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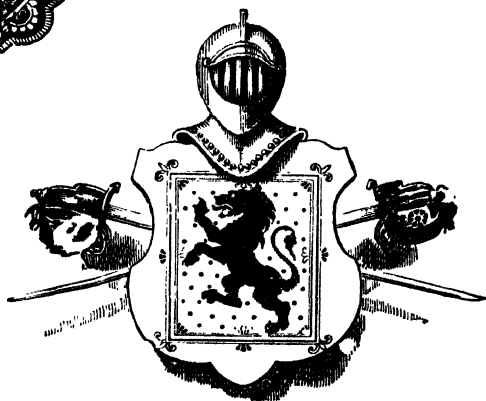
Walter M

A large, ornate initial letter 'P' that serves as a decorative element for the title. It features intricate floral and geometric patterns, with a cross-like design at the top and bottom.

Poems:

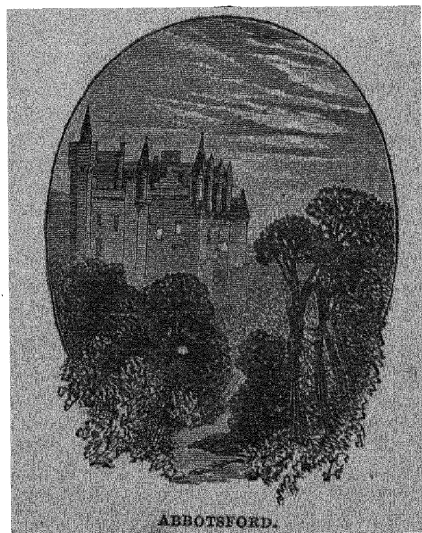
By
Sir Walter Scott.

with illustrations by
Frederick Halliwell



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO AND CO.

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO & CO.
1881.

THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

BY ALEXANDER LEIGHTON.

It has been sometimes said, that there is nothing of which a man is more vain than of authorship, yet Sir Walter Scott was certainly more proud of his pedigree than of his writings; and, what is scarcely less strange, that which he valued the less was the means of making him, while that which he valued the more was the source of his greatest misfortunes. The Border, that great nursery of families, gave birth to the Dukes of Buccleuch, with whom the poet was connected. It is fortunate that those who are proud of lineage are exempted from questioning, or even looking at the origin of their families; for it is more true than pleasant to their descendants, that the beginnings of these Border septs were often men whose superiority was founded on nothing better than the stealing of cattle. Yet such is the power of genius in transferring qualities, that even so mean and disreputable a calling has received at the hand of this, one of her sons, something so like an appearance of dignity and heroism, that the author could congratulate himself on both ends of his pedigree.

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, on the 15th of August 1771, a day signalised by the birth of Napoleon. His father, a man of unblemished reputation for correct business habits, honesty, and benevolence, was a writer to the signet; his mother, Ann Rutherford, was daughter of Dr John Rutherford, first professor of physic in the University of Edinburgh, who had studied under the celebrated Boerhave. Mr Robert Scott, farmer at Sandyknowe, in the vicinity of Smalholm Tower, upon the Borders, was the paternal grandfather, being the son of Mr Walter Scott, a younger son of Walter Scott of Raeburn, third son of Sir Walter Scott of Harden. The Scotts of Harden, again, came, in the fourteenth century, from the stock of

the Buccleuchs, whereby arose the connexion between the poet and the greatest of the Border clans.

Scott was a healthy infant from the beginning, and the lameness with which he was affected through life was not congenital, neither did it come of what may be called accident, if the origin of it may not be called strange, as described by himself. One night he had a great aversion to go to bed, and it was not till he was chased round the room and laid hold of, that he could be prevailed upon to comply with the wishes of his mother. In the morning he was affected with fever, and after three days it was discovered that he had lost the use of his right leg. After this, and till he was about eight years of age, his childhood was chiefly spent at his grandfather's house of Sandyknowe, where, even at this early time, he began to be lovingly familiar with the scenery of the Border, and even some of the simplest of the traditions and ballads, which he heard narrated or sung in the farmhouse. At this early stage, or a little beyond it, he began to show that love for miscellaneous reading, but chiefly that which was connected with history and adventure, which he entertained so passionately almost through his whole life, and which he turned to the account of his genius. This gave rise, as it generally does, to hopes of scholarship; but on being placed in the High School of Edinburgh, in 1779, he failed to signalise himself in the studies of his class, if, indeed, he was not numbered amongst the dullards. The circumstance is worth an observation, not unuseful, as it may tend to disabuse us of a notion which is all but incredible, that scholarship forms any index of success in studies and avocations which belong altogether to faculties not comprehended among those necessary for classic superiority. All the intellectual powers which follow in the train of the emotional may be almost in abeyance, while the memory, exercised upon languages, may raise a youth to academic honours, so often vainly looked to as a prelude of future greatness. Nor are we to forget that precocity, always in the physical kingdom, and not seldom in the moral, bespeaks short duration.

Even then, however, Scott, in place of showing the general dulness ascribed to him in the "Percy Anecdotes," evinced eminence in historical, anecdotal, and miscellaneous knowledge, treasuring up aviciously names and facts which were destined to impart substance and charms to his subsequent writings. The poet and chronicler were, in short, in the germ; already his story-telling was shrewd and captivating; and, in his twelfth year, his love of ballad poetry was ineradicably established by the delight with which he devoured "Percy's Reliques."

About this time, his health, which ever since the fever had been weakly, began again to give way, and he was sent, for the benefit of a change of air, to reside at Kelso with his aunt. How strangely are the threads of a great man's early life woven! If he had not gone there he might never have been acquainted, at least connected in a literary way, with James and John Ballantyne, afterwards the eminent

printers and publishers. It was in Kelso that he met and formed an intimacy with these young men. Little did any of them know how their names would go over the world, and how that long and mysterious connexion would terminate. At this time James Ballantyne had noticed the bent of Scott's mind. "In the intervals of school hours, it was our constant practice to walk by the banks of the Tweed, and his stories became quite inexhaustible." Even on that same spot where they walked, Scott was to raise Abbotsford,—his pride and his ruin.

In the winter of 1783, he entered the University of his native city. He enrolled himself for the Humanity Class, under Professor Hill, and the Greek Class, under Professor Dalzell, and for the latter again in 1784; but the only class for which he seems to have matriculated at the College was that of Logic, under Professor Bruce, in 1785. With such predilections as he now possessed, it was vain to expect that application to the classics which is so indispensable to success. Accordingly, he made so little real progress as to justify the estimate subsequently made of his classical knowledge, that he never understood Greek beyond the elements, and possessed but a loose scholarship in Latin; and even the acquaintance which, in early manhood, he made with French, Italian, Spanish, and German, was at the very best superficial.

In May 1786, when nearly fifteen years of age, he was articled to his father as an apprentice, in order to be initiated into the secrets of the law and the complicated mysteries of conveyancing. But although he attended his father's chambers pretty regularly for four years, his heart was never in the business, from which he would escape at every opportunity. In place of "progresses," or bundles of parchment called title-deeds, you would have seen on his desk all manner of works in the department of fiction, and a book on knight-errantry might have been seen lying on the top of a last will and testament. In the second year of his apprenticeship he burst a blood-vessel, and was thereby confined to bed; but after this he began to assume that robust health and hardihood which he retained almost through life. There was a strong physical spring in his constitution, which, working in harmony with a natural joyousness, fitted him for all manner of out-door exercises, either on foot or horseback; then, scenery of all kinds, particularly the wildest, had inexpressible charms for him, not simply as mere scenes of nature, but as the theatres of traditional adventure, whether military or domestic. Every old castle, or ruined house, or muirland fell, that came under his eye, immediately became tenanted by beings called up by the magic of his creative power; and then he would pour out upon his hearers such stories of intrigue, *diablerie*, or war, that he was as captivating in oral displays as he subsequently became in written description. All the while, however, Scott showed no aptitude for the production of poetry in the proper sense, for it may be doubted whether a rhymed chronicle deserves that name, and it is quite certain that, beyond an enthusiastic perception of the ballad jingle, he had no ear for music.

His father's intention, as well as his own, was that he should go to the bar, and his attendance at the Speculative Society was intended as a step in his training. He had here an opportunity, also, of writing the essays which formed a part of the society's forms of business, and in which he could exhibit his turn for antiquarian studies. In 1792, he was admitted a member of the Faculty of Advocates; and as an evidence that he was fairly set up for doing serious business as a pleader, he was supplied by his father with a well-furnished house in a genteel part of the town. Every requisite was prepared but the legal and forensic faculties; not that he was destitute of these, for his versatile mind was deficient scarcely in any human power, but that his tastes and inclinations prevented him from giving these studies that undivided attention necessary to absolute mastership, and therefore success. He was not zealous to join "the ranks of the gentlemen not over anxious for business," for he had strong ambition to figure even as a barrister; and it has been said, that, with his sagacity and ready powers of speech—though not forensic speech—if he had been early tempted by fees, and stimulated by duty, so as to have been brought within the challenge of competition, the energy of his nature and his deep sagacity would inevitably have carried him on to triumph. Nor does this seem doubtful, for Scott was not a shy contemplative poet, he was essentially a shrewd man of the world, and in place of his antiquarian predilections operating against him, they might have contributed to his success. It is certain, however, that he was never put into the track, so it could not be said that he failed so much as that he really did not seriously try.

Without any call from without, then, to take his mind off his old studies, he fell back into the meshes he had woven for himself: but his earliest efforts at authorship were comparatively small and desultory. It seems certain that Scott was tardy in arriving at a conviction of his powers, and it is doubtful if he knew where they lay. His efforts were more tentative than confident. In 1796, he published translations of some of those ballads of Bürger, which have such a charm for young Scotchmen,—particularly "The Wild Huntsman,"—clearly showing his preference for the supernatural, at the same time that he was a shrewd observer of the world. In the same department, he contributed to Lewis's "Tales of Wonder." In 1798 appeared his translation of Goethe's drama, "Goetz von Berlichingen;" and in 1799 he wrote and made known to his friends the earliest of his greater efforts in original poetry, the ballads of "Glenfinlas," "The Eve of St John," and "The Gray Brother." Yet withal, though the pieces were well received, he made no great progress to a high literary reputation. Perhaps he figured better as Adjutant of the Royal Mid-Lothian Regiment of Cavalry, a section of the Volunteer Militia of the time, for which office his lameness was considered no bar, and his love of poetry no recommendation.

While on a visit to the English Lakes, Scott became acquainted with Miss Mary Carpenter, daughter of John Carpenter of Lyons, and then

an orphan, her father having fallen a victim in the hottest period of the French Revolution. He married her in 1797, with consent of her guardians, and an annuity of £200 a-year. His father's death next gave him a moderate patrimony: and in 1799 he obtained, through the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, whose politics he had espoused, the Sheriffship of Selkirkshire, an office involving neither responsibility nor labour, with a salary of £300 a-year. Throughout his whole life he was a very good example of the possibility of making poetry and worldly success perfectly compatible.

During all this time, his information was increasing, and his powers were ripening; but he did not seem to have had any intuitive conception of the form in which they ought to be applied. The best that could be said for him was, that his inherent good sense and independence—perhaps not less an inward consciousness of originality—prevented him from following old tracks, and falling into the youthful trap of imitation. With a wonderful memory, especially for all odds and ends of history, scraps of tradition, and old ballads, he had been gradually and almost unconsciously collecting a store, and he thus became fitted for the task of giving to the public the poetical legends of the Borders. In 1802, he published the first and second volumes of "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," a publication which brought him at once a distinguished reputation, not only as a curious collector and annotator, but as an original ballad-writer, several of his own effusions having formed a part of the "Minstrelsy."

This work, which was the product of a long gathering, prosecuted with an object like that to which it was applied, was followed by another, which, as respects success, was a miracle. In 1802, he had begun to write what, in a letter to Ellis, he denominated "a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza." It seems to have been at first intended to be a long ballad, with no higher destination than an insertion in the "Minstrelsy;" but having submitted the MS. to some of his friends,—Jeffrey, Wordsworth, and others,—he was induced, upon their recommendation, to extend it into the form of an independent metrical romance. Such was the history of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," which became the foundation-stone of Scott's fame as an original poet. The sale of the book was, as we have said, marvellous; and the spread was commensurate, not only with the admiration and delight of the reading public, but also with the favour it received from the hands of the critics, at that time a surly set, envious of rising reputations. That the work really deserved all the praise it got, there can be no doubt; for although, viewed strictly in the aspect of its originality, it is only in the wake of the old metrical romances, it contained so many warm pictures of scenery, burned with such a glow of bardic enthusiasm, and resuscitated so effectually the slumbering poetical mind of the nation, that it had all the charms of novelty. The effect was thus increased by the wakening feeling of surprise, for the work appeared at a time when—Burns being only an immortal memory, and the earlier volumes of Crabbe and Campbell

simply domestic or didactic—poetry which addressed itself to the past of a nation's chivalry, was unheard of. Above all, as regarded admiration, the poem is a work of high art; for though there may be less construction in it than in some of the subsequent poems, with, perhaps, fewer grand passages and less striking imagery, it is pervaded by a simplicity which is a species of art itself. Lastly, it was more true to his aim of reviving the spirit of the old knights and lovers in a form suited to modern sympathies.

It may be worth while to give the author's own history of this, the first of his great poems. "The lovely Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, had come to the land of her husband with the desire of making herself acquainted with its traditions and customs. She soon heard enough of Border lore. Among others, an aged gentleman of property, near Langholm, (Mr Stoddart,) communicated to her ladyship the story of Gilpin Horner, a story in which the narrator and many more in that county were firm believers. The young lady, much delighted with the legend, and the gravity and full confidence in which it was told, enjoined it on me as a task to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course, to hear was to obey; and thus the goblin story, objected to by many of the critics as an excrescence upon the poem, was, in fact, the occasion of its being written. It was, to the best of my recollection, more than a year after Mr Stoddart's visit, that, by way of experiment, I composed the first two or three stanzas of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' I was shortly afterwards visited by two intimate friends, whom I was in the habit of consulting in my attempts at composition, having equal confidence in their sound taste and friendly sincerity. . . . As neither of my friends said much to me on the subject of the stanzas I showed them before their departure, I had no doubt that their disgust was greater than their good-nature chose to express. Looking upon them, therefore, as a failure, I threw the MS. into the fire, and thought as little more as I could of the matter. Some time afterwards, I met one of my two counsellors, who inquired, with considerable appearance of interest, about the progress of the romance I had commenced, and was greatly surprised at learning its fate. He confessed that neither he nor his mutual friend had been at first able to give a precise opinion of a poem so much out of the common road, but that as they walked home together to the city, they had talked much on the subject, and the result was an earnest desire that I would proceed with the composition. The poem being once licensed by the critics as fit for the market was soon finished."

After the publication of "The Lay" in 1805, Scott's pen never ceased. In 1806 he collected his original compositions of the ballad order into a small volume, with the title, "Ballads and Lyrical Pieces." "Marmion," containing in its famous battle-scene one of the most striking and spirited passages in the entire range of our poetry, came, in 1808, after, as he admits, great pains. Then the Annotated Works of Dryden, in eighteen volumes, with a Life. Next, in 1809, "The State

Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler," in two volumes; and in the same year, Lord Somers' Tracts, to which he contributed notes, in twelve volumes. Amidst all which, he wrote in the *Annual Register*, a work at first edited by Mr Southey.

Not long after, appeared the poem which not undeservedly is considered the finest of his poetical works,—“The Lady of the Lake,”—wherein he had an opportunity to luxuriate in those descriptions of Highland scenery which first roused the English to the beauties of our romantic country. In 1811, appeared “Don Roderick,” and in 1813, “Rokeby,” in which he tried, not ineffectually, yet bringing down upon him the clever English “Jokeby,” to clothe southern scenery, and a tale of the civil wars, with the charm he had so magically thrown over the romantic features of his own country. Subsequently, in 1814, came “The Lord of the Isles.” Adding one or two anonymous poems, and taking into account his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, and his assistance in founding its formidable rival, the *Quarterly Review*, we have an array of works, all within the compass of a few years, which, even with the admission that he was stimulated by the commercial engagements he had formed, is nothing less than marvellous.

It became manifest, however, to himself that he had exhausted the purse of the public with his own poetical mine, and the exigency of his engagement with the Ballantynes stimulated him to new efforts. These engagements commenced so early as 1805. His school-fellow, James Ballantyne, was the editor and printer of a newspaper in Roxburghshire, and Scott assisted him in setting up a printing establishment in Edinburgh. After lending money to the firm, he became a partner, as we have said, in 1805. A quarrel with his publisher, Constable, afforded him, he thought, the means of giving to the public a higher literature than that which best remunerates a publisher; and—which was a kind of contradiction—he thought he must derive profit from a business guided by a man of knowledge like himself: in short, he confounded the aspirations of an author with the expectations of a merchant. He accordingly got Mr John Ballantyne to be the head of a publishing establishment, as James was of a printing one, and in this he became also a partner to the extent of a third. It has often been a matter of surprise that a man like Scott, with his family pride, his fame, and his money, could thus descend to mercantile means of adding to his fortune. Some have excused him on the plea that he was serving his friends, but others, more truly, seek the reason in a love of family aggrandisement, to which he knew money was indispensable.

Certain it is that Scott was ashamed of this mercantile speculation. All these arrangements were kept a profound secret—Scott being always held up and considered by the public as the mere patron and friend of the Ballantynes. A few years after these arrangements, Scott commenced the second great stage of his literary progress. He was himself the first to perceive the waning popularity of his poetry. Byron's “*Childe Harold*” had appeared two years before the publication of

"Marmion," and the freshness and vigour of that chant, combining, as it did, a species of romance with the characters, thoughts, and feelings of a more conventional and recent age, put out for a time the light of Scott's rhyming chronicles. In short, the people were awakened out of a dream of the past, unreal though gorgeous, and felt a relief in receiving the impressions of actual life, sublimed by the fire of genius, but yet a reflection of their experiences.

Scott, like a true champion, accordingly set himself to the task of regaining his laurels in a new field. The fame he had acquired was subject to the old law of discontent. He wished more glory, and he also wished more gold. The one was natural and praiseworthy, the other artificial and mean; nor was the meanness the less that he burned throughout his whole life to be the lord of broad acres and the founder of a great Border family. All his tendencies were towards the great; and though his good heart could not cast off the humanities, it is to be feared that his general *bonhomie* was simply condescension, stimulated by prudence. From this passion nothing would divert him; but he could not hope to gratify it from his own ordinary means, though his appointment as one of the clerks of the Court of Session added nearly £1300 a-year to an income already great; and hence his ardour to enter upon a new mine. In 1805, while engaged on "Marmion," he had begun a novel, under, it is sometimes said, the stimulus of the example of Miss Edgeworth, but threw it aside, and it is said to have lain in a barrel for years. He added two volumes to it in the course of three weeks, in 1814, and published it anonymously in the autumn of that year, under the name of "Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since." For twelve successive years the Waverley Novels were showered forth in quick succession. Eighteen novels appeared from 1815 to 1825. It is scarcely necessary at this day to speak of works which are known all over the world, and the merits of which have become a proverb, indicating almost insuperable excellence. Nor would it be easy to speak of them so as not to appear tedious, for their qualities are so varied in character, construction, sentiment, pathos, and humour, that they represent the workings of one of the most fruitful of minds in almost every aspect towards the physical world and human nature.

The year 1825 was the last year of the prosperity of this extraordinary man,—a termination to a long course of success. We have looked principally to his literary life; but his career had many other lights and shadows. In 1811, he purchased a farm on the banks of the Tweed, naming it Abbotsford, whereon having erected a cottage, he began to acquire land round it, till he was proprietor of a considerable estate. This property, or most of it, was bought at extravagant prices, at a time when he was under the passion of his old idea of territorial aggrandisement; and his well-known sagacity in bargain-making was reduced to little better than persuasions to induce people to accept his money for what, in some cases, was not half the value of what he offered. Next came the great baronial residence, built at a fabulous

expense, and then the filling it with antiquarian and historical relics, brought together with persevering industry, and at great sacrifices. The place became a show, and at the same time a kind of hostelry, where the greatest men in Europe were proud to be received, and partake of the princely hospitalities of the Great Unknown. In all this, there was just that amount of folly where passion degenerates into weakness, and God's blessings are transmuted into worldly idols. In 1820, he received the baronetcy for which he sighed, as an aristocratic badge to complete the foundation of the new Border family; and in the following year, he figured impassionately, if not nervously, as the director of the whimsical pageantry in celebration of George the Fourth's visit to Scotland. The money he spent in all these displays was enormous; nor could he ever have been reconciled to such outlay, except from the conviction that his genius was a mine upon which he could draw when he pleased. He forgot that nature has certain boundaries; or rather, being greater than nature, he thought he could overleap them. Even some of the people in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford shook their heads; and Mr John Mercer, an adjacent proprietor, whose property was envied, told Sir Walter that "he wouldna be surprised if he lived to see the craws bigging in the braw lum-heads."

Meanwhile Fate was busy with her ordinary adjustments of eccentric decorations. Before this period, the Messrs Ballantyne were tottering, and they were brought to the ground in 1826 by the failure of Constable's house, with which they were deeply involved. The disclosure of Sir Walter's concealed partnership followed of necessity, and his liabilities were found to amount to nearly £150,000. Now the better man emerged from the dream of grandeur and pride, displaying his old courage and real high-mindedness. He refused to be a party to a composition, or to accept of any discharge, and pledged himself to devote his whole subsequent life to hard labour for the purpose of paying off his debts. This pledge he actually redeemed; but it cost him dear, for the hard toil brought his life to a termination long before nature's time. A great part of the debt was satisfied during his life, and the balance was paid by his executors; but there was little left to maintain the dignity of the new family. One main source in bringing about this result was the Collected Edition of his Works, with the personal notes he furnished to it. He also brought out a new series of writings, which, though clearly indicating decay, and one or two not of a high order, will always be viewed with respect from the very circumstances which produced them. "Woodstock" was published in 1826, realising £8000, at the very height of his difficulties and anxiety. Afterwards came the "Life of Napoleon," which, however, was partly written before the bankruptcy; then, in succession, the "Tales of a Grandfather," the first and second series of the "Chronicles of the Canongate," "Anne of Geierstein," a History of Scotland for Lardner's "Encyclopædia," two dramas, and "Letters on Demonology." In 1831 were first seen the indications of the failure of the active intellect, in "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous."

Sir Walter had, in 1830, been struck by paralysis, which came back more than once. Having been prevailed upon to pause from labour, he departed, in September 1831, for the Continent, of which he had been allowed by his avocations to see but little. In November, he arrived at Malta, where orders were given by the Governor that every attention should be paid to the poet,—an unnecessary injunction, for every one seemed anxious to render him honour. He arrived at Naples on the 17th of December, where by the English residents he was received with marked attentions, and afterwards presented at Court. He next went to Pompeii, where he viewed with much interest the splendid mosaic representation of a combat of the Greeks and Persians; and then, very deliberately, the various antiquities in detail. In the library, to which he next went, he was surrounded by the literati, who showed him all the curiosities of that wonderful collection. He next proceeded to Rome, where he visited St Peter's and other remarkable places, and got offered to him the free use of museums and libraries, of which he could now make small use. Having crossed the Appenines, he arrived at Venice on the 19th; and, having stayed there for a short time, went to Frankfort; whence he embarked in a Rhine boat; but, on going down the river, he had another attack of apoplectic paralysis. On reaching London, he was put to bed, and attended by Sir Henry Hallford, and other physicians, who some time after consented to his removal to Scotland. On arriving at Newhaven, he was slung ashore in his carriage, totally helpless, and with his mind so entirely gone that he had sunk to worse than second childhood; yet on arriving at the scene of all his former glory—Abbotsford—"his dogs having assembled round him, and begun to fawn upon and lick his hands, he alternately sobbed and smiled over them, till sleep oppressed him." For four or five days after his arrival, he was wheeled about the house and garden. On the 16th, he remained in bed; and, though probably no better, he, on the 17th, desired to be placed at his desk. His desire was complied with; the pen was put into his hand, and dropped from utter inability to hold it. He became, shortly after, unconscious; and died, in the midst of his children, on the 21st of September, in the sixty-second year of his age.

Though Scott was a man far easier to be understood than Byron, it has always remained a wonder why one with his breadth of mind, moderation of manner, and eclat of genius, could ever have been precipitated into his wild ambition to be great in mere conventional distinctions of rank. The wonder is, at best, very unnecessary, if applied to an exception from general laws; for we have only to remember that a ruling passion is irrespective not only of the prudence which lies in moderation, but even of those qualities which are the very opposite of the dominant desire. No man could inculcate the virtues of moderation and humility better than Scott, if he did not even *look them* better than any other man; but all this was the mere overlaying of the internal fire; and how that came in that shape to be there, is just one of the mysteries of man's being.

By this passion hung all his imperfections. We are, and ought to be, like every Scotchman, and all true lovers of literature, slow in making deductions from such a character. And, therefore, without any further addition to this brief sketch, we shall only say in conclusion, that, take Sir Walter Scott all in all it will be long before we shall see his like again.



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THE LAY
OF
THE LAST MINSTREL.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

Dum relego, scripseris ludet; quia plurima cern
Me quoque, qui feci, iudica, digna lini.'

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES, EARL OF DALKEITH,
THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1805.

THE Poem now offered to the Public is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament. As the description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author, than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the ancient metrical romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude, in this respect, than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular poem. The same model offered other facilities, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorises the changes of rhythm in the text. The machinery also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a poem, which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance.

For these reasons, the Poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model. The date of the tale itself is about the middle of the sixteenth century, when most of the personages actually flourished. The time occupied by the action is three nights and three days.

INTRODUCTION.

THE way was long, the wind was cold
The Minstrel was infirm and old ;
His withered cheek, and tresses gray,
Seemed to have known a better day ;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy :
The last of all the Bards was he,
Who sung of Border chivalry ;
For, well-a-day ! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead ;
And he, neglected and oppressed,
Wished to be with them, and at rest.
No more, on prancing palfrey borne,
He carolled, light as lark at morn ;
No longer, courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay :
Old times were changed, old manners gone ;
A stranger filled the Stuarts' throne ;
The bigots of the iron time
Had called his harmless art a crime.
A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door ;
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a King had loved to hear.

He passed where Newark's stately tower
Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower :
The Minstrel gazed with wishful eye—
No humbler resting-place was nigh.
With hesitating step, at last,
The embattled portal-arch he passed,
Whose ponderous grate, and massy bar,
Had oft rolled back the tide of war,
But never closed the iron door
Against the desolate and poor.
The Duchess* marked his weary pace,
His timid mien, and reverend face,

* Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, representative of the ancient lords of Buccleuch, and widow of the unfortunate James, Duke of Monmouth, who was beheaded in 1685.

THE
LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

THE feast was over in Branksome tower,
And the Ladye had gone to her secret bower;
Her bower, that was guarded by word and by spell,
Deadly to hear, and deadly to tell—
Jesu Maria, shield us well!
No living wight, save the Ladye alone,
Had dared to cross the threshold stone.

II.

The tables were drawn, it was idlesse all;
Knight, and page, and household squire,
Loitered through the lofty hall,
Or crowded round the ample fire.
The stag-hounds, weary with the chase,
Lay stretched upon the rushy floor,
And urged, in dreams, the forest race,
From Teviot-stone to Eskdale-moor.

III.

Nine-and-twenty knights of fame
Hung their shields in Branksome Hall;
Nine-and-twenty squires of name,
Brought them their steeds ~~from~~ ^{from} bower ~~to~~ stall;
Nine-and-twenty women tall,
Waited, duteous, on them all:
They were ~~all~~ knights of mettle true,
Kinsmen to the bold Buccleuch.

IV.

Ten of them were sheathed in steel,
With belted sword and spur on heel;
They quitted not their harness bright,
Neither by day, nor yet by night:
They lay down to rest
With corslet laced,
Pillowed on buckler cold and hard;
They carved at the meal
With gloves of steel,
And they drank the red wine through the helmet barred.

V.

Ten squires, ten yeomen, mail-clad men.
 Waited the beck of the warders ten :
 Thirty steeds, both fleet and wight,
 Stood saddled in stable day and night,
 Barbed with frontlet of steel, I trow,
 And with Jedwood-axe at saddle-bow :
 A hundred more fed free in stall :—
 Such was the custom of Branksome Hall.

VI.

Why do these steeds stand ready dight ?
 Why watch these warriors, armed, by night ?
 They watch, to hear the blood-hound baying ;
 They watch, to hear the war-horn braying ;
 To see St George's red cross streaming,
 To see the midnight beacon gleaming ;
 They watch, against Southern force and guile,
 Lest Scroop, or Howard, or Percy's powers,
 Threaten Branksome's lordly towers,
 From Warkworth, or Naworth, or merry Carlisle

VII.

Such is the custom of Branksome Hall.
 Many a valiant knight is here ;
 But he, the Chieftain of them all,
 His sword hangs rusting on the wall,
 Beside his broken spear.
 Bards long shall tell,
 How Lord Walter fell !
 When startled burghers fled, afar,
 The furies of the Border war ;
 When the streets of high Dunedin *
 Saw lances gleam, and falchions redden,
 And heard the slogan's † deadly yell—
 Then the Chief of Branksome fell.

VIII.

Can piety the discord heal,
 Or stanch the death-feud's enmity ?
 Can Christian lore, can patriot zeal,
 Can love of blessed charity ?
 No ! vainly to each holy shrine,
 In mutual pilgrimage, they drew ;
 Implored, in vain, the grace divine,
 For chiefs their own red falchions slew.
 While Cessford owns the rule of Carr,
 While Ettricke boasts the line of Scott,
 The slaughtered chiefs, the mortal jar,
 The havoc of the feudal war,
 Shall never, never be forgot !

* Edinburgh.

† The war-cry, or gathering word, of a Border clan.

IX.

In sorrow, o'er Lord Walter's bier
 The warlike foresters had bent,
 And many a flower, and many a tear,
 Old Teviot's maids and matrons lent:
 But o'er her warrior's bloody bier
 The Ladye dropped nor flower nor tear!
 Vengeance, deep-brooding o'er the slain,
 Had locked the source of softer woe,
 And burning pride, and high disdain,
 Forbade the rising tear to flow;
 Until, amid his sorrowing clan,
 Her son lisped from the nurse's knee -
 "And, if I live to be a man,
 My father's death revenged shall be!"
 Then fast the mother's tears did seek
 To dew the infant's kindling cheek.

X.

All loose her negligent attire,
 All loose her golden hair,
 Hung Margaret o'er her slaughtered sire,
 And wept in wild despair.
 But not alone the bitter tear
 Had filial grief supplied;
 For hopeless love, and anxious fear,
 Had lent their mingled tide:
 Nor in her mother's altered eye
 Dared she to look for sympathy.
 Her lover, 'gainst her father's clan,
 With Carr in arms had stood,
 When Mathouse burn to Melrose ran,
 All purple with their blood.
 And well she knew, her mother dread,
 Before Lord Cranstoun she should wed,
 Would see her on her dying bed.

XI.

Of noble race the Ladye came;
 Her father was a clerk of fame,
 Of Bethune's line of Picardie:
 He learned the art, that none may name,
 In Padua, far beyond the sea.
 Men said, he changed his mortal frame
 By feat of magic mystery;
 For when, in studious mood, he paced
 St Andrew's cloistered hall,
 His form no darkening shadow traced
 Upon the sunny wall!

xii.

And of his skill, as bards avow,
 He taught that Ladye fair,
 Till to her bidding she could bow
 The viewless forms of air.



All loose her negligent attire,
All loose her golden hair,
Hung Margaret o'er her slaughtered sire,
And wept in wild despair.

Page

And now she sits in secret bower,
In old Lord David's western tower,
And listens to a heavy sound,
That moans the mossy turrets round.
Is it the roar of Teviot's tide,
That chafes against the scaur's red side?
Is it the wind that swings the oaks?
Is it the echo from the rocks?
What may it be, the heavy sound,
That moans old Branksome's turrets round?

XIII.

At the sullen, moaning sound,
The ban-dogs bay and howl;
And, from the turrets round,
Loud whoops the startled owl,
In the hall, both squire and knight
Swore that a storm was near,
And looked forth to view the night;
But the night was still and clear!

XIV.

From the sound of Teviot's tide,
Chafing with the mountain's side,
From the groan of the wind-swung oak,
From the sullen echo of the rock,
From the voice of the coming storm,
The Ladye knew it well!
It was the Spirit of the Flood that spoke,
And he called on the Spirit of the Fell.

XV.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Sleepest thou, brother?"

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

—"Brother, nay—

On my hills the moon-beams play.
From Craik-cross to Skelfhill-pen,
By every rill, in every glen,
Merry elves their morrice pacing,
To ærial minstrelsy,
Emerald rings on brown heath tracing,
Trip it deft and merrily.
Up, and mark their nimble feet!
Up, and list their music sweet!"

XVI.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Tears of an imprisoned maiden
Mix with my polluted stream;
Margaret of Branksome, sorrow-laden,
Mourns beneath the moon's pale beam.
Tell me, thou, who view'st the stars,
When shall cease these feudal jars?
What shall be the maiden's fate?
Who shall be the maiden's mate?"

XVII.

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

"Arthur's slow wain his course doth roll,
 In utter darkness round the pole;
 The Northern Bear lowers black and grim;
 Orion's studded belt is dim;
 Twinkling faint, and distant far,
 Shimmers through mist each planet star;
 Ill may I read their high decree:
 But no kind influence deign they shower
 On Teviot's tide, and Branksome's tower,
 Till pride be quelled, and love be free."

XVIII.

The unearthly voices ceased,
 And the heavy sound was still;
 It died on the river's breast,
 It died on the side of the hill—
 But round Lord David's tower
 The sound still floated near;
 For it rung in the Ladye's bower,
 And it rung in the Ladye's ear.
 She raised her stately head,
 And her heart throbbed high with pride:—
 "Your mountains shall bend,
 And your streams ascend,
 Ere Margaret be our foeman's bride!"

XIX.

The Ladye sought the lofty hall,
 Where many a bold retainer lay,
 And, with jocund din, among them all,
 Her son pursued his infant play.
 A fancied moss-trooper, the boy
 The truncheon of a spear bestrode,
 And round the hall, right merrily,
 In mimic foray rode.
 Even bearded knights, in arms grown old,
 Share in his frolic gambols bore,
 Albeit their hearts, of rugged mould,
 Were stubborn as the steel they wore.
 For the gray warriors prophesied,
 How the brave boy, in future war,
 Should tame the Unicorn's pride,
 Exalt the Crescents and the Star.

XX.

The Ladye forgot her purpose high,
 One moment, and no more;
 One moment gazed with a mother's eye,
 As she paused at the arched door:
 Then, from amid the armed train,
 She called to her William of Deloraine.

XXI.

A stark moss-trooping Scot was he,
 As e'er couched Border lance by knee:

Through Solway sands, through Tarras moss.
 Blindfold, he knew the paths to cross;
 By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
 Had baffled Percy's best blood-hounds;
 In Eske, or Liddel, fords were none,
 But he would ride them, one by one;
Alike to him was time, or tide,
December's snow, or July's pride;
Alike to him was tide, or time,
Moonless midnight; or ~~mid~~ prime:
Steady of heart, and stout of hand,
As ever drove prey from Cumberland;
 Five times outlawed had he been,
 By England's king and Scotland's queen.

XXII.

"Sir William of Deloraine, good at need,
 Mount thee on the wightest steed;
 Spare not to spur, nor stint to ride,
 Until thou come to fair Tweedside;
 And in Melrose's holy pile
 Seek thou the Monk of St Mary's aisle.
 Greet the father well from me;
 Say, that the fated hour is come,
 And to-night he shall watch with thee,
 To win the treasure of the tomb:
 For ~~this~~ will be St Michael's night,
 And, though stars be dim, the moon is bright;
 And the Cross, of bloody red,
 Will point to the grave of the mighty dead.

XXIII.

"What he gives thee, see thou keep;
 Stay not thou for food or sleep:
 Be it scroll, or be it book,
 Into it, knight, thou must not look;
 If thou readest, thou art lorn!
 Better hadst thou ne'er been born."

XXIV.

"O swiftly can speed my dapple-gray steed,
 Which drinks of the Teviot clear;
 Ere break of day," the warrior 'gan say,
 "Again will I be here:
 And safer by none may thy errand be done,
 Than, noble dame, by me;
 Letter nor line know I never a one,
 Were't my neck-verse at Hairibee."

XXV.

Soon in his saddle sate he fast,
 And soon the steep descent he passed,
 Soon crossed the sounding barbican,^{*}
 And soon the Teviot side he won.
 Eastward the wooded path he rode;
 Green hazels o'er his basnet nod:

* The defence of the outer gate of a feudal castle.

He passed the Peel * of Goldiland,
 And crossed old Borthwick's roaring strand ;
 Dimly he viewed the Moat-hill's mound,
 Where Druid shades still flitted round ;
 In Hawick twinkled many a light ;
 Behind him soon they set in night ;
 And soon he spurred his courser keen
 Beneath the tower of Hazeldean.

XXVI.

The clattering hoofs the watchmen mark ;—
 "Stand, ho ! thou courier of the dark."
 "For Branksome, ho !" the knight rejoined,
 And left the friendly tower behind.
 He turned him now from Teviotside,
 And, guided by the tinkling rill,
 Northward the dark ascent did ride,
 And gained the moor at Horsliehill ;
 Broad on the left before him lay,
 For many a mile, the Roman way.†

XXVII.

A moment now he slack'd his speed,
 A moment breathed his panting steed ;
 Drew saddle-girth and corslet-band,
 And loosened in the sheath his brand.
 On Minto-crag the moon-beams glint
 Where Barnhill hewed his bed of flint ;
 Who flung his outlawed limbs to rest,
 Where falcons hang their giddy nest,
 'Mid cliffs, from whence his eagle eye
 For many a league his prey could spy ;
 Cliffs, doubling, on their echoes borne,
 The terrors of the robber's horn ;
 Cliffs which, for many a later year,
 The warbling Doric reed shall hear,
 When some sad swain shall teach the grove,
 Ambition is no cure for love.

XXVIII.

Unchallenged, thence passed Deloraine
 To ancient Riddell's fair domain,
 Where Aill, from mountains freed,
 Down from the lakes did raving come ;
 Each wave was crested with tawny foam,
 Like the mane of a chestnut steed.
 In vain ! no torrent, deep or broad,
 Might bar the bold moss-trooper's road.

XXIX.

At the first plunge the horse sunk low,
 And the water broke o'er the saddle-bow ;
 Above the foaming tide, I ween,
 Scarce half the charger's neck was seen ;

* A border tower.

† An ancient Roman road crossing through part of Roxburghshire.



A moment now he slack'd his speed,
A moment breathed his panting steed;
Drew saddle-girth and corset-band,
And loosened in the sheath his brand.

For he was barded* from counter to tail,
And the rider was armed complete in mail;
Never heavier man and horse
Stemmed a midnight torrent's force.
The warrior's very plume, I say,
Was daggled by the dashing spray;
Yet, through good heart, and our Ladye's grace,
At length he gained the landing-place.

XXX.

Now Bowden Moor the marchman won,
And sternly shook his plumèd head,
As glanced his eye o'er Halidon;†
For on his soul the slaughter red
Of that unhallowed morn arose,
When first the Scott and Carr were foes;
When royal James beheld the fray,
Prize to the victor of the day;
When Home and Douglas in the van,
Bore down Buccleuch's retiring clan,
Till gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
Reeked on dark Elliot's Border spear.

XXXI.

In bitter mood he spurred fast,
And soon the hated heath was passed;
And far beneath in lustre wan,
Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran:
Like some tall rock, with lichens gray,
Seemed, dimly huge, the dark Abbaye.
When Hawick he passed, had curfew rung,
Now midnight lauds‡ were in Melrose sung.
The sound, upon the fitful gale,
In solemn wise did rise and fall,
Like that wild harp, whose magic tone
Is wakened by the winds alone.
But when Melrose he reached, 'twas silence all:
He meetly stabled his steed in stall,
And sought the convent's lonely wall.

HERE paused the harp; and with its swell
The Master's fire and courage fell:
Dejectedly, and low, he bowed,
And, gazing timid on the crowd,
He seemed to seek, in every eye,
If they approved his minstrelsy;
And, diffident of present praise,
Somewhat he spoke of former days,
And how old age, and wandering long,
Had done his hand and harp some wrong.

The Duchess, and her daughters fair,
And every gentle ladye there,

* Or barbed, applied to a horse accoutred with defensive armour.

† An ancient seat of the Kerrs of Cessford, now demolished.

‡ The midnight service of the Catholic Church.

Each after each, in due degree,
 Gave praises to his melody;
 His hand was true, his voice was clear,
 And much they longed the rest to hear.
 Encouraged thus, the Aged Man,
 After meet rest, again began.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
 Go visit it by the pale moonlight;
 For the gay beams of lightsome day
 Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.
 When the broken arches are black in night,
 And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
 When the cold light's uncertain shower
 Streams on the ruined central tower;
 When buttress and buttress, alternately,
 Seem framed of ebon and ivory;
 When silver edges the imagery,
 And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
 When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
 And the owl to hoot o'er the dead man's grave
 Then go—but go alone the while—
 Then view St David's ruined pile;
 And, home returning, soothly swear,
 Was never scene so sad and fair!

II.

Short halt did Deloraine make there,
 Little recked he of the scene so fair.
 With dagger's hilt, on the wicket strong,
 He struck full loud, and struck full long.
 The porter hurried to the gate—
 "Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late?"—
 "From Branksome I," the warrior cried;
 And straight the wicket opened wide:
 For Branksome's chiefs had in battle stood,
 To fence the rights of fair Melrose;
 And lands and livings, many a rood,
 Had gifted the shrine for their souls' repose

III.

Bold Deloraine his errand said;
 The porter bent his humble head;
 With torch in hand, and feet unshod,
 And noiseless step, the path he trod:
 The archèd cloisters, far and wide,
 Rang to the warrior's clanking stride;
 Till, stooping low his lofty crest,
 He entered the cell of the ancient priest.

And lifted his barred aventayle,*
To hail the Monk of St Mary's aisle.

IV.

"The Ladye of Branksome greets thee by me :
Says, that the fated hour is come,
And that to-night I shall watch with thee, }
To win the treasure of the tomb."—
From sackcloth couch the Monk arose,
With toil his stiffened limbs he reared ;
A hundred years had flung their snows
On his thin locks and floating beard.

V.

And strangely on the Knight looked he,
And his blue eyes gleamed wild and wide ;—
"And, darest thou, warrior ! seek to see
What heaven and hell alike would hide ?
My breast, in belt of iron pent,
With shirt of hair and scourge of thorn ;
For threescore years, in penance spent,
My knees those flinty stones have worn ;
Yet all too little to atone
For knowing what should ne'er be known.
Wouldst thou thy every future year
In ceaseless prayer and penance dree,
Yet wait thy latter end with fear—
Then, daring warrior, follow me."

VI.

"Penance, father, will I none ;
Prayer know I hardly one ;
For mass or prayer can I rarely tarry,
Save to patter an Ave Mary,
When I ride on a Border foray :
Other prayer can I none ;
So speed me my errand, and let me be gone."—

VII.

Again on the Knight looked the Churchman old,
And again he sighed heavily ;
For he had himself been a warrior bold,
And fought in Spain and Italy.
And he thought on the days that were long since by,
When his limbs were strong, and his courage was high :—
Now, slow and faint, he led the way,
Where, cloistered round, the garden lay ;
The pillared arches were over their head,
And beneath their feet were the bones of the dead.

VIII.

Spreading herbs, and flowerets bright,
Glistened with the dew of night ;
Nor herb, nor floweret, glistened there,
But was carved in the cloister-arches as fair

* Visor of the helmet.

The Monk gazed long on the lovely moon,
 Then into the night he looked forth;
 And red and bright the streamers light
 Were dancing in the glowing north.
 So had he seen, in fair Castile,
 The youth in glittering squadrons start;
 Sudden the flying jennet wheel,
 And hurl the unexpected dart.
 He knew, by the streamers that shot so bright,
 That spirits were riding the northern light.

IX.

By a steel-clenched postern door,
 They entered now the chancel tall;
 The darkened roof rose high aloof
 On pillars, lofty, and light, and small;
 The key-stone, that locked each ribbed aisle,
 Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille;
 The corbels * were carved grotesque and grim
 And the pillars, with clustered shafts so trim,
 With base and with capital flourished around,
 Seemed bundles of lances which garlands had bound.

X.

Full many a ~~scutcheon~~ and banner, riven,
 Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven,
 Around the screened altar's pale;
 And there the dying lamps did burn,
 Before thy low and lonely urn,
 O gallant Chief of Otterburne,
 And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale!
 O fading honours of the dead!
 O high ambition, lowly laid!

XI.

The moon on the east ~~oriel~~ shone,
 Through slender shafts of shapely stone,
 By foliated tracery combined;
 Thou wouldst have thought some fairy's hand,
 'Twixt poplars straight the osier wand,
 In many a freakish knot had twined;
 Then framed a spell, when the work was done,
 And changed the willow-wreaths to stone.
 The silver light, so pale and faint,
 Showed many a prophet, and many saint,
 Whose image on the glass was dyed;
 Full in the midst, his Cross of Red
 Triumphant Michael brandished,
 And trampled the Apostate's pride.
 The moon-beam kissed the holy pane,
 And threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

XII.

They sate them down on a marble stone,
 A Scottish monarch slept below;

* The projections from which the arches spring, usually cut in a fantastic

Thus spoke the Monk in solemn tone :—

“I was not always a man of woe ;
For Paynim countries I have trod,
And fought beneath the Cross of God ;
Now, strange to my eyes thine arms appear,
And their iron clang sounds strange to my ear.

XIII.

“In these far climes, it was my lot
To meet the wondrous Michael Scott ;

A wizard of such dreaded fame,
That when, in Salamanca's cave,
Him listed his magic wand to wave,
The bells would ring in Notre Dame !
Some of his skill he taught to me ;
And, Warrior, I could say to thee
The words, that cleft Eildon hills in three,

And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone :
But to speak them were a deadly sin ;
And for having but thought them my heart within,
A treble penance must be done.

XIV.

“When Michael lay on his dying bed,
His conscience was awaken'd ;
He bethought him of his sinful deed,
And he gave me a sign to come with speed :
I was in Spain when the morning rose,
But I stood by his bed ere evening close.
The words may not again be said,
That he spoke to me, on death-bed laid ;
They would rend this Abbaye's massy nave,
And pile it in heaps above his grave.

XV.

“I swore to bury his Mighty Book,
That never mortal might therein look ;
And never to tell where it was hid,
Save at his chief of Branksome's need ;
And when that need was past and o'er,
Again the volume to restore.
I buried him on St Michael's night,
When the bell tolled one and the moon was bright ;
And I dug his chamber among the dead,
When the floor of the chancel was stained red.
That his patron's Cross might over him wave,
And scare the fiends from the Wizard's grave.

XVI.

“It was a night of woe and dread,
When Michael in the tomb I laid !
Strange sounds along the chancel passed,
The banners waved without a blast,”—
Still spoke the Monk, when the bell tolled one !—
I tell you, that a braver man
Than William of Deloraine, good at need,
Against a foe ne'er spurred a steed :

Yet somewhat was he chilled with dread,
And his hair did bristle upon his head.

XVII.

"Lo, Warrior! now, the Cross of Red
Points to the grave of the mighty dead.
Within it burns a wondrous light,
To chase the spirits that love the night:
That lamp shall burn unquenchably,
Until the eternal doom shall be."—
Slow moved the Monk to the broad flag-stone,
Which the bloody Cross was traced upon:
He pointed to a secret nook;
An iron bar the Warrior took;
And the Monk made a sign with his withered hand.
The grave's huge portal to expand.

XVIII.

With beating heart to the task he went;
His sinewy frame o'er the grave-stone bent,
With bar of iron heaved again,
Till the toil-drops fell from his brows, like rain.
It was by dint of passing strength,
That he moved the massy stone at length.
I would you had been there, to see
How the light broke forth so gloriously,
Streamed upward to the chancel roof,
And through the galleries far aloof!
No earthly flame blazed e'er so bright:
It shone like heaven's own blessed light,
And, issuing from the tomb,
Showed the Monk's cowl, and visage pale,
Danced on the dark-brow'd Warrior's mail,
And kissed his waving plume.

XIX.

Before their eyes the Wizard lay,
As if he had not been dead a day.
His hoary beard in silver rolled,
He seemed some seventy winters old;
A palmer's amice wrapped him round,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:
His left hand held his Book of Might;
A silver cross was in his right;
The lamp was placed beside his knee:
High and majestic was his look,
At which the fellest fiends had shook,
And all unruffled was his face:—
They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

XX.

Often had William of Deloraine
Rode through the battle's bloody plain,
And trampled down the warriors slain,
And neither known remorse or awe;
Yet now remorse and awe he owned:

His breath came thick, his head swam round,

When this strange scene of death he saw.

Bewildered and unnerved he stood,

And the priest prayed fervently and loud :

With eyes averted prayed he ;

He might not endure the sight to see,

Of the man he had loved so brotherly.

XXI.

And when the priest his death-prayer had prayed,
Thus unto Deloraine he said :—

“Now, speed thee what thou hast to do,

Or, Warrior, we may dearly rue ;

For those, thou mayst not look upon,

Are gathering fast round the yawning stone !”

Then Deloraine, in terror, took

From the cold hand the Mighty Book,

With iron clasped, and with iron bound :—

He thought, as he took it, the dead man frowned ;

But the glare of the sepulchral light,

Perchance had dazzled the Warrior's sight.

XXII.

When the huge stone sunk o'er the tomb,

The night returned in double gloom ;

For the moon had gone down, and the stars were few

And, as the Knight and Priest withdrew,

With wavering steps and dizzy brain,

They hardly might the postern gain.

'Tis said, as through the aisles they passed,

They heard strange noises on the blast ;

And through the cloister-galleries small,

Which at mid-height thread the chancel wall,

Loud sobs, and laughter louder ran,

And voices unlike the voice of man ;

As if the fiends kept holiday,

Because these spells were brought to day.

I cannot tell how the truth may be ;

I say the tale as 'twas said to me.

XXIII.

“Now, hie thee hence,” the Father said,

“And, when we are on death-bed laid,

O may our dear Ladye, and sweet St John,

Forgive our souls for the deed we have done !”—

The monk returned him to his cell,

And many a prayer and penance sped ;

When the convent met at the noontide bell—

The monk of St Mary's aisle was dead !

Before the cross was the body laid,

With hands clasped fast, as if still he prayed.

XXIV.

The Knight breathed free in the morning wind,

And strove his hardihood to find :

He was glad when he passed the tombstones gray.

Which girdle round the fair Abbaye ;

For the Mystic Book, to his bosom pressed,
 Felt like a load upon his breast;
 And his joints, with nerves of iron twined
 Shook, like the aspen leaves in wind.
 Full fain was he when the dawn of day
 Began to brighten Cheviot gray;
 He joyed to see the cheerful light,
 And he said Ave-Mary, as well as he might.

XXV.

The sun had brightened Cheviot gray,
 The sun had brightened the Carter's side;*
 And soon beneath the rising day
 Smiled Branksome towers and Teviot's tide.
 The wild birds told their warbling tale,
 And wakened every flower that blows;
 And peeped forth the violet pale,
 And spread her breast the mountain-rose.
 And lovelier than the rose so red,
 Yet paler than the violet pale,
 She early left her sleepless bed,
 The fairest maid of Teviotdale.

XXVI.

Why does fair Margaret so early awake,
 And don her kirtle so hastily;
 And the silken knots, which in hurry she would make,
 Why tremble her slender fingers to tie?
 Why does she stop, and look often around,
 As she glides down the secret stair?
 And why does she pat the shaggy blood-hound,
 As he rouses him up from his lair?
 And, though she passes the postern alone,
 Why is not the watchman's bugle blown?

XXVII.

The Ladye steps in doubt and dread,
 Lest her watchful mother hear her tread;
 The Ladye caresses the rough blood-hound,
 Lest his voice should waken the castle round;
 The watchman's bugle is not blown,
 For he was her foster-father's son;
 And she glides through the greenwood at dawn of light,
 To meet Baron Henry, her own true knight.

XXVIII.

The Knight and Ladye fair are met,
 And under the hawthorn boughs are set.
 A fairer pair were never seen
 To meet beneath the hawthorn green.
 He was stately, and young, and tall;
 Dreaded in battle, and loved in hall:
 And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,
 Lent to her cheek a livelier red;
 When the half-sigh her swelling breast
 Against the silken riband pressed;

* A mountain on the border of England, above Jedburgh.

When her blue eyes their secret told,
Though shaded by her locks of gold—
Where would you find the peerless fair,
With Margaret of Branksome might compare!

XXIX.

And now, fair dames, methinks I see
You listen to my minstrelsy;
Your waving locks ye backward throw,
And sidelong bend your necks of snow:—
Ye woen to hear a melting tale,
Of two true lovers in a dale;
And how the Knight, with tender fire,
To paint his faithful passion strove;
Swore he might at her feet expire,
But never, never cease to love;
And how she blushed, and how she sighed,
And, half consenting, half denied,
And said that she would die a maid:—
Yet, might the bloody feud be stayed,
Henry of Cranstoun, and only he,
Margaret of Branksome's choice should be.

XXX.

Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!
My harp has lost the enchanting strain;
Its lightness would my age reprove:
My hairs are gray, my limbs are old,
My heart is dead, my veins are cold:—
I may not, must not, sing of love.

XXXI.

Beneath an oak, mossed o'er by eld,
The Baron's Dwarf his courser held,
And held his crested helm and spear:
That Dwarf was scarcely an earthly man,
If the tales were true that of him ran
Through all the Border, far and near.
'Twas said, when the Baron a-hunting rode
Through Reedsdale's glens, but rarely trod,
He heard a voice cry, "Lost! lost! lost!"
And, like tennis-ball by racket tossed,
A leap, of thirty feet and three,
Made from the gorse this elfin shape,
Distorted like some dwarfish ape,
And lighted at Lord Cranstoun's knee.
Lord Cranstoun was some whit dismayed;
'Tis said that five good miles he rade,
To rid him of his company;
But where he rode one mile, the Dwarf ran four,
And the Dwarf was first at the castle door.

XXXII.

Use lessens marvel, it is said.
This elvish Dwarf with the Baron stayed;
Little he ate, and less he spoko,
Nor mingled with the menial flock;

And oft apart his arms he tossed,
 And often muttered, "Lost! lost! lost!"
 He was waspish, arch, and litherlie,
 But well Lord Cranstoun served he:
 And he of his service was full fain;
 For once he had been ta'en or slain,
 An' it had not been his ministry.
 All between Home and Hermitage,
 Talked of Lord Cranstoun's Goblin Page.

XXXIII.

For the Baron went on pilgrimage,
 And took with him this elvish Page,
 To Mary's chapel of the Lowes:
 For there, beside our Ladye's lake,
 An offering he had sworn to make,
 And he would pay his vows.
 But the Ladye of Branksome gathered a band
 Of the best that would ride at her command;
 The trysting place was Newark Lee.
 Wat of Harden came thither amain,
 And thither came John of Thirlestane,
 And thither came William of Deloraine;
 They were three hundred spears and three.
 Through Douglas-burn, up Yarrow stream,
 Their horses prance, their lances gleam.
 They came to St Mary's lake ere day;
 But the chapel was void, and the Baron away.
 They burned the chapel for very rage,
 And cursed Lord Cranstoun's Goblin Page.

XXXIV.

And now, in Branksome's good green-wood,
 As under the aged oak he stood,
 The Baron's courser pricks his ears,
 As if a distant noise he hears.
 The Dwarf waves his long lean arm on high,
 And signs to the lovers to part and fly;
 No time was then to vow or sigh.
 Fair Margaret, through the hazel grove
 Flew like the startled cushat-dove:
 The Dwarf the stirrup held and rein;
 Vaulted the knight on his steed amain,
 And pondering deep that morning's scene,
 Rode eastward through the hawthorns green.

WHILE thus he poured the lengthened tale,
 The Minstrel's voice began to fall:
 Full sily smiled the observant page,
 And gave the withered hand of age
 A goblet, crowned with mighty wine,
 The blood of Velez' scorched vine.
 He raised the silver cup on high,
 And, while the big drop filled his eye,

* Wood Pigeon.

Prayed God to bless the Duchess long,
And all who cheered a son of song.
The attending maidens smiled to see,
How long, how deep, how zealously,
The precious juice the Minstrel quaffed;
And he, emboldened by the draught,
Looked gaily back to them, and laughed.
The cordial nectar of the bowl
Swelled his old veins, and cheered his soul;
A lighter, livelier prelude ran,
Ere thus his tale again began.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

AND said I that my limbs were old;
And said I that my blood was cold,
And that my kindly fire was fled,
And my poor withered heart was dead,
And that I might not sing of love?—
How could I to the dearest theme,
That ever warmed a minstrel's dream,
So foul, so false, a recreant prove!
How could I name love's very name,
Nor wake my harp to notes of flame!

II.

In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed;
In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;
In halls, in gay attire is seen;
In hamlets, dances on the green.
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above;
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.

III.

So thought Lord Cranstoun, as I ween,
While, pondering deep the tender scene,
He rode through Branksome's hawthorn green.
But the Page shouted wild and shrill—
And scarce his helmet could he don,
When downward from the shady hill
A stately knight came pricking on.
That warrior steed, so dapple-gray,
Was dark with sweat, and splashed with clay;
His armour red with many a stain:
He seemed in such a weary plight,
As if he had ridden the live-long night.
For it was William of Deloraine.

IV.

But no whit weary did he seem,
When, dancing in the sunny beam.

He marked the crane on the Baron's crest;*
 For his ready spear was in his rest.
 Few were the words, and stern and high,
 That marked the foeman's feudal hate;
 For question fierce, and proud reply,
 Gave signal soon of dire debate.
 Their very coursers seemed to know
 That each was other's mortal foe;
 And snorted fire, when wheeled around,
 To give each knight his vantage-ground.

V.

In rapid round the Baron bent;
 He sighed a sigh, and prayed a prayer:
 The prayer was to his patron saint,
 The sigh was to his ladye fair.
 Stout Deloraine nor sighed, nor prayed,
 Nor saint, nor ladye, called to aid;
 But he stooped his head, and couched his spear,
 And spurred his steed to full career.
 The meeting of these champions proud
 Seemed like the bursting thunder-cloud.

VI.

Stern was the dint the Borderer lent!
 The stately Baron backwards bent;
 Bent backwards to his horse's tail,
 And his plumes went scattering on the gale;
 The tough ash spear, so stout and true,
 Into a thousand flinders flew.
 But Cranstoun's lance, of more avail,
 Pierced through, like silk, the Borderer's mail;
 Through shield, and jack, and accout, passed,
 Deep in his bosom broke at last.—
 Still sate the warrior saddle-fast.
 Till, tumbling in the mortal shock,
 Down went the steed, the girthing broke,
 Hurl'd on a heap lay man and horse.
 The Baron onward passed his course;
 Nor knew—so giddy rolled his brain—
 His foe lay stretched upon the plain.

VII.

But when he reined his courser round,
 And saw his foeman on the ground
 Lie senseless as the bloody clay,
 He bade his page to stanch the wound.
 And there beside the warrior stay,
 And tend him in his doubtful state,
 And lead him to Branksome castle-gate:
 His noble mind was inly moved
 For the kinsman of the maid he loved.

* The crest of the Cranstouns, in allusion to their name, is a crane dormant, holding a stone in his foot, with an emphatic Border motto—"Thou shalt want ere I want."

"This shalt thou do without delay;
No longer here myself may stay:
Unless the swifter I speed away,
Short shrift will be at my dying day."—

VIII.

Away in speed Lord Cranstoun rode;
The Goblin Page behind abode:
His lord's command he ne'er withstood,
Though small his pleasure to do good.
As the corslet off he took,
The Dwarf espied the Mighty Book!
Much he marvelled, a knight of pride
Like a book-bosomed priest should ride:
He thought not to search or stanch the wound,
Until the secret he had found.

IX.

The iron band, the iron clasp,
Resisted long the elfin grasp;
For when the first he had undone,
It closed as he the next begun.
Those iron clasps, that iron band,
Would not yield to unchristened hand,
Till he smeared the cover o'er
With the Borderer's curdled gore;
A moment then the volume spread,
And one short spell therein he read.
It had much of glamour might,
Could make a ladye seem a knight;
The cobwebs on a dungeon wall
Seem tapestry in lordly hall;
A nut-shell seem a gilded barge,
A sheeling * seem a palace large,
And youth seem age, and age seem youth—
All was delusion, nought was truth.

X.

He had not read another spell,
When on his cheek a buffet fell,
So fierce, it stretched him on the plain,
Beside the wounded Deloraine.
From the ground he rose dismayed,
And shook his huge and matted head;
One word he muttered, and no more—
"Man of age, thou smitest sore!"
No more the Elfyn Page durst try
Into the wondrous Book to pry;
The clasps, though smeared with Christian gore,
Shut faster than they were before.
He hid it underneath his cloak.—
Now, if you ask who gave the stroke,
I cannot tell, so mot I thrive;
It was not given by man alive.

* A shepherd's hut.

XI.

Unwillingly himself he addressed,
To do his master's high behest :
He lifted up the living corse,
And laid it on the weary horse ;
He led him into Branksome hall,
Before the beards of the wardors all ;
And each did after swear and say,
There only passed a wain of hay.
He took him to Lord David's tower,
Even to the Ladye's secret bower ;
And, but that stronger spells were spread,
And the door might not be openèd,
He had laid him on her very bed.
Whate'er he did of gramarye,*
Was always done maliciously ;
He flung the Warrior on the ground,
And the blood welled freshly from the wound

XII.

