

Greensleeves

Words & Music:
Traditional English

Found in *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, by Clement Robinson & Divers Others, 1584

Wow. There are more verses to this than you can imagine. It is the quintessential "you done me wrong" song, except that it originated in the 1580s and has made its way down the ages. (one would think he'd get the idea...but I digress.) The tune, of course, has done double duty for the Christmas Tune "What Child Is This?" - most likely during Puritan times when all things secular were rather frowned upon. I'll spare you the ancient spelling of the words. Pick which verses you like and put a chorus between. The John Gay version used in The Beggar's Opera (1712) uses only the first verse & chorus. Loreena McKennit's 2001 version uses verses 1, 2 and the alternate version of 4.

Am G Am E
Alas, my love, you do me wrong, to cast me off discourteously.
Am G Am E Am
For I have loved you well and long, delighting in your company.

CHORUS:

G Am E
Greensleeves was all my joy. Greensleeves was my delight.
G Am E Am
Greensleeves was my heart of gold, and who but my Lady Greensleeves.

I have been ready at your hand, to grant whatever thou wouldst crave,
I have both wagered life and land, your love and good-will for to have.

CHORUS:

I bought three kerchers to thy head, that were wrought fine and gallantly;
I kept them both at board and bed, which cost my purse well-favour'dly.

CHORUS:

I bought thee petticoats of the best, the cloth so fine as fine might be:
I gave thee jewels for thy chest; and all this cost I spent on thee.

CHORUS:

Thy smock of silk both fair and white, with gold embroidered gorgeously;
Thy petticoat of Sendall right; and this I bought thee gladly.

*[alt: A petticoat of sendell right, with gold embroidered gorgeously.
A petticoat of silken white, and these I bought thee gladly.]*

CHORUS:

Thy girdle of gold so red, with pearls bedecked sumptuously,
The like no other lasses had; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

Thy purse, and eke thy gay gilt knives, thy pin-case, gallant to the eye;
No better wore the Burgesses' wives; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

Thy crimson stockings all of silk, with gold all wrought above the knee,
Thy pumps as white as was the milk, and yet thou wouldst not love me.

CHORUS:

Thy gown was of the grassy green, thy sleeves of satin hanging by;
Which made thee be our harvest queen; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

Thy garters fringed with the gold, and silver aglets hanging by;
Which made thee blithe for to behold; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

My gayest gelding thee I gave, to ride wherever liked thee;
No lady ever was so brave; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

My men were clothed all in green, and they did ever wait on thee;
All this was gallant to be seen, and yet thou wouldst not love me.

CHORUS:

They set thee up, they took thee down, they served thee with humility;
Thy foot might not once touch the ground; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

For every morning, when thou rose, I sent thee dainties, orderly,
To cheer thy stomach from all woes; and yet thou wouldst not love me!

CHORUS:

Thou couldst desire no earthly thing, but still thou hadst it readily.
Thy music still to play and sing; and yet thou wouldst not love me.

CHORUS:

And who did pay for all this gear, that thou didst spend when pleased thee?
Even I that am rejected here, and thou disdainst to love me!

Well, I will pray to God on high, that thou my constancy mayst see,
And that yet once before I die, thou wilt vouchsafe to love me.

CHORUS:

If you intend thus to disdain, it does the more enrapture me,
And even so, I still remain a lover in captivity.

CHORUS:

Ah, Greensleeves, now farewell, adieu, to God I pray to prosper thee,
For I am still thy lover true, come once again and love me.

CHORUS:

Your vows you've broken, like my heart, oh, why did you so enrapture me?
Now, I remain in a world apart but my heart remains in captivity.

CHORUS: