

William Shenstone (1714-63)

1 *Jemmy Dawson: A Ballad*

Written about the time of his execution, in the year 1745.

- 1 Come listen to my mournful tale,
Ye tender hearts and lovers dear!
Nor will you scorn to heave a sigh,
Nor need you blush to shed a tear.
- 2 And thou dear Kitty! peerless maid! 5
Do thou a pensive ear incline;
For thou canst weep at every woe,
And pity every plaint—but mine.
- 3 Young Dawson was a gallant boy,
A brighter never trod the plain; 10
And well he loved one charming maid,
And dearly was he loved again.
- 4 One tender maid, she loved him dear;
Of gentle blood the damsel came;
And faultless was her beauteous form, 15
And spotless was her virgin fame.
- 5 But curse on party's hateful strife,
That led the favour'd youth astray;
The day the rebel clans appear'd—
O had he never seen that day! 20
- 6 Their colours and their sash he wore,
And in the fatal dress was found;
And now he must that death endure
Which gives the brave the keenest wound.
- 7 How pale was then his true love's cheek, 25

When Jemmy's sentence reach'd her ear!
For never yet did Alpine snows
So pale, or yet so chill appear.

8 With faltering voice she, weeping, said,
"O Dawson! monarch of my heart! 30
Think not thy death shall end our loves,
For thou and I will never part.

9 "Yet might sweet mercy find a place,
And bring relief to Jemmy's woes,
O George! without a prayer for thee, 35
My orisons should never close.

10 "The gracious prince that gave him life,
Would crown a never-dying flame;
And every tender babe I bore
Should learn to lisp the giver's name. 40

11 "But though he should be dragg'd in scorn
To yonder ignominious tree;
He shall not want one constant friend
To share the cruel Fates' decree."

12 Oh! then her mourning coach was call'd; 45
The sledge moved slowly on before;
Though borne in a triumphal car,
She had not loved her favourite more.

13 She follow'd him, prepared to view
The terrible behests of law; 50
And the last scene of Jemmy's woes,
With calm and steadfast eye she saw.

14 Distorted was that blooming face,
Which she had fondly loved so long;
And stifled was that tuneful breath, 55

Which in her praise had sweetly sung:

- 15 And sever'd was that beauteous neck,
Round which her arms had fondly closed;
And mangled was that beauteous breast,
On which her lovesick head reposed: 60
- 16 And ravish'd was that constant heart,
She did to every heart prefer;
For though it could its king forget,
'Twas true and loyal still to her.
- 17 Amid those unrelenting flames 65
She bore this constant heart to see;
But when 'twas moulder'd into dust,
"Yet, yet," she cried, "I follow thee.
- 18 "My death, my death alone can show
The pure, the lasting love I bore: 70
Accept, O Heaven! of woes like ours,
And let us, let us weep no more."
- 19 The dismal scene was o'er and past,
The lover's mournful hearse retired;
The maid drew back her languid head, 75
And, sighing forth his name, expired.
- 20 Though justice ever must prevail,
The tear my Kitty sheds is due;
For seldom shall she hear a tale
So sad, so tender, yet so true. 80

1746

(From *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone*. With
Life, Critical Dissertation, and Explanatory Notes by the
Rev. George Gilfillan. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854)