

The Song of Ladye Bessiye

As printed in Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Ballads and Romances, ed. J.W. Hales and F.J. Furnivall, 3 vols. (London, 1868), III, pp. 319-363. Electronic text prepared by Roberta Lamaere.

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Ladye Bessiye

Inerat ibi ab unguiculis Dei timor et servitium admirabile; in parentes vero mira observantia; erga fratres et sorores amor ferme incredibilis; in pauperes Christique ministros reverenda ac singularis affectio.—*Bernard Andreas*.

Two copies of this song are preserved elsewhere, one in a MS. of the time of Charles II. in the possession of Mr. Bateman, the other in MS. Harl. 367, transcribed apparently, says Mr. Halliwell, about the year 1600. These two copies differ considerably. They have both been printed: the former three times, viz., by Mr. Thomas Heywood in 1829, by Mr. Halliwell for the Percy Society, and by Mr. Jewitt in his *Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire*; the latter by Mr. Halliwell along with the other. The following copy differs but slightly from this latter one from the Harl. MS. It is perhaps a little later than it, as it speaks of 'our comely King,' probably James the First, in v. 3, where the Harleian version reads 'Queen,' probably Queen Elizabeth. Certainly neither copy in its present shape is as old as the events it describes. Both are less modernized than the copy in Mr. Bateman's MS.

But we see no reason to doubt that the main ground-work of the poem was laid early in the sixteenth century, or still earlier, by one who himself took part, as he professes, in the exciting transactions that are narrated — by Humphrey Brereton, the active and zealous agent, the 'true esquire,' of the Lady Bessy. As to the date of the composition of the poem, there is a great look of authenticity about the work; there is an annalistic air. The account given of the conferences between the Princess and Lord Stanley (styled, proleptically, the Earl of Derby), of the messenger's journeys into the northern counties and across the sea, is singularly minute and graphic; and these merits can scarcely be ascribed to the brilliant imagination of the writer. There are no signs apparent of any great talent of that kind. The style is that of a man who can relate soberly and steadily what he has seen, not of one fertile in conjuring up ideal pictures. It is matter of fact, autoptic throughout.

We have, unhappily, no means of applying the touchstone of history to the circumstances narrated by the ballad. There is extant no other information as to the movements of Elizabeth of York, between Christmas 1484 and the 21st of the following August, when the battle of Bosworth was fought. We find that at the time of that battle she was living at Sheriff Hutton Castle in Yorkshire, "with no companion," says Miss

Strickland (see that lady's *Lives of the Queens of England*), "but its young and imbecile owner, her cousin Warwick." The ballad speaks of her as present at Leicester, when the dishonoured body of her uncle was carried from the field of his fall into that town. But this collision between the ballad and facts cannot be allowed to impugn the validity of the whole account furnished by the ballad. The bringing the lately oppressed lady to the sight of her fallen oppressor, formed a "position" too tempting to be rejected. Facts might pardonably be strained a little to compass such an effective meeting; and the furious spirit of a partisan might put into the mouth of a most gentle lady cruel words derisive of her fallen enemy.

They carried him naked into Leicester
And buckled his hair under his chin.
Bessie met him with a merry cheer;
These were the words she said to him: – 259.1058

"How likest thou the slaying of my brethren twain?"
She spake these words to him alone.
"Now are we wroken upon thee here!
Welcome, gentle uncle, home!" – 260.1062

As to the authorship, we may easily believe that the writer was Humphrey Brereton. Probably no one but Brereton would have described so carefully Brereton's movements, the main interests of the piece centring around the Earl of Richmond, and the lady Elizabeth. This author knows well and describes every passage of them.

This ballad then may be set down as of some considerable historical value for the picture of the times that it gives.

[Part I.]

[How the princess Elizabeth persuades Lord Derby to help her and her lover Richmond.]

GOD: *that* is most of might
& borne was of a maiden ffree,
saue & keepe our comelye **Kinge**
& **all** the pore cominaltye! – 1.4

for whereas *King Richard*, I vnd[e]rstand,
had not raigned yeeres three,
But the best duke in all the Land
he caused to be **headed** att Salsburye. – 2.8

that time the Stanleys without doubt
were dread ouer England ffarr & neere,
next King Richard, *that* was soe stout,
of any Lord in England Ire. – 3.12

there was a Lady faire on mold,
the name of her was litle Bessye;
shee was young, shee was not old,
but of the age of one and twentye; – 4.16

shee cold write, & shee cold reede,
well shee cold worke by prophesye;
shee soiornd in the Cittye of London
that time with the Erle of Darbye. – 5.20

vpon a time, as I you tell,
there was noe more but the Erle & shee;
shee made complaint of Richard the King,
that was her vnckle of blood soe nye: – 6.24

“helpe, ffather stanley, I doe you pray!
for of King Richard wroken I wold bee.
he did my brethren to the death on a day
in their bedd where they did lye; – 7.28

“he drowned them both in a pipe of wine;
itt was dole to heare and see!
& he wold haue put away his Queene
for to haue lyen by my bodye! – 8.32

helpe *that* he were put away,
for all the royall blood destroyed wilbee!
BUKINGAM, *that* duke of England,
was as great with King Richard as now are yee. – 9.36

“the crowne of England there tooke hee,—
forsooth, *Lord*, this is no lye,—
& crowned *King Richard* of England free,
that after beheaded him att Salsburye. — 10.40

“helpe, father Stanley, I you pray!
for on *that* traitor wroken wold I bee;
& helpe Erle Richmond, *that* Prince **soe** gay,
that is exiled ouer the sea! — 11.44

“for & he were *King*, I shold be Queene;
I doe him loue, & neuer him see.
thinke on Edward, my father, *that* late was *King*,
vpon his deathe-bed where he did lye: — 12.48

“of a litle child he put me to thee,
for to goerne and to **guide**;
into *your* keeping hee put mee,
& left me a booke of prophecye;— — 13.52

“I haue itt in keeping in this cite;—
he knew *that* yee might make me a *Queene*,
father, if thy will itt be;
for *Richard* is no righteous Kinge, — 14.56

“nor vpon no woman borne was hee;
the royall blood of all this land,
Richard my vnkle will destroye
as he did the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, — 15.60