As he repassed the outer court,
He spied the fair young child at sport :
He thought to train him to the wood ;
For, at a word, be it understood,
He was always for ill, and never for good ;
Seemed to the boy some comrade gay,
Led him forth to the woods to play ;
On the drawbridge the warders stout
Saw a terrier and lurcher passing out.

XIII.

He led the boy o'er bank and fell,
Until they came to a woodland brook ;
The running stream dissolved the spell,
And his own elvish shape he took.
Could he have had his pleasure vild,
He had crippled the joints of the noble child ;
Or, with his fingers long and lean,
Had strangled him in fiendish spleen :
But his awful mother he had in dread,
And also his power was limited ;
So he but scowled on the startled child,
And darted through the forest wild ;
The woodland brook he bounding crossed,
And laughed, and shouted, " Lost ! lost ! lost ! "—

XIV.

Full sore amazed at the wondrous change,
And frightened, as a child might be,
At the wild yell and visage strange,
And the dark words of gramarye,
The child, amidst the forest bower,
Stood rooted like a lily flower ;

* Magio.

And when at length, with trembling pace,
He sought to find where Branksome lay,
He feared to see that grisly face
Glare from some thicket on his way.
Thus, starting off, he journeyed on,
And deeper in the wood is gone,—
For aye the more he sought his way,
The farther still he went astray,—
Until he heard the mountains round
Ring to the baying of a hound.

XV.

And hark! and hark! the deep-mouthed bark
Comes nigher still, and nigher;
Bursts on the path a dark bloodhound,
His tawny muzzle tracked the ground,
And his red eye shot fire.
Soon as the wildered child saw he,
He flew at him right furiously.
I ween you would have seen with joy
The bearing of the gallant boy,
When, worthy of his noble sire,
His wet cheek glowed 'twixt fear and ire,
He faced the bloodhound manfully,
And held his little bat on high;
So fierce he struck, the dog, afraid,
At cautious distance hoarsely bayed,
But still in act to spring;
When dashed an archer through the glade,
And when he saw the bound was stayed,
He drew his tough bow-string;
But a rough voice cried, "Shoot not, boy!
Ho! shoot not, Edward—'tis a boy!"

XVI.

The speaker issued from the wood,
And checked his fellow's surly mood,
And quelled the ban-dog's ire:
He was an English yeoman good,
And born in Lancashire.
Well could he hit a fallow deer
Five hundred feet him fro';
With hand more true, and eye more clear,
No archer bended bow.
His coal-black hair, shorn round and close,
Set off his sun-burned face;
Old England's sign, St George's cross,
His barret-cap did grace;
His bugle-horn hung by his side,
All in a wolf-skin baldric tied;
And his short falchion, sharp and clear,
Had pierced the throat of many a deer.

XVII.

His kirtle, made of forest green,
Reached scantily to his knee:

And, at his belt, of arrows keen
 A furbished sheaf bore he;
 His buckler scarce in breadth a span,
 No longer fence had he;
 He never counted him a man
 Would strike below the knee;
 His slackened bow was in his hand,
 And the leash, that was his bloodhound's band.

XVIII.

He would not do the fair child harm,
 But held him with his powerful arm,
 That he might neither fight nor flee;
 For when the Red-Cross spied he.
 The boy strove long and violently.
 "Now, by St George," the archer cries,
 "Edward, methinks we have a prize!
 This boy's fair face, and courage free,
 Show he is come of high degree."—

XIX.

"Yes, I am come of high degree.
 For I am the heir of bold Buccleuch;
 And, if thou dost not set me free,
 False Southron, thou shalt dearly rue!
 For Walter of Harden shall come with speed,
 And William of Deloraine, good at need,
 And every Scott from Eske to Tweed;
 And, if thou dost not let me go,
 Despite thy arrows, and thy bow,
 I'll have thee hanged to feed the crow!"—

XX.

"Gramercy, for thy good will, fair boy!
 My mind was never set so high;
 But if thou art chief of such a clan,
 And art the son of such a man,
 And ever comest to thy command,
 Our wardens had need to keep good order:
 My bow of yew to a hazel wand,
 Thou 'lt make them work upon the Border.
 Meantime, be pleased to come with me,
 For good Lord Dacre shalt thou see;
 I think our work is well begun,
 When we have taken thy father's son."—

XXI.

Although the child was led away,
 In Branksome still he seemed to stay,
 For so the Dwarf his part did play;
 And, in the shape of that young boy,
 He wrought the castle much annoy.
 The comrades of the young Buccleuch
 He pinched, and beat, and overthrew;
 Nay, some of them he well nigh slew.
 He tore Dame Maudlin's silken tire;
 And, as Sym Hall stood by the fire.

He lighted the match of his bandelier,*
And woefully scorched the hackbutteer.†
It may be hardly thought, or said,
The mischief that the urchin made.
Till many of the castle guessed
That the young Baron was possessed!

XXII.

Well I ween, the charm he held
The noble Ladye had soon dispelled;
But she was deeply busied then
To tend the wounded Deloraine.
Much she wondered to find him lie,
On the stone threshold stretched along;
She thought some spirit of the sky
Had done the bold moss-trooper wrong,
Because, despite her precept dread,
Perchance he in the Book had read;
But the broken lance in his bosom stood,
And it was earthly steel and wood.

XXIII.

She drew the splinter from the wound,
And with a charm she stanch'd the blood;
She bade the gash be cleansed and bound:
No longer by his couch she stood;
But she has ta'en the broken lance,
And washed it from the clotted gore,
And salv'd the splinter o'er and o'er.
William of Deloraine, in trance,
Whene'er she turned it round and round,
Twisted, as if she galled his wound.
Then to her maidens she did say,
That he should be whole man and sound,
Within the course of a night and day.
Full long she toiled; for she did rue
Mishap to friend so stout and true.

XXIV.

So passed the day—the evening fell,
'Twas near the time of curfew bell;
The air was mild, the wind was calm,
The stream was smooth, the dew was balm:
E'en the rude watchman, on the tower,
Enjoyed and blessed the lovely hour.
Far more fair Margaret loved and blessed
The hour of silence and of rest.
On the high turret sitting lone,
She waked at times the lute's soft tone;
Touched a wild note, and all between
Thought of the bower of hawthorns green.
Her golden hair streamed free from band,
Her fair cheek rested on her hand,
Her blue eyes sought the west afar,
For lovers love the western star.

* Belt for carrying ammunition.

† Musketeer.

XXV.

Is yon the star, o'er Penchryst Pen,
That rises slowly to her ken,
And, spreading broad its wavering light,
Shakes its loose tresses on the night?
Is yon red glare the western star?—
O, 'tis the beacon-blaze of war!
Scarce could she draw her tightened breath.
For well she knew the fire of death!

XXVI.

The Warder viewed it blazing strong,
And blew his war-note loud and long,
Till, at the high and haughty sound,
Rock, wood, and river rung around.
The blast alarmed the festal hall,
And startled forth the warriors all;
Far downward, in the castle-yard,
Full many a torch and cresset glared;
And helms and plumes, confusedly tossed,
Were in the blaze half seen, half lost;
And spears in wild disorder shook,
Like reeds beside a frozen brook.

XXVII.

The Seneschal, whose silver hair
Was reddened by the torches' glare,
Stood, in the midst, with gesture proud,
And issued forth his mandates loud:—
"On Penchryst glows a bale of fire,
And three are kindling on Priestthaughswire;
Ride out, ride out,
The foe to scout!
Mount, mount for Branksome, every man!
Thou, Todrig, warn the Johnstone clan,
That ever are true and stout.—
Ye need not send to Liddesdale;
For, when they see the blazing bale,
Elliot and Armstrongs never fail.—
Ride, Alton, ride, for death and life,
And warn the warden of the strife.
Young Gilbert, let our beacon blaze,
Our kin, and clan, and friends to raise."

XXVIII.

Fair Margaret, from the turret head,
Heard, far below, the coursers' tread,
While loud the harness rung,
As to their seats, with clamour dread,
The ready horsemen sprung;
And trampling hoofs, and iron coats,
And leaders' voices, mingled notes,
And out! and out!
In hasty rout

The horsemen galloped forth ;
 Dispensing to the south to scout,
 And east, and west, and north,
 To view their coming enemies,
 And warn their vassals and allies.

XXIX.

The ready page, with hurried hand,
 Awaked the need-fire's * slumbering brand,
 And ruddy blushed the heaven :
 For a sheet of flame, from the turret high,
 Waved like a blood-flag on the sky,
 All flaring and uneven.
 And soon a score of fires, I ween,
 From height, and hill, and cliff, were seen,
 Each with warlike tidings fraught ;
 Each from each the signal caught ;
 Each after each they glanced to sight,
 As stars arise upon the night.
 They gleamed on many a dusky tarn, †
 Haunted by the lonely earn ; ‡
 On many a cairn's gray pyramid,
 Where urns of mighty chiefs lie hid ;
 Till high Dunedin the blazes saw,
 From Soltra and Dumpender Law ;
 And Lothian heard the Regent's order,
 That all should bowne § them for the Border.

XXX.

The livelong night in Branksome rang
 The ceaseless sound of steel ;
 The castle-bell, with backward clang,
 Sent forth the larum peel ;
 Was frequent heard the heavy jar
 Where massy stone and iron bar
 Were piled on echoing keep and tower,
 To whelm the foe with deadly shower ;
 Was frequent heard the changing guard,
 And watch-word from the sleepless ward ;
 While, wearied by the endless din,
 Bloodhound and ban-dog yelled within.

XXXI.

The noble Dame, amid the broil,
 Shared the gray Seneschal's high toil,
 And spoke of danger with a smile ;
 Cheered the young knights, and counsel sage
 Held with the chiefs of riper age.
 No tidings of the foe were brought,
 Nor of his numbers knew they aught,
 Nor in what time the truce he sought.
 Some said, that there were thousands ten ;
 And others weened that it was nought
 But Leven clans, or Tynedale men,

* Beacon.

† A Scottish eagle.

‡ A mountain lake.

§ Make ready.

Who came to gather in black mail,*
 And Liddesdale, with small avail,
 Might drive them lightly back again.
 So passed the anxious night away,
 And welcome was the peep of day.

CEASED the high sound—the listening throng
 Applaud the Master of the Song;
 And marvel much, in helpless age,
 So hard should be his pilgrimage.
 Had he no friend—no daughter dear,
 His wandering toil to share and cheer;
 No son, to be his father's stay,
 And guide him on the rugged way?—
 "Ay! once he had—but he was dead!"
 Upon the harp he stooped his head,
 And busied himself the strings withal,
 To hide the tear, that fain would fall.
 In solemn measure, soft and slow,
 Arose a father's notes of woe.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

SWEET Teviot! on thy silver tide
 The glaring bale-fires blaze no more;
 No longer steel-clad warriors ride
 Along thy wild and willowed shore;
 Where'er thou wind'st by dale or hill,
 All, all is peaceful, all is still,
 As if thy waves, since Time was born,
 Since first they rolled upon the Tweed,
 Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
 Nor started at the bugle-horn.

II.

Unlike the tide of human time,
 Which, though it change in ceaseless flow,
 Retains each grief, retains each crime,
 Its earliest course was doomed to know.
 And, darker as it downward bears,
 Is stained with past and present tears.
 Low as that tide has ebb'd with me,
 It still reflects to memory's eye
 The hour, my brave, my only boy,
 Fell by the side of great Dundee.
 Why, when the volleying musket played
 Against the bloody Highland blade,
 Why was not I beside him laid!—
 Enough—he died the death of fame;
 Enough—he died with conquering Græme.

* Protection-money exacted by freebooters.

III.

Now over Border dale and fell,
 Full wide and far was terror spread;
 For pathless marsh, and mountain cell,
 The peasant left his lowly shed.
 The frightened flocks and herds were pent
 Beneath the peel's rude battlement;
 And maids and matrons dropped the tear,
 While ready warriors seized the spear.
 From Branksome's towers, the watchman's eye
 Dun wreaths of distant smoke can spy,
 Which, curling in the rising sun,
 Showed southern ravage was begun.

IV.

Now loud the heedful gate-ward cried—
 "Prepare ye all for blows and blood!
 Watt Tinlinn, from the Liddel-side,
 Comes wading through the flood.
 Full off the Tynedale snatchers knock,
 At his lone gate, and prove the lock;
 It was but last St Barnabright
 They sieged him a whole summer night,
 But fled at morning; well they knew,
 In vain he never twanged the yew.
 Right sharp has been the evening shower,
 That drove him from his Liddel tower;
 And, by my faith," the gate-ward said,
 "I think 'twill prove a Warden-Raid!"*

V.

While thus he spoke, the bold yeoman
 Entered the echoing barbican.
 He led a small and shaggy nag,
 That through a bog, from hag to hag,†
 Could bound like any Bilhope stag.
 It bore his wife and children twain;
 A half-clothed serf was all their train:
 His wife, stout, ruddy, and dark-browed,
 Of silver brooch and bracelet proud,
 Laughed to her friends among the crowd.
 He was of stature passing tall,
 But sparely formed, and lean withal:
 A battered morion on his brow;
 A leathern jack, as fence enow,
 On his broad shoulders loosely hung;
 A Border-axe behind was slung;
 His spear, six Scottish ells in length,
 Seemed newly dyed with gore;
 His shafts and bow, of wondrous strength,
 His hardy partner bore.

* An inroad commanded by the Warden in person.

† The broken ground in a bog.

VI.

Thus to the Ladye did Tinlinn show
 The tidings of the English foe :—
 "Belted Will Howard is marching here,
 And hot Lord Dacre, with many a spear.
 And all the German hagbut men,
 Who have long lain at Askerten :
 They crossed the Liddel at curfew hour,
 And burned my little lonely tower ;
 The fiend receive their souls therefor !
 It had not been burned this year and more.
 Barn-yard and dwelling, blazing bright,
 Served to guide me on my flight ;
 But I was chased the live-long night.
 Black John of Akeshaw, and Fergus Græme.
 Fast upon my traces came,
 Until I turned at Priestthaugh-Scrogg,
 And shot their horses in the bog,
 Slew Fergus with my lance outright—
 I had him long at high despite ;
 He drove my cows last Fastern's night."

VII.

Now weary scouts from Liddesdale,
 Fast hurrying in, confirmed the tale ;
 As far as they could judge by ken,
 Three hours would bring to Teviot's strand
 Three thousand armed Englishmen.—
 Meanwhile, full many a warlike band,
 From Teviot, Aill, and Ettricke shade,
 Came in, their Chief's defence to aid.
 There was saddling and mounting in haste,
 There was pricking o'er moor and lee ;
 He that was last at the trysting place,
 Was but lightly held of his gay ladye.

VIII.

From fair St Mary's silver wave ;
 From dreary Gamescleuch's dusky height,
 His ready lances Thirlestane brave
 Arrayed beneath a banner bright.
 The tressured fleur-de-luce he claims
 To wreath his shield, since royal James,
 Encamped by Fala's mossy wave,
 The proud distinction grateful gave,
 For faith 'mid feudal jars ;
 What time, save Thirlestane alone,
 Of Scotland's stubborn barons none
 Would march to southern wars ;
 And hence, in fair remembrance worn,
 Yon sheaf of spears his crest has borne ;
 Hence his high motto shines revealed,—
 "Ready, aye ready," for the field

IX.

An aged knight, to danger steeled,
 With many a moss-trooper came on ;
 And azure in a golden field,
 The stars and crescent graced his shield,
 Without the bend of Murdieston.
 Wide lay his lands round Oakwood tower,
 And wide round haunted Castle-Ower ;
 High over Borthwick's mountain flood,
 His wood-embosomed mansion stood ;
 In the dark glen, so deep below,
 The herds of plundered England low ;
 His bold retainers' daily food,
 And bought with danger, blows, and blood.
 Marauding chief ! his sole delight
 The moonlight raid, the morning fight ;
 Not even the Flower of Yarrow's charms,
 In youth, might tame his rage for arms ;
 And still, in age, he spurned at rest,
 And still his brows the helmet pressed,
 Albeit the bleached locks below
 Were white as Dinlay's spotless snow :
 Five stately warriors drew the sword
 Before their father's band ;
 A braver knight than Harden's lord
 Ne'er belted on a brand.

X.

Scotts of Eskdale, a stalwart band,
 Came trooping down the Todshaw hill ;
 By the sword they won their land,
 And by the sword they hold it still.
 Hearken, Ladye, to the tale,
 How thy sires won fair Eskdale.—
 Earl Morton was lord of that valley fair,
 The Beattisons were his vassals there.
 The Earl was gentle, and mild of mood,
 The vassals were warlike, and fierce, and rude,
 High of heart, and haughty of word,
 Little they recked of a tame liege-lord
 The Earl to fair Eskdale came,
 Homage and seignory to claim :
 Of Gilbert the Galliard, a heriot* he sought,
 Saying, " Give thy best steed, as a vassal ought."—
 " Dear to me is my bonny white steed,
 Oft has he helped me at pinch of need ;
 Lord and Earl though thou be, I trow,
 I can rein Bucksfoot better than thou."—
 Word on word gave fuel to fire,
 Till so highly blazed the Beattison's ire,
 But that the Earl the flight had ta'en,
 The vassals there their lord had slain.

* The feudal superior, in certain cases, was entitled to the best horse of the vassal, in name of Heriot, or Horemot.

Sore he plied both whup and spur,
 As he urged his steed through Eskdale muir;
 And it fell down a weary weight,
 Just on the threshold of Branksome gate.

XI.

The Earl was a wrathful man to see!
 Full fain avengèd would he be.
 In haste to Branksome's Lord he spoke,
 Saying, "Take these traitors to thy yoke;
 For a cast of hawks, and a purse of gold,
 All Eskdale I'll sell thee, to have and hold:
 Beshrew thy heart, of the Beattisons' clan,
 If thou leavest on Eske a landed man!
 But spare Woodkerrick's lands alone,
 For he lent me his horse to escape upon."—
 A glad man then was Branksome bold,
 Down he flung him the purse of gold;
 To Eskdale soon he spurred amain,
 And with him five hundred riders has ta'en.
 He left his merry men in the mist of the hill,
 And bade them hold them close and still;
 And alone he wended to the plain,
 To meet with the Galliard and all his train.
 To Gilbert the Galliard thus he said:—
 "Know thou me for thy liege-lord and head;
 Deal not with me as with Morton tame,
 For Scotts play best at the roughest game.
 Give me in peace my heriot due,
 Thy bonny white steed, or thou shalt rue.
 If my horn I three times wind,
 Eskdale shall long have the sound in mind."—

XII.

Loudly the Beattison laughed in scorn:—
 "Little care we for thy winded horn.
 Ne'er shall it be the Galliard's lot,
 To yield his steed to a haughty Scott.
 Wend thou to Branksome back on foot,
 With rusty spur and miry boot."—
 He blew his bugle so loud and hoarse,
 That the dun deer started at fair Craikcross;
 He blew again so loud and clear,
 'Trough the gray mountain-mist there did lances appear;
 And the third blast rang with such a din,
 That the echoes answered from Pentoun-linn,
 And all his riders came lightly in.
 Then had you seen a gallant shock,
 When saddles were emptied, and lances broke!
 For each scornful word the Galliard had said,
 A Beattison on the field was laid.
 His own good sword the chieftain drew,
 And he bore the Galliard through and through;
 Where the Beattisons' blood mixed with the rill,
 The Galliard's Haugh men call it still.

The Scotts have scattered the Beattison clan,
In Eskdale they left but one landed man.
The valley of Eske, from the mouth to the source,
Was lost and won for that bonny white horse.

XIII.

Whitlade the Hawk, and Headshaw came,
And warriors more than I may name;
From Yarrow-cleuch to Hindhaugh-swar,
From Woodhouselie to Chester-glen,
Trooped man and horse, and bow and spear.
Their gathering word was "Bellenden!"
And better hearts o'er Border sod
To siege or rescue never rode.
The Ladye marked the aids come in,
And high her heart of pride arose:
She bade her youthful son attend,
That he might know his father's friend,
And learn to face his foes.
"The boy is ripe to look on war;
I saw him draw a cross-bow stiff,
And his true arrow struck afar
The raven's nest upon the cliff;
The Red Cross, on a southern breast,
Is broader than the raven's nest;
Thou, Whitlade, shall teach him his weapon to wield,
And o'er him hold his father's shield."

XIV.

Well may you think, the wily Page
Cared not to face the Ladye sage.
He counterfeited childish fear,
And shrieked, and shed full many a tear,
And moaned and plained in manner wild.
The attendants to the Ladye told,
Some fairy, sure, had changed the child,
That wont to be so free and bold.
Then wrathful was the noble dame;
She blushed blood-red for very shame:—
"Hence! ere the clan his faintness view;
Hence with the weakling to Buccleuch!—
Watt Tinlinn, thou shalt be his guide
To Rangleburn's lonely side.—
Sure some fell fiend has cursed our line,
That coward should e'er be son of mine!"

XV.

A heavy task Watt Tinlinn had,
To guide the counterfeited lad.
Soon as his palfrey felt the weight
Of that ill-omened elvish freight,
He bolted, sprung, and reared amain,
Nor heeded bit, nor curb, nor rein.
It cost Watt Tinlinn mickle toil
To drive him but a Scottish mile;

But, as a shallow brook they crossed,
 The elf, amid the running stream,
 His figure changed, like form in dream,
 And fled, and shouted, "Lost! lost! lost!"
 Full fast the urchin ran and laughed,
 But faster still a cloth-yard shaft
 Whistled from startled Tinlinn's yew,
 And pierced his shoulder through and through.
 Although the imp might not be slain,
 And though the wound soon healed again,
 Yet, as he ran, he yelled for pain;
 And Watt of Tinlinn, much aghast,
 Rode back to Branksome fiery fast.

XVI.

Soon on the hill's steep verge he stood,
 That looks o'er Branksome's towers and-wood;
 And martial murmurs, from below,
 Proclaimed the approaching southern foe.
 Through the dark wood, in mingled tone,
 Were Border-pipes and bugles blown;
 The coursers' neighing he could ken,
 And measured tread of marching men;
 While broke at times the solemn hum,
 The Almayn's sullen kettle-drum:
 And banners tall, of crimson sheen,
 Above the copse appear;
 And glistening through the hawthorns green,
 Shine helm, and shield, and spear.

XVII.

Light forayers first, to view the ground,
 Spurred their fleet coursers loosely round;
 Behind, in close array, and fast,
 The Kendal archers, all in green,
 Obedient to the bugle blast,
 Advancing from the wood are seen.
 To back and guard the archer band,
 Lord Dacre's bill-men were at hand;
 A hardy race, on Irthing bred,
 With kirtles white, and crosses red,
 Arrayed beneath the banner tall,
 That streamed o'er Acre's conquered wall;
 And minstrels, as they marched in order,
 Played, "Noble Lord Dacre, he dwells on the Border.

XVIII.

Behind the English bill and bow,
 The mercenaries, firm and slow,
 Moved on to fight, in dark array,
 By Conrad led of Wolfenstein,
 Who brought the band from distant Rhine,
 And sold their blood for foreign pay,
 The camp their home, their law the sword,
 They knew no country, owned no lord:

They were not armed like England's sons,
But bore the levin-darting guns ;
Buff-coats, all frounced and 'broidered o'er,
And morsing-horns * and scarfs they wore ;
Each better knee was bared, to aid
The warriors in the escalade ;
All, as they marched, in rugged tongue,
Songs of Teutonic feuds they sung.

XIX.

But louder still the clamour grew,
And louder still the minstrels blew,
When, from beneath the greenwood tree,
Rode forth Lord Howard's chivalry ;
His men-at-arms, with glaive and spear,
Brought up the battle's glittering rear.
There many a youthful knight, full keen
To gain his spurs, in arms was seen,
With favour in his crest, or glove,
Memorial of his ladye-love.
So rode they forth in fair array,
Till full their lengthened lines display ;
Then called a halt, and made a stand,
And cried, "St George, for merry England!"—

XX.

Now every English eye, intent,
On Branksome's armed towers was bent.
So near they were, that they might know
The straining harsh of each cross-bow ;
On battlement and bartizan
Gleamed axe, and spear, and partizan ;
Falcon and culver,† on each tower,
Stood prompt their deadly hail to shower ;
And flashing armour frequent broke
From eddying whirls of sable smoke,
Where, upon tower and turret head,
The seething pitch and molten lead
Reeked, like a witch's caldron red.
While yet they gaze, the bridges fall,
The wicket opes, and from the wall
Rides forth the hoary Seneschal.

XXI.

Armed he rode, all save the head,
His white beard o'er his breast-plate spread ;
Unbroke by age, erect his seat,
He ruled his eager courser's gait ;
Forced him, with chastened fire, to prance,
And, high curvetting, slow advance :
In sign of truce, his better hand
Displayed a peeled willow wand ;

* Powder-flasks.

† Ancient pieces of artillery.

His squire, attending in the rear,
Bore high a gauntlet on a spear.*
When they espied him riding out,
Lord Howard and Lord Dacre stout
Sped to the front of their array,
To hear what this old knight should say.

XXII.

"Ye English warden lords, of you
Demands the Ladye of Buccleuch,
Why, 'gainst the truce of Border-tide,
In hostile guise ye dare to ride,
With Kendal bow, and Gilsland brand,
And all yon mercenary band,
Upon the bounds of fair Scotland?
My Ladye redes you swith return;
And, if but one poor straw you burn,
Or do our towers so much molest,
As scare one swallow from her nest,—
St Mary! but we'll light a brand,
Shall warm your hearths in Cumberland."—

XXIII.

A wrathful man was Dacre's lord,
But calmer Howard took the word:—
"May't please thy Dame, Sir Seneschal,
To seek the castle's outward wall;
Our pursuivant-at-arms shall show,
Both why we came, and when we go."—
The message sped, the noble Dame
To the wall's outward circle came;
Each chief around leaned on his spear,
To see the pursuivant appear.
All in Lord Howard's livery dressed,
The lion argent decked his breast;
He led a boy of blooming hue—
O sight to meet a mother's view!
It was the heir of great Buccleuch.
Obeisance meet the herald made,
And thus his master's will he said:—

XXIV.

"It irks, high Dame, my noble Lords,
'Gainst ladye fair to draw their swords;
But yet they may not tamely see,
All through the western wardenry,
Your law-contemning kinsmen ride,
And burn and spoil the Border-side;
And ill beseems your rank and birth
To make your towers a flemens-firih.†
We claim from thee William of Deloraine,
That he may suffer march-treason pain:

* A glove upon a lance was the emblem of faith among the ancient Borderers, who were wont, when any one broke his word, to expose this emblem, and proclaim him a faithless villain at the first Border meeting. This ceremony was much dreaded.

† An asylum for outlaws.

It was but last St Outhbert's even
 He pricked to Stapleton on Leven,
 Harried * the lands of Richard Musgrave,
 And slew his brother by dint of glaive.
 Then, since a lone and widowed Dame
 These restless riders may not tame,
 Either receive within thy towers
 Two hundred of my master's powers,
 Or straight they sound their warisson,†
 And storm and spoil thy garrison,
 And this fair boy, to London led,
 Shall good King Edward's page be bred."

XXV.

He ceased—and loud the boy did cry,
 And stretched his little arms on high;
 Implored for aid each well-known face,
 And strove to seek the Dame's embrace.
 A moment changed that Lady's cheer,
 Gushed to her eye the unbidden tear;
 She gazed upon the leaders round,
 And dark and sad each warrior frowned;
 Then, deep within her sobbing breast
 She locked the struggling sigh to rest;
 Unaltered and collected stood,
 And thus replied, in dauntless mood:—

XXVI.

"Say to your Lords of high emprise
 Who war on woman and on boys,
 That either William of Deloraine
 Will cleanse him, by oath, of march-treason stain,
 Or else he will the combat take
 'Gainst Musgrave, for his honour's sake.
 No knight in Cumberland so good,
 But William may count with him kin and blood.
 Knighthood he took of Douglas' sword,
 When English blood swelled Ancram ford;
 And but that Lord Dacre's steed was wight,
 And bare him ably in the flight,
 Himself had seen him dubbed a knight.
 For the young heir of Branksome's line,
 God be his aid, and God be mine!
Through me no friend shall meet his doom;
Here, while I live, no foe finds room.

Then, if thy Lords their purpose urge,
 Take our defiance loud and high;
 Our slogan is their lyke-wake ‡ dirge,
 Our moat the grave where they shall lie."—

XXVII.

Proud she looked round, applause to claim—
 Then lightened Thirlestane's eye of flame;
 His bugle Watt of Harden blew:

* Plundered.

† Note of assault

‡ The watching a corpse previous to interment.

Pensils and pennons wide were flung,
 To heaven the Border slogan rung,
 "St Mary for the young Buccleuch!"—
 The English war-cry answered wide,
 And forward bent each southern spear;
 Each Kendal archer made a stride,
 And drew the bowstring to his ear:
 Each minstrel's war-note loud was blown;
 But, ere a gray-goose shaft had flown,
 A horseman galloped from the rear.

XXVIII.

"Ah! noble Lords!" he, breathless, said,
 "What treason has your march betrayed?
 What make you here, from aid so far,
 Before you walls, around you war?
 Your foemen triumph in the thought,
 That in the toils the lion's caught.
 Already on dark Ruberslaw
 The Douglas holds his weapon-schaw;*
 The lances, waving in his train,
 Clothe the dun heath like autumn grain;
 And on the Liddel's northern strand,
 To bar retreat to Cumberland,
 Lord Maxwell ranks his merry-men good
 Beneath the eagle and the rood;
 And Jedwood, Eske, and Teviotdale
 Have to proud Angus come;
 And all the Merse and Lauderdale
 Have risen with haughty Home.
 An exile from Northumberland,
 In Liddesdale I've wandered long;
 But still my heart was with merry England.
 And cannot brook my country's wrong;
 And hard I've spurred all night, to show
 The mustering of the coming foe."—

XXIX.

"And let them come!" fierce Dacre cried;
 "For soon yon crest, my father's pride,
 That swept the shores of Judah's sea,
 And waved in gales of Galilee,
 From Branksome's highest towers displayed
 Shall mock the rescue's lingering aid!—
 Level each harquebuss on row;
 Draw, merry archers, draw the bow;
 Up, bill-men, to the walls, and cry,
 Dacre for England, win or die!"—

XXX.

"Yet hear," quoth Howard, "calmly hear,
 Nor deem my words the words of fear:
 For who, in field or foray slack,
 Saw the blanche lion e'er fall back?

* The military array of a county.

But thus to risk our Border flower
In strife against a kingdom's power,
Ten thousand Scots 'gainst thousands three,
Certes, were desperate policy.
Nay, take the terms the Ladye made,
Ere conscious of the advancing aid :
Let Musgrave meet fierce Deloraine
In single fight ; and if he gain,
He gains for us ; but if he's crossed,
'Tis but a single warrior lost :
The rest, retreating as they came,
Avoid defeat, and death, and shame."—

XXXI.

Ill could the haughty Dacre brook
His brother-warden's sage rebuke ;
And yet his forward step he stayed,
And slow and sullenly obeyed.
But ne'er again the Border-side
Did these two lords in friendship ride
And this slight discontent, men say,
Cost blood upon another day.

XXXII.

The pursuivant-at-arms again
Before the castle took his stand ;
His trumpet called, with parleying strain.
The leaders of the Scottish band ;
And he defied, in Musgrave's right,
Stout Deloraine to single fight ;
A gauntlet at their feet he laid,
And thus the terms of fight he said :—
"If in the lists good Musgrave's sword
Vanquish the knight of Deloraine,
Your youthful chieftain, Branksome's lord,
Shall hostage for his clan remain :
If Deloraine foil good Musgrave,
The boy his liberty shall have.
Howe'er it falls, the English band,
Unharming Scots, by Scots unharmed,
In peaceful march, like men unarmed,
Shall straight retreat to Cumberland."—

XXXIII.

Unconscious of the near relief,
The proffer pleased each Scottish chief,
Though much the Ladye sage gainsayed ;
For though their hearts were brave and true,
From Jedwood's recent sack they knew,
How tardy was the regent's aid ;
And you may guess the noble Dame
Durst not the secret prescience own,
Sprung from the art she might not name,
By which the coming help was known.
Closed was the compact, and agreed
That lists should be enclosed with speed.

Beneath the castle on a lawn :
 They fixed the morrow for the strife ;
 On foot, with Scottish axe and knife,
 At the fourth hour from peep of dawn ;
 When Deloraine, from sickness freed,
 Or else a champion in his stead,
 Should for himself and chieftain stand,
 Against stout Musgrave, hand to hand.

XXXIV.

I know right well, that, in their lay,
 Full many minstrels sing and say,
 Such combat should be made on horse ;
 On foaming steed, in full career,
 With brand to aid, whenas the spear
 Should shiver in the course :
 But he, the jovial Harper, taught
 Me, yet a youth, how it was fought,
 In guise which now I say ;
 He knew each ordinance and clause
 Of black Lord Archibald's battle laws,
 In the old Douglas' day.
 He brooked not, he, that scoffing tongue
 Should tax his minstrelsy with wrong,
 Or call his song untrue ;
 For this, when they the goblet plied,
 And such rude taunt had chafed his pride,
 The bard of Reull he slew.
 On Teviot's side, in fight, they stood,
 And tuneful hands were stained with blood ;
 Where still the thorn's white branches wave,
 Memorial o'er his rival's grave.

XXXV.

Why should I tell the rigid doom,
 That dragged my master to his tomb ;
 How Ousenam's maidens tore their hair,
 Wept till their eyes were dead and dim,
 And wrung their hands for love of him,
 Who died at Jedwood Air ?
 He died !—his scholars, one by one,
 To the cold silent grave are gone ;
 And I, alas ! survive alone,
 To muse o'er rivalries of yore,
 And grieve that I shall hear no more
 The strains, with envy heard before ;
 For, with my minstrel brethren fled,
 My jealousy of song is dead.

He paused : the listening dames again
 Applaud the hoary Minstrel's strain ;
 With many a word of kindly cheer,—
 In pity half, and half sincere,—
 marvelled the Duchess how so well
 His legendary song could tell—

Of ancient deeds, so long forgot ;
Of feuds, whose memory was not ;
Of forests, now laid waste and bare ;
Of towers, which harbour now the hare ;
Of manners, long since changed and gone ;
Of chiefs, who under their gray stone
So long had slept, that fickle Fame
Had blotted from her rolls their name,
And twined round some new minion's head
The fading wreath for which they bled ;
In sooth, 'twas strange, this old man's verse
Could call them from their marble hearse.

The Harper smiled, well pleased ; for no'er
Was flattery lost on poet's ear :
A simple race ! they waste their toil
For the vain tribute of a smile ;
E'en when in age their flame expires,
Her dulcet breath can fan its fires :
Their drooping fancy wakes at praise.
And strives to trim the short-lived blaze.

Smiled then, well pleased, the Aged Man.
And thus his tale continued ran.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

CALL it not vain :—they do not err,
Who say, that, when the Poet dies,
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies ;
Who say, tall cliff, and cavern lone,
For the departed bard make moan ;
That mountains weep in crystal rill ;
That flowers in tears of balm distil ;
Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks, in deeper groan, reply ;
And rivers teach their rushing wave
To murmur dirges round his grave.

II.

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn
Those things inanimate can mourn ;
But that the stream, the wood, the gale,
Is vocal with the plaintive wail.
Of those, who, else forgotten long,
Lived in the poet's faithful song,
And, with the poet's parting breath,
Whose memory feels a second death.
The maid's pale shade, who walls her lot,
That love, true love, should be forgot.

From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear
 Upon the gentle minstrel's bier:
 The Phantom Knight, his glory fled,
 Mourns o'er the fields he heaped with dead;
 Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
 And shrieks along the battle-plain:
 The chief, whose antique crownlet long
 Still sparkled in the feudal song,
 Now, from the mountain's misty throne,
 Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
 His ashes undistinguished lie,
 His place, his power, his memory die:
 His groans the lonely caverns fill,
 His tears of rage impel the rill;
 All mourn the minstrel's harp unstrung,
 Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

III.

Scarcely the hot assault was stayed,
 The terms of truce were scarcely made,
 When they could spy, from Branksome's towers,
 The advancing march of martial powers:
 Thick clouds of dust afar appeared,
 And trampling steeds were faintly heard;
 Bright spears, above the columns dun,
 Glanced momentary to the sun;
 And feudal banners fair displayed
 The bands that moved to Branksome's aid.

IV.

Vails not to tell each hardy clan,
 From the fair Middle Marches came;
 The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
 Announcing Douglas' dreaded name!
 Vails not to tell what steeds did spurn,
 Where the Seven Spears of Wedderburne
 Their men in battle-order set;
 And Swinton laid the lance in rest,
 That tamed of yore the sparkling crest
 Of Clarence's Plantagenet.
 Nor list I say, what hundreds more,
 From the rich Merse and Lammermore,
 And Tweed's fair borders, to the war.
 Beneath the crest of old Dunbar,
 And Hepburn's mingled banners come,
 Down the steep mountain glittering far,
 And shouting still, "a Home! a Home!"

V.

Now squire and knight, from Branksome sent,
 On many a courteous message went;
 To every chief and lord they paid
 Meet thanks for prompt and powerful aid;
 And told them,—how a truce was made,
 And how a day of fight was ta'en
 "Twixt Mungrove and stout Deloraine:

And how the Ladye prayed them dear,
 That all would stay the fight to see,
 And deign, in love and courtesy,
 To taste of Branksome cheer.
 Nor, while they bade to feast each Scot
 Were England's noble Lords forgot;
 Himself, the hoary Seneschal,
 Rode forth, in seemly terms to call
 Those gallant foes to Branksome Hall.
 Accepted Howard, than whom knight
 Was never dubbed, more bold in fight,
 Nor, when from war and armour free,
 More famed for stately courtesy:
 But angry Dacre rather chose
 In his pavilion to repose.

VI.

Now, noble Dame, perchance you ask,
 How these two hostile armies met?
 Deeming it were no easy task
 To keep the truce which here was set;
 Where martial spirits, all on fire,
 Breathed only blood and mortal ire.
 By mutual inroads, mutual blows,
 By habit, and by nation, foes,
 They met on Teviot's strand:
 They met, and sate them mingled down.
 Without a threat, without a frown,
 As brothers meet in foreign land:
 The hands, the spear that lately grasped,
 Still in the mailed gauntlet clasped,
 Were interchanged in greeting dear;
 Visors were raised, and faces shown,
 And many a friend to friend made known.
 Partook of social cheer.
 Some drove the jolly bowl about;
 With dice and draughts some chased the day:
 And some, with many a merry shout,
 In riot, revelry, and rout,
 Pursued the foot-ball play.

VII.

Yet be it known, had bugles blown,
 Or sign of war been seen,
 Those bands, so fair together ranged,
 Those hands, so frankly interchanged,
 Had dyed with gore the green:
 The merry shout by Teviot-side
 Had sunk in war-cries wild and wide,
 And in the groan of death;
 And whingers,* now in friendship bare,
 The social meal to part and share.
 Had found a bloody sheath.

* A sort of knife, or poniard.

'Twixt truce and war, such sudden change
 Was not unfrequent, nor held strange,
 In the old Border-day;
 But yet on Branksome's towers and town,
 In peaceful merriment, sunk down
 The sun's declining ray.

VIII.

The blithesome signs of wassel gay
 Decayed not with the dying day;
 Soon through the latticed windows tall,
 Of lofty Branksome's lordly hall,
 Divided square by shafts of stone,
 Huge flakes of ruddy lustre shone;
 Nor less the gilded rafters rang
 With merry harp and beakers' clang;
 And frequent, on the darkening plain,
 Loud hollo, whoop, or whistle ran,
 As bands, their stragglers to regain,
 Gave the shrill watch-word of their clan;
 And revellers, o'er their bowls, proclaim
 Douglas or Dacre's conquering name.

IX.

Less frequent heard, and fainter still,
 At length the various clamours died;
 And you might hear, from Branksome-hill,
 No sound but Teviot's rushing tide;
 Save, when the changing sentinel
 The challenge of his watch could tell;
 And save, where, through the dark profound,
 The clanging axe and hammer's sound
 Rung from the nether lawn;
 For many a busy hand toiled there,
 Strong pales to shape, and beams to square,
 The lists dread barriers to prepare,
 Against the morrow's dawn.

X.

Margaret from hall did soon retreat,
 Despite the Dame's reproving eye,
 Nor marked she, as she left her seat,
 Full many a stifled sigh:
 For many a noble warrior strove
 To win the Flower of Teviot's love,
 And many a bold ally,—
 With throbbing head and anxious heart,
 All in her lonely bower apart,
 In broken sleep she lay:
 Betimes, from silken couch she rose;
 While yet the bannered hosts repose,
 She viewed the dawning day:
 Of all the hundreds sunk to rest,
 First woke the loveliest and the best.

XI.

She gazed upon the inner court,
Which in the tower's tall shadow lay;
Where coursers' clang, and stamp, and snort,
Had rung the live-long yesterday;
Now still as death; till, stalking slow,—
The jingling spurs announced his tread,—
A stately warrior passed below;
But when he raised his plumed head—
Blessed Mary! can it be?—
Secure, as if in Ousenam bowers,
He walks through Branksome's hostile towers,
With fearless step and free.
She dare not sign, she dare not speak—
Oh! if one page's slumbers break,
His blood the price must pay!
Not all the pearls Queen Mary wears,
Not Margaret's yet more precious tears,
Shall buy his life a day.

XII.

Yet was his hazard small—for well
You may bethink you of the spell
Of that sly urchin Page;
This to his lord he did impart
And made him seem, by glamour art,
A knight from Hermitage.
Unchallenged, thus, the warder's post,
The court, unchallenged, thus he crossed,
For all the vassalage:
But, O! what magic's quaint disguise
Could blind fair Margaret's azure eyes!
She started from her seat;
While with surprise and fear she strove,
And both could scarcely master love—
Lord Henry's at her feet.

XIII.

Oft have I mused, what purpose bad
That foul malicious urchin had
To bring this meeting round;
For happy love's a heavenly sight,
And by a vile malignant sprite
In such no joy is found:
And oft I've deemed, perchance he thought
Their erring passion might have wrought
Sorrow, and sin, and shame;
And death to Cranstoun's gallant Knight,
And to the gentle Ladye bright,
Disgrace, and loss of fame.
But earthly spirit could not tell
The heart of them that loved so well.
True love's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven.

It is not Fantasy's hot fire,
 Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
 It liveth not in fierce desire,
 With dead desire it doth not die:
 It is the secret sympathy,
 The silver link, the silken tie,
 Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
 In body and in soul can bind.—
 Now leave we Margaret and her Knight,
 To tell you of the approaching fight.

XIV.

Their warning blast the bugles blew,
 The pipe's shrill port * aroused each clan;
 In haste, the deadly strife to view,
 The trooping warriors eager ran:
 Thick round the lists their lances stood,
 Like blasted pines in Ettricke wood;
 To Branksome many a look they threw,
 The combatants' approach to view,
 And bandied many a word of boast,
 About the knight each favoured most.

XV.

Meantime full anxious was the Dame;
 For now arose disputed claim,
 Of who should fight for Deloraine,
 'Twixt Harden and 'twixt Thirlestane:
 They 'gan to reckon kin and rent,
 And frowning brow on brow was bent;
 But yet not long the strife—for, lo!
 Himself, the Knight of Deloraine,
 Strong, as it seemed, and free from pain,
 In armour sheathed from top to toe,
 Appeared, and craved the combat due.
 The Dame her charm successful knew,
 And the fierce chiefs their claims withdrew.

XVI.

When for the lists they sought the plain,
 The stately Ladye's silken rein
 Did noble Howard hold;
 Unarmèd, by her side he walked,
 And much, in courteous phrase, they talked,
 Of feats of arms of old.
 Costly his garb—his Flemish ruff
 Fell o'er his doublet, shaped of buff,
 With satin slashed, and lined;
 Tawny his boot, and gold his spur,
 His cloak was all of Poland fur,
 His hose with silver twined;
 His Bilboa blade, by Marchmen felt,
 Hung in a broad and studded belt;
 Hence, in rude phrase, the Borderers still
 Called noble Howard, Belted Will.

A martial piece of music, adapted to the bagpipes.

XVII.

Behind Lord Howard and the Damo,
Fair Margaret on her palfrey came,
Whose foot-cloth swept the ground;
White was her wimple, and her veil,
And her loose locks a chaplet pale
Of whitest roses bound;
The lordly Angus, by her side,
In courtesy to cheer her tried;
Without his aid, her hand in vain
Had strove to guide her broidered rein.
He deemed, she shuddered at the sight
Of warriors met for mortal fight;
But cause of terror, all unguessed,
Was fluttering in her gentle breast,
When, in their chairs of crimson placed,
The Dame and she the barriers graced.

XVIII.

Prize of the field, the young Buccleuch
An English knight led forth to view;
Scarce rued the boy his present plight,
So much he longed to see the fight.
Within the lists, in knightly pride,
High Home and haughty Dacre ride;
Their leading staffs of steel they wield,
As marshals of the mortal field;
While to each knight their care assigned
Like vantage of the sun and wind.
Then heralds hoarse did loud proclaim,
In king and queen, and warden's name
That none, while lasts the strife,
Should dare, by look, or sign, or word,
Aid to a champion to afford,
On peril of his life;
And not a breath the silence broke,
Till thus the alternate heralds spoke:—

XIX.

English Herald.

Here standeth Richard of Musgrave,
Good knight and true, and freely born,
Amends from Deloraine to crave,
For foul despiteous scathe and scorn.
He sayeth, that William of Deloraine
Is traitor false by Border laws;
This with his sword he will maintain,
So help him God, and his good cause!

XX.

Scottish Herald.

Here standeth William of Deloraine,
Good knight and true, of noble strain,
Who sayeth, that foul treason's stain

Since he bore arms, ne'er soiled his coat;
 And that, so help him God above!
 He will on Musgrave's body prove,
 He lyes most foully in his throat.

Lord Barre.

Forward, brave champions, to the fight!
 Sound trumpets!—

Lord Home.

——“God defend the right!”

Then, Teviot! how thine echoes rang,
 When bugle-sound and trumpet-clang
 Let loose the martial foes,
 And in mid list, with shield poised high,
 And measured step and wary eye,
 The combatants did close.

XXI.

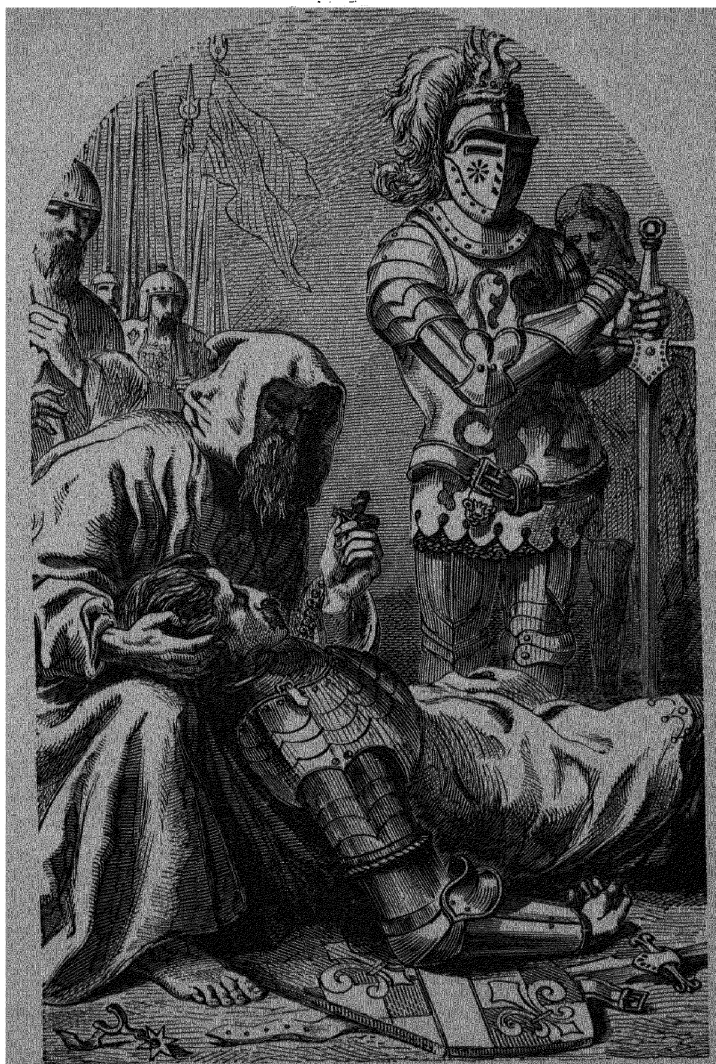
Oh would it suit your gentle ear,
 Ye lovely listeners, to hear
 How to the axe the helms did sound,
 And blood poured down from many a wound;
 For desperate was the strife, and long,
 And either warrior fierce and strong.
 But, were each dame a listening knight,
 I well could tell how warriors fight;
 For I have seen war's lightning flashing,
 Seen the claymore with bayonet clashing,
 Seen through red blood the war-horse dashing.
 And scorned, amid the reeling strife,
 To yield a step for death or life.

XXII.

'Tis done, 'tis done! that fatal blow
 Has stretched him on the bloody plain;
 He strives to rise—Brave Musgrave, no!
 Thence never shalt thou rise again!
 He chokes in blood—some friendly hand
 Undo the visor's barrèd band,
 Unfix the gorget's iron clasp,
 And give him room for life to gasp!
 O, bootless aid!—haste holy Friar,
 Haste, ere the sinner shall expire!
 Of all his guilt let him be shriven,
 And smoothe his path from earth to heaven.

XXIII.

In haste the holy Friar sped:—
 His naked foot was dyed with red,
 As through the lists he ran;
 Unmindful of the shouts on high,
 That hailed the conqueror's victory,
 He raised the dying man;
 Loose waved his silver beard and hair,
 As o'er him he kneelèd down in prayer:



Loose waved his silver beard and hair,
As o'er him he knelt down in prayer,
And still the crucifix on high
He baid before his darkening eye:
And still he baid an anxious ear,
His faltering penitence to hear.

And still the crucifix on high
He holds before his darkening eye;
And still he bends an anxious ear,
His faltering penitence to hear;
Still props him from the bloody sod,
Still, even when soul and body part,
Pours ghostly comfort on his heart,
And bids him trust in God!
Unheard he prays;—the death-pang's o'er!—
Richard of Musgrave breathes no more.

XXIV.

As if exhausted in the fight,
Or musing o'er the piteous sight,
The silent victor stands;
His beaver did he not unclasp,
Marked not the shouts, felt not the grasp
Of gratulating hands.
When lo! strange cries of wild surprise,
Mingled with seeming terror, rise
Among the Scottish bands;
And all, amid the thronged array,
In panic haste gave open way
To a half-naked ghastly man,
Who downward from the castle ran:
He crossed the barriers at a bound,
And wild and haggard looked around,
As dizzy, and in pain;
And all, upon the armed ground,
Knew William of Deloraine!
Each ladye sprung from seat with speed;
Vaulted each marshal from his steed;
“And who art thou,” they cried,
“Who hast this battle fought and won?”
His plumed helm was soon undone—
“Cranstoun of Teviot-side!
For this fair prize I've fought and won,”—
And to the Ladye led her son.

XXV.

Full oft the rescued boy she kissed,
And often pressed him to her breast;
For, under all her dauntless show,
Her heart had throbbed at every blow;
Yet not Lord Cranstoun deigned she greet,
Though low he kneeled at her feet.—
He lists not tell what words were made,
What Douglas, Home, and Howard said—
For Howard was a generous foe—
And how the clan united prayed,
The Ladye would the feud forego,
And deign to bless the nuptial hour
Of Cranstoun's Lord and Teviot's Flower

XXVI.

She looked to river, looked to hill,
 Thought on the Spirit's prophecy,
 Then broke her silence stern and still,—
 "Not you, but Fate, has vanquished me;
 Their influence kindly stars may shower
 On Teviot's tide and Branksome's tower,
 For pride is quelled, and love is free."—
 She took fair Margaret by the hand,
 Who, breathless, trembling, scarce might stand;
 That hand to Cranstoun's lord gave she:—
 "As I am true to thee and thine,
 Do thou be true to me and mine!
 This clasp of love our bond shall be;
 For this is your betrothing day,
 And all these noble lords shall stay,
 To grace it with their company."

XXVII.

All as they left the listed plain,
 Much of the story she did gain;
 How Cranstoun fought with Deloraine,
 And of his Page, and of the Book,
 Which from the wounded knight he took;
 And how he sought her castle high,
 That morn, by help of gramarye;
 How, in Sir William's armour dight,
 Stolen by his Page, while slept the knight,
 He took on him the single fight.
 But half his tale he left unsaid,
 And lingered till he joined the maid.—
 Cared not the Ladye to betray
 Her mystic arts in view of day;
 But well she thought, ere midnight came,
 Of that strange Page the pride to tame,
 From his foul hands the Book to save,
 And send it back to Michael's grave.—
 Needs not to tell each tender word
 "Twixt Margaret and 'twixt Cranstoun's lord;
 Nor how she told of former woes,
 And how her bosom fell and rose,
 While he and Musgrave bandied blows—
 Needs not these lovers' joys to tell;
 One day, fair maids, you'll know them well

XXVIII.

William of Deloraine, some chance
 Had wakened from his death-like trance;
 And taught that, in the listed plain,
 Another, in his arms and shield,
 Against fierce Musgrave axe did wield,
 Under the name of Deloraine.
 Hence, to the field, unarmed, he ran,
 And hence his presence scared the clan.

Who held him for some fleeting wraith,*
And not a man of blood and breath.
Not much this new ally he loved,
Yet, when he saw what hap had proved,
He greeted him right heartilie:
He would not waken old debate,
For he was void of rancorous hate,
Though rude and scant of courtesy;
In raids he spilt but seldom blood,
Unless when men-at-arms withstood,
Or, as was meet, for deadly feud.
He ne'er bore grudge for stalwart blow,
Ta'en in fair fight from gallant foe:
And so 'twas seen of him, e'en now,
When on dead Musgrave he looked down;
Grief darkened on his rugged brow,
Though half disguised with a frown;
And thus, while sorrow bent his head,
His foeman's epitaph he made:

XXIX.

"Now, Richard Musgrave, liest thou here!
I ween, my deadly enemy;
For if I slew thy brother dear,
Thou slewest a sister's son to me;
And when I lay in dungeon dark,
Of Naworth Castle, long months three,
Till ransomed for a thousand mark,
Dark Musgrave, it was long of thee.
And, Musgrave, could our fight be tried,
And thou wert now alive, as I,
No mortal man should us divide,
Till one, or both of us, did die.
Yet rest thee God! for well I know,
I ne'er shall find a nobler foe.
In all the northern counties here,
Whose word is, Snaffle, spur, and spear,
Thou wert the best to follow gear.
'Twas pleasure, as we looked behind,
To see how thou the chase couldst wind,
Cheer the dark bloodhound on his way,
And with the bugle rouse the fray!
I'd give the lands of Deloraine,
Dark Musgrave were alive again."—

XXX.

So mourned he, till Lord Dacre's band
Were bowning back to Cumberland.
They raised brave Musgrave from the field,
And laid him on his bloody shield;
On levelled lances, four and four,
By turns, the noble burden bore:
Before, at times, upon the gale,
Was heard the Minstrel's plaintive wail;

* The spectral apparition of a living person

Behind, four priests, in sable stole,
 Sung requiem for the warrior's soul :
 Around, the horsemen slowly rode ;
 With trailing pikes the spearmen trod ;
 And thus the gallant knight they bore,
 Through Liddesdale, to Leven's shore :
 Thence to Holme Coltrame's lofty nave,
 And laid him in his father's grave.

The harp's wild notes, though hushed the song,
 The mimic march of death prolong ;
 Now seems it far, and now a-near,
 Now meets, and now eludes the ear ;
 Now seems some mountain-side to sweep.
 Now faintly dies in valley deep ;
 Seems now as if the Minstrel's wail,
 Now the sad requiem loads the gale ;
 Last, o'er the warrior's closing grave,
 Rung the full choir in choral stave.

After due pause, they bade him tell,
 Why he, who touched the harp so well,
 Should thus, with ill-rewarded toil,
 Wander a poor and thankless soil,
 When the more generous Southern Land
 Would well requite his skilful hand.

The Aged Harper, howsoe'er
 His only friend, his harp, was dear,
 Liked not to hear it ranked so high
 Above his flowing poesy :
 Less liked he still, that scornful jeer
 Misprized the land he loved so dear ;
 High was the sound, as thus again
 The Bard resumed his minstrel strain.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

BREATHES there the man, with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said,

This is my own, my native land !
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
 As home his footsteps he hath turned,

From wandering on a foreign strand !—
 If such there breathe, go, mark him well ;
 For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
 High though his titles, proud his name,
 Boundless his wealth as wish can claim ;
 Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
 The wretch, concentred all in self.

Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

II.

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still, as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still feel the breeze down Ettricks break,
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot stone,
Though there, forgotten and alone,
The Bard may draw his parting groan.

III.

Not scorned like me! to Branksome Hall
The Minstrels came, at festive call;
Trooping they came, from near and far,
The jovial priests of mirth and war;
Alike for feast and fight prepared,
Battle and banquet both they shared.
Of late, before each martial clan,
They blew their death-note in the van,
But now, for every merry mate,
Rose the portcullis' iron grate;
They sound the pipe, they strike the string,
They dance, they revel, and they sing,
Till the rude turrets shake and ring.

IV.

Me lists not at this tide declare
The splendour of the spousal rite,
How mustèred in the chapel fair
Both maid and matron, squire and knight:
Me lists not tell of owches rare,
Of mantles green, and braided hair,
And kirtles furred with miniver;
What plumage waved the altar round,
How spurs, and ringing chainlets, sound.
And hard it were for Bard to speak
The changeful hue of Margaret's cheek,
That lovely hue which comes and flies,
As awe and shame alternate rise!

V.

Some bards have sung, the Ladye high
 Chapel or altar came not nigh;
 Nor durst the rites of spousal grace,
 So much she feared each holy place.
 False slanders these :—I trust right well,
 She wrought not by forbidden spell;
 For mighty words and signs have power
 O'er sprites in planetary hour:
 Yet scarce I praise their venturous part
 Who tamper with such dangerous art.

But this for faithful truth I say,—

The Ladye by the altar stood,
 Of sable velvet her array,
 And on her head a crimson hood,
 With pearls embroidered and entwined,
 Guarded with gold, with ermine lined;
 A merlin sat upon her wrist,
 Held by a leash of silken twist.

VI.

The spousal rites were ended soon:
 'Twas now the merry hour of noon,
 And in the lofty archèd hall
 Was spread the gorgeous festival.
 Steward and squire, with heedful haste,
 Marshall'd the rank of every guest;
 Pages, with ready blade, were there,
 The mighty meal to carve and share:
 O'er capon, heron-shew, and crane,
 And princely peacock's gilded train,
 And o'er the boar-head, garnished brave,
 And cygnet from St Mary's wave;
 O'er ptarmigan and venison,
 The priest had spoke his benison.
 Then rose the riot and the din,
 Above, beneath, without, within,
 For, from the lofty balcony,
 Rung trumpet, shalm, and psaltery;
 Their clanging bowls old warriors quaffed,
 Loudly they spoke, and loudly laughed;
 Whispered young knights, in tone more mild,
 To ladies fair, and ladies smiled.
 The hooded hawks, high perched on beam,
 The clamour joined with whistling scream,
 And flapped their wings, and shook their beils,
 In concert with the stag-hounds' yells.
 Round go the flasks of ruddy wine,
 From Bourdeaux, Orleans, or the Rhine;
 Their tasks the busy sewers ply,
 And all is mirth and revelry.

VII.

The Gobliu Page, omitting still
 No opportunity of ill,

Strove now, while blood ran hot and high,
To rouse debate and jealousy;
Till Conrad, lord of Wolfenstein,
By nature fierce, and warm with wine,
And now in humour highly crossed,
About some steeds his band had lost,
High words to words succeeding still,
Smote with his gauntlet stout Hunthill;
A hot and hardy Rutherford,
Whom men call Dickon Draw-the-Sword;
He took it on the Page's saye,
Hunthill had driven these steeds away.
'Then Howard, Home, and Douglas rose,
The kindling discord to compose:
Stern Rutherford right little said,
But bit his glove, and shook his head.—
A fortnight thence, in Inglewood,
Stout Conrad, cold, and drenched in blood,
His bosom gored with many a wound,
Was by a woodman's lyme-dog found;
Unknown the manner of his death,
Gone was his brand, both sword and sheath;
But ever from that time, 'twas said,
That Dickon wore a Cologne blade.

VIII.

The Dwarf, who feared his master's eye
Might his foul treachery espie,
Now sought the castle buttery,
Where many a yeoman, bold and free,
Revelled as merrily and well
As those that sat in lordly selle.
Watt Tinlinn, there, did frankly raise
The pledge to Arthur Fire-the-Braes;
And he, as by his breeding bound,
To Howard's merry-men sent it round.
To quit them, on the English side,
Red Roland Forster loudly cried,
"A deep carouse to yon fair bride!"
At every pledge, from vat and pail,
Foamed forth, in floods, the nut-brown ale;
While shout the riders every one,
Such day of mirth ne'er cheered their clan,
Since old Buccleuch the name did gain,
When in the cleuch the buck was ta'en.

IX.

The wily Page, with vengeful thought,
Remembered him of Tinlinn's yew,
And swore, it should be dearly bought,
That ever he the arrow drew.
First, he the yeoman did molest,
With bitter gibe and taunting jest;
Told, how he fled at Solway strife,
And how Hob Armstrong cheered his wife:

XVI.

