

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)

5 *Faithless Nelly Gray*

A Pathetic Ballad

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
And used to war's alarms:
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
So he laid down his arms!

Now as they bore him off the field, 5
Said he, 'Let others shoot,
For here I leave my second leg,
And the Forty-second Foot!'

The army-surgeons made him limbs:
Said he, — 'They're only pegs: 10
But there's as wooden members quite
As represent my legs!'

Now Ben he loved a pretty maid,
Her name was Nelly Gray;
So he went to pay her his devours 15
When he'd devoured his pay!

But when he called on Nelly Gray,
She made him quite a scoff;
And when she saw his wooden legs,
Began to take them off! 20

'O, Nelly Gray! O, Nelly Gray!
Is this your love so warm?
The love that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform!'

Said she, 'I loved a soldier once, 25
For he was blythe and brave;
But I will never have a man
With both legs in the grave!'

‘Before you had those timber toes,
Your love I did allow, 30
But then, you know, you stand upon
Another footing now!’

‘O, Nelly Gray! O, Nelly Gray!
For all your jeering speeches,
At duty’s call, I left my legs 35
In Badajos’s *breaches!*’

‘Why, then,’ said she, ‘you’ve lost the feet
Of legs in war’s alarms,
And now you cannot wear your shoes
Upon your feats of arms!’ 40

‘O, false and fickle Nelly Gray;
I know why you refuse: —
Though I’ve no feet — some other man
Is standing in my shoes!’

‘I wish I ne’er had seen your face; 45
But, now, a long farewell!
For you will be my death; — alas!
You will not be my *Nell!*’

Now when he went from Nelly Gray,
His heart so heavy got — 50
And life was such a burthen grown,
It made him take a knot!

So round his melancholy neck,
A rope he did entwine,
And, for his second time in life, 55
Enlisted in the Line!

One end he tied around a beam,
And then removed his pegs,
And, as his legs were off, — of course,
He soon was off his legs! 60

And there he hung, till he was dead
As any nail in town, —
For though distress had cut him up,
It could not cut him down!

A dozen men sat on his corpse, 65
To find out why he died —
And they buried Ben in four cross-roads,
With a *stake* in his inside!

1826

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