“**Who** was as great with *King Richard* as now are yee.
for when he was Duke of Gloster,
he slew good King Henerye
in the Tower of London as he lay there. — 16.64

“Sir william Stanley, they brother deere
in the hol[t]e where he doth lye,
he may make 500 fightinge men
by the marryage of his faire Ladye. – 17.68

“your sonne George, the Lord Strange,
in Latham where he doth lye,
he may make a 1000 ffighting men in ffere,
& giue then wages for monthes three. – 18.72

“Edward stanley *that* is thy sonne,
300 men may bring to thee.
thy sonne Iames, *that* young preist,
warden of Manchester was made latelye. – 19.76

Sir Iohn Sauage, thy sisters sonne,—
he is thy sisters sonne of blood soe nye—
hee may make 1500 fighting men,
& all his men white hoods to giue; – 20.80

“he giueth the pikes on his banner bright;
vpon a feild backed was neuer hee.
Sir Gilbert Talbott, a man of might,
in Sheffeld castle where he doth lye, – 21.84

“Hele make a 1000^d men of might,
& giue them wages ffor monthes three.
& they selfe a 1000 Eagle ffitt to ffight,
that is a goodlye sight to see; – 22.88

“for thou & thine withouten pine
may bring Richemond ouer the sea;
for & he were King, I should be Queene;
ffather Stanley, remember bee!” – 23.92

then answered the Earle againe;
these were the words he sayd to BESSYE:
“& King Richard doe know this **thing**,
wee were vndone, both thou and I; – 24.96

“In a ffire **you** must brenn,
my liffe & my **lands are** lost from mee;
therefore these words be in vaine:
leauē & doe away, good BESSYE!” – 25.100

“ffather stanley! is there no grace?
noe Queene of England *that* I must bee?
then BESSYE stode **studying** in *that* place
with teares trickling ffrom her eyen: – 26.104

“Now I know I must neuer be Queene!
all this, man, is longe **of** thee!
but thinke on the dreadffull day
when the great doame itt shalbe, – 27.108

“when righteousnesse on the rainbowe shall sitt,
& deeme he shall both thee and mee,
& all ffalshood away shall fflitt
when all truth shall by him bee! – 28.112

“I care not whether I hange or drowne,
soe *that* my soule saued may bee;
make good answer as thou may,
ffor all this, man, is long **of** thee.” – 29.116

with *that* shee tooke her head **grace** downe
& **threw itt downe** vpon the ground,
both pearles & many a *precyous* stone
that were better **than a 1000** pound. – 30.120

her **ffaxe** *that* was as white as silke,
shortly downe shee did itt rent;
with her hands as white as any milke,
her ffaire ffaxe thus hath **shee spilt**; – 31.124

her hands together can shee wringe,
& with teares shee wipes her eye;
“welladay, BESSYE!” can shee sing,
& parted with the Erle of darbye. – 32.128

“ffare-well, man! now am I gone!
itt shall be long ere thou me see!”
the Erle stood still as any stone,
& all **blarked** was his blee. – 33.132

when he heard BESSYE make such mone,
the teares fell downe from his eye,
“abyde, BESSYE! wee *part* not soe soone!
heere is none now but thee and I; – 34.136

“ffeild hath eyen, & wood hath eares,
you cannott tell who standeth vs by;
but wend forth, BESSYE, to thy Bower,
& looke you doe as I bidd **yee**: – 35.140

“put away thy maydens bright,
that noe person **doth vs see**;
for att nine of the clocke within this night,
in thy bower will I be with thee; – 36.144

“then of this matter wee will **talke** more,
when there is no moe but **you** and I;
A charcole [**fire**] att my desire,
that no smoke come in our eye; – 37.148

“**Peeces** of wine many a one,
& diuers spices be therbye,
pen, Inke, *paper*, looke thou want none,
but haue all things ffull readye.” – 38.152

BESSYE made her busines, & forth is gone,
& tooke her leaue att the Erle of DARBYE,
& put away her maydens anon,
no man nor **mayd** was therby; – 39.156

A charcole fire was ready bowne,—
there cane no smoke *within* his eye,—
peece of wine many a one,
& **diuers spices lay** therby, – 40.160

Pen, Inke, & *paper*, **shee** wanted none,
& hadd all things there ffull readye,
& sett her selfe vpon a stone
without any companye. – 41.164

shee tooke a booke in her hande,
& did read of *prophecye*,
how shee shold bee Queene **of** England,
but many a guiltesse man first must dye; – 42.168

& as shee read **ffurther**, shee wept.
with that came the Erle of Darbye;
att nine of the clocke **att** night
to bessyes bower Cometh hee. – 43.172

shee barred the dore aboue and vnder,
that no man shold come them **nye**;
shee sett him on [**a**] **seate** [**soe**] rich,
& on another shee sett her by; – 44.176

shee gaue him wine, shee gaue him spice,
sais, “blend in, ffather, & drinke to me.”
the fire was hott, the spice itt bote,
the wine itt **wrought** wonderffullye. – 45.180

then **kind** in heat, god wott,
then **weaped the noble** Erle of Darbye:
“aske now, BESSYE **then**, what thou wilt,
& **thy boone granted itt** shalbee.” – 46.184

“Nothing,” said BESSYE, “I wold haue,
neither of gold nor yett of ffee.
but ffaire Erle Richmond, soe god me saue,
that hath lyen soe long beyond the sea.” – 47.188

“Alas, Bessye! **that** noble Lord
& thy boone, fforsooth, grant wold I thee;
but there is no clarke *that* I **dare** trust
this night to write ffor thee and mee, – 48.192

“because our matter is soe hye,
lest any man wold vs bewray.”
BESSYE said, “ffather, itt shall not neede;
I am a clarke ffull good, I say.” – 49.196

shee drew a paper vpon her knee,
pen and Inke shee had full readye,
hands white & ffingars long;
shee dressed her to **write** speedylye. – 50.200

“ffather Stanley, now let me see,
ffor euery word write shall I.”
“BESSYE, make a letter to the Holt
there my brother Sir William doth Lye; – 51.204