Sitztraber.

'Twas All-souls' eve, and Surrey's heart beat high;
 He heard the midnight-bell with anxious start,
 Which told the mystic hour, approaching nigh,
 When wise Cornelius promised, by his art,
 To shew to him the ladye of his heart,
 Albeit betwixt them roared the ocean grim;
 Yet so the sage had hight to play his part,
 That he should see her form in life and limb,
 And mark, if still she loved, and still she thought of him.

XVII.

Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye,
 To which the Wizard led the gallant Knight,
 Save that before a mirror, huge and high,
 A hallowed taper shed a glimmering light.
 On mystic implements of magic might;
 On cross, and character, and talisman,
 And almagest, and altar, nothing bright:
 For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,
 As watch-light, by the bed of some departing man.

XVIII.

But soon, within that mirror, huge and high,
 Was seen a self-emitted light to gleam;
 And forms upon its breast the earl gan spy,
 Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream;
 Till, slow arranging, and defined, they seem
 To form a lordly and a lofty room,
 Part lighted by a lamp with silver beam,
 Placed by a couch of Agra's silken loom,
 And part by moonshine pale, and part was hid in gloom.

XIX.

Fair all the pageant—but how passing fair
 The slender form, which lay on couch of Ind!
 O'er her white bosom strayed her hazel hair,
 Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined;
 All in her night-robe loose, she lay reclined,
 And, pensive, read from tablet eburnine
 Some strain, that seemed her inmost soul to find:—
 That favoured strain was Surrey's raptured line,
 That fair and lovely form, the Ladye Geraldine.

XX.

Slow rolled the clouds upon the lovely form,
 And swept the goodly vision all away—
 So royal envy rolled the murky storm
 O'er my beloved Master's glorious day.
 Thou jealous, ruthless tyrant! Heaven repay
 On thee, and on thy children's latest line,
 The wild caprice of thy despotic sway,
 The gory bridal bed, the plundered shrine,
 The murdered Surrey's blood, the tears of Geraldine!

XXI.

Both Scots, and Southern chiefs, prolong
Applauses of Fitztraver's song:
These hated Henry's name as death,
And those still held the ancient faith.—
Then, from his seat, with lofty air,
Rose Harold, bard of brave St Clair;
St Clair, who, feasting high at Home,
Had with that lord to battle come.
Harold was born where restless seas
Howl round the storm-swept Orcades;
Where erst St Clairs held princely sway
O'er isle and islet, strait and bay;—
Still nods their palace to its fall,
Thy pride and sorrow, fair Kirkwall!—
Thence oft he marked fierce Pentland rave,
As if grim Odin rode her wave;
And watched, the whilst, with visage pale,
And throbbing heart, the struggling sail;
For all of wonderful and wild
Had rapture for the lonely child.

XXII.

And much of wild and wonderful,
In these rude isles might Fancy cull;
For thither came, in times afar,
Stern Lochlin's sons of roving war,
The Norsemen, trained to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food;
Kings of the main their leaders brave,
Their barks the dragons of the wave.
And there, in many a stormy vale,
The Scald had told his wondrous tale;
And many a Runic column high
Had witnessed grim idolatry.
And thus had Harold, in his youth,
Learned many a Saga's rhyme uncouth,—
Of that Sea-Snake, tremendous curled,
Whose monstrous circle girds the world;
Of those dread Maids, whose hideous yell
Maddens the battle's bloody swell;
Of chiefs, who, guided through the gloom
By the pale death-lights of the tomb,
Ransacked the graves of warriors old,
Their falchions wrenched from corpses' hold,
Waked the deaf tomb with war's alarms,
And bade the dead arise to arms!
With war and wonder all on flame,
To Roslin's bowers young Harold came,
Where, by sweet glen and greenwood tree,
He learned a milder minstrelsy;
Yet something of the Northern spell
Mixed with the softer numbers well.

XXIII.

Harold.

O listen, listen, ladies gay!
No haughty feat of arms I tell:
Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.

—"Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
And, gentle ladye, deign to stay!
Rest thee in castle Ravensheuch,
Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.

"The blackening wave is edged with white;
To inch and rock the sea-mews fly;
The fishers have heard the Water Sprite,
Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

"Last night the gifted Seer did view
A wet shroud swathed round ladye gay;
Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch;
Why cross the gloomy firth to-day?"—

"'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
To-night at Roslin leads the ball,
But that my ladye-mother there
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

"'Tis not because the ring they ride,
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,
But that my sire the wine will chide,
If 'tis not filled by Rosabelle."—

O'er Roslin all that dreary night
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam;
'Twas broader than the watch-fire light,
And redder than the bright moon-beam.

It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
'Twas seen from Dreyden's groves of oak,
And seen from caverned Hawthornden.

Seemed all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffined lie;
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seemed all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmered all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair--
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high St Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
 Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
 Each one the holy vault doth hold—
 But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle!

And each St Clair was buried there,
 With candle, with book, and with knell;
 But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung
 The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.

XIV. - 2

XXIV.

So sweet was Harold's piteous lay,
 Scarce marked the guests the darkened hall,
 Though, long before the sinking day,
 A wondrous shade involved them all:
 It was not eddying mist or fog,
 Drained by the sun from fen or bog;
 Of no eclipse had sages told;
 And yet, as it came on apace,
 Each one could scarce his neighbour's face,
 Could scarce his own stretched hand behold.
 A secret horror checked the feast,
 And chilled the soul of every guest;
 Even the high Dame stood half-aghast,
 She knew some evil on the blast;
 The elvish Page fell to the ground,
 And, shuddering, muttered, "Found! found! found!"

XXV.

Then, sudden, through the darkened air
 A flash of lightning came;
 So broad, so bright, so red the glare,
 The castle seemed on flame;
 Glanced every rafter of the hall,
 Glanced every shield upon the wall;
 Each trophied beam, each sculptured stone,
 Were instant seen, and instant gone;
 Full through the guests' bedazzled band
 Resistless flashed the levin brand,
 And filled the hall with smouldering smoke;
 As on the elvish Page it broke.
 It broke, with thunder long and loud,
 Dismayed the brave, appalled the proud,—
 From sea to sea the larum rung;
 On Berwick wall, and at Carlisle withal,
 To arms the startled warders sprung.
 When ended was the dreadful roar,
 The elvish Dwarf was seen no more!

XXVI.

Some heard a voice in Branksome Hall,
 Some saw a sight, not seen by all;
 That dreadful voice was heard by some,
 Cry, with loud summons, "GYLEN, COME!"

And on the spot where burst the brand,
 Just where the Page had flung him down,
 Some saw an arm, and some a hand,
 And some the waving of a gown.
 The guests in silence prayed and shook,
 And terror dimmed each lofty look :
 But none of all the astonished train
 Was so dismayed as Deloraine ;
 His blood did freeze, his brain did burn,
 'Twas feared his mind would ne'er return ;
 For he was speechless, ghastly, wan,
 Like him, of whom the story ran,
 Who spoke the spectre-hound in Mar.
 At length, by fits, he darkly told,
 With broken hint, and shuddering cold —
 That he had seen, right certainly,
A shape with amice wrapped around,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea ;
 And knew—but how it mattered not—
 It was the wizard, Michael Scott.

XXVII.

The anxious crowd, with horror pale,
 All trembling, heard the wondrous tale :
 No sound was made, no word was spoke.
 Till noble Angus silence broke ;
 And he a solemn sacred plight
 Did to St Bride of Douglas make,
 That he a pilgrimage would take
 To Melrose Abbey, for the sake
 Of Michael's restless sprite.
 'Then each, to ease his troubled breast.
 To some blessed saint his prayers addressed—
 Some to St Modan made their vows,
 Some to St Mary of the Lowes,
 Some to the Holy Rood of Lisle,
 Some to Our Lady of the Isle ;
 Each did his patron witness make,
 That he such pilgrimage would take,
 And Monks should sing, and bells should toll,
 All for the weal of Michael's soul.
 While vows were ta'en, and prayers were prayed,
 'Tis said the noble Dame, dismayed,
 Renounced, for aye, dark magic's aid.

XXVIII.

Nought of the bridal will I tell,
 Which after in short space befell ;
 Nor how brave sons and daughters fair
 Blessed Teviot's Flower and Cranstoun's heir
 After such dreadful scene, 'twere vain
 To wake the note of mirth again ;

More meet it were to mark the day
Of penitence and prayer divine,
When pilgrim-chiefs, in sad array,
Sought Melrose' holy shrine.

XXIX.

With naked foot, and sackcloth vest,
And arms enfolded on his breast,
Did every pilgrim go;
The standers-by might hear uneath,
Footstep, or voice, or high-drawn breath,
Through all the lengthened row:
No lordly look, no martial stride,
Gone was their glory, sunk their pride,
Forgotten their renown;
Silent and slow, like ghosts, they glide
To the high altar's hallowed side,
And there they kneeled them down;
Above the suppliant chieftains wave
The banners of departed brave;
Beneath the lettered stones were laid
The ashes of their fathers dead;
From many a garnished niche around,
Stern saints, and tortured martyrs, frowned.

XXX.

And slow up the dim aisle afar,
With sable cowl and scapular,
And snow-white stoles, in order due,
The holy Fathers, two and two,
In long procession came;
Taper, and host, and book they bare,
And holy banner, flourished fair
With the Redeemer's name.
Above the prostrate pilgrim band
The mitred Abbot stretched his hand,
And blessed them as they kneeled;
With holy cross he signed them all,
And prayed they might be sage in hall,
And fortunate in field.
Then mass was sung, and prayers were said,
And solemn requiem for the dead;
And bells tolled out their mighty peal,
For the departed spirit's weal;
And ever in the office close
The hymn of intercession rose;
And far the echoing aisles prolong
The awful burthen of the song,—

DIES IRÆ, DIES ILLA,
SOLVET SÆCULUM IN FAVILLA,

While the pealing organ rung;
Were it meet with sacred strain
To close my lay, so light and vain,
Thus the holy Fathers sung:—

XXXI.

Hymn for the Dead.

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay!
How shall he meet that dreadful day,
When, shrivelling like a parchèd scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll;
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead!

O! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

TRUSTED is the harp—the Minstrel gone.
And did he wander forth alone?
Alone, in indigence and age,
To linger out his pilgrimage?
No—close beneath proud Newark's tower,
Arose the Minstrel's lowly bower;
A simple hut; but there was seen
The little garden edged with green,
The cheerful hearth, and lattice clean.
There sheltered wanderers, by the blaze,
Oft heard the tale of other days;
For much he loved to ope his door,
And give the aid he begged before.
So passed the winter's day; but still,
When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,
And July's eve, with balmy breath,
Waved the blue-bells on Newark heath;
When throstles sung in Hare-head shaw.
And corn was green on Carterhaugh,
And flourished, broad, Blackandro's oak,
The aged Harper's soul awoke!
Then would he sing achievements high,
And circumstance of chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay,
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths, the strain to hear,
Forsook the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow, as he rolled along,
Bore burden to the Minstrel's song

MARMION;
A TALE OF FLODDEN FIELD.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

Alas! that Scottish Maid should sing
The combat where her lover fell!
That Scottish Bard should wake the string,
The triumph of our foes to tell!—*LEYDEN.*

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY, LORD MONTAGU,
&c., &c., &c.,

THIS ROMANCE IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1808.

It is hardly to be expected, that an Author, whom the Public has honoured with some degree of applause, should not be again a trespasser on their kindness. Yet the Author of *MARMION* must be supposed to feel some anxiety concerning its success, since he is sensible that he hazards, by this second intrusion, any reputation which his first Poem may have procured him. The present Story turns upon the private adventures of a fictitious character; but is called a Tale of Flodden Field, because the hero's fate is connected with that memorable defeat, and the causes which led to it. The design of the Author was, if possible, to apprise his Readers, at the outset, of the date of his Story, and to prepare them for the manners of the Age in which it is laid. Any Historical narrative, far more an attempt at Epic composition, exceeded his plan of a Romantic Tale; yet he may be permitted to hope, from the popularity of *THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL*, that an attempt to paint the manners of the feudal times, upon a broader scale, and in the course of a more interesting story, will not be unacceptable to the Public.

The Poem opens about the commencement of August, and concludes with the defeat of Flodden. 9th September 1519

MARMION

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FIRST.

TO WILLIAM STEWART ROSE, ESQ.

Ashiestiel, Etnrick Forest.

NOVEMBER's sky is chill and drear,
November's leaf is red and sear :
Late, gazing down the steepy hinn,
That hems our little garden in,
Low in its dark and narrow glen,
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled green-wood grew,
So feeble trilled the streamlet through :
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen
Through bush and brier, no longer green,
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade,
And, foaming brown with doubled speed,
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

No longer Autumn's glowing red
Upon our Forest hills is shed ;
No more, beneath the evening beam,
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam ;
Away hath passed the heather-bell,
That bloomed so rich on Needpath-fell ;
Sallow his brow, and russet bare
Are now the sister-heights of Yair.
The sheep, before the pinching heaven,
To sheltered dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
And yet a watery sunbeam shines :
In meek despondency they eye
The withered sward and wintry sky,
And far beneath their summer hill,
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill :
The shopherd shifts his mantle's fold,
And wraps him closer from the cold ;
His dogs no merry circles wheel,
But, shivering, follow at his heel ;
A cowering glance they often cast,
As doeper moans the gathering blast.

My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,
 As best befits the mountain child,
 Feel the sad influence of the hour,
 And wail the daisy's vanished flower;
 Their summer gambols tell, and mourn,
 And anxious ask,—Will spring return,
 And birds and lambs again be gay,
 And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?

Yes, prattlers, yes. The daisy's flower
 Again shall paint your summer bower;
 Again the hawthorn shall supply
 The garlands you delight to tie;
 The lambs upon the lea shall bound,
 The wild birds carol to the round,
 And while you frolic light as they,
 Too short shall seem the summer day.

To mute and to material things
 New life revolving summer brings;
 The genial call dead Nature hears,
 And in her glory reappears.
 But oh! my country's wintry state
 What second spring shall renovate?
 What powerful call shall bid arise
 The buried warlike, and the wise?
 The mind, that thought for Britain's weal
 The hand, that grasped the victor's steel?
 The vernal sun new life bestows
 Even on the meanest flower that blows;
 But vainly, vainly, may he shine,
 Where glory weeps o'er NELSON's shrine:
 And vainly pierce the solemn gloom,
 That shrouds, O PITT, thy hallowed tomb!

Deep graved in every British heart,
 O never let those names depart!
 Say to your sons,—Lo, here his grave,
 Who victor * died on Gadite wave;
 To him, as to the burning levin,
 Short, bright, resistless course was given;
 Where'er his country's foes were found,
 Was heard the fated thunder's sound,
 Till burst the bolt on yonder shore,
 Rolled, blazed, destroyed,—and was no more.

Nor mourn ye less his perished worth,
 Who bade the conqueror go forth,
 And launched that thunderbolt of war
 On Egypt, Hafnia,† Trafalgar;
 Who, born to guide such high emprise
 For Britain's weal was early wise;
 Alas! to whom the Almighty gave,
 For Britain's sins, an early grave;

* Nelson.

† Copenhagen.

His worth, who, in his mightiest hour,
A bauble held the pride of power,
Spurned at the sordid lust of self;
And served his Albion for herself;
Who, when the frantic crowd amain
Strained at subjection's bursting rein,
O'er their wild mood full conquest gained,
The pride, he would not crush, restrained,
Showed their fierce zeal a worthier cause,
And brought the freeman's arm to aid the free-
man's laws.

Hadst thou but lived, though stripped of power
A watchman on the lonely tower,
Thy thrilling trump had roused the land,
When fraud or danger were at hand;
By thee, as by the beacon-light,
Our pilots had kept course aright;
As some proud column, though alone,
Thy strength had propped the tottering throne.
Now is the stately column broke,
Tho beacon-light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
The warder silent on the hill!

Oh, think, how to his latest day,
When Death, just hovering, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unaltered mood,
Firm at his dangerous post he stood;
Each call for needful rest repelled,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till, in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way!
Then, while on Britain's thousand plains,
One unpolluted church remains,
Whose peaceful bells ne'er sent around
The bloody tocsin's maddening sound,
But still, upon the hallowed day,
Convoke the swains to praise and pray;
While faith and civil peace are dear,
Grace this cold marble with a tear,—
He, who preserved them, PITT, lies here!

Nor yet suppress the generous sigh,
Because his Rival slumbers nigh;
Nor be thy *requiescat* dumb,
Lest it be said o'er Fox's tomb.
For talents mourn, untimely lost,
When best employed, and wanted most;
Mourn genius high, and lore profound,
And wit that loved to play, not wound.
And all the reasoning powers divine,
To penetrate, resolve, combine;
And feelings keen, and fancy's glow.—

They sleep with him who sleeps below ;
 And, if thou mourn'st they could not save
 From error him who owns this grave,
 Be every harsher thought suppressed,
 And sacred be the last long rest!

Here, where the end of earthly things
 Lays heroes, patriots, bards, and kings;
 Where stiff the hand, and still the tongue,
 Of those who fought, and spoke, and sung;
Here, where the fretted aisles prolong
 The distant notes of holy song,
 As if some angel spoke agen,
 All peace on earth, good-will to men;
 If ever from an English heart,
 O *here* let prejudice depart,
 And, partial feeling cast aside,
 Record that Fox a Briton died!
 When Europe crouched to France's yoke,
 And Austria bent, and Prussia broke,
 And the firm Russian's purpose brave
 Was bartered by a timorous slave,
 Even then dishonour's peace he spurned,
 The sullied olive-branch returned,
 Stood for his country's glory fast,
 And nailed her colours to the mast.
 Heaven, to reward his firmness, gave
 A portion in this honoured grave;
 And ne'er held marble in its trust
 Of two such wondrous men the dust.

With more than mortal powers endowed,
 How high they soared above the crowd!
 Theirs was no common party race,
 Jostling by dark intrigue for place;
 Like fabled Gods, their mighty war
 Shook realms and nations in its jar;
 Beneath each banner proud to stand,
 Looked up the noblest of the land,
 Till through the British world were known
 The names of PITT and FOX alone.
 Spells of such force no wizard grave
 E'er framed in dark Thessalian cave,
 Though his could drain the ocean dry,
 And force the planets from the sky.
 These spells are spent, and, spent with these,
 The wine of life is on the lees.
 Genius, and taste, and talent gone,
 For ever tombed beneath the stone,
 Where,—taming thought to human pride!--
 The mighty chiefs sleep side by side.
 Drop upon FOX's grave the tear,
 'Twill trickle to his rival's bier;
 O'er PITT's the mournful requiem sound,
 And FOX's shall the notes rebound.

The solemn echo seems to cry,—
"Here let their discord with them die;
Speak not for those a separate doom,
Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb,
But search the land of living men,
Where wilt thou find their like agen?"

Rest, ardent Spirits! till the cries
Of dying Nature bid you rise;
Not even your Britain's groans can pierce
The leaden silence of your hearse:
Then, O how impotent and vain
This grateful tributary strain!
Though not unmarked from northern clime,
Ye heard the Border Minstrel's rhyme:
His Gothic harp has o'er you rung;
The bard you deigned to praise, your deathless
names has sung.

Stay yet, illusion, stay awhile,
My wildered fancy still beguile!
From this high theme how can I part,
Ere half unloaded is my heart!
For all the tears e'er sorrow drew,
And all the raptures fancy knew,
And all the keener rush of blood,
That throbs through bard in bard-like mood,
Were here a tribute mean and low,
Though all their mingled streams could flow—
Woe, wonder, and sensation high,
In one spring-tide of ecstasy.—
It will not be—it may not last—
The vision of enchantment's past:
Like frost-work in the morning ray,
The fancied fabric melts away;
Each Gothic arch, memorial stone,
And long, dim, lofty aisle are gone,
And, lingering last, deception dear,
The choir's high sounds die on my ear.
Now slow return the lonely down,
The silent pastures bleak and brown,
The farm begirt with copse-wood wild,
The gambols of each frolic child,
Mixing their shrill cries with the tone
Of Tweed's dark waters rushing on.

Prompt on unequal tasks to run,
Thus Nature disciplines her son:
Meeter, she says, for me to stray,
And waste the solitary day,
In plucking from yon fen the reed,
And watching it float down the Tweed;
Or idly list the shrilling lay
With which the milk-maid cheers her way.

Marking its cadence rise and fall,
As from the field, beneath her pail,
She trips it down the uneven dale;
Meeter for me, by yonder cairn,
The ancient shepherd's tale to learn,
Though oft he stop in rustic fear,
Lest his old legends tire the ear
Of one, who, in his simple mind,
May boast of book-learned taste refined.

But thou, my friend, canst fitly tell,
(For few have read romance so well)
How still the legendary lay
O'er poet's bosom holds its sway;
How on the ancient minstrel strain
Time lays his palsied hand in vain;
And how our hearts at doughty deeds,
By warriors wrought in steely weeds,
Still throb for fear and pity's sake:
As when the Champion of the Lake
Enters Morgana's fated house,
Or in the Chapel Perilous,
Despising spells and demons' force,
Holds converse with the unburied corse;
Or when, Dame Ganore's grace to move
(Alas! that lawless was their love)
He sought proud Tarquin in his den,
And freed full sixty knights; or when,
A sinful man, and unconfessed,
He took the Sangreal's holy quest,
And, slumbering, saw the vision high,
He might not view with waking eye.

The mightiest chiefs of British song
Scorned not such legends to prolong:
They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme;
And Dryden, in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald king and court
Bade him toil on, to make them sport;
Demanded for their niggard pay,
But for their souls, a looser lay,
Licentious satire, song, and play;
The world defrauded of the high design,
Profaned the God-given strength, and marred
the lofty line.

Warned by such names, well may we then,
Though dwindled sons of little men,
Essay to break a feeble lance
In the fair fields of old romance;
Or seek the moated castle's cell,
Where long through talisman and spell-

While tyrants ruled, and damsels wept.
 Thy Genius, Chivalry, hath slept:
 There sound the harpings of the North,
 Till he awake and sally forth,
 On venturous quost to prick again,
 In all his arms, with all his train,
 Shield, lance, and brand, and plume, and surf,
 Fay, giant, dragon, squire, and dwarf,
 And wizard with his wand of might,
 And errant maid on palfrey white.
 Around the Genius weave their spells,
 Pure Love, who scarce his passion tells;
 Mystery, half veiled and half revealed;
 And Honour with his spotless shield;
 Attention, with fixed eye; and Fear,
 That loves the tale she shrinks to hear;
 And gentle Courtesy; and Faith,
 Unchanged by sufferings, time, or death;
 And Valour, lion-mettled lord,
 Leaning upon his own good sword.

Well has thy fair achievement shown,
 A worthy meed may thus be won;
 Ytene's * oaks—beneath whose shade
 Their theme the merry minstrels made,
 Of Ascapart, and Bevis bold,
 And that Red King,† who, while of old
 Through Boldrewood the chase he led,
 By his loved huntsman's arrow bled—
 Ytene's oaks have heard again
 Renewed such legendary strain;
 For thou hast sung, how He of Gaul,
 That Amadis so famed in hall,
 For Oriana, foiled in fight
 The Necromancer's felon might;
 And well in modern verse hast wove
 Partenopex's mystic love;
 Hear then, attentive to my lay,
 A knightly tale of Albion's elder day.

CANTO FIRST.

THE CASTLE.

I.

DAY set on Norham's castled steep,
 And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
 And Cheviot's mountains lone:
 The battled towers, the Donjon Keep,
 The loop-hole grates where captives weep,
 The flanking walls that round it sweep,
 In yellow lustre shone.

* The New Forest in Hampshire, anciently so called.

† William Rufus.

The warriors on the turrets high,
Moving athwart the evening sky,
Seemed forms of giant height:
Their armour, as it caught the rays,
Flashed back again the western blaze,
In lines of dazzling light.

II.

St George's banner, broad and gay,
Now faded, as the fading ray
Less bright, and less, was flung;
The evening gale had scarce the power
To wave it on the Donjon tower,
So heavily it hung.
The scouts had parted on their search,
The castle gates were barred;
Above the gloomy portal arch,
Timing his footsteps to a march,
The warder kept his guard,
Low humming, as he paced along,
Some ancient Border gathering song.

III.

A distant trampling sound he hears;
He looks abroad, and soon appears,
O'er Horncliff-hill, a plump* of spears,
Beneath a pennon gay;
A horseman darting from the crowd,
Like lightning from a summer cloud,
Spurs on his mettled courser proud,
Before the dark array.
Beneath the sable palisade,
That closed the castle barricade,
His bugle-horn he blew;
The warder hasted from the wall,
And warned the Captain in the hall,
For well the blast he knew;
And joyfully that Knight did call,
To sewer, squire, and seneschal.

IV.

"Now, broach ye a pipe of Malvoisie,
Bring pasties of the doe,
And quickly make the entrance free,
And bid my heralds ready be,
And every minstrel sound his glee,
And all our trumpets blow;
And, from the platform, spare ye not
To fire a noble salvo-shot:
Lord Marmion waits below."—
Then to the Castle's lower ward
Sped forty yeomen tall,

* This word properly applies to a flight of waterfowl; but is applied, by analogy, to a body of horse:—

"There is a knight of the north country,
Which leads a lusty plump of squire."—*Battle of Flodden*.

The iron-studded gates unbarred,
Raised the portcullis' ponderous guard,
The lofty palisade unsparred,
And let the drawbridge fall.

V.

Along the bridge Lord Marmion rode,
Proudly his red-roan charger trod,
His helm hung at his saddle-bow;
Well, by his visage, you might know
He was a stalworth knight, and keen,
And had in many a battle been;
The scar on his brown cheek revealed
A token true of Bosworth field;
His eyebrow dark, and eye of fire,
Showed spirit proud, and prompt to ire;
Yet lines of thought upon his cheek,
Did deep design and counsel speak.
His forehead, by his casque worn bare,
His thick moustache, and curly hair,
Coal-black, and grizzled here and there,
But more through toil than age;
His square-turned joints, and strength of limb,
Showed him no carpet knight so trim,
But, in close fight, a champion grim,
In camps, a leader sage.

VI.

Well was he armed from head to heel,
In mail, and plate, of Milan steel;
But his strong helm, of mighty cost,
Was all with burnished gold embossed;
Amid the plumage of the crest,
A falcon hovered on her nest,
With wings outspread, and forward breast;
E'en such a falcon, on his shield,
Soared sable in an azure field:
The golden legend bore aright,
"WHO CHECKS AT ME, TO DEATH IS DIGHT."
Blue was the charger's brodered rein;
Blue ribbons decked his arching mane;
The knightly housing's ample fold
Was velvet blue, and trapped with gold.

VII.

Behind him rode two gallant squires,
Of noble name, and knightly sires;
They burned the gilded spurs to claim;
For well could each a war-horse tame,
Could draw the bow, the sword could away,
And lightly bear the ring away;
Nor less with courteous precepts stored,
Could dance in hall, and carve at board,
And frame love ditties passing rare,
And sing them to a lady fair.

VIII.

Four men-at-arms came at their backs,
With halbard, bill, and battle-axe :
They bore Lord Marmion's lance so strong,
And led his sumpter mules along,
And ambling palfrey, when at need
Him listed ease his battle-steed.
The last, and trustiest of the four,
On high his forky pennon bore ;
Like swallow's tail, in shape and hue,
Fluttered the streamer glossy blue,
Where, blazoned sable, as before,
The towering falcon seemed to soar.
Last, twenty yeomen, two and two,
In hosen black, and jerkins blue,
With falcons broidered on each breast,
Attended on their lord's behest.
Each, chosen for an archer good,
Knew hunting-craft by lake or wood ;
Each one a six-foot bow could bend,
And far a cloth-yard shaft could send ;
Each held a boar-spear tough and strong,
And at their belts their quivers rung.
Their dusty palfreys, and array,
Showed they had marched a weary way.

IX.

'Tis meet that I should tell you now,
How fairly armed, and ordered how,
The soldiers of the guard,
With musket, pike, and morion,
To welcome noble Marmion,
Stood in the Castle-yard ;
Minstrels and trumpeters were there,
The gunner held his linstock yare,
For welcome-shot prepared—
Entered the train, and such a clang,
As then through all his turrets rang,
Old Norham never heard.

X.

The guards their morrice-pikes advanced,
The trumpets flourished brave,
The cannon from the ramparts glanced,
And thundering welcome gave ;
A blithe salute, in martial sort,
The minstrels well might sound,
For, as Lord Marmion crossed the court,
He scattered angels round.
"Welcome to Norham, Marmion!
Stout heart, and open hand!
Well dost thou brook thy gallant roan,
Thou flower of English land!"—

XI.

Two pursuivants, whom tabards deck,
 With silver scutcheon round their neck,
 Stood on the steps of stone,
 By which you reach the Donjon gate,
 And there, with herald pomp and state,
 They hailed Lord Marmion:
 They hailed him Lord of Fontenaye,
 Of Lutterward, and Scrivelbaye,
 Of Tamworth tower and town;
 And he, their courtesy to requite,
 Gave them a chain of twelve marks' weight,
 All as he lighted down.
 "Now largesse, largesse,* Lord Marmion,
 Knight of the crest of gold!
 A blazoned shield, in battle won,
 Ne'er guarded heart so bold."—

XII.

They marshalled him to the Castle-hall,
 Where the guests stood all aside,
 And loudly flourished the trumpet-call,
 And the heralds loudly cried,
 —"Room, lordlings, room for Lord Marmion,
 With the crest and helm of gold!
 Full well we know the trophies won
 In the lists at Cottiswold:
 There, vainly Ralph de Wilton strove
 'Gainst Marmion's force to stand;
 To him he lost his ladye-love,
 And to the king his land.
 Ourselves beheld the listed field,
 A sight both sad and fair;
 We saw Lord Marmion pierce his shield,
 And saw his saddle bare;
 We saw the victor win the crest
 He wears with worthy pride;
 And on the gibbet-tree, reversed,
 His foeman's scutcheon tied.
 Place, nobles, for the Falcon-Knight!
 Room, room, ye gentles gay,
 For him who conquered in the right,
 Marmion of Fontenaye!"—

XIII.

Then stepped to meet that noble lord,
 Sir Hugh the Heron bold,
 Baron of Twisell, and of Ford,
 And Captain of the Hold.
 He led Lord Marmion to the ~~deas~~,
 Raised o'er the pavement high,
 And placed him in the upper place—
 They feasted full and high:

* The cry by which the heralds expressed their thanks for the bounty
 the nobles.

'The whiles a Northern harper rude
 Chanted a rhyme of deadly feud,
*"How the fierce Thirwall, and Bidleys all,
 Stout Willimondswick,
 And Hard-riding Dick,
 And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will o' the Wall,
 Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonhaugh,
 And taken his life at the Deadman's-shaw."*
 Scantly Lord Marmion's ear could brook
 The harper's barbarous lay;
 Yet much he praised the pains he took,
 And well those pains did pay:
 For lady's suit, and minstrel's strain,
 By knight should ne'er be heard in vain.

XIV.

"Now, good Lord Marmion," Heron says,
 "Of your fair courtesy,
 I pray you bide some little space,
 In this poor tower with me.
 Here may you keep your arms from rust.
 May breathe your war-horse well;
 Seldom hath passed a week, but giust
 Or feat of arms befell:
 The Scots can rein a mettled steed,
 And love to couch a spear;—
 St George! a stirring life they lead,
 That have such neighbours near:
 Then stay with us a little space,
 Our northern wars to learn;
 I pray you for your lady's grace."—
 Lord Marmion's brow grew stern.

XV.

The Captain marked his altered look,
 And gave a squire the sign;
 A mighty wassel bowl he took,
 And crowned it high with wine.
 "Now pledge me here, Lord Marmion:
 But first I pray thee fair,
 Where hast thou left that Page of thine,
 That used to serve thy cup of wine,
 Whose beauty was so rare?
 When last in Raby towers we met,
 The boy I closely eyed,
 And often marked his cheeks were wet,
 With tears he fain would hide:
 His was no rugged horse-boy's hand,
 To burnish shield, or sharpen brand,
 Or saddle battle-steed;
 But milder seemed for lady fair,
 To fan her cheek, or curl her hair,
 Or through embroidery, rich and rare,
 The slender silk to lead:
 His skin was fair, his ringlets gold.

His bosom—when he sighed,
The russet doublet's rugged fold
Could scarce repel its pride!
Say, hast thou given that lovely youth
To serve in lady's bower?
Or was the gentle page, in sooth,
A gentle paramour?"—

XVI.

Lord Marmion ill could brook such jest;
He rolled his kindling eye,
With pain his rising wrath suppressed,
Yet made a calm reply:
"That boy thou thought'st so goodly fair,
He might not brook the northern air.
More of his fate if thou wouldst learn,
I left him sick in Lindisfarn:
Enough of him.—But, Heron, say,
Why does thy lovely lady gay
Disdain to grace the hall to-day?
Or has that dame, so fair and sage,
Gone on some pious pilgrimage?"—
He spoke in covert scorn, for fame
Whispered light tales of Heron's dame.

XVII.

Unmarked, at least unrecked, the taunt,
Careless the Knight replied,
"No bird, whose feathers gaily flaunt,
Delights in cage to bide:
Norham is grim, and grated close,
Hemmed in by battlement and fosse,
And many a darksome tower;
And better loves my lady bright
To sit in liberty and light,
In fair Queen Margaret's bower.
We hold our greyhound in our hand,
Our falcon on our glove;
But where shall we find leash or band
For dame that loves to rove?
Let the wild falcon soar her swing,
She'll stoop when she has tired her wing"—

XVIII.

"Nay, if with Royal James's bride
The lovely Lady Heron bide,
Behold me here a messenger,
Your tender greetings prompt to bear;
For, to the Scottish court addressed,
I journey at our king's behest,
And pray you, of your grace, provide
For me, and mine, a trusty guide.
I have not ridden in Scotland since
James backed the cause of that mock prince,
Warbeck, that Flemish counterfeit,
Who on the gibbet paid the cheat.

Then did I march with Surrey's power,
What time we razed old Ayton tower."—

XIX.

"For such-like need, my lord, I trow,
Norham can find you guides enow;
For here be some have pricked as far
On Scottish ground, as to Dunbar;
Have drunk the monks of St Bothan's ale,
And driven the beeves of Lauderdale;
Harried the wives of Greenlaw's goods,
And given them light to set their hoods."—

XX.

"Now, in good sooth," Lord Marmion cried,
'Were I in warlike-wise to ride,
A better guard I would not lack,
Than your stout forayers at my back:
But, as in form of peace I go,
A friendly messenger, to know,
Why through all Scotland, near and far,
Their king is mustering troops for war,
The sight of plundering Border spears
Might justify suspicious fears,
And deadly feud, or thirst of spoil,
Break out in some unseemly broil:
A herald were my fitting guide;
Or friar, sworn in peace to bide;
Or pardoner, or travelling priest,
Or strolling pilgrim, at the least."—

XXI.

The Captain mused a little space,
And passed his hand across his face.
—"Fain would I find the guide you want,
But ill may spare a pursuivant,
The only men that safe can ride
Mine errands on the Scottish side.
Then, though a bishop built this fort,
Few holy brethren here resort;
Even our good chaplain, as I ween,
Since our last siege, we have not seen:
The mass he might not sing or say,
Upon one stinted meal a day;
So, safe he sat in Durham aisle,
And prayed for our success the while.
Our Norham vicar, woe betide,
Is all too well in case to ride.
The priest of Shoreswood—he could rein
The wildest war-horse in your train;
But then, no spearman in the hall
Will sooner swear, or stab, or brawl.
Friar John of Tillmouth were the man;
A blithesome brother at the can,
A welcome guest in hall and bower,
He knows each castle, town, and tower.

In which the wine and ale is good,
"Twixt Newcastle and Holy-Rood.
But that good man, as ill befalls,
Hath seldom left our castle walls,
Since on the vigil of St Bede,
In evil hour, he crossed the Tweed,
To teach Dame Alison her creed.
Old Bughtrig found him with his wife;
And John, an enemy to strife,
Sans frock and hood, fled for his life.
The jealous churl hath deeply swore,
That, if again he ventures o'er,
He shall shrieve penitent no more.
Little he loves such risks, I know;
Yet, in your guard, perchance will go."

XXII.

Young Selby, at the fair hall-board,
Carved to his uncle, and that lord,
And reverently took up the word.
"Kind uncle, woe were we each one,
If harm should hap to Brother John.
He is a man of mirthful speech,
Can many a game and gambol teach,
Full well at tables can he play,
And sweep at bowls the stake away.
None can a lustier carol bawl,
The needfullest among us all,
When time hangs heavy in the hall,
And snow comes thick at Christmas tide.
And we can neither hunt, nor ride
A foray on the Scottish side,
The vowed revenge of Bughtrig rude,
May end in worse than loss of hood.
Let Friar John, in safety, still
In chimney-corner snore his fill,
Roast hissing crabs, or flagons swill;
Last night, to Norham there came one,
Will better guide Lord Marmion."—
"Nephew," quoth Heron, "by my fay.
Well hast thou spoke; say forth thy say."

XXIII.

"Here is a holy Palmer come,
From Salem first, and last from Rome;
One, that hath kissed the blessed tomb,
And visited each holy shrine,
In Araby and Palestine;
On hills of Armenie hath been,
Where Noah's ark may yet be seen;
By that Red Sea, too, hath he trod,
Which parted at the prophet's rod;
In Sinai's wilderness he saw
The Mount, where Israel heard the law,
Mid thunder-dint, and flashing levin,
And shadows, mists, and darkness. given.

He shows St James's cockle-shell,
Of fair Montserrat, too, can tell;
And of that Grot where Olives nod,
Where, darling of each heart and eye,
From all the youth of Sicily,
Saint Rosalie retired to God.

XXIV.

"To stout Saint George of Norwich merry.
Saint Thomas, too, of Canterbury,
Cuthbert of Durham and Saint Bede,
For his sins' pardon hath he prayed.
He knows the passes of the North,
And seeks far shrines beyond the Fortin;
Little he eats, and long will wake,
And drinks but of the stream or lake.
This were a guide o'er moor and dale:
But, when our John hath quaffed his ale,
As little as the wind that blows,
And warms itself against his nose,
Kens he, or cares, which way he goes."—

XXV.

"Gramercy!" quoth Lord Marmion,
"Full loth were I, that Friar John,
That venerable man, for me,
Were placed in fear, or jeopardy;
If this same Palmer will me lead
From hence to Holy-Rood,
Like his good saint, I'll pay his meed,
Instead of cockle-shell, or bead,
With angels fair and good.
I love such holy rambles; still
They know to charm a weary hill,
With song, romance, or lay:
Some jovial tale, or glee, or jest,
Some lying legend at the least,
They bring to cheer the way."

XXVI.

"Ah! noble sir," young Selby said,
And finger on his lip he laid,
"This man knows much, perchance e'en more
Than he could learn by holy lore.
Still to himself he's muttering,
And shrinks as at some unseen thing.
Last night we listened at his cell;
Strange sounds we heard, and, sooth to tell,
He murmured on till morn, howe'er
No living mortal could be near.
Sometimes I thought I heard it plain,
As other voices spoke again.
I cannot tell—I like it not—
Friar John hath told us it is wrote,
No conscience clear, and void of wrong,
Can rest awake, and pray so long.

Himself still sleeps before his beads
Have marked ten aves and two creeds."...

XXVII.

"Let pass," quoth Marmion; "by my faf,
This man shall guide me on my way,
Although the great arch-fiend and he
Had sworn themselves of company;
So please you, gentle youth, to call
This Palmer to the Castle-hall."
The summoned Palmer came in place;
His sable cowl o'erhung his face;
In his black mantle was he clad,
With Peter's keys, in cloth of red,
On his broad shoulders wrought;
The scallop shell his cap did deck;
The crucifix around his neck
Was from Loretto brought;
His sandals were with travel tore;
Staff, budget, bottle, scrip, he wore;
The faded palm-branch in his hand,
Showed pilgrim from the Holy Land.

XXVIII.

Whenas the Palmer came in hall,
Nor lord, nor knight, was there more tall,
Or had a statelier step withal,
Or looked more high and keen;
For no saluting did he wait,
But strode across the hall of state,
And fronted Marmion where he sate,
As he his peer had been.
But his gaunt frame was worn with toil;
His cheek was sunk, alas! the while;
And when he struggled at a smile,
His eye looked haggard wild.
Poor wretch! the mother that him bare,
If she had been in presence there,
In his wan face, and sun-burned hair,
She had not known her child.
Danger, long travel, want, or woe,
Soon change the form that best we know—
For deadly fear can time outgo,
And blanch at once the hair;
Hard toil can roughen form and face,
And want can quench the eye's bright grace,
Nor does old age a wrinkle trace,
More deeply than despair.
Happy whom none of these befall,
But this poor Palmer knew them all.

XXIX.

Lord Marmion then his boon did ask;
The Palmer took on him the task,
So he would march with morning tide,
To Scottish court to be his guide.

—“But I have solemn vows to pay,
And may not linger by the way,
To fair Saint Andrew’s bound,
Within the ocean-cave to pray,
Where good Saint Rule his holy lay,
From midnight to the dawn of day,
Sung to the billows’ sound;
Thence to Saint Fillan’s blessed well,
Whose spring can frenzied dreams dispel,
And the crazed brain restore :—
Saint Mary grant, that cave or spring
Could back to peace my bosom bring,
Or bid it throb no more!”—

XXX.

And now the midnight draught of sleep,
Where wine and spices richly steep,
In massive bowl of silver deep,

The page presents on knee.

Lord Marmion drank a fair good rest,
The Captain pledged his noble guest,
The cup went through among the rest,

Who drained it merrily;

Alone the Palmer passed it by,
Though Selby pressed him courteously.

This was the sign the feast was o’er;

It hushed the merry wassel roar,

The minstrels ceased to sound.

Soon in the Castle nought was heard,

But the slow footstep of the guard,

Pacing his sober round.

XXXI.

With early dawn Lord Marmion rose:
And first the chapel doors unclosed;
Then, after morning rites were done,
(A hasty mass from Friar John,)
And knight and squire had broke their fast
On rich substantial repast,
Lord Marmion’s bugle blew to horse.

Then came the stirrup-cup in course;

Between the Baron and his host,

No point of courtesy was lost:

High thanks were by Lord Marmion paid,

Solemn excuse the Captain made,

Till, filing from the gate, had passed

That noble train, their Lord the last,

Then loudly rung the trumpet call;

Thundered the cannon from the wall,

And shook the Scottish shore;

Around the Castle eddied, slow,

Volumes of smoke as white as snow,

And hid its turrets hoar;

Till they rolled forth upon the air,

And met the river breezes there,

Which gave again the prospect fair.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO SECOND.

TO THE REV. JOHN MARRIOT, M.A.

Ashestiel, Eltricke Forest

THE scenes are desert now, and bare,
 Where flourished once a forest fair,
 When these waste glens with copse were lined,
 And peopled with the hart and hind.
 Yon thorn—perchance whose prickly spears
 Have fenced him for three hundred years,
 While fell around his green compeers—
 Yon lonely thorn, would he could tell
 The changes of his parent dell,
 Since he, so gray and stubborn now,
 Waved in each breeze a sapling bough;
 Would he could tell how deep the shade,
 A thousand mingled branches made;
 How broad the shadows of the oak,
 How clung the rowan* to the rock,
 And through the foliage showed his head,
 With narrow leaves, and berries red;
 What pines on every mountain sprung,
 O'er every dell what birches hung,
 In every breeze what aspens shook,
 What alders shaded every brook!

“Here, in my shade,” methinks he’d say,
 “The mighty stag at noontide lay;
 The wolf I’ve seen, a fiercer game,
 (The neighbouring dingle bears his name,)
 With lurching step around me prowl,
 And stop against the moon to howl;
 The mountain boar, on battle set,
 His tusks upon my stem would whet;
 While doe and roe, and red-deer good,
 Have bounded by through gay green-wood.
 Then oft, from Newark’s riven tower,
 Sallied a Scottish monarch’s power:
 A thousand vassals mustered round,
 With horse, and hawk, and horn, and hound
 And I might see the youth intent,
 Guard every pass with cross-bow bent;
 And through the brake the rangers stalk,
 And falconers hold the ready hawk;
 And foresters, in green-wood trim,
 Lead in the leash the gaze-hounds grim,
 Attentive, as the bratchet’s† bay
 From the dark covert drove the prey,
 To slip them as he broke away.
 The startled quarry bounds amain,
 As fast the gallant greyhounds strain:

* Mountain ash.

† Slow-hound

Whistles the arrow from the bow,
Answers the harquebuss below;
While all the rocking hills reply,
To hoof-clang, hound, and hunters' cry.
And bugles ringing lightsomely."—

Of such proud huntings, many tale:
Yet linger in our lonely dales,
Up pathless Ettricke, and on Yarrow,
Where erst the Outlaw drew his arrow.
But not more blithe that sylvan court,
Than we have been at humbler sport;
Though small our pomp, and mean our game,
Our mirth, dear Marriot, was the same.
Remember'st thou my greyhounds true?
O'erholt, or hill, there never flew,
From slip, or leash, there never sprang,
More fleet of foot, or sure of fang.
Nor dull, between each merry chase,
Passed by the intermitted space;
For we had fair resource in store,
In Classic, and in Gothic lore:
We marked each memorable scene,
And held poetic talk between;
Nor hill, nor brook, we paced along.
But had its legend, or its song.
All silent now—for now are still
Thy bowers, untenanted Bowhill!
No longer, from thy mountains dun,
The yeoman hears the well-known gun,
And, while his honest heart glows warm,
At thought of his paternal farm,
Round to his mates a brimmer fills,
And drinks, "The Chieftain of the Hills!"
No fairy forms, in Yarrow's bowers,
Trip o'er the walks, or tend the flowers,
Fair as the elves whom Janet saw,
By moonlight, dance on Carterhaugh;
No youthful baron's left to grace
The Forest-Sheriff's lonely chase,
And ape, in manly step and tone,
The majesty of Oberon:
And she is gone, whose lovely face
Is but her least and lowest grace;
Though if to Sylphid Queen 'twere given,
To show our earth the charms of heaven,
She could not glide along the air,
With form more light, or face more fair.
No more the widow's deafened ear
Grows quick, that lady's step to hear:
At noontide she expects her not,
Nor busies her to trim the cot;
Pensive she turns her humming wheel,
Or pensive cooks her orphan's meal.

Yet blesses, ere she deals their bread,
The gentle hand by which they're fed.

From Yair,—which hills so closely bind,
Scarce can the Tweed his passage find,
Though much he fret, and chafe, and toil,
Till all his eddying currents boil,—
Her long-descended lord is gone,
And left us by the stream alone,
And much I miss those sportive boys,
Companions of my mountain joys,
Just at the age 'twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech, and speech is truth.
Close to my side, with what delight,
They pressed to hear of Wallace wight,
When, pointing to his airy mound,*
I called his ramparts holy ground!
Kindled their brows to hear me speak;
And I have smiled, to feel my cheek,
Despite the difference of our years,
Return again the glow of theirs.
Ah, happy boys! such feelings pure,
They will not, cannot long endure;
Condemned to stem the world's rude tide,
You may not linger by the side;
For Fate shall thrust you from the shore,
And Passion ply the sail and oar.
Yet cherish the remembrance still,
Of the lone mountain, and the rill;
For trust, dear boys, the time will come,
When fiercer transport shall be dumb,
And you will think right frequently,
But, well I hope, without a sigh,
On the free hours that we have spent,
Together, on the brown hill's bent.

When, musing on companions gone,
We doubly feel ourselves alone,
Something, my friend, we yet may gain,
There is a pleasure in this pain:
It soothes the love of lonely rest,
Deep in each gentler heart impressed.
'Tis silent amid worldly toils,
And stilled soon by mental broils;
But, in a bosom thus prepared,
Its still small voice is often heard,
Whispering a mingled sentiment,
'Twixt resignation and content.
Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
By lone St Mary's silent lake;
Thou know'st it well,—nor fen, nor sedge,
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge;

* There is, on a high mountainous ridge above the farm of Ashestiel, a fosse called Wallace's Trench.

Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink;
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror, bright and blue,
Each hill's huge outline you may view;
Shaggy with heath, but lonely, bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where, of land, yon slender line
Bears thwart the lake the scattered pine
Yet even this nakedness has power,
And aids the feeling of the hour:
Nor thicket, dell, nor copse you spy,
Where living thing concealed might lie;
Nor point, retiring, hides a dell,
Where swain, or woodman lone, might dwell;
There's nothing left to fancy's guess,
You see that all is loneliness:
And silence aids—though these steep hills
Send to the lake a thousand rills;
In summer tide, so soft they weep,
The sound but lulls the ear asleep;
Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
So stillly is the solitude.

Nought living meets the eye or ear
But well I ween the dead are near;
For though, in feudal strife, a foe
Hath laid Our Lady's chapel low,
Yet still, beneath the hallowed soil,
The peasant rests him from his toil,
And, dying, bids his bones be laid
Where erst his simple fathers prayed.

If age had tamed the passions' strife,
And fate had cut my ties to life,
Here, have I thought, 'twere sweet to dwell,
And rear again the chaplain's cell,
Like that same peaceful hermitage,
Where Milton longed to spend his age.
'Twere sweet to mark the setting day,
On Bourhope's lonely top decay;
And, as it faint and feeble died
On the broad lake, and mountain's side,
To say, "Thus pleasures fade away;
Youth, talents, beauty, thus decay,
And leave us dark, forlorn, and gray;"—
Then gaze on Dryhope's ruined tower,
And think on Yarrow's faded Flower:
And when that mountain-sound I heard
Which bids us be for storm prepared,
The distant rustling of his wings,
As up his force the Tempest brings,
'Twere sweet, ere yet his terrors rave,
To sit upon the Wizard's grave:

That Wizard Priest's whose bones are thrust
From company of holy dust;
On which no sunbeam ever shines—
(So superstition's creed divines,)
Thence view the lake, with sullen roar,
Heave her broad billows to the shore;
And mark the wild swans mount the gale,
Spread wide through mist their snowy sail,
And ever stoop again, to lave
Their bosoms on the surging wave:
Then, when against the driving hail
No longer might my plaid avail,
Back to my lonely home retire,
And light my lamp, and trim my fire:
There ponder o'er some mystic lay,
Till the wild tale had all its sway,
And in the bittern's distant shriek
I heard unearthly voices speak,
And thought the Wizard Priest was come,
To claim again his ancient home!
And bade my busy fancy range,
To frame him fitting shape and strange,
Till from the task my brow I cleared,
And smiled to think that I had feared.

But, chief, 'twere sweet to think such life,
(Though but escape from fortune's strife,)
Something most matchless good and wise,
A great and grateful sacrifice;
And deem each hour to musing given,
A step upon the road to heaven.

Yet him, whose heart is ill at ease,
Such peaceful solitudes displease:
He loves to drown his bosom's jar
Amid the elemental war:
And my black Palmer's choice had been
Some ruder and more savage scene,
Like that which frowns round dark Loch-skene
There eagles scream from isle to shore;
Down all the rocks the torrents roar;
O'er the black waves incessant driven,
Dark mists infect the summer heaven;
Through the rude barriers of the lake,
Away its hurrying waters break,
Faster and whiter dash and curl,
Till down yon dark abyss they hurl.
Rises the fog-smoke white as snow,
Thunders the viewless stream below,
Diving, as if condemned to lave
Some demon's subterranean cave,
Who, prisoned by enchanter's spell,
Shakes the dark rock with groan and yell.
And well that Palmer's form and mien
Had suited with the stormy scene.

Just on the edge, straining his ken
 To view the bottom of the den,
 Where, deep, deep down, and far within,
 Toils with the rocks the roaring linn;
 Then, issuing forth one foamy wave,
 And wheeling round the Giant's Grave,
 White as the snowy charger's tail,
 Drives down the pass of Moffatdale.

Marriot, thy harp, on Isis strung,
 To many a Border theme has rung:
 Then list to me, and thou shalt know
 Of this mysterious Man of Woe.

CANTO SECOND.

THE CONVENT.

I.

THE breeze, which swept away the smoke
 Round Norham Castle rolled;
 When all the loud artillery spoke,
 With lightning-flash, and thunder-stroke,
 As Marmion left the Hold.
 It curled not Tweed alone, that breeze;
 For, far upon Northumbrian seas,
 It freshly blew, and strong,
 Where, from high Whitby's cloistered pile,
 Bound to Saint Outhbert's Holy Isle,
 It bore a bark along.
 Upon the gale she stooped her side,
 And bounded o'er the swelling tide,
 As she were dancing home;
 The merry seamen laughed, to see
 Their gallant ship so lustily
 Furrow the green sea-foam.
 Much joyed they in their honoured freight;
 For, on the deck, in chair of state,
 The Abbess of Saint Hilda placed,
 With five fair nuns, the galley graced.

II.

'Twas sweet to see these holy maids,
 Like birds escaped to green-wood shades,
 Their first flight from the cage,
 How timid, and how curious too,
 For all to them was strange and new,
 And all the common sights they view,
 Their wonderment engage.
 One eyed the shrouds and swelling sail,
 With many a benedicite;
 One at the rippling surge grew pale,
 And would for terror pray:

Then shrieked, because the sea-dog, nigh,
His round black head, and sparkling eye,
Reared o'er the foaming spray;
And one would still adjust her veil,
Disordered by the summer gale,
Perchance lest some more worldly eye
Her dedicated charms might spy;
Perchance, because such action graced
Her fair-turned arm and slender waist.
Light was each simple bosom there,
Save two, who ill might pleasure share,—
The Abbess and the Novice Clare.

III.

The Abbess was of noble blood,
But early took the veil and hood,
Ere upon life she cast a look,
Or knew the world that she forsook.
Fair too she was, and kind had been
As she was fair, but ne'er had seen
For her a timid lover sigh,
Nor knew the influence of her eye;
Love, to her ear, was but a name,
Combined with vanity and shame;
Her hopes, her fears, her joys, were all
Bounded within the cloister-wall:
The deadliest sin her mind could reach,
Was of monastic rule the breach;
And her ambition's highest aim,
To emulate Saint Hilda's fame.
For this she gave her ample dower,
To raise the convent's eastern tower;
For this, with carving rare and quaint,
She decked the chapel of the saint,
And gave the relique-shrine of cost,
With ivory and gems embossed.
The poor her convent's bounty blessed,
The pilgrim in its halls found rest.

IV.

Black was her garb, her rigid rule
Reformed on Benedictine school;
Her cheek was pale, her form was spare,
Vigils, and penitence austere,
Had early quenched the light of youth,
But gentle was the dame in sooth;
Though, vain of her religious sway,
She loved to see her maids obey,
Yet nothing stern was she in cell,
And the nuns loved their Abbess well.
Sad was this voyage to the dame;
Summoned to Lindisfarne, she came,
There, with Saint Outhbert's Abbot old,
And Tynemouth's Prioress, to hold

A chapter of Saint Benedict,
For inquisition stern and strict,
On two apostates from the faith,
And, if need were, to doom to death.

V.

Nought say I here of Sister Clare,
Save this, that she was young and fair;
As yet a novice unprofessed,
Lovely, and gentle, but distressed.
She was betrothed to one now dead,
Or worse, who had dishonoured fled.
Her kinsmen bade her give her hand
To one, who loved her for her land:
Herself, almost heart-broken now,
Was bent to take the vestal vow,
And shroud, within Saint Hilda's gloom,
Her blasted hopes and withered bloom.

VI.

She sate upon the galley's prow,
And seemed to mark the waves below;
Nay seemed, so fixed her look and eye,
To count them as they glided by.
She saw them not—'twas seeming all—
Far other scene her thoughts recall,—
A sun-scorched desert, waste and bare,
Nor wave, nor breezes, murmured there;
There saw she, where some careless hand
O'er a dead corpse had heaped the sand,
To hide it till the jackals come
To tear it from the scanty tomb.—
See what a woeful look was given,
As she raised up her eyes to heaven!

VII.

Lovely, and gentle, and distressed—
These charms might tame the fiercest breast:
Harpers have sung, and poets told,
That he, in fury uncontrolled,
The shaggy monarch of the wood,
Before a virgin, fair and good,
Hath pacified his savage mood.
But passions in the human frame
Oft put the lion's rage to shame;
And jealousy, by dark intrigue,
With sordid avarice in league,
Had practised, with their bowl and knife,
Against the mourner's harmless life.
This crime was charged 'gainst those who lay
Prisoned in Cuthbert's islet gray.

VIII.

And now the vessel skirts the strand
Of mountainous Northumberland;
Towns, towers, and halls, successive rise,
And catch the nuns' delighted eyes.

Monk-Wearmouth soon behind them lay,
And Tynemouth's priory and bay;
They marked, amid her trees, the hall
Of lofty Seaton-Delaval;
They saw the Blythe and Wansbeck floods
Rush to the sea through sounding woods;
They passed the tower of Widderington,
Mother of many a valiant son;
At Coquet-isle their beads they tell,
To the good Saint who owned the cell;
Then did the Alne attention claim,
And Warkworth, proud of Percy's name;
And next, they crossed themselves, to hear
The whitening breakers sound so near,
Where, boiling through the rocks, they roar
On Dunstanborough's caverned shore;
Thy tower, proud Bamborough, marked they here,
King Ida's castle, huge and square,
From its tall rock look grimly down.
And on the swelling ocean frown;
Then from the coast they bore away,
And reached the Holy Island's bay.

IX.

The tide did now its flood-mark gain,
And girdled in the Saint's domain;
For with the flow and ebb, its style,
Varies from continent to isle;
Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,
The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
Twice every day, the waves efface
Of staves and sandalled feet the trace.
As to the port the galley flew,
Higher and higher rose to view
The Castle, with its battled walls,
The ancient Monastery's halls,
A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile,
Placed on the margin of the isle.

X.

In Saxon strength that Abbey frowned,
With massive arches broad and round,
That rose alternate, row and row
On ponderous columns, short and low,
Built ere the art was known,
By pointed aisle, and shafted stalk,
The arcades of an alleyed walk
To emulate in stone.
On the deep walls, the heathen Dane
Had poured his impious rage in vain;
And needful was such strength to these,
Exposed to the tempestuous seas,
Scourged by the wind's eternal away,
Open to rovers fierce as they.

Which could twelve hundred years withstand
Winds, waves, and northern pirates' hand.
Not but that portions of the pile,
Rebuilt in a later style,
Showed where the spoiler's hand had been;
Not but the wasting sea-breeze keen
Had worn the pillar's carving quaint,
And mouldered in his niche the saint,
And rounded, with consuming power,
The pointed angles of each tower:
Yet still entire the Abbey stood,
Like veteran, worn, but unsubdued.

XI.

Soon as they neared his turrets strong,
The maidens raised Saint Hilda's song,
And with the sea-wave and the wind,
Their voices, sweetly shrill, combined,
And made harmonious close;
Then, answering from the sandy shore,
Half-drowned amid the breakers' roar,
According chorus rose:
Down to the haven of the Isle,
The monks and nuns in order file,
From Cuthbert's cloisters grim;
Banner, and cross, and reliques there,
To meet Saint Hilda's maids, they bare;
And, as they caught the sounds on air,
They echoed back the hymn.
The islanders, in joyous mood,
Rushed emulously through the flood
To hale the bark to land;
Conspicuous by her veil and hood,
Signing the cross, the Abbess stood,
And blessed them with her hand.

XII.

Suppose we now the welcome said,
Suppose the Convent banquet made:
All through the holy dome,
Through cloister, aisle, and gallery,
Wherever vestal maid might pry,
Nor risk to meet unhallowed eye,
The stranger sisters roam:
Till fell the evening damp with dew,
And the sharp sea-breeze coldly blew,
For there, even summer night is chill;
Then, having strayed and gazed their fill,
They closed around the fire;
And all, in turn, essayed to paint
The rival merits of their saint,
A theme that ne'er can tire
A holy maid; for, be it known,
That their saint's honour is their own.

XIII.

Then Whitby's nuns exulting told,
How to their house three barons bold
Must menial service do;
While horns blow out a note of shame,
And monks cry "Eye upon your name!
In wrath, for loss of sylvan game,
Saint Hilda's priest ye slew."—
"This, on Ascension-day, each year,
While labouring on our harbour-pier,
Must Herbert, Bruce, and Percy hear."
They told, how in their convent cell
A Saxon princess once did dwell,
The lovely Edelfled;
And how, of thousand snakes, each one
Was changed into a coil of stone,
When holy Hilda prayed;
Themselves, within their holy bound,
Their stony folds had often found.
They told, how sea-fowls' pinions fail,
As over Whitby's towers they sail,
And, sinking down, with flutterings faint,
They do their homage to the saint.

XIV.

Nor did Saint Cuthbert's daughters fail
To vie with these in holy tale;
His body's resting-place, of old,
How oft their patron changed, they told;
How, when the rude Dane burned their pile,
The monks fled forth from Holy Isle;
O'er northern mountain, marsh, and moor,
From sea to sea, from shore to shore,
Seven years Saint Cuthbert's corpse they bore:
They rested them in fair Melrose;
But though, alive, he loved it well,
Not there his reliques might repose;
For, wondrous tale to tell!
In his stone coffin forth he rides,
(A ponderous bark for river tides)
Yet light as gossamer it glides,
Downward to Tillmouth cell.
Nor long was his abiding there,
For southward did the saint repair;
Chester-le-Street, and Rippon, saw
His holy corpse, ere Wardilaw
Hailed him with joy and fear;
And, after many wanderings passed,
He chose his lordly seat at last,
Where his cathedral, huge and vast,
Looks down upon the Wear:
There, deep in Durham's Gothic shade,
His reliques are in secret laid;
But none may know the place,

Save of his holiest servants three,
 Deep sworn to solemn secrecy,
 Who share that wondrous graco.

xv.

