

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

27 *Westland Well*

Ye maun mak' me a scarlet gown, Lord John,  
A scarlet gown to the knee;  
It maun be sewn wi' a gowd needle,  
To mak' fit wear to me.

It maun be sewn wi' a gowd needle, 5  
And spun o' silk for thread;  
And ye maun gie me a band of silk,  
To tie upon my head.  
And ye maun gie me a sheet of silk  
To put into my bed. 10

O wha was't made ye proud, Janet,  
Or ever ye were born?  
There's nae gowd in the land, Janet,  
Is redder than the corn.

O wha was't taught you words, Janet, 15  
Or wha was't learned you pride?  
There's mony a better face than yours  
Would fain lie neist my side.

O haud your tongue, Lord John o' the Mains,  
I doubt ye hae drunken wine; 20  
There is not a maid that wons in heaven  
Wi' sic a face as mine.

Gin I were set in the high heaven,  
And God's mother were set below,  
I wad be queen of the high heaven, 25  
And she wad be let go.

When she cam in Lord John's bower,  
She never had kissed man;  
When she cam frae Lord John's bower,  
She was but his leman. 30

O ye'll gar make me a bonny bed,  
Ye'll make it warm and sweet,  
Ye'll set a pillow to my head, mither,  
And a pillow to my feet.

It fell about the middle May time 35  
When the apple flowers wax red,  
Her mither began to chide with her  
She kept sae lang abed.

I canna stand to walk, mither,  
But I'm just like to die, 40  
And wae be to your bonny bloodhound  
That bit me by the knee.

Yestreen my maids took off the sheet  
To wash i' the Westland Well,  
And lest the bonny web suld ravel, 45  
I set a hand mysell.

We washed the blue thread and the brown,  
The white thread and the black;  
And sae cam ben your fause bloodhound,  
And bit me in the back. 50

Sae sair it rent and bit, mither,  
Sae sair it bit and clang,  
And ever I hope in God, mither,  
Ye'll gar that bloodhound hang.

What's this o't now maiden Janet? 55

What's this o't now? quo' she;  
There's nae such hound that bites women,  
There's nae such langs to me.

Tell me now, Janet, she says,  
And I winna gar ye lee, 60  
Is this a hound's tooth or a child's shaping  
That mars your straight body?

O where your cheek was red, Janet,  
Your cheek is sick and wan;  
And where your back was right and flat, 65  
It bows like a loaden man.

O where your throat was round, Janet,  
It's lean and loose by this;  
And where your lip was sweet, Janet,  
It's grown too thin to kiss. 70

The blood sprang in her cheek, fair Janet,  
The blood sprang in her chin;  
I doubt there's ane wad kiss me, mither,  
Though I be sick and thin.

About the time of moon rising 75  
They set her saft in bed,  
About the time of star setting  
They streekit her for dead.

O ill be in your meat, Lord John,  
And ill be in your wine; 80  
Gin the bairn be none of your getting,  
I'm sure it's none of mine.

Ill be in your bed, Lord John,  
And ill be in your way,  
Gin ye had been hangit a year agone, 85

I had been the merrier May.

*1909*

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