“bidd him bring 7 sad yeomen,
all in greene clothes lett them bee,
& change his Inn in euery towne
where before hee was wont to Lye; – 52.208

“& lett his fface be towards the benche,
lest any man shold him espye;
& by the 3^d day of May
that he come and speake with mee. – 53.212

“Commend me to my sonne George,
the Lord strange, where he doth lye,
& bidd him bring 7 sadd yeomen;
all in greene clothes lett them bee, – 54.216

“& lett himselfe be in the same suite,
& **change** his Inn in euery towne,
& lett his back be ffroe the benche,
Lest any man shold him knowne; – 55.220

“& by the 3^d day of May
bidd him come & speake with mee.
Commend me to Edward my sonne,
the warden & hee togetherr bee, – 56.224

“& bidd them bring 7 sadd yeomen,
& all in greene lett them bee,
changing their Inn in euery towne
where before they were wont to Lye; – 57.228

“lett their backes be ffrom the bench,
lest any man shold them see;
& by the 3^d day of May
bidd them come & speake with mee. – 58.232

Comend me to Sir Iohn Sauage
& Sir Gilbert Talbott in the north cuntrye,
& [let] either of them [bring] 7 sad yeomen,
and all in green lett them bee. – 59.236

“Changing their Inn in euery towne
before where they were wont to bee;
& by the 3^d day of May
lett them come & speake with me.” – 60.240

BESSYE writeth, the Lord he seaeth;
“ffather Stanley, what will yee more?”
“alas!” sayd *that* royall Lord,
“all our worke is fforlore! – 61.244

“ffor there is noe messenger *that* wee may trust
to bring the tydings to the north cuntrye,
lest any man shold vs betraye,
because our matter is soe hye.” – 62.248

“Humphrey **Bretton**,” said litle Bessye,
“he hath beene true to my father & mee,
hee shall haue the **writting** in hand,
& bring them into the North cuntrye. – 63.252

“goe to thy bedd, ffather, & sleepe,
& I shall **worke**, ffor thee & mee,
to-Morrow by rising of the sunn
Humphrey Bretton shall be with thee.” – 64.256

shee brought the Lord **to** his bedd,
all *that* night where he shold Lye;
& BESSYE **worketh** all the night;
there came no sleepe in her eye. – 65.260

[Part II.]

[How Humphrey Bretton, for the Princess Elizabeth's sake, carries the Letters of Lord Derby to his Adherents.]

In the morninge when the day can spring,
vp riseth BESSYE in *that* stower,
to Humphrey Bretton gone **is shee**;
but when shee came to Humphreys bower, – 66.264

with a small voice called shee.
Humphrey answered *that* Lady bright,
& saith, “lady, who are yee
that calleth on me **ere** itt be light?” – 67.268

I am *King* Edwards daughter,
the countesse cleere, young BESSYE:
in all the hast **thou** can,
thou must come speake with the Erle of Darbye.” – 68.272

Humphrey cast vpon **[him]** a gowne,
a paire of slippers **on** his ffeete.
for[th] of [his] Chamber then he came,
& **went** with *that* Lady sweet. – 69.276

shee brought him to the bed side
where they *Lord* lay in bed to sleepe.
when **they** Erle did Humphrey see,
full tenderlye **can hee** weepe, – 70.280

& said, “my loue, my trust, my liffe, my Land,
all this, Humphrey, doth Lye in thee!
thou may make, & thou may marr,
thou may vndoe BESSYE & mee! – 71.284

“take sixe letters in **thy hand**,
& bring them to the north countrye;
they be written on **they** backside,
where they letters **deliuered shold** bee.” – 72.288

he receiued the letterrs sixe;
into the west **wend** wold hee.
then meeteth him *that* Ladye bright,
she said, “abide, Humphrey, & speake with mee. – 73.292

“a poore reward I shall thee giue,
itt shall be but pounds three;
if I be Queene, & may liue,
better rewarded shalt thou bee. – 74.296

“A litle witt god hath sent mee:
when thou rydest into the west,
I pray thee take no companye
but such as shall be of the best, – 75.300

“sitt not too long drinking **thy** wine,
lest in **heat** thou be too merrye;
such words **you** may cast out then,
to-morrow fforthought itt may bee.” – 76.304

Humphray **of** BESSYE *receiued* **noble[s] nine**;
with a peece of wine shee cold him assay;
hee tooke leaue of *that* Ladye sheene,
& straight to the holt he took **h[i]s** way. – 77.308

when Sir william stanley did him see,
he said to him *with* words free,
“Humphrey Brettom, what maketh **thee** heere,
that hither dost ryde soe hastilye? – 78.312

How [fareth] *that Lord*, my brother deare,
That lately was made the Erle of darby,
is he dead without letting,
or with *King Richard* his **counsell** is hee? – 79.316

“Or he be suspected **without** lett,
or taken into the tower so hye,
London gates shall tremble & quake
but my brother borrowed shall bee! – 80.320

“tell me, Humphrey, withouten lett,
that rydest hither, soe hastilye.”
“**breake that letter**,” said Humphrey then;
“**behold then, and you shall see**.” – 81.324

when **the Knight Looked the Letter** on,
he stood still in a studdiinge:
answer to Humphrey gaue he none,
but still hee **gnew** on his staffe end. – 82.328

he plucket the letter in peeces three,
into the water he cold itt **fflinge**:
“haue here, Humphrey,” said the *Knight*,
“I will giue thee a 100 shillinge; – 83.332

“thou shalt not tarry heere all night,
straight to Latham ryd shall yee.”
“alas,” sais Humphrey, “I may not ryde,
my horsse is tyred, as ye may see; – 84.336

“I came ffrom London in this tyde,
there came no sleepe within mine eye,”
“Lay thee downe, Humphrey,” he said, “& sleepe
well the space of houres three; – 85.340

a ffresh horsse I thee behett,
shall bring [thee] through the north countrye.”
Humphray slept but howers 2,
but on his Iourney well thought hee; – 86.344

a ffresh horsse was brought to him
to bring him through the west countrye.
he tooke his leaue at the *Knight*,
& straight to Latham rydeth hee, – 87.348

