

George MacDonald (1824-1905)

8 *The Yerl o' Waterydeck*

The wind it blew, and the ship it flew,  
And it was "Hey for hame!"  
But up an' cried the skipper til his crew,  
"Haud her oot ower the saut sea faem."

Syne up an' spak the angry king: 5  
"Haud on for Dumferline!"  
Quo' the skipper, "My lord, this maunna be —  
I'm king on this boat o' mine!"

He tuik the helm intil his han', 10  
He left the shore un'er the lee;  
Syne croodit sail, an', east an' south,  
Stude awa richt oot to sea.

Quo' the king, "Leise-majesty, I trow!  
Here lies some ill-set plan!  
'Bout ship!" Quo' the skipper, "Yer grace forgets 15  
Ye are king but o' the lan'!"

Oot he heild to the open sea  
Quhill the north wind flaughtered an' fell;  
Syne the east had a bitter word to say 20  
That waukent a watery hell.

He turnt her heid intil the north:  
Quo' the nobles, "He s' droon, by the mass!"  
Quo' the skipper, "Haud aff yer lady-han's  
Or ye'll never see the Bass."

The king creepit down the cabin-stair 25  
To drink the gude French wine;  
An' up cam his dochter, the princess fair,  
An' luikit ower the brine.

She turnt her face to the drivin snaw,

To the snaw but and the weet; 30  
It claucht her snood, an' awa like a clud  
Her hair drave oot i' the sleet.

She turnt her face frae the drivin win' —  
“Quhat's that aheid?” quo' she.  
The skipper he threw himsel frae the win' 35  
An' he brayt the helm alee.

“Put to yer han', my lady fair!  
Haud up her heid!” quo' he;  
“Gien she dinna face the win' a wee mair  
It's faurweel to you an' me!” 40

To the tiller the lady she laid her han',  
An' the ship brayt her cheek to the blast;  
They joukit the berg, but her quarter scraped,  
An' they luikit at ither aghast.

Quo' the skipper, “Ye are a lady fair, 45  
An' a princess gran' to see,  
But war ye a beggar, a man wud sail  
To the hell i' yer company!”

She liftit a pale an' a queenly face,  
Her een flashed, an' syne they swam: 50  
“An' what for no to the hevin?” she says,  
An' she turnt awa frae him.

Bot she tuik na her han' frae the gude ship's helm  
Till the day begouth to daw;  
An' the skipper he spak, but what was said 55  
It was said atween them twa.

An' syne the gude ship she lay to,  
Wi' Scotlan' hyne un'er the lee;  
An' the king cam up the cabin-stair  
Wi' wan face an' bluidshot ee. 60

Laigh loutit the skipper upo' the deck;  
“Stan' up, stan' up,” quo' the king;  
“Ye're an honest loun — an' beg me a boon

Quhan ye gie me back this ring.”

Lowne blew the win’; the stars cam oot; 65  
The ship turnt frae the north;  
An’ or ever the sun was up an’ about  
They war intil the firth o’ Forth.

Quhan the gude ship lay at the pier-heid,  
And the king stude steady o’ the lan’, — 70  
“Doon wi’ ye, skipper — doon!” he said,  
“Hoo daur ye afore me stan!”

The skipper he loutit on his knee;  
The king his blade he drew:  
Quo’ the king, “Noo mynt ye to contre me! 75  
I’m aboard *my* vessel noo!

“Gien I hadna been yer verra gude lord  
I wud hae thrawn yer neck!  
Bot — ye wha loutit Skipper o’ Doon,  
Rise up Yerl o’ Waterydeck.” 80

The skipper he rasena: “Yer Grace is great,  
Yer wull it can heize or ding:  
Wi’ ae wee word ye hae made me a yerl —  
Wi’ anither mak me a king.”

“I canna mak ye a king,” quo’ he, 85  
“The Lord alane can do that!  
I snowk leise-majesty, my man!  
Quhat the Sathan wad ye be at?”

Glowert at the skipper the doutsum king  
Jalousin aneth his croon; 90  
Quo’ the skipper, “Here is yer Grace’s ring —  
An’ yer dochter is my boon!”

The black blude shot intil the king’s face —  
He wasna bonny to see:  
“The rascal skipper! he lichtlies oor grace! — 95  
Gar hang him heigh on yon tree.”

Up sprang the skipper an' aboard his ship,  
Cleikit up a bytin blade  
An' hackit at the cable that held her to the pier,  
An' thought it 'maist ower weel made. 100

The king he blew shill in a siller whustle;  
An' tramp, tramp, doon the pier  
Cam twenty men on twenty horses,  
Clankin wi' spur an' spear.

At the king's fute fell his dochter fair: 105  
"His life ye wadna spill!"  
"Ye daur stan' twixt my hert an' my hate?"  
"I daur, wi' a richt gude will!"

"Ye was aye to yer faither a thrawart bairn,  
But, my lady, here stan's the king! 110  
Luikna *him* i' the angry face —  
A monarch's anither thing!"

"I lout to my father for his grace  
Low on my bendit knee;  
But I stan' an' luik the king i' the face, 115  
For the skipper is king o' me!"

She turnt, she sprang upo' the deck,  
The cable splashed i' the Forth,  
Her wings sae braid the gude ship spread  
And flew east, an' syne flew north. 120

Now was not this a king's dochter —  
A lady that feared no skaith?  
A woman wi' quhilk a man might sail  
Prood intil the Port o' Death?

1893

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