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*The Nutbrown
Maid*

STRATFORD-ON-AVON, 1906

THE Text is from Arnold's *Chronicle*, of the edition which, from typographical evidence, is said to have been printed at Antwerp in 1502 by John Doesborowe. Each stanza is there printed in six long lines. Considerable variations appear in later editions. There is also a Balliol ms. (354), which contains a contemporary version, and the Percy Folio in the British Museum contains a corrupt version.

This should not be considered as a ballad proper; it is rather a 'dramatic lyric.' Its history, however, is quite as curious as that of many ballads. It occurs, as stated above, in the farrago known as the *Chronicle* of Richard Arnold, inserted between a list of the 'tolls' due on merchandise entering or leaving the port of Antwerp, and a table giving Flemish weights and moneys in terms of the corresponding English measures. Why such a poem should be printed in such incongruous surroundings, what its date or who its author was, are questions impossible to determine. John Selden and Samuel Pepys helped to rescue it from oblivion.

From verse 3 to the end of the last but one, it is a dialogue between an earl's son and a baron's daughter, in alternate stanzas; a prologue and an epilogue are added by the author.

Matthew Prior printed the poem in his works, in order to contrast it with his own version, *Henry and Emma*, which appealed to contemporary taste as more elegant than its rude original.

F. S.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Be it right, or wrong, these men among
On women do complaine ;
Affermyng this, how that it is
A labour spent in vaine,
To loue them wele ; for neuer a dele,
They loue a man agayne ;
For lete a man do what he can,
Ther fauour to attayne,
Yet, yf a newe to them pursue,
Ther furst trew louer than
Laboureth for nought ; and from her
thought
He is a bannished man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

I say not nay, but that all day
It is bothe writ and sayde
That womans fayth is as who saythe
All utterly decayed ;
But neutheles, right good wytnes
In this case might be layde ;
That they loue trewe, and contynew,
Recorde the Nutbrowne maide :
Which from her loue, whan, her to proue,
He cam to make his mone,
Wolde not departe, for in her herte,
She louyd but hym allone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Than betwene us lete us discusse,
What was all the maner
Betwene them too; we wyll also
Tell all the Payne in fere,
That she was in; now I begynne,
Soo that ye me answere;
Wherfore, ye, that present be
I pray you geue an eare.
I am the knyght; I cum be nyght,
As secret as I can;
Sayng, alas! thus stondyth the cause,
I am a bannished man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

And I your wylle for to fulfylle
In this wyl not refuse ;
Trusting to shewe, in wordis fewe,
That men haue an ille use
To ther owne shame wymen to blame,
And causeles them accuse ;
Therfore to you I answeare nowe,
All wymen to excuse,—
Myn owne hert dere, with you what chiere?
I prey you, tell anoon ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you allon.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

It stondith so ; a dede is do,
Wherfore moche harme shal growe ;
My desteny is for to dey
A shamful dethe, I trowe ;
Or ellis to flee : the ton must bee.
None other wey I knowe,
But to withdrawe as an outlaw,
And take me to my bowe.
Wherefore, adew, my owne hert trewe,
None other red I can :
For I muste to the grene wode goo,
Alone a bannysshed man.

ton, one. *red*, advice.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

O Lorde, what is this worldis blisse,
That chaungeth as the mone !
My somers day in lusty may
Is derked before the none.
I here you saye farwel : nay, nay,
We depart not soo sone.
Why say ye so ? wheder wyll ye goo ?
Alas ! what haue ye done ?
Alle my welfare to sorow and care
Shulde chaunge, yf ye were gon ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you 'alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

