MacPherson's Lament

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong, the

wretched's destiny. MacPherson's life will

not be long on yonder gallows tree. Sae

rantingly sae wantonly, sae dauntingly gaed he:

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Take off these bands from off my hands
And give to me a sword
For there's not a man in all Scotland
But I'd brave him at his word

Chorus

There's some come here for to see me hung
And some to buy my fiddle
But before that I do part with her
I'll break her through the middle

Chorus

He took his fiddle in both of his hands
And broke it o'er a stone
Saying "There's nae ither hand shall play on thee
When I am dead and gone"

Chorus

The reprieve was coming o'er the Brigg of Banff
For to set McPherson free
But they put the clock a quarter before
And they hanged him from a tree

MacPherson's Lament. Composed by James MacPherson himself in Prison on the eve of his execution for cattle rustling. Born in 1675, the son of a gypsy woman and a highland laird. James, a fine fiddler, became the Leader of an unlawful gypsy gang plundering the North East of Scotland living off their spoils and sharing them out with the less fortunate. He was eventually caught in the town of Keith while being chased through the streets by the bailiffs where a woman threw a blanket out of a window trapping James. He was tried in Banff, found guilty and was sentenced to hang by the magistrates. On the day of his execution in Banff the magistrates knew there was a reprieve coming from Aberdeen and put the town clock forward by 20 minutes so James could be hanged before the specified time. On the gallows he played this tune then offered his fiddle to anyone in his clan who would play it at his wake. When no one came forward to take the fiddle, he broke it then threw it into the crowd. The broken fiddle now lies in a folk museum near Newtonmore. The Magistrates were punished for this and the town clock was kept 20 minutes behind the correct time for many years. Even to this day the town of Macduff has its west facing town clock covered so the people of Banff can't see the correct time!