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[64]

T' RUNAWAA LASS.

"Wah, Mary! sittin' lawnsum of a bench,
Wi' leean white fingers clasp'd, an' soonken ah,
A' doin' nowt! Thoo wast a bonny wench,
Loosty an' strong; wativer's coom'd te tha'?"

"Ah mahnd, when Maason tonnops was te haw,
Hoo well thruff t' lands thah foot kept oop wi' mahn,
Friv end te end; an' when wa'd dun t' last raw,
Ah said Ah'd swop mah weary airms for thahn.

"Ther's neer a wonn was fit te match wi' thee
Them happy daas, i't' field or farm or byre; 11
As brant and lissum as a poplar tree,
As brisk and cheery as thah moother fire.

[65]

"An' noo, thah faace has lossen t' sunbonn glaw,
Thah stoot yong limbs ha' gotten shroonk an' small!
Ther's summat worrkin' i' thah mahnd, Ah know:
Speek oop, me lass, an' tell auld Philip all!"

Then she, with grave affection in her eyes,

Toss'd back her batter'd bonnet and her hair,
And look'd at him; who saw her wan face rise
Again to beauty, sorrow being there.

"Aye, Philip, them was happy daas, indeed!
Ah mahnd 'em well: sich bonny crops as yon
Oor maaster ow'd, Ah seer Ah niver seed
I't sooth; an' him a joggin' oot upon

"His gallowaa, te watch us all agaat—
Me, an' oor Jaan, an' Jack (wat's getten Jack?)
An' thee, auld lad! Bud wat, it's ovver laat
For sich as me te fet them good things back!

"Philip, wat said tha' when Ah runn'd awaa?
Thaa knaw'd Ah *did*; Ah'd shaam te ax it else;
Bud weer Ah went tha' knawna; an' Ah laa
Tha' reckon nowt: they're too well off thesels.

[66]

"It's all along o' *him* — Ah darna naam
His awesum naam, for all Ah've said it scoors
An' scoors o' tahms, when fost mah trooble caam:
His faather land, thoo knaws, wer floosh wi' oors,

"An' oft an' oft, when Ah've been fettlin' t' coos,
Or oot i't sta'ala'd, maybe, be mesen,
He used te coom, an' dawdle oop te t'hoose,
An' stan' an' leek at ma' lahk owt; an' then

"He'd ax, Was t' maaster in? an sich as that;
An' keep on axin', when Ah'd tell'd him Naw:
Fond wench! Ah might ha' seen wat he'd be at—
Bud Ah wer daft te think he luv'd ma' saw.

"Ah thowt, fost tahm Ah foond me 'and iv his,
Hoo roogh an'bad we mahn; bud he says, 'Seah,'
He says, 'me lass, tha' weean't' be long lahk this;
Thoo'lt live a laady, an' ha' nowt te deah.'

"*A laady!* Sitha—this here hand, 'at's tonn'd
As white as white, Ah'd fling it, blud an' baan
(That would E too, an' welcum), into t' pond,
If Ah mud hev mah broon un back agaan.

[67]

"Aye, lad! Ah's wander'd oop an' doon a year,
Be slaape rooads an' be slooshy rooads, si' then,
An' larnt wat fawks is maad on; an' Ah seer
A vast o' laadies is as bad as t' men.

"Bud this backend, when things was got te t' wost
Wi' me, an' t' babby hingin' at ma' breast,
Ah thowt Ah'd gang te weer Ah lived at fost,
An' beg for meeat an' drink, an' maybe rest.

"Well, an' Ah coom'd te' t' farm; bud chap at door
Says 'Naw,' an' bangs it reet agin me faace;
Sae then Ah gaed tiv oor 'oose; an' mah poor
Auld moother's deead, an' faather's lossen t' plaace

"An' left, along o' me! When Ah heerd that,
Ah'd lahk te swound; bud summat kept ma' oop
Wahl Ah gat here; an' here Ah sat an' sat,
An' t' lahl un hoddin' up it mooth for t' sup

"Ah couldna give. Sae then, at last, Ah says,
'Mah baabe,' Ah says, 'there's nowt for thee an' me
I' this wold; bud ther's happen better daas
Wi' granny, oop i' heaven: saw wa'll dee!"

[68]

"Aa, 'twer' a job te do it—still, it's dun:
Leeaksta, lad, leeksta! T' boondle o' mah knee,
It's noan a thing 'at sich as you mud shun,—
It's mah dead baabe : an' noo then, *Ah mun dee!*"

He was a poor man, Philip: do you think
He led her to the workhouse, or, mayhap,
Fetch'd out the constable, to get a blink
Of that cold infant chilling all her lap?

Such pious folks as you, and I, and they,
Of course had done it: so perhaps, you know,
Perhaps, he did! At least, I cannot say,
For fear of men, I dare not answer, No.