# Curfew Must Not Ring To-night - song lyrics

## American Old-time song lyrics from www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

Curfew Must Not Ring To-Night.
Recited by James Harking.

England's sun was slowly settlng.o'er the hills so far away,
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one sad day;
And the last rays kiss'd the forehead of a man and maiden fair,
He with step so slow and weakened, she with sunny, floating hair;
He with sad bowed head, and thoughtful, she with lips so cold and white,
Struggling to keep back the murmur, " Curfew must not ring to-night."
"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison old,
With its walls so dark and gloomy-walls so dark and damp and cold-
"I've a lover in that'prlson, doomed this very night to die
At the ringing of the Curfew, no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset and her face grew strangely white,
As she spoke in husky whispers,' Curfew must not ring tonight."
"Bessie," clanily spoke the sexton-every word pierced her young heart
Like a thousand gleaming arrows, like a deadly-poisoned dart-_____
"Long, long years I've rung the Curfew from that gloomy shadowed tower:
Every evening, just at sunset, it has told the twilight hour;
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right,
Now I'm old I will not miss It; girl, the Curfew rings to-night!"
Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,
And within her heart's deep centre, Bessie made a solemn vow;
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,
"At the ringing of the Curfew-Basil Underwood must die."
And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright-
One low murmur, scarcely spoken-" Curfew must not ring to-night "
She with light step bounded forward, sprang within the old church door.
Left the old man coming slowly paths he'd trod so oft before;
Not one moment paused the maiden, but with cheek and brow aglow,
Staggered up the gloomy towar, where the bell swung to and fro ;
Then she climbed the slimy ladder. dark, without one ray of light,
Upward still, her pale lips saying: "Curfew shall not ring to-night."
She has reached the topmost ladder, o'er her hangs the great dark bell,
And the awfui gloom beneath her, like the pathway down to hell;
See, the ponderous tongue is swinging, 'tis the hour of Curfew now,
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath and paled her brow.
Shall she let it ring? No, never! her eyes flash with sudden light,
As she springs and grasps it firmly-" Curfew shall not ring to-night!"
Out she swung, far out, the city seemed a tiny speck below :
There, 'twixt heaven and earth suspended, as the bell swung to and fro;
And the half-deaf sexton ringing (years he had not heard the bell),
And he thought the twilight Curfew rang young Basils funeral knell;
Still the maiden clinging firmly, cheek and brow so pale and white,
Stilled her frightened heart's wild beating-" Curfew shall not ring to-night."
It was o'er-the bell ceased swaying, and the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the damp old ladder, where for hundred years before
Human foot had not been planted; and what she this night had done
Should be told in long years after-as the rays of setting sun
Light the sky with mellow beauty, aged sires with heads of white
Tell their children why the Curfew did not ring that one sad night,
O'er the distant hills came Cromwell; Bessie saw him, and her brow,
Lately white with sickening terror, glows with sudden beauty now;
At his foot she told her story, showed ner hands all bruised and torn;
And her sweet young face so haggard, with a look so sad and worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity-lit his eyes with misty light;
"Go, your lover lives !" cried Cromwell; " Curfew shall not ring to-night."