

The Boy and the Mantle (Child 29)

- 1 IN the third day of May to Carleile did come
A kind curteous child, that cold much of wisdom.
- 2 A kirtle and a mantle this child had vpon,
With brauches and ringes full richelye bedone.
- 3 He had a sute of silke, about his middle drawne;
Without he cold of curtesye, he thought itt much shame.
- 4 'God speed thee, *King* Arthur, sitting att thy meate!
And the goodly *Queene* Gueneuer! I canott her fforgett.
- 5 'I tell you lords in this hall, I hett you all heede,
Except you be the more surer, is you for to dread.'
- 6 He plucked out of his potewer, and longer wold not dwell,
He pulled forth a pretty mantle, betweene two nut-shells.
- 7 'Haue thou here, *King* Arthure, haue thou heere of mee;
Giue itt to thy comely queene, shapen as itt is alreadye.
- 8 'Itt shall neuer become *that* wiffe *that* hath once done amisse.'
Then euery *knight* in the *kings* court began to care for his.
- 9 Forth came dame Gueneuer, to the mantle shee her bed;
The ladye shee was new-fangle, but yett shee was affrayd.
- 10 When shee had taken the mantle, shee stoode as she had beene madd;
It was from the top to the toe as sheeres had itt shread.
- 11 One while was itt gaule, another while was itt greene;
Another while was itt wadded; ill itt did her beseeme.
- 12 Another while was it blacke, and bore the worst hue;
'By my troth,' quoth *King* Arthur, 'I thinke thou be not true.'
- 13 Shee threw downe the mantle, *that* bright was of blee,
Fast with a rudd redd to her chamber can shee flee.
- 14 Shee curst the weauer and the walker that clothe *that* had wrought,
And bade a vengeance on his crowne *that* hither hath itt brought.
- 15 'I had rather be in a wood, vnder a greene tree,
Then in *King* Arthurs court shamed for to bee.'

- 16 Kay called forth his ladye, and bade her come neere;
Saies, 'Madam, and thou be guiltye, I pray thee hold thee there.'
- 17 Forth came his ladye shortlye and anon,
Boldlye to the mantle then is shee gone.
- 18 When she had tane the mantle, and cast it her about,
Then was shee bare all aboute the buttockes.
- 19 Then euery knight *that* was in the kings court
Talked, laughed, and showed, full oft att *that* sport.
- 20 Shee threw downe the mantle, *that* bright was of blee,
Ffast with a red rudd to her chamber can shee flee.
- 21 Forth came an old *knight*, pattering ore a creede,
And he *proffered* to this little boy twenty markes to his meede,
- 22 And all the time of the Christmase willinglye to feede;
For why, this mantle might doe his wiffe some need.
- 23 When shee had tane the mantle, of cloth *that* was made,
Shee had no more left on her but a tassell and a threed:
Then euery *knight* in the *kings* court bade euill might shee speed.
- 24 Shee threw downe the mantle, *that* bright was of blee,
And fast *with* a redd rudd to her chamber can shee flee.
- 25 Craddocke called forth his ladye, and bade her come in;
Saith, 'Winne this mantle, ladye, with a litle dinne.
- 26 'Winne this mantle, ladye, and it shalbe thine
If thou neuer did amisse since thou wast mine.'
- 27 Forth came Craddockes ladye shortlye and anon,
But boldlye to the mantle then is shee gone.
- 28 When shee had tane the mantle, and cast itt her about,
Vpp att her great toe itt began to crinkle and crows;
Shee said, 'Bowe downe, mantle, and shame me not for nought.
- 29 'Once I did amisse, I tell you certainlye,
When I kist Craddockes mouth vnder a greene tree,
When I kist Craddockes mouth before he marryed mee.'
- 30 When shee had her shreeuen, and her sines shee had tolde,
The mantle stoode about her right as shee wold;

- 31 Seemelye of coulour, glittering like gold;
Then euery *knight* in Arthurs court did her behold.
- 32 Then spake dame Gueneuer to Arthur our king:
'She hath tane yonder mantle, not with wright but with wronge!
- 33 'See you not yonder woman *that* maketh her selfe soe clene?
I haue seene tane out of her bedd of men fiuteene;
- 34 'Preists, clarkes, and wedded men, from her by-deene;
Yett she taketh the mantle, and maketh her-selfe cleane!'
- 35 Then spake the litle boy *that* kept the mantle in hold;
Sayes '*King*, chasten thy wiffe; of her words shee is to bold.
- 36 'Shee is a bitch and a witch, and a whore bold;
King, in thine owne hall thou art a cuchold.'
- 37 The litle boy stode looking ouer a dore;
He was ware of a wyld bore, wold haue werryed a man.
- 38 He pulld forth a wood kniffe, fast thither *that* he ran;
He brought in the bores head, and quitted him like a man.
- 39 He brought in the bores head, and was wonderous bold;
He said there was neuer a cucholds kniffe carue itt that cold.
- 40 Some rubbed their kniues vpon a whetstone;
Some threw them vnder the table, and said they had none.
- 41 *King* Arthur and the child stood looking them vpon;
All their kniues edges turned backe againe.
- 42 Craddoccke had a litle kniue of iron and of steele;
He birtled the bores head wonderous weele,
That euery *knight* in the *kings* court had a morssell.
- 43 The litle boy had a horne, of red gold *that* ronge;
He said, 'There was noe cuckolde shall drinke of my horne,
But he shold itt sheede, either behind or before.'
- 44 Some shedd on their shoulder, and some on their knee;
He *that* cold not hitt his mouth put it in his eye;
And he *that* was a cuckhold, euery man might him see.
- 45 Craddoccke wan the horne and the bores head;
His ladye wan the mantle vnto her meede;
Euerye such a louely ladye, God send her well to speede!