

James Hogg (1770-1835)

11 *The Mermaid*

“Oh where won ye, my bonnie lass,  
Wi’ look sae wild an’ cheery?  
There’s something in that witching face  
That I lo’e wonder dearly.”

“I live where the hare-bell never grew, 5  
Where the streamlet never ran,  
Where the winds o’ heaven never blew;  
Now find me gin you can.”

“Tis but your wild an’ wily way, 10  
The gloaming maks you eirie,  
For ye are the lass o’ the Braken-Brae,  
An’ nae lad maun come near ye:

“But I am sick, an’ very sick  
Wi’ a passion strange an’ new, 15  
For ae kiss o’ thy rosy cheek  
An’ lips o’ the coral hue.”

“O laith, laith wad a wanderer be  
To do your youth sic wrang;  
Were you to reave a kiss from me  
Your life would not be lang. 20

“Go, hie you from this lonely brake,  
Nor dare your walk renew;  
For I’m the Maid of the Mountain Lake,  
An’ I come wi’ the falling dew.”

“Be you the Maid of the Crystal Wave, 25  
Or she of the Braken-Brae,  
One tender kiss I mean to have;  
You shall not say me nay.

“For beauty’s like the daisy’s vest  
That shrinks from the early dew, 30  
But soon it opes its bonnie breast,  
An’ sae may it fare wi’ you.”

“Kiss but this hand, I humbly sue,  
Even there I’ll rue the stain;  
Or the breath of man will dim its hue, 35  
It will ne’er be pure again.

“For passion’s like the burning beal  
Upon the mountain’s brow,  
That wastes itself to ashes pale;  
An’ sae will it fare wi’ you.” 40

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“O mother, mother, make my bed,  
An’ make it soft and easy;  
An’ with the cold dew bathe my head,  
For pains of anguish seize me:

“Or stretch me in the chill blue lake, 45  
To quench this bosom’s burning;  
An’ lay me by yon lonely brake,  
For hope there’s none returning.

“I’ve been where man should not have been,  
Oft in my lonely roaming; 50  
And seen what man should not have seen,  
By greenwood in the gloaming.

“Oh, passion’s deadlier than the grave,  
A’ human things undoing!  
The Maiden of the Mountain Wave 55  
Has lured me to my ruin!”

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’Tis now an hundred years an’ more,  
An’ all these scenes are over,

Since rose his grave on yonder shore,  
Beneath the wild wood cover; 60

An' late I saw the Maiden there,  
Just as the day-light faded,  
Braiding her locks of gowden hair,  
An' singing as she braided:

Mermaid's Song

Lie still, my love, lie still and sleep, 65  
Long is thy night of sorrow;  
Thy Maiden of the Mountain deep  
Shall meet thee on the morrow.

But oh, when shall that morrow be,  
That my true love shall waken? 70  
When shall we meet, refined an' free,  
Amid the moorland braken?

Full low and lonely is thy bed,  
The worm even flies thy pillow;  
Where now the lips, so comely red, 75  
That kissed me 'neath the willow?

Oh I must laugh, do as I can,  
Even 'mid my song of mourning,  
At all the fuming freaks of man  
To which there's no returning. 80

Lie still, my love, lie still an' sleep –  
Hope lingers o'er thy slumber;  
What though thy years beneath the steep  
Should all its stones outnumber?

Though moons steal o'er an' seasons fly 85  
On time's swift wing unstaying,  
Yet there's a spirit in the sky  
That lives o'er thy decaying.

In domes beneath the water-springs

No end hath my sojourning; 90  
An' to this land of fading things  
Far hence be my returning;

For spirits now have left the deep,  
Their long last farewell taken:  
Lie still, my love, lie still an' sleep, 95  
Thy day is near the breaking!

When my loved flood from fading day  
No more its gleam shall borrow,  
Nor heath-fowl from the moorland gray  
Bid the blue dawn good-morrow; 100

The Mermaid o'er thy grave shall weep,  
Without one breath of scorning:  
Lie still, my love, lie still an' sleep,  
And fare thee well till morning!

1819

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