

THE  
Life and Death  
OF  
FAIR ROSAMOND,  
Concubine to King Henry the II.



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*Fair Rosamond.*

WHEN as King Henry rul'd this land,  
 The second of that name ;  
 Besides the Queen, he loved dear  
 A fair and comely dame,

Most peerless was her beauty found,  
 Her favour and her face ;  
 A sweeter creature in the world  
 Could never prince embrace.

Her crisped locks, like threads of gold,  
 Appear'd to each man's sight,  
 Her comely eyes like orient pearl,  
 Did cast a heavenly light.

The blood within her crystal cheeks  
 Did such a colour drive,  
 As though the lily and the rose  
 For mastership did strive.

Fair Rosamond, fair Rosamond,  
 Her name was called so,  
 To whom dame Eleanor our Queen,  
 Was known a deadly foe.

The King therefore for her defence,  
 Against the furious Queen,  
 At Woodstock builded such a bower,  
 The like was never seen.

Most curiously that bower was built,  
 Of stone and timber strong,

An hundred and fifty doors,  
Did to this bower belong,

And they so cunningly contriv'd,  
With turnings round about,  
That none without a clue of thread,  
Could enter in or out.

Now for his love and lady's sake,  
Who was both fair and bright,  
The keeping of this bower he gave  
Unto a valiant Knight.

But fortune that doth often frown,  
Where it before did smile,  
The king's delight, the lady's joy,  
Full soon she did beguile.

For why, the King's ungracious son,  
Whom he did high advance,  
Against his father raised wars,  
Within the realms of France.

But yet before our gracious King  
The English land forsook,  
Of Rosamond, his fair lady,  
His farewell thus he took.

My Rosamond, my only Rose,  
Who pleaseth best mine eye,  
The fairest flower in all the world  
To feed my phantasy;

The flower of my affected heart  
Whose sweetness doth excel,  
My royal Rose, a hundred times  
I bid you now farewell,

For I must leave my fairest Rose,  
 My sweetest Rose a space,  
 And cross the ocean into France,  
 Proud rebels to debase.

But still my Rose, be sure thou shalt  
 My coming shortly see,  
 And in my heart, when hence I am,  
 I'll bear my Rose with me.

When Rosamond, the lady bright,  
 Did hear the King say so,  
 The sorrows of her grieved heart,  
 Her outward looks did show,

And from her clear and crystal eyes  
 The tears gush'd out apace,  
 Which like the silver pearly dew,  
 Ran down her comely face.

Her lips like to the coral red  
 Did wax both wan and pale,  
 And for the sorrow she conceiv'd,  
 Her vital spirits fail.

And falling down into a swoon  
 Before King Henry's face,  
 Full oft within his princely arms  
 Her body did embrace.

And twenty times with wat'ry eyes  
 He kiss'd her tender cheek,  
 Until he had reviv'd again  
 Her spirit, mild and meek.

Why grieves my Rose? my sweetest Rose,  
 The King did often say:

Because, said she, to bloody wars  
My lord must pass away.

But since your Grace in foreign parts,  
Among your foes unknown,  
Must go to hazard life and limb,  
Why must I stay at home?

Nay, rather let me, like a page,  
Thy sword and target bear,  
That on my breast the blow may light,  
That would offend my dear.

O let me in your royal tent  
Prepare your bed at night,  
And with sweet baths refresh you there,  
As you return from fight.

So I your presence may enjoy,  
No toil I will refuse;  
But wanting you, my life is death,  
Which doth true love abuse.

Content thyself, my dearest love,  
Thy rest at home shall be  
In England's sweet and pleasing court,  
For travels fit not thee.

Fair ladies, brook not bloody wars,  
Sweet peace their pleasure breed,  
The nourisher of hearts content,  
Whose fancy first did feed.

My Rose shall rest in Woodstock bower,  
With music's sweet delight,  
While I among the piercing pikes  
Against my foes do fight.



My Rose in robes of pearl and gold,  
 With diamonds rich and bright,  
 Shall dance the galliards of my love,  
 While I my foes do smite.

And you, Sir Thomas, whom I trust  
 To be my love's defence,  
 Be careful of my gallant Rose,  
 When I am parted hence.

And here withal he fetch'd a sigh,  
 As though his heart would break,  
 And Rosamond, for very grief,  
 Not one plain word could speak.

And at their parting well they might  
 In heart be griev'd sore,  
 After that day fair Rosamond  
 The King did see no more.

For when his Grace passed the seas,  
 And into France was gone,  
 Queen Eleanor, with envious heart,  
 To Woodstock came anon.

And forth she calls the trusty Knight,  
 Who kept this curious bower,  
 And with a clue of twisted thread,  
 Came from this famous flower.

But when that they had wounded him,  
 The Queen his thread did get,  
 And went where lady Rosamond  
 Was like an angel set.

But when the Queen with stedfast eyes  
 Beheld this lovely face,

She was amazed in her mind  
At such exceeding grace.

Cast off, said she, these fine wrought robes,  
That rich and costly be,  
And drink you up this deadly draught  
Which I have brought to thee.

But presently upon her knees,  
Fair Rosamond did fall,  
And pardon of the Queen she crav'd,  
For her offences all.

Take pity on my youthful years,  
Fair Rosamond did cry,  
And let me not with poison strong  
Be forced for to die.

I will renounce my sinful life,  
And in some cloister hide,  
Or else be banish'd, if you please,  
To range the world so wide.

And sure the fault which I have done,  
I was forced thereunto,  
Preserve my life, and punish me  
As you think fit to do.

And with these words her lily hands  
She wrung full often there,  
And down along her comely face,  
Proceeded many a tear.

But nothing could this furious Queen  
Herewith appeased be,  
The cup of deadly poison strong,  
Which she held on her knee,

She gave this comely dame to drink,  
 Who took it from her hand,  
 And from her bended knees arose,  
 And on her feet did stand.

When casting up her eyes to Heaven,  
 She did for mercy call,  
 And drinking up the poison strong,  
 She lost her life withal.

And when that death thro' ev'ry limb  
 Had done its greatest spite,  
 Her chiefest foes could but confess  
 She was a glorious sight.

Her body then they did entomb,  
 When life was fled away,  
 At Woodstock, near to Oxford town,  
 As may be seen this day.

FINIS.