

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07726-2 - Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets: Volume 3

Edited by Thomas Percy

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## AND BALLADS.

## I.

## THE BOY AND THE MANTLE,

— *Is printed verbatim from the old MS described in the Preface. The Editor believes it more ancient, than it will appear to be at first sight; the transcriber of that manuscript having reduced the orthography and style in many instances to the standard of his own times.*

*The incidents of the MANTLE and the KNIFE have not, that I can recollect, been borrowed from any other writer. The former of these evidently suggested to Spenser his conceit of FLORIMEL'S GIRDLÉ. B. iv. C. 5. St. 3.*

*That girdle gave the virtue of chaste love  
And wivehood true to all that did it beare;  
But whosoever contrarie doth prove,  
Might not the same about her middle weare,  
But it would loose or else asunder teare.*

*So it happened to the false Florimel, st. 16, when  
— Being brought, about her middle small  
They thought to gird, as best it her became,  
But by no means they could it thereto frame,  
For ever as they fastned it, it loos'd  
And fell away, as feeling secret blame, &c.*

*That all men wondred at the uncouth sight  
And each one thought as to their fancies came.  
But she herself did think it done for spight,  
And touch'd was with secret wrath and shame  
Therewith, as thing deviz'd her to defame:  
Then many other ladies likewise tride*

*About their tender loynes to knit the same,  
But it would not on none of them abide,  
But when they thought it fast, estfoones it was untide.  
Thereat all knights gan laugh and ladies lowr:  
Till that at last the gentle Amoret*

VOL. I.

B

Bike-

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## 2 ANCIENT SONGS

*Likewise assayed to prove that girdle's powre.  
And having it about her middle set  
Did find it fit withouten breach or let,  
Whereat the rest gan greatly to envie.  
But Florimel exceedingly did fret  
And snatching from her hand, &c.*

*As for the trial of the HORNE, it is not peculiar to our Poet: It occurs in the old romance, intituled Morte Arthur, which was translated out of French in the time of K Edw. IV. and first printed anno 1484. From this romance Ariosto borrowed his tale of the Enchanted Cup, C. 42. &c. See Mr. Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queen, 8vo. 1753.*

*The story of the HORN in Morte Arthur varies a good deal from this of our Poet, as the reader will judge from the following extract.—*” By the way they met with  
“ a knight that was sent from Morgan le Faye to king  
“ Arthur, and this knight had a fair horne all garnished  
“ with gold, and the horne had such a virtue that there  
“ might no ladye or gentlewoman drinke of that horne, but  
“ if she were true to her husband: and if shee were false  
“ she should spill all the drinke, and if shee were true unto  
“ her lorde, shee might drink peaceably: and because of  
“ queene Guenever and in despite of Sir Launcelot du Lake,  
“ this horne was sent unto king Arthur.”—*This horn is intercepted and brought unto another king named Marke, who is not a whit more fortunate than the British hero, for he makes “ his queene drinke thereof and an hundred ladies moe, and there were but foure ladies of all those that drank cleane” of which number the said queen, proves not to be one [Book II. chap. 22. Ed. 1632.]*

*In other respects the two stories are so different. that we have jst reason to suppose this Ballad was written before that romance was translated into English.*

*As for queen Guenever, she is here represented no otherwise, than as we find her in old histories and romances. Holinshed observes, that “ she was evil reported of, as noted of incontinence and breach of faith to hir husband.” Vol. 1. p. 93.*

☞ SUCH READERS, AS HAVE NO RELISH FOR PURE ANTIQUITY, WILL FIND A MORE MODERN COPY OF THIS BALLAD AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

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## A N D B A L L A D S. 3

**I**N the third day of may,  
To Carleile did come  
A kind curteous child,  
That cold much of wifdome.

A kirtle and a mantle 5  
This child had uppon,  
With ‘brooches’ and ringes  
Full richelye bedone.

He had a fute of filke  
About his middle drawne; 10  
Without he cold of curtesye  
He thought itt much shame.

God speede thee, king Arthur,  
Sitting at thy meate:  
And the goodly queene Guénever, 15  
I cannott her forgett.

I tell you, lords, in this hall;  
I hett you all to ‘heede’;  
Except you be the more furer  
Is for you to dread. 20

He plucked out of his poterver,  
And longer wold not dwell,  
He pulled forth a pretty mantle,  
Betweene two nut-shells.

B 2

Have

*Ver. 7.* Branches, *MS. Ver. 11.* heate, *MS. Ver. 21.* or potewer.



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<b>A N D - B A L L A D S.</b>	<b>5</b>
Shee threw downe the mantle, That bright was of blec ;	50
Fast with a rudd redd, To her chamber can shee flee.	
She curst the weaver, and the walker, That clothe that had wrought ;	
And bade a vengeance on his crowne, That hither hath itt brought.	55
I had rather be in a wood, Under a green tree ;	
Than in king Arthur's court Shamed for to bee.	60
Kay called forth his ladye, And bade her come neere ;	
Saies, Madam, and thou be guiltye, I pray thee hold thee there.	
Forth came his ladye	65
Shortlye and anon ; Boldlye to the mantle	
Then is shee gone.	
When she had tane the mantle, And cast it her about ;	70
Then was she bare ' Before all the rout."	
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	<b>Then</b>



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## A N D B A L L A D S. 7

And fast, with a redd rudd,  
To her chamber can shee flee.

Craddocke called forth his ladye,  
And bade her come in; 100  
Saith, winne this mantle, ladye,  
With a little dinne.

Winne this mantle, ladye,  
And it shal be thine,  
If thou never did amisse 105  
Since thou wast mine.

Forth came Craddocke's ladye  
Shortlye and anon;  
But boldlye to the mantle  
Then is shee gone. 110

When shee had tane the mantle,  
And cast itt her about,  
Upp att her great toe  
It began to crinkle and crowt:  
Shee said, bowe-downe, mantle, 115  
And shame me not for nought.

Once I did amisse,  
I tell you certainlye,  
When I kist Craddocke's mouth  
Under a greene tree; 120  
B 4 When





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## A N D B A L L A D S. 9

Then spake the litle boy,  
That kept the mantle in hold ;  
Sayes, king, chasten thy wiffe, 145  
Of her words shee is too bold :

Shee is a bitch and a witch,  
And whore bold :  
King, in thine owne hall,  
Thou art a cuckold. 150

The litle boy stooode  
Looking out a dore ;  
' And there as he was lookinge  
' He was ware of a wyld bore.'

He was ware of a wyld bore, 155  
Wold have werryed a man :  
He pulled forth a wood kniffe,  
Fast thither that he ran :  
He brought in the bores head,  
And quitted him like a man. 160

He brought in the bores head,  
And was wonderous bold :  
He said there were never a cuckolds kniffe  
Carve itt that cold.

Some rubbed their knives 165  
Uppon a whetstone :

Some

