

**THE MILLER
O'DUDDINGSTON,
OR THE BETROTHAL**

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The Miller O'Duddingston, Or The Betrothal by J. F.

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MILLER O' DUDDINGSTON:

OR,

THE BETROTHAL.

BY

J. F.

EDINBURGH.

—
1875.

NOTE.

This Poem, such as it is, is dedicated to a few kind friends and my fellow-workmen, who, when I was advised to try and have it published, most generously assisted me by giving their names as Subscribers. To them I return my sincere thanks; and while they will not find a rare and polished gem, they may still be able to have a spare hour to spend over it. For my humble self, it is most gratifying to know that my labour has not been all in vain,—my whole idea being to weave around Craigmillar and the secluded village of Duddingston a little more of the glamour of fiction and the halo of romance.

EDINBURGH, *September 1875.*

Which paw'd the snaw as it were silly,
 The toddling younkers laugh'd wi' glee—
 Bell was as prood as she could be—
 While collie bark'd an' loup'd as fain,
 Same as the warld were a' there ain.
 That morn he left for Dalkeith toon,
 Soon tae be hame that afternoon ;
 Sae he promis'd, hap what may,
 He wad be hame by close o' day ;
 Hae'in twa three errands tae dae for Bell,
 An' twa or three nick-nacks for himsell.

The snaw lay deep on field an' shaw—
 Puir bodies couldna work ava—
 Jack frost had made his footing good,
 The burns an' lochs a' freezing stood ;
 The thresher clatter'd at his flail,
 Outside was nocht but drift an' hail ;
 The ploughman shiver'd ower the fire,
 Or faund his wark in barn or byre ;
 'Deed, beast an' bodie, young an' auld,
 Were fair benumb'd wi' frost an' cauld.

Alas ! for man's schemes an' purposes,
 This life has got sae monie dozes—
 Sae monie cross an' fitful whims,
 Oor best laid schemes it often dims.
 Puir mortals, we gang oft a glee,
 Oor projects, schemes, no worth a flee ;
 Oor promises an' sage advices
 Whiles are the counterplots o' vices ;
 Twa or three gude cheils we chance tae meet,
 Wing'd pleasures then they taste sae sweet,
 Ne'er mind for conscience though it ca',
 Ne'er heed the shadow on the wa',
 Wi' reeming swats an' rousing fire,
 We burke oor heart's maist fond desire.
 Oor pledge an' promise we hae broke,
 The substance gane, a' else is smoke.
 Syne comes remorse, oor hearts are riven,
 Wondering giff we 'll be forgiven ;
 The lights an' scenes that look'd sae fair,
 Only bring madness an' despair.
 Sae was 't wi' Jock, ere he got hame
 That nicht tae his kind, couthie dame.

No, never since she 'd been a wife,
 Had Bell felt sae in a' her life ;
 When gi'eing hawkie its bit fodder,
 She fell intae an aw'some shudder,
 As gloaming glinted ower the trees,
 Or a loud sough groan'd in the breeze.
 Puir Bell went often tae the door,
 An' listen'd 'mid the tempest roar.
 The waukrife winter's eerie moan,
 The rifted woods despairing groan,
 Wi' her bodie slightly bent,
 List'ning wi' an ear intent
 Tae catch the sma'est whush or sound,
 Of a fitfa' upon the ground ;
 But feint a sound, or whush, or ca'
 Was heard ; an' noo the day was spent awa',
 While mirk an' gloomie grew the nicht.
 Nae word o' John, nae horse in sicht,
 Bell sigh'd, an' mutter'd tae her sell,
 I 'll gang the length o' the auld dell.
 When a knock at the door was heard—
 Bell started as she had been scaur'd—
 It was Hab that rapp'd as he was passing,
 An' hop'd that he was not trespassing ;
 O' speerings an' askings maist profuse,
 Was startled when he heard the news.
 What ! John no hame, an' it sae late ?
 I hope he has nae tint his gate !
 Let's tak the lantren an' gang ower
 Tae whaur the Pow its waters pour.
 A wearie trodge,—naething they saw,
 But trees an' cluds an' drifting snaw.
 Wae Bell ne'er spoke : tae tell the truth,
 Her heart was in her very mouth.
 Whaur could he be ? what was John keeping ?
 She stagger'd ; it was Hab was speaking.
 Ah, Hab ! I wish tae gude that I could tell—
 That's what I 'm thinking tae my sell ;
 Waes me, but I 'm a wae, wae woman,
 There 's something in it maist uncommon :
 John never stay'd sae late before.
 Hech, me ! an' here we 're at the door :
 An' sic a nicht ! my, what a nicht !
 Puir John will be in sic a plicht.
 Hab stood an' glower'd far ben the fire,

He thocht, but couldna' weel enquire—
 Sair perplex'd wi' schemes an' doots—
 Intae his maister's in's an' oot's.
 Gang hame, kind Hab, I'll sit an' wait,
 An' though it should be e'er sae late,
 I'll let ye ken when John comes hame—
 He's maybe no jist a' tae blame.
 Sae thocht the wife, that lo'ed Jock weel,
 Wi' kindly heart an' true as steel,
 She sat her doon, an' thocht an' thocht,
 But thinking mair confusion brocht.
 Had she but ken'd, had she but seen it,
 Her spouse sae bricht that very minute,
 At Dalkeith toon in the Cross Keys,
 I'm bound she'd sworn it was a' lees.
 Na, na; her John tae sit an' bouse,
 An' keep her lonely in the house;
 He micht, when he met an auld cronie,
 Sit doon an' tak a glass wi' onie,
 But that is a'. Was it e'er heard,
 That John did ever break his word?

