

Charles Kingsley (1819-75)

14 *The Weird Lady*

The swevens came up round Harold the Earl,
Like motes in the sunnès beam;
And over him stood the Weird Lady,
In her charmèd castle over the sea,
Sang 'Lie thou still and dream.' 5

'Thy steed is dead in his stall, Earl Harold,
Since thou hast been with me;
The rust has eaten thy harness bright,
And the rats have eaten thy greyhound light,
That was so fair and free.' 10

Mary Mother she stooped from heaven;
She wakened Earl Harold out of his sweven,
To don his harness on;
And over the land and over the sea
He wended abroad to his own countrie, 15
A weary way to gon.

O but his beard was white with eld,
O but his hair was gray;
He stumbled on by stock and stone,
And as he journeyed he made his moan 20
Along that weary way.

Earl Harold came to his castle wall;
The gate was burnt with fire;
Roof and rafter were fallen down,
The folk were strangers all in the town, 25
And strangers all in the shire.

Earl Harold came to a house of nuns,
And he heard the dead-bell toll;
He saw the sexton stand by a grave;
'Now Christ have mercy, who did us save, 30

Upon yon fair nun's soul.'

The nuns they came from the convent gate
By one, by two, by three;
They sang for the soul of a lady bright
Who died for the love of a traitor knight: 35
It was his own lady.

He stayed the corpse beside the grave;
'A sign, a sign!' quod he.
'Mary Mother who rulest heaven,
Send me a sign if I be forgiven 40
By the woman who so loved me.'

A white dove out of the coffin flew;
Earl Harold's mouth it kist;
He fell on his face, wherever he stood;
And the white dove carried his soul to God 45
Or ever the bearers wist.

1840

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