

45.        *THOMAS THE RHYMER*

PART FIRST +++

1. True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank:  
    A ferlie he spied wi' his ee;  
    And there he saw a lady bright,  
    Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.
2. Her shirt was o' the grass green silk,  
    Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;  
    At ilka tett of her horse's mane,  
    Hang fifty siller bells and nine.
3. True Thomas, he pull'd aff his cap,  
    And louted low down to his knee—  
    —“All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heav'n!  
    For thy peer on earth I never did see.”—
4. —“O no, O no, Thomas,” she said;  
    “That name does not belang to me;  
    I am but the Queen of fair Elfland,  
    That am hither come to visit thee.
5. “Harp and carp, Thomas,” she said;  
    “Harp and carp along wi' me:  
    And if ye dare to kiss my lips,  
    Sure of your bodie I will be.”—
6. —“Betide me weal, betide me woe,  
    That weird shall never danton me.”—  
    Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,  
    All underneath the Eildon Tree.
7. —“Now, ye maun go wi' me,” she said;  
    “True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me:  
    And ye maun serve me seven years,  
    Thro' weal or woe as may chance to be.”—
8. She mounted on her milk-white steed;  
    She's ta'en true Thomas up behind;  
    And aye, whene'er her bridle rung,  
    The steed flew swifter than the wind.
9. O they rade on, and further on;  
    The steed gaed swifter than the wind;  
    Untill they reached a desart wide,  
    And living land was left behind.

10. —“Light down, light down, now, true Thomas,  
And lean your head upon my knee:  
Abide and rest a little space,  
And I will shew you ferlies three.
11. “O see ye not yon narrow road,  
So thick beset wi’ thorns and briers?  
That is the path of righteousness,  
Tho’ after it but few enquires.
12. “And see not ye that braid braid road,  
That lies across that lily leven?  
That is the path of wickedness,  
Tho’ some call it the road to heaven.
13. “And see not ye that bonny road,  
That winds about the fernie brae?  
That is the road to fair Elfland,  
Where thou and I this night maun gae.
14. “But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,  
Whatever ye may hear or see;  
For, if you speak word in Elflyn land,  
Ye’ll ne’er get back to your ain countrie.”——
15. O they rade on, and farther on,  
And they waded thro’ rivers aboon the knee;  
And they saw neither sun nor moon,  
But they heard the roaring of the sea.
16. It was mirk mirk night, and there was nae stern light,  
And they waded thro’ red blude to the knee;  
For a’ the blude that’s shed on earth,  
Rins thro’ the springs o’ that countrie.
17. Syne they came on to a garden green,  
And she pu’d an apple frae a tree—  
—“Take this for thy wages, true Thomas;  
It will give the tongue that can never lie.”——
18. —“My tongue is mine ain,” true Thomas said;  
“A gudely gift ye wad gie to me!  
I neither dought to buy nor sell,  
At fair or tryst where I may be.

19. "I dought neither speak to prince or peer,  
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye."—  
—"Now hold thy peace!" the lady said,  
"For, as I say, so must it be."—
20. He has gotten a cloth of the even cloth,  
And a pair of shoes of velvet green;  
And, till seven years were gane and past,  
True Thomas on earth was never seen.