

THE BALLAD OF JAMES BIRD

Sons of Freedom, listen to me,
And ye daughters, too give ear,
You a sad and mournful story
As was ever told, shall hear.

Hull, you know, his troops surrendered,
And defenceless left the west;
Then our forces quick assembled,
The invaders to resist.

Among the troops that marched to war,
Were the Kingston volunteers;
Captain Thomas them commanded,
To protect our west frontiers.

Tender were the scenes of parting,
Mothers wrung their hands and cried,
Maidens kept their swains in secret,
Fathers strove their tears to hide.

There is one among the number,
Tall and graceful is his mien,
Firm his step, his look undaunted,
Scarce a nobler youth was seen.

One sweet kiss he snatched from Mary,
Craved his mother's prayer, and more,
Pressed his father's hand, and left them
For Lake Erie's distant shore.

Mary tried to say "Farewell, James,"
Waved her hand, but nothing spoke,
"Good-bye, Bird, may Heaven preserve you,"
From the rest at parting broke.

Soon they came where noble Perry
Had assembled all his fleet;
Then the gallant Bird enlisted,
Hoping soon the foe to meet.

Where is Bird? The battle rages;
Is he in the strife or no?
Now the cannon roars tremendous;
Dare he meet the hostile foe?

Aye! behold him! see him, Perry!
In the selfsame ship they fight;
Though his messmates fall around him
Nothing can his soul affright.

But behold! a ball has struck him;
See the crimson current flow;
"Leave the deck!" exclaimed brave Perry;
"No!" cried Bird, "I will not go."

"Here on deck I took my station
Here will Bird his cutlass ply;
I'll stand by you, gallant captain,
Till we conquer or we die."

Still he fought, though faint and bleeding,
Till our stars and stripes waved o'er us,
Victory having crowned our efforts,
All triumphant o'er our foes.

And did Bird receive a pension?
Was he to his friends restored?
No; nor never to his bosom
Clasped the maid his heart adored.

But there came most dismal tidings
From Lake Erie's distant shore;
Better far if Bird had perished
Midst the battle's awful roar.

"Dearest parents," said the letter,
This will bring sad news to you;
Do not mourn your first beloved,
Though this brings his last adieu.

"I must suffer for deserting
From the brig Niagara;
Read this letter, brothers, sisters,
'Tis the last you'll hear from me."

Sad and gloomy was the morning
Bird was ordered out to die;
Where's the breast not dead to pity
But for him would heave a sigh?

Lo! he fought so brave at Erie,
Freely bled and nobly dared;
Let his courage plead for mercy,
Let his precious life be spared.

See him march and bear his fetters;
Hark! they clank upon the ear;
But his step is firm and manly
For his heart ne'er harbored fear.

See him kneel upon his coffin,
Sure his death can do no good;
Spare him! spare! O God, they shoot him!
Oh! his bosom streams with blood.

Farewell, Bird; farewell forever;
Friends and home he'll see no more;
But his mangled corpse lies buried
On Lake Erie's distant shore.