

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Adam Bell, Clym Clough

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MERY it was in grene forest,
Amonge the leues grene,
Where that men walke both east ainrd west,
Wyth bowes and arrowes kene,

To ryse the dere out of theyr denne;
Suche sightes as hath ofte bene sene,
As by thre yemen of the north countrey,
By them it is as I meane.

The one of them hight Adam Bel,
The other Clym of the Clough,
The thyrd was William of Cloudesly,
An archer good ynough.

They were outlawed for venyson,
These thre yemen euerechone;
They swore them brethen vpon a day,
To Englysshe-wood for to gone.

Now lith and lysten, gentylnen,
And that of myrthes loueth to here:
Two of them were single men,
The third had a wedded fere.

Wyllyam was the wedded man,
Muche more then was hys care:
He sayde to hys brethen vpon a day,
To carelel he would fare,

For to speke with fayre Else hys wife,
And with hys chyldren thre:
'By my trowth,' sayde Adam Bel,
'Not by the counsell of me.

'For if ye go to Caerlel, brother,
And from thys wylde wode wende,
If the justice mai you take,
Your lyfe were at an ende.'

'If that I come not to morowe, brother,
By pryme to you agayne,

Truste not els but that I am take,
Or else that I am slayne.'

He toke hys leaue of hys brethen two,
And to Carlel he is gone;
There he knocked at hys owne wyndowe,
Shortlye and anone.

`Wher be you, fayre Alyce, my wyfe,
And my chyldren three?
Lyghtly let in thyne husbände,
Wyllyam of Cloudesle.'

`Alas!' then sayde fayre Alyce,
And syghed wonderous sore,
`Thys place hath ben besette for you
Thys halfe yere and more.'

`Now am I here,' sayde Cloudesle,
`I woulde that I in were;
Now feche vs meate and drynke ynoughe,
And let vs make good chere.'

She feched him meat and drynke plenty,
Lyke a true wedded wyfe,
And pleased hym with that she had,
Whome she loued as her lyfe.

There lay an old wyfe in that place,
A lytle besyde the fyre,
Whych Wyllyam had found, of cherytye,
More then seuen yere.

Up she rose, and walked full styll,
Euel mote she spede therefoore!
For she had not set no fote on ground
In seuen yere before.

She went vnto the justice hall,
As fast as she could hye:
`Thys nyght is come vn to thys town
Wyllyam of Cloudesle.'

Thereof the iustice was full fayne,
And so was the shirife also:
`Thou shalt not trauaile hether, daimre, for nought;
Thy meed thou shalt haue or thou go.'

They gaue to her a ryght good goune,

Of scarlat it was, as I heard sayne;
She toke the gyft, and home she wente,
And couched her doune agayne.

They rysed the towne of mery Carlel,
In all the hast that they can,
And came thronging to Wyllyames house,
As fast as they might gone.

Theyr they besette that good yeman,
Round about on euery syde;
Wyllyam hearde great noyse of folkes,
That heytherward they hyed.

Alyce opened a shot-wyndow,
And loked all about;
She was ware of the justice and the shrife bothe,
Wyth a full great route.

`Alas! treason,' cryed Alyce,
`Euer wo may thou be!
Go into my chambre, my husband,' she sayd,
`Swete Wyllyam of Cloudesle.'

He toke hys sward and hys bucler,
Hys bow and hys chyldren thre,
And wente into hys strongest chamber,
Where he thought surest to be.

Fayre Alice folowed hiimr as a louer true,
With a pollaxe in her hande:
`He shalbe deade that here coimreth in
Thys dore, whyle I may stand.'

Cloudesle bent a wel good bowe,
That was of trusty tre,
He smot the justise on the brest,
That hys arrowe brest in thre.

`God's curse on his hartt,' saide William,
`Thys day thy cote dyd on;
If it had ben no better then myne,
It had gone nere thy bone.'

`Yelde the, Cloudesle,' sayd the justise,
`And thy bowe aindr thy arrowes the fro:'
`Gods curse on hys hart,' sayde fair Alice,
`That my husband councelleth so.'

`Set fyre on the house,' saide the sherife,
`Syth it wyll no better be,
And brenne we therin William,' he saide,
`Hys wyfe and chyldren thre.'

