

The Ballad of Bart and Beth

Dan Timmons

On our lovely land of long ago,
The fields and fallows spread out far and wide,
Near valleys vast by vaulting circles
Of hardy hills and mountains high in mist,
Which shadowed and shouldered shapely towns,
In clearlit climes and under stormy clouds.
Here, poor and rich people passed their days
In long lively hours of hard labour,
And many merchants moved about
The traveled trails and roads, daily trading
All their worthy wares and ways of service,
In sunny seasons and during soft winter snows.

In these years of yore, a young soul lived
Who strangely strayed from the structured life
Of his curt and cautious kin, which always
worked and worried about their wealth concerns,
In their deeply dark and dank caves,
By hearths of heated coal in halls of grime.
For a lad of lore he longed to be,
Instead of stoutly working with stone and ore,
And so he wrung and wrote, from wrangled thoughts,
Such words of wonder and some wanful tales
Of the lives and loves of languid hearts
Who, like this lad, could never nightly lie with peace.

Then one day when deep in a dell,
Near a field of ferns by a leafy woods' edge,
Where a river ran to a rocky waterfall,
Which glowed and glittered under streaky gleams of light,
He heard the sounds of soft singing,
Which suddenly, yet soothingly, broke his silent thoughts.
As he stayed his steps and stood to listen,
His eager eye saw, among the eaves of green,
Wrapped in a gorgeous gown of gold,
A lovely lass who gracefully lingered through
The winding woods and wandered by
The foot of the falls, straying near fens and willows.

The lad wistfully watched and waited,
Held speechless and spellbound by this special lass,
Until her soulful song so softly ended
With a sigh of sadness and a sorrowful note.
Then he called out, "Could you continue, please?
For I like to listen to such lovely songs,

Though I do hear a heavy heart singing
That mellow music that indeed moves me greatly."
The mournful maiden moved not a bit,
So stunned and startled by the staring lad;
Her cheeks flushed and flammed, her eyes fluttered,
And nary a note came from her nervous lips.

"Please don't flee and or floutly flare your eyes,
My will and words aren't meant to be wily,"
Said the lad of lore, "I long only
To hear and heed all your fair harmonies."
The lovely lass then lowered her eyes
And sadly said, "Few ever hear my singing voice,
Since my father firmly forbids me
To daily dally in any of my duties,
And take some time for tunes or songs,
Instead of stoutly working with stitch and thread
In the silent and solemn sewing rooms,
By webs of weaving cloth and winding yarn."

"You must knit and knot while knowing
Your gift of a golden voice can give such joy?"
The lad cried and crept to the creek's edge,
"So dense and dull-witted is he who does this to you.
Though a forward fool of folly
You may think me and dispute my words, I—"
Just then the livid lad did lurch sideways,
Slipping and sliding on the slopely bank,
And fell with face first into
The fens of the falls, all covered with ferns floating;
Then he wrenched and wriggled in wrath,
Striving to stretch to the boggy stream's other bank.

There, the lively lass laughed and said,
"Yes, a fool of folly you do fully seem.
Still, my hand is here to help you out
Of the muck and mire, if you can make it to me."
With face smeared and smudged, he smiled
In relief and reached out for her readied grasp.
Thus with hands and hearts happily joined,
They peacefully passed the days with poetic talk,
Far from the somber souls in solemn halls,
And softly sang only pleasant songs of love,
In both clear and cloudy climes,
On our lovely land of oh so long ago.