& att 9 of Clocke in the night,
att Latham gates knocketh hee.
the porter ariseth anon-right,
& answerd Humphray with words ffree, – 88.352

“In good ffaith, itt is tó Late
to call on me this time of the night.”
“I pray the, porter, open the gate,
& lett me in anon-right; – 89.356

“with the Lord strange I must speake,
from his ffather, the Erle of Darbye.”
the porter opened vp the gates,
& came his horsse and hee. – 90.360

the best wine *that* was therin,
to Humphrey Bretton fforth brought hee,
with torches burning in *that* tyde,
& other lights *that* he might see, – 91.364

& brought him to the bed syde
wheras the Lord strange Lay.
the Lord he mused in *that* tyde,
& sayd, “Humphrey, what has thou to say? – 92.368

“how fareth my ffather, *that noble Lord?*
in all England **he hath no peere.**”
Humphrey tooke a letter in his hand,
& said, “behold & yee may **see.**” – 93.372

when they *Lord* strange looked the letter vpon,
the teares trickled downe his eye;
he sayd, “wee must vnder a **cloude**,
for wee **may** neuer trusted bee;
wee may **sigh** & make great moane;
this world is not as itt shold bee. – 94.378

“commend me to my father deere,
his daylye blessing he **wold** giue me;
for & I liue another yeere,
this appointment keepe will I.” – 95.382

he receiued gold of my *Lord* Strange,
& straight to Manchester rydeth hee;
And when hee came to Manchester,
Itt was prime of the day;
he was ware of the warden & Edward Stanley,
together their Mattins ffor to say. – 96.388

then one brother said to the other,
“behold, brother, & you may see,
heere cometh Humphrey Bretton,
some hastye **tydings** bringheth hee.” – 97.392

he betooke them either a letter,
& bidd them looke & behold;
& read they did thsesse *letterrs* **readylye**,
& vp they lope, & laught aloude, – 98.396

And **saith**, “ffaire ffall *our* ffather *that noble Lord!*
to stirre and rise beginneth hee;

Buckingham's blood shall be **roken**,
that was **beheaded** att Salsbuyrye. – 99.400

“ffaire ffall the Countesse, the *Kings* daughter,
that **good** Councell giue cold shee;
wee trust in god **ffull** of might
to bring her Lord over the sea! – 100.404

“haue heere, Humphray, of either 40^s;
better rewarded shall thou bee.”
he tooke the gold att their hand;
to Sir Iohn Sauage rydeth hee, – 101.408

& hee tooke him a letter **in** hand,
bade him “behold, read, and see.”
& when the *Knight* the Letter hadd,
all blanked was his blee: – 102.412

“womens witt is wonder to heare!
my vnckle is turned by **your** BESSYE!
& wether itt turne to weale or **woe**,
att my vnckles biddinge **will I bee**. – 103.416

“haue heere, Humphrey, 40^s:
better rewarded may thou bee!
to Sheffield Castle Looke thou ryde
in all the hast *that* may bee.” – 104.420

fforth then rydeth *that* gentle *Knight*;
Sir Gilbert Talbott **ffindeth** hee;
hee tooke him a letter in his hand,
& bidd him, “reade & **yee may** see.” – 105.424

when Sir Gilbert Talbott the *lettre* looked on,
a loude laughter laughed hee:
“ffaire ffall *that* Lord of *hye* renowne!
to rise and stirr beginneth hee! – 106.428

“ffaire ffall Bessye, *that* Countesse cleere,
that such counsell giueth trulye!
Comend me to my nephew deare,
the young Erle of Shrewsbyrye, – 107.432

“bidd him neuer dread for no death,
In London Towre if hee bee;
I shall make London tremble & quake
but my nephew borrowed shalbee! – 108.436

“Comend me to *that* Countesse cleere,
King Edwards daughter, young Bessye;
tell her, I trust in god *that* hath no peere
to bring her loue ouer the sea. – 109.440

“Comend me to *that* Lord *without* dread
that latelye was made *Erle* of darbye;
& every haire of my head
for a man counted might bee, – 110.444

“with *that* Lord withouten dread,
with him will I liue and dye!
haue heree, Humphray, pounds three;
better rewarded may thou bee! – 111.448

“Straight to London looke thou ryde
in all the hast *that* may bee;
Comend mee *to the Kings daughter*, young Bessye
King Edwards daughter forssooth is shee, – 112.452

“In all this Land shee hath no peere.”
he taketh his leaue att the *Knicht*,
& straight to London rydeth hee.
& when he came to London right – 113.456

Itt was but a litle before eueni[n]ge,
there was he ware, walking in a garden greene,
[of] both the Erle & Richard our Kinge.
when the Erle had Humphrey see[ne,] – 114.460

he guae him a priuye *twinkle* with his eye.
then Humphrey came before the *King* soe ffree,
& downe he ffalleth vpon his knee.
“welcome, Humphray!” said the Erle of Darbye: – 115.464

“where hast thou beene, Humphray!” said the Erle,
“ffor I haue mist thee weekes three.”
“I haue beene in the west, my *Lord*,
where I was borne and bredd trulye, – 116.468

“ffor to sport me & to play
amonge my ffreinds ffarr & nye.”
“tell me, Humphrey,” said the Erle,
“how ffareth *all that* Countrye?
tell me, Humphrey, I thee pray,
how ffareth *King Richards Comunaltye?* – 117.474

“of all Countryes, I dare well say,
they beene the *fflower* of archerye,
ffor they will be trustye with their bowes,
for they will ffight & neuer fflee.” – 118.478

when *King Richard* heard Humphray soe say,
in his hart hee was ffull merrye;
hee with his Cappe *that* was soe deere
thanked *him* ffull curteouslye,

& said, “ffather Stanley, thou art to mee **neere**,
you are cheeffe of *your* Comynaltye, – 119.484

“halfe of England shalbe thine,
& equally devided betweene thee & mee;
I am thine, & thou art mine,
& **for** 2 ffellowes will wee bee. – 120.488

“I sweare by Marry, **maid** mild.
I know none such vnder the skye!
whilest I **am** *King* & weare the Crowne,
I will be cheeffe of the **poore** Comynaltye. – 121.492