They fyred the house in many a place,
The fyre flew vpon hye;
`Alas!' than cryed fayr Alice,
`I se we shall here dy.'

William openyd hys backe wyndow,
That was in hys chambre on hye,
And wyth shetes let hys wyfe downe,
And hys chyldren thre.

`Haue here my treasure,' sayde William,
`My wyfe and my chyldren thre;
For Christes loue do them no harme,
But wreke you all on me.'

Wyllyam shot so wonderous well,
Tyll hys arrowes were all go,
And the fyre so fast vpon hym fell,
That hys bowstryng brent in two.

The spercles brent and fell hym on,
Good Wyllyam of Cloudesle;
But than was he a wofull man, and sayde,
Thys is a cowardes death to me.

`Leuer I had,' sayde Wyllyam,
`With my sworde in the route to renne,
Then here among myne ennemyes wode
Thus cruelly to bren.'

He toke hys sward and hys buckler,
And among them all he ran;
Where the people were most in prece,
He smot downe many a man.

There myght no man stand hys stroke,
So fersly on them he ran;
Then they threw wyndowes and dores on him,
And so toke that good yeman.

There they hym bounde both hand and fote,
And in depe dongeon hym cast;
`Now, Cloudesle,' sayde the hye justice,
`Thou shalt be hanged in hast.'

`One vow shal I make,' sayde the sherife,
`A payre of new galowes shall I for the make,
And al the gates of Caerlel shalbe shutte,
There shall no man come in therat.

`Then shall not helpe Clim of the Cloughe,
Nor yet Adam Bell,
Though they came with a thousand mo,
Nor all the deuels in hell.'

Early in the mornynge the justice vprose,
To the gates fast gan he gon,
And commaunded to be shut full cloce
Lightile euerychone.

Then went he to the market-place,
As fast as he coulde hye;
A payre of new gallous there dyd he vp set,
Besyde the pyllory.

A lytle boy stod them amonge,
And asked what meaned that gallow-tre;
They sayde, To hange a good yeaman,
Called Wyllyam of Cloudesle.

That lytle boye was the towne swyne-heard,
And kept fayre Alyce swyne;
Full oft he had sene Cloudesle in the wodde,
And geuen hym there to dyne.

He went out of a creues in the wall,
And lightly to the woode dyd gone;
There met he with these wyght yonge men,
Shortly and anone.

`Alas!' then sayde that lytle boye,
`Ye tary here all to longe;
Cloudesle is taken and dampned to death,
All readye for to honge.'

`Alas!' then sayde good Adam Bell,
`That euer we see thys daye!
He myght her with vs haue dwelled,
So ofte as we dyd him praye.

`He myght haue taryed in grene foreste,
Under the shadowes sheene,
And haue kepte both hym and vs in reaste,

Out of trouble and teene.'

Adam bent a ryght good bow,
A great hart sone had he slayne;
'Take that, chylde,' he sayde, 'To thy dynner,
And bryng me myne arrowe agayne.'

'Now go we hence,' sayed these wight yong meinr,
'Tary we no longer here;
We shall hym borowe, by Gods grace,
Though we bye it full dere.'

To Caerlel went these good yemen,
In a mery mornyng of Maye:
Her is a fyt of Cloudesli,
And another is for to saye.

And when they came to mery Caerlell,
In a fayre mornyng-tyde,
They founde the gates shut them vntyll,
Round about on euery syde.

'Alas!' than sayd good Adam Bell,
'That euer we were made men!
These gates be shyte so wonderly well,
That we may not come here in.'

Than spake Clymme of the Cloughe:
With a wyle we wyll vs in brynge;
Let vs say we be messengers,
Streyght comen from oure kyng.

Adam sayd, I haue a lettre wryten wele,
Now let vs wysely werke;
We wyll say we haue the kynges seale,
I holde the porter no clerke.

Than Adam Bell bete on the gate,
With str'okes greate and stronge;
The porter herde suche a noyse therate,
And to the gate faste he thronge.

'Who is there nowe,' sayd the porter,
'That maketh all this knockyng?
'We be two messengers,' sayd Clymme of the Cloughe,
'Be comen streyght frome oure kyng.'

