

Author: Joseph Ramsbottom (?-?)

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Ramsbottom, Joseph (?-?),

***Poacher Tom* (1867)**

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Neaw hurray for a rollickin' spree,
For an up an deawn tumble i'th' fowt;
Or a hunt or a battle for me,
Aw'm a lad rough an' ready for owt;
An' some rare bonny marlocks aw play
When aw'm eawt among th' gam of a neet;
Th' keepers sen ut aw'st get in to pay,
If bo once aw get nabb'd; an' they're reet.

But aw'm noane so soon cowt, an' they known
Ut their braggin's not o'er safe for two;
For whene'er ut aw'm taen aw'st ha shown
Ut they'n bwoth had a towf job to do.
So a mon ut's like me mun ne'er fret,
Aw con awlus lay howd o' mi prey;
If at neet aw've mi livin' to get,

Aw con spree an' be idle o' day.

Aw'm the cock o'th'har neest, Poacher Tom;
Mi midden's o'th' parish, an aw'll see
If a lad ut lives in it dar come
An' aus t'fling his preawd crow o'er to me;
'Cose aw'st twitch am'dy's nose ut looks croot,
If aw meet a young lass hoo'st be kist,
An' aw'll reet o' complaints wi' mi' foot,
An' gie favvers bi th' weight o' mi fist.

Aw ne'er deeted mi honds yet wi' wark,
Tho' they're hitthert wi' dirt an wi' mire;
Aw look afther mi threasure at dark,
An' aw live uppo th' lond like a squire.
So hurray for a life wild an' free,
An' hurray for mi dog an' mi net;
For this poachin' comes natthral to me,
An' mi mother used t' learn me, aw'll bet.

Aw' mi mother! Well, what abeawt her?
What could bring her lost name to mi tongue?
What could gie one's owd thowts sich a stir
afther hoo's bin fo' gotten so long?
Aw mun surely be dhremin' or mad!
Heaw it rakes up owd things ut wur dyead!
It reminds me o' when aw'r a lad,
An' mi mother used t'hug me to bed.

Le'me think.---Aw remember her weel,
Sich a pale, pratty face as hoo had;
Bo my feyther's cowl heart wur like steel,
An' he car'd nowt for her nor her lad.
Aw'r a leet-hearted thricksther just then,
Wi' sich reawnd rosy cheeks an' breet een;
O, heaw plain aw con see th' time again,
Aw con see o' ut's past, too, between.

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Aw con see her pale cheel paler grow;
Aw con see deeper sink her sunk e'e;
Of her clemmin' aw know nowt at o',
Her last crust hoo laft awlus for me.
As hoo'r deein' aw stode bi her bed,

An' mi feyther lee dhrunken o'th' floore;
Heaw hoo blest mi an' patted mi yead,
Eh! mi mother's an angel aw'm sure.

Then mi feyther went mad wi' his spree,
What mi feelins wur words cono tell;
A mad feyther, dyead mother, an' me
In a dark, empty heawse laft ussel.
Someb'dy coom, an' they took him away,
An' a poor, parish coffin wur browt;
An' they buried mi mother th' same day,
But o' me they ne'er wasted a thowt.

Yet aw seed th' coffin lowert i'th' grave.
As aw yeard th' earth's dull seawnd uppo th' lid,
Reawnd mi heart what a sharp twinge it gave,
Yet aw watch't till for ever 'twur hid.
I'th' wide wold o'th' next day aw'r alone,
Tho' aw played wi' folk's childher abeawt;
But oich mother at dark sowt her own,
An' aw'r laft bi mysel theer areawt.

Heaw aw felt o' mi loneliness then,
An' aw sobb'd as mi heart wur beawn t' break;
Bo no mother e'er sowt me again,
An' aw mist mi churn milk an hard cake;
Nor no mother's face smiled away grief,
Ther wur nob'dy 'ud welcome her child,
Ther wur no hont ut tendhert relief,
Aw wur laft to mysel, an' ran wild.

Aw had t' rob for mi breakfast next day,
An they put me i'limbo for that;
An' oth' folk when aw'r freed turn'd away,
Aw'd a prison crop undher mi hat.
Aw'd ha worch't, but aw couldno' get wark,
Aw'r a thief, an' ther'd nob'dy ha' me;
So aw clemm'd o' that day, an' at dark
Rob'd again; aw wur lik'd, or else dee.

So aw've gone on fro bad unto wuss
(For at larnin' aw never wur slow),
An' aw hang like a terrible cuss
Reawnd this place ut neglected me so.
Aw con hondle a ferret or net,

An' aw could ha' larnt heaw to make shoon;
If aw know heaw a gin should be set,
Could aw not ha larnt wayvin' as soon?

Aw con run, aw con wroastle an' shoot,
Bo that's nowt to mi credit, aw'm towd.
Happen not, but aw know it's the fruit
O' one's bein' laft starvin' i'th' cowl.
Aw'm an idler, a skulk, an' a sot,
When aw met ha' bin taychin' at th' schoo';
But it's my faurt i' part, an' part not,
For aw'd nob'dy to tell me what t' do.