Who may his miracles declare!
 Even Scotland's dauntless king, and heir,
 (Although with them they led
 Galwegians, wild as ocean's gale,
 And Lodon's knights, all sheathed in mail,
 And the bold men of Teviotdale,)

Before his standard fled.

'Twas he, to vindicate his reign,
 Edged Alfred's falchion on the Dane,
 And turned the Conqueror back again,
 When, with his Norman bowyer band,
 He came to waste Northumberland.

xvi.

But fain Saint Hilda's nuns would learn,
 If, on a rock by Lindisfarn,
 Saint Cuthbert sits, and toils to frame
 The sea-born beads that bear his name:
 Such tales had Whitby's fishers told,
 And said they might his shape behold,
 And hear his anvil sound;
 A deadened clang,—a huge dim form,
 Seen but, and heard, when gathering storm
 And night were closing round.
 But this, as tale of idle fame,
 The nuns of Lindisfarn disclaim.

xvii.

While round the fire such legends go,
 Far different was the scene of woe,
 Where, in a secret aisle beneath,
 Council was held of life and death.
 It was more dark and lone, that vault,
 Than the worst dungeon cell;
 Old Colwulf built it, for his fault,
 In penitence to dwell,
 When he, for cowl and beads, laid down
 The Saxon battle-axe and crown.
 This den, which, chilling every sense
 Of feeling, hearing, sight,
 Was called the Vault of Penitence,
 Excluding air and light,
 Was, by the prelate Sexhelm, made
 A place of burial, for such dead
 As, having died in mortal sin,
 Might not be laid the church within.
 'Twas now a place of punishment;
 Whence if so loud a shriek was sent
 As reached the upper air,
 The hearers blessed themselves, and said,
 The spirits of the sinful dead
 Bemoaned their torments there.

XVIII.

But though, in the monastic pile,
Did of this penitential aisle

Some vague tradition go,
Few only, save the Abbot, knew
Where the place lay; and still more few
Were those, who had from him the clew
To that dread vault to go.

Victim and executioner
Were blindfold when transported there.
In low dark rounds the arches hung,
From the rude rock the side-walls sprung;
The grave-stones, rudely sculptured o'er,
Half sunk in earth, by time half worn,
Were all the pavement of the floor;
The mildew-drops fell one by one,
With tinkling plash, upon the stone.
A cresset,* in an iron chain,
Which served to light this drear domain,
With damp and darkness seemed to strive,
As if it scarce might keep alive;
And yet it dimly served to show
The awful conclave met below.

XIX.

There, met to doom in secrecy,
Were placed the heads of convents three:
All servants of Saint Benedict,
The statutes of whose order strict

On iron table lay;
In long black dress, on seats of stone,
Behind were these three judges shown,

By the pale cresset's ray:
The Abbess of Saint Hilda's, there
Sate for a space with visage bare,
Until, to hide her bosom's swell,
And tear-drops that for pity fell,

She closely drew her veil:
Yon shrouded figure, as I guess,
By her proud mien and flowing dress,
Is Tynemouth's haughty Prioress,
And she with awe looks pale:
And he, that Ancient Man, whose sight
Has long been quenched by age's night,
Upon whose wrinkled brow alone,
Nor ruth, nor mercy's trace is shown,

Whose look is hard and stern,—
Saint Cuthbert's Abbot is his style;
For sanctity called, through the isle,
The Saint of Lindisfarn.

XX.

Before them stood a guilty pair;
But, though an equal fate they share,

* Antique chandeliers.

Yet one alone deserves our care.
 Her sex a page's dress belied ; -
 The cloak and doublet, loosely tied,
 Obscured her charms, but could not hide.
 Her cap down o'er her face she drew ;
 And, on her doublet breast,
 She tried to hide the badge of blue,
 Lord Marmion's falcon-crest.
 But, at the Prioress' command,
 A Monk undid the silken band
 That tied her tresses fair,
 And raised the bonnet from her head,
 And down her slender form they spread,
 In ringlets rich and rare.
 Constance de Beverley they know,
 Sister professed of Fontevraud,
 Whom the church numbered with the dead,
 For broken vows, and convent fled.

XXI.

When thus her face was given to view,
 (Although so pallid was her hue,
 It did a ghastly contrast bear
 To those bright ringlets glistening fair,)
 Her look composed, and steady eye,
 Bespoke a matchless constancy ;
 And there she stood so calm and pale,
 That, but her breathing did not fail,
 And motion slight of eye and head,
 And of her bosom, warranted
 That neither sense nor pulse she lacked,
 You might have thought a form of wax,
 Wrought to the life, was there ;
 So still she was, so pale, so fair.

XXII.

Her comrade was a sordid soul,
 Such as does murder for a meed ;
 Who, but of fear, knows no control,
 Because his conscience, seared and foul,
 Feels not the import of his deed ;
 One, whose brute-feeling ne'er aspires
 Beyond his own more brute desires
 Such tools the tempter ever needs,
 To do the savagest of deeds ;
 For them no visioned terrors daunt,
 Their nights no fancied spectres haunt ;
 One fear with them, of all most base,
 The fear of death,—alone finds place.
 This wretch was clad in frock and cowl,
 And shamed not loud to moan and howl,
 His body on the floor to dash,
 And crouch, like hound beneath the lash ;
 While his mute partner, standing near,
 Waited her doom without a tear.

XXIII.

Yet well the luckless wretch might shriek.
 Well might her paleness terror speak !
 For there were seen, in that dark wall,
 Two niches, narrow, deep, and tall.
 Who enters at such grisly door,
 Shall ne'er, I ween, find exit more.
 In each a slender meal was laid,
 Of roots, of water, and of bread :
 By each, in Benedictine dress,
 Two haggard monks stood motionless ;
 One, holding high a blazing torch,
 Wed the grim entrance of the porch :
 Reflecting back the smoky beam,
 Dark-red walls and arches gleam.
 On stones and cement were displayed,
 All building tools in order laid.

XXIV.

These executioners were those
 Men who were with mankind foes,
 One, with despite and envy fired,
 Whom the cloister had retired ;
 One who, in desperate doubt of grace,
 Had strove, by deep penance, to efface
 Of some foul crime the stain ;
 One, as the vassals of her will,
 Had such men the church selected still,
 As either joyed in doing ill,
 Or thought more grace to gain,
 If in her cause they wrestled down
 Feelings their nature strove to own.
 By strange device were they brought there,
 They knew not how, and knew not where.

XXV.

And now that blind old Abbot rose,
 To speak the Chapter's doom,
 On those the wall was to enclose,
 Alive, within the tomb ;
 But stopped, because that woeful maid,
 Gathering her powers, to speak essayed ;
 Twice she essayed, and twice in vain,
 Her accents might no utterance gain ;
 Nought but imperfect murmurs slip
 From her convulsed and quivering lip :
 "Twixt each attempt all was so still,
 You seemed to hear a distant rill—
 'Twas ocean's swells and falls ;
 For though this vault of sin and fear
 Was to the sounding surge so near,
 A tempest there you scarce could hear.
 So massive were the walls.

XXVI.

At length, an effort sent apart
The blood that curdled to her heart,
And light came to her eye,
And colour dawned upon her cheek,
A hectic and a fluttered streak,
Like that left on the Cheviot peak
By Autumn's stormy sky;
And when her silence broke at length,
Still as she spoke, she gathered strength,
And armed herself to bear.
It was a fearful sight to see
Such high resolve and constancy,
In form so soft and fair.

XXVII.

"I speak not to implore your grace;
Well know I, for one minute's space
Successless might I sue:
Nor do I speak your prayers to gain;
For if a death of lingering pain,
To cleanse my sins, be penance vain,
Vain are your masses too.—
I listened to a traitor's tale,
I left the convent and the veil,
For three long years I bowed my pride,
A horse-boy in his train to ride;
And well my folly's meed he gave,
Who forfeited, to be his slave,
All here, and all beyond the grave.—
He saw young Clara's face more fair,
He knew her of broad lands the heir,
Forgot his vows, his faith forswore,
And Constance was beloved no more.—
'Tis an old tale, and often told;
But, did my fate and wish agree,
Ne'er had been read, in story old,
Of maiden true betrayed for gold,
That loved, or was avenged, like me!

XXVIII.

"The king approved his favourite's aim;
In vain a rival barred his claim,
Whose faith with Clare's was plight,
For he attaints that rival's fame
With treason's charge—and on they came,
In mortal lists to fight.
Their oaths are said,
Their prayers are prayed,
Their lances in the rest are laid,
They meet in mortal shock;
And hark! the throng, with thundering cry,
Shout, 'Marmion, Marmion, to the sky!
De Wilton to the block!'

Say ye, who preach heaven shall decide,
When in the lists two champions ride,
Say, was heaven's justice here?
When, loyal in his love and faith,
Wilton found overthrow or death,
Beneath a traitor's spear.
How false the charge, how true he fell,
This guilty packet best can tell."—
Then drew a packet from her breast,
Paused, gathered voice, and spoke the rest:

XXX.

"Still was false Marmion's bridal stayed;
To Whitby's convent fled the maid,
The hated match to shun.
'Ho! shifts she thus?' King Henry cried,
'Sir Marmion, she shall be thy bride,
If she were sworn a nun.'
One way remained—the king's command
Sent Marmion to the Scottish land:
I lingered here, and rescue planned
For Clara and for me:
This caitiff Monk, for gold, did swear,
He would to Whitby's shrine repair,
And, by his drugs, my rival fair
A saint in heaven should be.
But ill the dastard kept his oath,
Whose cowardice hath undone us both.

XXX.

"And now my tongue the secret tells,
Not that remorse my bosom swells,
But to assure my soul, that none
Shall ever wed with Marmion.
Had fortune my last hope betrayed,
This packet, to the king conveyed,
Had given him to the headsman's stroke,
Although my heart that instant broke.—
Now, men of death, work forth your will,
For I can suffer, and be still;
And come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but Death who comes at last.

XXXI.

"Yet dread me, from my living tomb,
Ye vassal slaves of bloody Rome!
If Marmion's late remorse should wake,
Full soon such vengeance will he take,
That you shall wish the fiery Dane
Had rather been your guest again.
Behind, a darker hour ascends!
The altars quake, the crosier bends,
The ire of a despotic king
Rides forth upon destruction's wing;
Then shall these vaults, so strong and deep,
Burst open to the sea-winds' sweep;

Some traveller then shall find my bones,
Whitening amid disjointed stones,
And, ignorant of priests' cruelty,
Marvel such reliques here should be."—

XXXII.

Fixed was her look, and stern her air;
Back from her shoulders streamed her hair;
The locks, that wont her brow to shade,
Stared up erectly from her head;
Her figure seemed to rise more high;
Her voice, despair's wild energy
Had given a tone of prophecy.
Appalled the astonished conclave sate;
With stupid eyes, the men of fate
Gazed on the light inspired form,
And listened for the avenging storm;
The judges felt the victim's dread;
No hand was moved, no word was said,
Till thus the Abbot's doom was given,
Raising his sightless balls to heaven:—
"Sister, let thy sorrows cease;
Sinful brother, part in peace!"—
From that dire dungeon, place of doom,
Of execution too, and tomb,
Paced forth the judges three;
Sorrow it were, and shame, to tell
The butcher-work that there befell,
When they had glided from the cell
Of sin and misery.

XXXIII.

An hundred winding steps convey
That conclave to the upper day;
But, ere they breathed the fresher air,
They heard the shriekings of despair,
And many a stifled groan:
With speed their upward way they take,
(Such speed as age and fear can make,)
And crossed themselves for terror's sake,
As, hurrying, tottering on;
Even in the vesper's heavenly tone,
They seemed to hear a dying groan,
And bade the passing knell to toll
For welfare of a parting soul.
Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
Northumbrian rocks in answer rung;
To Warkworth cell the echoes rolled,
His beads the wakeful hermit told;
The Bamborough peasant raised his head,
But slept ere half a prayer he said;
So far was heard the mighty knell,
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,

Listed before, aside, behind;
Then couched him down beside the hind,
And quaked among the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO THIRD.

TO WILLIAM ERSKINE, ESQ.

Ashestiel, Eltricks Forest.

LIKE April morning clouds, that pass,
With varying shadow, o'er the grass,
And imitate, on field and furrow,
Life's chequered scene of joy and sorrow;
Like streamlet of the mountain north,
Now in a torrent racing forth,
Now winding slow its silver train,
And almost slumbering on the plain;
Like breezes of the Autumn day,
Whose voice inconstant dies away,
And ever swells again as fast,
When the ear deems its murmur past;
Thus various, my romantic theme
Flits, winds, or sinks, a morning dream.
Yet pleased, our eye pursues the trace
Of Light and Shade's inconstant race;
Pleased, views the rivulet afar,
Weaving its maze irregular;
And pleased, we listen as the breeze
Heaves its wild sigh through Autumn trees.
Then wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,
Flow on, flow unconfined my tale.

Need I to thee, dear Erskine, tell,
I love the licence all too well,
In sound now lowly, and now strong,
To raise the desultory song?
Oft, when 'mid such capricious chime,
Some transient fit of loftier rhyme,
To thy kind judgment seemed excuse
For many an error of the muse;
Oft hast thou said, "If still misspent,
Thine hours to poetry are lent,
Go, and to tame thy wandering course,
Quaff from the fountain at the source;
Approach those masters, o'er whose tomb
Immortal laurels ever bloom;
Instructive of the feeble bard,
Still from the grave their voice is heard;
From them, and from the paths they showed,
Choose honoured guide and practised road;
Nor ramble on through brake and maze,
With harpers rude of barbarous days.

"Or, deem'st thou not our later time
 Yields topic meet for classic rhymes?
 Hast thou no elegiac verse
 For Brunswick's venerable hearse?
 What! not a line, a tear, a sigh,
 When valour bleeds for liberty?
 Oh, hero of that glorious time,
 When, with unrivalled light sublime,—
 Though martial Austria, and though all
 The might of Russia, and the Gaul,
 Though banded Europe stood her foes—
 The star of Brandenburg arose,
 Thou couldst not live to see her beam
 For ever quenched in Jena's stream.
 Lamented chief!—it was not given
 To thee to change the doom of heaven,
 And crush that dragon in its birth,
 Predestined scourge of guilty earth.
 Lamented chief!—not thine the power,
 To save in that presumptuous hour,
 When Prussia hurried to the field,
 And snatched the spear, but left the shield;
 Valour and skill 'twas thine to try,
 And, tried in vain, 'twas thine to die.
 Ill had it seemed thy silver hair
 The last, the bitterest pang to share,
 For princedom's reft, and scutcheons riven,
 And birthrights to usurpers given;
 Thy land's, thy children's wrongs to feel,
 And witness woes thou couldst not heal!
 On thee relenting Heaven bestows
 For honoured life an honoured close;
 And when revolves, in time's sure change,
 The hour of Germany's revenge,
 When, breathing fury for her sake,
 Some new Arminius shall awake,
 Her champion, ere he strike, shall come
 To whet his sword on Brunswick's tomb.

"Or of the Red-Cross hero* teach,
 Dauntless in dungeon as on breach:
 Alike to him the sea, the shore,
 The brand, the bridle, or the oar;
 Alike to him the war that calls
 Its votaries to the shattered walls,
 Which the grim Turk besmeared with blood,
 Against the Invincible made good;
 Or that, whose thundering voice could wake
 The silence of the polar lake,
 When stubborn Russ, and metall'd Swede,
 On the warped wave their death-game played;
 Or that, where vengeance and affright
 Howled round the father of the fight,

• Sir Sidney Smith.

Who snatched on Alexandria's sand
The conqueror's wreath with dying hand."

"Or, if to touch such chord be thine,
Restore the ancient tragic line,
And emulate the notes that rung
From the wild harp which silent hung.
By silver Avon's holy shore,
Till twice an hundred years rolled o'er;
When she, the bold Enchantress,† came,
With fearless hand and heart on flame!
From the pale willow snatched the treasure,
And swept it with a kindred measure,
Till Avon's swans, while rung the grove
With Monfort's hate and Basil's love,
Awakening at the inspired strain,
Deemed their own Shakspeare lived again."

Thy friendship thus thy judgment wronging,
With praises not to me belonging,
In task more meet for mightiest powers,
Wouldst thou engage my thriftless hours.
But say, my Erskine, hast thou weighed
That secret power by all obeyed,
Which warps not less the passive mind,
Its source concealed or undefined;
Whether an impulse, that has birth
Soon as the infant wakes on earth,
One with our feelings and our powers,
And rather part of us than ours;
Or whether fittier termed the sway
Of habit, formed in early day?
Howe'er derived, its force confessed
Rules with despotic sway the breast,
And drags us on by viewless chain,
While taste and reason plead in vain.
Look east, and ask the Belgian why,
Beneath Batavia's sultry sky,
He seeks not eager to inhale
The freshness of the mountain gale,
Content to rear his whitened wall
Reside the dank and dull canal?
He'll say, from youth he loved to see
The white sail gliding by the tree.
Or see yon weather-beaten hind,
Whose sluggish herds before him wind,
Whose tattered plaid and rugged cheek
His northern clime and kindred speak;
Through England's laughing meads he goes,
And England's wealth around him flows:
Ask, if it would content him well,
At ease in these gay plains to dwell,
Where hedge-rows spread a verdant screen,
And spires and forests intervene,

* Sir Ralph Abercromby

† Joanna Baillie

And the neat cottage peeps between?
No! not for these will he exchange
His dark Lochaber's boundless range,
Nor for fair Devon's meads forsake
Bennevis gray and Garry's lake.

Thus, while I ape the measure wild
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still with the chime
Return the thoughts of earlier time;
And feelings, roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.
Then rise those crags, that mountain tower,
Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour:
Though no broad river swept along,
To claim, perchance, heroic song;
Though sighed no groves in summer gale,
To prompt of love a softer tale;
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed,
Yet was poetic impulse given,
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.
It was a barren scene, and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;
But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honey-suckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruined wall.
I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade
The sun in all his round surveyed;
And still I thought that shattered tower
The mightiest work of human power;
And marvelled, as the aged hind
With some strange tale bewitched my mind
Of forayers, who, with headlong force,
Down from that strength had spurred their horse.
Their southern rapine to renew,
Far in the distant Cheviots blue,
And, home returning, filled the hall
With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.—
Methought that still with tramp and clang
The gateway's broken arches rang;
Methought grim features, seamed with scars,
Glared through the windows' rusty bars.
And ever, by the winter hearth,
Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
Of lovers' sleights, of ladies' charms,
Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms;
Of patriot battles, won of old
By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
Of later fields of feud and fight,
When, pouring from their Highland height,

The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
Had swept the scarlet ranks away.
While stretched at length upon the floor,
Again I fought each combat o'er,
Pebbles and shells, in order laid,
The mimic ranks of war displayed;
And onward still the Scottish Lion bore,
And still the scattered Southron fled before.

Still, with vain fondness, could I trace,
Anew, each kind familiar face,
That brightened at our evening fire;
From the thatched mansion's gray-haired Sire
Wise without learning, plain and good,
And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood;
Whose eye in age, quick, clear, and keen,
Showed what in youth its glance had been;
Whose doom discording neighbours sought,
Content with equity unbought;
To him the venerable Priest,
Our frequent and familiar guest,
Whose life and manners well could paint
Alike the student and the saint;
Alas! whose speech too oft I broke
With gambol rude and timeless joke:
For I was wayward, bold, and wild,
A self-willed imp, a grandame's child;
But half a plague, and half a jest,
Was still endured, beloved, caressed.

From me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask
The classic poet's well-conned task?
Nay, Erskine, nay—on the wild hill
Let the wild heathbell flourish still;
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,
But freely let the woodbine twine,
And leave untrimmed the eglantine:
Nay, my friend, nay—since oft thy praise
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays,
Since oft thy judgment could refine
My flattened thought, or cumbrous line,
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,
And in the minstrel spare the friend.
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!

CANTO THIRD.

THE HOSTEL, OR INN.

I.

THE livelong day Lord Marmion rode:
The mountain path the Palmer showed;
By glen and streamlet winded still,
Where stunted birches hid the rill.

They might not choose the lowland road,
 For the Merse forayers were abroad,
 Who, fired with hate and thirst of prey,
 Had scarcely failed to bar their way.
 Oft on the trampling band, from crown
 Of some tall cliff, the deer looked down;
 On wing of jet, from his repose
 In the deep heath, the black-cock rose;
 Sprung from the gorse the timid roe
 Nor waited for the bending bow;
 And when the stony path began,
 By which the naked peak they wan,
 Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.
 The noon had long been passed before
 They gained the height of Lammermoor;
 Thence winding down the northern way,
 Before them, at the close of day,
 Old Gifford's towers and hamlet lay.

II.

No summons calls them to the tower
 To spend the hospitable hour.
 To Scotland's camp the Lord was gone;
 His cautious dame, in bower alone,
 Dreaded her castle to unclose,
 So late, to unknown friends or foes.
 On through the hamlet as they paced,
 Before a porch, whose front was graced
 With bush and flagon trimly placed,
 Lord Marmion drew his rein:
 The village inn seemed large though rude,
 Its cheerful fire and hearty food
 Might well relieve his train.
 Down from their seats the horsemen sprang
 With jingling spurs the court-yard rung;
 They bind their horses to the stall,
 For forage, food, and firing call,
 And various clamour fills the hall;
 Weighing the labour with the cost,
 Toils everywhere the bustling host.

III.

Soon by the chimney's merry blaze,
 Through the rude hostel might you gaze;
 Might see, where, in dark nook aloof,
 The rafters of the sooty roof
 Bore wealth of winter cheer;
 Of sea-fowl dried, and solands store,
 And gammons of the tusky boar,
 And savoury haunch of deer.
 The chimney arch projected wide;
 Above, around it, and beside,
 Were tools for housewives' hand:
 Nor wanted, in that martial day,
 The implements of Scottish fray,
 The buckler, lance, and brand.

Beneath its shade, the place of state,
On oaken settle Marmion sate,
And viewed around the blazing hearth.
His followers mix in noisy mirth,
Whom with brown ale, in jolly tide,
From ancient vessels ranged aside,
Full actively their host supplied.

IV.

Theirs was the glee of martial breast,
And laughter theirs at little jest;
And oft Lord Marmion deigned to aid,
And mingle in the mirth they made:
For though, with men of high degree,
The proudest of the proud was he,
Yet, trained in camps, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart.
They love a captain to obey,
Boisterous as March, yet fresh as May;
With open hand, and brow as free,
Lover of wine, and minstrelsy;
Ever the first to scale a tower,
As venturous in a lady's bower
Such buxom chief shall lead his host
From India's fires to Zembla's frost.

V.

Resting upon his pilgrim staff,
Right opposite the Palmer stood;
His thin dark visage seen but half,
Half hidden by his hood.
Still fixed on Marmion was his look,
Which he, who ill such gaze could brook,
Strove by a frown to quell;
But not for that, though more than once
Full met their stern encountering glance,
The Palmer's visage fell.

VI.

By fits less frequent from the crowd
Was heard the burst of laughter loud;
For still, as squire and archer stared
On that dark face and matted beard,
Their glee and game declined.
All gazed at length in silence drear,
Unbroke, save when in comrade's ear
Some yeoman, wondering in his fear,
Thus whispered forth his mind:—
"Saint Mary! saw'st thou e'er such sight?
How pale his cheek, his eye how bright,
Whene'er the fire-brand's fickle light
Glances beneath his cowl!
Full on our Lord he sets his eye;
For his best palfrey, would not I
Endure that sullen scowl."—

VII.

But Marmion, as to chase the awe
Which thus had quelled their hearts, who saw
The ever-varying fire-light show
That figure stern and face of woe,
Now called upon a squire :—
“Fitz-Eustace, know'st thou not some lay,
To speed the lingering night away?
We slumber by the fire.”—

VIII.

“So please you,” thus the youth rejoined,
“Our choicest minstrel's left behind.
Ill may we hope to please your ear,
Accustomed Constant's strains to hear.
The harp full deftly can he strike,
And wake the lover's lute alike;
To dear Saint Valentine, no thrush
Sings livelier from a spring-tide bush;
No nightingale her love-lorn tune
More sweetly warbles to the moon.
Woe to the cause, whate'er it be,
Detains from us his melody,
Lavished on rocks, and billows stern,
Or duller monks of Lindisfarn.
Now must I venture as I may,
To sing his favourite roundelay.”

IX.

A deep voice Fitz-Eustace had,
The air he chose was wild and sad;
Such have I heard, in Scottish land,
Rise from the busy harvest band,
When falls before the mountaineer,
On lowland plains, the ripened ear.
Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,
Now a wild chorus swells the song:
Oft have I listened, and stood still
As it came softened up the hill,
And deemed it the lament of men
Who languished for their native glen;
And thought, how sad would be such sound,
On Susquehana's swampy ground,
Kentucky's wood-encumbered brake,
Or wild Ontario's boundless lake,
Where heart-sick exiles, in the strain,
Recalled fair Scotland's hills again!

X.

Song.

Where shall the lover rest,
Whom the fates sever
From his true maiden's breast,
Parted for ever?

Where, through groves deep and high,
Sounds the far billow,
Where early violets die,
Under the willow.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Soft shall be his pillow.

There, through the summer day,
Cool streams are laving;
There, while the tempests sway,
Scarce are boughs waving;
There, thy rest shalt thou take,
Parted for ever,
Never again to wake,
Never, O never.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never.

XI.

Where shall the traitor rest,
He, the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's breast,
Ruin, and leave her?
In the lost battle,
Borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle,
With groans of the dying.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. There shall he be lying.

Her wing shall the eagle flap
O'er the false-hearted;
His warm blood the wolf shall lap,
Ere life be parted.
Shame and dishonour sit
By his grave ever;
Blessing shall hallow it,—
Never, O never.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never.

XII.

It ceased, the melancholy sound;
And silence sunk on all around.
The air was sad; but sadder still
It fell on Marmion's ear,
And plained as if disgrace and ill,
And shameful death were near.
He drew his mantle past his face,
Between it and the band,
And rested with his head a space,
Reclining on his hand.
His thoughts I scan not; but I ween,
That, could their import have been seen,

The meanest groom in all the hall,
That e'er tied courser to a stall,
Would scarce have wished to be their prey,
For Lutterward and Fontenaye.

XIII.

High minds, of native pride and force,
Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse!
Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have,
Thou art the torturer of the brave;
Yet fatal strength they boast to steel
Their minds to bear the wounds they feel;
Even while they writhe beneath the smart
Of civil conflict in the heart.

For soon Lord Marmion raised his head,
And, smiling, to Fitz-Eustace said:—

“Is it not strange, that, as ye sung,
Seemed in mine ear a death-peal rung,
Such as in nunneries they toll
For some departing sister's soul?

Say, what may this portend?”
Then first the Palmer silence broke,
(The livelong day he had not spoke,
“The death of a dear friend.”

XIV.

Marmion, whose steady heart and eye
Ne'er changed in worst extremity;
Marmion, whose soul could scantily brook,
Even from his king, a haughty look;
Whose accent of command controlled,
In camps, the boldest of the bold—
Thought, look, and utterance, failed him now,
Fallen was his glance, and flushed his brow:

For either in the tone,
Or something in the Palmer's look,
So full upon his conscience strook,

That answer he found none.
Thus oft it haps, that when within
They shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave;
A fool's wild speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave.

XV.

Well might he falter!—by his aid
Was Constance Beverley betrayed;
Not that he augured of the doom,
Which on the living closed the tomb;
But, tired to hear the desperate maid
Threaten by turns, beseech, upbraid;
And wroth, because, in wild despair,
She practised on the life of Claro;
Its fugitive the church he gave,
Though not a victim but a slave!

And deemed restraint in convent strange,
Would hide her wrongs, and her revenge.
Himself, proud Henry's favourite peer
Held Romish thunders, idle fear,
Secure his pardon he might hold,
For some slight mulct of penance-gold.
Thus judging, he gave secret way,
When the stern priests surprised their prey :
His train but deemed the favourite page
Was left behind, to spare his age ;
Or other if they deemed, none dared
To mutter what he thought and heard :
Woe to the vassal, who durst pry
Into Lord Marmion's privacy !

XVI.

His conscience slept—he deemed her well,
And safe secured in distant cell ;
But, wakened by her favourite lay,
And that strange Palmer's boding say,
That fell so ominous and drear,
Full on the object of his fear,
To aid remorse's venom'd throes,
Dark tales of convent vengeance rose ;
And Constance, late betrayed and scorned,
All lovely on his soul returned :
Lovely as when, at treacherous call,
She left her convent's peaceful wall,
Crimsoned with shame, with terror mute,
Dreading alike escape, pursuit,
Till love, victorious o'er alarms,
Bid fears and blushes in his arms.

XVII.

"Alas!" he thought, "how changed that mien!
How changed these timid looks have been,
Since years of guilt, and of disguise,
Have steel'd her brow, and arm'd her eyes!
No more of virgin terror speaks
The blood that mantles in her cheeks ;
Fierce, and unfeminine, are there,
Frenzy for joy, for grief despair ;
And I the cause—for whom were given
Her peace on earth, her hopes in heaven!—
Would," thought he, as the picture grows,
"I on its stalk had left the rose!
Oh, why should man's success remove
The very charms that wake his love!
Her convent's peaceful solitude
Is now a prison harsh and rude ;
And, pent within the narrow cell,
How will her spirit chafe and swell!
How brook the stern monastic laws!
The penance how—and I the cause!—

Vigil and scourge—perhaps even worse;”—
 And twice he rose to cry “To horse!”
 And twice his sovereign’s mandate came,
 Like damp upon a kindling flame;
 And twice he thought, “Gave I not charge
 She should be safe, though not at large?
 They durst not, for their island, shred
 One golden ringlet from her head.”

XVIII.

While thus in Marmion’s bosom strove
 Repentance and reviving love,
 Like whirlwinds, whose contending sway
 I’ve seen Loch Vennachar obey,
 Their Host, the Palmer’s speech had heard,
 And, talkative, took up the word:—
 “Ay, reverend Pilgrim, you, who stray
 From Scotland’s simple land away,
 To visit realms afar,
 Full often learn the art to know,
 Of future weal, or future woe,
 By word, or sign, or star;
 Yet might a knight his fortune hear,
 If, knight-like, he despises fear,
 Not far from hence;—if fathers old
 Aright our hamlet legend told.”—
 These broken words the menials move,
 (For marvels still the vulgar love;)
 And, Marmion giving licence cold,
 His tale the Host thus gladly told.

XIX.

The Host’s Tale.

“A clerk could tell what years have flown
 Since Alexander filled our throne,
 Third monarch of that warlike name,
 And eke the time when here he came
 To seek Sir Hugo, then our lord:
 A braver never drew a sword;
 A wiser never, at the hour
 Of midnight, spoke the word of power;
 The same, whom ancient records call
 The founder of the Goblin Hall.
 I would, Sir Knight, your longer stay
 Gave you that cavern to survey.
 Of lofty roof, and ample size,
 Beneath the castle deep it lies:
 To hew the living rock profound,
 The floor to pave, the arch to round,
 There never toiled a mortal arm,
 It all was wrought by word and charm;
 And I have heard my grandsire say,
 That the wild clamour and affray
 Of those dread artisans of hell,
 Who laboured under Hugo’s spell,

Sounded as loud as ocean's war,
Among the caverns of Dunbar.

XX.

"The king Lord Gifford's castle sought,
Deep-labouring with uncertain thought:
Even then he mustered all his host,
To meet upon the western coast;
For Norse and Danish galleys plied
Their oars within the firth of Clyde.
'There floated Haco's banner trim,
Above Norwegian warriors grim,
Savage of heart, and large of limb;
Threatening both continent and isle,
Bute, Arran, Cunninghame, and Kyle.
Lord Gifford, deep beneath the ground,
Heard Alexander's bugle sound,
And tarried not his garb to change,
But, in his wizard habit strange,
Came forth, a quaint and fearful sight;
His mantle lined with fox-skins white;
His high and wrinkled forehead bore
A pointed cap, such as of yore
Clerks say that Pharaoh's Magi wore;
His shoes were marked with cross and spell;
Upon his breast a pentacle;
His zone, of virgin parchment thin,
Or, as some tell, of dead man's skin,
Bore many a planetary sign,
Combust, and retrograde, and trine;
And in his hand he held prepared,
A naked sword without a guard.

XXI.

"Dire dealings with the fiendish race
Had marked strange lines upon his face;
Vigil and fast had worn him grim,
His eyesight dazzled seemed, and dim,
As one unused to upper day;
Even his own menials with dismay
Beheld, Sir Knight, the grisly sire,
In this unwonted wild attire;
Unwonted, for traditions run,
He seldom thus beheld the sun.
'I know,' he said,—his voice was hoarse,
And broken seemed its hollow force,—
'I know the cause, although untold,
Why the king seeks his vassal's hold:
Vainly from me my liege would know
His kingdom's future weal or woe:
But yet, if strong his arm and heart,
His courage may do more than art.

XXII.

"Of middle air the demons proud,
Who ride upon the racking cloud,

Can read, in fixed or wandering star,
 The issue of events afar;
 But still their sullen aid withhold,
 Save when by mightier force controlled.
 Such late I summoned to my hall;
 And though so potent was the call,
 That scarce the deepest nook of hell
 I deemed a refuge from the spell,
 Yet, obstinate in silence still,
 The haughty demon mocks my skill.
 But thou,—who little know'st thy might,
 As born upon that blessed night,
 When yawning graves, and dying groan,
 Proclaimed hell's empire overthrown,—
 With untaught valour shalt compel
 Response denied to magic spell.'—
 'Gramercy,' quoth our Monarch free,
 'Place him but front to front with me,
 And, by this good and honoured brand,
 The gift of Cœur-de-Lion's hand,
 Soothly I swear, that, tide what tide,
 The demon shall a buffet bide.'—
 His bearing bold the wizard viewed,
 And thus, well pleased, his speech renewed:
 'There spoke the blood of Malcolm!—mark
 Forth pacing hence, at midnight dark,
 The rampart seek, whose circling crown
 Crests the ascent of yonder down;
 A southern entrance shalt thou find;
 There halt, and there thy bugle wind,
 And trust thine elfin foe to see,
 In guise of thy worst enemy;
 Couch then thy lance, and spur thy steed
 Upon him! and St George to speed!
 If he go down, thou soon shalt know
 Whate'er these airy sprites can show;
 If thy heart fail thee in the strife,
 I am no warrant for thy life.'

XXIII.

"Soon as the midnight bell did ring,
 Alone, and armed, forth rode the King
 To that old camp's deserted round:
 Sir Knight, you well might mark the mound,
 Left hand the town,—the Pictish race
 The trench, long since, in blood did trace;
 The moor around is brown and bare,
 The space within is green and fair.
 The spot our village children know,
 For there the earliest wild flowers grow;
 But woe betide the wandering wight,
 That treads its circle in the night!
 The breadth across, a bowshot clear,
 Gives ample space for full career;

Opposed to the four points of heaven,
 By four deep gaps is entrance given.
 The southernmost our monarch passed,
 Halted, and blew a gallant blast;
 And on the north, within the ring,
 Appeared the form of England's king,
 Who then a thousand leagues afar,
 In Palestine waged holy war:
 Yet arms like England's did he wield,
 Alike the leopards in the shield,
 Alike his Syrian courser's frame,
 The rider's length of limb the same:
 Long afterwards did Scotland know,
 Fell Edward * was her deadliest foe.

XXIV.

"The vision made our monarch start,
 But soon he manned his noble heart,
 And in the first career they ran,
 The Elfin Knight fell horse and man;
 Yet did a splinter of his lance
 Through Alexander's visor glance,
 And razed the skin—a puny wound.
 The king, light leaping to the ground,
 With naked blade his phantom foe
 Compelled the future to show.
 Of Largs he saw the glorious plain,
 Where still gigantic bones remain,
 Memorial of the Danish war;
 Himself he saw amid the field,
 On high his brandished war-axe wield,
 And strike proud Haco from his car,
 While all around the shadowy kings,
 Denmark's grim ravens covered their wings.
 'Tis said, that, in that awful night,
 Remoter visions met his sight,
 Foreshowing future conquests far,
 When our sons' sons wage northern war;
 A royal city, tower and spire,
 Reddened the midnight sky with fire;
 And shouting crews her navy bore,
 Triumphant, to the victor shore.
 Such signs may learned clerks explain,
 They pass the wit of simple swain.

XXV.

"The joyful king turned home again,
 Headed his host, and quelled the Dane;
 But yearly, when returned the night
 Of his strange combat with the sprite,
 His wound must bleed and smart;
 Lord Gifford then would gibing say,
 'Bold as ye were, my liege, ye pay
 The penance of your start.'

* Edward I., surnamed Longshanks.

Long since, beneath Dunfermline's nave,
 King Alexander fills his grave,
 Our Lady give him rest!
 Yet still the nightly spear and shield
 The elfin warrior doth wield,
 Upon the brown hill's breast;
 And many a knight hath proved his chanco
 In the charmed ring to break a lance,
 But all have foully sped;
 Save two, as legends tell, and they
 Were Wallace wight, and Gilbert Hay.--
 Gentles, my tale is said."

XXVI.

The quaighs * were deep, the liquor strong,
 And on the tale the yeoman throng
 Had made a comment sage and long,
 But Marmion gave a sign;
 And, with their lord, the squires retire;
 The rest, around the hostel fire,
 Their drowsy limbs recline;
 For pillow, underneath each head
 The quiver and the targe were laid:
 Deep slumbering on the hostel floor,
 Oppressed with toil and ale, they snore:
 The dying flame, in fitful change,
 Threw on the group its shadows strange.

XXVII.

Apart, and nestling in the hay
 Of a waste loft, Fitz-Eustace lay;
 Scarce, by the pale moonlight, were seen
 The foldings of his mantle green:
 Lightly he dreamt, as youth will dream,
 Of sport by thicket, or by stream,
 Of hawk or hound, of ring or glove,
 Or, lighter yet, of lady's love.
 A cautious tread his slumber broke,
 And, close beside him, when he woke,
 In moonbeam half, and half in gloom,
 Stood a tall form with nodding plume;
 But, ere his dagger Eustace drew
 His master Marmion's voice he knew.

XXVIII.

—"Fitz-Eustace! rise,—I cannot rest;
 Yon churl's wild legend haunts my breast,
 And graver thoughts have chafed my mood;
 The air must cool my feverish blood;
 And fain would I ride forth, to see
 The scene of elfin chivalry.
 Arise, and saddle me my steed;
 And, gentle Eustace, take good heed
 Thou dost not rouse these drowsy slaves;
 I would not that the prating knaves
 A wooden cup composed of staves hooped together.

Had cause for saying, o'er their alo,
That I could credit such a tale."
Then softly down the steps they slid,
Eustace the stable door undid,
And, darkling, Marmion's steed arrayed,
While, whispering, thus the Baron said :

XXIX.

"Didst never, good my youth, hear tell,
That in the hour when I was born,
St George, who graced my sire's chapelle,
Down from his steed of marble fell,

A weary wight forlorn?
The flattering chaplains all agree,
The champion left his steed to me :
I would, the omen's truth to show,
That I could meet this Elfin Foe!
Blithe would I battle, for the right
To ask one question at the sprite :—
Vain thought! for elves, if elves there be,
An empty race, by fount or sea,
To dashing waters dance and sing,
Or round the green oak wheel their ring."—
Thus speaking, he his steed bestrode,
And from the hostel slowly rode.

XXX.

Fitz-Eustace followed him abroad,
And marked him pace the village road,
And listened to his horse's tramp,
Till, by the lessening sound,
He judged that of the Pictish camp
Lord Marmion sought the round.
Wonder it seemed, in the squire's eyes,
That one, so wary held, and wise,—
Of whom 'twas said, he scarce received
For gospel, what the church believed,—
Should, stirred by idle tale,
Ride forth in silence of the night,
As hoping half to meet a sprite,
Arrayed in plate and mail.
For little did Fitz-Eustace know,
That passions, in contending flow,
Unfix the strongest mind;
Wearied from doubt to doubt to flee,
We welcome fond credulity,
Guide confident, though blind.

XXXI.

Little for this Fitz-Eustace cared,
But, patient, waited till he heard,
At distance, pricked to utmost speed,
The foot-tramp of a flying steed,
Come town-ward rushing on :
First, dead, as if on turf it trod,
Then, clattering on the village road,—

In other pace than forth he yode,*
 Returned Lord Marmion.
 Down hastily he sprung from selle,
 And, in his haste, well nigh he fell;
 To the squire's hand the rein he threw,
 And spoke no word as he withdrew;
 But yet the moonlight did betray,
 The falcon-crest was soiled with clay;
 And plainly might Fitz-Eustace see,
 By stains upon the charger's knee,
 And his left side, that on the moor
 He had not kept his footing sure.
 Long musing on these wondrous signs;
 At length to rest the squire reclines,
 Broken and short; for still, between,
 Would dreams of terror intervene:
 Eustace did ne'er so blithely mark
 The first notes of the morning lark.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FOURTH.

TO JAMES SKENE, ESQ.

Ashestiel, Etrick's Forest.

AN ancient Minstrel sagely said,
 "Where is the life which late we led?"
 That motley clown, in Arden wood,
 Whom humorous Jaques with envy viewed,
 Not even that clown could amplify,
 On this trite text so long as I.
 Eleven years we now may tell,
 Since we have known each other well;
 Since, riding side by side, our hand
 First drew the voluntary brand;
 And sure, through many a varied scene,
 Unkindness never came between.
 Away these winged years have flown,
 To join the mass of ages gone;
 And though deep marked, like all below,
 With chequered shades of joy and woe;
 Though thou o'er realms and seas hast ranged,
 Marked cities lost, and empires changed,
 While here, at home, my narrower ken
 Somewhat of manners saw, and men;
 Though varying wishes, hopes, and fears,
 Fevered the progress of these years,
 Yet now, days, weeks, and months, but seem
 The recollection of a dream,
 So still we glide down to the sea
 Of fathomless eternity.

Even now, it scarcely seems a day,
 Since first I tuned this idle lay;

* Used by old poets for "went."

A task so often thrown aside,
When leisure graver cares denied,
That now, November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore;
Their vexed boughs streaming to the sky,
Once more our naked birches sigh;
And Blackhouse heights, and Ettricke Pen,
Have donned their wintry shrouds again;
And mountain dark, and flooded mead,
Bid us forsake the banks of Tweed.
Earlier than wont along the sky,
Mixed with the rack, the snow-mists fly:
The shepherd, who, in summer sun,
Has something of our envy won,
As thou with pencil, I with pen,
The features traced of hill and glen;
He who, outstretched, the livelong day,
At ease among the heath-flowers lay,
Viewed the light clouds with vacant look,
Or slumbered o'er his tattered book,
Or idly busied him to guide
His angle o'er the lessened tide;—
At midnight now, the snowy plain
Finds sterner labour for the swain.

When red hath set the beamless sun,
Through heavy vapours dank and dun;
When the tired ploughman, dry and warm,
Hears, half asleep, the rising storm
Hurling the hail, and sleeted rain,
Against the casement's tinkling pane;
The sounds that drive wild deer, and fox,
To shelter in the brake and rocks,
Are warnings which the shepherd ask
To dismal and to dangerous task.
Oft he looks forth, and hopes, in vain,
The blast may sink in mellowing rain;
Till, dark above, and white below,
Decided drives the flaky snow,
And forth the hardy swain must go.
Long, with dejected look and whine,
To leave the hearth his dogs repine;
Whistling, and cheering them to aid,
Around his back he wroathes the plaid:
His flock he gathers, and he guides
To open downs, and mountain sides,
Where, fiercest though the tempest blow,
Least deeply lies the drift below.
The blast, that whistles o'er the fells,
Stiffens his locks to icicles;
Oft he looks back, while, streaming far,
His cottage window seems a star,—

Loses its feeble gleam,—and then
 Turns patient to the blast again,
 And, facing to the tempest's sweep,
 Drives through the gloom his lagging sheep :
 If fails his heart, if his limbs fail,
 Benumbing death is in the gale ;
 His paths, his landmarks—all unknown,
 Close to the hut, no more his own,
 Close to the aid he sought in vain,
 The morn may find the stiffened swain :
 His widow sees, at dawning pale,
 His orphans raise their feeble wail ;
 And close beside him, in the snow,
 Poor Yarrow, partner of their woe,
 Couches upon his master's breast,
 And licks his cheek, to break his rest.

Who envies now the shepherd's lot,
 His healthy fare, his rural cot,
 His summer couch by greenwood tree,
 His rustic kirk's * loud revelry,
 His native hill notes, tuned on high,
 To Marion of the blithesome eye ;
 His crook, his scrip, his oaten reed,
 And all Arcadia's golden creed ?

Changes not so with us, my Skene,
 Of human life the varying scene ?
 Our youthful summer oft we see
 Dance by on wings of game and glee,
 While the dark storm reserves its rage,
 Against the winter of our age :
 As he, the ancient chief of Troy,
 His manhood spent in peace and joy ;
 But Grecian fires, and loud alarms,
 Called ancient Priam forth to arms.
 Then happy those,—since each must drain
 His share of pleasure, share of pain,—
 Then happy those, beloved of heaven,
 To whom the mingled cup is given ;
 Whose lenient sorrows find relief,
 Whose joys are chastened by their grief.
 And such a lot, my Skene, was thine,
 When thou of late wert doomed to twine.—
 Just when thy bridal hour was by,—
 The cypress with the myrtle tie ;
 Just on thy bride her Sire had smiled,
 And blessed the union of his child,
 When love must change its joyous cheer,
 And wipe affection's filial tear.
 Nor did the actions next his end,
 Speak more the father than the friend
 Scarce had lamented Forbes paid
 The tribute to his Minstrel's shade ;

* The Scottish harvest-home.

The tale of friendship scarce was told,
Ere the narrator's heart was cold.
Far may we search before we find
A heart so manly and so kind.
But not around his honoured urn,
Shall friends alone, and kindred mourn;
The thousand eyes his care had dried,
Pour at his name a bitter tide;
And frequent falls the grateful dew,
For benefits the world ne'er knew.
If mortal charity dare claim
The Almighty's attributed name,
Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
"The widow's shield, the orphan's stay."
Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
My verse intrudes on this sad theme;
For sacred was the pen that wrote,—
"Thy father's friend forget thou not:"
And grateful title may I plead,
For many a kindly word and deed,
To bring my tribute to his grave:—
'Tis little—but 'tis all I have.

To thee, perchance, this rambling strain
Recalls our summer walks again;
When doing nought,—and, to speak true,
Not anxious to find aught to do,—
The wild unbounded hills we ranged;
While oft our talk its topic changed,
And desultory, as our way,
Ranged unconfined from grave to gay.
Even when it flagged, as oft will chance,
No effort made to break its trance,
We could right pleasantly pursue
Our sports in social silence too.
Thou gravely labouring to portray
The blighted oak's fantastic spray;
I spelling o'er, with much delight,
The legend of that antique knight,
Tirante by name, ycleped the White.
At either's feet a trusty squire,
Pandour and Camp, with eyes of fire,
Jealous, each other's motions viewed,
And scarce suppressed their ancient feud.
The laverock whistled from the cloud;
The stream was lively, but not loud;
From the white-thorn the May-flower shed
Its dewy fragrance round our head;
Not Ariel lived more merrily
Under the blossomed bough, than we.

And blithesome nights, too, have been ours,
When Winter stript the summer's bowers;
Careless we heard, what now I hear,
The wild blast sighing deep and drear,

When fires were bright, and lamps beamed gay
 And ladies tuned the lovely lay;
 And he was held a laggard soul,
 Who shunned to quaff the sparkling bowl.
 Then he, whose absence we deplore,
 Who breathes the gales of Devon's shore,
 The longer missed, bewailed the more;
 And thou, and I, and dear-loved R—,
 And one whose name I may not say—
 For not Mimosa's tender tree
 Shrinks sooner from the touch than he—
 In merry chorus, well combined,
 With laughter drowned the whistling wind.
 Mirth was within; and Care without
 Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout.
 Not but amid the buxom scene
 Some grave discourse might intervene—
 Of the good horse that bore him best,
 His shoulder, hoof, and arching crest;
 For, like mad Tom's,* our chiefest care,
 Was horse to ride, and weapon wear.
 Such nights we've had, and, though the game
 Of manhood be more sober tame,
 And though the field-day, or the drill,
 Seem less important now—yet still
 Such may we hope to share again.
 The sprightly thought inspires my strain,
 And mark, how like a horseman true,
 Lord Marmion's march I thus renew.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE CAMP.

I.

EUSTACE, I said, did blithely mark
 The first notes of the merry lark.
 The lark sung shrill, the cock he crew,
 And loudly Marmion's bugles blew,
 And, with their light and lively call,
 Brought groom and yeoman to the stall.
 Whistling they came, and free of heart;
 But soon their mood was changed:
 Complaint was heard on every part,
 Of something disarranged.
 Some clamoured loud for armour lost;
 Some brawled and wrangled with the host;
 "By Becket's bones," cried one, "I fear
 That some false Scot has stolen my spear!"
 Young Blount, Lord Marmion's second squiro,
 Found his steed wet with sweat and mire;
 Although the rated horse-boy sware,
 Last night he dressed him sleek and fair.

* See "King Lear."

While chafed the impatient squire like thunder,
Old Hubert shouts, in fear and wonder,—
“Help, gentle Blount! help, comrades all!
Bevis lies dying in his stall:
To Marmion who the plight dare tell,
Of the good steed he loves so well?”
Gaping for fear and ruth, they saw
The charger panting on his straw;
Till one, who would seem wisest, cried,—
“What else but evil could betide,
With that cursed Palmer for our guide?
Better we had through mire and bush
Been lanthorn-led by Friar Rush.”

II.

Fitz-Eustace, who the cause but guessed,
Nor wholly understood,
His comrades' clamorous complaints suppressed;
He knew Lord Marmion's mood.
Him, ere he issued forth, he sought,
And found deep plunged in gloomy thought,
And did his tale display
Simply, as if he knew of nought
To cause such disarray.

Lord Marmion gave attention cold,
Nor marvelled at the wonders told,—
Passed them as accidents of course,
And bade his clarions sound to horse.

III.

Young Henry Blount, meanwhile, the cost
Had reckoned with their Scottish host;
And, as the charge he cast and paid,
“Ill thou deserv'st thy hire,” he said;
“Dost see, thou knave, my horse's plight?
Fairies have ridden him all the night,
And left him in a foam!

I trust, that soon a conjuring band,
With English cross and blazing brand,
Shall drive the devils from this land,
To their infernal home:

For in this haunted den, I trow,
All night they trampled to and fro.”
The laughing host looked on the hire,—
“Gramercy, gentle southern squire,
And if thou com'st among the rest,
With Scottish broad-sword to be blessed,
Sharp be the brand, and sure the blow,
And short the pang to undergo.”—
Here stayed their talk—for Marmion
Gave now the signal to set on.
The Palmer showing forth the way,
They journeyed all the morning day.

IV.

The green-sward way was smooth and good,
Through Humble's and through Saltoun's wood;

A forest glade, which, varying still,
Here gave a view of dale and hill;
There narrower closed, till over head
A vaulted screen the branches made.
"A pleasant path," Fitz-Eustace said;
"Such as where errant knights might see
Adventures of high chivalry;
Might meet some damsel flying fast,
With hair unbound, and looks aghast;
And smooth and level course were here,
In her defence to break a spear.
Here, too, are twilight nooks and dells;
And oft, in such, the story tells,
The damsel kind, from danger freed,
Did grateful pay her champion's meed."—
He spoke to cheer Lord Marmion's mind:
Perchance to show his lore designed;
For Eustace much had pored
Upon a huge romantic tome,
In the hall-window of his home,
Imprinted at the antique dome
Of Caxton or De Worde.
Therefore he spoke—but spoke in vain,
For Marmion answered nought again.

V.

Now sudden distant trumpets shrill,
In notes prolonged by wood and hill,
Were heard to echo far;
Each ready archer grasped his bow,
But by the flourish soon they know,
They breathed no point of war.
Yet cautious, as in foeman's land,
Lord Marmion's order speeds the band,
Some opener ground to gain;
And scarce a furlong had they rode,
When thinner trees, receding, showed
A little woodland plain.
Just in that advantageous glade,
The halting troop a line had made,
As forth from the opposing shade
Issued a gallant train.

VI.

First came the trumpets, at whose clang
So late the forest echoes rang;
On prancing steeds they forward pressed,
With scarlet mantle, azure vest;
Each at his trump a banner wore,
Which Scotland's royal scutcheon bore:
Heralds and pursuivants, by name
Bute, Islay, Marchmont, Rothsay, came.
In painted tabards, proudly showing
Gules, Argent, Or, and Azure glowing,

Attendant on a King-at-arms,
Whose hand the armorial truncheon held,
That feudal strife had often quelled,
When wildest its alarms.

VII.

He was a man of middle age;
In aspect manly, grave, and sage,
As on king's errand come;
But in the glances of his eye,
A penetrating, keen, and sly
Expression found its home;
The flash of that satiric rage,
Which, bursting on the early stage,
Branded the vices of the age,
And broke the keys of Rome.
On milk-white palfrey forth he paced;
His cap of maintenance was graced
With the proud heron-plume.
From his steed's shoulder, loin, and breast,
Silk housings swept the ground,
With Scotland's arms, device, and crest,
Embroidered round and round.
The double tressure might you see,
First by Achaius borne,
The thistle, and the fleur-de-lis,
And gallant unicorn.
So bright the king's armorial coat,
That scarce the dazzled eye could note,
In living colours, blazoned brave,
The Lion, which his title gave.
A train, which well beseeemed his state,
But all unarmed, around him wait.
Still is thy name in high account,
And still thy verse has charms,
Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,
Lord Lion King-at-arms!

VIII.

Down from his horse did Marmion spring,
Soon as he saw the Lion-King;
For well the stately Baron knew,
To him such courtesy was due,
Whom royal James himself had crowned,
And on his temples placed the round
Of Scotland's ancient diadem;
And wet his brow with hallowed wine,
And on his finger given to shine
The emblematic gem.
Their mutual greetings duly made,
The Lion thus his message said:—
"Though Scotland's King hath deeply swore,
Ne'er to knit faith with Henry more;
And strictly hath forbid resort
From England to his royal court:

Yet, for he knows Lord Marmion's name,
 And honours much his warlike fame,
 My liege hath deemed it shame, and lack
 Of courtesy, to turn him back;
 And by his order, I, your guide,
 Must lodging fit and fair provide,
 Till finds King James meet time to see
 The flower of English chivalry."

IX.

Though inly chafed at this delay,
 Lord Marmion bears it as he may.
 Tho Palmer, his mysterious guide,
 Beholding thus his place supplied,
 Sought to take leave in vain:
 Strict was the Lion-King's command,
 That none who rode in Marmion's band
 Should sever from the train:
 "England has here enow of spies
 In Lady Heron's witching eyes;"
 To Marchmount thus, apart, he said,
 But fair pretext to Marmion made.
 The right-hand path they now decline,
 And trace against the stream the Tyne.

X.

At length up that wild dale they wind,
 Where Crichtoun Castle crowns the bank
 For there the Lion's care assigned
 A lodging meet for Marmion's rank.
 That castle rises on the steep
 Of the green vale of Tyne;
 And far beneath, where slow they creep
 From pool to eddy, dark and deep,
 Where alders moist, and willows weep,
 You hear her streams repine.
 The towers in different ages rose;
 Their various architecture shows
 The builders' various hands;
 A mighty mass, that could oppose,
 When deadliest-hatred fired its foes,
 The vengeful Douglas bands.

XI.

Crichtoun! though now thy miry court
 But pens the lazy steer and sheep,
 Thy turrets rude, and tottered Keep,
 Have been the minstrel's loved resort.
 Oft have I traced within thy fort,
 Of mouldering shields the mystic serje,
 Scutcheons of honour, or pretence,
 Quartered in old armorial sort,
 Remains of rude magnificence:
 Nor wholly yet hath time defaced
 Thy lordly galle-y fair:

Nor yet the stony cord unbraced,
Whose twisted knots, with roses laced,

Adorn thy ruined stair.

Still rises unimpaired, below,
The court-yard's graceful portico;
Above its cornice, row and row
Of fair hewn facets richly show

Their pointed diamond form,
Though there but houseless cattle go
To shield them from the storm.

And, shuddering, still may we explore,
Where oft whilome were captives pent,
The darkness of thy Massy More;*

Or, from thy grass-grown battlement,
May trace, in undulating line,
The sluggish mazes of the Tyne.

XII.

Another aspect Crichtoun showed,
As through its portal Marmion rode;
But yet 'twas melancholy state
Received him at the outer gate;
For none were in the castle then,
But women, boys, or aged men.
With eyes scarce dried, the sorrowing dame,
To welcome noble Marmion came;
Her son, a stripling twelve years old,
Proffered the Baron's rein to hold;
For each man, that could draw a sword,
Had marched that morning with their lord,
Earl Adam Hepburn—he who died
On Flodden, by his sovereign's side.
Long may his lady look in vain!
She ne'er shall see his gallant train
Come sweeping back through Crichtoun-Dean.
'Twas a brave race, before the name
Of hated Bothwell stained their fune.

XIII.

And here two days did Marmion rest,
With every rite that honour claims,
Attended as the King's own guest,—
Such the command of royal James;
Who marshalled then his land's array,
Upon the Borough moor that lay.
Perchance he would not foeman's eye
Upon his gathering host should pry,
Till full prepared was every band
To march against the English land.
Here while they dwelt, did Lindsey's wit
Oft cheer the Baron's moodier fit;
And, in his turn, he knew to prize
Lord Marmion's powerful mind and wise—
Trained in the lore of Rome and Greece,
And policies of war and peace.

* The pit or prison vault.

XIV.

It chanced, as fell the second night,
 That on the battlements they walked.
 And, by the slowly fading light,
 Of varying topics talked;
 And, unaware, the Herald-bard
 Said Marmion might his toil have spared.
 In travelling so far;
 For that a messenger from heaven
 In vain to James had counsel given
 Against the English war:
 And, closer questioned, thus he told
 A tale, which chronicles of old
 In Scottish story have enrolled:—

XV.

Sir David Lindsay's Tale.

"Of all the palaces so fair,
 Built for the royal dwelling,
 In Scotland, far beyond compare
 Linlithgow is excelling;
 And in its park, in jovial June,
 How sweet the merry linnet's tune,
 How blithe the blackbird's lay!
 The wild buck bells from ferny brake,
 The coot dives merry on the lake,
 The saddest heart might pleasure take
 To see all nature gay.
 But June is to our Sovereign dear
 The heaviest month in all the year:
 Too well his cause of grief you know,—
 June saw his father's overthrow.
 Woe to the traitors, who could bring
 The princely boy against his King!
 Still in his conscience burns the sting.
 In offices as strict as Lent,
 King James's June is ever spent.

XVI.

"When last this ruthful month was come
 And in Linlithgow's holy dome
 The King, as wont, was praying;
 While for his royal father's soul
 The chanter sung, the bells did toll,
 The Bishop mass was saying—
 For now the year brought round again
 The day the luckless king was slain—
 In Katharine's aisle the monarch knelt,
 With sackcloth shirt, and iron belt,
 And eyes with sorrow streaming;
 Around him, in their stalls of state,
 The Thistle's Knight-Companions sate,
 Their banners o'er them beaming.
 I too was there, and, sooth to tell,
 Bedeafened with the jangling knell.

Was watching where the sunbeams fell,
 Through the stained casement gleaming;
 But, while I marked what next befell,
 It seemed as I were dreaming.
 Stepped from the crowd a ghostly wight,
 In azure gown, with cincture white;
 His forehead bald, his head was bare,
 Down hung at length his yellow hair.—
 Now, mock me not, when, good my lord,
 I pledge to you my knightly word,
 That, when I saw his placid grace,
 His simple majesty of face,
 His solemn bearing, and his pace
 So stately gliding on;
 Seemed to me ne'er did limner paint
 So just an image of the Saint,
 Who propped the Virgin in her faint,—
 The loved Apostle John.

XVII.

“He stepped before the Monarch's chair,
 And stood with rustic plainness there,
 And little reverence made;
 Nor head, nor body, bowed nor bent,
 But on the desk his arm he leant,
 And words like these he said,
 In a low voice,—but never tone
 So thrilled through vein, and nerve, and bone:—
 ‘My mother sent me from afar,
 Sir King, to warn thee not to war,—
 Woe waits on thine array;
 If war thou wilt, of woman fair,
 Her witching wiles and wanton snare,
 James Stuart, doubly warned, beware:
 God keep thee as he may!’—
 The wondering Monarch seemed to seek
 For answer, and found none;
 And when he raised his head to speak,
 The monitor was gone.
 The Marshal and myself had cast
 To stop him as he outward passed;
 But, lighter than the whirlwind's blast,
 He vanished from our eyes,
 Like sunbeam on the billow cast,
 That glances but, and dies.”

XVIII.

While Lindesay told this marvel strange,
 The twilight was so pale,
 He marked not Marmion's colour change,
 While listening to the tale:
 But, after a suspended pause,
 The Baron spoke:—“Of Nature's laws
 So strong I hold the force,
 That never superhuman cause
 Could e'er control their course;

And, three days since, had judged your aim
 Was but to make your guest your game.
 But I have seen, since past the Tweed,
 What much has changed my sceptic creed,
 And made me credit aught."—He stayed,
 And seemed to wish his words unsaid;
 But, by that strong emotion pressed,
 Which prompts us to unload our breast,
 Even when discovery's pain,
 To Lindesay did at length unfold
 The tale his village host had told,
 At Gifford, to his train.
 Nought of the Palmer says he there,
 And nought of Constance, or of Clare:
 The thoughts, which broke his sleep, he seems
 To mention but as feverish dreams.

