

Hector MacNeill (1746-1818)

3 *Dornock Ha'*

A Ballad.

The night blew cauld thro' snaw and sleet,
Loud rair'd the blast wi' deaf'ning din;
A voice cam' sad, yet mournfu' sweet;
"Unbar the door, and let me in!

On feckless eild, wi' waes down borne, 5
Bereft o' hame, friends, kith or kin,
Some pity tak'! — till cheering morn
Unbar the door! — Oh let me in!"

To feckless eild, or sorrow's mane
My door was aye unbarr'd and free, 10
Come in auld man ! — tho' left alane,
The friends o' pity here ye'll see:

Come in auld man! our house, tho' sma',
Has aye a nook for want and wae;
There's shelter here frae wind and snaw, 15
And kindness too, for night and day.

We led him to our cozie nook;
His cheek was wan — his strength was gane!
My GRIZZIE cast saft pity's look,
As frae her heart burst sorrow's mane; 20

She brought the best things frae her hoard,
The bicker ream'd wi' nappy brown,
And smiles o' kindness round the board
Made welcome's feast gang sweeter down.

Cheer'd wi' my Grizzie's kindly treat, 25
The carle's heart began to glow;
Our wee-things crap around his seat,
Our ingle bleez'd a canty low;

Aft times he sigh'd, and sometimes smil'd,
Then shook his head as white as snaw; 30
And aft a thought his peace beguil'd,
Whan down a tear wad trickling fa'!

“Blissfu' the lot!” at length he cries,
“When kindred virtues mingle round;
Unbind the cords that misery ties, 35
And pour their balm in sorrow's wound! —

Tw'as sae alas! when plenty shed
Her heart'ning joys within my ha';
Ilk strave to mak' the mourner glad,
And dry the tears that grief let fa'! 40

The cauldest night snell winter blaws
Could warm the freezing heart o' care;
Skreen'd safe within my sheltering wa's,
Smiles bright'ning brak' through mirk despair;

The feast, the sang, the tale gae'd round 45
To cheat the pang that sorrow gae,
And aye wi' cheering, softening sound
I waked to mirth the minstrel lay!”

What brak the joys that plenty shed? —
What banish'd safety frae your ha'? 50
Was't *poortith*, aye in sorrow clad,
That sent ye mourning thro' the snaw?

“It was na poortith wrought the change;
It was na want owrturn'd my ha';
'Twas deadly feud, and black revenge 55
Sent frail fourscore thro' blast and snaw!

Ae fearfu' night — (oh! night of fate!)
Loud beat the storm wi' thund'ring thud,
The waters raise, and in a spate
Updash'd in foam the neighb'ring flood; 60

A cry o' horror through the blast
Reach'd where my family quak'd wi' fear;
Starting I raise in wilder'd haste,
And frae the wa' upsnatch'd my spear;

“Oh gang na forth! my MARIAN cried, 65
As fast she held me to her breast,
The rain has swell'd the raging tide —
Oh gang na forth!” she sigh'd and prest.

“A horseman rides the roaring flood
Loud cried our warden frae the tower, 70
He's miss'd the ford at Dornock wood,
Nor horse, nor man, will reach the shore!”

Fearless I flew whar danger led,
The horse was gane; the rider seen
Struggling for life in death's deep bed, 75
Dash'd round in Kirtle's whirling linn! —

Oh ! had the life that then remain'd
Sunk in the flood I desp'rate braved,
What ills and waes that since hae pain'd
This bleeding heart had then been saved! 80

Senseless and pale we bare him hame;
My HELEN fair, prepared his bed!
We waked ere lang life's smother'd flame;
My Marian kind, band up his head!

Three weeks we cherish'd in our ha' 85
This fause Earl's son o' high degree,
The fourth, the traitor stal awa'
A treasure rich, and dear to me!

The lily pure that decks the vale
Fresh gilt wi' morning' beams and dew, 90
The rose that blushing scents the gale,
Wi' Helen match'd would tyne their hue! —

Ah me! e'en now, cheer'd in this nook,

Wi' thae sweet young things round my chair,
Methinks I see her artless look; — 95
Sae *ance* she smiled wha — smiles nae mair!

'O waefu' mourner! — yet disclose
What cam o' Helen stown awa'?'
"Our Warder brought the tale o' woes
Loud echoing thro' my sorrowing ha' — 100

Bowne! — bowne! — to horse! I raging cried,
To horse! my gallant friends and true,
Ere night I guess, if swift we ride,
The traitor thief the deed shall rue!

Lang, lang I sought my darling child, 105
(The gem was hid in secret bowers.)
At length 'mang glens, and forests wild,
We spied the raver's castled towers:"

'I come to warn ye o' your fate,
Outspak a herald loud and bauld, 110
'Nae careless watchmen guard yon gate,
Nae worn-out warriors frail and auld;

Full fifty spearmen, stoops o' weir,
Guard round; — their leader bad me say,
Come to your Helen kind and fair, 115
The bridal feast shall crown the day.'

"Gae, tell your fause and taunting lord
To keep his feasts for them wha crave! —
I cam na here to grace his board,
His life, or her he's stown I'll have! 120

His fifty warriors let him guide,
Wi' thirty leil I'll meet him here;
Justice and heaven are on our side,
The *base* alane hae cause to fear!

The buglers rang thro' glen and wood; 125
Our spearmen fought wi' might and main;

I sought fause GUY — he fell in blood; —
My faithfu', valiant friends war slain!

My Grizzie's colour fled, and came,
Her heaving sighs fast rise, and fa'; 130
'Speak! is na GREGORY your name,
The Baron ance o' DORNOCK HA?

"What boots it what I ance possest!
My name, my lineage wherefore tell! —
They've lang laid buried in this breast, 135
In flames o' fire my family fell! —

Oh barb'rous deed! to smother life
Guiltless o' harm — to virtue true! —
Inhuman fiends! I brunt nae *wife*,
Nor *blooming babes* that round ye grew; 140

I cam na at the dead o' night
Wi' fire to flame your ancient ha',
Drive frailty's eild to winter's blight,
And send it mourning thro' the snaw! —

What boots it what I *ance* possest! 145
My birth I've lang conceal'd in shame,
A wand'rer houseless, and distress'd,
Could ill bruik *Dornock's* baron'd name!"

His streaming griefs my Grizzie sees,
She sprang like light'ning frae her seat, 150
Cried, while she claspt the mourner's knees,
'Your Helen's daughter's at your feet?'

My *Helen's daughter!*" skreech'd he wild,
"As sair wi' warring thoughts he strave; —
"Rise — rise! nor mock my helpless eild; — 155
My Helen's lang syne in her grave!"

'Lang, lang I ken! — and weel I might!
Her death has lang been mourn'd by me;
But maist o' what ye've tauld this night

I've heard upon my mither's knee; 160

Aft, aft in sorrow's waefu' mood
When winter's nights blew drifts o' snaw,
She'd tell of *Guy's* red field o' blood,
And a' the waes o' Dornock Ha'!

And aft (when driven frae house and hame 165
By *Guy's* rough sire, wha nought could move.)
She'd talk o' GREGORY's ancient fame,
And weep his death in tears o' love!

Till worn wi' grief and mirk despair
She died! and left her child forlorn, 170
Till Kenneth's love, and tender care
Dried up the tears that now return: —

But blest the night that blew the blast
And sent ye wandering thro' the snaw
To find a kindred hame at last 175
To cheat the waes o' DORNOCK HA'!

1808

(From *Poetical Works of Hector MacNeill, Esq.* A New
Edition, Corrected and Enlarged. Philadelphia, 1815)