

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818)

4 *Bothwell's Bonny Jane*

Bothwell Castle is beautifully situated upon the Clyde, and fronts the ruins of Blantyre Priory. The estate of Bothwell has long been, and continues to be, in the possession of the Douglas family.

Loud roars the north round Bothwell's hall,
And fast descends the pattering rain:
But streams of tears still faster fall
From thy blue eyes, oh! bonny Jane!

Hark! hark! — I hear, with mournful yell, 5
Thy wraiths of angry Clyde complain;
But sorrow bursts with louder swell
From thy fair breast, oh! bonny Jane!

“Tap! — tap!” — who knocks? — the door unfolds;
The mourner lifts her melting eye, 10
And soon with joy and hope beholds
A reverend monk approaching nigh:

His air is mild, his step is slow,
His hands across his breast are laid,
And soft he sighs, while bending low, 15
— “St. Bothan guard thee, gentle maid!” —

To meet the friar the damsel ran;
She kiss'd his hand, she clasp'd his knee.
— ‘Now free me, free me, holy man,
‘Who com'st from Blantyre Prio-rie!’ — 20

— “What mean these piteous cries, daughter?
“St. Bothan be thy speed!
“Why swim in tears thine eyes, daughter?

“From whom would’st thou be freed?” ——

— ‘Oh! father, father! know, my sire, 25
‘Though long I knelt, and wept, and sigh’d,
‘Hath sworn, ere twice ten days expire,
‘His Jane shall be Lord Malcolm’s bride!’ —

“Lord Malcolm is rich and great, daughter, —
“And comes of an high degree; 30
“He’s fit to be thy mate, daughter,
“So, Benedicite!” —

— ‘Oh! father, father! say not so!
‘Though rich his halls, though fair his bowers, —
‘There stands an hut, where Tweed doth flow, 35
‘I prize beyond Lord Malcolm’s towers:

‘There dwells a youth where Tweed doth glide,
‘On whom nor rank, nor fortune smiles;
‘T’d rather be that peasant’s bride,
‘Than reign o’er all Lord Malcolm’s isles.’ — 40

— “But should you flee away, daughter,
“And wed with a village clown,
“What would your father say, daughter?
“How would he fume and frown?” —

— ‘Oh! he might frown and he might fume, 45
‘And Malcolm’s heart might grieve and pine,
‘So Edgar’s hut for me had room,
‘And Edgar’s lips were press’d to mine!’ —

— “If at the castle gate, daughter,
“At night, thy love so true 50
“Should with a courser wait, daughter,
“What, daughter, would’st thou do?” ——

— ‘With noiseless step the stairs I’d press,
‘Unclose the gate, and mount with glee,
‘And ever, as on I sped, would bless 55
‘The abbot of Blantyre Prio-rie!’ ——

— “Then, daughter, dry those eyes so bright;
“I’ll haste where flows Tweed’s silver stream;
“And when thou see’st, at dead of night,
“A lamp in Blantyre’s chapel gleam, 60

“With noiseless step the staircase press,
“For know, thy lover there will be;
“Then mount his steed, haste on, — and bless
“The abbot of Blantyre Prio-rie!” ——

Then forth the friar he bent his way, 65
While lightly danc’d the damsel’s heart;
Oh! how she chid the length of day,
How sigh’d to see the sun depart!

How joy’d she when eve’s shadows came,
How swiftly gain’d her tower so high! —— 70
—— ‘Does there in Blantyre shine a flame? —
‘Ah no! — the moon deceiv’d mine eye!’ ——

Again the shades of evening lour;
Again she hails the approach of night.
— ‘Shines there a flame in Blantyre tower? — 75
‘Ah no! — ’tis but the northern-light!’ ——

But when arriv’d All-hallow-E’en,
What time the night and morn divide,
The signal-lamp by Jane was seen
To glimmer on the waves of Clyde. 80

She cares not for her father’s tears,
She feels not for her father’s sighs;

No voice but headstrong Love's she hears,
And down the staircase swift she hies.

Though thrice the Brownie shriek'd — "Beware!" — 85
Though thrice was heard a dying groan,
She op'd the castle gate. — Lo! there
She found the friendly monk alone.

— 'Oh! where is Edgar, father, say?' —
— "On! on!" the friendly monk replied; 90
"He fear'd his berry-brown steed should neigh,
"And waits us on the banks of Clyde." ——

Then on they hurried, and on they hied,
Down Bothwell's slope so steep and green,
And soon they reach'd the river's side —— 95
Alas! no Edgar yet was seen!

Then, bonny Jane, thy spirits sunk;
Fill'd was thy heart with strange alarms!
— "Now thou art mine!" exclaim'd the monk,
And clasp'd her in his ruffian arms. 100

"Know, yonder bark must bear thee straight,
"Where Blantyre owns my gay controul:
"There Love and Joy to greet thee wait,
"There Pleasure crowns for thee her bowl.

"Long have I loved thee, bonny Jane, 105
"Long breathed to thee my secret vow!
"Come then, sweet maid! — nay, strife is vain;
"Not heaven itself can save thee now!" ——

The damsel shriek'd, and would have fled,
When lo! his poniard press'd her throat! 110
— "One cry, and 'tis your last!" — he said,
And bore her fainting tow'rds the boat.

The moon shone bright; the winds were chain'd;
The boatman swiftly plied his oar;
But ere the river's midst was gain'd, 115
The tempest-fiend was heard to roar.

Rain fell in sheets; high swell'd the Clyde;
Blue flam'd the lightning's blasting brand!
— "Oh! lighten the bark!" the boatman cried,
"Or hope no more to reach the strand. 120

"E'en now we stand on danger's brink!
"E'en now the boat half fill'd I see!
"Oh! lighten it soon, or else we sink!
"Oh! lighten it of your gay la-die!" —

With shrieks the maid his counsel hears; 125
But vain are now *her* prayers and cries,
Who cared not for her father's tears,
Who felt not for her father's sighs!

Fear conquer'd love! — In wild despair
The abbot view'd the watery grave, 130
Then seized his victim's golden hair,
And plunged her in the foaming wave!

She screams! — she sinks! — "Row, boatman, row!
"The bark is light!" the abbot cries;
"Row, boatman, row to land!" — When lo! 135
Gigantic grew the boatman's size!

With burning steel his temples bound
Throbb'd quick and high with fiery pangs;
He roll'd his blood-shot eyeballs round,
And furious gnash'd his iron fangs: 140

His hands two gore-fed scorpions grasp'd;

His eyes fell joy and spite express'd.
— “Thy cup is full!” — he said, and clasp'd
The abbot to his burning breast.

With hideous yell down sinks the boat, 145
And straight the warring winds subside;
Moon-silver'd clouds through æther float,
And gently murmuring flows the Clyde.

Since then full many a winter's powers
In chains of ice the earth have bound; 150
And many a spring, with blushing flowers
And herbage gay, has robed the ground:

Yet legends say, at Hallow-E'en,
When Silence holds her deepest reign,
That still the ferryman-fiend is seen 155
To waft the monk and bonny Jane:

And still does Blantyre's wreck display
The signal-lamp at midnight hour;
And still to watch its fatal ray,
The phantom-fair haunts Bothwell Tower; 160

Still tunes her lute to Edgar's name,
Still chides the hours which stay her flight;
Still sings, — “In Blantyre shines the flame?
“Ah! no! — 'tis but the northern-light!” ——

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