XIX.

"In vain," said he, "to rest I spread
 My burning limbs, and couched my head,
 Fantastic thoughts returned;
 And, by their wild dominion led,
 My heart within me burned.
 So sore was the delirious goad,
 I took my steed, and forth I rode,
 And, as the moon shone bright and cold,
 Soon reached the camp upon the wold.
 The southern entrance I passed through,
 And halted, and my bugle blew.
 Methought an answer met my ear,—
 Yet was the blast so low and drear,
 So hollow, and so faintly blown,
 It might be echo of my own.

XX.

"Thus judging, for a little space
 I listened, ere I left the place;
 But scarce could trust my eyes,
 Nor yet can think they served me true.
 When sudden in the ring I view,
 In form distinct of shape and hue,
 A mounted champion rise.—
 I've fought, Lord-Lion, many a day,
 In single fight, and mixed affray,
 And ever, I myself may say,
 Have borne me as a knight;
 But when this unexpected foe
 Seemed starting from the gulf below,—
 I care not though the truth I show,—
 I trembled with affright;
 And as I placed in rest my spear,
 My hand so shook for very fear,
 I scarce could couch it right.

"Why need my tongue the issue tell?
 We ran our course,—my charger fell;—
 What could he 'gainst the shock of hell?
 I rolled upon the plain.
 High o'er my head, with threatening hand,
 The spectre shook his naked brand,—
 Yet did the worst remain;
 My dazzled eyes I upward cast,—
 Not opening hell itself could blast
 Their sight, like what I saw!
 Full on his face the moonbeam strook,—
 A face could never be mistook!
 I knew the stern vindictive look,
 And held my breath for awe.
 I saw the face of one who, fled
 To foreign climes, has long been dead.—
 I well believe the last;
 For no'er, from visor raised, did stare
 A human warrior, with a glare
 So grimly and so ghost.
 Thrice o'er my head he shook the blade;
 But when to good Saint George I prayed,
 (The first time o'er I asked his aid,)
 He plunged it in the sheath;
 And, on his courser mounting light,
 He seemed to vanish from my sight:
 The moonbeam drooped, and deepest night
 Sunk down upon the heath.—
 'Twere long to tell what cause I have
 To know his face, that met me there,
 Called by his hatred from the grave,
 To cumber upper air:
 Dead or alive, good cause had he
 To be my mortal enemy."—

XXII.

Marvelled Sir David of the Mount;
 Then, learned in story, 'gan recount
 Such chance had happed of old,
 When once, near Norham, there did fight
 A spectre fell, of fiendish might,
 In likeness of a Scottish knight,
 With Brian Bulmer bold,
 And trained him nigh to disallow
 The aid of his baptismal vow.
 "And such a phantom, too," 'tis said,
 With Highland broad-sword, targe, and ploid,
 And fingers red with gore,
 Is seen in Rothiemurcus glade,
 Or where the sable pine-trees shade
 Dark Tomantoul, and Achnaslaid,
 Dromouchty, or Glenmore.
 And yet, whate'er such legends say,
 Of warlike demon, ghost, or fay.

On mountain, moor, or plain,
Spotless in faith, in bosom bold,
True son of chivalry should hold
These midnight terrors vain:
For seldom have such spirits power
To harm, save in the evil hour,
When guilt we meditate within,
Or harbour unrepented sin."—
Lord Marmion turned him half aside,
And twice to clear his voice he tried,
Then pressed Sir David's hand,—
But nought, at length, in answer said:
And here their further converse stayed,
Each ordering that his band
Should bowne them with the rising day,
To Scotland's camp to take their way,—
Such was the King's command.

XXIII.

Early they took Dun-Edin's road,
And I could trace each step they trode,
Hill, brook, nor dell, nor rock, nor stone
Lies on the path to me unknown.
Much might it boast of storied lore;
But, passing such digression o'er,
Suffice it, that their route was laid
Across the furzy hills of Braid.
They passed the glen and scanty rill,
And climbed the opposing bank, until
They gained the top of Blackford Hill.

XXIV.

Blackford! on whose uncultured breast,
Among the broom, the thorn, and whit,
A truant boy, I sought the nest,
Or listed, as I lay at rest.
While rose, on breezes thin,
The murmur of the city crowd,
And, from his steeple jangling loud,
Saint Giles's mingling din.
Now, from the summit to the plain,
Waves all the hill with yellow grain;
And o'er the landscape as I look,
Nought do I see unchanged remain,
Save the rude cliffs and chiming brook
To me they make a heavy moan,
Of early friendships past and gone.

XXV.

But different far the change has been,
Since Marmion, from the crown
Of Blackford saw that martial scene
Upon the bent so brown:
Thousand pavilions, white as snow,
Spread o'er the Borough-moor below,
Upland, and dale, and down:—

A thousand did I say! I ween,
 Thousands on thousands there were seen,
 That chequered all the heath between
 The streamlet and the town;
 In crossing ranks extending far,
 Forming a camp irregular;
 Oft giving way, where still there stood
 Some reliques of the old oak-wood,
 That darkly huge did intervene,
 And tame the glaring white with green :
 In these extended lines there lay
 A martial kingdom's vast array.

XXVI.

For from Hebudes, dark with rain,
 To eastern Lodon's fertile plain,
 And from the southern Redswire edge,
 To farthest Rosse's rocky ledge;
 From west to east, from south to north,
 Scotland sent all her warriors forth.
 Marmion might hear the mingled hum
 Of myriads up the mountain come ;
 The horses' tramp, and tingling clank,
 Where chiefs reviewed their vassal rank,
 And charger's shrilling neigh;
 And see the shifting lines advance,
 While frequent flashed, from shield and lance,
 The sun's reflected ray.

XXVII.

Thin curling in the morning air,
 The wreaths of failing smoke declare,
 To embers now the brands decayed,
 Where the night-watch their fires had made.
 They saw, slow rolling on the plain,
 Full many a baggage-cart and wain,
 And dire artillery's clumsy car,
 By sluggish oxen tugged to war;
 And there were Borthwick's Sisters Seven,*
 And culverins which France had given.
 Ill-omened gift! the guns remain
 The conqueror's spoil on Flodden plain.

XXVIII.

Nor marked they less, where in the air
 A thousand streamers flaunted fair;
 Various in shape, device, and hue,
 Green, sanguine, purple, red, and blue,
 Broad, narrow, swallow-tailed, and square,
 Scroll, pennon, pensil, bandrol,† there
 O'er the pavilions flew.
 Highest, and midmost, was descried
 The royal banner, floating wide;

* Seven culverins so called, cast by one Borthwick.

† Each of these feudal ensigns intimated the different rank of those entitled to display them.

The staff, a pine-tree strong and straight,
 Pitched deeply in a massive stone,
 Which still in memory is shown,
 Yet bent beneath the standard's weight,
 Whene'er the western wind unrolled,
 With toll, the huge and cumbrous fold,
 And gave to view the dazzling field,
 Where, in proud Scotland's royal shield,
 The ruddy Lion ramped in gold.

XXIX.

Lord Marmion viewed the landscape bright,—
 He viewed it with a chief's delight,—
 Until within him burned his heart,
 And lightning from his eye did part,
 As on the battle-day;
 Such glance did falcon never dart,
 When stooping on his prey.
 "Oh! well, Lord-Lion, hast thou said,
 Thy King from warfare to dissuade
 Were but a vain essay;
 For, by Saint George, were that host mine,
 Not power infernal, nor divine,
 Should once to peace my soul incline,
 Till I had dimmed their armour's shine
 In glorious battle fray!"—
 Answered the bard, of milder mood:
 "Fair is the sight,—and yet 'twere good,
 That kings would think withal,
 When peace and wealth their land have blessed,
 'Tis better to sit still at rest,
 Than rise, perchance to fall."

XXX.

Still on the spot Lord Marmion stayed,
 For fairer scene he no'er surveyed.
 When sated with the martial show
 That peopled all the plain below,
 The wandering eye could o'er it go,
 And mark the distant city glow
 With gloomy splendour red;
 For on the smoke-wreaths, huge and slow,
 That round her sable turrets flow,
 The morning beams were shed,
 And tinged them with a lustre proud,
 Like that which streaks a thunder-cloud.
 Such dusky grandeur clothed the height,
 Where the huge castle holds its state,
 And all the steep slope down,
 Whose ridgy back leaves to the sky,
 Piled deep and massy, close and high,
 Mine own romantic town!
 But northward far, with purer blaze,
 On Ochil mountains fell the rays,
 And as each heathy top they kissed,
 It gleamed a purple amethyst.

Yonder the shores of Fife you saw;
Here Preston-Bay, and Berwick-Law;
And, broad between them rolled,
The gallant Firth the eye might note,
Whose islands on its bosom float,
Like emeralds chased in gold.
Fitz-Eustace' heart felt closely pent;
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle-hand,
And, making demi-volte in air,
Cried, "Where's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land!"
The Lindesay smiled his joy to see;
Nor Marmion's frown repressed his glee.

XXXI.

Thus while they looked, a flourish proud,
Where mingled trump, and clarion loud,
And fife and kottle-drum,
And sackbut deep, and psaltery,
And war-pipe with discordant cry,
And cymbal clattering to the sky,
Making wild music bold and high,
Did up the mountain come;
The whilst the bells, with distant chime,
Merrily tolled the hour of prime,
And thus the Lindesay spoke:—
"Thus clamour still the war-notes when
The King to mass his way has ta'en,
Or to Saint Catherine's of Sienne,
Or chapel of Saint Rocque.
To you they speak of martial fame;
But me remind of peaceful game,
When blither was their cheer.
Thrilling in Falkland-woods the air,
In signal none his steed should spare,
But strive which foremost might repair
To the downfall of the deer.

XXXII.

"Nor less," he said,— "when looking forth,
I view yon Empress of the North
Sit on her hilly throne;
Her palace's imperial bowers,
Her castle, proof to hostile powers,
Her stately halls, and holy towers—
Nor less," he said, "I moan,
To think what woe mischance may bring,
And how these merry bells may ring
The death-dirge of our gallant King,
Or, with their larum, call
The burghers forth to watch and ward,
'Gainst southern sack and fires to guard
Dun-Edin's leaguered wall.—

But not, for my presaging thought,
 Dream conquest sure, or cheaply bought!
 Lord Marmion, I say nay :—
 God is the guider of the field,
 He breaks the champion's spear and shield,—
 But thou thyself shalt say,
 When joins yon host in deadly stowre,
 That England's dames must weep in bower,
 Her monks the death-mass sing;
 For never saw'st thou such a power
 Led on by such a King.
 And now, down winding to the plain,
 The barriers of the camp they gain,
 And there they made a stay.—
 There stays the Minstrel, till he fling
 His hand o'er every Border string,
 And fit his harp the pomp to sing,
 Of Scotland's ancient Court and King,
 In the succeeding lay.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FIFTH.

TO GEORGE ELLIS, ESQ.

Edinburgh.

WHEN dark December glooms the day,
 And takes our autumn joys away;
 When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
 Upon the weary waste of snows,
 A cold and profitless regard,
 Like patron on a needy bard;
 When sylvan occupation's done,
 And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
 And hang, in idle trophy, near,
 The game pouch, fishing-rod, and spear;
 When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
 And greyhound with his length of limb,
 And pointer, now employed no more,
 Cumber our parlour's narrow floor;
 When in his stall the impatient steed
 Is long condemned to rest and feed;
 When from our snow-encircled home,
 Scarce cares the hardiest step to roam,
 Since path is none, save that to bring
 The needful water from the spring;
 When wrinkled news-page, thrice conned o'er,
 Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
 And darkling politician, crossed,
 Inveighs against the lingering post,
 And answering housewife sore complains
 Of carriers' snow-impeded wains:
 When such the country cheer, I come,
 Well pleased to seek our city home;

For converse, and for books, to change
The Forest's melancholy range,
And welcome, with renewed delight,
The busy day, and social night.

Not here need my desponding rhyme
Lament the ravages of time,
As erst by Newark's riven towers,
And Ettricke stripped of forest bowers.*
True,—Caledonia's Queen is changed,
Since on her dusky summit ranged,
Within its steepy limits pent,
By bulwark, line, and battlement,
And flanking towers, and laky flood,
Guarded and garrisoned she stood,
Denying entrance or resort,
Save at each tall embattled port;
Above whose arch, suspended, hung
Portcullis spiked with iron prong.
That long is gone,—but not so long,
Since early closed, and opening late,
Jealous revolved the studded gate;
Whose task from eve to morning tide
A wicket churlishly supplied.
Stern then, and steel-girt was thy brow,
Dun-Edin! O, how altered now,
When safe amid thy mountain court
Thou sitt'st, like Empress at her sport,
And liberal, unconfined, and free,
Flinging thy white arms to the sea,
For thy dark cloud, with umbered lower,
That hung o'er cliff, and lake, and tower,
Thou gleam'st against the western ray
Ten thousand lines of brighter day.

Not she, the championess of old,
In Spenser's magic tale enrolled,—
She for the charmed spear renowned,
Which forced each knight to kiss the ground,—
Not she more changed, when, placed at rest,
What time she was Malbecco's guest,†
She gave to flow her maiden vest;
When from the corslet's grasp relieved,
Free to the sight her bosom heaved;
Sweet was her blue eye's modest smile,
Erst hidden by the aventayle;
And down her shoulders graceful rolled
Her locks profuse, of paly gold.
They who whilome, in midnight fight,
Had marvelled at her matchless might,
No less her maiden charms approved,
But looking liked, and liking loved.‡

* See Introduction to Canto II.

† See "The Fairy Queen," book III. canto ix.

‡ "For every one her liked, and every one her loved."—*Spenser, as above*

The sight could jealous pangs beguile,
 And charm Malbecco's cares awhile;
 And he, the wandering Squire of Dames,
 Forgot his Columbella's claims,
 And passion, erst unknown, could gain
 The breast of blunt Sir Satyrane;
 Nor durst light Paridel advance,
 Bold as he was, a looser glance,—
 She charmed, at once, and tamed the heart,
 Incomparable Britomarte!

So thou, fair City! disarrayed
 Of battled wall, and rampart's aid,
 As stately seem'st, but lovelier far
 Than in that panoply of war.
 Nor deem that from thy fenceless throne
 Strength and security are flown;
 Still, as of yore, Queen of the North!
 Still canst thou send thy children forth.
 Ne'er readier at alarm-bell's call
 Thy burghers rose to man thy wall,
 Than now, in danger, shall be thine,
 Thy dauntless voluntary line;
 For fosse and turret proud to stand,
 Their breasts the bulwarks of the land.
 Thy thousands, trained to martial toil,
 Full red would stain their native soil,
 Ere from thy mural crown there fell
 The slightest knosp, or pinnacle.
 And if it come,—as come it may,
 Dun-Edin! that eventful day,—
 Renowned for hospitable deed,
 That virtue much with heaven may plead,
 In patriarchal times whose care
 Descending angels deigned to share;
 That claim may wrestle blessings down
 On those who fight for the Good Town,
 Destined in every age to be
 Refuge of injured royalty;
 Since first, when conquering York arose,
 To Henry meek she gave repose,
 Till late, with wonder, grief, and awe,
 Great Bourbon's reliques, sad she saw.

Truce to these thoughts!—for, as they rise,
 How gladly I avert mine eyes,
 Bodings, or true or false, to change,
 For fiction's fair romantic range.
 Or for Tradition's dubious light,
 That hovers 'twixt the day and night:
 Dazzling alternately and dim,
 Her wavering lamp I'd rather trim,
 Knights, squires, and lovely dames to see,
 Creation of my fantasy,

Than gaze abroad on reeky fen,
And make of mists invading men.—
Who loves not more the night of June
Than dull December's gloomy noon?
The moonlight than the fog of frost?
And can we say, which cheats the most?

But who shall teach my harp to gain
A sound of the romantic strain,
Whose Anglo-Norman tones whilere
Could win the Second Henry's ear,
Famed Beauchamp called, for that he loved
The minstrel, and his lay approved?
Who shall these lingering notes redeem,
Decaying on Oblivion's stream;
Such notes as from the Breton tongue
Marie translated, Blondel sung?
O! born Time's ravage to repair,
And make thy dying Muse thy care;
Who, when his scythe her hoary foe
Was poisoning for the final blow,
The weapon from his hand could wring,
And break his glass, and shear his wing,
And bid, reviving in his strain,
The gentle poet live again;
Thou, who canst give to lightest lay
An unpedantic moral gay,
Nor less the dullest theme bid flit
On wings of unexpected wit;
In letters as in life approved,
Example honoured, and beloved,—
Dear ELLIS! to the bard impart
A lesson of thy magic art,
To win at once the head and heart,—
At once to charm, instruct, and mend,
My guide, my pattern, and my friend!

Such minstrel lesson to bestow
Be long thy pleasing task,—but, O!
No more by thy example teach
What few can practise, all can preach;
With even patience to endure
Lingering disease, and painful cure,
And boast affliction's pangs subdued
By mild and manly fortitude.
Enough, the lesson has been given:
Forbid the repetition, Heaven!

Come, listen, then! for thou hast known,
And loved the Minstrel's varying tone;
Who, like his Border sires of old,
Waked a wild measure, rude and bold,
Till Windsor's oaks, and Ascot plain
With wonder heard the northern strain.

Come, listen!—bold in thy applause,
 The Bard shall scorn pedantic laws;
 And, as the ancient art could stain
 Achievements on the storied pane,
 Irregularly traced and planned,
 But yet so glowing and so grand;
 So shall he strive, in changeful hue,
 Field, feast, and combat, to renew,
 And loves, and arms, and harpers' glee.
 And all the pomp of chivalry.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE COURT.

I.

THE train has left the hills of Braid;
 The barrier guard have open made
 (So Lindesay bade) the palisade,
 That closed the tented ground,
 Their men the warders backward drew,
 And carried pikes as they rode through,
 Into its ample bound.
 Fast ran the Scottish warriors there,
 Upon the Southern band to stare;
 And envy with their wonder rose,
 To see such well-appointed foes;
 Such length of shafts, such mighty bows,
 So huge, that many simply thought,
 But for a vaunt such weapons wrought;
 And little deemed their force to feel,
 Through links of mail, and plates of steel,
 When, rattling upon Flodden vale,
 The cloth-yard arrows flew like hail.

II.

Nor less did Marmion's skilful view
 Glance every line and squadron through;
 And much he marvelled one small land
 Could marshal forth such various band:
 For men-at-arms were here,
 Heavily sheathed in mail and plate,
 Like iron towers for strength and weight,
 On Flemish steeds of bone and height,
 With battle-axe and spear.
 Young knights and squires, a lighter train,
 Practised their chargers on the plain,
 By aid of leg, of hand, and rein,
 Each warlike feat to show;
 To pass, to wheel, the croupe to gain,
 And high curvett, that not in vain
 The sword-sway might descend amain
 On foeman's casque below.

He saw the hardy burghers there
March armed, on foot, with faces bare,
For visor they wore none,
Nor waving plume, nor crest of knight,
But burnished were their corslets bright,
Their brigantines, and gorgets light,
Like very silver shone.
Long pikes they had for standing fight,
Two-handed swords they wore,
And many wielded mace of weight,
And bucklers bright they bore.

III.

On foot the yeoman too, but dressed
In his steel jack, a swarthy vest,
With iron quilted well;
Each at his back, a slender store,
His forty days' provision bore,
As feudal statutes tell.
His arms were halbard, axe, or spear,
A cross-bow there, a hagbut here,
A dagger-knife and brand.—
Sober he seemed, and sad of cheer,
As loth to leave his cottage dear,
And march to foreign strand;
Or musing, who would guide his steer,
To till the fallow land.
Yet deem not in his thoughtful eye
Did aught of dastard terror lie;—
More dreadful far his ire,
Than theirs, who, scorning danger's name,
In eager mood to battle came,
Their valour like light straw on flame,
A fierce but fading fire.

IV.

Not so the Borderer:—bred to war,
He knew the battle's din afar,
And joyed to hear it swell.
His peaceful day was slothful ease;
Nor harp, nor pipe, his ear could please,
Like the loud slogan yell.
On active steed, with lance and blade,
The light-armed pricker plied his trade,—
Let nobles fight for fame;
Let vassals follow where they lead,
Burghers, to guard their townships, bleed
But war's the Borderer's game.
Their gain, their glory, their delight,
To sleep the day, maraud the night,
O'er mountain, moss, and moor;
Joyful to fight they took their way,
Scarce caring who might win the day,
Their booty was secure.
These, as Lord Marmion's train passed by,
Looked on, at first, with careless eye,

Nor marvelled aught, well taught to know
 The form and force of English bow.
 But when they saw the lord arrayed
 In splendid arms, and rich brocade,
 Each Borderer to his kinsman said,—
 “Hist, Ringan! seest thou there!
 Canst guess which road they’ll homeward ride?
 O! could we but, on Border-side,
 By Eusedale glen, or Liddel’s tide,
 Beset a prize so fair!
 That fangless Lion, too, their guide,
 Might chance to lose his glistering hide;
 Brown Maudlin of that doublet pied
 Could make a kirtle rare.”

V.

Next Marmion marked the Celtic race,
 Of different language, form, and face,
 A various race of man;
 Just then the chiefs their tribes arrayed,
 And wild and garish semblance made,
 The chequered trews, and belted plaid,
 And varying notes the war-pipes brayed
 To every varying clan;
 Wild through their red or sable hair
 Looked out their eyes, with savage stare,
 On Marmion as he passed;
 Their legs, above the knee, were bare;
 Their frame was sinewy, short, and spare,
 And hardened to the blast;
 Of taller race, the chiefs they own
 Were by the eagle’s plumage known.
 The hunted red-deer’s undressed hide
 Their hairy buskins well supplied;
 The graceful bonnet decked their head;
 Back from their shoulders hung the plaid;
 A broad-sword of unwieldy length,
 A dagger, proved for edge and strength,
 A studded targe they wore,
 And quivers, bows, and shafts,—but, O!
 Short was the shaft, and weak the bow,
 To that which England bore.
 The Isles-men carried at their backs
 The ancient Danish battle-axe.
 They raised a wild and wondering cry,
 As with his guide rode Marmion by.
 Loud were their clamouring tongues, as when
 The clanging sea-fowl leave the fen,
 And, with their cries discordant mixed,
 Grumbled and yelled the pipes betwixt.

VI.

Thus through the Scottish camp they passed,
 And reached the City gate at last,

Where all around, a wakeful guard,
 Armed burghers kept their watch and ward.
 Well had they cause of jealous fear,
 When lay encamped, in field so near,
 The Borderer and the Mountaineer.
 As through the bustling streets they go,
 All was alive with martial show;
 At every turn, with dinning clang,
 The armourer's anvil clashed and rang;
 Or toiled the swarthy smith, to wheel
 The bar that arms the charger's heel;
 Or axe, or falchion, to the side
 Of jarring grindstone was applied.
 Page, groom, and squire, with hurrying pace,
 Through street, and lane, and market-place,
 Bore lance, or casque, or sword;
 While burghers, with important face,
 Described each new-come lord,
 Discussed his lineage, told his name,
 His following,* and his warlike fame.—
 The Lion led to lodging meet,
 Which high o'erlooked the crowded street;
 There must the Baron rest,
 Till past the hour of vesper tide,
 And then to Holy-Rood must ride,—
 Such was the King's behest.
 Meanwhile the Lion's care assigns
 A banquet rich, and costly wines,
 To Marmion and his train.
 And when the appointed hour succeeds,
 The Baron dons his peaceful weeds,
 And following Lindesay as he leads,
 The palace-halls they gain.

VII.

Old Holy-Rood rung merrily,
 That night, with wassel, mirth, and glee:
 King James within her princely bower
 Feasted the chiefs of Scotland's power,
 Summoned to spend the parting hour;
 For he had charged, that his array
 Should southward march by break of day.
 Well loved that splendid monarch ay
 The banquet and the song;
 By day the tourney, and by night
 The merry dance, traced fast and light,
 The masquers quaint, the pageant bright,
 The revel loud and long.
 This feast outshone his banquets past;
 It was his blithest—and his last.
 The dazzling lamps, from gallery gay,
 Cast on the court a dancing ray;
 Here to the harp did minstrels sing;
 There ladies touched a softer string;

* Feudal retainers.

With long-eared cap, and motley vest,
 The licensed fool retailed his jest;
 His magic tricks the juggler plied;
 At dice and draughts the gallants vied:
 While some, in close recess apart,
 Courted the ladies of their heart,
 Nor courted them in vain;
 For often, in the parting hour,
 Victorious love asserts his power
 O'er coldness and disdain;
 And flinty is her heart, can view
 To battle march a lover true,—
 Can hear, perchance, his last adieu,
 Nor own her share of pain.

VIII.

Through this mixed crowd of glee and game,
 The King to greet Lord Marmion came,
 While, reverent, all made room
 An easy task it was, I trow,
 King James's manly form to know,
 Although, his courtesy to show,
 He doffed, to Marmion bending low,
 His brodered cap and plume.
 For royal were his garb and mien,
 His cloak, of crimson velvet piled,
 Trimmed with the fur of marten wild;
 His vest, of changeful satin sheen,
 The dazzled eye beguiled;
 His gorgeous collar hung adown,
 Wrought with the badge of Scotland's crown,
 The thistle brave, of old renown;
 His trusty blade, Toledo right,
 Descended from a baldric bright;
 White were his buskins, on the heel
 His spurs inlaid of gold and steel;
 His bonnet, all of crimson fair,
 Was buttoned with a ruby rare:
 And Marmion deemed he ne'er had seen
 A prince of such a noble mien.

IX.

The Monarch's form was middle size;
 For feat of strength, or exercise,
 Shaped in proportion fair;
 And hazel was his eagle eye,
 And auburn of the darkest dye,
 His short curled beard and hair.
 Light was his footstep in the dance,
 And firm his stirrup in the lists;
 And, oh! he had that merry glance,
 That seldom lady's heart resists.
 Lightly from fair to fair he flew,
 And loved to plead, lament, and sue;—
 Suit lightly won, and short-lived pain!
 For monarchs seldom sigh in vain.

I said he joyed in banquet-bower;
But, 'mid his mirth, 'twas often strange,
How suddenly his cheer would change,
His look o'ercast and lower,
If, in a sudden turn, he felt
The pressure of his iron belt,
That bound his breast in penance-pain,
In memory of his father slain.
Even so 'twas strange how, evermore,
Soon as the passing pang was o'er,
Forward he rushed, with double glee,
Into the stream of revelry :
Thus, dim-seen object of affright
Startles the courser in his flight,
And half he halts, half springs aside ;
But feels the quickening spur applied,
And, straining on the tightened rein,
Scours doubly swift o'er hill and plain.

X.

O'er James's heart, the courtiers say,
Sir Hugh the Heron's wife held away :
To Scotland's court she came,
To be a hostage for her lord,
Who Cessford's gallant heart had gored,
And with the King to make accord,
Had sent his lovely dame.
Nor to that lady free alone
Did the gay King allegiance own ;
For the fair Queen of France
Sent him a turquois ring, and glove,
And charged him, as her knight and love,
For her to break a lance ;
And strike three strokes with Scottish brand,
And march three miles on Southron land,
And bid the banners of his band
In English breezes dance.
And thus, for France's Queen, he dressed
His manly limbs in mailed vest ;
And thus admitted English fair,
His inmost counsels still to share ;
And thus, for both, he madly planned
The ruin of himself and land !
And yet, the sooth to tell,
Nor England's fair, nor France's Queen,
Were worth one pearl-drop, bright and sheen,
From Margaret's eyes that fell,—
His own Queen Margaret, who, in Lithgow's bower,
All lonely sat, and wept the weary hour.

XI.

The Queen sits lone in Lithgow pile,
And weeps the weary day,
The war against her native soil,
Her Monarch's risk in battle broil :—

And in gay Holy-Rood, the while,
 Dame Heron rises with a smile
 Upon the harp to play.
 Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
 The strings her fingers flew;
 And as she touched, and tuned them all,
 Even her bosom's rise and fall
 Was plainer given to view;
 For, all for heat, was laid aside
 Her wimple, and her hood untied.
 And first she pitched her voice to sing,
 Then glanced her dark eye on the King,
 And then around the silent ring;
 And laughed, and blushed, and oft did say
 Her pretty oath, by Yea, and Nay,
 She could not, would not, durst not play!
 At length, upon the harp, with glee,
 Mingled with arch simplicity,
 A soft, yet lively, air she rung,
 While thus the wily lady sung.

XII.

LOCHINVAR.

Lady Heron's Song.

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
 Through all the wide Border his steed was the best,
 And save his good broad-sword he weapons had none;
 He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
 So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
 There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone,
 He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;
 But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
 The bride had consented, the gallant came late.
 For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
 Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby hall,
 Among bride's-men and kinsmen, and brothers and all:
 Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
 (For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word;)
 "O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
 Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar!"
 "I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;
 Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
 And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
 To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
 There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
 That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,
 He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup,
 She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
 With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.

He took her soft hand, e'er her mother could bar,—
"Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whispered, "'Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall door and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprang!—
"She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar

There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran;
There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

XIII.

The Monarch o'er the syren hung,
And beat the measure as she sung;
And, pressing closer, and more near,
He whispered praises in her ear.
In loud applause the courtiers vied;
And ladies winked and spoke aside.

The witching dame to Marmion threw
A glance, where seemed to reign
The pride that claims applauses due,
And of her royal conquest, too,
A real or feigned disdain:
Familiar was the look, and told,
Marmion and she were friends of old.
The King observed their meeting eyes,
With something like displeased surprise;
For monarchs ill can rivals brook,
Even in a word, or smile, or look.
Straight took he forth the parchment broad,
Which Marmion's high commission showed:
"Our Borders sacked by many a raid,
Our peaceful liege-men robbed," he said;
"On day of truce our Warden slain,
Stout Barton killed, his vassals ta'en—
Unworthy were we here to reign,
Should these for vengeance cry in vain;
Our full defiance, hate, and scorn,
Our herald has to Henry borne."

XIV.

He paused, and led where Douglas stood,
And with stern eye the pageant viewed:

I mean that Douglas, sixth of yore,
 Who coronet of Angus bore,
 And, when his blood and heart were high,
 Did the Third James in camp defy,
 And all his minions led to die

On Lauder's dreary flat:
 Princes and favourites long grew tame,
 And trembled at the homely name
 Of Archibald Bell-the-Cat.

'The same who left the dusky vale
 Of Hermitage in Liddesdale,
 Its dungeons, and its towers,
 Where Bothwell's turrets brave the air,
 And Bothwell bank is blooming fair,
 To fix his princely bowers.

Though now, in age, he had laid down
 His armour for the peaceful gown,
 And for a staff his brand,
 Yet often would flash forth the fire,
 That could, in youth, a monarch's ire
 And minion's pride withstand;
 And e'en that day, at council board,
 Unapt to soothe his sovereign's mood,
 Against the war had Angus stood,
 And chafed his royal lord.

xv.

His giant-form, like ruined tower,
 Though fallen its muscles' brawny vaunt,
 Huge-boned, and tall, and grim, and gaunt,
 Seemed o'er the gaudy scene to lower:

His locks and beard in silver grew;
 His eyebrows kept their sable hue.
 Near Douglas when the Monarch stood,
 His bitter speech he thus pursued:—
 "Lord Marmion, since these letters say
 That in the North you needs must stay,

While slightest hopes of peace remain.
 Uncourteous speech it were, and stern,
 To say—Return to Lindisfarn,

Until my herald come again.—
 Then rest you in Tantallon Hold;
 Your host shall be the Douglas bold,—
 A chief unlike his sires of old.

He wears their motto on his blade,
 Their blazon o'er his towers displayed:
 Yet loves his sovereign to oppose,
 More than to face his country's foes.
 And, I bethink me, by Saint Stephen,

But e'en this morn to me was given
 A prize, the first-fruits of the war,
 Ta'en by a galley from Dunbar,

A bevy of the maids of heaven.
 Under your guard, these holy maids
 Shall safe return to cloister shades,

And, while they at Tantallon stay,
Requiem for Cochran's soul may say."
And, with the slaughtered favourite's name
Across the Monarch's brow there came
A cloud of ire, remorse, and shame.

XVI.

In answer nought could Angus speak;
His proud heart swelled well nigh to break:
He turned aside, and down his cheek

A burning tear there stole.
His hand the monarch sudden took,
That sight his kind heart could not brook:

"Now, by the Bruce's soul,
Angus, my hasty speech forgive!
For sure as doth his spirit live,
As he said of the Douglas old,

I well may say of you,—
That never king did subject hold,
In speech more free, in war more bold,

More tender, and more true:
Forgive me, Douglas, once again."—
And, while the King his hand did strain,
The old man's tears fell down like rain.

To seize the moment Marmion tried,
And whispered to the King aside:

"Oh! let such tears unwonted plead
For respite short from dubious deed!
A child will weep a bramble's smart,
A maid to see her sparrow part,
A stripling for a woman's heart:
But woe awaits a country, when
She sees the tears of bearded men.
Then, oh! what omen, dark and high,
When Douglas wets his manly eye!"

XVII.

Displeased was James, that stranger viewed
And tampered with his changing mood.

"Laugh those that can, weep those that may,

Thus did the fiery Monarch say,
"Southward I march by break of day;

And if within Tantallon strong,
The good Lord Marmion tarries long,
Perchance our meeting next may fall
At Tamworth, in his castle-hall."—

The haughty Marmion felt the taunt,
And answered, grave, the royal vaunt:

"Much honoured were my humble home,
If in its halls King James should come;
But Nottingham has archers good,
And Yorkshire men are stern of mood;
Northumbrian pricklers wild and rude.
On Derby hills the paths are steep;
In Ouse and Tyne the fords are deep;

And many a banner will be torn,
 And many a knight to earth be borne,
 And many a sheaf of arrows spent,
 Ere Scotland's King shall cross the Trent:
 Yet pause, brave prince, while yet you may *
 The Monarch lightly turned away,
 And to his nobles loud did call,—
 "Lords, to the dance,—a hall! a hall!" *
 Himself his cloak and sword flung by,
 And led Dame Heron gallantly;
 And minstrels, at the royal order,
 Rung out—"Blue Bonnets o'er the Border."

XVIII.

Leave we these revels now, to tell
 What to Saint Hilda's maids befell,
 Whose galley, as they sailed again
 To Whitby, by a Scot was ta'en.
 Now at Dun-Edin did they bide,
 Till James should of their fate decide;
 And soon, by his command,
 Were gently summoned to prepare
 To journey under Marmion's care,
 As escort honoured, safe, and fair,
 Again to English land.
 The Abbess told her chaplet o'er,
 Nor knew which Saint she should implore;
 For when she thought of Constance, sore
 She feared Lord Marmion's mood.
 And judge what Clara must have felt!
 The sword, that hung in Marmion's belt,
 Had drunk De Wilton's blood.
 Unwittingly, King James had given,
 As guard to Whitby's shades,
 The man most dreaded under heaven
 By these defenceless maids;
 Yet what petition could avail,
 Or who would listen to the tale
 Of woman, prisoner and nun,
 'Mid bustle of a war begun;
 They deemed it hopeless to avoid
 The convoy of their dangerous guide.

XIX.

Their lodging, so the King assigned,
 To Marmion's, as their guardian, joined;
 And thus it fell, that, passing night,
 The Palmer caught the Abbess' eye,
 Who warned him by a scroll,
 She had a secret to reveal,
 That much concerned the Church's weal,
 And health of sinner's soul;
 And, with deep charge of secrecy,

* The ancient cry to make room for a dance, or pageant.

She named a place to meet,
Within an open balcony,
That hung from dizzy pitch, and high,
Above the stately street;
To which, as common to each home,
At night they might in secret come.

XX.

At night in secret there they came,
The Palmer and the holy dame.
The moon among the clouds rode high,
And all the city hum was by.

Upon the street, where late before
Did din of war and warriors roar,

You might have heard a pebble fall,
A beetle hum, a cricket sing,
An owl flap his boding wing
On Giles's steeple tall.

The antique buildings, climbing high,
Whose Gothic frontlets sought the sky,

Were here wrapt deep in shade:

There on their brows the moonbeam broke,
Through the faint wreaths of silvery smoke,

And on the casements played.

And other light was none to see,

Save torches gliding far,
Before some chieftain of degree,
Who left the royal revelry

To bowne him for the war. —

A solemn scone the Abbess chose;
A solemn hour, her secret to disclose.

XXI.

"O, holy Palmer!" she began, —

"For sure he must be sainted man,
Whose blessed feet have trod the ground
Where the Redeemer's tomb is found; —

For his dear Church's sake, my tale
Attend, nor deem of light avail,

Though I must speak of worldly love, —

How vain to those who wed above!

De Wilton and Lord Marmion wooed

Clara de Clare, of Gloster's blood;

(Idle it were of Whitby's dame,

To say of that same blood I came;)

And once, when jealous rage was high,

Lord Marmion said despitiously,

Wilton was traitor in his heart,

And had made league with Martin Swart,

When he came here on Simnel's part;

And only cowardice did restrain

His rebel aid on Stokefield's plain, —

And down he threw his glove: — the thing

Was tried, as wont, before the King;

Where frankly did De Wilton own,

That Swart in Guelders he had known;

And that between them then there went
 Some scroll of courteous compliment.
 For this he to his castle sent;
 But when his messenger returned,
 Judge how De Wilton's fury burned:
 For in his packet there were laid
 Letters that claimed disloyal aid,
 And proved King Henry's cause betrayed.
 His fame, thus blighted, in the field
 He strove to clear, by spear and shield;—
 To clear his fame in vain he strove,
 For wondrous are His ways above!
 Perchance some form was unobserved;
 Perchance in prayer or faith he swerved;
 Else how could guiltless champion quail.
 Or how the blessed ordeal fail?

XXII.

“His squire, who now De Wilton saw
 As recreant doomed to suffer law,
 Repentant, owned in vain,
 That, while he had the scrolls in care,
 A stranger maiden, passing fair,
 Had drenched him with a beverage rare:—
 His words no faith could gain.
 With Clare alone he credence won,
 Who, rather than wed Marmion,
 Did to Saint Hilda's shrine repair,
 To give our house her livings fair,
 And die a vestal vot'ress there.
 The impulse from the earth was given,
 But bent her to the paths of heaven.
 A purer heart, a lovelier maid,
 Ne'er sheltered her in Whitby's shade,
 No, not since Saxon Edelfed;
 Only one trace of earthly strain,
 That for her lover's loss
 She cherishes a sorrow vain,
 And murmurs at the cross.—
 And then her heritage;—it goes
 Along the banks of Tame;
 Deep fields of grain the reaper mows,
 In meadows rich the heifer lows,
 The falconer, and huntsman, knows
 Its woodlands for the game.
 Shame were it to Saint Hilda dear,
 And I, her humble vot'ress here,
 Should do a deadly sin;
 Her temple spoiled before mine eyes,
 If this false Marmion such a prize
 By my consent should win;
 Yet hath our boisterous Monarch sworn,
 That Clare shall from our house be torn,
 And grievous cause have I to fear,
 Such mandate doth Lord Marmion bear.

XXIII.

"Now, prisoner, helpless, and betrayed
 To evil power, I claim thine aid:
 By every step that thou hast trod
 To holy shrine, and grotto dim;
 By every martyr's tortured limb;
 By angel, saint, and seraphim,
 And by the Church of God!
 For mark:—When Wilton was betrayed,
 And with his squire forged letters laid,
 She was, alas!—that sinful maid,
 By whom the deed was done,—
 O! shame and horror to be said,—
 She was a perjured nun!
 No clerk in all the land, like her,
 Traced quaint and varying character.
 Perchance you may a marvel deem,
 That Marmion's paramour
 (For such vile thing she was) should scheme
 Her lover's nuptial hour;
 But o'er him thus she hoped to gain
 As privy to his honour's stain,
 Illimitable power:
 For this she secretly retained
 Each proof that might the plot reveal,
 Instructions with his hand and seal;
 And thus Saint Hilda deigned,
 Through sinner's perfidy impure,
 Her house's glory to secure,
 And Clare's immortal weal.

XXIV.

"Twere long, and needless, here to tell,
 How to my hand these papers fell;
 With me they must not stay.
 Saint Hilda keep her Abbess true!
 Who knows what outrage he might do.
 While journeying by the way?—
 O! blessed Saint, if e'er again
 I venturous leave thy calm domain,
 To travel or by land or main,
 Deep penance may I pay!—
 Now, saintly Palmer, mark my prayer:
 I give this packet to thy care,
 For thee to stop they will not dare;
 And, O! with cautious speed,
 To Wolsey's hand the papers bring,
 That he may show them to the King;
 And for thy well-earned meed,
 Thou holy man, at Whitby's shrine,
 A weekly mass shall still be thine,
 While priests can sing and read.—
 What ail'st thou?—Speak!"—For as he took
 The charge, a strong emotion shook

His frame; and, ere reply,
 They heard a faint, yet shrilly tone,
 Like distant clarion feebly blown,
 That on the breeze did die;
 And loud the Abbess shrieked in fear,
 "Saint Withold save us!—What is here!
 Look at yon city cross!
 See on its battled tower appear
 Phantoms, that scutcheons seem to rear,
 And blazoned banners toss!"—

XXV.

Dun-Edin's cross, a pillared stone,
 Rose on a turret octagon;
 (But now is razed that monument,
 Whence royal edict rang,
 And voice of Scotland's law was sent,
 In glorious trumpet clang.
 O! be his tomb as lead to lead,
 Upon its dull destroyer's head!—
 A minstrel's malison* is said.)
 Then on its battlements they saw
 A vision, passing Nature's law,
 Strange, wild, and dimly seen;
 Figures, that seemed to rise and die,
 Gibber and sign, advance and fly,
 While nought confirmed could ear or eye
 Discern of sound or mien.
 Yet darkly did it seem, as there
 Heralds and pursuivants prepare,
 With trumpet sound, and blazon fair,
 A summons to proclaim;
 But indistinct the pageant proud,
 As fancy forms of midnight cloud,
 When flings the moon upon her shroud
 A wavering tinge of flame;
 It flits, expands, and shifts, till loud,
 From midmost of the spectre crowd,
 This awful summons came:—

XXVI.

"Prince, prelate, potentate, and peer,
 Whose names I now shall call,
 Scottish, or foreigner, give ear!
 Subjects of him who sent me here
 At his tribunal to appear,
 I summon one and all:
 I cite you by each deadly sin,
 That e'er hath soiled your hearts with...;
 I cite you by each brutal lust,
 That e'er defiled your earthly dust,—
 By wrath, by pride, by fear,
 By each o'er-mastering-passion's tone,
 By the dark grave, and dying groan!

* Curse.

When forty days are passed and gone
 I cite you at your Monarch's throne
 To answer and appear."—
 Then thundered forth a roll of names:
 The first was thine, unhappy James!
 Then all thy nobles came;
 Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,
 Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,—
 Why should I tell their separate style?
 Each chief of birth and fame,
 Of Lowland, Highland, Border, Isle,
 Fore-doomed to Flodden's carnage pile,
 Was cited there by name;
 And Marmion, Lord of Fontenaye,
 Of Lutterward and Scriverlbye,
 De Wilton, erst of Aberley,
 The self-same thundering voice did say.—
 But then another spoke:
 "Thy fatal summons I deny,
 And thine infernal lord defy,
 Appealing me to Him on High,
 Who burst the sinner's yoke."
 At that dread accent, with a scream,
 Parted the pageant like a dream.
 The summoner was gone.
 Prone on her face the Abbess fell,
 And fast, and fast, her beads did tell;
 Her nuns came, startled by the yell,
 And found her there alone.
 She marked not, at the scene aghast,
 What time, or how, the Palmer passed.

XXVII.

Shift we the scene.—The camp doth move.

Dun-Edin's streets are empty now,
 Save when, for weal of those they love,
 To pray the prayer, and vow the vow,
 The tottering child, the anxious fair,
 The gray-haired sire with pious care,
 To chapels and to shrines repair.—
 Where is the Palmer now? and where
 The Abbess, Marmion, and Clare?—
 Bold Douglas! to Tantallon fair
 They journey in thy charge:
 Lord Marmion rode on his right hand,
 The Palmer still was with the band;
 Angus, like Lindesay, did command,
 That none should roam at large.
 But in that Palmer's altered mien
 A wondrous change might now be seen;
 Freely he spoke of war,
 Of marvels wrought by single hand,
 When lifted for a native land;
 And still looked high, as if he planned
 Some desperate deed afar.

His coursar would he feed and stroke,
 And, tucking up his sable frocke,
 Would first his mettle bold provoke,
 Then soothe, or quell his pride.
 Old Hubert said, that never one
 He saw, except Lord Marmion,
 A steed so fairly ride.

XXVIII.

Some half-hour's march behind, there came
 By Eustace governed fair,
 A troop escorting Hilda's Dame,
 With all her nuns, and Clare.
 No audience had Lord Marmion sought:
 Ever he feared to aggravate
 Clara de Clare's suspicious hate;
 And safer 'twas, he thought,
 To wait till, from the nuns removed,
 The influence of kinsmen loved,
 And suit by Henry's self approved,
 Her slow consent had wrought.
 His was no flickering flame, that dies
 Unless when fanned by looks and sighs,
 And lighted oft at lady's eyes;
 He longed to stretch his wide command
 O'er luckless Clara's ample land:
 Besides, when Wilton with him vied,
 Although the pang of humbled pride
 The place of jealousy supplied,
 Yet conquest, by that meanness won,
 He almost loathed to think upon,
 Led him, at times, to hate the cause,
 Which made him burst through honour's laws.
 If e'er he loved, 'twas her alone,
 Who died within that vault of stone.

XXIX.

And now, when close at hand they saw
 North-Berwick's town and lofty Law,
 Fitz-Eustace bade them pause a while
 Before a venerable pile.
 Whose turrets viewed, afar,
 The lofty Bass, the Lambie Isle,
 The ocean's peace or war.
 At tolling of a bell, forth came
 The convent's venerable Dame,
 And prayed Saint Hilda's Abbess rest
 With her, a loved and honoured guest,
 Till Douglas should a barque prepare,
 To waft her back to Whitby fair.
 Glad was the Abbess, you may guess,
 And thanked the Scottish Prioress;
 And tedious were to tell, I ween,
 The courteous speech that passed between.

O'erjoyed the nuns their palfreys leave :
But when fair Clara did intend,
Like them, from horseback to descend,
Fitz-Eustace said,—“I grieve,
Fair lady, grieve e'en from my heart,
Such gentle company to part.—
Think not discourtesy,
But lords' commands must be obeyed ;
And Marmion and the Douglas said,
That you must wend with me.
Lord Marmion hath a letter broad,
Which to the Scottish Earl he showed,
Commanding, that, beneath his care,
Without delay, you shall repair,
To your good kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare.”

xxx.

The startled Abbess loud exclaimed ;
But she, at whom the blow was aimed,
Grew pale as death, and cold as lead,—
She deemed she heard her death-doom read.
“Cheer thee, my child!” the Abbess said,
“They dare not tear thee from my hand,
To ride along with armed band.”—
“Nay, holy mother, nay,”
Fitz-Eustace said, “the lovely Clare
Will be in Lady Angus' care,
In Scotland while we stay ;
And, when we move, an easy ride,
Will bring us to the English side,
Female attendance to provide
Befitting Gloster's heir ;
Nor thinks, nor dreams, my noble lord,
By slightest look, or act, or word,
To harass Lady Clare.
Her faithful guardian he will be,
Nor sue for slightest courtesy
That e'en to stranger falls,
Till he shall place her, safe and free,
Within her kinsman's halls.”—
He spoke, and blushed with earnest grace ;
His faith was painted on his face,
And Clare's worst fear relieved.
The Lady Abbess loud exclaimed
On Henry, and the Douglas blamed,
Entreated, threatened, grieved ;
To martyr, saint, and prophet prayed,
Against Lord Marmion inveighed,
And called the Prioress to aid,
To curse with candle, bell, and book.—
Her head the grave Cistercian shook :
“The Douglas and the King,” she said,
“In their commands will be obeyed ;
Grieve not, nor dream that harm can fall
The maiden in Tantallon hall.”

XXXI.

The Abbess, seeing strife was vain,
 Assumed her wonted state again,—
 For much of state she had,—
 Composed her veil, and raised her head,
 And—"Bid," in solemn voice she said,
 "Thy master, bold and bad,
 The records of his house turn o'er,
 And, when he shall there written see,
 That one of his own ancestry
 Drove the Monks forth of Coventry.
 Bid him his fate explore!
 Prancing in pride of earthly trust,
 His charger hurled him to the dust,
 And, by a base plebeian thrust,
 He died his band before.
 God judge 'twixt Marmion and me;
 He is a chief of high degree,
 And I a poor recluse;
 Yet oft, in holy writ, we see
 Even such weak minister as me
 May the oppressor bruise:
 For thus, inspired, did Judith slay
 The mighty in his sin,
 And Jael thus, and Deborah,"—
 Here hasty Blount broke in:
 "Fitz-Eustace, we must march our band;
 St Anton' fire thee! wilt thou stand
 All day, with bonnet in thy hand,
 To hear the Ladye preach?
 By this good light! if thus we stay
 Lord Marmion, for our fond delay,
 Will sharper sermon teach.
 Come, don thy cap, and mount thy horse;
 The Dame must patience take perforce."

XXXII.

"Submit we then to force," said Clare;
 "But let this barbarous lord despair
 His purposed aim to win;
 Let him take living, land, and life;
 But to be Marmion's wedded wife
 In me were deadly sin:
 And if it be the King's decree,
 That I must find no sanctuary,
 Where even an homicide might come,
 And safely rest his head,
 Though at its open portals stood,
 Thirsting to pour forth blood for blood,
 The kinsmen of the dead;
 Yet one asylum is my own,
 Against the dreaded hour;
 A low, a silent, and a lone,
 Where kings have little power.

One victim is before me there.—
 Mother, your blessing, and in prayer
 Remember your unhappy Clare!"
 Loud weeps the Abbess, and bestows
 Kind blessings many a one;
 Weeping and wailing loud arose
 Round patient Clare, the clamorous woes
 Of every simple nun.
 His eyes the gentle Eustace dried,
 And scarce rude Blount the sight could bide.
 Then took the squire her rein,
 And gently led away her steed,
 And, by each courteous word and deed,
 To cheer her strove in vain.

XXXIII.

But scant three miles the band had rode,
 When o'er a height they passed,
 And, sudden, close before them shewed
 His towers, Tantallon vast:
 Broad, massive, high, and stretching far,
 And held impregnable in war.
 On a projecting rock they rose,
 And round three sides the ocean flows;
 The fourth did battled walls enclose,
 And double mound and fosse.
 By narrow drawbridge, outworks strong,
 Through studded gates, an entrance long,
 To the main court they cross.
 It was a wide and stately square;
 Around were lodgings, fit and fair,
 And towers of various form,
 Which on the court projected far,
 And broke its lines quadrangular.
 Here was square keep, there turret high,
 Or pinnacle that sought the sky,
 Whence oft the Warder could descry
 The gathering ocean storm.

XXXIV.

Here did they rest.—The princely care
 Of Douglas, why should I declare,
 Or say they met reception fair?
 Or why the tidings say,
 Which, varying, to Tantallon came,
 By hurrying posts, or fleeter fame,
 With every varying day?
 And, first, they heard King James had won
 Ettall, and Wark, and Ford; and then,
 That Norham castle strong was ta'en.
 At that sore marvelled Marmion;—
 And Douglas hoped his monarch's hand
 Would soon subdue Northumberland:
 But whispered news there came.

That, while his host inactive lay,
And melted by degrees away,
King James was dallying off the day

With Heron's wily dame.—

Such acts to chronicles I yield;

Go seek them there, and see:

Mine is a tale of Flodden Field.

And not a history.—

At length, they heard the Scottish host

On that high ridge had made their post,

Which frowns o'er Millfield Plain;

And that brave Surrey many a band

Had gathered in the Southern land,

And marched into Northumberland,

And camp at Wooler ta'en.

Marmion, like charger in the stall,

That hears without the trumpet-call,

Began to chafe, and swear:—

“A sorry thing to hide my head

In castle, like a fearful maid,

When such a field is near!

Needs must I see this battle-day:

Death to my fame, if such a fray

Were fought, and Marmion away!

The Douglas, too, I wot not why,

Hath 'bated of his courtesy:

No longer in his halls I'll stay.”—

Then bade his band, they should array

For march against the dawning day.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO SIXTH.

TO RICHARD HEBER, ESQ.

Mertoun House, Christmas

HEAR on more wood!—the wind is chill;

But let it whistle as it will,

We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

Each age has deemed the new-born year

The fittest time for festal cheer:

Even heathen yet, the savage Dane

At Iol more deep the mead did drain;

High on the beach his galleys drew,

And feasted all his pirate crew;

Then in his low and pine-built hall,

Where shields and axes decked the wall,

They gorged upon the half-dressed steer;

Caroused in seas of sable beer;

While round, in brutal jest, were thrown

The half-gnawed rib, and marrow-bone;

Or listened all, in grim delight,

While scalds yelled out the joys of fight.

Then forth, in frenzy, would they hie,
While wildly loose their red locks fly;
And dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.

And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the misletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The vassel round in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge surloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high-tide, her savoury goose.

Then came the merry masquers in,
 And carols roared with blithesome din;
 If unmelodious was the song,
 It was a hearty note, and strong.
 Who lists may in their mumming see
 Traces of ancient mystery;
 White shirts supplied the masquerade,
 And smutted cheeks the visors made;
 But, O! what masquers richly dight
 Can boast of bosoms half so light!
 England was merry England, when
 Old Christmas brought his sports again.
 'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
 'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
 A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
 The poor man's heart through half the year.

Still linger in our northern clime,
 Some remnants of the good old time;
 And still, within our valleys here,
 We hold the kindred title dear,
 Even when perchance its far-fetched claim
 To Southron ear sounds empty name;
 For course of blood our proverbs deem,
 Is warmer than the mountain-stream.*
 And thus, my Christmas still I hold
 Where my great-grandsire came of old;
 With amber beard, and flaxen hair,
 And reverend apostolic air—
 The feast and holy-tide to share,
 And mix sobriety with wine,
 And honest mirth with thoughts divine.
 Small thought was his, in after-time
 E'er to be hitched into a rhyme.
 The simple sire could only boast,
 That he was loyal to his cost;
 The banished race of kings revered,
 And lost his land,—but kept his beard.

In these dear halls, where welcome kind,
 Is with fair liberty combined;
 Where cordial friendship gives the hand,
 And flies constraint the magic wand
 Of the fair dame that rules the land,
 Little we heed the tempest drear,
 While music, mirth, and social cheer,
 Speed on their wings the passing year.
 And Mertoun's halls are fair e'en now,
 When not a leaf is on the bough.
 Tweed loves them well, and turns again,
 As loath to leave the sweet domain;
 And holds his mirror to her face,
 And clips her with a close embrace:—

* "Blood is warmer than water,"—a proverb meant to vindicate our family predilections.

Gladly as he, we seek the dome,
And as reluctant turn us home.

How just, that, at this time of glee,
My thoughts should, Heber, turn to thee!
For many a merry hour we've known,
And heard the chimes of midnight's tone.
Cease, then, my friend! a moment cease,
And leave these classic tomes in peace!
Of Roman and of Grecian lore,
Sure mortal brain can hold no more.
These ancients, as Noll Bluff might say,
Were "pretty fellows in their day,"*
But time and tide o'er all prevail—
On Christmas eve a Christmas tale—
Of wonder and of war—"Profane!
What! leave the lofty Latian strain,
Her stately prose, her verse's charms,
To hear the clash of rusty arms;
In Fairy Land or Limbo lost,
To jostle conjurer and ghost,
Goblin and witch!"—Nay, Heber, dear,
Before you touch my charter, hear.
Though Leyden aids, alas! no more
My cause with many-languaged lore,
This may I say:—in realms of death
Ulysses meets Alcides' *wraith*;
Æneas, upon Thracia's shore,
The ghost of murdered Polydore.
For omens, we in *Livy* cross,
At every turn, *locutus Bos*.
As grave and duly speaks that ox
As if he told the price of stocks;
Or held, in Rome republican,
The place of Common-councilman.

All nations have their omens drear,
Their legions wild of woe and fear.
To Cambria look—the peasant see,
Bethink him of Glendowerdy,
And shun "the spirit's blasted tree."
The Highlander, whose red claymore
The battle turned on Maida's shore,
Will, on a Friday morn, look pale,
If asked to tell a fairy tale:
He fears the vengeful Elfin King,
Who leaves that day his grassy ring;
Invisible to human ken,
He walks among the sons of men.

Didst e'er, dear Heber, pass along
Beneath the towers of Franchémont,
Which, like an eagle's nest in air,
Hang o'er the stream and hamlet fair?—

* "Hannibal was a pretty fellow, sir—a very pretty fellow in his day."—
Old Bachelor.

Deep in their vaults, the peasants say,
 A mighty treasure buried lay,
 Amassed through rapine, and through wrong.
 By the last lord of Franchémont.
 The iron chest is bolted hard,
 A Huntsman sits, its constant guard;
 Around his neck his horn is hung,
 His hanger in his belt is slung;
 Before his feet his bloodhounds lie:
 And 'twere not for his gloomy eye,
 Whose withering glance no heart can brook,
 As true a huntsman doth he look,
 As bugle e'er in brake did sound,
 Or ever hallooed to a hound.
 To chase the fiend, and win the prize,
 In that same dungeon ever tries
 An aged Necromantic Priest;
 It is an hundred years at least,
 Since 'twixt them first the strife begun.
 And neither yet has lost or won.
 And oft the Conjurer's words will make
 The stubborn Demon groan and quake;
 And oft the bands of iron break,
 Or bursts one lock, that still amain,
 Fast as 'tis opened, shuts again.
 That magic strife within the tomb
 May last until the day of doom,
 Unless the Adept shall learn to tell
 The very word that clenched the spell,
 When Franch'mont locked the treasure coll.
 An hundred years are past and gone,
 And scarce three letters has he won.

Such general superstition may
 Excuse for old Pitscottie say;
 Whose gossip history has given
 My song the messenger from heaven,
 That warned, in Lithgow, Scotland's King,
 Nor less the infernal summoning;
 May pass the monk of Durham's tale,
 Whose Demon fought in Gothic mail;
 May pardon plead for Fordun grave,
 Who told of Gifford's Goblin-Cave.
 But why such instances to you,
 Who, in an instant, can review
 Your treasured hoards of various lore,
 And furnish twenty thousand more?
 Hoards, not like theirs whose volumes rest
 Like treasure in the Franch'mont chest;
 While grapple owners still refuse
 To others what they cannot use,
 Give them the priest's whole century,
 They shall not spell you letters three;
 Their pleasure in the book's the same

The magpie takes in pilfered gem.
Thy volumes, open as thy heart,
Delight, amusement, science, art,
To every ear and eye impart;
Yet who, of all who thus employ them,
Can, like the owner's self, enjoy them?—
But, hark! I hear the distant drum:
The day of Flodden Field is come.—
Adieu, dear Heber! life and health,
And store of literary wealth.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE BATTLE.

I.

WHILE great events were on the gale,
And each hour brought a varying tale,
And the demeanour, changed and cold,
Of Douglas, fretted Marmion bold,
And like the impatient steed of war,
He snuffed the battle from afar;
And hopes were none, that back again,
Herald should come from Terouenne,
Where England's King in leaguer lay,
Before decisive battle-day;—
While these things were, the mournful Clare
Did in the Dame's devotions share:
For the good Countess ceaseless prayed,
To Heaven and Saints, her sons to aid,
And, with short interval, did pass
From prayer to book, from book to mass,
And all in high Baronial pride,
A life both dull and dignified;—
Yet as Lord Marmion nothing pressed
Upon her intervals of rest,
Dejected Clara well could bear
The formal state, the lengthened prayer,
Though dearest to her wounded heart
The hours that she might spend apart.

II.

I said, Tantallon's dizzy steep
Hung o'er the margin of the deep.
Many a rude tower and rampart there
Repelled the insult of the air,
Which, when the tempest vexed the sky,
Half breeze, half spray, came whistling by.
Above the rest, a turret square
Did o'er its Gothic entrance bear,
Of sculpture rude, a stony shield;
The Bloody Heart was in the field,
And in the chief three mullets stood,
The cognizance of Douglas blood.

The turret held a narrow stair,
Which, mounted, gave you access where
A parapet's embattled row
Did seaward round the castle go;
Sometimes in dizzy steps descending,
Sometimes in narrow circuit bending,
Sometimes in platform broad extending,
Its varying circle did combine
Bulwark, and bartizan, and line,
And bastion, tower, and vantage-coign;
Above the booming ocean leant
The far-projecting battlement;
The billows burst, in ceaseless flow,
Upon the precipice below.
Where'er Tantallon faced the land,
Gate-works, and walls, were strongly manned;
No need upon the sea-girt side;
The steepy rock, and frantic tide,
Approach of human step denied;
And thus these lines, and ramparts rude,
Were left in deepest solitude.

III.