“**tax nay mise** I will make none,
in noe Cuntry ffarr nor **neare**;
ffor if by their goods I shold plucke them downe,
for me they will **ffaight** ffull ffainteouslye. – 122.496

“**There is no riches to me soe rich
as is the pore Comynaltye.**”
when they had ended all their speche,
they tooke their leaue ffull gladlye, – 123.500

& to his Bower the *King* is gone.
then the Erle **and** Humphrey Bretton,
to Bessyes bower **they** went anon,
& ffound Bessye there alone. – 124.504

when Bessye did see Humphrey anon,
anon shee kissed him times three,
saith, “Humphray Bretton, welcome home!
how hast thou spedd in the west Countrye?” – 125.508

Into a *parler* they went anon,
there was no more but hee & shee:
Humphray, tell mee of **hence I** gone,
some **tydings** out of the west Countrye! – 126.512

“If I shold send ffor yonder Prince
to come ouer ffor the Loue of mee,
and murthered **amongst** his ffoes to bee,
alas, *that* were ffull great pittye! – 127.516

“fforsooth, *that* sight I wold not see
for all the gold in Christentye!
tell me, Humphray, I thee pray,
how hast thou done in the west countrye.” – 128.520

vnto Bessye anon he told
how hee had sped in the west countrye,
what was the answers **of them hee** had,
& what rewards hee had trulye: – 129.524

“By the third day of May, Bessye,” he sayd,
“In London there will they bee;
thou shalt in England be a Queene,
or else doubtlesse they will dye.” – 130.528

[Part III.]

[How Lord Derby’s friends come to London; and how the Princess Elizabeth send
Humphrey Bretton to her lover, Richmond.]

thus they *providid* **in** the winter time
their councell **to** keepe all three.
the Erle wrought by prophecye,
he wold not abyde in London trulye, – 131.532

but in the suburbs without the Cittye
an old Inn Chosen hath hee,
& drew an **Eagle** vpon the entrie
that the westerne men **might know where to Lye**. – 132.536

Humphrey stood in a hye tower,
& looked into the west Countrye;
Sir William Stanley & 7 in greene
came **straight ryding to** the Citye. – 133.540

when he was ware of the Eagle drawne,
he drew himself wonderous nye,
& bade his men goe into the towne,
& **dranke** the wine and make merrye. – 134.544

Into the Inn where the Eagle did bee,
fforsooth shortlye is hee gone.
Humphray Looked into the west,
& saw the *Lord* strange & 7 come – 135.548

ryding in greene into the Cittye.
when hee was ware of the **Eagle** drawen,
he drew himselfe wonderous nye,
& bade his men goe into the towne, – 136.552

**& spare no cost, & where they come
& drinke the wine & make good cheere;
& hee himselfe drew ffull nye
into the Inn where his ffather Lay**. – 137.556

Humphrey looked more into the west;
Six-teene in greene did hee see,
the warden & Sir Edward Stanley
cam ryding both in companye. – 138.560

there as the Eagle was drawen,
the gentlemen drew itt nye,
& bade their men goe into the towne,
& drinke the wine & make merrye; – 139.564

& went into the same Inn
there **where their ffather Lay.**
yett Humphray beholdeth into the west,
& looked towards the North countrye; – 140.568

he was ware of Sir Iohn sauage & Sir Gylbert Talbott
came ryding both in companye.
when they where ware of the Eagle drawen,
then they drew themselues **ffull** nye, – 141.572

& bade their men goe into the towne,
& drinke the wine & make merry;
& **yode** themselues into the **inne**
where the Erle and Bessye **Lay.** – 142.576

when all the *Lords* together mett,
among them all was litle Bessye;
with goodlye words shee them **grett,**
& said, “Lords, will yee doe ffor mee? – 143.580

“what, will yee releue yonder Prince
that is exiled beyond the sea?”
the Erle of Darbye came fforth then;
these **be** they words he said to Bessye: – 144.584

“ffourty Pound will I send,
Bessye, ffor the loue of thee;
& 20000 Eagle **ffeette,**
a queene of England to make thee.” – 145.588

Sir William stanley cam fforth then;
these were the words hee sayd to BESSYE:
“remember, Bessye, another **time**,
who doth the best ffor thee. – 146.592

“10000 Cotes *that* beene red,
in an howers warning ready shalbee.
In England thou shall be a queene,
or else doubtlesse I will dye.” – 147.596

Sir Iohn Sauage came fforth then;
these were the words he said to Bessye:
“**1000 marke** ffor thy sake
I will send thy loue beyond the sea; – 148.600

the Lord strange Came fforth then;
these were the words he said to Bessye:
“a little mony & ffew men
will bring thy loue ouer the sea; – 149.604

“Lett vs keepe our gold att home
for to wage our companye.
if wee itt send ouer the **sea**,
wee put our gold in Ieopardye.” – 150.608

Edward Stanley came forth then;
these were the words he sayd to Bessye:
“remember, BESSYE, another time,
he *that* **doth now** best ffor thee; – 151.612

“ffor there is **no** power *that* I haue,
nor no gold to giue thee;
vnder my ffathers banner will I **bee**
either ffor to liue or dye.” – 152.616

BESSYE cam fforth before the Lords all,
& vpon her knees then ffalleth shee;
10000 pound I will send
to my loue ouer the sea. – 153.620

“who shall be our messenger
to bring the gold ouer the sea?
Humphrey Bretton,” said BESSYE;
“I know none soe good as hee.” – 154.624

“alas!” sayd Humphrey, “I dare not take in hand
to carry the gold ouer the sea;
they Galley shipps beene soe stronge,
they will me neigh wonderous nighe, – 155.628

“they will me robb, they will me drowne,
they will take they gold ffrom mee.”
“hold thy peace, Humphrey,” sayd litle BESSYE,
“thou shalt itt carry without Leopardye; – 156.632

“thou shalt haue no baskett nor no male;
no buckett nor sacke-cloth shall goe with thee;
three Mules that bee stiffe & stronge,
loded with gold shall they bee;
with saddles side skirted, I doe thee tell,
wherin the gold sowed shalbe. – 157.638

“if any man sayes, `who is the shipp
that sayleth fforth vpon the sea?’
Say itt is the Lord Liles;
in England & ffraunce welbeloued is hee.” – 158.642

then came fforthe the Erle of Darbye;
these were the words he sayd to BESSYE;
he said: “BESSYE, thou art to blame
to poynt any shipp vpon the sea! – 159.646

“I haue a good shipp of my owne
shall carry *Humphrey* & my mules three;
an Eagle shalbe drawen vpon the **top mast**,
that the **out allyants** may itt see. – 160.650

“there is no ffreake in all ffrance
that shipp that dare come nye.
if any man aske whose is the shipp,
say `itt is the **Erle** of Darbyes.” – 161.654

HUMphrey tooke the Mules three;
into the west wind taketh hee;
att **Hippon** withouten doubt
there shipping taketh hee;
with a **ffaire** wind & a Coole
thus he sayleth vpon the sea – 162.660

[Part IV.]

