

Clerk Colvin

By Anonymous

Clerk Colvin and his Lady gay,
They walk'd in yonder garden sheen:
The girdle round her middle jimp¹
Had cost Clerk Colvin crowns fifteen.

—“Oh hearken well, my wedded Lord,
“Oh hearken well to what I say;
“When ye gae² by the wells of Stane,
“Beware, ye touch nae well-faced mae.”³

—“Oh! haud⁴ your tongue, my Lady gay,
“And haud my Lady gay, your din:
“ Did I never yet see a fair woman,
“But wi' her body I wad sin?”—

Then he's rode on frae his Lady fair,
Nought reeking what that Lady said,
And he's rode by the wells of Stane,
Where washing was a bonnie maid.

“Wash on! Wash on! my bonnie may!
“Sae clean ye wash your sark⁵ of silk.”—
“And weel fa you,⁶ fair gentle knight,
“Whose skin is whiter far than milk!”—

He has ta'en her by the lilly hand,
He has ta'en her by the grass-green sleeve,
And thrice has pried her bonnie mou,⁷
Nor of his lady speered he leave.⁸

¹ Stays.

² Go.

³ Maiden.

⁴ Hold.

⁵ Shift.

⁶ *Weel fa you*, good luck to you.

⁷ *Pried her mou*, kissed her mouth.

⁸ *Speered he leave*, asked her leave.

Soon as his mouth her lip had press'd,
His heart was fill'd with doubt and dread;
—"Ohan! and alas!" Clerk Colvin says,
"Ohan, and alas! What pains my head?"—

"Sir Knight, now take your little penknife,
"And frae my sark ye's cut a gare;⁹
"Row¹⁰ that around your face so pale,
And o' the pain ye'll feel na mair."¹¹—

Syne¹² out has he ta'en his little penknife,
And frae her sark he cut a gare,
He row'd it around his face so pale,
But the pain increased still mair and mair.

Then out, and spake the knight again,
"Alas! more sairly throbs my head!"—
And merrily did the mermaid laugh,
"Twill ever be wae,¹³ till ye be dead!"

He has drawn out his trusty blade,
All for to kill her where she stood,
But she was changed to a monstrous fish,
And quickly sprang into the flood.

He has mounted on his berry-brown steed,
And dowie,¹⁴ dowie, on he rides,
Till he has reach'd Dunallan's towers,
And there his mother dear resides.

"Oh! mother, mother, make my bed,
"And lay me down, my fair La-dye;
"And brother dear, unbend my bow,
"Twill never more be bent by me

His mother, she has made his bed,
She has laid him down, his fair La-dye;
His brother has unbent his bow,
And death has closed Clerk Colvin's eë!¹⁵

⁹ Piece.

¹⁰ Wrap.

¹¹ *Na mair*, no more.

¹² Then.

¹³ *Be wae*, be painful.

¹⁴ Swiftly.

¹⁵ Eye.

There is a great resemblance between this old Scotch Ballad, and the Danish tradition, of "*the Erl-King's Daughter.*"