

[Page 25]

It happened on a high holiday, ⁱ
The very best day of the year,
When little Matha ⁱⁱ Groves he went to church,
The holy word for to hear.

The first came down was dressed in satin,
The next was dressed in silk,
The next came down was Lord Daniel's wife,
With her skin as white as milk.

She stepped up to little Matha Groves
And unto him did say,
"I must invite you little Matha Grove
This night with me to stay."

[Page 26]

"I cannot, I will not" said little Matha Groves,
I dare not for my life,
For I know by the rings you have on your fingers,
You are Lord Daniel's wife."

"Well, what if I am Lord Daniel's wife,
As you suppose me to be!
Lord Daniel's to Newcastle gone,
King Henry ⁱⁱⁱ for to see."

The little foot page was standing by.
He's to Newcastle gone,
And when he came to the broad river side,
He bended his breast and swum.

[Page 27]

And when he came to the other side,
He took to his heels and run.

[lost]

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"What news, what news, my little foot page,
Do you bring unto me!"

"Little Matha Grove this very night
Lies with your fair lady."

"If this be true, be true unto me,
That you do tell to me,
I have an only daughter,
And your wedded wife she shall be."

[Page 28]

"If this be a lie, a lie unto me,
A lie you tell to me,
I'll cause a gallows ^{iv} to be built,
And hanged you shall be."

"If this be a lie, a lie, a lie,
A lie I tell to thee,
You need not cause a gallows to be built,
For I'll hang on a tree."

He called all of his merry men,

And marched them in a row.
 He ordered not a whistle to sound,
 Nor yet a horn to blow.

[Page 29]

But there was one among the rest,
 Who wished little Matha Groves well.
 He put his whistle to his mouth,
 And he blew it loud and shrill.
 And as he blew both loud and shrill,
 He seemed for to say,
 He that's in bed with another man's wife,
 Tis time to be going away.
 "I must get up", said little Matha Groves,
 "'Tis time for me to be gone,
 For I know by the sound of it,
 It is Lord Darnel's horn."

[Page 30]

"Lie still, lie still, you little Matha Groves,
 And keep me from the cold.
 It is my father's shepherd boy,
 Driving his sheep to the fold."
 So there they lie in one another's arms,
 Till they fell fast asleep.
 They never spoke another word,
 Till Lord Darnel stood at their feet.
 "How do you like my bed" he said,
 And how do you like my sheet,
 And how do you like my false lady,
 That lies in your arms and sleep!"

[Page 31]

"Well do I like your bed" said he,
 And well do I like your sheets.
 But better do I like your false lady,
 That lies in my arms and sleeps.
 "Rise up! rise!" Lord Darnel said,
 "And some of our clothes put on.
 It never shall be said, when you are dead,
 That I slew you a naked man."
 "Must I get up" said little Matha Groves,
 And fight you for my life!
 When you have two good swords by your side,
 And I not have a knife!"

[Page 32]

"If I hae to good swords by my side,
 They cost me gold from my purse
 You shall have the best of them,
 And I will take the worst."
 The first good stroke little Matha Groves made,
 He wounded Lord Darnel sore;
 But the first stroke Lord Darnel made,

Matha Groves could strike no more.

"Oh! curse my merry men,
That did not stay my hand,
For I have slain the handsomest man,
That ever trod England's land."

[Page 33]

He took his lady by the hand,
And set her on his knee,
Saying, "Which of us do you love best,
Little Matha Groves or me!"

"Well did I like his cheeks" she said,
"Well did I like his chin,
Better did I like his palavering ' tongue,
Than Lord Darnel and all his kin."

He took his lady by the hand,
He led her yonder plain.
He never spoke another word,
Till he split her head in twain.

[Page 34]

Loudly sings the nightingale,
Merrily sings the sparrow.
Lord Darnel killed his wife today,
And he's to be hung tomorrow.

Finis



Notes

- i. **High holidays** normally refer to the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- ii. **Matha** : Matha is a traditional Irish language name with Hebrew dissent.
- iii. **King Henry VIII** was the King of England from 1491 - 1547
- iv. **Gallows**: Elevated wooden structure used to execute people by hanging them.
- v. **Palavering**: to talk too much.