Bonnie Black Bess (2)

Bonnie Black Bess (2)

When fortune's blind goddess
Had fled my abode,
And friends proved unfaithful
I took to the road;
To plunder the wealthy
And relieve my distress,
I bought you to aid me,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

No vile whip nor spur
Did your sides ever gall,
For none did you need,
You would bound at my call;
And for each act of kindness
You would me caress.
Thou art never unfaithful,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

When dark, sable midnight
Her mantle had thrown
O'er the bright face of nature,
How oft we have gone
To the famed Hounslow heath,
Though an unwelcome guest
To the minions of fortune,
My Bonnie Black Bess!

How silent you stood
When the carriage I stopped!
The gold and the jewels
Its inmates would drop.
No poor man I plundered
Nor e'er did oppress
The widows or orphans,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

When Argus-eyed justice
Did me hot pursue,
From York town to London
Like lightning we flew.
No toll bars could stop you,

The waters did breast,
And in twelve hours we made it,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

But hate darkens o'er me,
Despair is my lot,
And the law does pursue me
For the many I've shot;
To save me, poor brute,
Thou hast done thy best,
Thou art worn out and weary,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

Hark! they never shall have
A beast like thee;
So noble and gentle
And brave, thou must die,
My dumb friend,
Though it does me distress.
There! There! I have shot thee,
My Bonnie Black Bess.

In after years
When I am dead and gone,
This story will be handed
From father to son;
My fate some will pity,
And some will confess
'Twas through kindness I killed
My Bonnie Black Bess.

No one can e'er say
That ingratitude dwelt
In the bosom of Turpin-
'Twas a vice never felt.
I will die like a man
And soon be at rest
Now, farewell forever
My Bonnie Black Bess.

From Cowboy Songs, Lomax
Note: "said to have been the most popular song among the cowboys
in the Indian Territory". I haven't come across it in any
other cowboy collection, though. RG
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