

**DICKENS CHARLES, THACKERAY
WILLIAM MAKEPEACE**

**THE LOVING
BALLAD OF
LORD BATEMAN**

Charles Dickens
William Thackeray
The Loving Ballad
of Lord Bateman

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Содержание

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Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

6
11

Charles Dickens

The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman

In some collection of old English Ballads there is an ancient ditty which I am told bears some remote and distant resemblance to the following Epic Poem. I beg to quote the emphatic language of my estimable friend (if he will allow me to call him so), the Black Bear in Piccadilly, and to assure all to whom these presents may come, that "*I am the original.*" This affecting legend is given in the following pages precisely as I have frequently heard it sung on Saturday nights, outside a house of general refreshment (familarly termed a wine vaults) at Battle-bridge. The singer is a young gentleman who can scarcely have numbered nineteen summers, and who before his last visit to the treadmill, where he was erroneously incarcerated for six months as a vagrant (being unfortunately mistaken for another gentleman), had a very melodious and plaintive tone of voice, which, though it is now somewhat impaired by gruel and such a getting up stairs for so long a period, I hope shortly to find restored. I have taken down the words from his own mouth at different periods, and have been careful to preserve his pronunciation, together with the air to which he does so much justice. Of his execution of it, however, and the intense melancholy which he communicates

to such passages of the song as are most susceptible of such an expression, I am unfortunately unable to convey to the reader an adequate idea, though I may hint that the effect seems to me to be in part produced by the long and mournful drawl on the last two or three words of each verse.

I had intended to have dedicated my imperfect illustrations of this beautiful Romance to the young gentleman in question. As I cannot find, however, that he is known among his friends by any other name than "The Tripe-skewer," which I cannot but consider as a *soubriquet*, or nick-name; and as I feel that it would be neither respectful nor proper to address him publicly by that title, I have been compelled to forego the pleasure. If this should meet his eye, will he pardon my humble attempt to embellish with the pencil the sweet ideas to which he gives such feeling utterance? And will he believe me to remain his devoted admirer,

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK?

P.S. – The above is not my writing, nor the notes either, nor am I on familiar terms (but quite the contrary) with the Black Bear. Nevertheless I admit the accuracy of the statement relative to the public singer whose name is unknown, and concur generally in the sentiments above expressed relative to him.

The Loving Ballad Of Lord Bateman

I

Lord Bateman vos a noble Lord,
A noble Lord of high degree;
He shipped his-self all aboard of a ship,
Some foreign country for to see.¹²

¹ Some foreign country for to seeThe reader is here in six words artfully made acquainted with Lord Bateman's character and temperament. – Of a roving, wandering, and unsettled spirit, his Lordship left his native country, bound he knew not whither. *Some* foreign country he wished to see, and that was the extent of his desire; any foreign country would answer his purpose – all foreign countries were alike to him. He was a citizen of the world, and upon the world of waters, sustained by the daring and reckless impulses of his heart, he boldly launched. For anything, from pitch-and-toss upwards to manslaughter, his Lordship was prepared. Lord Bateman's character at this time, and his expedition, would appear to Have borne a striking resemblance to those of Lord Byron.His goblets brimmed with every costly wine,And all that mote to luxury invite.Without a sigh he left to cross the brine,And traverse Paynim shores, and pass earth's central line.Childe Harold, Canto I.

² For the notes to this beautiful Poem, see the end of the work.

II

He sail-ed east, he sail-ed vest,
Until he come to famed Tur-key,
Vere he vos taken, and put to prisin,
Until his life was quite wea-ry.

III

All in this prisin there grew a tree,
O! there it grew so stout and strong,
Vere he vos chain-ed all by the middle
Until his life vos almost gone.

IV

This Turk³ he had one ounly darter,

³ This Turk he had, &cThe poet has here, by that bold license which only genius can venture upon, surmounted the extreme difficulty of introducing any particular Turk, by assuming a fore-gone conclusion in the reader's mind, and adverting in a casual, careless way to a Turk unknown, as to an old acquaintance. "*This Turk he had* – " We

The fairest my two eyes e'er see,
She steele the keys of her father's prisin,
And swore Lord Bateman she would let go free.

V

O she took him to her father's cellar,
And giv to him the best of vine;
And ev'ry holth she dronk unto him,
Vos, "I vish Lord Bateman as you vos mine!"⁴

have heard of no Turk before, and yet this familiar introduction satisfies us at once that we know him well. He was a pirate, no doubt, of a cruel and savage disposition, entertaining a hatred of the Christian race, and accustomed to garnish his trees and vines with such stray professors of Christianity as happened to fall into his hands. "This Turk he had –" is a master-stroke – a truly Shakspearian touch. There are few things like it in the language.

⁴ And every holth she drunk unto him Vos, "I vish Lord Bateman as you vos mine!" A most affecting illustration of the sweetest simplicity, the purest artlessness, and holiest affections of woman's gentle nature. Bred up among the rough and savage crowds which thronged her father's lawless halls, and meeting with no responsive or kindred spirit among those fierce barbarians (many of whom, however, touched by her surpassing charms, though insensible to her virtues and mental endowments, had vainly sought her hand in marriage), this young creature had spent the greater part of her life in the solitude of her own apartments, or in contemplating the charms of nature arrayed in all the luxury of eastern voluptuousness. At length she hears from an aged and garrulous attendant, her only female adviser (for her mother died when she was yet an infant), of the sorrows and sufferings of the Christian captive. Urged by pity and womanly sympathy, she repairs to his prison to succour and console him. She supports his feeble and tottering steps to her father's cellar, recruits his exhausted

VI

"O have you got houses, have you got land,
And does Northumberland belong to thee?
And what would you give to the fair young lady
As out of prisin would let you go free?"

VII

"O I've got houses, and I've got land,
And half Northumberland belongs to me;
And I vill give it all to the fair young lady
As out of prisin would let me go free."

frame with copious draughts of sparkling wine, and when his dim eye brightens, and his pale cheek becomes flushed with the glow of returning health and animation, she – unaccustomed to disguise or concealment, and being by nature all openness and truth – gives vent to the feelings which now thrill her maiden heart for the first time, in the rich gush of unspeakable love, tenderness, and devotion —I vish Lord Bateman as you vos mine!

VIII

"O in sevin long years, I'll make a wow
For sevin long years, and keep it strong,⁵
That if you'll ved no other voman,
O I vill v-e-ed no other man."

⁵ Oh, in sevin long years I'll make a wow, I'll make a wow, and I'll keep it strong. Love has converted the tender girl into a majestic heroine; she cannot only make "a wow," but she can "keep it strong;" she feels all the dignity of truth and love swelling in her bosom. With the view of possessing herself of the real state of Lord Bateman's affections, and with no sordid or mercenary motives, she has enquired of that nobleman what are his means of subsistence, and whether *all* Northumberland belongs to him. His Lordship has rejoined, with a noble regard for truth, that *half* Northumberland is his, and that he will give it freely to the fair young lady who will release him from his dungeon. She, being thus assured of his regard and esteem, rejects all idea of pecuniary reward, and offers to be a party to a solemn wow – to be kept strong on both sides – that, if for seven years he will remain a bachelor, she, for the like period, will remain a maid. The contract is made, and the lovers are solemnly contracted.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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