'We haue a lettre,' sayd Adam Bell,
'To the justyce we must it brynge;

Let vs in, oure message to do,
That we were agayne to our kynge.'

`Here cometh no man in,' sayd the porter,
`By hym that dyed on a tre,
Tyll a false thefe be hanged,
Called Wylliam of Clowdysle.'

Than spake that good yeman Clym of the Cloughe,
And swore by Mary fre,
If that we stande long wythout,
Lyke a thefe hanged shalt thou be.

Lo here we haue got the kynges seale;
What! lordane, arte thou wode?
The porter had wende it had been so,
And lyghtly dyd of his hode.

`Welcome be my lordes seale,' sayd he,
`For that shall ye come in:'
He opened the gate ryght shortly,
An euyll openynge for hym!

`Nowe we are in,' sayd Adam Bell,
`Therof we are full fayne;
But Cryst knoweth that herowed hell,
How we shall come oute agayne.'

`Had we the keys,' sayd Clym of the Clowgh,
`Ryght well than sholde we spede;
Than myght we come out well ynough,
Whan we se tyme and nede.'

They called the porter to a councell,
And wronge hys necke in two,
And kest hym in a depe dongeon,
And toke the keys hym fro.

`Now am I porter,' sayd Adam Bell;
`Se, broder, the keys haue we here;
The worste porter to mery Carlell,
That ye had this hondreth yere.
`Now wyll we oure bowe:s bende,
Into the towne wyll we go,
For to delyuer our dere broder,
Where he lyeth in care and wo.'

Then they bent theyr good yew bowes,
And loked theyr striinrges were round;

The market-place of mery Carlyll,
They beset in that stounde.

And as they loked them besyde,
A payre of newe galowes there they se,
And the iustyce, with a quest of swerers,
That had iuged Clowdysle there hanged to be.

And Clowdysle hymselfe lay redy in a carte,
Fast bounde bothe fote and hande,
And a strong rope aboute his necke,
All redy for to be hangde.

The iustyce called to hym a ladde;
Clowdysles clothes sholde he haue,
To take the mesure of that good yoman,
And therafter to make his graue.

`I haue sene as greate a merueyll,' sayd Clowdesle,
`As bytwene this and pryme,
He that maketh thys graue for me,
Hymselfe may lye therin.'

`Thou spekest proudely,' sayd the iustyce;
`I shall hange the with my hande'
Full well that herde his bretheren two,
There styll as they dyd stande.

Than Clowdysle cast hys eyen asyde,
And sawe hys bretheren stande,
At a corner of the market-place,
With theyr good bowes bent in theyr hand,
Redy the iustyce for to chase.

`I se good comforte,' sayd Clowdysle,
`Yet hope I well to fare;
If I myght haue my handes at wyll,
Ryght lytell wolde I care.'

Than bespake good Adam Bell,
To Clymme of the Clowgh so fre;
Broder, se ye marke the iustyce well;
Lo yonder ye may him se.

And at the sheryf shote I wyll,
Strongly with an arowe kene;
A better shotte in mery Carlyll,
Thys seuen yere was not sene.

They loused theyr arowes bothe at ones,
Of no man had they drede;
The one hyt the iustyce, the other the sheryf,
That bothe theyr sydes gan blede.

All men voyded, that them stode nye,
Whan the iustyce fell to the grounde,
And the sheryf fell nyghe hym by;
Eyther had his dethe:s wounde.

All the cytezeyns fast gan fle,
They durste no lenger abyde;
There lyghtly they loused Clowdysle,
Where he with ropes lay tyde.

Wyllyam sterte to an offycer of the towne,
Hys axe out his hande he wronge;
On eche syde he smote them downe,
Hym thought he had taryed to longe.

Wyllyam sayd to his bretheren two,
Thys daye let vs togyder lyue and deye;
If euer you haue nede as I haue nowe,
The same shall ye fynde by me.

They shyt so well in that tyde,
For theyr strynges were of sylke full sure,
That they kepte the stretes on euery syde;
That batayll dyd longe endure.

