

THE FIRE AT TRANTER SWEATLEY'S

They had long met o' Zundays--her true love and she -

And at junketings, maypoles, and flings;

But she bode wi' a thirtover uncle, and he

Swore by noon and by night that her goodman should be

Naighbour Sweatley--a gaffer oft weak at the knee

From taking o' sommat more cheerful than tea -

Who tranted, and moved people's things.

She cried, "O pray pity me!" Nought would he hear;

Then with wild rainy eyes she obeyed.

She chid when her Love was for clinking off wi' her.

The pa'son was told, as the season drew near

To throw over pu'pit the names of the peair

As fitting one flesh to be made.

The wedding-day dawned and the morning drew on;

The couple stood bridegroom and bride;

The evening was passed, and when midnight had gone

The folks horned out, "God save the King," and anon

The two home-along gloomily hied.

The lover Tim Tankens mourned heart-sick and drear

To be thus of his darling deprived:
He roamed in the dark ath'art field, mound, and mere,
And, a'most without knowing it, found himself near
The house of the tranter, and now of his Dear,
Where the lantern-light showed 'em arrived.

The bride sought her cham'er so calm and so pale
That a Northern had thought her resigned;
But to eyes that had seen her in tide-times of weal,
Like the white cloud o' smoke, the red battle-field's vail,
That look spak' of havoc behind.

The bridegroom yet laitered a beaker to drain,
Then reeled to the lincay for more,
When the candle-snoff kindled some chaff from his grain -
Flames spread, and red vlankers, wi' might and wi' main,
And round beams, thatch, and chimley-tun roar.

Young Tim away yond, rafted up by the light,
Through brimble and underwood tears,
Till he comes to the orchet, when crooping thereright
In the lewth of a codlin-tree, bivering wi' fright,
Wi' on'y her night-rail to screen her from sight,
His lonesome young Barbree appears.

Her cwold little figure half-naked he views

Played about by the frolicsome breeze,
Her light-tripping totties, her ten little tooes,
All bare and besprinkled wi' Fall's chilly dews,
While her great gallied eyes, through her hair hanging loose,
Sheened as stars through a tardle o' trees.

She eyed en; and, as when a weir-hatch is drawn,
Her tears, penned by terror afore,
With a rushing of sobs in a shower were strawn,
Till her power to pour 'em seemed wasted and gone
From the heft o' misfortune she bore.

"O Tim, my OWN Tim I must call 'ee--I will!
All the world ha' turned round on me so!
Can you help her who loved 'ee, though acting so ill?
Can you pity her misery--feel for her still?
When worse than her body so quivering and chill
Is her heart in its winter o' woe!

"I think I mid almost ha' borne it," she said,
"Had my griefs one by one come to hand;
But O, to be slave to thik husbird for bread,
And then, upon top o' that, driven to wed,
And then, upon top o' that, burnt out o' bed,
Is more than my nater can stand!"

Tim's soul like a lion 'ithin en outsprung -
(Tim had a great soul when his feelings were wrung)--
 "Feel for 'ee, dear Barbree?" he cried;
And his warm working-jacket about her he flung,
Made a back, horsed her up, till behind him she clung
Like a chiel on a gipsy, her figure uphung
 By the sleeves that around her he tied.

Over piggeries, and mixens, and apples, and hay,
 They lumpered straight into the night;
And finding bylong where a halter-path lay,
At dawn reached Tim's house, on'y seen on their way
By a naibour or two who were up wi' the day;
 But they gathered no clue to the sight.

Then tender Tim Tankens he searched here and there
 For some garment to clothe her fair skin;
But though he had breeches and waistcoats to spare,
He had nothing quite seemly for Barbree to wear,
Who, half shrammed to death, stood and cried on a chair
 At the caddle she found herself in.

There was one thing to do, and that one thing he did,
 He lent her some clouts of his own,
And she took 'em perforce; and while in 'em she slid,
Tim turned to the winder, as modesty bid,

Thinking, "O that the picter my duty keeps hid
To the sight o' my eyes mid be shown!"

In the tallet he stowed her; there huddied she lay,
Shortening sleeves, legs, and tails to her limbs;
But most o' the time in a mortal bad way,
Well knowing that there'd be the divel to pay
If 'twere found that, instead o' the elements' prey,
She was living in lodgings at Tim's.

"Where's the tranter?" said men and boys; "where can er be?"

"Where's the tranter?" said Barbree alone.

"Where on e'th is the tranter?" said everybod-y:

They sifted the dust of his perished roof-tree,
And all they could find was a bone.

Then the uncle cried, "Lord, pray have mercy on me!"

And in terror began to repent.

But before 'twas complete, and till sure she was free,
Barbree drew up her loft-ladder, tight turned her key -
Tim bringing up breakfast and dinner and tea -
Till the news of her hiding got vent.

Then followed the custom-kept rout, shout, and flare
Of a skimmington-ride through the naighbourhood, ere
Folk had proof o' wold Sweatley's decay.

Whereupon decent people all stood in a stare,
Saying Tim and his lodger should risk it, and pair:
So he took her to church. An' some laughing lads there
Cried to Tim, "After Sweatley!" She said, "I declare
I stand as a maiden to-day!"

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