

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

10 *The Earl of Mar's Daughter*

It was intill a goodly time,
The first morning in May,
The bonny Earl of Mar's daughter
Went forth hersell to play.

She's tane her to the bonny birkenshaw 5
Among the fair green leaves;
There she saw a bonny doo
Sat on the leaf o' the tree.

"O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true,
Gin ye'll come down to me, 10
I'll gie ye a cage of good red gowd
For a cage of green shaw tree."

"Gowden hingers roun' your cage,
And siller roun' your wa',
I'll gar ye shine as bonny a bird 15
As the bonniest ower them a'."

She hadna weel these words spoken,
Nor yet she hadna said,
Till Coo-me-doo flew frae the leaves
And lighted on her head. 20

And she's tane hame this bonny bird,
Brought him to bower and ha';
She's garred him shine the bonniest bird
That was out ower them a'.

When day was gane and night was come 25

In ae chamber they were that tide;
And there she saw a goodly young man
Stood straight up at her side.

“How cam ye in my bower-chamber,
For sair it marvels me, 30
For the bolts are made o’ the good red gowd
And the door-shafts of a good tree.”

“O haud your tongue now, May Janet,
And of your talking let me be;
Mind ye not on your turtle-doo 35
That ye brought hame wi’ ye?”

“O whatten a man are ye,” she said,
“Fu’ sair this marvels me;
I doubt ye are some keen warlock
That wons out ower the sea.” 40

“O come ye here for ills?” she says,
“Or come ye for my good?
I doubt ye are some strong warlock
That wons out ower the flood.”

“My mither is lady of strange landis 45
Stand far out ower the sea;
She witched me to a birdie’s shape
For the love of your body.”

“My mither is queen of the witch-landis
Lie baith to north and south; 50
She witched me to a birdie’s body
For the love of your goodly mouth.”

“She can well of witches’ work,
She maketh baith mirth and meen;
She witched me to a little bird’s body 55

For the love of your twa grey een.”

“It was a’ for your yellow hair
That I cam ower the sea;
And it was a’ for your bonny mouth
I took sic weird on me.” 60

“O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true,
Nae mair frae me ye’se gae.
The stanes shall fleet on the wan waters
Before we twain be twey.”

“O Coo-me-doo, my love sae true, 65
It’s time we were abed.”
“O weel for you, my ain sweet thing,
It’s be as ye have said.”

Then he’s dwelt in her bower-chamber
Fu’ six lang years and ane, 70
And seven fair sons she’s borne to him.
Fairer was there never nane.

The first bairn she’s borne to him
He’s tane him ower the sea;
He’s gien it to his auld mither, 75
Bade well-nourished it should be.

The seventh bairn she’s borne to him,
He’s tane him frae his make;
He’s gien it to his auld mither,
Bade nourice it for his sake. 80

And he’s dwelt in her bower-chamber
Fu’ six years thro’ and three;
Till there is comen an auld grey knight
Her wed-lord for to be;
She had nae will to his gowden gifts 85

Nor wad she to his fee.

Out then spak the bonny bird,
He heard what they did say;
Says; "Waes be to you, ye auld grey man,
For it's time I were away."

90

Then Coo-me-doo took flight and flew
He flew out ower the sea;
He's lighted by his mither's castle-ha'
On a tower of gold fu' hie.

1917

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