And, for they were so lonely, Clare
Would to these battlements repair,
And muse upon her sorrows there,
And list the sea-bird's cry;
Or slow, like noon-tide ghost, would glide
Along the dark-gray bulwarks' side,
And ever on the heaving tide
Look down with weary eye.
Oft did the cliff, and swelling main,
Recall the thoughts of Whitby's fane,—
A home she ne'er might see again;
For she had laid adown,
So Douglas bade, the hood and veil,
And frontlet of the cloister pale,
And Benedictine gown:
It were unseemly sight, he said,
A novice out of convent shade.—
Now her bright locks, with sunny glow
Again adorned her brow of snow;
Her mantle rich, whose borders, round,
A deep and fretted broi'dery bound,
In golden foldings sought the ground;
Of holy ornament, alone
Remained a cross with ruby stone;
And often did she look
On that which in her hand she bore
With velvet bound, and broi'dered o'er,
Her breviary book.
In such a place, so lone, so grim,
At dawning pale, or twilight dim,
It fearful would have been,

To meet a form so richly dressed,
With book in hand, and cross on breast,
And such a woeful mien.
Fitz-Eustace, loitering with his bow,
To practise on the gull and crow,
Saw her, at distance, gliding slow,
And did by Mary swear,—
Some love-lorn Fay she might have been,
Or, in romance, some spell-bound queen;
For ne'er, in work-day world was seen
A form so witching fair.

IV.

Once walking thus, at evening tide,
It chanced a gliding sail she spied,
And, sighing, thought—"The Abbess there,
Perchance, does to her home repair;
Her peaceful rule, where Duty, free,
Walks hand in hand with Charity;
Where oft Devotion's trance'd glow
Can such a glimpse of heaven bestow,
That the enraptured sisters see
High vision, and deep mystery;
The very form of Hilda fair,
Hovering upon the sunny air,
And smiling on her votaries' prayer.
O! wherefore to my duller eye,
Did still the Saint her form deny?
Was it, that, scared by sinful scorn,
My heart could neither melt nor burn?
Or lie my warm affections low,
With him that taught them first to glow?
Yet, gentle Abbess, well I knew,
To pay thy kindness grateful due,
And well could brook the mild command
That ruled thy simple maiden band.—
How different now! condemned to hide
My doom from this dark tyrant's pride.—
But Marmion has to learn, ere long,
That constant mind, and hate of wrong,
Descended to a feeble girl,
From Red De Clare, stout Gloster's Earl:
Of such a stem, a sapling weak,
He ne'er shall bend, although he break.

V.

"But see!—what makes this armour here?"

For in her path there lay
Targe, corselet, helm;—she viewed them near.
"The breastplate pierced!—Ay, much I fear,
Weak fence wert thou 'gainst foeman's spear,
That hath made fatal entrance here,

As these dark blood-gouts say.—
Thus Wilton!—Oh! not corselet's ward,
Not truth, as diamond pure and hard,
Could be thy manly bosom's guard.

"on disastrous day!"—
 raised her eyes in mournful mood,—
 SATON himself before her stood!
 might have seemed his passing ghost,
 or every youthful grace was lost;
 and joy unwonted, and surprise.
 Gave their strange wildness to his eyes.—
 Expect not, noble dames and lords,
 That I can tell such scene in words:
 What skilful limner e'er could choose
 To paint the rainbow's varying hues,
 Unless to mortal it were given
 To dip his brush in dyes of heaven?
 Far less can my weak line declare
 Each changing passion's shade;
 Brightening to rapture from despair,
 Sorrow, surprise, and pity there,
 And joy, with her angelic air,
 And hope, that paints the future fair,
 Their varying hues displayed:
 Each o'er its rival's ground extending,
 Alternate conquering, shifting, blending,
 Till all, fatigued, the conflict yield,
 And mighty Love retains the field.
 Shortly I tell what then he said,
 By many a tender word delayed,
 And modest blush, and bursting sigh,
 And question kind, and fond reply.

VI.

De Wilton's History.

"Forget we that disastrous day,
 When senseless in the lists I lay.
 Thence dragged,—but how I cannot know,
 For sense and recollection fled,—
 I found me on a pallet low,
 Within my ancient beadsman's shed.
 Austin,—remember'st thou, my Clare,
 How thou didst blush, when the old man,
 When first our infant love began,
 Said we would make a matchless pair?—
 Menials, and friends, and kinsmen fled
 From the degraded traitor's bed,—
 He only held my burning head,
 And tended me for many a day,
 While wounds and fever held their sway.
 But far more needful was his care,
 When sense returned to wake despair;
 For I did tear the closing wound,
 And dash me frantic on the ground,
 If e'er I heard the name of Clare.
 At length, to calmer reason brought.
 Much by his kind attendance wrought,
 With him I left my native strand

And, in a palmer's weeds arrayed,
My hated name and form to shade,
I journeyed many a land;
No more a lord of rank and birth,
But mingled with the dregs of earth.
Oft Austin for my reason feared,
When I would sit, and deeply brood
On dark revenge and deeds of blood,
Or wild mad schemes upreared.
My friend at length fell sick, and said,
God would remove him soon;
And while upon his dying bed,
He begged of me a boon—
If e'er my deadliest enemy
Beneath my brand should conquered lie,
Even then my mercy should awake,
And spare his life for Austin's sake.

VII.

"Still restless as a second Cain,
To Scotland next my route was ta'en.
Full well the paths I knew;
Fame of my fate made various sound,
That death in pilgrimage I found,
That I had perished of my wound,—
None cared which tale was true;
And living eye could never guess
De Wilton in his Palmer's dress;
For now that sable slough is shed,
And trimmed my shaggy beard and head,
I scarcely know me in the glass.
A chance most wondrous did provide,
That I should be that Baron's guide—
I will not name his name!—
Vengeance to God alone belongs;
But, when I think on all my wrongs,
My blood is liquid flame!
And ne'er the time shall I forget,
When, in a Scottish hostel set,
Dark looks we did exchange:
What were his thoughts I cannot tell,
But in my bosom mustered Hell
Its plans of dark revenge.

VIII.

"A word of vulgar augury,
That broke from me, I scarce knew why,
Brought on a village tale;
Which wrought upon his moody sprite
And sent him armed forth by night.
I borrowed steed and mail,
And weapons, from his sleeping band;
And, passing from a postern door,
We met, and countered, hand to hand,—
He fell on Gifford-moor.

For the death-stroke my brand I drew,
 (O then my helmèd head he knew,
 The Palmer's cowl was gone,)
 Then had three inches of my blade
 The heavy debt of vengeance paid,—
 My hand the thought of Austin stayed,
 I left him there alone.—

O good old man! even from the grave,
 Thy spirit could thy master save:
 If I had slain my foeman, ne'er
 Had Whitby's Abbess, in her fear,
 Given to my hand this packet dear,
 Of power to clear my injured fame,
 And vindicate De Wilton's name.—
 Perchance you heard the Abbess tell
 Of the strange pageantry of Hell,
 That broke our secret speech—
 It rose from the infernal shade,
 Or fealty was some juggle played,
 A tale of peace to teach.

Appeal to Heaven I judged was best,
 When my name came among the rest.

IX.

"Now here, within Tantallon Hold,
 To Douglas late my tale I told,
 To whom my house was known of old.
 Won by my proofs, his falchion bright
 This eve anew shall dub me knight.
 These were the arms that once did turn
 The tide of fight on Otterburne,
 And Harry Hotspur forced to yield,
 When the Dead Douglas won the field.
 These Angus gave—his armourer's care,
 Ere morn, shall every breach repair;
 For nought, he said, was in his halls,
 But ancient armour on the walls,
 And aged chargers in the stalls,
 And women, priests, and gray-haired men;
 The rest were all in Twisel-glen.*
 And now I watch my armour here,
 By law of arms, till midnight's near;
 Then, once again a belted knight,
 Seek Surrey's camp with dawn of light.

X.

"There soon again we meet, my Clare!
 This Baron means to guide thee there.
 Douglas reveres his king's command,
 Else would he take thee from his band.
 And there thy kinsman, Surrey, too,
 Will give De Wilton justice due.
 Now meeter far for martial broil,
 Firmer my limbs, and strung by toil,

* Where James encamped before taking post on Flodden.

Once more"——"O, Wilton! must we then
 Risk new-found happiness again,
 Trust fate of arms once more?
 And is there not a humble glen,
 Where we, content and poor,
 Might build a cottage in the shade,
 A shepherd thou, and I to aid
 Thy task on dale and moor?—
 That reddening brow!—too well I know
 Not even thy Clare can peace bestow,
 While falsehood stains thy name:
 Go, then, to fight! Clare bids thee go!
 Clare can a warrior's feelings know,
 And weep a warrior's shame,
 Can Red Earl Gilbert's spirit feel,
 Buckle the spurs upon thy heel,
 And belt thee with thy brand of steel,
 And send thee forth to fame!"—

XI.

That night, upon the rocks and bay,
 The midnight moonbeam slumbering lay,
 And poured its silver light, and pure,
 Through loop-hole, and through embrasure.
 Upon Tantallon tower and hall;
 But chief where arch'd windows wide
 Illuminate the chapel's pride,
 The sober glances fall.
 Much was there need; though, seamed with scars,
 Two veterans of the Douglas' wars,
 Though two gray priests were there,
 And each a blazing torch held high,
 You could not by their blaze descry
 The chapel's carving fair.
 Amid that dim and smoky light,
 Chequering the silvery moonshine bright,
 A bishop by the altar stood,
 A noble lord of Douglas blood,
 With mitre sheen, and rocquet white;
 Yet showed his meek and thoughtful eye
 But little pride of prelacy:
 More pleased that, in a barbarous age,
 He gave rude Scotland Virgil's page,
 Than that beneath his rule he held
 The bishopric of fair Dunkeld.
 Beside him ancient Angus stood,
 Doffed his furred gown, and sable hood,
 O'er his huge form, and visage pale,
 He wore a cap and shirt of mail;
 And leaned his large and wrinkled hand
 Upon the huge and sweeping brand,
 Which wont, of yore, in battle-fray,
 His foeman's limbs to shred away,
 As wood-knife lops the sapling spray.

He seemed as, from the tombs around
 Rising at judgment-day,
 Some giant Douglas may be found
 In all his old array;
 So pale his face, so huge his limb,
 So old his arms, his look so grim.

XII.

Then at the altar Wilton kneels,
 And Clare the spurs bound on his heels;
 And think what next he must have felt,
 At buckling of the falchion belt;
 And judge how Clara changed her hue,
 While fastening to her lover's side
 A friend, which, though in danger tried,
 He once had found untrue!
 Then Douglas struck him with his blade:
 "Saint Michael and Saint Andrew aid,
 I dub thee knight.
 Arise, Sir Ralph, De Wilton's heir!
 For king, for church, for lady fair,
 See that thou fight."—
 And Bishop Gawain, as he rose,
 Said,—“Wilton! grieve not for thy woes,
 Disgrace, and trouble,
 For He, who honour best bestows,
 May give thee double.”—
 De Wilton sobbed, for sob he must—
 “Where'er I meet a Douglas, trust
 That Douglas is my brother!”—
 “Nay, nay,” old Angus said, “not so;
 To Surrey's camp thou now must go,
 Thy wrongs no longer smother.
 I have two sons in yonder field;
 And, if thou meet'st them under shield,
 Upon them bravely—do thy worst;
 And foul fall him that blanches first!”

XIII.

Not far advanced was morning day,
 When Marmion did his troop array
 To Surrey's camp to ride;
 He had safe-conduct for his band,
 Beneath the royal seal and hand,
 And Douglas gave a guide:
 The ancient Earl, with stately grace,
 Would Clara on her palfrey place,
 And whispered, in an under-tone,
 “Let the hawk stoop, his prey is flown.”
 The train from out the castle drew;
 But Marmion stopped to bid adieu:—
 “Though something I might plain,” he said,
 “Of cold respect to stranger guest,
 Sent hither by your king's behest,
 While in Tantallon's towers I stayed.

Part we in friendship from your land,
 And, noble Earl, receive my hand."—
 But Douglas round him drew his cloak,
 Folded his arms, and thus he spoke :—
 "My manors, halls, and bowers, shall still
 Be open to my sovereign's will,
 To each one whom he lists, how'er
 Unmeet to be the owner's peer,
 My castles are my king's alone,
 From turret to foundation-stone—
 The hand of Douglas is his own;
 And never shall in friendly grasp
 The hand of such as Marmion clasp."

XIV.

Burned Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
 And shook his very frame for ire,
 And—"This to me!" he said,—
 "An 'twere not for thy hoary beard,
 Such hand as Marmion's had not spared
 To cleave the Douglas' head!
 And, first, I tell thee, haughty Peer,
 He who does England's message here,
 Although the meanest in her state,
 May well, proud Angus, be thy mate:
 And, Douglas, more I tell thee here,
 Even in thy pitch of pride,
 Here in thy Hold, thy vassals near,
 (Nay, never look upon your lord,
 And lay your hands upon your sword,)
 I tell thee, thou'rt defied!
 And if thou saidst, I am not peer
 To any lord in Scotland here,
 Lowland or Highland, far or near,
 Lord Angus, thou hast lied!"—
 On the Earl's cheek the flush of rage
 O'ercame the ashen hue of age:
 Fierce he broke forth :—"And darrest thou then
 To beard the lion in his den,
 The Douglas in his hall?
 And hopest thou hence unscathed to go?—
 No, by Saint Bryde of Bothwell, no!—
 Up drawbridge, grooms—what, Warder, ho!
 Let the portcullis fall!"—
 Lord Marmion turned,—well was his need,
 And dashed the rowels in his steed,
 Like arrow through the archway sprung,
 The ponderous gate behind him rung:
 To pass there was such scanty room,
 The bars, descending, razed his plume.

XV.

The steed along the drawbridge flies,
 Just as it trembled on the rise;
 Not lighter does the swallow skim
 Along the smooth lake's level brim

And when Lord Marmion reached his band,
He halts, and turns with clenched hand,
And shout of loud defiance pours,
And shook his gauntlet at the towers.
"Horse! horse!" the Douglas cried, "and chase!
But soon he reigned his fury's pace:
"A royal messenger he came,
Though most unworthy of the name.—
A letter forged! Saint Jude to speed!
Did ever knight so foul a deed!
At first in heart it liked me ill,
When the King praised his clerkly skill.
Thanks to Saint Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line:
So swore I, and I swore it still,
Let my boy-bishop fret his fill.—
Saint Mary mend my fiery mood!
Old age ne'er cools the Douglas blood,
I thought to slay him where he stood.—
"Tis pity of him, too," he cried;
"Bold can he speak, and fairly ride.
I warrant him a warrior tried."—
With this his mandate he recalls,
And slowly seeks his castle halls.

XVI.

The day in Marmion's journey wore;
Yet, ere his passion's gust was o'er,
They crossed the heights of Stanrigg-moor.
His troop more closely there he scanned,
And missed the Palmer from the band.—
"Palmer or not," young Blount did say,
"He parted at the peep of day;
Good sooth, it was in strange array."
"In what array?" said Marmion, quick.
"My lord, I ill can spell the trick;
But all night long, with clink and bang,
Close to my couch did hammers clang;
At dawn the falling drawbridge rang,
And from a loophole while I peep,
Old Bell-the-Cat came from the Keep,
Wrapped in a gown of sables fair,
As fearful of the morning air;
Beneath, when that was blown aside,
A rusty shirt of mail I spied,
By Archibald won in bloody work,
Against the Saracen and Turk:
Last night it hung not in the hall;
I thought some marvel would befall.
And next I saw them saddled lead
Old Cheviot forth, the Earl's best steel;
A matchless horse, though something old,
Prompt to his paces, cool and bold.
I heard the Sheriff Sholto say,

The Earl did much the Master * pray
 To use him on the battle-day;
 But he preferred—"Nay, Henry, cease!
 Thou sworn horse-courser, hold thy peace. -
 Eustace, thou bear'st a brain—I pray,
 What did Blount see at break of day?"—

XVII.

"In brief, my lord, we both descried
 (For I then stood by Henry's side)
 The Palmer mount and outwards ride,
 Upon the Earl's own favourite steed;
 All sheathed he was in armour bright,
 And much resembled that same knight
 Subdued by you in Cotswold fight;
 Lord Angus wished him speed."—
 The instant that Fitz-Eustace spoke,
 A sudden light on Marmion broke:—
 "Ah! dastard fool, to reason lost!"
 He muttered: "Twas not fay nor ghost
 I met upon the moonlight wold,
 But living man of earthly mould.—
 O dotage blind and gross!
 Had I but fought as wont, one thrust
 Had laid De Wilton in the dust,
 My path no more to cross.—
 How stand we now?—he told his tale
 To Douglas; and with some avail;
 'Twas therefore gloomed his rugged brow. -
 Will Surrey dare to entertain,
 'Gainst Marmion, charge disproved and vain?
 Small risk of that I throw.—
 Yet Clare's sharp questions must I shun;
 Must separate Constance from the Nun—
 O what a tangled web we weave,
 When first we practise to deceive!—
 A Palmer too!—no wonder why
 I felt rebuked beneath his eye:
 I might have known there was but one,
 Whose look could quell Lord Marmion." ..

XVIII.

Stung with these thoughts, he urged to speed
 His troop, and reached, at eve, the Tweed,
 Where Lennel's convent closed their march;
 (There now is left but one frail arch,
 Yet mourn thou not its cells;
 Our time a fair exchange has made *
 Hard by, in hospitable shade,
 A reverend pilgrim dwells,
 Well worth the whole Bernardine brood,
 That e'er wore sandal, frock, or hood.)
 Yet did Saint Bernard's Abbot there
 Give Marmion entertainment fair,

* His eldest son, the Master of Angus.

And lodging for his train, and Clare.
 Next morn the Baron climbed the tower,
 To view afar the Scottish power,
 Encamped on Flodden edge:
 The white pavilions made a show,
 Like remnants of the winter snow,
 Along the dusky ridge.
 Long Marmion looked:—at length his eye
 Unusual movement might descry,
 Amid the shifting lines:
 The Scottish host drawn out appears,
 For, flashing on the edge of spears
 The eastern sunbeam shines.
 Their front now deepening, now extending;
 Their flank inclining, wheeling, bending,
 Now drawing back, and now descending,
 The skilful Marmion well could know,
 They watched the motions of some foe,
 Who traversed on the plain below.

XIX.

E'en so it was:—from Flodden ridge
 The Scots beheld the English host
 Leave Barmore-wood, their evening post,
 And heedful watched them as they crossed
 The Till by Twisel-bridge.

High sight it is, and haughty, while
 They dive into the deep defile;
 Beneath the caverned cliff they fall,
 Beneath the castle's airy wall.

By rock, by oak, by hawthorn-tree,
 Troop after troop are disappearing;
 Troop after troop their banners rearing,
 Upon the eastern bank you see.

Still pouring down the rocky den,
 Where flows the sullen Till,
 And rising from the dim-wood glen,
 Standards on standards, men on men,

In slow succession still,
 And sweeping o'er the Gothic arch,
 And pressing on, in ceaseless march,
 To gain the opposing hill.

That morn, to many a trumpet-clang,
 Twisel! thy rock's deep echo rang;
 And many a chief of birth and rank,
 Saint Helen! at thy fountain drank.
 Thy hawthorn glade, which now we see
 In spring-tide bloom so lavishly,
 Had then from many an axe its doom,
 To give the marching columns room.

XX.

And why stands Scotland idly now,
 Dark Flodden! on thy airy brow,
 Since England gains the pass the while,
 And struggles through the deep defile?

What checks the fiery soul of James?
Why sits that champion of the dames
Inactive on his steed,
And sees, between him and his land,
Between him and Tweed's southern strand,
His host Lord Surrey lead?
What 'vails the vain knight-errant's brand?—
O, Douglas, for thy leading wand!
Fierce Randolph, for thy speed!
O for one hour of Wallace wight,
Or well-skilled Bruce, to rule the fight,
And cry—"Saint Andrew and our right!"
Another sight had seen that morn,
From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
And Flodden had been Bannock-bourne!—
The precious hour had passed in vain,
And England's host has gained the plain;
Wheeling their march, and circling still,
Around the base of Flodden-hill.

XXI.

Ere yet the bands met Marmion's eye,
Fitz-Eustace shouted loud and high,—
"Hark! hark! my lord, an English drum!
And see ascending squadrons come
Between Tweed's river and the hill,
Foot, horse, and cannon:—hap what hap,
My basnet to a 'prentice cap,
Lord Surrey's o'er the Till!—
Yet more! yet more!—how fair arrayed
They file from out the hawthorn shade,
And sweep so gallant by!
With all their banners bravely spread,
And all their armour flashing high,
Saint George might waken from the dead,
To see fair England's standards fly."—
"Stint in thy prate," quoth Blount; "thou 'dst best,
And listen to our lord's behest."—
With kindling brow Lord Marmion said,—
"This instant be our band arrayed;
The river must be quickly crossed,
That we may join Lord Surrey's host.
If fight King James,—as well I trust,
That fight he will, and fight he must,—
The Lady Clare behind our lines
Shall tarry, while the battle joins."—

XXII.

Himself he swift on horseback threw,
Scarce to the Abbot bade adieu:
Far less would listen to his prayer,
To leave behind the helpless Clare.
Down to the Tweed his band he drew,
And muttered, as the flood they view,
"The pheasant in the falcon's claw,

He scarce will yield to please a daw;
 Lord Angus may the Abbot awe,
 So Clare shall bide with me."
 Then on that dangerous ford, and deep,
 Where to the Tweed Leat's eddies creep,
 He ventured desperately;
 And not a moment will he bide,
 Till squire, or groom, before him ride;
 Headmost of all he stems the tide,
 And stems it gallantly.
 Eustace held Clare upon her horse,
 Old Hubert led her rein,
 Stoutly they braved the current's course,
 And, though far downward driven per force,
 The southern bank they gain;
 Behind them, straggling, came to shore,
 As best they might, the train:
 Each o'er his head his yew-bow bore,
 A caution not in vain;
 Deep need that day that every string,
 By wet unharmed, should sharply ring.
 A moment then Lord Marmion stayed,
 And breathed his steed, his men arrayed,
 Then forward moved his band.
 Until, Lord Surrey's rear-guard won,
 He halted by a cross of stone,
 That, on a hillock standing lone,
 Did all the field command.

XXIII.

Hence might they see the full array
 Of either host, for deadly fray;
 Their marshalled lines stretched east and west,
 And fronted north and south,
 And distant salutation passed
 From the loud cannon mouth;
 Not in the close successive rattle,
 That breathes the voice of modern battle,
 But slow and far between.—
 The hillock gained, Lord Marmion stayed:
 "Here, by this cross," he gently said,
 "You well may view the scene.
 Here shalt thou tarry, lovely Clare:
 O! think of Marmion in thy prayer!—
 Thou wilt not?—well,—no less my care
 Shall, watchful, for thy weal prepare.—
 You, Blount and Eustace, are her guard,
 With ten picked archers of my train;
 With England if the day go hard,
 To Berwick speed amain.—
 But, if we conquer, cruel maid!
 My spoils shall at your feet be laid,
 When here we meet again."
 He waited not for answer there,
 And would not mark the maid's despair.

Nor heed the discontented look
From either squire; but spurred amain,
And, dashing through the battle-plain,
His way to Surrey took.

XXIV.

“—The good Lord Marmion, by my life

Welcome to danger's hour!—

Short greeting serves in time of strife:—

Thus have I ranged my power:

Myself will rule this central host,

Stout Stanley fronts their right,

My sons command the vanward post,

With Brian Tunstall, stainless knight;

Lord Dacre, with his horsemen light,

Shall be in rear-ward of the fight,

And succour those that need it most.

Now, gallant Marmion, well I know,

Would gladly to the vanguard go:

Edmund, the Admiral, Tunstall there,

With thee their charge will blithely share;

There fight thine own retainers too,

Beneath De Burg, thy steward true.”—

“Thanks, noble Surrey!” Marmion said,

Nor further greeting there he paid;

But, parting like a thunderbolt,

First in the vanguard made a halt,

Where such a shout there rose

Of “Marmion! Marmion!” that the cry,

Up Flodden mountain shrilling high,

Startled the Scottish foes.

XXV.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still

With Lady Clare upon the hill;

On which (for far the day was spent)

The western sunbeams now were bent.

The cry they heard, its meaning knew,

Could plain their distant comrades view:

Sadly to Blount did Eustace say,

“Unworthy office here to stay!

No hope of gilded spurs to-day.—

But, see! look up—on Flodden bent,

The Scottish foe has fired his tent.”—

And sudden, as he spoke,

From the sharp ridges of the hill,

All downward to the banks of Till,

Was wreathed in sable smoke;

Volumed and vast, and rolling far,

The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,

As down the hill they broke;

Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,

Announced their march; their tread alone,

At times one warning trumpet blown,

At times a stifled hum.

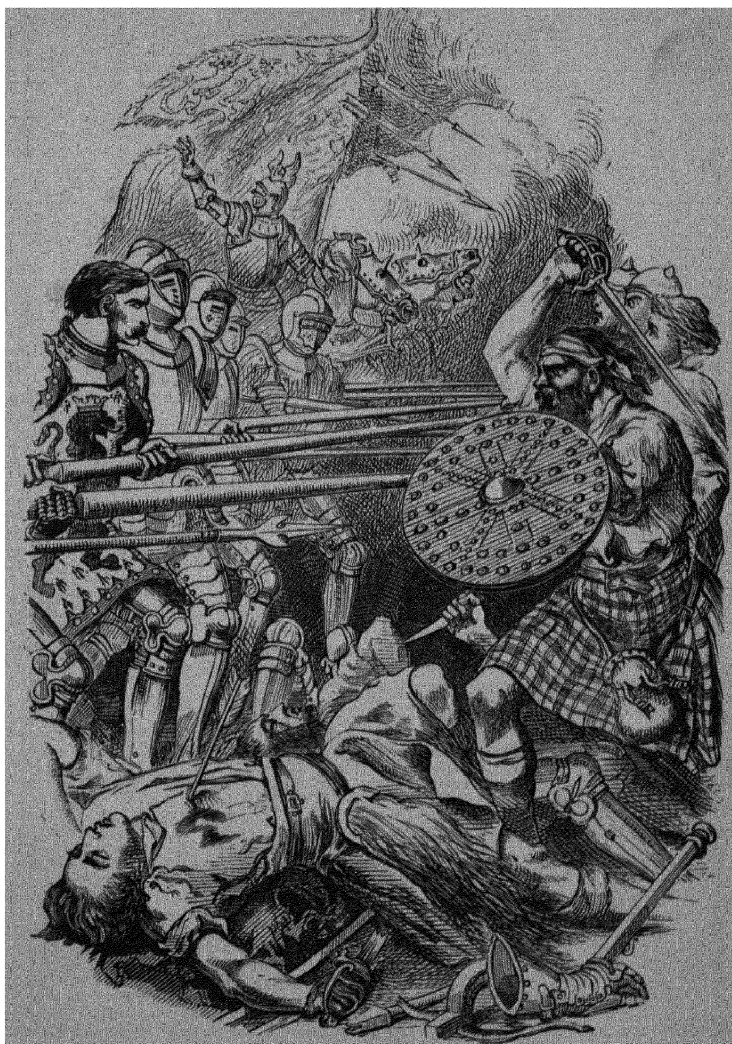
Told England, from his mountain-throne
 King James did rushing come.—
 Scarce could they hear, or see their foes,
 Until at weapon-point they close.—
 They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
 With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust;
 And such a yell was there,
 Of sudden and portentous birth,
 As if men fought upon the earth,
 And fiends in upper air.
 Long looked the anxious squires; their eye
 Could in the darkness nought descry.

XXVI.

At length the freshening western blast
 Aside the shroud of battle cast;
 And, first, the ridge of mingled spears
 Above the brightening cloud appears;
 And in the smoke the pennons flew,
 As in the storm the white sea-mew.
 Then marked they, dashing broad and far,
 The broken billows of the war,
 And plumed crests of chieftains brave,
 Floating like foam upon the wave;
 But nought distinct they see:
 Wide raged the battle on the plain;
 Spears shook, and falchions flashed again;
 Fell England's arrow-flight like rain;
 Crests rose, and stooped, and rose again,
 Wild and disorderly.
 Amid the scene of tumult, high
 They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly:
 And stainless Tunstall's banner white,
 And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
 Still bear them bravely in the fight;
 Although against them come,
 Of gallant Gordons many a one,
 And many a stubborn Highlandman,
 And many a rugged Border clan,
 With Huntley, and with Home.

XXVII.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
 Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle;
 Though there the western mountaineer
 Rushed with bare bosom on the spear,
 And flung the feeble targe aside,
 And with both hands the broadsword plied:
 'Twas vain.—But Fortune, on the right,
 With fickle smile, cheered Scotland's fight.
 Then fell that spotless banner white,
 The Howard's lion fell;
 Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew
 With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
 Around the battle-yell.



Wide raged the battle on the plain :
Swords shook, and falchions flashed again ,
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain ,
Crests rose, and stooped, and rose again,
Wild and disorderly

The Border slogan rent the sky :
A Home! a Gordon! was the cry ;
Loud were the clanging blows ;
Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high.
The pennon sunk and rose ;
As bends the bark's mast in the gale,
When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail.
It wavered 'mid the foes.
No longer Blount the view could bear :—
" By heaven, and all its saints! I swear,
I will not see it lost!
Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare
May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—
I gallop to the host."
And to the fray he rode amain,
Followed by all the archer train.
The fiery youth, with desperate charge,
Made, for a space, an opening large,—
The rescued banner rose,—
But darkly closed the war around,
Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,
It sunk among the foes.
Then Eustace mounted too;—yet stayed,
As loath to leave the helpless maid,
When, fast as shaft can fly,
Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,
The loose rein dangling from his head,
Housing and saddle bloody red,
Lord Marmion's steed rushed by;
And Eustace, maddening at the sight,
A look and sign to Clara cast,
To mark he would return in haste,
Then plunged into the fight.

XXVIII.

Ask me not what the maiden feels,
Left in that dreadful hour alone :
Perchance her reason stoops, or reels ;
Perchance a courage, not her own,
Braces her mind to desperate tone. —
The scattered van of England wheels;—
She only said, as loud in air
The tumult roared, " Is Wilton there?"
They fly, or, maddened by despair,
Fight but to die.—" Is Wilton there?"
With that, straight up the hill there rode
Two horsemen drenched with gore,
And in their arms, a helpless load,
A wounded knight they bore.
His hand still strained the broken brand ;
His arms were smeared with blood and sand.
Dragged from among the horses' feet,
With dented shield, and helmet beat,
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion !

Young Blount his armour did unlace,
 And gazing on his ghastly face,
 Said,—“By Saint George, he’s gone!
 That spear wound has our master sped,
 And see the deep cut on his head!
 Good night to Marmion.”—
 “Unnurtured Blount!—thy brawling cease:
 He opes his eyes,” said Eustace; “peace!”—

XXIX.

When, doffed his casque, he felt free air,
 Around ’gan Marmion wildly stare :—
 “Where’s Harry Blount? Fitz-Eustace where?
 Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare!
 Redeem my pennon,—charge again;
 Cry—‘Marmion to the rescue!’—Vain!
 Last of my race, on battle-plain
 That shout shall ne’er be heard again!—
 Yet my last thought is England’s :—fly,
 To Dacre bear my signet-ring;
 Tell him his squadrons up to bring.—
 Fitz-Eustace, to Lord Surrey lie:
 Tunstall lies dead upon the field;
 His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
 Edmund is down;—my life is left;—
 The Admiral alone is left.
 Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,
 With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
 Full upon Scotland’s central host,
 Or victory and England’s lost.—
 Must I bid twice?—hence, varlets! fly!
 Leave Marmion here alone—to die.”—
 They parted, and alone he lay;
 Clare drew her from the sight away,
 Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,
 And half he murmured,—“Is there none,
 Of all my halls have nursed,
 Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
 Of blessed water from the spring,
 To slake my dying thirst!”—

XXX.

O, woman! in our hours of ease,
 Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
 And variable as the shade
 By the light quivering aspen made;
 When pain and anguish wring the brow
 A ministering angel thou!—
 Scarce were the piteous accents said,
 When, with the Baron’s casque, the maid
 To the nigh streamlet ran:
 Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears;
 The plaintive voice alone she hears,
 Sees but the dying man.
 She stooped her by the runnel’s side,

But in abhorrence backward drew,
 For, oozing from the mountain's side,
 Where raged the war, a dark red tide
 Was curdling in the streamlet blue.
 Where shall she turn!—behold her mark
 A little fountain cell,
 Where water, clear as diamond-spark,
 In a stone basin fell.
 Above, some half-worn letters say,
 "Drink. wearp. pilgrim. drink. and. pray.
 For. the. kind. soul. of. Spbil. Grap.
 Who. buift. this. cross. and. well."
 She filled the helm, and back she hied,
 And with surprise and joy espied
 A Monk supporting Marmion's head;
 A pious man, whom duty brought
 To dubious verge of battle fought,
 To shrieve the dying, bless the dead.

XXXI.

Deep drank Lord Marmion of the wave,
 And as she stooped his brow to lave—
 "Is it the hand of Clare," he said,
 "Or injured Constance, bathes my head?"
 Then, as remembrance rose,—
 "Speak not to me of shrift or prayer!
 I must redress her woes.
 Short space, few words, are mine to spare;
 Forgive and listen, gentle Clare!"—
 "Alas!" she said, "the while,—
 O think of your immortal weal!
 In vain for Constance is your zeal;
 She—died at Holy Isle."—
 Lord Marmion started from the ground;
 As light as if he felt no wound;
 Though in the action burst the tide,
 In torrents from his wounded side.
 "Then it was truth!"—he said—"I knew
 That the dark presage must be true.—
 I would the Fiend, to whom belongs
 The vengeance due to all her wrongs,
 Would spare me but a day!
 For wasting fire, and dying groan,
 And priests slain on the altar-stone,
 Might bribe him for delay.
 It may not be!—this dizzy trance—
 Curse on yon base marauder's lance,
 And doubly cursed my failing brand!
 A sinful heart makes feeble hand."—
 Then, fainting, down on earth he sunk,
 Supported by the trembling Monk.

XXXII.

With fruitless labour, Clara bound
 And strove to stanch the gushing wound.

The Monk, with unavailing cares,
 Exhausted all the Church's prayers;
 Ever, he said, that, close and near,
 A lady's voice was in his ear;
 And that the priest he could not hear,
 For that she ever sung,
*"In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,
 Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying!"*
 So the notes rung;
 "Avoid thee, Fiend!—with cruel hand,
 Shake not the dying sinner's sand!—
 O look, my son, upon yon sign
 Of the Redeemer's grace divine;
 O think on faith and bliss!—
 By many a death-bed I have been,
 And many a sinner's parting seen,
 But never aught like this."—
 The war, that for a space did fail,
 Now trebly thundering swelled the gale,
 And—STANLEY! was the cry:—
 A light on Marmion's visage spread,
 And fired his glazing eye:
 With dying hand, above his head
 He shook the fragment of his blade,
 And shouted "Victory!—
 Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"
 Were the last words of Marmion.

XXXIII.

By this, though deep the evening fell,
 Still rose the battle's deadly swell;
 For still the Scots, around their king,
 Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.
 Where's now their victor vanward wing,
 Where Huntley, and where Home?—
 O for a blast of that dread horn,
 On Fontarabian echoes borne,
 That to King Charles did come,
 When Rowland brave, and Oliver,
 And every paladin and peer,
 On Roncesvalles died!
 Such blast might warn them, not in vain.
 To quit the plunder of the slain,
 And turn the doubtful day again,
 While yet on Flodden side,
 Afar, the Royal Standard flies,
 And round it toils and bleeds and dies,
 Our Caledonian pride!
 In vain the wish—for far away,
 While spoil and havoc mark their way,
 Near Sybil's Cross the plunderers stray.—
 "O Lady," cried the Monk, "away!"—
 And placed her on her steed;
 And led her to the chapel fair,
 Of Tilmouth upon Tweed.

There all the night they spent in prayer,
And, at the dawn of morning, there
She met her kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare.

XXXIV.

But as they left the darkening heath,
More desperate grew the strife of death.
The English shafts in volleys hailed,
In headlong charge their horse assailed:
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep,
To break the Scottish circle deep,

That fought around their king.

But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,

Unbroken was the ring;

The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
The instant that he fell.

No thought was there of dastard flight;
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,

As fearlessly and well;

Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded king.

Then skilful Surrey's sage commands
Led back from strife his shattered bands;

And from the charge they drew,

As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,

Sweep back to ocean blue.

Then did their loss his foemen know;
Their king, their lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field as snow,
When streams are swoln, and south winds blow.

Dissolves in silent dew.

Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless plash,

While many a broken band,

Disordered, through her currents dash,

To gain the Scottish land;

To town and tower, to down and dale,

To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,

And raise the universal wail.

Tradition, legend, tune, and song,

Shall many an age that wail prolong:

Still from the sire the son shall hear

Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,

Of Flodden's fatal field,

Where shivered was fair Scotland's spear,

And broken was her shield!

XXXV.

Day dawns upon the mountain's side:—

There, Scotland! lay thy bravest pride,

Chiefs, knights, and nobles, many a one:

The sad survivors all are gone.—

View not that corpse mistrustfully,
 Defaced and mangled though it be;
 Nor to yon Border castle high
 Look northward with upbraiding eye;
 Nor cherish hope in vain,
 That, journeying far on foreign strand,
 The Royal Pilgrim to his land
 May yet return again.
 He saw the wreck his rashness wrought;
 Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
 And fell on Flodden plain:
 And well in death his trusty brand,
 Firm clenched within his manly hand,
 Beseemed the monarch slain.
 But, O! how changed since you blithe night!—
 Gladly I turn me from the sight,
 Unto my tale again.

XXXVI.

Short is my tale — Fitz-Eustace' care
 A pierced and mangled body bare
 To moated Lichfield's lofty pile;
 And there, beneath the southern aisle,
 A tomb, with Gothic sculpture fair,
 Did long Lord Marmion's image bear.
 (Now vainly for its site you look;
 'Twas levelled, when fanatic Brook
 The fair cathedral stormed and took;
 But, thanks to heaven and good Saint Chad,
 A guerdon meet the spoiler had!)
 There erst was martial Marmion found,
 His feet upon a couchant hound,
 His hands to heaven upraised;
 And all around, on scutcheon rich,
 And tablet carved, and fretted niche,
 His arms and feats were blazed.
 And yet, though all was carved so fair,
 And priests for Marmion breathed the prayer
 The last Lord Marmion lay not there.
 From Ettricke woods, a peasant swain
 Followed his lord to Flodden plain.—
 One of those flowers, whom plaintive lay
 In Scotland mourns as "wede away:"
 Sore wounded, Sybil's Cross he spied,
 And dragged him to its foot, and died,
 Close by the noble Marmion's side.
 The spoilers stripped and gashed the slain,
 And thus their corpses were mista'en;
 And thus, in the proud Baron's tomb,
 The lowly woodsman took the room.

XXXVII.

Less easy task it wore, to show
 Lord Marmion's nameless grave, and low.
 They dug his grave e'en where he lay,
 But every mark is gone;

Time's wasting hand has done away
The simple Cross of Sybil Gray,
And broke her font of stone :
But yet from out the little hill
Oozes the slender springlet still.
Oft halts the stranger there,
For thence may best his curious eye
The memorable field descry ;
And shepherd boys repair
To seek the water-flag and rush,
And rest them by the hazel bush,
And plait their garlands fair ;
Nor dream they sit upon the grave,
That holds the bones of Marmion brave.—
When thou shalt find the little hill,
With thy heart commune, and be still.
If ever, in temptation strong,
Thou leftst the right path for the wrong ;
If every devious step, thus trode,
Still led the farther from the road ;
Dread thou to speak presumptuous doom,
On noble Marmion's lowly tomb ;
But say, "He died a gallant knight,
With sword in hand, for England's right."

XXXVIII.

I do not rhyme to that dull elf,
Who cannot image to himself,
That all through Flodden's dismal night,
Wilton was foremost in the fight ;
That, when brave Surrey's steed was slain,
'Twas Wilton mounted him again ;
'Twas Wilton's brand that deepest hewed,
Amid the spearmen's stubborn wood :
Unnamed by Hollinshed or Hall,
He was the living soul of all ;
That, after fight, his faith made plain,
He won his rank and lands again ;
And charged his old paternal shield
With bearings won on Flodden field.--
Nor sing I to that simple maid,
To whom it must in terms be said,
That king and kinsmen did agree
To bless fair Clara's constancy ;
Who cannot, unless I relate,
Paint to her mind the bridal's state ;
That Wolsey's voice the blessing spoke ;
More, Sands, and Denny, passed the joke :
That bluff King Hal the curtain drew,
And Catherine's hand the stocking threw :
And afterwards, for many a day,
That it was held enough to say,
In blessing to a wedded pair,
"Love they like Wilton and like Clare!"

H'Entop.

TO THE READER.

Why then a final note prolong,
Or lengthen out a closing song,
Unless to bid the gentles speed,
Who long have list'd to my rede?—*
To Statesmen grave, if such may deign
To read the Minstrel's idle strain,
Sound head, clean hand, and piercing wit,
And patriotic heart—as PITT!
A garland for the hero's crest,
And twined by her he loves the best;
To every lovely lady bright,
What can I wish but faithful knight?
To every faithful lover too,
What can I wish but lady true?
And knowledge to the studious sage;
And pillow soft to head of age.
To thee, dear school-boy, whom my lay
Has cheated of thy hour of play,
Light task, and merry holiday!
To all, to each, a fair good night,
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light!

* Used generally for *tale* or *discourse*.

THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

TO
THE MOST NOBLE
JOHN JAMES, MARQUIS OF ABERCORN,
dec., dec., dec.,

THIS POEM IS DESCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1810

Argument.

THE scene of the following Poem is laid chiefly in the vicinity of Loch Katrina, in the West Highlands of Perthshire. The time of action includes six days, and the transactions of each day occupy a Canto.

THE
LADY OF THE LAKE

CANTO FIRST.

THE CHASE.

HARP of the North! that mouldering long hast hung
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,

Muffling with verdant ringlet every string,—
O minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?
'Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmuring,
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful or subdued the proud.
At each according pause was heard aloud
Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bowed;
For still the burthen of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's match-
less eye.

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! though scarce my skill command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay;
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touched in vain.
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

I.

THE stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade;
But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,

The deep-mouthed bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II.

As chief who hears his warder call,
"To arms! the foemen storm the wall,"--
The antlered monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuffed the tainted gale,
A moment listened to the cry,
That thickened as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appeared,
With one brave bound the copse he cleared,
And stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III.

Yelled on the view the opening pack,
Rock, glen, and cavern paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awakened mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bayed deep and strong,
Clattered a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rang out,
A hundred voices joined the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cowered the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its falling din
Returned from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

IV.

Less loud the sounds of sylvan war
Disturbed the heights of Uam-Var,
And roused the cavern, where, 'tis told,
A giant made his den of old;
For ere that steep ascent was won,
High in his pathway hung the sun,
And many a gallant, stayed per-force,
Was fain to breathe his faltering horse:
And of the trackers of the deer
Scarce half the lessening pack was near:

So shrewdly, on the mountain-side,
Hail the bold burst their mettle tried.

V.

The noble Stag was pausing now
Upon the mountain's southern brow
Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith.
With anxious eye he wandered o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And pondered refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copse-wood gray,
That waved and wept on Loch-Achray,
And mingled with the pine-trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Ben-venue.
Fresh vigour with the hope returned,
With flying foot the heath he spurned,
Held westward with unwearied race,
And left behind the panting chase.

VI.

'Twere long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambus-more;
What reins were tightened in despair,
When rose Benledi's ridge in air;
Who flagged upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunned to stem the flooded Teith,—
For twice, that day, from shore to shore,
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er,
Few were the stragglers, following fur,
That reached the lake of Vennachar;
And when the Brigg of Turk was won,
The headmost horseman rode alone.

VII.

Alone, but with unbated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel;
For, jaded now, and spent with toil,
Embossed with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strained full in view.
Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatched for courage, breath, and speed,
Fast on his flying traces came,
And all but won that desperate game;
For, scarce a spear's length from his haunch,
Vindictive toiled the bloodhounds stanch:
Nor nearer might the dogs attain,
Nor farther might the quarry strain.
Thus up the margin of the lake,
Between the precipice and brake,
O'er stock and rock their race they take.

VIII.

The Hunter marked that mountain high,
The lone lake's western boundary;

And deemed the stag must turn to bay,
Where that rude rampart barred the way;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes;
For the death-wound, and death halloo,
Mustered his breath, his whinyard drew;
But, thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunned the shock,
And turned him from the opposing rock;
Then, dashing down a darksome glen,
Soon lost to hound and hunter's ken,
In the deep Trosach's wildest nook
His solitary refuge took.
There, while close couched, the thicket shed
Cold dews and wild flowers on his head,
He heard the baffled dogs in vain
Rave through the hollow pass amain,
Chiding the rocks that yelled again.

IX.

Close on the hounds the hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanished game;
But, stumbling in the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labours o'er,
Stretched his stiff limbs, to rise no more;
Then, touched with pity and remorse,
He sorrowed o'er the expiring horse.
"I little thought, when first thy rein
I slacked upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed!
Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That cost thy life, my gallant gray!"

X.

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.
Back limped, with slow and cripple pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they pressed,
With drooping tail and humbled crest;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolonged the swelling bugle-note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answered with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast,
Till echo seemed an answering blast;
And on the hunter hied his way,
To join some comrades of the day;
Yet often paused, so strange the road,
So wondrous were the scenes it showed.

XI.

The western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path, in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain.
Their rocky summits, split and rent,
Formed turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever decked,
Or mosque of eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lacked they many a banner fair;
For, from their shivered brows displayed,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew-drop sheen,
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

XII.

Boon nature scattered, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalmed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale, and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Fox-glove and night-shade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Grouped their dark hues with every stain,
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Gray birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shattered trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrowed sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glistening streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

XIII.

Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
A narrow inlet, still and deep,
Affording scarce such breadth of brim,
As served the wild-duck's brood to swim;
Lost for a space, through thickets veering
But broader when again appearing,
Tall rocks and tufted knolls their face
Could on the dark-blue mirror trace;
And farther as the hunter strayed,
Still broader sweep its channels made.
The shaggy mounds no longer stood,
Emerging from entangled wood,
But wave-encircled, seemed to float,
Like castle girdled with its moat;
Yet broader floods extending still,
Divide them from their parent hill,
Till each, retiring, claims to be
An islet in an inland sea.

XIV.

And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far projecting precipice.
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnished sheet of living gold,
Loch-Katrine lay beneath him rolled:
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light;
And mountains, that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Ben-venue
Down to the lake in masses threw
Crag, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled.
The fragments of an earlier world;
A wildering forest feathered o'er
His ruined sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV.

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed,
And "What a scene were here," he cried,
"For princely pomp or churchman's pride!
On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
On yonder meadow, far away,
The turrets of a cloister gray;

How blithely might the bugle-horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn !
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute,
Ohime, when the groves are still and mute !
And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matins' distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell—
And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
Should each bewildered stranger call
To friendly feast and lighted hall.

XVI.

“Blithe were it then to wander here !
But now,—beahrew yon nimble deer,—
Like that same hermit's, thin and spare,
The copse must give my evening fare;
Some mossy bank my couch must be,
Some rustling oak my canopy.
Yet pass we that;—the war and chase
Give little choice of resting-place;
A summer night, in green-wood spent,
Were but to-morrow's merriment;—
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better missed than found :
To meet with Highland plunderers here
Were worse than loss of steed or deer.—
I am alone;—my bugle strain
May call some straggler of the train;
Or, fall the worst that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried.”

XVII.

But scarce again his horn he wound,
When lo ! forth starting at the sound,
From underneath an aged oak,
That slanted from the islet rock,
A Damsel guider of its way,
A little skiff shot to the bay,
That round the promontory steep
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,
Edifying, in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow twig to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touched the silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,
And stood concealed amid the brake,
To view this Lady of the Lake.
The maiden paused, as if again
She thought to catch the distant strain,

With head up-raised, and look intent,
 And eye and ear attentive bent,
 And locks flung back, and lips apart,
 Like monument of Grecian art.
 In listening mood she seemed to stand,
 The guardian Naiad of the strand.

XVIII.

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
 A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
 Of finer form, or lovelier face!
 What though the sun, with ardent frown,
 Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—
 The sportive toil, which, short and light,
 Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
 Served too in hastier swell to show
 Short glimpses of a breast of snow;
 What though no rule of courtly grace
 To measured mood had trained her pace,—
 A foot more light, a step more true,
 Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew;
 E'en the slight hare-bell raised its head,
 Elastic from her airy tread:
 What though upon her speech there hung
 The accents of the mountain tongue,—
 Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
 The listener held his breath to hear.

XIX.

A chieftain's daughter seemed the maid;
 Her satin snood, her silken plaid,
 Her golden brooch, such birth betrayed.
 And seldom was a snood amid
 Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
 Whose glossy black to shame might bring
 The plumage of the raven's wing;
 And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
 Mantled a plaid with modest care,
 And never brooch the folds combined
 Above a heart more good and kind.
 Her kindness and her worth to spy,
 You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
 Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
 Gives back the shaggy banks more true,
 Than every free-born glance confessed
 The guileless movements of her breast;
 Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
 Or woe or pity claimed a sigh,
 Or filial love was glowing there,
 Or meek devotion poured a prayer,
 Or tale of injury called forth
 The indignant spirit of the north.
 One only passion, unrevealed,
 With maiden pride the maid concealed,
 Yet not less purely felt the flame;—
 O! need I tell that passion's name?

XX.

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne:—
“Father!” she cried; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
Awhile she paused, no answer came,—
“Malcolm, was thine the blast?” the name
Less resolutely uttered fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
“A stranger I,” the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid alarmed, with hasty oar,
Pushed her light shallop from the shore,
And, when a space was gained between,
Closer she drew her bosom’s screen;
(So forth the startled swan would swing,
So turn to prune his ruffled wing.)
Then safe, though fluttered and amazed,
She paused, and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

XXI.

On his bold visage, middle age
Had slightly pressed its signet sage,
Yet had not quenched the open truth,
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
Of hasty love, or headlong ire,
His limbs were cast in manly mould,
For hardy sports, or contest bold;
And though in peaceful garb arrayed,
And weaponless, except his blade,
His stately mien as well implied
A high-born heart, a martial pride,
As if a baron’s crest he wore,
And sheathed in armour trod the shore.
Slighting the petty need he showed,
He told of his benighted road:
His ready speech flowed fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy;
Yet seemed that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII.

Awhile the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at last replied,
That Highland halls were open still
To wildered wanderers of the hill,
“Nor think you unexpected come
To yon lone isle, our desert home;
Before the heath had lost the dew,
This morn a couch was pulled for you:

On yonder mountain's purple head
Have ptarmigan and heath-cock bled,
And our broad nets have swept the mere
To furnish forth your evening cheer."—
"Now, by the rood, my lovely maid,
Your courtesy has erred," he said;
"No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer here by fortune tossed,
My way, my friends, my courser lost,
I ne'er before, believe me, fair,
Have ever drawn your mountain air,
Till on this lake's romantic strand,
I found a fay in fairy land."—

XXIII.

"I well believe," the maid replied,
As her light skiff approached the side,
"I well believe, that ne'er before
Your foot has trode Loch-Katrine's shore;
But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-bane foretold your plight,—
A gray-haired sire, whose eye intent
Was on the visioned future bent.
He saw your steed, a dappled gray,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
Painted exact your form and mien,
Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,
That tasselled horn so gaily gilt,
That falchion's crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron's plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be,
To grace a guest of fair degree;
But light I held his prophecy,
And deemed it was my father's horn,
Whose echoes o'er the lake were borne."

XXIV.

The stranger smiled:—"Since to your home,
A destined errant knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doomed, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I'll lightly front each high emprise,
For one kind glance of those bright eyes;
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid, with smile suppressed and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try;
For seldom, sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasped an oar;
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.

Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The darkening mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV.

The stranger viewed the shore around;
'Twas all so close with copse-wood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain-maiden showed
A clambering unsuspected road,
That winded through the tangled screen,
And opened on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibres swept the ground;
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower.

XXVI.

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials, as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopped of their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees over-head,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And withered heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne,
Of mountain fir with bark unshorn,
Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
The ivy and Idæan vine,
The clematis, the favoured flower,
Which boasts the name of virgin-bower,
And every hardy plant could bear
Loch-Katrine's keen and searching air.
An instant in this porch she stayed,
And gaily to the stranger said,
"On Heaven and on thy lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII.

"My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
My gentle guide, in following thee."—
He crossed the threshold—and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.
To his bold brow his spirit rushed,
But soon for vain alarm he blushed.

When on the floor he saw displayed,
 Cause of the din, a naked blade
 Dropped from the sheath, that careless flung
 Upon a stag's huge antlers swung;
 For all around, the walls to grace,
 Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
 A target there, a bugle here,
 A battle-axe, a hunting-spear,
 And broad-swords, bows, and arrows store,
 With the tusked trophies of the boar.
 Hero grins the wolf as when he died,
 And there the wild-cat's brindled hide
 The frontlet of the elk adorns,
 Or mantles o'er the bison's horns:
 Pennons and flags defaced and stained,
 That blackening streaks of blood retained,
 And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
 With otter's fur and seal's unite,
 In rude and uncouth tapestry all,
 To garnish forth the sylvan hall.

XXVIII.

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
 And next the fallen weapon raised;
 Few were the arms whose sinewy strength
 Sufficed to stretch it forth at length.
 And as the brand he poised and swayed,
 "I never knew but one," he said,
 "Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
 A blade like this in battle-field."
 She sighed, then smiled and took the word;
 "You see the guardian champion's sword:
 As light it trembles in his hand,
 As in my grasp a hazel wand;
 My sire's tall form might grace the part
 Of Ferragus, or Ascabart:
 But in the absent giant's hold
 Are women now, and menials old."

XXIX.

The mistress of the mansion came,
 Mature of age, a graceful dame;
 Whose easy step and stately port
 Had well become a princely court,
 To whom, though more than kindred know,
 Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
 Meet welcome to her guest she made,
 And every courteous rite was paid,
 That hospitality could claim,
 Though all unasked his birth and name;
 Such then the reverence to a guest,
 That fellest foe might join the feast,
 And from his deadliest foeman's door
 Unquestioned turn, the banquet o'er.
 At length his rank the stranger names—
 "The Knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James;

Lord of a barren heritage,
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords had held with toil;
His sire had fallen in such turmoil,
And he, God wot, was forced to stand
Off for his right with blade in hand.
This morning with Lord Moray's train
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripped his comrades, missed the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wandered here."

XXX

Fain would the Knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire;
Well showed the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks displayed
The simple grace of sylvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Showed she was come of gentle race;
"Twere strange in ruder rank to find
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.
Each hint the Knight of Snowdoun gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;
Or Ellen, innocently gay,
Turned all inquiry light away.
"Weird women we! by dale and down,
We dwell afar from tower and town.
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
On wandering knights our spells we cast;
While viewless minstrels touch the string,
"Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing."
She sang, and still a harp unseen
Filled up the symphony between.

XXXI

Song.

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking!
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Airy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

"No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.

Yet the lark's shrill fife may come,
 At the daybreak from the fallow,
 And the bittern sound his drum,
 Booming from the sedgy shallow.
 Ruder sounds shall none be near,
 Guards nor warders challenge here,
 Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
 Shouting clans or squadrons stamping."

XXXII.

She paused—then, blushing, led the lay
 To grace the stranger of the day;
 Her mellow notes a while prolong
 The cadence of the flowing song,
 Till to her lips in measured frame
 The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

Song continued.

"Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
 While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
 Dream not with the rising sun
 Bugles here shall sound reveillé.
 Sleep! the deer is in his den;
 Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
 Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen,
 How thy gallant steed lay dying.
 Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
 Think not of the rising sun,
 For at dawning to assail ye,
 Here no bugles sound reveillé."

XXXIII.

The hall was cleared—the stranger's bed
 Was there of mountain heather spread,
 Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
 And dreamed their forest sports again.
 But vainly did the heath-flower shed
 Its moorland fragrance round his head;
 Not Ellen's spell had lulled to rest
 The fever of his troubled breast;
 In broken dreams the image rose
 Of varied perils, pains, and woes.
 His steed now flounders in the brake,
 Now sinks his barge upon the lake:
 Now leader of a broken host,
 His standard falls, his honour's lost.
 Then,—from my couch may heavenly might
 Chase that worst phantom of the night!—
 Again returned the scenes of youth,
 Of confident undoubting truth;
 Again his soul he interchanged
 With friends whose hearts were long estranged.
 They come, in dim procession led,
 The cold, the faithless, and the dead;
 As warm each hand, each brow as gay,
 As if they parted yesterday.

And doubt distracts him at the view,
O were his senses false or true!
Dreamed he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now?

XXXIV.

At length, with Ellen in a grove,
He seemed to walk, and speak of love;
She listened with a blush and sigh,
His suit was warm, his hopes were high.
He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet met his grasp;
The phantom's sex was changed and gone,
Upon its head a helmet shone;
Slowly enlarged to giant size,
With darkened cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore.—
He woke, and, panting with affright,
Recalled the vision of the night.
The hearth's decaying brands were red,
And deep and dusky lustre shed,
Half showing, half concealing all
The uncouth trophies of the hall.
'Mid those the stranger fixed his eye
Where that huge falchion hung on high,
And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rushed, chasing countless thoughts along,
Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

XXIV.

The wild rose, eglantine, and broom,
Wafted around their rich perfume;
The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm,
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Played on the water's still expanse;
Wild were the heart whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!
He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
While thus he communed with his breast:
"Why is it at each turn I trace
Some memory of that exiled race
Can I not mountain maiden spy,
But she must bear the Douglas eye?
Can I not view a Highland brand,
But it must match the Douglas hand?
Can I not frame a fevered dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme?—
I'll dream no more—by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resigned.
My midnight orison said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more."

His midnight orison he told,
 A prayer with every bead of gold,
 Consigned to Heaven his cares and woer
 And sunk in undisturbed repose;
 Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
 And morning dawned on Ben-venue.

CANTO SECOND.

THE ISLAND.

I.

AT morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
 'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay,
 All Nature's children feel the matin spring
 Of life reviving, with reviving day;
 And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
 Wafting the stranger on his way again,
 Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel gray,
 And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
 Mixed with the sounding harp, O white-haired Allan bane!

II.

Song.

"Not faster yonder rowers' might
 Flings from their oars the spray,
 Not faster yonder rippling bright,
 That tracks the shallop's course in light,
 Melts in the lake away,
 Than men from memory erase
 The benefits of former days;
 Then, stranger, go! good speed the while,
 Nor think again of the lonely isle.

"High place to thee in royal court,
 High place in battled line,
 Good hawk and hound for sylvan sport,
 Where Beauty sees the brave resort,
 The honoured meed be thine!
 True be thy sword, thy friend sincere,
 Thy lady constant, kind, and dear,
 And lost in love and friendship's smile,
 Be memory of the lonely isle.

III.

Song continued.

"But if beneath yon southern sky
 A plaided stranger roam,
 Whose drooping crest and stifled sigh,
 And sunken cheek and heavy eye,
 Pine for his Highland home;
 Then, warrior, then be thine to show
 The care that soothes a wanderer's woe;
 Remember then thy hap erewhile
 A stranger in the lonely isle.

"Or if on life's uncertain main,
Mishap shall mar thy sail;
If faithful, wise, and brave in vain,
Woe, want, and exile thou sustain
Beneath the fickle gale;
Waste not a sigh on fortune changed,
On thankless courts, or friends estranged,
But come where kindred worth shall smile,
To greet thee in the lonely isle."

IV.

As died the sounds upon the tide,
The shallop reached the mainland side,
And ere his onward way he took,
The stranger cast a lingering look,
Where easily his eye might reach
The harper on the islet beach,
Reclined against a blighted tree,
As wasted, gray, and worn as he.
To minstrel meditation given,
His reverend brow was raised to heaven,
As from the rising sun to claim
A sparkle of inspiring flame;
His hand, reclined upon the wire,
Seemed watching the awakening fire;
So still he sate, as those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate;
So still, as if no breeze might dare
To lift one lock of hoary hair;
So still as life itself were fled,
In the last sound his harp had sped.

V.

Upon a rock with lichens wild,
Beside him Ellen sate and smiled.
Smiled she to see the stately drake
Lead forth his fleet upon the lake,
While her vexed spaniel, from the beach,
Bayed at the prize beyond his reach;
Yet tell me then, the maid who knows,
Why deepened on her cheek the rose?—
Forgive, forgive, Fidelity!
Perchance the maiden smiled to see
Yon parting lingerer wave adieu,
And stop and turn to wave anew;
And, lovely ladies, ere your ire
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Show me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquest of her eye!

VI.

While yet he loitered on the spot,
It seemed as Ellen marked him not;
But when he turned him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made:

And after, oft that Knight would say,
 That not when prize of festal day
 Was dealt him by the brightest fair,
 Who e'er wore jewel in her hair,
 So highly did his bosom swell,
 As at that simple mute farewell.
 Now with a trusty mountain guide,
 And his dark stag-hounds by his side,
 He parts—the maid, unconscious still,
 Watched him wind slowly round the hill;
 But when his stately form was hid,
 The guardian in her bosom chid—
 “Thy Malcolm! vain and selfish maid!”
 ’Twas thus upbraiding conscience said,
 “Not so had Malcolm idly hung
 On the smooth phrase of southern tongue:
 Not so had Malcolm strained his eye
 Another step than thine to spy.”—
 “Wake, Allan-bane!” aloud she cried,
 To the old minstrel by her side,—
 “Arouse thee from thy moody dream!
 I’ll give thy harp heroic theme,
 And warm thee with a noble name;
 Pour forth the glory of the Græme.”—
 Scarce from her lip the word had rushed,
 When deep the conscious maiden blushed;
 For of his clan, in hall and bower,
 Young Malcolm Græme was held the flower.

VII.

