

## THE GATTON TRAGEDY

By John Manifold

Father, the moon is up and full.  
It shines on Gatton town,  
and they'll be dancing all tonight,  
until the moon goes down.

Michael, it's no concern of yours  
what townsfolk choose to do -  
whirling with drunken jezebels  
the whole night through!

Father, the dancers are my friends,  
they're decent girls and men.  
I'll take my sister Nora there  
and dance with her; what then?

Michael, it's not a seemly thing  
for you and her to ride  
so much alone together,  
like a bridegroom and his bride.

Summer's a loving season, true,  
and the moon a lovers' moon,  
but you're too old to be jealous, father,  
you'll have your daughter soon.

I'll take young Ellen to see fair play  
and borrow from Bill McNeill  
his old grey horse and his sulky  
for all its wobbling wheel.

Michael, there's no contesting you,  
Since your hot blood's bound to win.  
But may the harm be on your head,  
and God shield all from sin!

They were not home when midnight struck  
nor when the sky grew pale,  
so Bill McNeill rode out alone  
to follow the sulky's trail.

Six miles to town and two miles back  
the trail was printed fair,  
thro' Moran's sliprails into the trees  
it turned, and ended there.

There Michael lay beneath a tree  
with Ellen at his side.  
Gunshot and bludgeon had been used  
when the hands of both were tied.

There Nora's strangled body lay  
half-naked on the ground.  
it was a grim dance she had danced  
before the moon went down!

Across the shafts the horse lay shot  
that could neither fight nor plead,  
for fear he might have found human  
tongue  
to declare who did the deed.

Whether it was a madman's work  
or that of a fiend from Hell  
only the stark white ringbarked gums  
and the silent moon can tell.



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