

William Julius Mickle (1735-88)

1 *Cumnor Hall*

The dews of summer nighte did falle,  
The moone (sweete regente of the skye)  
Silver'd the walles of Cumnor Halle,  
And manye an oake that grewe therebye.

Nowe noughte was hearde beneath the skies, 5  
(The soundes of busye lyfe were stille,)  
Save an unhappie ladie's sighes,  
That issued from that loneleye pile.

"Leicester," shee cried "is thys thy love  
"That thou so oft has sworne to mee, 10  
"To leave mee in thys loneleye grove,  
"Immurr'd in shameful privitie?

"No more thou com'st with lover's speede,  
"Thy once-beloved bryde to see;  
"But bee shee alive, or bee shee deade, 15  
"I feare (sterne earle's) the same to thee.

"Not so the usage I receiv'd,  
"When happye in my father's halle;  
"No faithlesse husbände then me griev'd,  
"No chilling feares did mee appall. 20

"I rose up with the chearful morne,  
"No lark more blith, no flow'r more gaye;  
"And, like the birde that hauntes the thorne,  
"So merrylie sung the live-long daye.

"If that my beautye is but smalle, 25  
"Among court ladies all despis'd;

“Why didst thou rend it from that halle,  
 “Where (scorneful earle) it well was priz’d?

“And when you first to mee made suite,  
 “How fayre I was you oft woulde saye! 30  
 “And, proude of conquest — pluck’d the fruite,  
 “Then lefte the blossom to decaye.

“Yes, nowe neglected and despis’d,  
 “The rose is pale — the lilly’s deade —  
 “But hee that once their charmes so priz’d, 35  
 “Is sure the cause those charms are fledde.

“For knowe, when sick’ning grieffe doth preye  
 “And tender love’s repay’d with scorne,  
 “The sweetest beautye will decaye —  
 “What flow’ret can endure the storme? 40

“At court I’m tolde is beauty’s throne,  
 “Where everye lady’s passing rare;  
 “That eastern flow’rs, that shame the sun,  
 “Are not so glowing, not soe fayre.

“Then, earle, why didst thou leave the bedds 45  
 “Where roses and where lillys vie,  
 “To seek a primrose, whose pale shades  
 “Must sicken — when those gaudes are bye?

“Mong rural beauties I was one,  
 “Among the fields wild flow’rs are faire; 50  
 “Some countrye swayne might mee have won,  
 “And thoughte my beautie passing rare.

“But, Leicester, (or I much am wronge)  
 “Or tis not beautye lures thy vowes;  
 “Rather ambition’s gilded crowne 55  
 “Makes thee forget thy humble spouse.

“Then, Leicester, why, again I pleade,  
 “(The injur’d surelye may repyne,)  
 “Why didst thou wed a countrye mayde,  
 “When some fayre princesse might be thyne? 60

“Why didst thou praise my humble charmes,  
 “And, oh! then leave them to decaye?  
 “Why didst thou win me to thy armes,  
 “Then leave me to mourne the live-long daye?

“The village maidens of the plaine 65  
 “Salute me lowly as they goe;  
 “Envious they marke my silken trayne,  
 “Nor thinke a countesse can have woe.

“The simple nymphs! they little knowe,  
 “How farre more happy’s their estate — 70  
 “ — To smile for joye — than sigh for woe —  
 “ — To be contente — than to be greate.

“Howe farre lesse bleste am I than them?  
 “Dailye to pyne and waste with care!  
 “Like the poore plante, that from its stem 75  
 “Divided — feeles the chilling ayre.

“Nor (cruel earl!) can I enjoye  
 “The humble charmes of solitude;  
 “Your minions proude my peace destroye,  
 “By sullen frownes or pratings rude. 80

“Laste nyghte, as sad I chanc’d to straye,  
 “The village deathe-bell smote my eare;  
 “They wink’d asyde, and seem’d to saye,  
 “Countesse, prepare — thy end is neare.

“And nowe, while happye peasantes sleepe, 85

“Here I set lonelye and forlorne;  
“No one to soothe mee as I weepe,  
“Save phylomel on yonder thorne.

“My spirits flag — my hopes decaye —  
“Still that dreade deathe-bell smites my eare; 90  
“And many a boding seems to saye,  
“Countess, prepare — thy end is neare.”

Thus sore and sad that ladie griev'd,  
In Cumnor Halle so lone and dreare;  
And manye a heartefelte sighe shee heav'd, 95  
And let falle manye a bitter teare.

And ere the dawne of daye appear'd,  
In Cumnor Hall so lone and dreare,  
Full manye a piercing screame was hearde,  
And manye a crye of mortal feare. 100

The death-belle thrice was hearde to ring,  
An aërial voyce was hearde to call,  
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wyng  
Arounde the tow'rs of Cumnor Hall.

The mastiffe howl'd at village doore, 105  
The oaks were shatter'd on the greene;  
Woe was the houre — for never more  
That haplesse countesse e'er was seene.

And in that manor now no more  
Is chearful feaste and sprightly balle; 110  
For ever since that drearye houre  
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall.

The village maides, with fearful glance,  
Avoid the antient mossgrowne walle;  
Nor ever leade the merrye dance, 115

Among the groves of Cumnor Halle.

Full manye a travellor oft hath sigh'd,  
And pensive wepte the countess' falle,  
As wand'ring onwards they've espied  
The haunted tow'rs of Cumnor Halle. 120

1784

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