They fought togyder as bretheren true,
Lyke hardy men and bolde;
Many a man to the grounde they threwe,
And made many an herte colde.

But whan theyr arowes were all gone,
Men presyd on them full fast;
They drewe theyr swerde:s than anone,
And theyr bowes from them caste.

They wente lyghtly on theyr waye,
With swerdes and buckelers rounde;
By that it was the myddes of the daye,
They had made many a wounde.

There was many a noute-horne in Carlyll blowen,
And the belles backwarde dyd they ryngge;
Many a woman sayd alas,
And many theyr handes dyd wryngge.

The mayre of Carlyll forth come was,
And with hym a full grete route;
These thre yomen dredde hym full sore,
For theyr lyues stode in doubte.

The mayre came armed, a full greate pace,
With a polaxe in his hande;
Many a stronge man with hym was,
There in that stoure to stande.

The mayre smote at Clowdysle with his byll,
His buckeler he brast in two;
Full many a yoman with grete yll,
`Alas, treason!' they cryed for wo.
`Kepe we the gates fast,' they bad,
`That these traytours theroute not go.'

But all for nought was that they wrought,
For so fast they downe were layde
Tyll they all thre, that so manfully fought,
Were gotten without at a brayde.

`Haue here your keys,' sayd Adam Bell,
`Myne offyce I here forsake;
Yf ye do by my councell,
A newe porter ye make.'

He threwe the keys there at theyr hedes,
And bad them evyll to thryue,
And all that letteth ony good yoman
To come and comforte his wyue.

Thus be these good yomen gone to the wode,
As lyght as lefe on lynde;
They laughe and be mery in theyr mode,
Theyr enemyes were farre behynde.

Whan they came to Inglyswode,
Under theyr trysty-tre,
There they founde bowes full gode,
And arowes greate plente.

`So helpe me God,' sayd Adam Bell,
And Clymme of the Clowgh so fre,
`I wolde we were nowe in mery Carlell,
Before that fayre meyne.'

They set them downe and made good chere,

And eate and dranke full well:
Here is a fyttre of these wyght yongemen,
And another I shall you tell.

As they sat in Inglyswode,
Under theyr trysty-tre,
Them thought they herde a woman wepe,
But her they myght not se.

Sore syghed there fayre Alyce, and sayd,
Alas that euer I se this daye!
For now is my dere husbonde slayne,
Alas and welawaye!

Myght I haue spoken wyth hys dere bretheren,
With eyther of them twayne,
To shew to them what him befell
My herte were out of payne.

Clowdysle walked a lytell besyde,
And loked vnder the grene wodde lynde;
He was ware of his wyfe and his chyldren thre,
Full wo in herte and mynde.

`Welcome, wyfe,' than sayd Wyllyam,
`Unto this trysty-tre;
I had wende yesterdaye, by swete Saint John,
Thou sholde me neuer haue se.'

`Now wele is me,' she sayd, 'That ye be here,
My herte is out of wo:'
`Dame,' he sayd, 'Be mery and glad,
And thanke my bretheren two.'

`Here of to speke,' sayd Adam Bell,
`I-wys it is no bote;
The meat that we must supp withall,
It runneth yet fast on fote.'

Then went they down into a lauinrde,
These noble archares all thre,
Eche of them slewe a harte of grece,
The best they coude there se.

`Haue here the best, Alyce my wyfe,'
Sayde Wyllyam of Clowdysle,
`By cause ye so boldely stode me by,
Whan I was slayne full nye.'

Than they wente to theyr souper,
Wyth suche mete as they had,
And thanked God of theyr fortune;
They were bothe mery and glad.

And whan they had souped well,
Certayne withouten leace,
Clowdysle sayde, We wyll to oure kyng,
To get vs a chartre of peace.

Alyce shal be a soiournyng,
In a nunry here besyde;
My tow sonnes shall with her go,
And ther they shall abyde.

Myne eldest sone shall go with me,
For hym haue I no care,
And he shall brenge you worde agayne
How that we do fare.

Thus be these wight men to London gone,
As fast as they maye hie,
Tyll they came to the kynges palays,
There they woulde nede:s be.

And whan they came to the kynges courte,
Unto the pallace gate,
Of no man wold they aske leue,
But boldly went in therat.