[How Humphrey Bretton takes money from Princess Elizabeth to Richmond; and who are on Richmond's side.]

To **BIGERAM** abbey, where the English *Prince* was.
the porter was an Englishman,
well he knew *HUMphrey* Breiton,
& ffast to him **can he gone**. – 163.664

Humphrey knocked att the gate priuilye,
& these words he spake surelye,
“I pray thee, Porter, open the gate
& receiue me & **my** mules three,
I shall thee giue withouten lett
ready gold to thy **meede**.” – 164.670

“I will none of thy gold,” the Porter said,
“nor yett, HUMphrey, none of thy ffee;
but I will open the gates wyde,
& receiue thy mules and thee, – 165.674

“ffor a Cheshire man borne am I,
ffrom the Malpas but miles three.”
the porter opened the gates soone,
& receiued him & the Mules three; – 166.678

the best wine readilye then
to HUMphrey Bretton giueth hee.
“alas!” sayd Humphrey, “how shall I doe?
for I am stead in a strange countrye; – 167.682

“The Prince of England I do not know;
before I did him neuer see.”
“I shall thee teach,” said the Porter then,
“the Prince of England to know trulye. – 168.686

“loe, where he shooteth att the butts,
& with him are Lords three;
he weareth a gowne of veluett blacke,
& itt is coted above his knee;
with long visage & pale;
therby the Prince know may yee; – 169.692

“a priuye wart, withouten lett,
a litle aboute the chin;
his face h[i]s white, the wart is red,
therby you may him ken.” – 170.696

now ffrom the Porter is he gone;
with him hee tooke the Mules 3;
to Erle Richmand he went anon
where the other Lords bee. – 171.700

when he came before the Prince,
lowlye hee kneeled vpon his knee;
he deliuered the lettre *that* Bessye sent,
& soe he did the mules three, – 172.704

[&] a rich ring with a stone.
there the prince glad was hee;
he tooke the ring att *Humphrey* then,
& kissed itt times 3. – 173.708

HUMphrey kneeled still as any stone,
assuredlye as I tell to thee;
HUMphrey of the Prince word gatt none,
therefore in his hart was not merrye. – 174.712

HUMphrey standeth vpp then anon;
to the prince these words said he,
“why standeth thou soe still in this stead,
& no answer does giue mee? – 175.716

“I am come ffrom the stanleys bold,
King of England to make thee,
& a ffaire Lady to the ffere,
there is none such in Christenyt; – 176.720

“shee is *Countesse*, a *Kings* daughter,
the name of her is BESSYE,
a louelye Lady to looke vpon,
& well shee can worke by profecye. – 177.724

“I may be called a lewd messenger,
for answer of thee I can gett none;
I may sayle hence with a heauy heart;
what shall I say when I come home?” – 178.728

the prince tooke the Lord Lisle,
& the Lord of Oxford was him by;
they Lord fferres wold him not beguile;
to counsell thé goeth all 3. – 179.732

when they had their counsell tane,
to HUMphrey Bretton turneth hee,
“answer, HUMphrey, I can giue none
for the space of weekes 3. – 180.736

“when 3 weekes are come & gone,
Then an answer I will giue thee.”
the mules into a stable are tane;
the saddle skirtts then rippeth hee; – 181.740

therin he ffindeth gold great plentye
for to wage a companye.
he caused the houshold to make him cheare;
“in my stead lett him bee.” – 182.744

Erly in the morning, as soone as itt was day,
with him he tooke the Lords three,
& straight to paris he tooke the way,
there armes to make readye. – 183.748

to the King of ffrance wendeth hee,
of men and mony he doth him pray,
that he wold please to Lend him shippes,
& ffor to bring him ouer the sea: – 184.752

“the Stanleys stout ffor me haue sent,
King of England ffor to make mee,
& if euer I weare the crowne,
well quitt the King of ffrance shalbe.” – 185.756

then answereth the *King* of ffrance,
& shortly answereth, “by St. Iohn,”
no shippes to bring him ouer the seas,
men nor money bringeth he none!” – 186.760

thus the Prince his answer hath tane.
both the Prince & Lords gay
to BIGGERAM abbey rydeth hee,
wheras HUMphrey Bretton Lay. – 187.764

“haue heere HUMphrey a 100 markes;
better rewarded shalt thou bee;
comend me to Bessye, *that* Countesse cleere,—
& yett I did neuer her see,— – 188.768

“I trust in god she shall be my Queene,
for her I will trauell the sea.
comend me to my ffather stanley,—
my owne mother marryed hath hee,— – 189.772

“bring him here a loue *lettre*,
& another to litle Bessye;
tell her I trust in the *Lord* of might
that my Queene shee shalbee. – 190.776

“Comend me to *Sir william* stanley,
that noble *Knight* in the west countrye;
tell him, about Micchallmasse
I trust in god in England to bee. – 191.780

“att Mylford hauen I will come in,
with all the power *that I can* bringe;
the ffirst towne *that* I may win
shalbe the towne of shrewsburye – 192.784

“pray Sir william, *that noble Knight,*
that night that hee wold looke on mee.
comend me to Sir Gilbert Talbott *that* is soe wight;
he lyeth still in the north cuntrye.” – 193.788

