

Watkin's Ale

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This and the Carman's Whistle are both ribald peices, but this one has a special place in my heart.

References:

Tune from Byrd's: Fitzwilliam Virginal Book II, 236, Will Forster's MS Virginal Book p. 460, etc. etc. Also accompanying part for bass viol in Cambridge University MSS Dd. 5.20 fol 7 and treble recorder in Dd.5.21 fol 6v.

Three slightly varying sets of words in:

c. 1590 broadside ballad in Collection of 79 Black Letter Ballads

c. 1590 version *As Watkine walked by the way* in MS Rawl. poet 185. is significantly different but quite related.

c. 1590. *A ditty delightfull of mother watkins ale A warning wel wayed, though counted a tale*, dated 1590, a broadside ballad, and a reproduction of the original in the British Library.

From Simpson, page 86: "In 1592, Henry Chettle, in a letter prefixed to Anthony Munday's translation of Gerileon of England (Part 2, sig. A4), condemned it by name: "I maruell who the diuell is his Printer [who] ... would bee so impudent to print such odious and lasciuious ribauldrie, as Watkins Ale, The Carmans Whistle, and sundrie such other."

(Most tune and lyric references from Gregory Blount's "Music of the Broadside Ballad", which is in turn mostly based on Simpson, Claude M., *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music*. Rutgers University Press, 1966.)

Commentary:

This is the (c.1590) "As Watkine walked by the way" version from MS Rawl. poet 185. as printed in an 1800's source. Included only for comparison, as it's almost certainly corrupted by the copyists.

A new Ballad of Mother Watkins ale.

As Watkine walked by the way,
he met a las, and made her stay.
faire maide, quoth he, go you with me,
and Watkins ale I will give the.
She did not him denie,
but went forth merely,
and thanked him hartely,
for his good merry tale.
Watkin perceaving than,
that she did love a man,
with pleasant talk began
to walke along the dale
They slipped aside cleane out of sight;
what they did more, let Venus wright;
but as it seemed by poettes tale,
he gave her well of Watkins ale.

She said to Watkin lovingly:
whate ale is this which comes soe free?
tys Watkings ale, doe you not know,
tys now abroach, and layd full low.
yf Watkings ale be such,
I cannot drink too much,
I like so well the touch,
It is worthy of good sale:
Suger and claret wine,
malmsey and muskettine,
there tast is not so fine
as my sweet Watkings ale.
Watking, give me more of the same,
I like so well of this same game:
Ambroso with his fine flood,
nor Nextus drinke seeme halfe so good.

The mylkmayde went home merely,
and sunge for ioy with mirth and gle,
that she had sped of Watkings ale;
but marke the sequall of my tale:
ere fortye weekes was past,
this maide she went vnlaste;
she sweld beneath the waste,
her kirtle grew to shorte.
she sighed and sayde: alas!
how comes this geare to pass?
I am not as I was,
all spoyld is our sporte,
So lonng he fishe snaps at the baite,
she taken is by subtell sleight,
Watkins ale and pleasant sporte,
that brought one in fooles paradise.

Where got you this? her mother saide.
at Watkings ale, whereas I stayde.
Is watkins ale of such force,
my daughter must goe seeke a nurce.
Watkins ale was so stronng,
I think it went not wronng;
well spiced with pech lonnge,
Beaten in mortar well,
hys ale most pleasant is;
with many a loving kisse,
he strikes to hit or miss,
my Watkings did excell.
Of Watking ale I tooke a pull,
that I have drunke my belly full;
the proverbe old, as I do thinke:
such ale I brew, such must I drinke.

Hath Watkings ale thus me betrayde,
I can no longer be a maide;
our maids and young men storm at me,
as though the like could never be.
take heed, you silly fooles,
deale not in Venus scholes,
nor yet with Watkins tooles;
his ale full strong will rise.
buy not, before you cheape;
looke in time, before you leape.
Argoes was slayne a sleape
with all his hundred eyes.
My frend Watking hath such a lure,
he will your hartes to love procure,
and tell you many a faire tale,
tyll he hath given you of his ale.

