

Graih my Chree.
(Love of my Heart.)

I.

She was Joney, the rich man's only child,

He was Juan, a son of the sea.

"Thy father hath cast me forth of his door,

But, poor as I am, to his teeth I swore

I should wed thee, O graih my chree."

He broke a ring and gave her the half,

And she buried it close at her heart.

"I must leave thee, love of my soul," he said,

"But I vow by our troth that living or dead,

I will come back rich to thine arms and thy bed,

And fetch thee as sure as we part."

He sailed to the north, he sailed to the south,

He sailed to the foreign strand,

But whether he touched on the icy cone

Or the coral reef of the Indian zone,

It turned to a golden land.

And he cried to his crew, "Hoist sail and about,

For no more do I need to roam ;

I have silks and satins and lace and gold,

I have treasure as deep as my ship will hold

To win me a wife at home."

They had not sailed but half of their course

To the haven where they would be,

When the devil beguiled their barque on a rock,

And down it sank with a woeful shock

On the banks of Italy.

Then over the roar of the clamorous waves

The skipper his voice was heard,

"I vowed by our troth that dead or alive

I should come back yet to wed and to wive,

And by t' Lady I keep my word.

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"I will come to thee still, O love of my heart,
From the arms of the envious sea;
Though the tempest should swallow my choking
breath,
In the spite of hell and the devil and death
I will come to thee, graih my chree."

II.

"He will come no more to thine arms, my child,
He is false or lost and dead,
Now wherefore make ye these five years' moan,
And wherefore sit by the sea alone?"
"He will keep his vow," she said.

She climbed the brows of the cliffs at home,
She gazed on the false, false sea.
"It comes and it goes for ever," she cried,
"And tidings it brings to the wife and the bride,
But never a word to me."

Then, of lovers, another came wooing the maid,
But she answered him nay and nay,
The manfullest man and her servant true,
"Give me thy hand and thou shalt not rue,"
She murmured, "Alack, the day."

Her father arose in his pride and his wrath,
He was last of his race and name,
"Because that a daughter will peak and will pine
Must I never have child of my child to my line,
But die in my childless shame?"

They bore her a bride to the kirkyard gate,
It was a pitiful sight to see,
Her body they decked in their jewels and gold,
But the heart in her bosom sate silent and cold,
And she murmured "Ah, woe is me."

III.

They had not been wedded a year, a year,
A year but barely two,
When the good wife close to the hearth-stone crept
And rocked her babe while the good man slept
And the wind in the chimney blew.

Loud was the sea and fierce was the night,
Gloomy and wild and dour ;
From a flying cloud came a lightning flash,
A pane of the window fell in with a crash,
And something rang on the floor.

O, was it a stone from the waste sea-beach ?
O, was it an earthly thing ?
She stirred the peat and stooped to the ground,
And there in the red, red light she found
The half of a broken ring.

She rose upright in a terror of fright
As one that hath sinned a sin,
And out of the dark and the wind and rain,
Through the jagged gap of the broken pane,
A man's white face looked in.

"Oh, why didst thou stay so long, Juan ?
Five years I waited for thee."
"I vowed by our troth, that living or dead
I should come back yet to thine arms and thy bed,
And my vow I have kept, my chree."

"But I have been false to my troth, Juan ;
Falsely I swore me away."
"I have silks and satins and lace and gold,
I have treasure as deep as my ship will hold ;
And my barque lies out in the bay."

- "But I have a husband that loves me dear;
I promised him never to part."
- "Through the salt sea's foam and the earth's hot breath,
Through the grappings of hell and the gates of death
I have come for thee, Joney, my heart."
- "But I have a child of my body so sweet—
Little Jannie that sleeps in the cot."
- "By the glimpse of the moon, at the top of the tide,
Ere the crow of the cock our vessel must ride,
Or what will befall us, God wot."
- "Now, ever alack, thou must kiss and go back;
My love, I am never for thee."
- "As sure as yon ship to the billows that roll,
By the plight of our troth, both body and soul
You belong to me, graih my chree."

She followed him forth like to one in a sleep;
It was a woeful and wonderous sight.
The moon on his face from a rift in a cloud
Showed it white and wan as a face in a shroud,
And his ship on the sea gleamed white.

IV.

- "Now weigh and away, my merry men all."
The crew laughed loud in their glee.
- "With the rich man's pride and his sweet daughter,
In the spite of wind and the wild water—
To the banks of Italy!"

The anchor was weighed, the canvas was spread,
All in the storm and the dark,
With never a reef in a stitch of sail,
But standing about to burst the gale
Merrily sped the barque.

The first night out there was fear on the ship,
For the lady lay in a swoon ;
The second night out she woke from her trance,
And the skipper did laugh and his men would dance,
But she made a piteous moan.

“ O, where is my home and my sweet baby—
My Jannie I nursed on my knee ?
He will wake in his cot by the cold hearth-stone
And cry for his mother who left him alone ;
My Jannie, I 'm wae for thee.”

The skipper he shouted for music and song,
And his crew they answered his call.
He clothed her in silk and satin and lace,
But still through the rout and riot her face
Showed fit for a funeral.

And ever at night they sailed by the moon,
Through the wild white foam so fleet,
And ever again at the coming of day,
When the sun rose out of the sea they lay
In a mist like a winding sheet.

And still the skipper he kissed her and cried,
“ Be merry and let-a-be.”
And still to soothe her he sat through the nights
With his hand in her hand, till they opened the lights
By the banks of Italy.

Then his face shone green as with ghostly sheen,
And the moon began to dip.

“ O, think not you, I am the lover ye knew ;
I am a ghostly man with a ghostly crew,
And this is a ghostly ship.”

Then he rose upright to a fearsome height,
And stamped his foot on the deck ;
He smote the mast at the topsail yards,
And the rigging fell like a house of cards,
And the hulk was a splitting wreck.

O, then as she sank in the water's womb,
In the churn of the choking sea,
She knew that his arms were about her breast,
As close as his arms might be.
And he cried o'er the tramp of the champing tide
On the banks of Italy,
"By the plight of our troth, by the power of our bond,
If not in this world in the world beyond,
Thou art mine, O graih my chree."