this ring o' gowd,
And this mantle o' the silk sae fine, 50
And bid him mak a maister sang
For his sovereign ladye's sake and mine."

"I winna take the gowden ring,
Nor yet the mantle fine:
But I'll mak the sang for my ladye's sake, 55
And for a cup of wine."

The Queen was sitting at the cards,
The King ahint her back;
And aye she dealed the red honours,
And aye she dealed the black; 60

And syne unto the dourest Prince
She spak richt courteouslie;—
"Now will ye play, Lord Admiral,
Now will ye play wi' me?"

The dourest Prince he bit his lip, 65
 And his brow was black as glaur;
 “The only game that e’er I play
 Is the bluidy game o’ war!”

“And gin ye play at that, young man,
 It weel may cost ye sair; 70
 Ye’d better stick to the game at cards,
 For you’ll win nae honours there!”

The King he leuch, and the Queen she leuch,
 Till the tears ran blithely doun;
 But the Admiral he raved and swore, 75
 Till they kicked him frae the room.

The Harper came, and the Harper sang,
 And O but they were fain;
 For when he had sung the gude sang twice,
 They called for it again. 80

It was the sang o’ the Field o’ Gowd,
 In the days of auld langsyne;
 When bauld King Henry crossed the seas,
 Wi’ his brither King to dine.

And aye he harped, and aye he carped, 85
 Till up the Queen she sprang—
 “T’ll wad a County Palatine,
 Gude Walter made that sang.”

Three days had come, three days had gane,
 The fourth began to fa’, 90
 When our gude Queen to the Frenchman said,
 “It’s time I was awa!”

“O, bonny are the fields o’ France,
 And saftly draps the rain;
 But my bairnies are in Windsor Tower, 95

And greeting a' their lane.

“Now ye maun come to me, Sir King,
As I have come to ye;
And a benison upon your heid
For a' your courtesie! 100

“Ye maun come, and bring your ladye fere;
Ye sall na say me no;
And ye'se mind, we have aye a bed to spare
For that gawsy chield Guizot.”

Now he has ta'en her lily-white hand, 105
And put it to his lip,
And he has ta'en her to the strand,
And left her in her ship,

“Will ye come back, sweet bird,” he cried,
“Will ye come kindly here, 110
When the lift is blue, and the lavrocks sing,
In the spring-time o' the year?”

“It's I would blithely come, my Lord,
To see ye in the spring;
It's I would blithely venture back, 115
But for ae little thing.

“It isna that the winds are rude,
Or that the waters rise,
But I loe the roasted beef at hame,
And no thae puddock-pies!” 120

1843

(From *The Book of Ballads*. Ed. Bon Gaultier. 1845. 6th.
ed. Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1859)