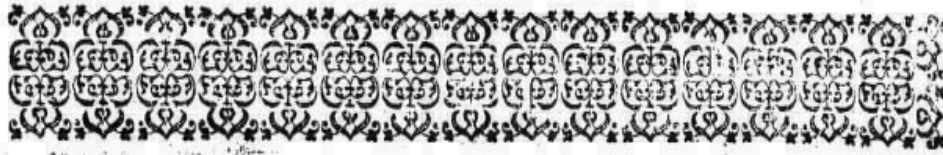
Watking, my love from me is gone;
now for his sake I will trust none.
I may bewaile my great mishapp,
I have to shew within my lapp.
when my sweete babie crye,
I may singe lullabye.
she therefor hath this; why,
you lassis, consider,
make you no scorne at me;
you doe not know, perdie,
what chaunce maye fortune thee,
when you playe to gether.
my Watkinge was a livelie lade,
I was my owne that Watkinge had;
thus have you hard my merye tale.
I thanke Watkinge for his good ale.

[From Robert Lemon's Catalogue of a
Collection of Printed Broadside, 1866.]

To demonstrate how little the 1800's copyist can be depended upon, next is an actual period source that's much more modern sounding. It's dated 1590, as well, A reproduction of the original Broadside Ballad in the British Library. The 1800's medieval nostalgia craze created a lot of fake cutesy versions of period tunes. One clue to veracity: the Elizabethan originals always seem to SCAN better. Doubtless this indicates the relative skill levels involved. A further performance note...this piece works quite well if performed like a beach movie tune. Frankie of Avalon and Annette of the Funny Jello, anyone?



A Ditty delightfull of mother watkins ale
A warning wel wayed, though counted a tale.



There was a maid this other day,
and she would needs go forth to play,
And as she walked she stid and said,
I am afraid to die a mayd.

With that behard a Lad,
What talke this maiden had,
wherof he was full glad,
and did not spare,
To say faire mayd I pray,
whether goe you to play:
God sir then did she say,
what do you care?

For I will without faile
Playden, give you Watkins ale,
Watkins ale god sir quoth she,
what is that I pray you tel me.

This water farre then Sugar one,
And pleasanter than Huskaine,
And if you please faire mayd to stay,
A little while with me to play:

I will give you the same,
Watkins ale calld by name:
Wher els I were to blame,
in truth faire mayd.
Good sir quoth she againe,
If you will take the paine:
I will it not refraine,
no; be dismayd.

We toke this mayden then aside,
And led her where she was not spyde,
And told her many a pretty tale,
And gaue her well of watkins ale.

God sir quoth she in smiling sort,
What doe you call this pretty sport?
What is this you do me?

This called Watkins ale quoth he,
wherein (faire mayd you may)
Report an other day.

When you go forth to play,
how you did speake:

In deed (god sir quoth she)
It is a pretty glee.
And well it pleaseth me,
no doubt indeed.

Thus they sported and they playd,
This yongman and this pretty mayd,
Under a banke whereas they lay,
Not long agoe this other day.

When he had done to her his will,
They talkt, but what it shall not skill:
At last quoth she, sauing your tale,
Gue me some moze of Watkins ale.

Wher els I will not stay,
For I must needs away,
My mother had me play,
the time is past:
therfoze god sir quoth she,
If you haue done with me,
Say soft faire maid quoth he,
againe at last.

Let's take a little while,
With that the maid began to smile,
And saide god sir full well I know,
Your ale I see runs very low.

This yongman then being so blamd,
Did blush as one being a shamde:
He toke her by the middle small,
And gaue her moze of watkins ale:
and saide faire maid I pray
When you goe forth to play,
Remember what I say,
wake not alone.

God sir quoth she againe,
I thanke you for your paine,
For feare of further staine,
I will be gone.

Farewell mayden then quoth he,
Adue god sir againe quoth she,
Thus they parted at last, (past.)
Will thye 12 months were gone and

This mayden then fell very sicke,
Her mayden head began to niche,
Her colour waxed wan and pale,
With taking much of Watkins ale,
I with all maydens cor,
What here is this prett toy,
Wherein most women ioy,

how they doe sport:
For surely Watkins ale,
And if it be not stale,
Will turne them to some bale,
as hath report.

Now ale will make their bellies botone,
As trial by this same is knowne,
this prouerbe hath bin taught in schols,
It is no telling with edge toles.

Whyle scarcely changed hath the moze
Since first this pretty tricke was done,
Which bring harde of one by chance,
He made thereof a country dance.

