

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **William Hamilton**

**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

## The Braes of Yarrow

'BUSK ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride!  
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!  
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride!  
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow!'

'Where got ye that bonnie, bonnie bride?  
Where got ye that winsome marrow?'  
'I got her where I durst not well be seen—  
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Weep not, weep not, my bonnie, bonnie bride!  
Weep not, weep not, my winsome marrow!  
Nor let thy heart lament to leave  
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Why does she weep, thy bonnie, bonnie bride?  
Why does she weep, thy winsome marrow?  
And why dare ye nae mair weel be seen  
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow?'

'Lang maun she weep, lang maun she, maun she weep,  
Lang maun she weep with dule and sorrow;  
And lang maun I nae weel be seen  
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.'

'For she has tint her lover, lover dear—  
Her lover dear, the cause of sorrow;  
And I have slain the comeliest swain  
That ever pu'ed birks on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Why runs thy stream O Yarrow, Yarrow, reid?  
Why on thy braes is heard the voice of sorrow?  
And why yon melancholious weeds  
Hung on the bonnie birks of Yarrow.'

'What's yonder floats on the rueful, rueful flood?  
What's yonder floats? O dule and sorrow!  
'Tis he, the comely swain I slew  
Upon the duleful braes of Yarrow.'

'Wash, O wash his wounds, his wounds in tears,  
His wounds in tears of dule and sorrow;  
And wrap his limbs in mourning weeds,  
And lay him on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Then build, then build, ye sisters, sisters sad,  
Ye sisters sad, his tomb with sorrow:  
And weep around, in woeful wise,  
His hapless fate on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Curse ye, curse ye, his useless, useless shield,  
My arm that wrought the deed of sorrow,

The fatal spear that pierced his breast—  
His comely breast on the braes of Yarrow!

'Did I not warn thee not to, not to love,  
And warn from fight? But, to my sorrow,  
Too rashly bold, a stronger arm  
Thou met'st, and fell on the braes of Yarrow.'

'Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,  
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan;  
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,  
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowing!'

'Flows Yarrow sweet? As sweet, as sweet flows Tweed;  
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow;  
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,  
The apple from its rocks as mellow.

'Fair was thy love, fair, fair indeed thy love;  
In flowery bands thou didst him fetter:  
Though he was fair, and well beloved again  
Than me, he never loved thee better.

'Busk ye then, busk, my bonnie, bonnie bride!  
Busk, ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!  
Busk ye, and lo'e me on the banks of Tweed,  
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow!'

'How can I busk, a bonnie, bonnie bride?  
How can I busk, a winsome marrow?  
How lo'e him on the banks of Tweed  
That slew my love on the braes of Yarrow!

'O Yarrow fields, may never, never rain  
Nor dew thy tender blossoms cover!  
For there was basely slain my love—  
My love as he had not been a lover.

'The boy put on his robes, his robes of green,  
His purple vest—'twas my ain sewing:  
Ah, wretched me! I little, little knew  
He was in these to meet his ruin!

'The boy took out his milk-white, milk-white steed,  
Unheedful of my dule and sorrow;  
But ere the to-fall of the night  
He lay a corpse on the braes of Yarrow.

'Much I rejoiced, that woeful, woeful day;  
I sang, my voice the woods returning;  
But lang ere night the spear was flown  
That slew my love and left me mourning.

`What can my barbarous, barbarous father do,  
But with his cruel rage pursue me?  
My lover's blood is on thy spear;  
How canst thou, barbarous man, then woo me?

`My happy sisters may be, may be proud—  
With cruel and ungentle scoffin'  
May bid me seek, on Yarrow's braes,  
My lover nailed in his coffin.

`My brother Douglas may upbraid,  
And strive with threat'ning words to move me:  
My lover's blood is on thy spear,  
How canst thou ever bid me love thee?

`Yes, yes, prepare the bed, the bed of love!  
With bridal sheets my body cover!  
Unbar, ye bridal maids, the door;  
Let in the expected husband lover!

`But who the expected husband, husband is?  
His hands, methinks, are bathed in slaughter.  
Ah me! what ghastly spectre's yon,  
Comes in his pale shroud bleeding after?

`Pale as he is, here lay him, lay him down;  
O lay his cold head on my pillow:  
Take aff, take aff these bridal weeds,  
And crown my careful head with willow.

`Pale though thou art, yet best, yet best beloved!  
Oh! could my warmth to life restore thee,  
Ye'd lie all night between my breasts!  
No youth lay ever there before thee.

`Pale, pale indeed! O lovely, lovely youth!  
Forgive, forgive so foul a slaughter;  
And lie all night between my breasts!  
No youth shall ever lie there after.'

Return, return, O mournful, mournful bride!  
Return, and dry thy useless sorrow!  
Thy lover heeds nought of thy sighs—  
He lies a corpse on the braes of Yarrow."

William Hamilton