I can beleue, it shal you greue,
And somwhat you distractyne ;
But, aftyrwarde, your paynes harde
Within a day or tweyne
Shall sone aslake ; and ye shall take
Comfort to you agayne.
Why shuld ye nought? for, to make thought,
Your labur were in vayne.
And thus I do ; and pray you, loo,
As hertely as I can ;
For I must too the grene wode goo,
Alone a banysshed man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Now, syth that ye haue shewed to me
The secret of your mynde,
I shalbe playne to you agayne,
Lyke as ye shal me fynde.
Syth it is so, that ye wyll goo,
I wol not leue behynde ;
Shall neuer be sayd, the Nutbrowne mayd,
Was to her loue unkind :
Make you redy, for soo am I,
All though it were anoon ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Yet I you rede take good hede
Whan men wyl thynke, and sey ;
Of yonge, and olde, it shalbe tolde,
That ye be gone away,
Your wanton wylle for to fulfylle,
In grene wood you to play ;
And that ye myght from your delyte
Noo lenger make delay :
Rather than ye shuld thus for me
Be called an ylle woman,
Yet wolde I to the grene wodde goo,
Alone a banyshed man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Though it be songe of olde and yonge,
That I shuld be to blame,
Theirs be the charge, that speke so large
In hurting of my name :
For I wyl proue that feythal loue
It is deuoyd of shame ;
In your distresse and heuynesse,
To parte wyth you, the same :
And sure all thoo, that doo not so,
Trewe louers ar they noon ;
But, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

I councel yow, remembre howe
It is noo maydens lawe,
Nothing to dought, but to renne out
To wod with an outlawe;
For ye must there in your hande bere
A bowe to bere and drawe;
And, as a theef, thus must ye lyeue,
Euer in drede and awe,
By whiche to yow gret harme myght grow :
Yet had I leuer than,
That I had too the grenewod goo,
Alone a banysshed man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

I thinke not nay, but as ye saye,
It is noo maydens lore :
But loue may make me for your sake,
As ye haue said before
To com on fote, to hunte, and shote,
To gete us mete and store ;
For soo that I your company
May haue, I aske noo more :
From whiche to parte, it makith myn herte
As colde as ony ston ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

For an outlawe, this is the lawe,
That men hym take and binde ;
Wythout pytee hanged to bee,
And wauer with the wynde.
Yf I had neede, (as God forbede !)
What rescous coude ye finde ?
Forsothe, I trowe, you and your bowe
Shuld drawe for fere behynde :
And noo merueyle ; for lytel auayle
Were in your councel than ;
Wherfore I too the woode wyl goo
Alone a banysshed man.

rescous, rescue.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Ful wel knowe ye, that wymen bee
Ful febyl for to fyght ;
Noo womanhed is it in deede
To bee bolde as a knight :
Yet, in suche fere, yf that ye were
Amonge enemys day and nyght,
I wolde wytstande, with bowe in hande,
To greue them as I myght,
And you to sauе ; as wymen haue
From deth many one :
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Yet take good hede, for euer I drede
That ye coude not sustein
The thorney wayes, the depe valeis,
The snowe, the frost, the reyn,
The colde, the hete: for drye, or wete,
We must lodge on the playn;
And, us abowe, noon other roue
But a brake bussh or twayne:
Which sone shulde greue you, I beleue;
And ye wolde gladly than
That I had too the grenewode goo,
Alone a banysshyd man.

roue, roof.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Syth I haue here ben partynere
With you of joy and blysse,
I must also parte of your woo
Endure, as reason is:
Yet am I sure of oon pleasure;
And, shortly, it is this:
That where ye bee, me semeth perde,
I coude not fare amysse;
Wythout more speche, I you beseche
That we were soon agone;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Yef ye goo thedyr, ye must consider,
Whan ye haue lust to dyne
Ther shal no mete be fore to gete,
Nor drinke, beer, ale, ne wine;
Ne shetis clene, to lye betwene,
Made of thred and twyne;
Noon other house but leuys and bowes
To keuer your hed and myn.
Loo, myn herte swete, this ylle dyet
Shuld make you pale and wan;
Wherfore I to the wood wyl goo,
Alone, a banysshid man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Amonge the wylde dere, suche an archier,
As men say that ye bee,
Ne may not fayle of good vitayle
Where is so grete plente:
And watir cleere of the ryuere
Shalbe ful swete to me;
Wyth whiche in hele I shal right wele
Endure, as ye shal see;
And, or we goo, a bed or twoo
I can prouide anoon;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Loo, yet before ye must doo more,
Yf ye wyl goo with me;
As cutte your here up by your ere,
Your kirtel by the knee;
Wyth bowe in hande, for to withstande
Your enmys, yf nede bee:
And this same nyght before daylyght,
To woodwarde wyl I flee.
And ye wyl all this fulfylle,
Doo it shortlye as ye can:
Ellis wil I to the grenewode goo,
Alone, a banysshed man.

