

The Braes of Yarrow

By William Hamilton, of Bangour

Busk ye, husk ye, my bonny, bonny bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow¹;
Busk ye, husk ye, my bonny, bonny bride,
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow.

Where gat ye that bonny, bonny bride?
Where gat ye that winsome marrow?
I gat her where I dare nae weil be seen,
Pu'ing the birks² on the braes of Yarrow.

Weep not, weep not, my bonny, bonny bride,
Weep not, weep not, my winsome marrow;
Nor let thy heart lament to leave
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

Why does she weep, thy bonny, bonny bride?
Why does she weep, thy winsome marrow?
And why dare ye nae mair weil be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow?

Lang maun she weep, lang maun she, maun she weep,
Lang maun she weep with dule and sorrow;
And lang maun I nae mair well be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

For she has tint³ her lover, lover dear,
Her lover dear, the cause of sorrow;
And I hae slain the comeliest swain
That e'er pu'd birks on the braes of Yarrow.

Why runs thy stream, O Yarrow, Yarrow reid⁴?
Why on thy braes heard the voice of sorrow?
And why yon melancholious weeds,
Hung on the bonny birks of Yarrow?

What's yonder floats on the rueful, rueful flood?

¹ Mate.

² Birches.

³ Lost.

⁴ Red.

What's yonder floats? O dule and sorrow!
O 'tis the comely swain I slew
Upon the doleful braes of Yarrow.

Wash, O wash his wounds, his wounds in tears,
His wounds in tears with dule and sorrow;
And wrap his limbs in mourning weeds,
And lay him on the braes of Yarrow.

Then build, then build, ye sisters, sisters sad,
Ye sisters sad, his tomb with sorrow;
And weep around in waeful wise,
His hapless fate on the braes of Yarrow.

Curse ye, curse ye his useless, useless shield,
My arm that wrought the deed of sorrow,
The fatal spear that pierc'd his breast,
His comely breast on the braes of Yarrow.

Did I not warn thee not to, not to love,
And warn from fight; but to my sorrow,
Too rashly bold, a stronger arm
Thou met'st, and fell on the braes of Yarrow.

Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan⁵,
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan⁶.

Flows Yarrow sweet? as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow,
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,
The apple frae the rock as mellow.

Fair was thy love, fair, fair indeed thy love;
In flow'ry bands thou him did'st fetter:
Tho' he was fair, and well belov'd again,
Than me he never lov'd thee better.

Busk ye, then busk, my bonny, bonny bride,
Busk ye, then busk, my winsome marrow;
Busk ye, and lo'e me on the banks of Tweed,
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow.

⁵ Daisy.

⁶ Flowing.

How can I busk a bonny, bonny bride?
How can I busk a winsome marrow?
How lo'e him on the banks of Tweed,
That slew my love on the braes of Yarrow?

O Yarrow fields, let never, never rain,
No dew thy tender blossoms cover;
For there was basely slain my love,
My love, as he had not been a lover.

The boy put on his robes, his robes of green,
His purple vest,—'twas my awn sewing;
Ah! wretched me! I little, little ken'd,
He was in these to meet his ruin.

The boy took out his milk-white, milk-white steed,
Unheedful of my dule and sorrow;
But ere the to-fall⁷ of the night,
He lay a corpse on the braes of Yarrow.

Much I rejoic'd that waeful, waeful day;
I sang, my voice the woods returning:
But lang ere night the spear was flown
That slew my love, and left me mourning.

What can my barbarous, barbarous father do,
But with his cruel rage pursue me?
My lover's blood is on thy spear;
How canst thou, barbarous man, then woo me?

My happy sisters may be, may be proud;
With cruel and ungentle scoffing,
May bid me seek on Yarrow's braes
My lover nailed in his coffin.

My brother Douglas may upbraid,
And strive with threat'ning words to move me;
My lover's blood is on thy spear;
How canst thou ever bid me love thee?

Yes, yes, prepare the bed, the bed of love;
With bridal sheets my body cover:
Unbar, ye bridal maids, the door;
Let in the expected husband lover.

⁷ Oncoming.

But who the expected husband, husband is?
His hands, methinks, are bath'd in slaughter.
Ah me! what ghastly spectre's yon,
Comes, in his pale shroud, bleeding after?

Pale as he is, here lay him, lay him down;
O lay his cold head on my pillow:
Tak aff, tak aff these bridal weeds,
And crown my careful head with willow.

Pale tho' thou art, yet best, yet best belov'd,
O could my warmth to life restore thee!
Yet lie all night between my breasts;
No youth lay ever there before thee.

Pale, pale indeed, O lovely, lovely youth!
Forgive, forgive so foul a slaughter.
And lie all night between my breasts;
No youth shall ever lie there after.

Return, return, O mournful, mournful bride,
Return and dry thy useless sorrow;
Thy lover heeds nought of thy sighs,
He lies a corpse on the braes of Yarrow.