They preceed prestly into the hall,
Of no man had they drede;
The porter came after and dyd them call,
And with them began to chyde.

The vssher sayd, Yemen, what wolde ye haue?
I praye you tell me;
Ye myght thus make offycers shent:
Good syrs, of whens be ye?

`Syr, we be outlawes of the forest,
Certayne withouten leace,
And hyther we be come to our kyng,
To get vs a charter of peace.'

And whan they came before our kyng,
As it was the lawe of the lande,
They kneled downe without lettyng,
And eche helde vp his hande.

They sayd, Lorde, we beseche you here,
That ye wyll graunte vs grace,
For we haue slayne your fatte falowe dere,
In many a sondry place.

`What is your names?' than sayd our kynge,
`Anone that you tell me:'
They sayd, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough,
And Wylliam of Clowdesle.

`Be ye those theues,' than sayd our kynge,
`That men haue told of to me?'
Here to God I make a vowe,
Ye shall be hanged all thre.

`Ye shall be dead without mercy,
As I am kynge of this lande:'
He commanded his officers euerichone
Fast on them to lay hand.

There they toke these good yemen,
And arested them all thre:
`So may I thryue,' sayd Adam Bell,
`Thys game lyketh not me.

`But, good lorde, we beseche you nowe,
That ye wyll graunte vs grace,
In so moche as we be to you commen;
Or elles that we may fro you passe,

`With suche weapons as we haue here,
Tyll we be out of your place;
And yf we lyue this hondred yere,
We wyll aske you no grace.'

`Ye speke proudly,' sayd the kynge,
`Ye shall be hanged all thre:'
`That were great pity,' sayd the quene,
`If any grace myght be.

`My lorde, whan I came fyrst in to this lande,
To be your wedded wyfe,
The fyrst bone that I wolde aske,
Ye wolde graunte me belyfe.

`And I asked you neuer none tyll nowe,
Therefore, good lorde, graunte it me:'
`Nowe aske it, madame,' sayd the kynge,

`And graunted shall it be.'

`Than, good lorde, I you beseche,
The yemen graunte you me:'

`Madame, ye myght haue asked a bone
That sholde haue ben worthe them thre.

`Ye myght haue asked towres and townes,
Parkes and forestes plentie:'

`None so pleasaunt to mi pay,' she said,
`Nor none so lefe to me.'

`Madame, sith it is your desyre,
Your asking graunted shalbe;
But I had leuer haue geuen you
Good market-townes thre.'

The quene was a glad woman,
And sayd, Lord, gramarcy;
I dare vndertake for them
That true men shall they be.

But, good lord, speke som mery word,
That comfort they may se:

`I graunt you grace,' then said our king,
`Wasshe, folos, and to meate go ye.'

They had not setten but a whyle,
Certayne without lesynge,
There came messeingers out of the north,
With letters to our kyng.

And whan the came before the kyng,
The kneled downe vpon theyr kne,
And sayd, Lord, your offycers grete you wel,
Of Caerlel in the north cuntre.

`How fareth my justice,' sayd the kyng,
`And my sherife also?'
`Syr, they be slayne, without leasyng,
And many an officer mo.'

`Who hath them slayne?' sayd the kyng,
`Anone thou tell me:'
`Adam Bel, and Clime of the Clough,
And wyllyam of Cloudesle.'

`Alas for rewth!' then sayd our kyng,
`My hart is wonderous sore;

I had leuer than a thousand pounce
I had knowne of thys before.

`For I haue y-graunted them grace,
And that forthynketh me;
But had I knowne all thys before,
They had ben hanged all thre.'

The kyng opened the letter anone,
Hym selfe he red it tho,
And founde how these thre outlawes had slaine
Thre hundred men and mo.

Fyrst the justice and the sheryfe,
And the mayre of Caerlel towne;
Of all the constables and catchpolles
Alyue were left not one.

The baylyes and the bedyls both,
And the sergeauntes of the law,
And forty fosters of the fe
These outlawes had y-slaw;

And broken his parks, and slaine his dere;
Ouer all they chose the best;
So perelous outlawes as they were
Walked not by easte nor west.

