

Andrew Lang (1844-1912)

5 *The Sudden Bridal*

It was a maid lay sick of love,
All for a leman fair;
And it was three of her bower-maidens
That came to comfort her.

The first she bore a blossomed branch, 5
The second an apple brown,
The third she had a silk kerchief,
And still her tears ran down.

The first she mocked, the second she laughed —
‘We have loved lemans fair, 10
We made our hearts like the iron stone,
Had little teen or care.’

‘If ye have loved ’twas a false false love,
And an ill leman was he;
But her true love had angel’s eyes, 15
And as fair was his sweet body.

‘And I will gird my green kirtle,
And braid my yellow hair,
And I will over the high hills
And bring her love to her.’ 20

‘Nay, if you braid your yellow hair,
You’ll twine my love from me.’
‘Now nay, now nay, my lady good,
That ever this should be!’

‘When you have crossed the western hills 25
My true love you shall meet,
With a green flag blowing over him,
And green grass at his feet.’

She has crossed over the high hills,
And the low hills between, 30
And she has found the may's leman
Beneath a flag of green.

'Twas four and twenty ladies fair
Were sitting on the grass;
But he has turned and looked on her, 35
And will not let her pass.

'You've maidens here, and maidens there,
And loves through all the land;
But what have you made of the lady fair
You gave the rose-garland?' 40

'She was so harsh and cold of love,
To me gave little grace;
She wept if I but touched her hand,
Or kissed her bonnie face.

'Yea, crows shall build in the eagle's nest, 45
The hawk the dove shall wed,
Before my old true love and I
Meet in one wedding bed.'

When she had heard his bitter rede
That was his old true love, 50
She sat and wept within her bower,
And moaned even as a dove.

She rose up from her window seat,
And she looked out to see;
Her love came riding up the street 55
With a goodly company.

He was clad on with Venice gold,
Wrought upon cramoisie,
His yellow hair shone like the sun
About his fair body. 60

'Now shall I call him blossomed branch

That has ill knots therein?
Or shall I call him basil plant,
That comes of an evil kin?

‘Oh, I shall give him goodly names, 65
My sword of damask fine;
My silver flower, my bright-winged bird —
Where go you, lover mine?’

‘I go to marry my new bride,
That I bring o’er the down; 70
And you shall be her bridal maid,
And hold her bridal crown.’

‘When you come to the bride chamber
Where your fair maiden is,
You’ll tell her I was fair of face, 75
But never tell her this,

‘That still my lips were lips of love,
My kiss love’s spring-water,
That my love was a running spring,
My breast a garden fair. 80

‘And you have kissed the lips of love
And drained the well-water,
And you have spoiled the running spring,
And robbed the fruits so fair.’

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‘Now he that will may scatter nuts, 85
And he may wed that will;
But she that was my old true love
Shall be my true love still.’

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