“I will none of thy gold, Sir Prince,
not yett none of they ffee;
if euery haire of my head were a man,
with you, *Sir Prince, that they shold* bee. – 194.792

thus HUMphrey his leaue hath tane,
& fforth hee sayleth vpon the seas;
straight to London can he ryde,
there as the Erle and Bessye Lyes. – 195.796

he tooke them either a *lettre* in hand,
& bade then *reade* and see.
the Erle tooke leaue of Richard the King,
& into the west rydeth hee. – 196.800

& leaueth Bessye att Leicecster,
& bade her *lye there in* priuitye;
“ffor if King Richard knew thee there,
in a ffyer brent must thou bee.” – 197.804

straight to Latham is he gone,
Where the Lord *strange he did* Lye,
& sent the Lord strange to London
to *keepe King Richard* companye. – 198.808

then to Sir william stanley, with 10000 cotes
in an howers warning readye to bee:
they *were all as red as* blood,
there they *harts head* is sett full hye. – 199.812

Sir Gilbert Talbott, 10000 **doggs**
in an howers warning readye to be.
Sir Iohn Sauage, 1500 **white hoods**,
ffor they will fflight & neuer fflee. – 200.816

Sir Edward Stanley, 300 men;
there were no better in Christentye.
Rice apthomas, a *Knight* of wales,
800 spere-men brought hee. – 201.820

[Part V.]

[How Richmond lands in England, and marches to Bosworth.]

Sir William stanley, att the holt hee lyes,
& looked ouer his head soe hye;
“which way standeth the wind?” he sayes;
“if there be any man can tell mee.” – 202.824

“The wind itt standeth south west,”
soe sayd a *Knight that* stood **him** by.
“this night, yonder royall prince,
into England entreth hee.” – 203.828

he called **that** gentleman *that* stood him by,
his name was Rowland Warburton,
he bade him goe to Shrewsburye *that* night,
& bade them lett *that* prince in come. – 204.832

by **that** Rowland came to Shrewsburye
the portcullis was letten downe;
thé called the Prince in ffull great scorne,
& said “in England he shold weare no crowne.” – 205.836

Rowland bethought him of a wile,
& tyed the writtings to a stone;
he threw the writtings ouer the wall,
& bade the baliffes looke them vpon. – 206.840

then they opened the gates wyde,
& mett the Prince with processyon;
he wold not abyde in shrewsburye *that* night,
for King Richard heard of his cominge, – 207.844

& called his Lords of great renowne.
Lord Pearcy came to him then,
& on his knees he kneeled him downe
& sayd, “my leege, I haue 30000 ffigting men.” – 208.848

the Duke of Norffolke came to the King,
& downe he kneeleth on his knee;
the Erle of Surrey came with him,
they were both in companye. – 209.852

the Bishopp of Durham was not away,
Sir william Bawmer stood him by,
the Lord scroope & the Erle of Kent
they were both in companye: – 210.856

“& wee haue either 20000 men
ffor to keepe the crowne with thee.”
the good Sir william Harrington
said they wold ffight & neuer fflee. – 211.860

King Richard made a messenger,
& send into the west cuntrye,
“bidd the Erle of Derbye make him readye
& bring 20000 men vnto mee, – 212.864

“or the Lord **stranges** head I shall him send;
for doubtlesse **hee** shall dye.
without hee come to me **soone**,
his owne sonne hee shall neuer see.” – 213.868

then another Herald can appeare:
“to Sir william stanley *that noble Knight*,
bidd him bring 10000 men,
or **to** death hee shall be dight.” – 214.872

then answered *that doubtye Knight*,
& **answered the herald** without lettinge:
“**Say, on Bosworthe feilde I wyll hym meete**
On munday earlye in the morninge. – 215.876

“such a breakeffast I him **hett**
as neuer subiect **did to** Kinge!”
the messenger is home gone
to tell King Richard this **tydand**. – 216.880

the King together his hands can ding,
& say[d], “the Lord **Strange** shall dye!”
hee bade, “**put him into** the tower,
ffor I will him neuer see.” – 217.884

now leaue wee Richard & his Lords
that were prest **all** with pryde,
& talke wee of the stanleys **bold**
that **brought in the Prince of** the other side. – 218.888

Now is Richmond to stafford come,
& Sir william Stanley to litle stone.
the Prince had leuer then any gold
Sir william Stanley to looke vpon. – 219.892

a messenger was readye made,
that night to stone rydeth hee;
Sir william rydeth to stafford towne,
with him a small companye. – 220.896

when the *Knight* to stafford came,
that Richmond might him see,
he tooke him in his armes then,
& kissed him times three; – 221.900

“the welfare of **thy body** comforteth me more
then all the gold in christentye!”
then answered *that* royall *Knight*;
to the Prince thus speaketh hee: – 222.904

“in England thou shalt weare the crowne,
or else doubtlesse I will dye.
a ffaire Lady thou shalt ffind to thy fferre,
as any is in christentye,
a *Kings* daughter, a countesse clere;
yea, shee is both wise & wittye. – 223.910

“I must goe to stone, my soueraigine,
ffor to comfort my men this night.”
the Prince tooke him by the hand,
& sayd, “ffarwell, gentle *Knight*!” – 224.914

now is word comen to Sir *william* stanley
Early **on the sunday** morninge,
that the Erle of Darby, his brother deere,
had giuen battell to *Richard* the Kinge. – 225.918

“that wold I not,” said Sir william,
“for all the gold in christentye,

except I were with him there,
att the Battell ffor to bee. – 226.922

then straight to Lichefeild can he ryde
in all the hast *that* might bee.
& when they came to the towne,
they all cryed, “King HENERY!” – 227.926

then straight to Bosworth wold he ryde
in all he hast *that* might bee.
when they came to Bosworth ffeild,
there they mett with a royall *companye*. – 228.930

[Part VI.]

[How Richmond fights and wins the Battle of Bosworth Field, and marries the Princess Elizabeth, Lady Bessy.]