When the kynge this letter had red,
In hys harte he syghed sore;
'Take vp the table,' anone he bad,
'For I may eate no more.'

The kyng called hys best archars,
To the buttes with hym to go;
'I wyll se these felowes shote,' he sayd,
'That in the north haue wrought this wo.'

The kynges bowmen buske them blyue,
And the quenes archers also,
So dyd these thre wyght yemen,
Wyth them they thought to go.

There twyse or thryse they shote about,
For to assay theyr hande;
There was no shote these thre yemen shot
That any prycke might them stand.

Then spake Wylyyam of Cloudesle;

By God that for me dyed,
I hold hym neuer no good archar
That shuteth at buttes so wyde.

`Wherat?' then sayd our kyng,
`I pray thee tell me:'
`At suche a but, syr,' he sayd,
`As men vse in my countree.'

Wyllyam wente into a fyeld,
And his to brothren with him;
There they set vp to hasell rodde,
Twenty score paces betwene.

`I hold him an archar,' said Cloudesle,
`That yonder wande cleueth in two:'
`Here is none suche,' sayd the kyng,
`Nor none that can so do.'

`I shall assaye, syr,' sayd Cloudesle,
`Or that I farther go:'
Cloudesle, with a bearyng arow,
Claue the wand in to.

`Thou art the best archer,' theinr said the kiinrg,
`Forsothe that euer I se:'
`And yet for your loue,' sayd Wyllyam,
`I wyll do more maystry.

`I haue a sonne is seuen yere olde;
He is to me full deare;
I wyll hym tye to a stake,
All shall se that be here;

`And lay an apple vpon hys head,
And go syxe score paces hym fro,
And I my selfe, with a brode arow,
Shall cleue the apple in two.'

`Now hast the,' then sayd the kyng;
`By him that dyed on a tre,
But yf thou do not as thou hest sayde,
Hanged shalt thou be.

`And thou touche his head or gowne,
In syght that men may se,
By all the sayntes that be in heaven,
I shall hange you all thre.'

`That I haue promised,' said William,
`I wyl it neuer forsake;'
And there euen before the kynge,
In the earth he droue a stake;

And bound therto his eldest sonne,
And bade hym stande styll therat,
And turned the childes face fro him,
Because he shuld not sterte.

An apple vpon his head he set,
And then his bowe he bent;
Syxe score paces they were outmet,
And thether Cloudesle went.

There he drew out a fayr brode arrowe;
Hys bowe was great and longe;
He set that arrowe in his bowe,
That was both styffe and stronge.

He prayed the people that was there
That they would styll stande;
`For he that shooteth for such a wager,
Behoueth a stedfast hand.'

Muche people prayed for Cloudesle,
That hys lyfe saued myght be,
And whan he made hym redy to shote,
There was many a wepynge eye.

Thus Clowdesle cleft the apple in two,
That many a man it se;
`Ouer goddes forbode,' sayd the kynge,
`That thou sholdest shote at me!

`I gyue the .xviii. pens a daye,
And my bowe shalte thou bere,
And ouer all the north countree
I make the chefe rydere.'

`And I gyue the .xii. pens a day,' sayd the quene,
`By God and by my faye;
Come fetch the thy payment whan thou wylt,
No man shall say the naye.

`Wyllyam, I make the gentyman
Of clothyng and of fee,
And thy two brethren yemen of my chambre,
For they are so semely to se.

`Your sone, for he is tendre of age,
Of my wine-seller shall he be,
And whan he commeth to manne:s state,
Better auauanced shall he be.

`And, Wylliam, brynge me your wyfe,' sayd the quene;
Me longeth sore here to se;
She shall be my chefe gentywoman,
And gouerne my nursery.'

The yemen thanked them full courteysly,
And sayd, To Rome streyght wyll we wende,
Of all the synnes that we haue done
To be assoyled of his hand.

So forthe be gone these good yemen,
As fast as they myght hye,
And after came and dwelled with the kyng,
And dyed good men all thre.

Thus endeth the lyues of these good yemen,
God sende them eternall blysse,
And all that with hande-bowe shoteth,
That of heuen they may neuer mysse!

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Version in Child
LMP