And as I heard the tale,
he cald it Watkins ale,
which neuer will be stale,
I doe beleue:

This dance is now in prime,
and chiefly vsd this time,
And lately put in rime:
let no man greue,

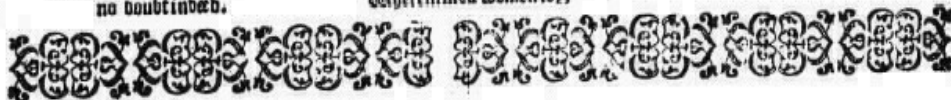
To heare this merry telling tale,
Which which is calld watkins ale:
It is not long since it was made,
The bestest flower with some it fade.

God maydes and wiuers I pardon crase
And lack not that which you would haue
To blith it is a womans grace,
And well becometh a maidens face,
For women will refuse,
the thing that they would chuse
Cense men should them excuse.

off thinking ill:
Cat will after kind,
all winkers are not blind,
Faire maydes you know my mind,
say what you will.

When you drinke ale beware the toalk
for therein lay the danger moalk:
If any here offended be,
When blame the authoz, blame not me.

FINIS.



Mother Watkins Ale

C Am
There was a maid this other day
F G C
And she must needs go forth to play.
C Am
And as she walked, she sighed and said
F G C
"I am afraid to die a maid."
C G
When that he heard, a lad, what talk this maiden had,
F G
Whereof he was full glad and did not spare
C G
To say ``Fair maid, I pray, wither go thou today?"
F G
``Good sir," then did she say, ``What do you care?"
C G Am G
``For I will, without fail,
F C G C
Maiden, give to you Watkins ale."
C G Am G
``Watkins ale, sir," quoth she,
F C G C
What is that, I pray you tell me?"

'Tis sweeter far than sugar fine
And pleasanter than Muscadine.
And if you please fair maid to stay
A little while to sport and play
I will give you the same, Watkins ale called by name,
Or else I were to blame, in truth fair maid.
``Good sir," quoth she again, ``If you will take the pain,
I shall it not refrain, nor be dismayed."
He took this maiden then aside
And led her where she was not spied
And told her many a pretty tale,
And gave her well of Watkins ale.

When he had done to her his will,
They talked but what I shall not skill
At last she said, ``Spare your tale,
Give me some more of Watkins ale
Or else I will not stay, for I must needs away,
My mother bade me play, the time is past.
Therefore, good sir," quoth she, ``if you have done with me."
``Nay soft, fair maid," quoth he again at last.
Let us talk a little while."
With that the maiden began to smile.
And said, ``Good sir, full well I know,
Your ale I see runs very low."

This young man then, being so blamed,
Did blush as one being ashamed.
He took her by the middle small,
And gave her more of Watkins ale
And said, ``Fair maid I pray, when you go forth to play,
Remember what I say, walk not alone."
``Nay soft," said she again. ``I thank you for your pain,
For fear of further stain, I must be gone."
``Farewell maiden," then quoth he;
``Adieu good sir," again quoth she
Thus they parted then at last,
Till thrice three months were gone and passed.

This maiden then fell very sick.
Her maidenhead began to kick.
Her color waxed wan and pale,
With taking much of Watkins ale.
I wish all maidens coy, that hear this pretty toy,
Wherein most women's joy, how they do sport.
For surely Watkins ale, and if it be not stale,
Will bring them to some bale, as hath report.
New ale will make their bellies bowne,
As trial by this same has shown.
This proverb hath been taught in schools,
It is no jesting with edged tools.

Good maids and wives, I pardon crave,
 And lack not that which you would have.
 To blush it is a woman's grace,
 And well becometh a maiden's face.
 For women will refuse the thing that they would choose,
 So men should them excuse of thinking ill.
 Cat will after kind, all winkers are not blind,
 You maidens know my mind, say what you will.
 When you drink ale, beware the toast,
 For therein lies the danger most.
 If any here offended be,
 Then blame the author, blame not me.

Here's my version:

Watkin's Ale

c. 1590

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Voice

There was a maid the oth er day and she must needs go forth to play and
 as she walked she sighed and said, "I am a fraid to die a maid." When that he heard, a lad,
 what talk this mai den had, wher of he was full glad and did not spare, to say, "Fair maid, I pray,
 whith er go thou today?" "Good Sir," she then did say, "What do you care?" "For I will,
 with-out fail, give to you of Wat kin's Ale!" "Wät kin's Ale, Sir," quoth she,
 "What is that I pray you tell me?"