



A. Mickiewicz „Dudarz“ z pieśni gminnej

K. Gorski pinx

*Can tak mi ty niespodziewanie przesyłaś serdecznie po dnie to wspaniałe  
Komnaty*

ADAM MICKIEWICZ\*

## The Minstrel<sup>[1]</sup>

Who is that long-beard, like a pigeon grey?  
Two boys lead him by the hand  
As along the edge of our land  
Ready for harvest, he slowly makes his way.

The old man strums his lyre and trills  
A song, while the children play  
Small pipes; Go — call them back this way  
And have them rest there, by that little hill.

‘Come back, old man, and rest you over there —  
We’re celebrating the tillage;  
It’s not far to the village,  
And what God’s given us, we’ll gladly share.

He stopped, made a low bow, and back he walked;  
On either side of him the boys  
Crouched, near the hill, along the balk  
Where they watched all the peasants at their joys.

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\* Tekst pochodzi z tomu Adam Mickiewicz, *Ballads and Romances*, translated by Charles S. Kraszewski, Glagoslav Publications, London 2022, p. 112–118. Publikacja za zgodą Tłumacza.

[1] An idea from a folk song.

The drums are thumping, and the pipers skirl,  
And round about the bonfire's blaze  
The oldsters drink, the maidens whirl  
In celebration of the harvest days.

The pipes go silent then, as do the drums.  
Bonfire and dance are left behind  
And all the villagers now come  
To where the ancient troubadour reclines.

'Greetings, old minstrel, in the Lord God's name!  
After your trek you must be tired —  
Come and enjoy our harvest games,  
And rest, and warm yourself before the fire.'

They lead him near a sumptuous table spread;  
They set him in the midmost seat  
And place before him vittles, bread.  
'Perhaps you'll take a little cup of mead?

'You've got a lyre, you've got two little flutes;  
Play us a little tune for three!  
We'll fill your bag chock-full of loot  
In gratitude, glad for the melody.'

'Well, hush then,' he says to the gathered throng;  
He claps — and the murmurs all cease.  
'If you wish, I'll play you a song.  
What sort would you have?' 'Whatever you please.'

In his two hands he lifts mead-cup and lyre.  
He drinks deep and tunes the strings.  
His old bosom with the mead afire,  
He nods to his pipers, they rise, he sings:

'From village to village I wander, I glide,  
As far as the Niemen is long;  
From forest to forest, beside  
The River Niemen, I lift up my song.

‘And all the villagers rush up to hear  
 My songs — which they can’t comprehend.  
 Stifling my moans, drying my tears,  
 Once more my sad and lonely way I wend.

‘If any should my sorrow understand,  
 She would be pierced unto the core.  
 We both would weep and clasp our hands,  
 And from there I should travel on no more.’

He pauses then; before once more he plays  
 About the fields he casts a glance,  
 And... something grips him... See him gaze...  
 Who is that — there — off to the side that stands?

She is a shepherdess — a wreath she’s plaiting  
 And unplaiting — bright, blooming strands.  
 Next to her stands a youth, waiting  
 To take the woven chaplet from her hands.

An inner peace shines from her forehead bright;  
 Her eyes are trained upon the ground.  
 It’s neither sadness nor delight  
 That grips her; rather, some notion profound.

Just as the dewy grass trembles at rest  
 Though it be by no zephyr stirred,  
 The linen rocks upon her breast  
 Although no breath or sigh of hers is heard.

Upon her bosom falls a yellow leaf,  
 A little leaf from tree unknown;  
 She looks and in soft — anger? grief?  
 Whispers it something — and now, look! She’s thrown

It down; she turns away, moves off from there  
 And heavenward she lifts her eyes  
 That glitter with a sudden tear,  
 While on her cheeks some rosy blushes rise.

The minstrel's silent, strumming absently.  
Upon the shepherdess he pores  
With falcon's eye, and seems to see  
What's hidden in her very deepest core.