The minstrel waked his harp—three times
 Arose the well-known martial chimes,
 And thrice their high heroic pride
 In melancholy murmurs died.
 “Vainly thou biddest, O noble maid,”
 Clasp his withered hands, he said,
 “Vainly thou biddest me wake the strain,
 Though all unwont to bid in vain.
 Alas! than mine a mightier hand
 Has tuned my harp, my strings has spanned:
 I touch the chords of joy, but low
 And mournful answer notes of woe;
 And the proud march which victors tread,
 Sinks in the wailing for the dead.—
 O well for me, if mine alone
 That dirge’s deep prophetic tone!
 If, as my tuneful fathers said,
 This harp, which erst Saint Modan swayod,
 Can thus its master’s fate foretell,
 Then welcome be the minstrel’s knell!

VIII.

“But ah! dear lady, thus it sighed
 The eve thy sainted mother died;
 And such the sounds which, while I strove
 To wake a lay of war or love,

Came marring all the festal mirth,
Appalling me who gave them birth;
And, disobedient to my call,
Wailed loud through Bothwell's bannered hall,
Ere Douglasses to ruin driven,
Were exiled from their native heaven.--
Oh! if yet worse mishap and woe
My master's house must undergo,
Or aught but weal to Ellen fair,
Brood in these accents of despair,
No future bard, sad harp! shall fling
'Triumph or rapture from thy string;
One short, one final strain shall flow.
Fraught with unutterable woe,
Then shivered shall thy fragments lie,
Thy master cast him down and die."

IX.

Soothing she answered him, "Assuage,
Mine honoured friend, the fears of age;
All melodies to thee are known,
That harp has rung, or pipe has blown.
In Lowland vale, or Highland glen,
From Tweed to Spey—what marvel, then,
At times, unbidden notes should rise,
Confusedly bound in memory's ties,
Entangling, as they rush along,
The war-march with the funeral song?—
Small ground is now for boding fear;
Obscure, but safe, we rest us here.
My sire, in native virtue great,
Resigning lordship, lands, and state,
Not then to fortune more resigned,
Than yonder oak might give the wind;
The graceful foliage storms may reave,
The noble stem they cannot grieve.
For me,"—she stooped, and, looking round,
Plucked a blue hare-bell from the ground,
"For me, whose memory scarce conveys
An image of more splendid days,
This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well my simple emblem be;
It drinks heaven's dew as blithe as rose
That in the King's own garden grows,
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a bard is bound to swear,
He ne'er saw coronet so fair."
Then playfully the chaplet wild
She wreathed in her dark locks, and smiled.

X.

Her smile, her speech, with winning sway,
Wiled the old harper's mood away;
With such a look as hermits throw
When angels stoop to soothe their woe.

He gazed, till fond regret and pride
 Thrilled to a tear, then thus replied:
 "Loveliest and best! thou little know'st
 The rank, the honours thou hast lost;
 O might I live to see thee grace,
 In Scotland's court, thy birthright place,
 To see my favourite's step advance,
 The lightest in the courtly dance,
 The cause of every gallant's sigh,
 And leading star of every eye,
 And theme of every minstrel's art,
 The Lady of the Bleeding Heart!"*

XI.

"Fair dreams are these," the maiden cried,
 (Light was her accent, yet she sighed,)
 "This mossy rock, my friend, to me
 Is worth gay chair and canopy;
 Nor would my footstep spring more gay,
 In courtly dance than blithe strathspey;
 Nor half so pleased mine ear incline
 To royal minstrel's lay as thine;
 And then for suitors proud and high,
 To bend before my conquering eye,
 Thou, flattering bard! thyself wilt say,
 That grim Sir Roderick owns its sway.
 The Saxon scourge, Clan-Alpine's pride,
 The terror of Loch-Lomond's side,
 Would at my suit, thou know'st, delay
 A Lennox foray—for a day."

XII.

The ancient bard his glee repressed:
 "I'll hast thou chosen theme for jest!
 For who, through all this western wild,
 Named Black Sir Roderick e'er, and smiled?
 In Holy-Rood a knight he slew;
 I saw, when back the dirk he drew,
 Courtiers give place before the stride
 Of the undaunted homicide;
 And since, though outlawed, hath his hand
 Full sternly kept his mountain land.
 Who else dared give,—ah! woe the day,
 That I such hated truth should say—
 The Douglas, like a stricken deer,
 Disowned by every noble peer,
 Even the rude refuge we have here?
 Alas, this wild marauding chief
 Alone might hazard our relief,
 And now thy maiden charms expand,
 Looks for his guerdon in thy hand;
 Full soon may dispensation sought,
 To back his suit, from Rome be brought.
 Then, though an exile on the hill,
 Thy father, as the Douglas, still
 The well-known cognizance of the Douglas family.

Be held in reverence and fear.
But though to Roderick thou'rt so dear,
That thou mightst guide with silken thread,
Slave of thy will, this chieftain dread;
Yet, O loved maid, thy mirth refrain!
Thy hand is on a lion's mane."

XIII.

"Minstrel," the maid replied, and high
Her father's soul glanced from her eye,
"My debts to Roderick's house I know:
All that a mother could bestow,
To Lady Margaret's care I owe,
Since first an orphan in the wild
She sorrowed o'er her sister's child;
To her brave chieftain son, from ire
Of Scotland's king who shrouds my sire,
A deeper, holier debt is owed;
And, could I pay it with my blood,
Allan! Sir Roderick should command
My blood, my life,—but not my hand.
Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell
A votaress in Maronnan's cell;
Rather through realms beyond the sea,
Seeking the world's cold charity,
Where ne'er was spoke a Scottish word,
And ne'er the name of Douglas heard,
An outcast pilgrim will she rove,
Than wed the man she cannot love.

XIV.

"Thou shakest, good friend, thy tresses gray—
That pleading look, what can it say
But what I own?—I grant him brave,
But wild as Bracklinn's thundering wave;
And generous—save vindictive mood,
Or jealous transport chafe his blood:
I grant him true to friendly band,
As his claymore is to his hand:
But O! that very blade of steel
More mercy for a foe would feel:
I grant him liberal, to fling
Among his clan the wealth they bring,
When back by lake and glen they wind,
And in the Lowland leave behind,
Where once some pleasant hamlet stood,
A mass of ashes slaked with blood.
The hand, that for my father fought,
I honour, as his daughter ought;
But can I clasp it reeking red,
From peasants slaughtered in their shed?
No! wildly while his virtues gleam,
They make his passions darker seem,
And flash along his spirit high,
Like lightning o'er the midnight sky.

While yet a child,—and children know,
 Instinctive taught, the friend and foe,—
 I shuddered at his brow of gloom,
 His shadowy plaid, and sable plume;
 A maiden grown, I ill could bear
 His haughty mien and lordly air;
 But, if thou join'st a suitor's claim,
 In serious mood, to Roderick's name,
 I thrill with anguish! or, if e'er
 A Douglas knew the word, with fear.
 To change such odious theme were best,—
 What think'st thou of our stranger guest?"

XV.

"What think I of him?—woe the while
 That brought such wanderer to our isle!
 Thy father's battle-brand, of yore
 For Time-man forged by fairy lore,
 What time he leagued, no longer foes,
 His Border spears with Hotspur's bows,
 Did, self-unsabarded, foreshow
 The footstep of a secret foe.
 If courtly spy, and harboured here,
 What may we for the Douglas fear?
 What for this island, deemed of old
 Clan-Alpine's last and surest hold?
 If neither spy nor foe, I pray
 What yet may jealous Roderick say?
 —Nay, wave not thy disdainful head!
 Bethink thee of the discord dread,
 That kindled when at Beltane game,
 Thou ledst the dance with Malcolm Græmo;
 Still, though thy sire the peace renewed,
 Smoulders in Roderick's breast the feud;
 Beware!—But hark, what sounds are these?
 My dull ears catch no faltering breeze,
 No weeping birch, nor aspens wake,
 Nor breath is dimpling in the lake,
 Still is the canna's* hoary beard,
 Yet, by my minstrel faith, I heard.—
 And hark again! some pipe of war
 Sends the bold pibroch from afar."

XVI.

Far up the lengthened lake were spied
 Four darkening specks upon the tide,
 That, slow enlarging on the view,
 Four manned and masted barges grew,
 And bearing downwards from Glengyle,
 Steered full upon the lonely isle;
 The point of Briancholl they passed,
 And, to the windward as they cast,
 Against the sun they gave to shine
 The bold Sir Roderick's bannered pine.

* Cotton-grass.

Nearer and nearer as they bear,
Spears, pikes, and axes flash in air.
Now might you see the tartans brave,
And plaids and plumage dance and wave;
Now see the bonnets sink and rise,
As his tough oar the rower plies;
See, flashing at each sturdy stroke,
The wave ascending into smoke;
See the proud pipers on the bow,
And mark the gaudy streamers flow
From their loud chanter^s * down, and sweep
The furrowed bosom of the deep,
As, rushing through the lake amain,
They plied the ancient Highland strain.

XVII.

Ever, as on they bore, more loud
And louder rung the pibroch proud.
At first the sounds, by distance tame,
Mellowed along the waters came,
And, lingering long by cape and bay,
Waile^d every harsher note away;
Then, bursting bolder on the ear,
The clan's shrill Gathering they could hear;
Those thrilling sounds, that call the might
Of old Clan-Alpine to the fight:
Thick beat the rapid notes, as when
The mustering hundreds shake the glen,
And, hurrying at the signal dread,
The battered earth returns their tread;
Then prelude light, of livelier tone,
Expressed their merry marching on,
Ere peal of closing battle rose,
With mingled outcry, shrieks, and blows;
And mimic din of stroke and ward,
As broad-sword upon target jarred;
And groaning pause, ere yet again,
Condensed, the battle yelled amain;
The rapid charge, the rallying shout,
Retreat borne headlong into rout,
And bursts of triumph, to declare
Clan-Alpine's conquest—all were there.
Nor ended thus the strain; but slow,
Sun^k in a moan prolonged and low,
And changed the conquering clarion swell,
For wild lament o'er those that fell.

XVIII.

The war-pipes ceased; but lake and hill
Were busy with their echoes still;
And, when they slept, a vocal strain
Bade their hoarse chorus wake again.
While loud a hundred clansmen raise
Their voices in their chieftain's praise.

* The drone of the bagpipe.

Each boatman, bending to his oar,
 With measured sweep the burthen bore,
 In such wild cadence, as the breeze
 Makes through December's leafless trees:
 The chorus first could Allan know,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine, ho! iro!"
 And near, and nearer, as they rowed,
 Distinct the martial ditty flowed.

XIX.

Boat Song.

Hail to the chief who in triumph advances!
 Honoured and blessed be the ever-green pine!
 Long may the tree in his banner that glances,
 Flourish, the shelter and grace of our line!
 Heaven send it happy dew,
 Earth lend it sap anew;
 Gaily to bourgeon, and broadly to grow,
 While every Highland glen
 Sends our shout back agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"
 Ours is no sapling, chance-sown by the fountain,
 Blooming at Beltane, in winter to fade;
 When the whirlwind has stripped every leaf on the mountain
 The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.
 Moored in the rifted rock,
 Proof to the tempest's shock,
 Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow;
 Menteith and Breadalbane, then,
 Echo his praise agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XX.

Proudly our pibroch has thrilled in Glen Fruin,
 And Banochar's groans to our slogan replied:
 Glen Luss and Ross-dhu, they are smoking in ruin,
 And the best of Loch-Lomond lie dead on her side.
 Widow and Saxon maid
 Long shall lament our raid,
 Think of Clan-Alpine with fear and with woe;
 Lennox and Leven-glen
 Shake when they hear agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"
 Row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Highlands!
 Stretch to your oars, for the ever-green pine!
 O! that the rosebud that graces yon islands,
 Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine!
 O that some seedling gem
 Worthy such noble stem,
 Honoured and blessed in their shadow might grow!
 Loud should Clan-Alpine then
 Ring from her deepmost glen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XXI.

With all her joyful female band,
Had Lady Margaret sought the strand.
Loose on the breeze their tresses flew,
And high their snowy arms they threw,
As echoing back, with shrill acclaim
And chorus wild, the chieftain's name;
While, prompt to please, with mother's art
The darling passion of his heart,
The Dame called Ellen to the strand,
To greet her kinsman ere he land:
"Come, loiterer, come! a Douglas thou,
And shun to wreath a victor's brow?" —
Reluctantly and slow, the maid
The unwelcome summoning obeyed,
And, when a distant bugle rung,
In the mid-path aside she sprung:—
"List, Allan-bane! From mainland east,
I hear my father's signal-blast.
Be ours," she cried, "the skiff to guide,
And waft him from the mountain-side."
Then, like a sunbeam swift and bright,
She darted to her shallop light,
And, eagerly while Roderick scanned,
For her dear form, his mother's band,
The islet far behind her lay,
And she had landed in the bay.

XXII.

Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than heav'n;
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dross refined and clear,
A tear so limpid and so meek,
It would not stain an angel's cheek,
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a duteous daughter's head!
And as the Douglas to his breast
His darling Ellen closely pressed,
Such holy drops her tresses steeped,
Though 'twas a hero's eye that weeped.
Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue
Her filial welcomes crowded hung,
Marked she, that fear (affection's proof)
Still held a graceful youth aloof;
No! not till Douglas named his name,
Although the youth was Malcolm Græme.

XXIII.

Allan, with wistful look the while,
Marked Roderick standing on the isle;
His master piteously he eyed,
Then gazed upon the chieftain's pride,
Then dashed, with hasty hand, away
From his dimmed eye the gathering spray;

And Douglas, as his hand he laid
 On Malcolm's shoulder, kindly said,
 "Canst thou, young friend, no meaning spy
 In my poor follower's glistening eye?
 I'll tell thee:—he recalls the day,
 When in my praise he led the lay
 O'er the arched gate of Bothwell proud,
 While many a minstrel answered loud,
 When Percy's Norman pennon, won
 In bloody field, before me shone,
 And twice ten knights, the least a name
 As mighty as yon chief may claim,
 Gracing my pomp, behind me came.
 Yet trust me, Malcolm, not so proud
 Was I of all that marshalled crowd,
 Though the waned crescent owned my might,
 And in my train trooped lord and knight,
 Though Blantyre hymned her holiest lays,
 And Bothwell's bards flung back my praise,
 As when this old man's silent tear,
 And this poor maid's affection dear,
 A welcome give more kind and true
 Than aught my better fortunes knew.
 Forgive, my friend, a father's boast;
 O! it out-beggars all I lost!"

XXIV.

Delightful praise!—like summer rose,
 That brighter in the dew-drop glows,
 The bashful maiden's cheek appeared,
 For Douglas spoke, and Malcolm heard.
 The flush of shame-faced joy to hide,
 The hounds, the hawk, her cares divide;
 The loved caresses of the maid
 The dogs with crouch and whimper paid;
 And, at her whistle, on her hand
 The falcon took his favourite stand,
 Closed his dark wing, relaxed his eye,
 Nor, though unhooded, sought to fly.
 And trust, while in such guise she stood,
 Like fabled Goddess of the Wood,
 That if a father's partial thought
 O'erweighed her worth and beauty aught
 Well might the lover's judgment fail,
 To balance with a juster scale;
 For with each secret glance he stole,
 The fond enthusiast sent his soul.

XXV.

Of stature fair, and slender frame,
 But firmly knit, was Malcolm Græmie.
 The belted plaid and tartan hose
 Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose;
 His flaxen hair, of sunny hue,
 Curled closely round his bonnet blue.

Trained to the chase, his eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy;
Each pass, by mountain, lake, and heath,
He knew, through Lennox and Menteith;
Vain was the bound of dark-brown doe,
When Malcolm bent his sounding bow,
And scarce that doe, though winged with fear,
Outstripped in speed the mountaineer;
Right up Ben-Lomond could he press,
And not a sob his toil confess;
His form accorded with a mind
Lively and ardent, frank and kind;
A blither heart, till Ellen came,
Did never love nor sorrow tame;
It danced as lightsome in his breast,
As played the feather on his crest.
Yet friends, who nearest knew the youth,
His scorn of wrong, his zeal for truth,
And bards, who saw his features bold,
When kindled by the tales of old,
Said, were that youth to manhood grown,
Not long should Roderick Dhu's renown
Be foremost voiced by mountain fame,
But quail to that of Malcolm Grame.

XXVI.

Now back they wend their watery way,
And "O my sire!" did Ellen say,
"Why urge thy chase so far astray?
And why so late returned? And why" ...
The rest was in her speaking eye.
"My child, the chase I follow far,
'Tis mimicry of noble war:
And with that gallant pastime reft
Were all of Douglas I have left.
I met young Malcolm as I strayed
Far eastward, in Glenfinlas' shade,
Nor strayed I safe; for, all around,
Hunters and horsemen scoured the ground:
This youth, though still a royal ward,
Risked life and land to be my guard,
And through the passes of the wood
Guided my steps not unpursued;
And Roderick shall his welcome make,
Despite old spleen, for Douglas' sake.
Then must he seek Strath-Endrick glen,
Nor peril aught for me agen."—

XXVII.

Sir Roderick, who to meet them came,
Reddened at sight of Malcolm Grame,
Yet, nor in action, word, or eye,
Failed aught in hospitality.
In talk and sport they whiled away
The morning of that summer day:

But at high noon a courier light
 Held secret parley with the knight,
 Whose moody aspect soon declared
 That evil were the news he heard.
 Deep thought seemed toiling in his head;
 Yet was the evening banquet made,
 Ere he assembled round the flame,
 His mother, Douglas, and the Græme,
 And Ellen too; then cast around
 His eyes, then fixed them on the ground,
 As studying phrase that might avail
 Best to convey unpleasant tale.
 Long with his dagger's hilt he played,
 Then raised his haughty brow, and said:—

XXVIII.

“Short be my speech;—nor time affords,
 Nor my plain temper, glozing words.
 Kinsman and father—if such name
 Douglas vouchsafe to Roderick's claim;
 Mine honoured mother; Ellen—why,
 My cousin, turn away thine eye?—
 And Græme, in whom I hope to know
 Full soon a noble friend or foe,
 When age shall give thee thy command,
 And leading in thy native land,—
 List all!—The King's vindictive pride
 Boasts to have tamed the Border-side,
 Where chiefs, with hound and hawk who came
 To share their monarch's sylvan game,
 Themselves in bloody toils were snared,
 And when the banquet they prepared,
 And wide their loyal portals flung,
 O'er their own gateway struggling hung.
 Loud cries their blood from Meggat's mead,
 From Yarrow braes, and banks of Tweed,
 Where the lone streams of Ettricks glide,
 And from the silver Teviot's side;
 The dales, where martial clans did ride,
 Are now one sheep-walk waste and wide.
 This tyrant of the Scottish throne,
 So faithless, and so ruthless known,
 Now hither comes; his end the same,
 The same pretext of sylvan game.
 What grace for Highland chiefs judge ye,
 By fate of Border chivalry.
 Yet more; amid Glenfinlas green,
 Douglas, thy stately form was seen.
 This by espial sure I know:
 Your counsel in the streight I show.”—

XXIX.

Ellen and Margaret fearfully
 Sought comfort in each other's eye,
 Then turned their ghastly look, each one,
 This to her sire, that to her son.

The hasty colour went and came
 In the bold cheek of Malcolm Græme;
 But, from his glance it well appeared,
 'Twas but for Ellen that he feared;
 While sorrowful, but undismayed,
 The Douglas thus his counsel said:
 "Brave Roderick, though the tempest roar,
 It may but thunder and pass o'er;
 Nor will I here remain an hour,
 To draw the lightning on thy bower,
 For well thou know'st, at this gray head
 The royal bolt were fiercest sped.
 For thee, who, at thy King's command,
 Canst aid him with a gallant band,
 Submission, homage, humbled pride,
 Shall turn the monarch's wrath aside.
 Poor remnants of the Bleeding Heart,
 Ellen and I will seek, apart,
 The refuge of some forest cell;
 There, like the hunted quarry, dwell,
 Till, on the mountain and the moor,
 The stern pursuit be passed and o'er."—

XXX.

"No, by mine honour!" Roderick said,
 "So help me Heaven, and my good blade!
 No, never! Blasted be yon pine,
 My fathers' ancient crest, and mine,
 If from its shade in danger part
 The lineage of the Bleeding Heart!
 Hear my blunt speech: grant me this maid
 To wife, thy counsel to mine aid;
 To Douglas, leagued with Roderick Dhu,
 Will friends and allies flock enow;
 Like cause of doubt, distrust, and grief,
 Will bind to us each western chief.
 When the loud pipes my bridal tell,
 The Links of Forth shall hear the knell,
 The guards shall start in Stirling's porch;
 And when I light the nuptial torch,
 A thousand villages in flames,
 Shall scare the slumbers of King James!
 —Nay, Ellen, blench not thus away,
 And, mother, cease these signs, I pray;
 I meant not all my heat might say.—
 Small need of inroad, or of fight,
 When the sage Douglas may unite
 Each mountain clan in friendly band,
 To guard the passes of their land,
 Till the foiled King, from pathless glen,
 Shall bootless turn him home agen."—

XXXI.

There are who have, at midnight hour,
 In slumber scaled a dizzy tower,

And, on the verge that beetled o'er
 The ocean-tide's incessant roar,
 Dreamed calmly out their dangerous dream
 Till wakened by the morning beam;
 When, dazzled by the eastern glow,
 Such startler cast his glance below,
 And saw unmeasured depth around,
 And heard unintermitted sound,
 And thought the battled fence so frail.
 It waved like cobweb in the gale;
 Amid his senses' giddy wheel,
 Did he not desperate impulse feel,
 Headlong to plunge himself below,
 And meet the worst his fears foreshow?—
 Thus, Ellen, dizzy and astound,
 As sudden ruin yawned around,
 By crossing terrors wildly tossed,
 Still for the Douglas fearing most,
 Could scarce the desperate thought withstand,
 To buy his safety with her hand.

XXXII.

Such purpose dread could Malcolm spy
 In Ellen's quivering lip and eye,
 And eager rose to speak—but ere
 His tongue could hurry forth his fear,
 Had Douglas marked the hectic strife,
 Where death seemed combating with life;
 For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
 One instant rushed the throbbing blood,
 Then ebbing back, with sudden sway,
 Left its domain as wan as clay
 “Roderick, enough! enough!” he cried,
 “My daughter cannot be thy bride;
 Not that the blush to wooer dear,
 Nor paleness that of maiden fear.
 It may not be—forgive her, chief,
 Nor hazard aught for our relief.
 Against his sovereign, Douglas ne'er
 Will level a rebellious spear.
 ’Twas I that taught his youthful hand
 To rein a steed and wield a brand.
 I see him yet, the princely boy!
 Not Ellen more my pride and joy;
 I love him still, despite my wrongs,
 By hasty wrath, and slanderous tongues.
 O seek the grace you well may find,
 Without a cause to mine combined.”

XXXIII.

Twice through the hall the Chieftain strode,
 The waving of his tartans broad,
 And darkened brow, where wounded pride
 With ire and disappointment vied,
 Seemed, by the torch's gloomy light,
 Like the ill Daemon of the night,

Stooping his pinion's shadowy sway
Upon the nighted pilgrim's way:
But, unrequited Love! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenomed smart,
And Roderick, with thine anguish stung,
At length the hand of Douglas wrung,
While eyes, that mocked at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.
The death-pangs of long cherished hope
Scarce in that ample breast had scope,
But, struggling with his spirit proud,
Convulsive heaved its chequered shroud.
While every sob—so mute were all—
Was heard distinctly through the hall.
The son's despair, the mother's look,
Ill might the gentle Ellen brook;
She rose, and to her side there came,
To aid her parting steps, the Græme.

XXXIV.

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke —
As flashes flame through sable smoke,
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low.
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid:
"Back, beardless boy!" he sternly said,
"Back, minion! hold'st thou thus at nought
The lesson I so lately taught?
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delayed."
Eager as greyhound on his game,
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græme.
"Perish my name, if aught afford
Its chieftain safety, save his sword!"
Thus as they strove, their desperate hand
Griped to the dagger or the brand,
And death had been—but Douglas rose,
And thrust between the struggling foes
His giant strength:—"Chieftains, forego!
I hold the first who strikes, my foe.
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar!
What! is the Douglas fallen so far,
His daughter's hand is deemed the spoil
Of such dishonourable broil!"
Sullen and slowly, they unclasp,
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,
And each upon his rival glared,
With foot advanced, and blade half-bared.

XXXV.

Ere yet the brands aloft were flung,
Margaret on Roderick's mantle hung.

And Malcolm heard his Ellen's scream,
 As faltered through terrific dream.
 Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword,
 And veiled his wrath in scornful word.
 "Rest safe till morning; pity 'twere
 Such cheek should feel the midnight air!
 Then mayst thou to James Stuart tell,
 Roderick will keep the lake and foll,
 Nor lackey, with his free-born clan,
 The pageant pomp of earthly man.
 More would he of Clan-Alpine know,
 Thou canst our strength and passes show. —
 Malise, what ho?"—his henchman came:
 "Give our safe conduct to the Græme."
 Young Malcolm answered, calm and bold,
 "Fear nothing for thy favourite hold.
 The spot, an angel deigned to grace,
 Is blessed, though robbers haunt the place;
 Thy churlish courtesy for those
 Reserve, who fear to be thy foes.
 As safe to me the mountain way
 At midnight, as in blaze of day,
 Though, with his boldest at his back,
 Even Roderick Dhu beset the track. —
 Brave Douglas,—lovely Ellen,—nay,
 Nought here of parting will I say.
 Earth does not hold a lonesome glen,
 So secret, but we meet agen.—
 Chieftain! we too shall find an hour,"—
 He said, and left the sylvan bower.

XXXVI.

Old Allan followed to the strand,
 (Such was the Douglas's command,)
 And anxious told, how, on the morn,
 The stern Sir Roderick deep had sworn,
 The Fiery Cross should circle o'er
 Dale, glen, and valley, down, and moor.
 Much were the peril to the Græme,
 From those who to the signal came;
 Far up the lake 'twere safest land,
 Himself would row him to the strand.
 He gave his counsel to the wind,
 While Malcolm did, unheeding, bind,
 Round dirk and pouch and broad-sword rolled,
 His ample plaid in tightened fold,
 And stripped his limbs to such array
 As best might suit the watery way.

XXXVII.

Then spoke abrupt: "Farewell to thee,
 Pattern of old fidelity!"
 The minstrel's hand he kindly pressed,—
 "O! could I point a place of rest!"

My sovereign holds in ward my land,
My uncle leads my vassal band;
To tame his foes, his friends to aid,
Poor Malcolm has but heart and blade:
Yet, if there be one faithful Græme,
Who loves the Chieftain of his name,
Not long shall honoured Douglas dwell,
Like hunted stag, in mountain cell;
Nor, ere yon pride-swollen robber dare,—
I may not give the rest to air!—
Tell Roderick Dhu, I owed him nought,
Not the poor service of a boat,
To waft me to yon mountain-side.”
Then plunged he in the flashing tide.
Bold o’er the flood his head he bore,
And stoutly steered him from the shore;
And Allan strained his anxious eye,
Far ’mid the lake his form to spy.
Darkening across each puny wave,
To which the moon her silver gave,
Fast as the cormorant could skim.
The swimmer plied each active limb;
Then, landing in the moonlight dell,
Loud shouted of his veal to tell.
The minstrel heard the far halloo,
And joyful from the shore withdrew.

CANTO THIRD.

THE GATHERING.

I.

TIME rolls his ceaseless course. The race of yore
Who danced our infancy upon their knee,
And told our marvelling boyhood legends store,
Of their strange ventures happed by land or sea,
How are they blotted from the things that be!
How few, all weak and withered of their force,
Wait, on the verge of dark eternity,
Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning hoarse,
To sweep them from our sight! Time rolls his ceaseless course

Yet live there still who can remember well,
How, when a mountain chief his bugle blew,
Both field and forest, dingle, cliff, and dell,
And solitary heath, the signal knew;
And fast the faithful clan around him drew,
What time the warning note was keenly wound.
What time aloft their kindred banner flew,
While clamorous war-pipes yelled the gathering sound,
And while the Fiery Cross glanced, like a meteor, round.

II.

The summer dawn's reflected hue
To purple changed Loch-Katrine blue;
Mildly and soft the western breeze
Just kissed the lake, just stirred the trees,
And the pleased lake, like maiden coy,
Trembled, but dimpled not for joy;
The mountain-shadows on her breast
Were neither broken nor at rest;
In bright uncertainty they lie,
Like future joys to Fancy's eye.
The water-lily to the light
Her chalice reared of silver bright;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn,
Begemmed with dew-drops, led her fawn:
The gray mist left the mountain-side,
The torrent showed its glistening pride;
Invisible in fleckèd sky,
The lark sent down her revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush;
In answer cooed the cushat dove,
Her notes of peace, and rest, and love.

III.

No thought of peace, no thought of rest,
Assuaged the storm in Roderick's breast.
With sheathèd broad-sword in his hand,
Abrupt he paced the islet strand,
And eyed the rising sun, and laid
His hand on his impatient blade.
Beneath a rock, his vassals' care
Was prompt the ritual to prepare,
With deep and deathful meaning fraught;
For such Antiquity had taught
Was preface meet, ere yet abroad
The Cross of Fire should take its road.
The shrinking band stood oft aghast
At the impatient glance he cast;—
Such glance the mountain eagle threw,
As from the cliffs of Ben-venue,
She spread her dark sails on the wind,
And high in middle heaven reclined,
With her broad shadow on the lake,
Silenced the warblers of the brake.

IV.

A heap of withered boughs was piled,
Of juniper and rowan wild,
Mingled with shivers from the oak,
Rent by the lightning's recent stroke,
Brian the Hermit by it stood,
Barefooted, in his frock and hood.
His grised beard and matted hair
Obscured a visage of despair:

His naked arms and legs, seamed o'er,
The scars of frantic penance bore.
That Monk, of savage form and face,
The impending danger of his race
Had drawn from deepest solitude,
Far in Benharrow's bosom rude.
Not his the mien of Christian priest
But Druid's, from the grave released,
Whose hardened heart and eye might brook
On human sacrifice to look.
And much, 'twas said, of heathen lore
Mixed in the charms he muttered o'er;
The hallowed creed gave only worse
And deadlier emphasis of curse.
No peasant sought that Hermit's prayer,
His cave the pilgrim shunned with care;
The eager huntsman knew his bound,
And in mid chase called off his hound;
Or if, in lonely glen or strath,
The desert-dweller met his path,
He prayed, and signed the cross between,
While terror took devotion's mien.

V.

Of Brian's birth strange tales were told.
His mother watched a midnight fold,
Built deep within a dreary glen,
Where scattered lay the bones of men,
In some forgotten battle slain,
And bleached by drifting wind and rain.
It might have tamed a warrior's heart,
To view such mockery of his art:
The knot-grass fettered there the hand
Which once could burst an iron band;
Beneath the broad and ample bone,
That bucklered heart to fear unknown
A feeble and a timorous guest
The fieldfare framed her lowly nest;
There the slow blind-worm left his slime
On the fleet limbs that mocked at time;
And there, too, lay the leader's skull,
Still wreathed with chaplet flushed and full.
For heath-bell, with her purple bloom,
Supplied the bonnet and the plume.
All night, in this sad glen, the maid
Sate shrouded in her mantle's shade:
—She said, no shepherd sought her side,
No hunter's hand her snood untied,
Yet ne'er again to braid her hair
The virgin snood did Alice wear;
Gone was her maiden glee and sport,
Her maiden girdle all too short,
Ner sought she, from that fatal night,
Or holy church or blessed rite.

But locked her secret in her breast,
And died in travail, unconfessed.

VI.

Alone, among his young compeers,
Was Brian from his infant years;
A moody and heart-broken boy,
Estranged from sympathy and joy,
Bearing each taunt which careless tongue
On his mysterious lineage flung.
Whole nights he spent by moonlight vale,
To wood and stream his hap to wail.
Till, frantic, he as truth received
What of his birth the crowd believed,
And sought, in mist and meteor fire,
To meet and know his Phantom Sire!
In vain to soothe his wayward fate,
The cloister oped her pitying gate;
In vain, the learning of the age
Unclasped the sable-lettered page;
Even in its treasures he could find
Food for the fever of his mind.
Eager he read whatever tells
Of magic, cabala, and spells,
And every dark pursuit allied
To curious and presumptuous pride,
Till, with fired brain and nerves o'erstrung,
And heart with mystic horrors wrung,
Desperate he sought Benharrow's den,
And hid him from the haunts of men.

VII.

The desert gave him visions wild,
Such as might suit the Spectre's child:
Where with black cliffs the torrents toil,
He watched the wheeling eddies boil,
Till, from their foam, his dazzled eyes
Beheld the river demon rise;
The mountain mist took form and limb
Of noontide hag, or goblin grim;
The midnight wind came wild and dread,
Swelled with the voices of the dead;
Far on the future battle-heath
His eye beheld the ranks of death;
Thus the lone Seer, from mankind hurled,
Shaped forth a disembodied world.
One lingering sympathy of mind
Still bound him to the mortal kind;
The only parent he could claim
Of ancient Alpine's lineage came.
Late had he heard, in prophet's dream,
The fatal Ben-shie's boding scream;
Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,
Of charging steeds, careering fast
Along Benharrow's shingly side,
Where mortal horseman ne'er might ride:

The thunderbolt had split the pine,
All augured ill to Alpine's line.
He girt his loins and came to show
The signals of impending woe,
And now stood prompt to bless or ban,
As bade the Chieftain of his clan.

VIII.

'Twas all prepared—and from the rock,
A goat, the patriarch of the flock,
Before the kindling pile was laid,
And pierced by Roderick's ready blade.
Patient the sickening victim eyed
The life-blood ebb in crimson tide,
Down his clogged beard and shaggy limb,
Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer
A slender crosslet framed with care,
A cubit's length in measure due;
The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
Whose parents in Inch-Calliach wave
Their shadows o'er Clan-Alpine's grave,
And, answering Lomond's breezes deep,
Soothe many a chieftain's endless sleep.
The Cross, thus formed, he held on high,
With wasted hand and haggard eye,
And strange and mingled feelings woke,
While his anathema he spoke.

IX.

“Woe to the clansman, who shall view
This symbol of sepulchral yew,
Forgetful that its branches grew
Where weep the heavens their holiest dew
On Alpine's dwelling low!

Deserter of his Chieftain's trust,
He ne'er shall mingle with their dust,
But from his sires and kindred thrust,
Each clansman's execration just

Shall doom him wrath and woe.”

He paused;—the word the vassals took,
With forward step and fiery look,
On high their naked brands they shook,
Their clattering targets wildly strook;

And first in murmur low,
Then like the billow in his course,
That far to seaward finds his source,
And flings to shore his mustered force,
Burst, with loud roar, their answer hoarse.

“Woe to the traitor, woe!”

Ben-an's gray scalp the accents knew,
The joyous wolf from covert drew,
The exulting eagle screamed afar,—
They knew the voice of Alpine's war.

X.

The shout was hushed on lake and fell,
 The Monk resumed his muttered spell.
 Dismal and low its accents came,
 The while he scathed the Cross with flame;
 And the few words that reached the air
 Although the holiest name was there,
 Had more of blasphemy than prayer.
 But when he shook above the crowd
 Its kindled points, he spoke aloud :—
 “Woe to the wretch, who fails to rear
 At this dread sign the ready spear!
 For, as the flames this symbol sear,
 His home, the refuge of his fear,
 A kindred fate shall know;
 Far o’er its roof the volumed flame
 Clan-Alpine’s vengeance shall proclaim,
 While maids and matrons on his name
 Shall call down wretchedness and shame,
 And infamy and woe.”—
 Then rose the cry of females, shrill
 As goss-hawk’s whistle on the hill,
 Denouncing misery and ill,
 Mingled with childhood’s babbling trill,
 Of curses stammered slow;
 Answering, with imprecation dread,
 “Sunk be his home in embers red!
 And cursed be the meanest shed
 That e’er shall hide the houseless head
 We doom to want and woe!”
 A sharp and shrieking echo gave,
 Coir-Uriskin, thy goblin cave!
 And the gray pass where birches wave,
 On Beala-nam-bo.

XI.

Then deeper paused the priest anew,
 And hard his labouring breath he drew,
 While, with set teeth and clenched hand,
 And eyes that glowed like fiery brand,
 He meditated curse more dread,
 And deadlier, on the clansman’s head,
 Who, summoned to his Chieftain’s aid,
 The signal saw and disobeyed.
 The crosslet’s points of sparkling wood,
 He quenched among the bubbling blood,
 And as again the sign he reared,
 Hollow and hoarse his voice was heard:
 “When flits this Cross from man to man,
 Vich-Alpine’s summons to his clan,
 Burst be the ear that fails to heed!
 Falsied the foot that shuns to speed!
 May ravenous tear the careless eyes;
 Wolves make the coward heart their prize!

As sinks that blood-stream in the earth,
So may his heart's-blood drench his hearth!
As dies in hissing gore the spark,
Quench thou his light, Destruction dark!
And be the grace to him denied,
Bought by this sign to all beside!"—
He ceased: no echo gave agen
The murmur of the deep Amen.

XII.

Then Roderick, with impatient look
From Brian's hand the symbol took:
"Speed, Malise, speed!" he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
"The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed!"
Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
A barge across Loch-Katrine flew;
High stood the henchman on the prow.
So rapidly the bargemen row,
The bubbles, where they launched the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had neared the mainland hill;
And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathom wide,
When lightly bounded to the land
The messenger of blood and brand.

XIII.

Speed, Malise, speed! the dun deer's hide
On fleeter foot was never tied.
Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced.
Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
Burst down like torrent from its crest;
With short and springing footstep pass
The trembling bog and false morass;
Across the brook like roebuck bound,
And thread the brake like questing hound;
The crag is high, the scaur is deep,
Yet shrink not from the desperate leap;
Parched are thy burning lips and brow,
Yet by the fountain pause not now;
Herald of battle, fate, and fear,
Stretch onward in thy fleet career!
The wounded hind thou track'st not now,
Pursuest not maid though greenwood bough,
Nor pliest thou now thy flying pace
With rivals in the mountain race;
But danger, death, and warrior deed,
Are in thy course—speed, Malise, speed!

XIV.

Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise:

From winding glen, from upland brown,
 They poured each hardy tenant down.
 Nor slack'd the messenger his pace;
 He showed the sign, he named the place;
 And, pressing forward like the wind,
 Left clamour and surprise behind.
 The fisherman forsook the strand,
 The swarthy smith took dirk and brand,
 With changèd cheer, the mower blithe
 Left in the half-cut swathe his scythe;
 The herds without a keeper strayed,
 The plough was in mid-furrow stay'd,
 The falconer tossed his hawk away,
 The hunter left the stag at bay;
 Prompt at the signal of alarms,
 Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;
 So swept the tumult and affray
 Along the margin of Achray.
 Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er
 Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!
 The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep
 So stilly on thy bosom deep,
 The lark's blithe carol from the cloud,
 Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

XV.

Speed, Malise, speed! the lake is pass'd,
 Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
 And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half seen,
 Half hidden in the copse so green;
 There mayst thou rest, thy labour done,
 Their lord shall speed the signal on.—
 As stoops the hawk upon his prey,
 The henchman shot him down the way.
 What woeful accents load the gale!
 The funeral yell, the female wail!
 A gallant hunter's sport is o'er,
 A valliant warrior fights no more.
 Who, in the battle or the chase,
 At Roderick's side shall fill his place?—
 Within the hall, where torches' ray
 Supplies the excluded beams of day,
 Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,
 And o'er him streams his widow's tear.
 His stripling son stands mournful by,
 His youngest weeps, but knows not why;
 The village maids and matrons round
 The dismal coronach resound.

XVI.

Coronach.

He is gone on the mountain,
 He is lost to the forest,
 Like a summer-dried fountain,
 When our need was the sorest.

The font, reappearing,
 From the rain-drops shall borrow,
 But to us comes no cheering,
 To Duncan no morrow!

The hand of the reaper
 Takes the ears that are hoary,
 But the voice of the weeper
 Wails manhood in glory;
 The autumn winds rushing
 Waft the leaves that are scarest,
 But our flower was in flushing,
 When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the corrie,*
 Sage counsel in cumber,
 Red hand in the foray,
 How sound is thy slumber!
 Like the dew on the mountain,
 Like the foam on the river,
 Like the bubble on the fountain,
 Thou art gone, and for ever!

XVII.

See Stumah,† who, the bier beside,
 His master's corpse with wonder eyed,
 Poor Stumah! whom his least halloo
 Could send like lightning o'er the dew,
 Bristles his crest, and points his ears,
 As if some stranger step he hears.
 'Tis not a mourner's muffled tread,
 Who comes to sorrow o'er the dead,
 But headlong haste, or deadly fear,
 Urge the precipitate career.
 All stand aghast:—unheeding all,
 The henchman bursts into the hall;
 Before the dead man's bier he stood,
 Held forth the Cross besmeared with blood!
 "The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
 Speed forth the signal! clansmen, speed!"

XVIII.

Angus, the heir of Duncan's line,
 Sprung forth and seized the fatal sign.
 In haste the stripling to his side
 His father's dirk and broad-sword tied;
 But when he saw his mother's eye
 Watch him in speechless agony,
 Back to her opened arms he flew,
 Pressed on her lips a fond adieu.
 "Alas!" she sobbed—"and yet, be gone,
 And speed thee forth, like Duncan's son!"
 One look he cast upon the bier,
 Dashed from his eye the gathering tear,

* Or corrie. The hollow side of the hill, where game usually lies.

† Faithful. The name of a dog.

Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
 And tossed aloft his bonnet crest,
 Then, like the high-bred colt when freed
 First he essays his fire and speed,
 He vanished, and o'er moor and moss
 Sped forward with the Fiery Cross.
 Suspended was the widow's tear,
 While yet his footsteps she could hear;
 And when she marked the henchman's eye
 Wet with unwonted sympathy,
 "Kinsman," she said, "his race is run,
 That should have sped thine errand on;
 The oak has fallen,—the sapling bough
 Is all Duncraggan's shelter now.
 Yet trust I well, his duty done,
 The orphan's God will guard my son.
 And you, in many a danger true,
 At Duncan's hest your blades that drew,
 To arms, and guard that orphan's head;
 Let babes and women wail the dead."
 Then weapon-clang, and martial call,
 Resounded through the funeral hall,
 While from the walls the attendant band
 Snatched sword and targe, with hurried hand;
 And short and flitting energy
 Glanced from the mourner's sunken eye.
 As if the sounds to warrior dear
 Might rouse her Duncan from his bier:
 But faded soon that borrowed force;
 Grief claimed his right, and tears their course.

XIX.

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
 It glanced like lightning up Strath-Tre.
 O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
 Not rest nor pause young Angus knew;
 The tear that gathered in his eye,
 He left the mountain-breeze to dry;
 Until, where Teith's young waters roll,
 Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,
 That graced the sable strath with green,
 The chapel of Saint Bride was seen.
 Swollen was the stream, remote the bridge,
 But Angus paused not on the edge;
 Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
 Though reeled his sympathetic eye,
 He dashed amid the torrent's roar:
 His right hand high the crosslet bore,
 His left the pole-axe grasped, to guide
 And stay his footing in the tide.
 He stumbled twice—the foam splashed high,
 With hoarser swell the stream raced by;
 And had he fallen,—for ever there,
 Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir!

But still, as if in parting life,
Firmer he grasped the Cross of strife,
Until the opposing bank he gained,
And up the chapel pathway strained.

XX.

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
Had sought the chapel of Saint Bride.
Her troth Tombca's Mary gave
To Norman, heir of Armandave,
And, issuing from the Gothic arch,
The bridal now resumed their march.
In rude, but glad procession, came
Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame;
And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,
Which snooded maiden would not hear:
And children, that, unwitting why,
Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry;
And minstrels, that in measures vied
Before the young and bonny bride,
Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose
The tear and blush of morning rose.
With virgin step, and bashful hand,
She held the kerchief's snowy band;
The gallant bridegroom, by her side,
Beheld his prize with victor's pride,
And the glad mother in her ear
Was closely whispering word of cheer.

XXI.

Who meets them at the churchyard gate?
The messenger of fear and fate!
Haste in his hurried accent lies,
And grief is swimming in his eyes.
All dripping from the recent flood,
Panting and travel-soiled he stood.
The fatal sign of fire and sword
Held forth, and spoke the appointed word:
"The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!"
And must he change so soon the hand,
Just linked to his by holy band,
For the fell Cross of blood and brand?
And must the day, so blithe that rose,
And promised rapture in the close,
Before its setting hour, divide
The bridegroom from the plighted bride?
O fatal doom!—it must! it must!
Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust
Her summons dread, brooks no delay;
Stretch to the race—away! away!

XXII.

Yet slow he laid his plaid aside,
And, lingering, eyed his lovely bride,
Until he saw the starting tear
Speak woe he might not stop to cheer.

Then, trusting not a second look,
 In haste he sped him up the brook,
 Nor backward glanced, till on the heath,
 Where Lubnaig's lake supplies the Teith.—
 What in the racer's bosom stirred?
 The sickening pang of hope deferred,
 And memory, with a torturing train
 Of all his morning visions vain.
 Mingled with love's impatience, came
 The manly thirst for martial fame;
 The stormy joy of mountaineers,
 Ere yet they rush upon the spears;
 And zeal for clan and chieftain burning,
 And hope, from well-fought field returning,
 With war's red honours on his crest,
 To clasp his Mary to his breast.
 Stung by such thoughts, o'er bank and brac,
 Like fire from flint he glanced away,
 While high resolve, and feeling strong,
 Burst into voluntary song.

XXIII.

Song,

The heath this night must be my bed,
 The bracken * curtain for my head,
 My lullaby the warder's tread,
 Far, far from love and thee, Mary;
 To-morrow eve, more stilly laid,
 My couch may be my bloody plaid,
 My vesper song, thy wail, sweet maid!
 It will not waken me, Mary!

I may not, dare not, fancy now
 The grief that clouds thy lovely brow;
 I dare not think upon thy vow,
 And all it promised me, Mary.
 No fond regret must Norman know;
 When bursts Clan-Alpine on the foe,
 His heart must be like bended bow,
 His foot like arrow free, Mary.

A time will come with feeling fraught!
 For, if I fall in battle fought,
 Thy hapless lover's dying thought
 Shall be a thought on thee, Mary.
 And if returned from conquered foes,
 How blithely will the evening close,
 How sweet the linnet sing repose
 To my young bride and me, Mary

XXIV.

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
 Balquhiddar, speeds the midnight blaze.
 Rushing in conflagration strong,
 Thy deep ravines and dells along,

* Fern.

Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
And roddening the dark lakes below;
Nor faster speeds it, nor so far,
As o'er thy heaths the voice of war.
The signal roused to martial coil
The sullen margin of Loch Voil,
Waked still Loch Doine, and to the source
Alarmed, Balvaig, thy swampy course;
Thence southward turned its rapid road
Adown Strath-Gartney's valley broad,
Till rose in arms each man might claim
A portion in Clan-Alpine's name;
From the gray sire, whose trembling hand
Could hardly buckle on his brand,
To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
Were yet scarce terror to the crow.
Each valley, each sequestered glen,
Mustered its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height,
In Highland dale their streams unite,
Still gathering, as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong,
Till at the rendezvous they stood
By hundreds prompt for blows and blood;
Each trained to arms since life began,
Owning no tie but to his clan,
No oath, but by his Chieftain's hand,
No law, but Roderick Dhu's command.

XXV.

That summer morn had Roderick Dhu
Surveyed the skirts of Ben-venue,
And sent his scouts o'er hill and heath,
To view the frontiers of Menteith.
All backward came with news of truce;
Still lay each martial Grème and Bruce,
In Rednock courts no horsemen wait,
No banner waved on Cardross gate,
On Duchrny's towers no beacon shone,
Nor scared the herons from Loch Con;
All seemed at peace.—Now, wot ye why
The Chieftain, with such anxious eye,
Ere to the muster he repair,
This western frontier scanned with care?—
In Ben-venue's most darksome cleft,
A fair, though cruel pledge was left;
For Douglas, to his promise true,
That morning from the isle withdrew,
And in a deep sequestered dell
Had sought a low and lonely cell.
By many a bard, in Celtic tongue,
Has Coir-nan-Uriskin been sung;
A softer name the Saxon gave,
And called the grove the Goblin-cave

XXVI.

It was a wild and strange retreat,
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
The dell, upon the mountain's crest,
Yawned like a gash on warrior's breast;
Its trench had stayed full many a rock,
Hurled by primeval earthquake shock
From Ben-venue's gray summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frowned incumbent o'er the spot,
And formed the rugged sylvan grot.
The oak and birch, with mingled shade,
At noontide there a twilight made,
Unless when short and sudden shone
Some straggling beam on cliff or stone,
With such a glimpse as prophet's eye
Gains on thy depth, Futurity.
No murmur waked the solemn still,
Save tinkling of a fountain rill;
But when the wind chafed with the lake,
A sullen sound would upward break,
With dashing hollow voice, that spoke
The incessant war of wave and rock.
Suspended cliffs, with hideous sway,
Seemed nodding o'er the cavern gray.
From such a den the wolf had sprung,
In such the wild cat leaves her young;
Yet Douglas and his daughter fair
Sought, for a space, their safety there.
Gray Superstition's whisper dread
Debarred the spot to vulgar tread;
For there, she said, did fays resort,
And satyrs hold their sylvan court,
By moonlight tread their mystic maze,
And blast the rash beholder's gaze.

XXVII.

Now eve, with western shadows long,
Floated on Katrine bright and strong,
When Roderick, with a chosen few,
Repassed the heights of Ben-venue.
Above the Goblin-cave they go,
Through the wild pass of Beal-nam-bo;
The prompt retainers speed before,
To launch the shallop from the shore,
For 'cross Loch-Katrine lies his way
To view the passes of Achray,
And place his clansmen in array.
Yet lags the Chief in musing mind,
Unwonted sight, his men behind.
A single page, to bear his sword,
Alone attended on his lord;
The rest their way through thickets break.
And soon await him by the lake.

It was a fair and gallant sight,
To view them from the neighbouring height,
By the low-levelled sunbeam's light;
For strength and stature, from the clan
Each warrior was a chosen man,
As even afar might well be seen,
By their proud step and martial mien.
Their feathers dance, their tartans float,
Their targets gleam, as by the boat
A wild and warlike group they stand,
That well became such mountain strand.

XXVIII.

Their Chief, with step reluctant, still
Was lingering on the craggy hill,
Hard by where turned apart the road
To Douglas's obscure abode.
It was but with that dawning morn
That Roderick Dhu had proudly sworn,
To drown his love in war's wild roar,
Nor think of Ellen Douglas more;
But he who steins a stream with sand,
And fetters flame with flaxen band,
Has yet a harder task to prove—
By firm resolve to conquer love!
Eve finds the Chief, like restless ghost,
Still hovering near his treasure lost;
For though his haughty heart deny
A parting meeting to his eye,
Still fondly strains his anxious ear
The accents of her voice to hear,
And inly did he curse the breeze
That waked to sound the rustling trees.
But, hark! what mingles in the strain?
It is the harp of Allan-bane,
That wakes its measures slow and high,
Attuned to sacred minstrelsy.
What melting voice attends the strings?
'Tis Ellen, or an angel, sings!

XXIX.

Hymn to the Virgin.

Ave Maria! maiden mild!
Listen to a maiden's prayer:
Thou canst hear though from the wild,
Thou canst save amid despair.
Safe may we sleep beneath thy care,
Though banished, outcast, and reviled
Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer;
Mother, hear a suppliant child!—*Ave Maria!*
Ave Maria! undefiled!
The flinty couch we now must share,
Shall seem with down of eider piled,
If thy protection hover there.

The murky cavern's heavy air
 Shall breathe of balm if thou hast smiled;
 Then, Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer,
 Mother, list a suppliant child!—*Ave Maria!*
Ave Maria! stainless styled!
 Foul demons of the earth and air,
 From this their wonted haunt exiled,
 Shall flee before thy presence fair.
 We bow us to our lot of care,
 Beneath thy guidance reconciled;
 Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer!
 And for a father hear a child!—*Ave Maria!*

XXX.

Died on the harp the closing hymn—
 Unmoved in attitude and limb,
 As listening still, Clan-Alpine's lord
 Stood leaning on his heavy sword,
 Until the page, with humble sign,
 Twice pointed to the sun's decline;
 Then, while his plaid he round him cast,
 "It is the last time—'tis the last,"—
 He muttered thrice,—“the last time e'er
 That angel voice shall Roderick hear!”
 It was a goading thought—his stride
 Hied hastier down the mountain-side;
 Sullen he flung him in the boat,
 And instant 'cross the lake it shot.
 They landed in that silvery bay,
 And eastward held their hasty way
 Till, with the latest beams of light,
 The band arrived on Lanrick height,
 Where mustered in the vale below,
 Clan-Alpine's men in martial show.

XXXI.

A various scene the clansmen made,
 Some sate, some stood, some slowly strayed;
 But most, with mantles folded round,
 Were couched to rest upon the ground,
 Scarce to be known by curious eye,
 From the deep heather where they lie,
 So well was matched the tartan screen
 With heath-bell dark and brackens green;
 Unless where, here and there, a blade,
 Or lance's point, a glimmer made,
 Like glow-worm twinkling through the shawl.
 But, when, advancing through the gloom,
 They saw the Chieftain's eagle plume,
 Their shout of welcome, shrill and wide,
 Shook the steep mountain's steady side.
 Thrice it arose, and lake and fell
 Three times returned the martial yell.
 It died upon Bochastle's plain,
 And Silence claimed her evening reign.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE PROPHECY.

I.

"THE rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.
O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
Emblem of hope and love through future years!"
Thus spoke young Norman, heir of Armandave,
What time the sun arose on Vennachar's broad wave.

II.

Such fond conceit, half said, half sung,
Love prompted to the bridegroom's tongue:
All while he stripped the wild-rose spray,
His axe and bow beside him lay,
For on a pass 'twixt lake and wood,
A wakeful sentinel he stood.
Hark!—on the rock a footstep rung,
And instant to his arms he sprung.
"Stand, or thou diest!—What, Malise?—soon
Art thou returned from Braes of Doune.
By thy keen step and glance I know,
Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe."
(For while the Fiery Cross hid on,
On distant scout had Malise gone.)
"Where sleeps the Chief?" the henchman said.
"Apart, in yonder misty glade;
To his lone couch I'll be your guide."
Then called a slumberer by his side,
And stirred him with his slackened bow—
"Up, up, Glentarkin! rouse thee, ho!
We seek the Chieftain; on the track,
Keep eagle watch till I come back."

III.

Together up the pass they sped.
"What of the foeman?" Norman said.
"Varying reports from near and far,
This certain—that a band of war
Has for two day been ready bounce,
At prompt command, to march from Doune;
King James, the while, with princely powers,
Holds revelry in Stirling towers.
Soon will this dark and gathering cloud
Speak on our glens in thunder loud.
Inured to bide such bitter bout,
The warrior's plaid may bear it out;
But, Norman, how wilt thou provide
A shelter for thy bonny bride?"

"What! know ye not that Roderick's care
To the lone isle hath caused repair
Each maid and matron of the clan,
And every child and aged man
Unfit for arms; and given his charge,
Nor skiff nor shallop, boat nor barge,
Upon these lakes shall float at large,
But all beside the islet moor,
That such dear pledge may rest secure?"—

IV.

"'Tis well advised—the Chieftain's plan
Despeaks the father of his clan.
But wherefore sleeps Sir Roderick Dhu
Apart from all his followers true?"

"It is, because last evening-tide
Brian an augury hath tried,
Of that dread kind which must not be
Unless in dread extremity,
The Taghairm called; by which, afar
Our sires foresaw the events of war.
Duncraggan's milk-white bull they slow,"—

Maist.

"Ah! well the gallant brute I knew,
The choicest of the prey we had,
When swept our merry-men Gallagad.
His hide was snow, his horns were dark,
His red eye glowed like fiery spark;
So fierce, so tameless, and so fleet,
Sore did he cumber our retreat,
And kept our stoutest kernes in awe,
Even at the pass of Beal'maha.
But steep and flinty was the road,
And sharp the hurrying pikeman's goad,
And when we came to Dinnan's Row,
A child might scatheless stroke his brow."—

V.

Norman.

"That bull was slain: his reeking hide
They stretched the cataract beside,
Whose waters their wild tumult toss
Adown the black and craggy boss
Of that huge cliff, whose ample verge
Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.
Couched on a shelf beneath its brink,
Close where the thundering torrents sink,
Rocking beneath their headlong sway
And drizzled by the ceaseless spray,
'Midst groan of rock, and roar of stream,
The wizard waits prophetic dream.
Nor distant rests the Chief:—but hush!
See, gliding slow through mist and bush,
The Hermit gains yon rock, and stands
To gaze upon our slumbering bands.

Seems he not, Malise, like a ghost,
That hovers o'er a slaughtered host?
Or raven on the blasted oak,
That, watching while the deer is broke,
His morsel claims with sullen croak?"

Malise.

"Peace! peace! to other than to me,
Thy words were evil augury;
But still I hold Sir Roderick's blade
Clan-Alpine's omen and her aid,
Not aught that, gleaned from heaven or hell,
Yon fiend-begotten monk can tell.
The Chieftain joins him, see—and now,
Together they descend the brow."—

VI.

And, as they came, with Alpine's Lord
The Hermit Monk held solemn word:
"Roderick! it is a fearful strife,
For man endowed with mortal life,
Whose shroud of sentient clay can still
Feel feverish pang and fainting chill,
Whose eye can stare in stony trance,
Whose hair can rouse like warrior's lance,—
'Tis hard for such to view, unfurled,
The curtain of the future world.
Yet, witness every quaking limb,
My sunken pulse, mine eyeballs dim,
My soul with harrowing anguish torn,
This for my chieftain have I borne!
The shapes that sought my fearful couch,
A human tongue may ne'er avouch;
No mortal man,—save he, who, bred
Between the living and the dead,
Is gifted beyond nature's law,
Had e'er survived to say he saw.
At length the fateful answer came,
In characters of living flame!
Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul;—
WHICH SPILLS THE FOREMOST FOREMAN'S LIFE,
THAT PARTY CONQUERS IN THE STRIFE."

VII.

"Thanks, Brian, for thy zeal and care!
Good is thine augury, and fair.
Clan-Alpine ne'er in battle stood,
But first our broad-swords tasted blood.
A surer victim still I know,
Self-offered to the auspicious blow;
A spy hath sought my land this morn,
No eve shall witness his return!
My followers guard each pass's mouth,
To east, to westward, and to south;

Red Murdoch, bribed to be his guide,
Has charge to lead his steps aside,
Till, in deep path or dingle brown,
He light on those shall bring him down.
But see, who comes his news to show!
Malise! what tidings of the foe?"

VIII.

"At Doune, o'er many a spear and glaive,
Two Barons proud their banners wave.
I saw the Moray's silver star,
And marked the sable pale of Mar."—
"By Alpine's soul, high tidings those!
I love to hear of worthy foes.
When move they on?"—"To-morrow's noon
Will see them here for battle bouno."
"Then shall it see a meeting stern!—
But, for the place—say, couldst thou learn
Nought of the friendly clans of Earn?
Strengthened by them we well might bide
The battle on Benledi's side.—
Thou couldst not?—well! Clan-Alpine's men
Shall man the Trosach's shaggy glen;
Within Loch-Katrine's gorge we'll fight,
All in our maids' and matrons' sight,
Each for his hearth and household fire,
Father for child, and son for sire,
Lover for maid beloved!—but why—
Is it the breeze affects mine eye?
Or dost thou come, ill-omened tear!
A messenger of doubt or fear?
No! sooner may the Saxon lance
Unfix Benledi from his stance,
Than doubt or terror can pierce through
The unyielding heart of Roderick Dhu:
'Tis stubborn as his trusty targe.—
Each to his post!—all know their charge."
The pibroch sounds, the bands advance,
The broad-swords gleam, the banners dance,
Obedient to the Chieftain's glance.
I turn me from the martial roar,
And seek Coir-Uriskin once more.

IX.

Where is the Douglas?—he is gone;
And Ellen sits on the gray stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are poured on her unheeding ear.—
"He will return—Dear lady, trust!—
With joy return;—he will—he must.
Well was it time to seek afar
Some refuge from impending war,
When e'en Clan-Alpine's rugged swarms
Are cowed by the approaching storms.

I saw their boats, with many a light,
 Floating the live-long yesternight,
 Shifting like flashes darted forth
 By the red streamers of the north;
 I marked at morn how close they ride,
 Thick moored by the lone islet's side,
 Like wild ducks couching in the fen,
 When stoops the hawk upon the glen.
 Since this rude race dare not abide
 The peril on the main-land side,
 Shall not thy noble father's care
 Some safe retreat for thee prepare?"—

X.

Ellen.

"No, Allan, no! Pretext so kind
 My wakeful terrors could not blind.
 When in such tender tone, yet grave,
 Douglas a parting blessing gave,
 The tear that glistened in his eye
 Drowned not his purpose fixed and high.
 My soul, though feminine and weak,
 Can image his; e'en as the lake,
 Itself disturbed by slightest stroke,
 Reflects the invulnerable rock.
 He hears report of battle rife,
 He deems himself the cause of strife.
 I saw him reddened, when the theme
 Turned, Allan, on thine idle dream,
 Of Malcolm Græme in fetters bound,
 Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
 Think'st thou he trowed thine omen aught?
 Oh no! 'twas apprehensive thought
 For the kind youth,—for Roderick too—
 (Let me be just) that friend so true;
 In danger both, and in our cause!
 Minstrel, the Douglas dare not pause.
 Why else that solemn warning given,
 'If not on earth, we meet in heaven?'
 Why else, to Cambus-kenneth's fane,
 If eve return him not again,
 Am I to hie and make me known?
 Alas! he goes to Scotland's throne,
 Buys his friend's safety with his own;—
 He goes to do—what I had done,
 Had Douglas's daughter been his son!"

