

MACPHERSON'S LAMENT

Traditional Scottish Air

4 "Fare-well, ye dun-geons dark and strong, fare-well, farewell to
8 thee, Mac-pherson's time will not be long, on yon-der gallows
12 tree." Sae ran-tingly — sae wanton-ly, sae dauntingly — gaed
he. He played a tune and he danced it roon below the gallows tree.

"Untie these bands from off my hands and bring to me my sword.
There's no a man in all Scotland but I'll brave him at a word."

Chorus: Sae rantingly¹ sae wantonly², sae dauntingly³ gaed⁴ he.
He played a tune and he danced it roon⁵ below the gallows tree.

"There's some come here to see me hanged and some to buy my fiddle,
But before that I do part with her I'll break her through the middle."

He took the fiddle into both of his hands and he broke it over a stone.
"There's not another hand shall play on thee when I am dead and gone."

The reprieve was coming o'er the brig⁶ o' Banff to let Macpherson free,
But they put the clock a quarter afore and hanged him from the tree.

— lyrics adapted from traditional sources
and Robert Burns (1759–1796)

James Macpherson (1675–1700) was the illegitimate son of a nobleman and a beautiful gypsy woman. He became the leader of a band of gypsy outlaws who robbed only the rich and were quite popular with ordinary folk. Macpherson was an accomplished swordsman and a renowned fiddler. He was captured in 1700 and convicted of being a gypsy. His broken fiddle now lies in the Macpherson Clan Museum near Newtonmore, Inverness-shire, and his sword is in Duff House, in Banff.

¹ boisterously ² disrespectfully ³ courageously ⁴ went ⁵ round ⁶ bridge