l. 9. *And*, if.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

I shal as now do more for you
That longeth to womanhed ;
To short my here, a bowe to bere,
To shote in tyme of nedē.
O my swete moder, before all other
For you haue I most drede :
But now, adiew ! I must ensue
Wher fortune doth me leede.
All this make ye : now lete us flee ;
The day cum fast upon ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Nay, nay, not soo ; ye shal not goo,
And I shal telle you why,—
Your appetyte is to be lyght
Of loue, I wele aspie :
For, right as ye haue sayd to me,
In lyke wyse hardly
Ye wolde answere who so euer it were,
In way of company.
It is sayd of olde, sone hote, sone colde ;
And so is a woman.
Wherfore I too the woode wyl goo,
Alone, a banysshid man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Yef ye take hede, yet is noo nede
Suche wordis to say by me ;
For ofte ye preyd, and longe assayed,
Or I you louid, pardē :
And though that I of auncestry
A barons daughter bee,
Yet haue you proued how I you loued
A squyer of lowe degree ;
And euer shal, whatso befalle—
To dey therfore anoon ;
For, in my mynde, of al mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

A barons childe to be begyled,
It were a curssed dede;
To be felow with an outlawe,
Almyghty God forbede.
Yet bettyr were the power squyere
Alone to forest yede,
Than ye shal saye another day,
That, be my wyked dede,
Ye were betrayed: wherfore, good maide,
The best red that I can,
Is, that I too the grenewode goo,
Alone, a banysshed man.

yede, should go.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Whatso euer befall, I neuer shal
Of this thing you upbrayd :
But yf ye goo, and leue me soo,
Than haue ye me betraied.
Remembre you wele, how that ye dele,
For, yf ye as they sayd,
Be so unkynde, to leue behynde
Your loue, the notbrowne maide,
Trust me truly, that I shall dey
Sone after ye be gone ;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Yef that ye went, ye shulde repent;
For in the forest nowe
I haue purueid me of a maide,
Whom I loue more than you;
Another fayrer, than euer ye were,
I dare it wel auowe;
And of you bothe eche shulde be wrothe
With other, as I trowe;
It were myn ease, to lyue in pease,
So wyl I, yf I can:
Wherfore I to the wode wyl goo,
Alone a banysshid man.

purueid me, provided myself.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Though in the wood I undirstode
Ye had a paramour,
All this may nought remeue my thought,
But that I wil be your ;
And she shal fynde me soft and kynde,
And curteis euery our ;
Glad to fulfylle all that she wylle
Commaunde me to my power :
For had ye, loo, an hondred moo,
Yet wolde I be that one,
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I loue but you alone.

remeue, remove.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Myne owne dere loue, I see the proue
That ye be kynde and trewe,
Of mayde, and wyf, in al my lyf,
The best that euer I knewe.
Be mery and glad, be no more sad,
The case is chaunged newe;
For it were ruthe, that, for your trouth,
Ye shuld haue cause to rewe.
Be not dismayed; whatsoeuer I sayd
To you, whan I began,
I will not too the grene wod goo,
I am noo banysshed man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

This tidingis be more glad to me,
Than to be made a quene,
Yf I were sure they shuld endure ;
But it is often seen,
When men wyl breke promyse, they speke
The wordis on the splene ;
Ye shape some wyle me to begyle
And stele fro me, I wene :
Than were the case wurs than it was,
And I more woobegone :
For, in my mynde, of al mankynde
I loue but you alone.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Ye shal not nede further to drede ;
I wyl not disparage
You, (God defende !) syth you descend
Of so grete a lynage.
Now understande ; to Westmerlande,
Whiche is my herytage,
I wyl you bryng ; and wyth a rynge,
By wey of maryage
I wyl you take, and lady make,
As shortly as I can :
Thus haue ye wone an erles son
And not a banysshyd man.

THE NUTBROWN MAID

Here may ye see, that wymen be
In loue, meke, kinde, and stable;
Late neuer man repreue them than,
Or calle them variable;
But rather prey God that we may
To them be comfortable;
Whiche somtyme prouyth suche as loueth,
Yf they be charitable.
For sith men wolde that wymen sholde
Be meke to them echeon,
Moche more ought they to God obey,
And serue but Hym alone.