He drinks a deep draught, he picks up his lyre,  
His pipers blow, he tunes his strings.  
Once more his bosom glows with fire.  
He strums the first chord, and again he sings:

'For whom, the wedding chaplet that you weave  
Of roses red, lilies and thyme?  
Happy the young man, I believe,  
Who can say of your wedding wreath: "'Tis mine.'

'For one lover alone thou'd wind  
A wreath of lily, thyme, and rose.  
Another lover would thee bind  
But — not for him the wreath you wind.  
Enough, the tears that make thee blind,  
Spilt for another lover's woes,  
When to another thou shalt bind  
Thy fate with lily, thyme, and rose.'"<sup>[2]</sup>

A murmur rumbles then, a rumour darts  
Among the crowd — a pallor falls.  
That song was heard around these parts  
Before — but when? And who? No one recalls.

The minstrel lifts his hand, and stills the throng —  
'Give ear to me now, everyone!  
I'll tell you whence I have this song;  
Who wrote it may have been a native son

'Of this village. Once, in my travelling,  
In Königsberg I found me;  
And there, a lad, crossing the stream  
From Litwa met — a shepherd of this country.

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[2] These triolets are taken from the poetry of Tomasz Zan.

‘Oh, he was sad. But never did relate  
 The history that made him groan;  
 Later, abandoning his mates  
 He went away, never to go back home.

‘I often saw him wandering lonely  
 In the dawn bright or moonlight hoar  
 Over the meadows, out at sea,  
 Or on the sifting dunes of the sea-shore.

‘Among the rocks, himself like to a stone,  
 Wind or rain — it didn’t matter,  
 He’d give back to the wind his groans;  
 The tears he shed — back to the salty water.

‘Once, I approached. He cast me a sad look,  
 But never made to move away.  
 I said nothing, but up I took  
 My lyre, and tuning it, did sadly play.

‘His eyes grew teary, but he made a sign  
 For me to play on, so I kept  
 At it; he stretched his hand towards mine:  
 I took it, squeezed it, and both of us wept.

‘We got to know each other; we grew fond  
 Of one another; we became  
 Friends. He, silent, as was his wont;  
 And I, on my part, kept still much the same.

‘Then, when his frame with woe was whittled thin,  
 And for himself he couldn’t care,  
 Servant and friend I stayed with him;  
 Yes, all throughout his illness I was there.

‘I watched him as he slowly weakened, waned,  
 And once he called me to his cot:  
 “I sense soon I’ll be past all pain,”  
 He said: “I’m resigned to the will of God.

“My only sin was that my years unfurled  
In vain only to be tattered;  
I’ve long been dead. If from this world  
I must depart now, well, it hardly matters.

“When I to hide my face, to this wild sea  
These barren rocks, myself did bring,  
This world to me was as nothing  
And I lived only in my memory.

“How might I repay you?” squeezing my hand  
He said, “True to me, while I’ve lived?  
Repay such friendship? Nothing can.  
But what I have, though meagre, I shall give.

“I have this little twist of hair — pale, blonde,  
And dry sprig from a cypress tree;  
Take it, and memorise my song —  
'Tis all the earthly treasure left to me.

“Then go. Perhaps somewhere along the bank  
Of river Niemen, broad and deep,  
My love will greet your song with thanks;  
Perhaps she’ll see the sprig — and weep.

“If she invites you near the cheery flame  
Of her hearth... tell —” but then, alas!  
He faded, with the Virgin’s name  
Upon his lips, but only the first half...

‘He rallied once, but then, just as he died,  
Unable any more to speak,  
He pointed to his heart, and sighed  
Toward the home his eyes did always seek.’

The minstrel paused, and with eyes sweeping round,  
Withdrew the sprig from out his breast;  
But there was nowhere to be found  
Among the gathered crowd, the shepherdess.

Her face divine hidden in her kerchief,  
He only caught the sudden sheen  
Of her skirt flash; beyond his reach,  
Led by some lad, never more to be seen.

The crowd rushed up, as he sat mesmerised:  
'Hey, old man!' they called, 'What's with you?'  
But he sat still, with far-off eyes,  
And told them nothing — even if he knew.