

The Weird Lady

By Charles Kingsley

The swevens came up round Harold the Earl,
Like motes in the sunnes beam;
And over him stood the Weird Lady,
In her charmed castle over the sea,
Sang "Lie thou still and dream."

"Thy steed is dead in his stall, Earl Harold,
Since thou hast been with me;
The rust has eaten thy harness bright,
And the rats have eaten thy greyhound light,
That was so fair and free."

Mary Mother she stooped from heaven;
She wakened Earl Harold out of his sweven,
To don his harness on;
And over the land and over the sea
He wended abroad to his own countrie,
A weary way to gon.

Oh but his beard was white with eld,
Oh but his hair was gray;
He stumbled on by stock and stone,
And as he journeyed he made his moan
Along that weary way.

Earl Harold came to his castle wall;
The gate was burnt with fire;
Roof and rafter were fallen down,
The folk were strangers all in the town,
And strangers all in the shire.

Earl Harold came to a house of nuns,
And he heard the dead-bell toll;
He saw the sexton stand by a grave;
"Now Christ have mercy, who did us save,
Upon yon fair nun's soul."

The nuns they came from the convent gate
By one, by two, by three;
They sang for the soul of a lady bright
Who died for the love of a traitor knight:

It was his own lady.

He stayed the corpse beside the grave;

“A sign, a sign!” quod he.

“Mary Mother who rulest heaven,

Send me a sign if I be forgiven

By the woman who so loved me.”

A white dove out of the coffin flew;

Earl Harold’s mouth it kist;

He fell on his face, wherever he stood;

And the white dove carried his soul to God

Or ever the bearers wist.