

Ballad of Sweet William

Collected by Rev. Philip Parsons from a female parishioner, Wye

Sent to Thomas Percy 7th April 1770

*From the Percy Papers (Percy MS – 129.A) via the Bluegrass Messengers website,
<http://www.bluegrassmessengers.com/fair-margaret--child-74c-.aspx>*

Roud 253

1. As it fell out on a long summer's day,
Two lovers they sat on a hill;
They sat together that long summer's day,
And could not talk their fill.
2. I see no harm by you, Margaret,
And you see none by mee
Before to-morrow at eight o'clock
A rich wedding you shall see.
3. As Margaret Stood at her Window so clear
A combing back her hair
She saw sweet William and his gay Bride
Unto the Church draw near
4. Then down she threw her Ivory comb
She turned back her hair
There was a fair maid at that Window
She's gone- she'll come no more there.
5. In the night, in the middle of the Night
When all men were asleep
There walked a Ghost, fair Margaret's Ghost
And stood at his Bed's feet
6. Sweet William he dreamed a dream and he said
I wish it prove for good

My chamber was filled with wild men and Swine

And my Bride-bed stood in Blood

7. Then he called up his Stable groom

To Saddle his Nag with speed

This night will I ride to fair Margaret's Bow'r

With the leave of my Lady

8. Oh is fair Margaret in the Kitchen

Or is she in the Hall

No She is not in the Kitchen they Cried

Nor is she in the Hall

But she is in the Long Chamber

Laid up against the wall

9. Go with your right side to Newcastle

And come with your left side home

There you will see those two Lovers

Lie printed on one Stone

The first two verses were omitted in Parson's original, but are reproduced from Percy's *Reliques of ancient English poetry*, Volume 3. Rev Parsons Parsons wrote:

The Ballad of Sweet William was the same as Yours in the Stanzas I have omitted.
In the 8th Stanza and 35th Line Yours runs:

To dream thy Bower was full of 'red' Swine, which last words are marked as of uncertain reading. I think I have restored the Original Reading. The Person from whose mouth I took it Sung it thus:

My Chamber was full of wild men's wine, which is absolute nonsense, but if altered to wild men and Swine, is perfect sense and naturally Expresses a horrid and hurrying Dream.