'T is gude for human sicht an' ken,
 That distance lends enchantment then;
 Though what hereafter may befa'
 May prove a blessing tae us a'.
 The wee bit blinks that mak' us glad,
 Will jist as soon mak' us stark mad.
 Sae it was wi' Bell, as there she sat,
 Aye edging roond the simmering pat,
 Hoping, dooting, 'midst her sorrow,
 What micht be before to-morrow.
 That day she had been bizzy brewing,
 Jock's supper at the fire was stewing,
 A tastie bite as man could wish,
 His favourite an' his amous dish.

In auld Dalkeith, Jock's freens forgather,
 Tae weet, an' may be, drook their leather;
 Tae square an' reckon some amounts,
 An' settle a' their year's accounts.
 Each had pay'd doon his hinmost boddle,
 Syne some curmudgeon, in their noddle,
 Had caus'd them a' tae stand a treat,
 Their thirsty mou's an' throats tae weet.

As each drank oot his reaming bicker,
 They shune began tae laugh an' nicher;
 It seem'd tae be their earnest prayer
 Tae get hauf fou, an' ca' in mair.
 Nae doot the day was snell an' cauld,
 An' norelan' Boreas blew richt bauld;
 The drap hung at the auld year's nose,
 Chittering, trying tae warm its toes;
 The young year crouselly pok'd its nose,
 Just blushing like an opening rose.
 Sae, thinking there wad be nae ill,
 They yoked tae the bapps an' yill;
 The stoup pass'd round, the crack grew vauntie,
 They were nae lang or they grew cantie,
 Aboot ploughs an' horses, mills an' corn,
 An' a' they ken'd since they were born.
 Even politics an' gospel skreeds,
 They touch'd upon their various heads.
 The storm outside nicht blaw an' shout,
 They were indoors while it was oot;
 Jock never thocht tae rise ava,
 Nae thochts o' hame for him : na, na.
 He had nae got a sullen dame
 Tae gloom at him when he wun hame;
 She was nae yin tae flyte or bann,
 But jist said, yer an awfu' man;
 Was ower weal pleas'd tae see him leevin':
 Jock ken'd that he was shune forgiven.

Let's look intae the Cross Keys' apense,
 Whaur a' thing is sae trig an' mense,
 While merrie cracks an' funny stories,
 Mak's the time pass off sae glorious.
 Were you tae search the county roon,
 Ye could nae find a hoose sae boon;
 Noo while they're seaping at the drauff,
 I'll try an' tak' their photograuff.

At Watty Young's, in the Cross Keys,
 Three worthies sat an' supp'd at ease;
 They had a' been laddies at the schule,
 An' this had been there golden rule,
 Where'er they met or did forgether,
 In spite o' creeds or wind or weather,
 Jist for the sake o' auld langsyne,

They'd meet an' keep auld things in min'.
 Watt was an honest, cantie cheil,
 Hale o' heart an' true an' leal;
 There were but few could fill his place,
 As an upright, decent boniface.
 A widower he had been for' lang,
 An' ne'er wad wed, sae went the sang;
 But blest wi' Bess, his only dochter,
 He up tae womanhood had brocht her.
 Her dimpled face an' smiling ee
 Were like the blume on apple tree;
 As fair an' sweet as onie gowan,
 A trig bit couthie, sonsie woman.
 She grew beneath her faither's care,
 Sae kind an' simple, sweet an' rare;
 Should a wan look ower Watty steal,
 She nurs'd him or his heart grew weel.
 Her charms had struck the skinny tailor,
 He watch'd her as he were her jailor;
 She didna' seem tae shun him neither,
 But kind o' ways blink'd on him raither;
 Which made him maist loup oot his shinn,
 An' gaur'd the blood rin through his skin.

Rab Tamson made Jock's graith an' metal,
 An' kept them a' in famous fettle;
 He was a cronie worth the name,
 As e'er blew wind intae a flame.
 Fine he could mak' his anvil ringle
 Like auld kirk bells, tae tingle tingle.
 His muckle, burnt, pudding face,
 Had gi'en him sic a worthy grace,
 As careering, helchin', there he sat,
 Gude nature made him roond an' fat.
 His weel fed paunch, whene'er he leugh,
 Had burst'd, had it not been teugh.
 His lowein' thrapple aye was dry,
 He never loot the stoup pass bye.
 His brawnie airms were mair like legs—
 He needed them when shacing neigs—
 Were cled wi' hair, an' were sae lang,
 The cheild micht greive wha got a whang.
 An' when he shut his muckle neive,
 It was nae jist a mak' believe,
 If on the table it thump'd batter,