

Charles K. Sharpe (?1781-1851)

2 *The Murder of Caerlaveroc*

“Now, come to me, my little page,
Of wit sae wond’rous sly!
Ne’er under flower, o’ youthfu’ age,
Did mair destruction lie.

“I’ll dance and revel wi’ the rest, 5
Within this castle rare;
Yet he shall rue the drearie feast,
Bot and his lady fair.

“For ye maun drug Kirkpatrick’s wine, 10
Wi’ juice o’ poppy flowers;
Nae mair he’ll see the morning shine
Frae proud Caerlaveroc’s towers.

“For he has twin’d my love and me, 15
The maid of mickle scorn —
She’ll welcome, wi’ a tearfu’ e’e,
Her widowhood the morn.

“And saddle weel my milk-white steed,
Prepare my harness bright!
Gif I can mak my rival bleed,
I’ll ride awa’ this night.” 20

“Now, haste ye, master, to the ha’!
The guests are drinking there;
Kirkpatrick’s pride sall be but sma’,
For a’ his lady fair.”

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In came the merry minstrelsy; 25
Shrill harps wi’ tinkling string,
And bag-pipes, liling melody,

Made proud Caerlaveroc ring.

There gallant knights, and ladies bright,
Did move to measures fine, 30
Like frolic fairies, jimp and light
Wha dance in pale moonshine.

The ladies glided through the ha',
Wi' footing swift and sure —
Kirkpatrick's dame outdid them a', 35
Whan she stood on the floor.

And some had tyres of gold sae rare,
And pendants eight or nine;
And she, wi' but her gowden hair,
Did a' the rest outshine. 40

And some, wi' costly diamonds sheen,
Did warriors' hearts assail —
But she, wi' her twa sparkling een,
Pierced through the thickest mail.

Kirkpatrick led her by the hand, 45
With gay and courteous air:
No stately castle in the land
Could shew sae bright a pair.

O he was young — and clear the day
Of life to youth appears! 50
Alas! how soon his setting ray
Was dimm'd wi' show'ring tears!

Fell Lindsay sicken'd at the sight
And sallow grew his cheek;
He tried wi' smiles to hide his spite, 55
But word he cou'dna speak.

The gorgeous banquet was brought up,
On silver and on gold:
The page chose out a crystal cup,
The sleepy juice to hold. 60

And whan Kirkpatrick call'd for wine,
This page the drink wou'd bear;
Nor did the knight or dame divine
Sic black deceit was near.

Then every lady sung a sang; 65
Some gay — some sad and sweet —
Like tunefu' birds the woods amang,
Till a' began to greet.

E'en cruel Lindsay shed a tear,
Forletting malice deep — 70
As mermaids, wi' their warbles clear,
Can sing the waves to sleep.

And now to bed they all are dight,
Now steek they ilka door:
There's nought but stillness o' the night, 75
Whare was sic din before.

Fell Lindsay puts his harness on,
His steed doth ready stand;
And up the staircase is he gone,
Wi' poniard in his hand. 80

The sweat did on his forehead break,
He shook wi' guilty fear;
In air he heard a joyfu' shriek —
Red Cumin's ghaist was near.

Now to the chamber doth he creep — 85
A lamp, of glimmering ray,
Show'd young Kirkpatrick fast asleep,
In arms of lady gay.

He lay wi' bare unguarded breast,
By sleepy juice beguiled; 90
And sometimes sigh'd, by dreams opprest,
And sometimes sweetly smiled.

Unclosed her mouth o' rosy hue,
Whence issued fragrant air,
That gently, in soft motion, blew 95
Stray ringlets o' her hair.

“Sleep on, sleep on, ye lovers dear!
The dame may wake to weep —
But that day's sun maun shine fu' clear,
That spills this warrior's sleep.” 100

He louted down — her lips he prest —
O! kiss, foreboding woe!
Then struck on young Kirkpatrick's breast
A deep and deadly blow.

Sair, sair, and mickle, did he bleed: 105
His lady slept till day,
But dream't the Firth flow'd o'er her head,
In bride-bed as she lay.

The murderer hasted down the stair,
And back'd his courser fleet: 110
Then did the thunder 'gin to rair,
Then shower'd the rain and sleet.

Ae fire-flaught darted through the rain,
Whare a' was mirk before,
And glinted o'er the raging main, 115
That shook the sandy shore.

But mirk and mirker grew the night,
And heavier beat the rain;
And quicker Lindsay urged his flight,
Some ha' or beild to gain. 120

Lang did he ride o'er hill and dale,
Nor mire nor flood he fear'd:
I trow his courage 'gan to fail
When morning light appear'd.

For having hied, the live-lang night, 125

Through hail and heavy showers,
He fand himsel, at peep o' light,
Hard by Caerlaveroc's towers.

The castle bell was ringing out,
The ha' was all asteer; 130
And mony a scriech and waefu' shout
Appall'd the murderer's ear.

Now they hae bound this traitor strang,
Wi' curses and wi' blows,
And high in air they did him hang, 135
To feed the carrion crows.

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“To sweet Lincluden's haly cells
Fou dowie I'll repair;
There peace wi' gentle patience dwells,
Nae deadly feuds are there. 140

“In tears I'll wither ilka charm,
Like draps o' balefu' yew;
And wail the beauty that cou'd harm
A knight, sae brave and true.”

1802-03

(From Sir Walter Scott, ed. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Ed. Thomas Henderson. London, 1931)