The Erle of Darbye he was there,
& 20000 stode him by;
Sir John Savage, his sisters sone,
he was his nephew of blood soe nye,
he had 1500 ffighting men;
there was no better in christentye. – 229.936

Sir william stanley, *that* noble Knight,
10000 red Cotes had hee.
Sir Rice ap Thomas, he was there
with a 1000 speres mightye of tree. – 230.940

Erle Richmond came to the Erle of Darbye,
& downe he kneeleth vpon his knee;
he sayd, “ffather stanley, I you pray,
the vawward you will giue to me; – 231.944

“for I come for my right;
ffull ffaine waged wold I bee.”
“stand vp,” hee sayd, “my sonne deere,
thou hast thy mothers blessing by mee.” – 232.948

“the vanward, conne, I will thee giue;
ffor why, by me thou wilt [ordered be],
Sir William Stanley, my brother deere,
in *that* battell he shalbee; – 233.952

Sir Iohn Sauage, *that* hath no peere,
hee shall be a winge to thee;
Sir Rice ap Thomas shall breake the wray,
ffor he will ffight & neuer fflee;
& I my selfe will **houer** on this bill,
that ffaire battell ffor to see.” – 234.958

King Richard [**houed**] on the mountaines,
& was ware of the banner of the **Lord** stanley.
he said, “ffeitch hither the *Lord* strange to me
ffor doubtlesse hee shall dye this day.” – 235.962

“to the death, *Lord*, make thee bowne!
ffor by Mary, *that* mild **mayde**,
thou shalt dye ffor thy vnckles sake!
his name is william stanleye.” – 236.966

“if I shold dye,” sayd the *Lord* Strange,
“as god fforbidd itt soe shold bee!
alas ffor my Lady att home,
itt shold be long ere shee mee see! – 237.970

“but wee shall meete att domesday,
when the great dome itt shalbee.”
he called a gentleman of Lancashire,
his name was Latham trulye, – 238.974

& [a] ring beside his fffingar he tooke,
& cast itt to the gentleman,
& bade him “bring itt to Lancashire,
to my Ladye *that* is att home; – 239.978

“att her table shee may sitt;
ere shee see her Lord, itt may be Longe.
I haue no ffoot to scutt or fflytt,
I must be Martyred with tyrant stronge. – 240.982

“if itt ffortune my vnckle to lose the ffeild—
as god defend itt shold soe bee!—
pray her to take my eldest sonne
& exile him ouer the sea; – 241.986

“he may come in another time;
by ffeild, ffrith, tower or towne,
wreake hee may his ffathers death
vpon King Richard *that* weares the crowne.” – 242.990

a Knight to the King did appeare,
good Sir william Harrington;
saies, “lett him haue his liffe a while
till wee haue the ffather, the vnckle, & the sonne. – 243.994

“wee shall haue them soone on the ffeild,
the ffather, the vnckle, the sonne, all 3;
then may you deeme them with your mouth,
what Kind of death *that* they shall dye.” – 244.998

but a blocke on the ground was cast,
thervpon the Lords head was Layde;
an axe ouer his head can stand,
& out of passyon itt was brayd. – 245.1002

he saith, “there is no other boote
but *that* **the** *Lord* needs must dye.”
Harrington **heard itt**, & was ffull woe
when itt wold no better bee: – 246.1006

he saith, “our ray breaketh on euery syde;
wee put our **ffolke** in ieopardye.”
then they tooke vp the *Lord* on liue;
King Richard did him nuere see. – 247.1010

then **he** blew vp bewgles of brasse,
the **shott** of guns were soe ffree
that [**made**] **many wiues cry** alas,
& **many children** ffatherlesse. – 248.1014

Rice ap Thomas with the blacke **gowne**,
shortlye he brake the ray:
with 30000 ffighting men
the *Lord Percy* went his way. – 249.1018

the Duke of Norfolke would haue ffiled;
with 20000 **in** his companye
he went **vp to** a wind-mill,
& stood vpon a hill soe hye, – 250.1022

there he met *Sir Iohn Savage*, a **valyant Knight**;
with him a worthy companye:
to the death the duke was dight,
& his sonne, prisoner taken was hee. – 251.1024

then **they** *Lord dakers* began to fflee,
soe did **many** others **more**.
when *king Richard* *that* sight did see,
[**Then his heart was ffull w**]oe: – 252.1030

“I pray you, my men, be not away,
ffor like a man **ffree** will I dye!
ffor I had leuer dye this day,
the[n] with the stanleys taken bee!” – 253.1034

a *Knigh*t to *King* Richard can say,
good Sir william of harrington,
he saith, “wee are like all heere
to the death soone to be done;— – 254.1038

“there may no man their strokes abyde,
the stanleys dints they beene soe stronge;—
yee may come in another time;
therefore methinke yee tarry too longe; – 255.1042

“*your* horsse if ready att *your* hand,
another day **you may your** worshipp win,
& to raigne with royaltie,
& weare **your** crowne & be our *King*.” – 256.1046

“**giue** me my battell axe in my hand,
& **sett my crowne on** my head so hye!
ffor by him *that* made both sunn & moone,
King of England this day **I will** dye!” – 257.1050

besides his head thé hewed the crowne,
& dange on him as they were wood;
thé stroke his Basnett to his head
vntill his braines came out with blood. – 258.1054

thé carryed him naked **vnto** Leicester,
& buckeled his haire vnder his chin.
Bessye mett him **with** merry cheere;
these were they words shee sayd to him: – 259.1058

“how likest thou **they slaying of my brethren twaine?**”
she spake these words to him **alowde:**
“now are wee wroken vpon thee heere!
welcome, gentle vnckle, home!” – 260.1062

great solace itt was to see,
I tell you, *masters*, without lett,
when they red rose of Mickle price
& our **BESSYE** were mett. – 261.1068

a Bishopp them marryed with a ringe,
they 2 bloods of hye renowne.
BESSYE sayd, “now may wee sing,
wee tow bloods are made all one.” – 262.1070

the Erle of Darbye he was there,
& Sir william Stanley a man of might;
vpon their heads they sett the crowne
in *presence* of many a worthy wight. – 263.1074

then came **hee** vnder a cloud,
that sometime in England was ffull **high;**
the hart began to cast his head;
after, noe man might itt see. – 264.1078

but god *that* is both bright & sheene,
& borne was of **[a]** mayden ffree,
sauē & keepe our comelye **King**
& the poore cominaltye! – 265.1082

ffinis.