

William Shenstone (1714-63)

1 *Jemmy Dawson: A Ballad*

Written about the time of his execution, in the year 1745.

- 1 Come listen to my mournful tale,  
Ye tender hearts and lovers dear!  
Nor will you scorn to heave a sigh,  
Nor need you blush to shed a tear.
- 2 And thou dear Kitty! peerless maid! 5  
Do thou a pensive ear incline;  
For thou canst weep at every woe,  
And pity every plaint—but mine.
- 3 Young Dawson was a gallant boy,  
A brighter never trod the plain; 10  
And well he loved one charming maid,  
And dearly was he loved again.
- 4 One tender maid, she loved him dear;  
Of gentle blood the damsel came;  
And faultless was her beauteous form, 15  
And spotless was her virgin fame.
- 5 But curse on party's hateful strife,  
That led the favour'd youth astray;  
The day the rebel clans appear'd—  
O had he never seen that day! 20
- 6 Their colours and their sash he wore,  
And in the fatal dress was found;  
And now he must that death endure  
Which gives the brave the keenest wound.
- 7 How pale was then his true love's cheek, 25

When Jemmy's sentence reach'd her ear!  
For never yet did Alpine snows  
So pale, or yet so chill appear.

8 With faltering voice she, weeping, said,  
"O Dawson! monarch of my heart! 30  
Think not thy death shall end our loves,  
For thou and I will never part.

9 "Yet might sweet mercy find a place,  
And bring relief to Jemmy's woes,  
O George! without a prayer for thee, 35  
My orisons should never close.

10 "The gracious prince that gave him life,  
Would crown a never-dying flame;  
And every tender babe I bore  
Should learn to lisp the giver's name. 40

11 "But though he should be dragg'd in scorn  
To yonder ignominious tree;  
He shall not want one constant friend  
To share the cruel Fates' decree."

12 Oh! then her mourning coach was call'd; 45  
The sledge moved slowly on before;  
Though borne in a triumphal car,  
She had not loved her favourite more.

13 She follow'd him, prepared to view  
The terrible behests of law; 50  
And the last scene of Jemmy's woes,  
With calm and steadfast eye she saw.

14 Distorted was that blooming face,  
Which she had fondly loved so long;  
And stifled was that tuneful breath, 55



Which in her praise had sweetly sung:

- 15 And sever'd was that beauteous neck,  
Round which her arms had fondly closed;  
And mangled was that beauteous breast,  
On which her lovesick head reposed: 60
- 16 And ravish'd was that constant heart,  
She did to every heart prefer;  
For though it could its king forget,  
'Twas true and loyal still to her.
- 17 Amid those unrelenting flames 65  
She bore this constant heart to see;  
But when 'twas moulder'd into dust,  
"Yet, yet," she cried, "I follow thee.
- 18 "My death, my death alone can show 70  
The pure, the lasting love I bore:  
Accept, O Heaven! of woes like ours,  
And let us, let us weep no more."
- 19 The dismal scene was o'er and past,  
The lover's mournful hearse retired;  
The maid drew back her languid head, 75  
And, sighing forth his name, expired.
- 20 Though justice ever must prevail,  
The tear my Kitty sheds is due;  
For seldom shall she hear a tale  
So sad, so tender, yet so true. 80

1746

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