XI.

"Nay, lovely Ellen!—dearest, nay!
 If aught should his return delay,
 He only named yon holy fane
 As fitting place to meet again.
 Be sure he's safe; and for the Græme,—
 Heaven's blessing on his gallant name!—

My visioned sight may yet prove true.
 Nor bode of ill to him or you.
 When did my gifted dream beguile
 Think of the stranger at the isle,
 And think upon the harpings slow,
 That presaged this approaching woe!
 Sooth was my prophecy of fear;
 Believe it when it augurs cheer.
 Would we had left this dismal spot!
 Ill luck still haunts a fairy grot.
 Of such a wondrous tale I know—
 Dear lady, change that look of woe!
 My harp was wont thy grief to cheer.”—

Ellen.

“Well, be it as thou wilt; I hear,
 But cannot stop the bursting tear.”—
 The Minstrel tried his simple art,
 But distant far was Ellen’s heart.

XII.

Ballad.

ALICE BRAND.

Merry it is in the good green wood,
 When the mavis* and merle† are singing,
 When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry
 And the hunter’s horn is ringing.

“O Alice Brand, my native land
 Is lost for love of you;
 And we must hold by wood and wold,
 As outlaws wont to do.

“O Alice, ’twas all for thy locks so bright,
 And ’twas all for thine eyes so blue,
 That on the night of our luckless flight
 Thy brother bold I slew.

“Now must I teach to hew the beech,
 The hand that held the glaive,
 For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
 And stakes to fence our cave.

“And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
 That wont on harp to stray,
 A cloak must shear from the slaughtered deer
 To keep the cold away.”—

“O Richard! if my brother died,
 ’Twas but a fatal chance;
 For darkling was the battle tried,
 And Fortune sped the lance.

“If pall and vair no more I wear,
 Nor thou the crimson sheen,
 As warm, we’ll say, is the russet gray,
 As gay the forest-green.

* Thrush.

† Blackbird.

"And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand."

XIII.

Ballad continued.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good green wood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and the oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,
Who woned within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruined church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

"Why sounds yon stroke on beech and oak,
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairie's fatal green?"

"Up, Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christened man;
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For muttered word or ban.

"Lay on him the curse of the withered heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye;
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die."—

XIV.

Ballad continued.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good green wood,
Though the birds have stilled their singing;
The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf
Before Lord Richard stands,
And, as he crossed and blessed himself,
"I fear not sign," quoth the grisly elf,
"That is made with bloody hands."—

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
"And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer."—

"Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,
The blood of Ethert Brand."—

Then forward stepped she, Alice Brand,
 And made the holy sign,—
 “And if there’s blood on Richard’s hand,
 A spotless hand is mine.
 “And I conjure thee, Demon elf,
 By Him whom Demons fear,
 To show us whence thou art thyself?
 And what thine errand here?”—

XV.

Ballad continued.

“’Tis merry, ’tis merry, in Fairyland,
 When fairy birds are singing,
 When the court doth ride by their monarch’s side,
 With bit and bridle ringing:
 “And gaily shines the Fairyland—
 But all is glistening show,
 Like the idle gleam that December’s beam
 Can dart on ice and snow.
 “And fading, like that varied gleam,
 Is our inconstant shape,
 Who now like knight and lady seem,
 And now like dwarf and ape.
 “It was between the night and day,
 When the Fairy King has power,
 That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
 And, ’twixt life and death, was snatched away
 To the joyless Elfin bower.
 “But wist I of a woman bold,
 Who thrice my brow durst sign,
 I might regain my mortal mold
 As fair a form as thine.”

She crossed him once—she crossed him twice—
 That lady was so brave;
 The fouler grew his goblin hue,
 The darker grew the cave.

She crossed him thrice, that lady bold:
 He rose beneath her hand
 The fairest knight on Scottish mold,
 Her brother, Ethert Brand!

Merry it is in the good green wood,
 When the mavis and merle are singing;
 But merrier were they in Dunfermline gray,
 When all the bells were ringing.

XVI.

Just as the minstrel sounds were stayed,
 A stranger climbed the steepy glade:
 His martial step, his stately mien,
 His hunting-suit of Lincoln green,

His eagle glance, remembrance claims—
’Tis Snowdown’s Knight—’tis James Fitz-James.
Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then starting, scarce suppressed a scream :
“O stranger! in such hour of fear,
What evil hap has brought thee here?”—
“An evil hap, how can it be,
That bids me look again on thee?
By promise bound, my former guide
Met me betimes this morning tide,
And marshalled, over bank and bourne.
The happy path of my return.”—
“The happy path!—what! said he nought
Of war, of battle to be fought,
Of guarded pass?”—“No, by my faith!
Nor saw I aught could augur scathe.”—
“O haste thee, Allan, to the kerne,
Yonder his tartans I discern;
Learn thou his purpose, and conjure
That he will guide the stranger sure!—
What prompted thee, unhappy man?
The meanest serf in Roderick’s clan
Had not been bribed by love or fear,
Unknown to him, to guide thee here.”—

XVII.

“Sweet Ellen, dear my life must be,
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath,
When love or honour’s weighed with death.
Then let me profit by my chance,
And speak my purpose bold at once.
I come to bear thee from a wild,
Where ne’er before such blossom smiled;
By this soft hand to lead thee far
From frantic scenes of feud and war.
Near Bochastle my horses wait;
They bear us soon to Stirling gate.
I’ll place thee in a lovely bower,
I’ll guard thee like a tender flower,”—
“O! hush, Sir Knight! ’twere female art
To say I do not read thy heart;
Too much, before, my selfish ear
Was idly soothed my praise to hear.
That fatal bait hath lured thee back,
In deathful hour, o’er dangerous track;
And how, O how, can I atone
The wreck my vanity brought on!—
One way remains—I’ll tell him all—
Yes! struggling bosom, forth it shall!
Thou, whose light folly bears the blame.
Buy thine own pardon with thy shame!
But first—my father is a man
Outlawed, and exiled, under ban;
The wrice of blood is on his head.

With me 'twere infamy to wed.—
 Still wouldst thou speak?—then hear the truth!
 Fitz-James, there is a noble youth,—
 If yet he is!—exposed for me
 And mine to dread extremity,—
 Thou hast the secret of my heart;
 Forgive, be generous, and depart.”—

XVIII.

Fitz-James knew every wily train
 A lady's fickle heart to gain,
 But here he knew and felt them vain.
 There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
 To give her steadfast speech the lie;
 In maiden confidence she stood,
 Though mantled in her cheek the blood,
 And told her love with such a sigh
 Of deep and hopeless agony,
 As death had sealed her Malcolm's doom,
 And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.
 Hope vanished from Fitz-James's eye,
 But not with hope fled sympathy.
 He proffered to attend her side,
 As brother would a sister guide.—
 “O! little knowest thou Roderick's heart!
 Safer for both we go apart.
 O haste thee, and from Allan learn,
 If thou mayst trust yon wily kerne.”—
 With hand upon his forehead laid,
 The conflict of his mind to shade,
 A parting step or two he made;
 Then, as some thought had crossed his brain,
 He paused, and turned, and came again.

XIX.

“Hear, lady, yet, a parting word!—
 It chanced in fight that my poor sword
 Preserved the life of Scotland's lord.
 This ring the grateful Monarch gave,
 And bade, when I had boon to crave,
 To bring it back, and boldly claim
 The recompense that I would name.
 Ellen, I am no courtly lord,
 But one who lives by lance and sword,
 Whose castle is his helm and shield,
 His lordship, the embattled field.
 What from a prince can I demand,
 Who neither reck of state nor land?
 Ellen, thy hand—the ring is thine;
 Each guard and usher knows the sign.
 Seek thou the king without delay;
 This signet shall secure thy way;
 And claim thy suit, whate'er it be,
 As ransom of his pledge to me.”—
 He placed the golden circlet on,
 Paused—kissed her hand—and then was gone.

The aged Minstrel stood aghast,
 So hastily Fitz-James shot past.
 He joined his guide, and wending down
 The ridges of the mountain brown,
 Across the stream they took their way,
 That joins Loch-Katrine to Achray.

XX.

All in the Trosach's glen was still,
 Noontide was sleeping on the hill:
 Sudden his guide whooped loud and high—
 "Murdoch! was that a signal-cry?"
 He stammered forth,— "I shout to scare
 Yon raven from his dainty fare."
 He looked—he knew the raven's prey,
 His own brave steed:—"Ah! gallant grey!
 For thee—for me perchance—'twere well
 We ne'er had seen the Trosach's dell.—
 Murdoch, move first—but silently;
 Whistle or whoop, and thou shalt die."—
 Jealous and sullen on they fared,
 Each silent, each upon his guard.

XXI.

Now wound the path its dizzy ledge
 Around a precipice's edge,
 When lo! a wasted female form,
 Blighted by wrath of sun and storm,
 In tattered weeds and wild array,
 Stood on a cliff beside the way,
 And glancing round her restless eye
 Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
 Seemed nought to mark, yet all to spy.
 Her brow was wreathed with gaudy broom;
 With gesture wild she waved a plume
 Of feathers, which the eagles fling
 To crag and cliff from dusky wing;
 Such spoils her desperate step had sought,
 Where scarce was footing for the goat.
 The tartan plaid she first descried,
 And shrieked, till all the rocks replied;
 As loud she laughed when near they drew,
 For then the Lowland garb she knew;
 And then her hands she wildly wrung,
 And then she wept, and then she sung.—
 She sung!—the voice, in better time,
 Perchance to harp or lute might chime;
 But now, though strained and roughened, still
 Rang wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII.

Song.

"They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
 They say my brain is warped and wrung—
 I cannot sleep on Highland bae,
 I cannot pray in Highland tongue.

But were I now where Allan glides,
 Or heard my native Devan's tides,
 So sweetly would I rest and pray
 That heaven would close my wintry day!
 "Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
 They bade me to the church repair;
 It was my bridal morn, they said,
 And my true love would meet me there.
 But woe betide the cruel guile,
 That drowned in blood the morning smile!
 And woe betide the fairy dream!
 I only waked to sob and scream."

XXIII.

"Who is this maid? what means her lay?
 She hovers o'er the hollow way,
 And flutters wide her mantle gray,
 As the lone heron spreads his wing,
 By twilight, o'er a haunted spring."—
 "'Tis Blanche of Devan," Murdoch said,
 "A crazed and captive Lowland maid,
 Ta'en on the morn she was a bride,
 When Roderick forayed Devan-side.
 The gay bridegroom resistance made,
 And felt our Chief's unconquered blade.
 I marvel she is now at large,
 But oft she 'scapes from Maudlin's charge,—
 Hence, brain-sick fool!" He raised his bow:—
 "Now, if thou strikest her but one blow,
 I'll pitch thee from the cliff as far
 As ever peasant pitched a bar."
 "Thanks, champion, thanks!" the Maniac cried,
 And pressed her to Fitz-James's side.
 "See the gray pennons I prepare,
 To seek my true-love through the air!
 I will not lend that savage groom,
 To break his fall, one downy plume!
 No!—deep amid disjointed stones,
 The wolves shall batten on his bones,
 And then shall his detested plaid,
 By bush and brier in mid-air stayed,
 Wave forth a banner fair and free,
 Meet signal for their revelry."

XXIV.

"Hush thee, poor maiden, and be still!"—
 "O! thou look'st kindly, and I will.—
 Mine eye has dried and wasted been,
 But still it loves the Lincoln green;
 And, though mine ear is all unstrung,
 Still, still it loves the Lowland tongue.
 "For O my sweet William was forester true,
 He stole poor Blanche's heart away!
 His coat it was all of the greenwood hue,
 And so blithely he trilled the Lowland lay!" —

"It was not that I meant to tell . . .
But thou art wise and guessest well."
Then, in a low and broken tone,
And hurried note, the song went on.
Still on the Clansman, fearfully,
She fixed her apprehensive eye;
Then turned it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV.

"The toils are pitched, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily;
The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.

"It was a stag, a stag of ten,*
Bearing his branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

"It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warned him of the toils below,
O so faithfully, faithfully!

"He had an eye, and he could heed.
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed—
Hunters watch so narrowly."

XXVI.

Fitz-James's mind was passion-tossed,
When Ellen's hints and fears were lost;
But Murdoch's shout suspicion wrought,
And Blanche's song conviction brought.—
Not like a stag that spies the snare,
But lion of the hunt aware,
He waved at once his blade on high,
"Disclose thy treachery, or die!"—
Forth at full speed the Clansman flew,
But in his race his bow he drew.
The shaft just grazed Fitz-James's crest,
And thrilled in Blanche's faded breast.—
Murdoch of Alpine! prove thy speed,
For ne'er had Alpine's son such need!
With heart of fire, and foot of wind,
The fierce avenger is behind!
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit, death—the prize is life!
Thy kindred ambush lies before,
Close couched upon the heathery moor;
Them couldst thou reach!—it may not be—
Thine ambushed kin thou ne'er shalt see,
The fiery Saxon gains on thee!

* Having ten branches on his antlers.

Resistless speeds the deadly thrust,
 As lightning strikes the pine to dust;
 With foot and hand Fitz-James must strain,
 Ere he can win his blade again.
 Bent o'er the fallen, with falcon eye,
 He grimly smiled to see him die;
 Then slower wended back his way
 Where the poor maiden bleeding lay.

XXVII.

She sate beneath the birchen tree,
 Her elbow resting on her knee;
 She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,
 And gazed on it, and feebly laugh'd;
 Her wreath of broom and feathers gray,
 Daggled with blood, beside her lay.
 The Knight to stanch the life-stream tried,
 "Stranger, it is in vain!" she cried;
 "This hour of death has given me more
 Of reason's power than years before;
 For, as these ebbing veins decay,
 My frenzied visions fade away.
 A helpless injured wretch I die,
 And something tells me in thine eye,
 That thou wert mine avenger born.
 Seest thou this tress?—O! still I've worn
 This little tress of yellow hair,
 Through danger, frenzy, and despair!
 It once was bright and clear as thine,
 But blood and tears have dimmed its shine.
 I will not tell thee when 'twas shred,
 Nor from what guiltless victim's head—
 My brain would turn!—but it shall wave
 Like plumage on thy helmet brave,
 Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain.
 And thou wilt bring it me again.—
 I waver still!—O God! more bright
 Let Reason beam her parting light!—
 O! by thy knighthood's honoured sign,
 And for thy life preserved by mine,
 When thou shalt see a darksome man,
 Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's clan,
 With tartans broad and shadowy plume,
 And hand of blood, and brow of gloom,
 Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
 And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!—
 They watch for thee by pass and fell . . .
 Avoid the path . . . O God! . . . farewell!"—

XXVIII.

A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James;
 Fast poured his eye at pity's claims;
 And now, with mingled grief and ire,
 He saw the murdered maid expire.
 "God, in my need, be my relief,
 As I wreak this on yonder chief!"—

A lock from Blanche's tresses fair
 He blended with her bridegroom's hair;
 The mingled braid in blood he dyed,
 And placed it on his bonnet side:
 "By Him whose word is truth! I swear
 No other favour will I wear,
 Till this sad token I imbrue
 In the best blood of Roderick Dhu!
 But hark! what means yon faint halloo?
 The chase is up,—but they shall know,
 The stag at bay's a dangerous foe."—
 Barred from the known but guarded way,
 Through copse and cliffs Fitz-James must stray,
 And oft must change his desperate track,
 By stream and precipice turned back.
 Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
 From lack of food and loss of strength,
 He couched him in a thicket hoar,
 And thought his toils and perils o'er:—
 "Of all my rash adventures past,
 This frantic feat will prove the last!
 Who e'er so mad but might have guessed,
 That all this Highland hornet's nest
 Would muster up in swarms so soon
 As e'er they heard of bands at Doune?
 Like bloodhounds now they search me out,—
 Hark, to the whistle and the shout!
 If further through the wilds I go,
 I only fall upon the foe;
 I'll couch me here till evening gray,
 Then darkling try my dangerous way."

XXIX.

The shades of eve come slowly down,
 The woods are wrapped in deeper brown,
 The owl awakens from her dell,
 The fox is heard upon the fell;
 Enough remains of glimmering light
 To guide the wanderer's steps aright,
 Yet not enough from far to show
 His figure to the watchful foe.
 With cautious step, and ear awake,
 He climbs the crag and threads the brake;
 And not the summer solstice, there,
 Tempered the midnight mountain air,
 But every breeze that swept the wold,
 Benumbed his drenched limbs with cold.
 In dread, in danger, and alone,
 Famished and chilled, through ways unknown,
 Tangled and steep, he journeyed on;
 Till, as a rock's huge point he turned,
 A watch-fire close before him burned.

XXX.

Beside its embers red and clear,
 Basked, in his plaid, a mountaineer:

And up he sprung with sword in hand,--
 "Thy name and purpose! Saxon, stand!"--
 "A stranger."—"What dost thou require?"--
 "Rest and a guide, and food and fire.
 My life's beset, my path is lost,
 The gale has chilled my limbs with frost."--
 "Art thou a friend to Roderick?"—"No."--
 "Thou darest not call thyself a foe?"--
 "I dare! to him and all the band
 He brings to aid his murderous hand."--
 "Bold words!—but, though the beast of game
 The privilege of chase may claim,
 Though space and law the stag we lend,
 Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend,
 Who ever recked, where, how, or when,
 The prowling fox was trapped or slain?
 Thus, treacherous scouts,—yet sure they lie,
 Who say thou camest a secret spy!"--
 "They do, by Heaven!—Come Roderick Dhu,
 And of his clan the boldest two,
 And let me but till morning rest,
 I write the falsehood on their crest."--
 "If by the blaze I mark aright,
 Thou bear'st the belt and spur of Knight."
 "Then, by these tokens mayst thou know,
 Each proud oppressor's mortal foe."--
 "Enough, enough; sit down and share
 A soldier's couch, a soldier's fare."--

XXXI.

He gave him of his Highland cheer,
 The hardened flesh of mountain deer;
 Dry fuel on the fire he laid,
 And bade the Saxon share his plaid;
 He tended him like welcome guest,
 Then thus his further speech addressed.
 "Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
 A clansman born, a kinsman true;
 Each word against his honour spoko,
 Demands of me avenging stroke;
 Yet more,—upon thy fate, 'tis said,
 A mighty augury is laid.
 It rests with me to wind my horn,
 Thou art with numbers overborne;
 It rests with me, here, brand to brand,
 Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
 But nor for clan nor kindred's cause,
 Will I depart from honour's laws:
 To assail a wearied man were shame,
 A stranger is a holy name;
 Guidance and rest, and food and fire,
 In vain he never must require.
 Then rest thee here till dawn of day,
 Myself will guide thee on the way,

O'er stock and stone, through watch and ward,
 Till past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard,
 As far as Coillantogle's ford;
 From thence thy warrant is thy sword." --
 "I take thy courtesy, by Heaven,
 As freely as 'tis nobly given!" --
 "Well, rest thee; for the bittern's cry
 Sings us the lake's wild lullaby." --
 With that he shook the gathered heath,
 And spread his plaid upon the wreath;
 And the brave foemen, side by side,
 Lay peaceful down like brothers tried,
 And slept until the dawning beam
 Purpled the mountain and the stream.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE COMBAT.

I.

FAIR as the earliest beam of eastern light,
 When first, by the bewildered pilgrim spied,
 It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
 And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
 And lights the fearful path on mountain-side; --
 Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
 Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
 Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
 Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of War.

II.

That early beam, so fair and sheen,
 Was twinkling through the hazel screen,
 When, rousing at its glimmer red,
 The warriors left their lowly bed,
 Looked out upon the dappled sky,
 Muttered their soldier matins by,
 And then awaked their fire, to steal,
 As short and rude, their soldier meal.
 That o'er, the Gael* around him threw
 His graceful plaid of varied hue,
 And, true to promise, led the way,
 By thicket green and mountain gray.
 A wildering path! -- they winded now
 Along the precipice's brow
 Commanding the rich scenes beneath,
 The windings of the Forth and Teith,
 And all the vales between that lie,
 Till Stirling's turrets melt in sky;
 Then, sunk in copse, their furthest glance
 Gained not the length of horseman's lance.

* The Scottish Highlander calls himself *Gael*, or Gaul, and terms the *Tartan* *Sassanach*, or Saxons.

'Twas oft so steep, the foot was fain
 Assistance from the hand to gain;
 So tangled oft, that, bursting through,
 Each hawthorn shed her showers of dew,--
 That diamond dew, so pure and clear,
 It rivals all but Beauty's tear!

III.

At length they came where, stern and steep
 The hill sinks down upon the deep.
 Here Vennachar in silver flows,
 There, ridge on ridge, Benledi rose.
 Ever the hollow path twined on,
 Beneath steep bank and threatening stone;
 A hundred men might hold the post
 With hardihood against a host.
 The rugged mountain's scanty cloak
 Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak,
 With shingles bare, and cliffs between,
 And patches bright of bracken green,
 And heather black, that waved so high,
 It held the copse in rivalry.
 But where the lake slept deep and still,
 Dank osiers fringed the swamp and hill;
 And oft both path and hill were torn,
 Where wintry torrent down had borne,
 And heaped upon the cumbered land
 Its wreck of gravel, rocks, and sand.
 So toilsome was the road to trace,
 The guide, abating of his pace,
 Led slowly through the pass's jaws,
 And asked Fitz-James, by what strange cause
 He sought these wilds, traversed by few
 Without a pass from Roderick Dhu?

IV.

"Brave Gael, my pass, in danger tried,
 Hangs in my belt, and by my side;
 Yet, sooth to tell," the Saxon said,
 "I dreamed not now to claim its aid.
 When here, but three day since, I came,
 Bewildered in pursuit of game,
 All seemed as peaceful and as still,
 As the mist slumbering on yon hill;
 Thy dangerous chief was then afar,
 Nor soon expected back from war.
 Thus said, at least, my mountain guide.
 Though deep, perchance, the villain lied."--
 "Yet why a second venture try?"--
 "A warrior thou, and ask me why?--
 Moves our free course by such fixed cause,
 As gives the poor mechanic laws?
 Enough, I sought to drive away
 The lazy hours of peaceful day;
 Slight cause will then suffice to guide
 A Knight's free footsteps far and wide.--

A falcon flown, a greyhound strayed,
The merry glance of mountain maid;
Or, if a path be dangerous known,
The danger's self is lure alone."

V.

"Thy secret keep, I urge thee not;—
Yet, ere again ye sought this spot,
Say, heard ye not of Lowland war,
Against Clan-Alpine raised by Mar?"—
"No, by my word;—of bands prepared
To guard King James's sports I heard;
Nor doubt I aught, but, when they hear
This muster of the mountaineer,
Their pennons will abroad be flung,
Which else in Doune had peaceful hung."—
"Free be they flung!—for we were loth
Their silken folds should feast the moth.
Free be they flung!—as free shall wave
Clan-Alpine's pine in banner brave.
But, stranger, peaceful since you came,
Bewildered in the mountain game,
Whence the bold boast by which you show
Vich-Alpine's vowed and mortal foe?"—
"Warrior, but yester-morn I knew
Nought of thy Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Save as an outlawed desperate man,
The chief of a rebellious clan,
Who, in the Regent's court and sight,
With ruffian dagger stabbed a knight;
Yet this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart."

VI.

Wrothful at such arraignment foul,
Dark lowered the clansman's sable scowl.
A space he paused, then sternly said,—
"And heardst thou why he drew his blade?
Heardst thou that shameful word and blow
Brought Roderick's vengeance on his foe?
'What recked the Chieftain, if he stood
On Highland heath or Holy-Rood?
He rights such wrong where it is given,
If it were in the court of Heaven."—
"Still was it outrage;—yet, 'tis true,
Not then claimed sovereignty his due;
While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrowed truncheon of command.
The young King, mewed in Stirling tower,
Was stranger to respect and power.
But then, thy Chieftain's robber life!—
Winning mean prey by causeless strife,
Wrenching from ruined Lowland swain
His herds and harvest reared in vain,—
Methinks a soul like thine should scorn
The spoils from such foul foray borne."

VII.

The Gael beheld him grim the while,
 And answered with disdainful smile,—
 “Saxon, from yonder mountain high,
 I marked thee send delighted eye,
 Far to the south and east, where lay,
 Extended in succession gay,
 Deep waving fields and pastures green,
 With gentle slopes and groves between :—
 These fertile plains, that softened vale,
 Were once the birthright of the Gael ;
 The stranger came with iron hand,
 And from our fathers reft the land
 Where dwell we now ! See, rudely swell
 Crag over crag, and fell o’er fell.
 Ask we this savage hill we tread,
 For fattened steer or household bread ;
 Ask we for flocks these shingles dry,
 And well the mountain might reply,—
 ‘To you, as to your sires of yore,
 Belong the target and claymore !
 I give you shelter in my breast,
 Your own good blades must win the rest.’—
 Pent in this fortress of the North,
 Think’st thou we will not sally forth,
 To spoil the spoiler as we may,
 And from the robber rend the prey ?
 Ay, by my soul !—While on yon plain
 The Saxon rears one shock of grain ;
 While, of ten thousand herds, there strays
 But one along yon river’s maze,—
 The Gael, of plain and river heir,
 Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share.
 Where live the mountain chiefs who hold,
 That plundering Lowland field and fold
 Is aught but retribution true ?
 Seek other cause ’gainst Roderick Dhu.”—

VIII.

Answered Fitz-James—“And, if I sought,
 Think’st thou no other could be brought ?
 What deem ye of my path way-laid,
 My life given o’er to ambuscade ?”—
 “As of a meed to rashness due :
 Hadst thou sent warning fair and true,—
 I seek my hound, or falcon strayed,
 I seek, good faith, a Highland maid,—
 Free hadst thou been to come and go ;
 But secret path marks secret foe.
 Nor yet, for this, even as a spy,
 Hadst thou, unheard, been doomed to lie,
 Save to fulfil an augury.”—
 “Well, let it pass ; nor will I now
 Fresh cause of enmity avow,
 To chafe thy mood and cloud thy brow.

Enough, I am by promise tied
To match me with this man of pride:
Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen
In peace; but when I come agen,
I come with banner, brand and bow.
As leader seeks his mortal foe.
For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,
As I, until before me stand
This rebel Chieftain and his band."—

IX.

"Have then thy wish!"—he whistled shrill,
And he was answered from the hill;
Wild as the scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew.
Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets, and spears, and bended bows;
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;
From shingles gray their lances start,
The bracken-bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow-wand
Are bristling into axe and brand,
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior armed for strife.
That whistle garrisoned the glen
At once with full five hundred men,
As if the yawning hill to heaven
A subterranean host had given.
Watching their leader's beck and will.
All silent there they stood and still;
Like the loose crags whose threatening mass
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,
As if an infant's touch could urge
Their headlong passage down the vergo,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain-side they hung.
The mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fixed his eye and sable brow
Full on Fitz-James—"How say'st thou now?
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu!"—

X.

Fitz-James was brave:—Though to his heart
The life-blood thrilled with sudden start,
He manned himself with dauntless air,
Returned the Chief his haughty stare,
His back against a rock he bore,
And firmly placed his foot before:—
"Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I!"—
Sir Roderick marked—and in his eyes
Respect was mingled with surprise.

And the stern joy which warriors feel
 In foemen worthy of their steel.
 Short space he stood—then waved his hand:
 Down sunk the disappearing band;
 Each warrior vanished where he stood,
 In broom or bracken, heath or wood;
 Sunk brand and spear and bended bow,
 In osiers pale and copses low:
 It seemed as if their mother Earth
 Had swallowed up her warlike birth.
 The wind's last breath had tossed in air
 Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair,—
 The next but swept a lone hill-side,
 Where heath and fern were waving wide;
 The sun's last glance was glinted back,
 From spear and glaive, from targe and jack,—
 The next, all unreflected, shone
 On bracken green and cold gray stone.

XI.

Fitz-James looked round—yet scarce believed
 The witness that his sight received;
 Such apparition well might seem
 Delusion of a dreadful dream.
 Sir Roderick in suspense he eyed,
 And to his look the Chief replied,
 "Fear nought—nay, that I need not say—
 But—doubt not aught from mine array.
 Thou art my guest;—I pledged my word
 As far as Coilantogle ford:
 Nor would I call a clansman's brand
 For aid against one valiant hand,
 Though on our strife lay every vale
 Rent by the Saxon from the Gael.
 So move we on;—I only meant
 To show the reed on which you leant,
 Deeming this path you might pursue
 Without a pass from Roderick Dhu."—
 They moved:—I said Fitz-James was brave,
 As ever knight that belted glaive;
 Yet dare not say, that now his blood
 Kept on its wont and tempered flood,
 As, following Roderick's stride, he drew
 That seeming lonesome pathway through,
 Which yet, by fearful proof, was rife
 With lances, that to take his life
 Waited but signal from a guide,
 So late dishonoured and defied.
 Ever, by stealth, his eye sought round
 The vanished guardians of the ground,
 And still from copse and heather deep,
 Fancy saw spear and broad-sword peep,
 And in the plover's shrilly strain,
 The signal whistle heard again.

Nor breathed he free till far behind
 The pass was left; for then they wind
 Along a wide and level green,
 Where neither tree nor tuft was seen,
 Nor rush, nor bush of broom was near,
 To hide a bonnet or a spear.

XII.

The Chief in silence strode before,
 And reached that torrent's sounding shore,
 Which, daughter of three mighty lakes,
 From Vennachar in silver breaks,
 Sweeps through the plain, and ceaseless mines
 On Bochastle the mouldering lines,
 Where Rome, the Empress of the world,
 Of yore her eagle wings unfurled.
 And here his course the Chieftain stayed,
 Threw down his target and his plaid,
 And to the Lowland warrior said :—
 "Bold Saxon! to his promise just,
 Vich-Alpine has discharged his trust.
 This murderous chief, this ruthless man,
 This head of a rebellious clan,
 Hath led thee safe, through watch and ward,
 Far past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard.
 Now, man to man, and steel to steel,
 A chieftain's vengeance thou shalt feel.
 See, here, all vantageless I stand,
 Armed, like thyself, with single brand;
 For this is Coilantogle ford,
 And thou must keep thee with thy sword."—

XIII.

The Saxon paused :—"I ne'er delayed,
 When foeman bade me draw my blade;
 Nay more, brave Chief, I vowed thy death:
 Yet sure thy fair and generous faith,
 And my deep debt for life preserved,
 A better meed have well deserved :—
 Can nought but blood our feud atone?
 Are there no means?"—"No, Stranger, none!
 And hear,—to fire thy flagging zeal,—
 The Saxon cause rests on thy steel;
 For thus spoke Fate by prophet bred
 Between the living and the dead;
 "Who spills the foremost foeman's life,
 His party conquers in the strife."—
 "Then, by my word," the Saxon said,
 "The riddle is already read.
 Seek yonder brake beneath the cliff—
 There lies Red Murdoch, stark and stiff.
 Thus Fate has solved her prophecy,
 Then yield to Fate, and not to me.
 To James, at Stirling, let us go,
 When, if thou wilt, be still his foe,

Or if the King shall not agree
To grant thee grace and favour free,
I plight mine honour, oath, and word,
That, to thy native strengths restored,
With each advantage shalt thou stand,
That aids thee now to guard thy land."

XIV.

Dark lightning flashed from Roderick's eye—
"Soars thy presumption, then, so high,
Because a wretched kerne ye slew,
Homage to name to Roderick Dhu?
He yields not, he, to man nor Fate!
Thou add'st but fuel to my hate:—
My clansman's blood demands revenge.—
Not yet prepared?—By Heaven, I change
My thought, and hold thy valour light
As that of some vain carpet-knight,
Who ill deserved my courteous care,
And whose best boast is but to wear
A braid of his fair lady's hair."—
"I thank thee, Roderick, for the word!
It nerves my heart, it steels my sword;
For I have sworn this braid to stain
In the best blood that warms thy vein.
Now, truce, farewell! and ruth begone!—
Yet think not that by thee alone,
Proud Chief! can courtesy be shown;
Though not from copse, or heath, or cairn,
Start at my whistle clansmen stern,
Of this small horn one feeble blast
Would fearful odds against thee cast.
But fear not—doubt not—which thou wilt—
We try this quarrel hilt to hilt."—
Then each at once his falchion drew,
Each on the ground his scabbard threw,
Each looked to sun, and stream, and plain,
As what they ne'er might see again;
Then foot, and point, and eye opposed,
In dubious strife they darkly closed.

XV.

Ill fared it then with Roderick Dhu,
That on the field his targe he threw,
Whose brazen studs and tough bull-hide
Had death so often dashed aside;
For, trained abroad his arms to wield,
Fitz-James's blade was sword and shield;
He practised every pass and ward,
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard;
While, less expert, though stronger far,
The Gael maintained unequal war.
Three times in closing strife they stood,
And thrice the Saxon sword drank blood
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.

Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,
And showered his blows like wintry rain;
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,
Against the winter shower is proof,
The foe, invulnerable still,
Foiled his wild rage by steady skill;
Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand,
And, backwards borne upon the lea,
Brought the proud Chieftain to his knee.

XVI.

"Now, yield thee, or, by Him who made
The world, thy heart's blood dyes my blade!"—
"Thy threats, thy mercy, I defy!
Let recreant yield who fears to die."—
Like adder darting from his coil,
Like wolf that dashes through the toil,
Like mountain-cat who guards her young,
Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprung,
Received, but recked not of a wound,
And locked his arms his foeman round.—
Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own!
No maiden's hand is round thee thrown!
That desperate grasp thy frame might feel
Through bars of brass and triple steel!—
They tug, they strain!—down, down, they go,
The Gael above, Fitz-James below.
The Chieftain's gripe his throat compressed,
His knee was planted on his breast;
His clotted locks he backward threw,
Across his brow his hand he drew,
From blood and mist to clear his sight,
Then gleamed aloft his dagger bright!—
But hate and fury ill supplied
The stream of life's exhausted tide,
And all too late the advantage came,
To turn the odds of deadly game;
For, while the dagger gleamed on high,
Reeled soul and sense, reeled brain and eye.
Down came the blow! but in the heath
The erring blade found bloodless sheath
The struggling foe may now unclasp
The fainting Chief's relaxing grasp;
Unwounded from the dreadful close,
But breathless all, Fitz-James arose.

XVII.

He faltered thanks to Heaven for life,
Redeemed, unhop'd, from desperate strife;
Next on his foe his look he cast,
Whose every gasp appeared his last;
In Roderick's gore he dipped the braid,—
"Poor Blanche! thy wrongs are dearly paid
Yet with thy foe, must die, or live,
The praise that Faith and Valour give."—

With that he blew a bugle-note,
 Undid the collar from his throat,
 Unbonneted, and by the wave
 Sate down his brow and hands to lave.
 Then faint afar are heard the feet
 Of rushing steeds in gallop fleet;
 The sounds increase, and now are seen
 Four mounted squires in Lincoln green;
 Two who bear lance, and two who lead,
 By loosened rein, a saddled steed;
 Each onward held his headlong course,
 And by Fitz-James reined up his horse,
 With wonder viewed the bloody spot—
 —“Exclaim not, gallants! question not.
 You, Herbert and Luffness, alight,
 And bind the wounds of yonder knight;
 Let the gray palfrey bear his weight,
 *We destined for a fairer freight,
 And bring him on to Stirling straight;
 I will before at better speed,
 To seek fresh horse and fitting weed.
 The sun rides high;—I must be bounc
 To see the archer-game at noon;
 But lightly Bayard clears the lea.—
 De Vaux and Herries, follow me!

XVIII.

“Stand, Bayard, stand!”—the steed obeyed,
 With arching neck and bended head,
 And glancing eye, and quivering ear,
 As if he loved his lord to hear.
 No foot Fitz-James in stirrup stayed,
 No grasp upon the saddle laid,
 But wreathed his left hand in the mane,
 And lightly bounded from the plain,
 Turned on the horse his armed heel,
 And stirred his courage with the steel.
 Bounded the fiery steed in air,
 The rider sate erect and fair,
 Then, like a bolt, from steel cross-bow
 Forth launched, along the plain they go.
 They dashed that rapid torrent through,
 And up Carhonie’s hill they flew;
 Still at the gallop pricked the Knight,
 His merry-men followed as they might.
 Along thy banks, swift Teith! they ride,
 And in the race they mock thy ade;
 Torry and Lendrick now are passed,
 And Deanstown lies behind them cast;
 They rise, the bannered towers of Doune,
 They sink in distant woodland soon;
 Blair-Drummond sees the hoofs strike fire,
 They sweep like breeze through Ochertyre;
 They mark just glance and disappear
 The lofty brow of ancient Kier;

They bathe their coursers' sweltering sides,
Dark Forth! amid thy sluggish tides,
And on the opposing shore take ground,
With plash, with scramble, and with bound.
Right hand they leave thy cliffs, Craig-Forth,
And soon the bulwark of the North,
Gray Stirling, with her towers and town,
Upon their fleet career looked down.

XIX.

As up the flinty path they strained,
Sudden his steed the leader reined;
A signal to his squire he flung,
Who instant to his stirrup sprung:—
"Seest thou, De Vaux, yon woodsman gray,
Who town-ward holds the rocky way,
Of stature tall and poor array?
Mark'st thou the firm, yet active stride,
With which he scales the mountain-side?
Know'st thou from whence he comes, or whom?"
"No, by my word;—a burly groom
He seems, who in the field or chase
A Baron's train would nobly grace."
"Out, out, De Vaux! can fear supply,
And jealousy, no sharper eye?
Afar, ere to the hill he drew,
That stately form and step I knew;
Like form in Scotland is not seen,
Treads not such step on Scottish green.
'Tis James of Douglas, by Saint Serle!
The uncle of the banished Earl.
Away, away, to court, to show
The near approach of dreaded foe;
The king must stand upon his guard;
Douglas and he must meet prepared."—
Then right hand wheeled their steeds, and straight
They won the castle's postern gate.

XX.

The Douglas, who had bent his way
From Cambus-Kenneth's abbey gray,
Now, as he climbed the rocky shelf,
Held sad communion with himself:—
"Yes! all is true my fears could frame
A prisoner lies the noble Græme,
And fiery Roderick soon will feel
The vengeance of the royal steel.
I, only I, can ward their fate,—
God grant the ransom come not late!
The Abbess hath her promise given,
My child shall be the bride of heaven;—
—Be pardoned one repining tear!
For He, who gave her, knows how dear,
How excellent—but that is by,
And now my business is to die.

—Ye towers! within whose circuit dread
 A Douglas by his sovereign bled,
 And thou, O sad and fatal mound!*
 That oft has heard the death-axe sound,
 As on the noblest of the land
 Fell the stern headsman's bloody hand.
 The dungeon, block, and nameless tomb
 Prepare,—for Douglas seeks his doom!
 —But hark! what blithe and jolly peal
 Makes the Franciscan steeple reel?
 And see! upon the crowded street,
 In motley groups what masquers meet!
 Banner and pageant, pipe and drum,
 And merry morrice-dancers come.
 I guess, by all this quaint array,
 The burghers hold their sports to-day.
 James will be there;—he loves such show
 Where the good yeoman bends his bow,
 And the tough wrestler foils his foe,
 As well as where, in proud career,
 The high-born tilter shivers spear.
 I'll follow to the Castle-park,
 And play my prize;—King James shall mark,
 If age has tamed these sinews stark,
 Whose force so oft, in happier days,
 His boyish wonder loved to praise.”—

XXI.

The Castle gates were open flung,
 The quivering drawbridge rocked and rung,
 And echoed loud the flinty street
 Beneath the coursers' clattering feet,
 As slowly down the steep descent
 Fair Scotland's King and nobles went,
 While all along the crowded way
 Was jubilee and loud huzza.
 And ever James was bending low,
 To his white jennet's saddle-bow,
 Doffing his cap to city dame,
 Who smiled and blushed for pride and shame:
 And well the simper might be vain,—
 He chose the fairest of the train.
 Gravely he greets each city sire,
 Commends each pageant's quaint attire,
 Gives to the dancers thanks aloud,
 And smiles and nods upon the crowd,
 Who rend the heavens with their acclaims,
 “Long live the Commons' King, King James!”
 Behind the King thronged peer and knight,
 And noble dame and damsel bright,
 Whose fiery steeds ill brooked the stay
 Of the steep street and crowded way.

* An eminence on the north-east of the castle, where state criminals were executed. Stirling was often polluted with noble blood.

—But in the train you might discern
 Dark lowering brow and visage stern :
 There nobles mourned their pride restrained,
 And the mean burghers' joys disdained;
 And chiefs, who, hostage for their clan,
 Were each from home a banished man,
 There thought upon their own gray tower.
 Their waving woods, their feudal power,
 And deemed themselves a shameful part
 Of pageant, which they cursed in heart.

XXII.

Now in the Castle-park, drew out
 Their chequered bands the joyous rout.
 Their morricers, with bell at heel,
 And blade in hand, their mazes wheel;
 But chief, beside the butts, there stand
 Bold Robin Hood and all his band,—
 Friar Tuck with quarter-staff and cowl,
 Old Scathelocke with his surly scowl,
 Maid Marian, fair as ivory bone,
 Scarlet, and Mutch, and Little John;
 Their bugles challenge all that will,
 In archery to prove their skill.
 The Douglas bent a bow of might,—
 His first shaft centred in the white,
 And when in turn he shot again,
 His second split the first in twain.
 From the King's hand must Douglas take
 A silver dart, the archers' stake;
 Fondly he watched, with watery eye,
 Some answering glance of sympathy,—
 No kind emotion made reply!
 Indifferent as to archer wight,
 The Monarch gave the arrow bright.

XXIII.

Now, clear the ring! for, hand to hand,
 The manly wrestlers take their stand.
 Two o'er the rest superior rose,
 And proud demanded mightier foes,
 Nor called in vain; for Douglas came.
 —For life, is Hugh of Larbert lame;
 Scarce better John of Alloo's fare,
 Whom senseless home his comrades bear.
 Prize of the wrestling match, the King
 To Douglas gave a golden ring,
 While coldly glanced his eye of blue,
 As frozen drop of wintry dew.
 Douglas would speak, but in his breast
 His struggling soul his words suppressed.
 Indignant then he turned him where
 Their arms the brawny yeomen bare,
 To hurl the massive bar in air.

When each his utmost strength had shown,
The Douglas rent an earth-fast stone
From its deep bed, then heaved it high,
And sent the fragment through the sky,
A rood beyond the furthest mark :—
And still in Stirling's royal park,
The gray-haired sires who know the past,
To strangers point the Douglas-cast,
And moralise on the decay
Of Scottish strength in modern day.

XXIV.

The vale with loud applauses rang,
The Ladies' Rock sent back the clang;
The King, with look unmoved, bestowed
A purse well filled with pieces broad.
Indignant smiled the Douglas proud,
And threw the gold among the crowd,
Who now, with anxious wonder, scan,
And sharper glance, the dark gray man;
Till whispers rose among the throng,
That heart so free, and hand so strong,
Must to the Douglas blood belong :
The old men marked, and shook the head,
To see his hair with silver spread,
And winked aside, and told each son
Of feats upon the English done,
Ere Douglas of the stalwart hand
Was exiled from his native land.
The women praised his stately form,
Though wrecked by many a winter's storm.
The youth, with awe and wonder, saw
His strength surpassing nature's law.
Thus judged, as is their wont, the crowd,
Till murmurs rose to clamours loud.
But not a glance from that proud ring
Of peers who circled round the King,
With Douglas held communion kind,
Or called the banished man to mind;
No, not from those who, at the chase,
Once held his side the honoured place,
Begirt his board, and, in the field,
Found safety underneath his shield;
For he, whom royal eyes disown,
When was his form to courtiers known!

XXV.

The Monarch saw the gambols flag,
And bade let loose a gallant stag,
Whose pride, the holiday to crown,
Two favourite greyhounds should pull down.
That venison free, and Bordeaux wine,
Might serve the archery to dine.
But Lufra,—whom from Douglas' side
Nor bribe nor threat could e'er divide,

The fleetest hound in all the North,
Brave Lufra saw, and darted forth.
She left the royal hounds mid-way,
And, dashing on the antlered prey,
Sunk her sharp muzzle in his flank,
And deep the flowing life-blood drank.
The King's stout huntsman saw the sport
By strange intruder broken short,
Came up, and, with his leash unbound,
In anger struck the noble hound.
—The Douglas had endured, that morn,
The King's cold look, the nobles' scorn,
And last, and worst to spirit proud,
Had borne the pity of the crowd;
But Lufra had been fondly bred,
To share his board, to watch his bed,
And oft would Ellen, Lufra's neck,
In maiden glee, with garlands deck;
They were such playmates, that with name
Of Lufra, Ellen's image came.
His stifled wrath is brimming high,
In darkened brow and flashing eye;
As waves before the bark divide,
The crowd gave way before his stride;
Needs but a buffet and no more,
The groom lies senseless in his gore.
Such blow no other hand could deal,
Though gauntleted, in glove of steel.

XXVI.

Then clamoured loud the royal train,
And brandished swords and staves amain;
But stern the Baron's warning—"Back!
Back on your lives, ye menial pack!
Beware the Douglas.—Yes! behold,
King James, the Douglas, doomed of old,
And vainly sought for near and far,
A victim to atone the war,
A willing victim, now attends,
Nor craves thy grace but for his friends."—
"Thus is my clemency repaid?
Presumptuous Lord!" the Monarch said;
"Of thy mis-proud ambitious clan,
Thou, James of Bothwell, wert the man,
The only man, in whom a foe
My woman-mercy would not know:
But shall a Monarch's presence brook
Injurious blow, and haughty look?—
What ho! the Captain of our Guard!
Give the offender fitting ward.—
Break off the sports!"—for tumult rose,
And yemen 'gan to bend their bows—
"Break off the sports!" he said, and frowned,
And bid our horsemen clear the ground."

XXVII.

Then uproar wild and misarray
Marred the fair form of festal day.
The horsemen pricked among the crowd,
Repelled by threats and insult loud;
To earth are borne the old and weak,
The timorous fly, the women shriek;
With flint, with shaft, with staff, with bar.
The hardier urge tumultuous war.
At once round Douglas darkly sweep
The royal spears in circle deep,
And slowly scale the pathway steep;
While on their rear in thunder pour
The rabble with disordered roar.
With grief the noble Douglas saw
The commons rise against the law,
And to the leading soldier said,
"Sir John of Hyndford! 'twas my blade
That knighthood on thy shoulder laid;
For that good deed, permit me then
A word with these misguided men.—

XXVIII.

"Hear, gentle friends! ere yet, for me,
Ye break the bands of fealty.
My life, my honour, and my cause,
I tender free to Scotland's laws;
Are these so weak as must require
The aid of your misguided ire?
Or, if I suffer causeless wrong,
Is then my selfish rage so strong,
My sense of public weal so low,
That, for mean vengeance on a foe,
Those chords of love I should unbind,
Which knit my country and my kind?
Oh no! Believe, in yonder tower
It will not soothe my captive hour,
To know those spears our foes should dread,
For me in kindred gore are red;
To know, in fruitless brawl begun,
For me, that mother wails her son;
For me, that widow's mate expires,
For me, that orphans weep their sires,
That patriots mourn insulted laws,
And curse the Douglas for the cause.
O let your patience ward such ill,
And keep your right to love me still!"

XXIX.

The crowd's wild fury sunk again
In tears, as tempests melt in rain.
With lifted hands and eyes, they prayed
For blessings on his generous head,
Who for his country felt alone,
And prized her blood beyond his own.

Old men, upon the verge of life,
Blessed him who stayed the civil strife;
And mothers held their babes on high,
The self-devoted chief to spy,
Triumphant over wrong and ire,
To whom the prattlers owed a sire:
Even the rough soldier's heart was moved;
As if behind some bier beloved,
With trailing arms and drooping head,
The Douglas up the hill he led,
And at the Castle's battled verge,
With sighs, resigned his honoured charge.

XXX.

The offended Monarch rode apart,
With bitter thought and swelling heart,
And would not now vouchsafe again
Through Stirling streets to lead his train.
"O Lennox, who would wish to rule
This changeling crowd, this common fool.
Hear'st thou," he said, "the loud acclaim,
With which they shout the Douglas name?
With like acclaim, the vulgar throat
Strained for King James their morning note;
With like acclaim they hailed the day
When first I broke the Douglas sway;
And like acclaim would Douglas greet,
If he could hurl me from my seat.
Who o'er the herd would wish to reign,
Fantastic, fickle, fierce, and vain?
Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
And fickle as a changeful dream;
Fantastic as a woman's mood,
And fierce as Frenzy's fevered blood.
Thou many-headed monster-thing,
O who would wish to be thy king!—"

XXXI.

"But soft! what messenger of speed
Spurs hitherward his panting steed?
I guess his cognizance afar—
What from our cousin, John of Mar?"—
"He prays, my liege, your sports keep bound
Within the safe and guarded ground:
For some foul purpose yet unknown,—
Most sure for evil to the throne,—
The outlawed Chieftain, Roderick Dhu
Has summoned his rebellious crew;
'Tis said, in James of Bothwell's aid
These loose banditti stand arrayed.
The Earl of Mar, this morn, from Doune,
To break their muster marched, and soon
Your grace will hear of battle fought;
But earnestly the Earl besought,
Till for such danger he provide,
With scanty train you will not ride."—

XXXII.

"Thou warn'st me I have done amiss, --
 I should have earlier looked to this:
 I lost it in this bustling day.
 —Retrace with speed thy former way;
 Spare not for spoiling of thy steed,
 The best of mine shall be thy need.
 Say to our faithful Lord of Mar,
 We do forbid the intended war;
 Roderick, this morn, in single fight,
 Was made our prisoner by a knight,
 And Douglas bath himself and cause
 Submitted to our kingdom's laws.
 The tidings of their leaders lost
 Will soon dissolve the mountain host,
 Nor would we that the vulgar feel,
 For their Chief's crimes, avenging steel.
 Bear Mar our message, Braco, fly." —
 He turned his steed, — "My liege, I bid,
 Yet, ere I cross this lily lawn,
 I fear the broad-swords will be drawn." —
 The turf the flying courser spurned,
 And to his towers the King returned.

XXXIII.

Ill with King James's mood that day •
 Suited gay feast and minstrel lay;
 Soon were dismissed the courtly throng,
 And soon cut short the festal song
 Nor less upon the saddened town
 The evening sunk in sorrow down,
 The burghers spoke of civil jar,
 Of rumoured feuds and mountain war,
 Of Moray, Mar, and Roderick Dhu,
 All up in arms: — the Douglas too,
 They mourned him pent within the hold
 "Where stout Earl William was of old;" * —
 And there his word the speaker stayed,
 And finger on his lip he laid,
 Or pointed to his dagger-blade.
 But jaded horsemen, from the west,
 At evening to the Castle pressed;
 And busy talkers said they bore
 Tidings of fight on Katrine's shore;
 At noon the deadly fray begun,
 And lasted till the set of sun.
 Thus giddy rumour shook the town,
 Till closed the Night her pennons brown.

* Stabbed by James II in Stirling Castle.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE GUARD-ROOM.

I.

The sun, awakening, through the smoky air
Of the dark city casts a sullen glance,
Rousing each caitiff to his task of care,
Of sinful man the sad inheritance ;
Summoning revellers from the lagging dance,
Scaring the prowling robber to his den ;
Gilding on battled tower the warder's lance,
And warning student pale to leave his pen,
And yield his drowsy eyes to the kind nurse of men

What various scenes, and oh, what scenes of woe,
Are witnessed by that red and struggling beam !
The fevered patient, from his pallet low,
Through crowded hospital beholds it stream ;
The ruined maiden trembles at its gleam,
The debtor wakes to thoughts of gyve and jail,
The love-lorn wretch starts from tormenting dream ;
The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail.

II.

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang
With soldier-step and weapon-clang,
While drums, with rolling note, foretell
Relief to weary sentinel.
Through narrow loop and casement barred,
The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,
And, struggling with the smoky air,
Deadened the torches' yellow glare.
In comfortless alliance shone
The lights through arch of blackened stone,
And showed wild shapes in garb of war,
Faces deformed with beard and scar,
All haggard from the midnight watch,
And fevered with the stern debauch ;
For the oak table's massive board,
Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,
And beakers drained, and cups o'erthrown,
Showed in what sport the night had flown.
Some, weary, snored on floor and bench :
Some laboured still their thirst to quench,
Some, chilled with watching, spread their hands
O'er the huge chimney's dying brands,
While round them, or beside them flung,
At every step their harness rung.

III.

These drew not for their fields the sword,
Like tenants of a feudal lord,
Nor owned the patriarchal claim
Of chieftain in their leader's name :

Adventurers they, from far who roved,
 To live by battle which they loved.
 There the Italian's clouded face,
 The swarthy Spaniard's there you trace;
 The mountain-loving Switzer there
 More freely breathed in mountain air;
 The Fleming there despised the soil,
 That paid so ill the labourer's toil;
 Their rolls showed French and German name,
 And merry England's exiles came,
 To share, with ill-concealed disdain,
 Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.
 All brave in arms, well trained to wield
 The heavy halbert, brand, and shield;
 In camps licentious, wild, and bold;
 In pillage, fierce, and uncontrolled;
 And now, by holytide and feast,
 From rules of discipline released.

IV.

They held debate of bloody fray,
 Fought 'twixt Loch-Katrine and Achray.
 Fierce was their speech, and, 'mid their words,
 Their hands oft grappled to their swords;
 Nor sunk their tone to spare the ear
 Of wounded comrades groaning near,
 Whose mangled limbs, and bodies gored,
 Bore token of the mountain sword,
 Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard
 Their prayers and feverish wails were heard;—
 Sad burden to the ruffian joke,
 And savage oath by fury spoke!—
 At length up-started John of Brent,
 A yeoman from the banks of Trent;
 A stranger to respect or fear,
 In peace a chaser of the deer,
 In host a hardy mutineer,
 But still the boldest of the crew,
 When deed of danger was to do.
 He grieved, that day their games cut short,
 And marred the dicers' brawling sport,
 And shouted loud, "Renew the bowl!
 And, while a merry catch I troll,
 Let each the buxom chorus bear,
 Like brethren of the brand and spear."—

V.

Solbier's Song.

Our vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule
 Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,
 That there's wrath and despair in the jolly black jack,
 And seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack;
 Yet whoop, Barnaby! off with thy liquor,
 Drink upsees* out, and a fig for the vicar!

* A Bacchanalian interjection borrowed from the Dutch.

Our vicar he calls it damnation to sip
The ripe ruddy dew of a woman's dear lip,
Says, that Beelzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,
And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye;
Yet whoop, Jack! kiss Gillian the quicker,
Till she bloom like a rose, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar thus preaches—and why should he not?
For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot;
And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch,
Who infringe the domains of our good mother Church
Yet whoop, bully-boys! off with your liquor,
Sweet Marjorie's the word, and a fig for the vicar!

VI.

The warder's challenge heard without,
Stayed in mid roar the merry shout.
A soldier to the portal went,—
“Here is old Bertram, sirs, of Ghent;
And, beat for jubilee the drum!
A maid and minstrel with him come.”—
Bertram, a Fleming, gray, and scarred,
Was entering now the Court of Guard,
A harper with him, and, in plaid
All muffled close, a mountain maid,
Who backward shrank to 'scape the view
Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.
“What news?” they roared.—“I only know
From noon till eve we fought with foe,
As wild and as untameable
As the rude mountains where they dwell.
On both sides store of blood is lost,
Nor much success can either boast.”—
“But whence thy captives, friend? such spoil
As theirs must needs reward thy toil.
Old dost thou wax, and wars grow sharp;
Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp,
Get thee an ape, and trudge the land,
The leader of a juggler band.”—

VII.

“No, comrade;—no such fortune mine.
After the fight, these sought our line,
That aged harper and the girl,
And, having audience of the Earl,
Mar bade I should purvey them steed,
And bring them hitherward with speed.
Forbear your mirth and rude alarm,
For none shall do them shame or harm.”—
“Hear ye his boast!” cried John of Brent,
Ever to strife and jangling bent,—
“Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,
And yet the jealous niggard grudge
To pay the forester his fee?
I'll have my share howe'er it be,
Despite of Moray, Mar, or thee.”—

Bertram his forward step withstood ;
 And, burning in his vengeful mood,
 Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
 Laid hand upon his dagger-knife ;
 But Ellen boldly stepped between,
 And dropped at once the tartan screen —
 So, from his morning cloud, appears
 The sun of May, through summer tears.
 The savage soldiery, amazed,
 As on descended angel gazed ;
 Even hardy Brent, abashed and tamed,
 Stood half admiring, half ashamed.

VIII.

Boldly she spoke, — “Soldiers, attend !
 My father was the soldier’s friend ;
 Cheered him in camps, in marches led,
 And with him in the battle bled.
 Not from the valiant, or the strong,
 Should exile’s daughter suffer wrong.” —
 Answered De Brent, most forward still
 In every feat or good or ill, —
 “I shame me of the part I played :
 And thou an outlaw’s child, poor maid !
 An outlaw I by Forest laws,
 And merry Needwood knows the cause.
 Poor Rose, — if Rose be living now,” —
 He wiped his iron eye and brow, —
 “Must bear such age, I think, as thou. —
 Hear ye, my mates ; — I go to call
 The Captain of our watch to hall :
 There lies my halbert on the floor ;
 And he that steps my halbert o’er,
 To do the maid injurious part,
 My shaft shall quiver in his heart !
 Beware loose speech, or jesting rough :
 Ye all know John de Brent. Enough.” —

IX.

Their Captain came, a gallant young, —
 (Of Tullibardine’s house he sprung ;)
 Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight ;
 Gay was his mien, his humour light,
 And though by courtesy controlled,
 Forward his speech, his bearing bold.
 The high-born maiden ill could brook
 The scanning of his curious look
 And dauntless eye ; — and yet, in sooth,
 Young Lewis was a generous youth ;
 But Ellen’s lovely face and mien,
 Ill-suited to the garb and scene,
 Might lightly bear construction strange,
 And give loose fancy scope to range.
 — “Welcome to Stirling towers, fair maid !
 Come ye to seek a champion’s aid,

On palfrey white, with harper hoar,
Like errant damosel of yore?
Does thy high quest a knight require,
Or may the venture suit a squire?"—
Her dark eye flashed;—she paused and sighed,—
"Oh, what have I to do with pride!—
Through scenes of sorrow, shame, and strife,
A suppliant for a father's life,
I crave an audience of the King.
Behold, to back my suit, a ring,
The royal pledge of grateful claims,
Given by the Monarch to Fitz-James."

X.

The signet ring young Lewis took,
With deep respect and altered look;
And said,—“This ring our duties own;
And pardon, if, to worth unknown,
In semblance mean obscurely veiled,
Lady, in aught my folly failed.
Soon as the day flings wide his gates,
The King shall know what suitor waits.
Please you, meanwhile, in fitting bower,
Repose you till his waking hour;
Female attendance shall obey
Your hest, for service or array.
Permit I marshal you the way.”—
But, ere she followed, with the grace
And open bounty of her race,
She bade her slender purse be shared
Among the soldiers of the guard.
The rest with thanks their guerdon took,
But Brent, with shy and awkward look,
On the reluctant maiden's hold
Forced bluntly back the proffered gold;—
“Forgive a haughty English heart,
And, oh, forget its ruder part!
The vacant purse shall be my share,
Which in my barret-cap I'll bear,
Perchance, in jeopardy of war,
Where gayer crests may keep afar.”—
With thanks,—’twas all she could,—the maid
His rugged courtesy repaid.

XI.

When Ellen forth with Lewis went,
Allan made suit to John of Brent:—
“My lady safe, oh let your grace
Give me to see my master's face;
His minstrel I,—to share his doom
Bound from the cradle to the tomb.
Tenth in descent, since first my sire
Waked for his noble house their lyres,
Nor one of all the race was known
But prized its weal above their own.

With the Chief's birth begins our care;
 Our harp must soothe the infant heir,
 Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace
 His earliest feat of field or chase;
 In peace, in war, our rank we keep,
 We cheer his board, we soothe his sleep,
 Nor leave him till we pour our verse,
 A doleful tribute! o'er his hearse.
 Then let me share his captive lot;
 It is my right,—deny it not!"—
 "Little we reck," said John of Brent,
 "We Southern men, of long descent;
 Nor wot we how a name—a word—
 Makes clansmen vassals to a lord:
 Yet kind my noble landlord's part,—
 God bless the house of Beandesert!
 And, but I loved to drive the doer,
 More than to guide the labouring steer,
 I had not dwelt an outcast here.
 Come, good old Minstrel, follow me;
 Thy Lord and Chieftain shalt thou see."—

XII.

Then, from a rusted iron hook,
 A bunch of ponderous keys he took,
 Lighted a torch, and Allan led
 Through grated arch and passage dread.
 Portals they passed, where, deep within,
 Spoke prisoner's moan and fetters' din;
 Through rugged vaults, where, loosely stored,
 Lay wheel, and axe, and headsman's sword,
 And many an hideous engine grim,
 For wrenching joint, and crushing limb,
 By artists formed, who deemed it shame
 And sin to give their work a name.
 They halted at a low-browed porch,
 And Brent to Allan gave the torch,
 While bolt and chain he backward rolled.
 And made the bar unhasp its hold.
 They entered:—'twas a prison-room
 Of stern security and gloom,
 Yet not a dungeon; for the day
 Through lofty gratings found its way,
 And rude and antique garniture
 Decked the sad walls and oaken floor;
 Such as the rugged days of old,
 Deemed fit for captive noble's hold.
 "Here," said De Brent, "thou mayst remain;—
 Till the Leech visit him again.
 Strict is his charge, the warders tell,
 To tend the noble prisoner well."—
 Retiring then, the bolt he drew,
 And the lock's murmurs growled anew
 Roused at the sound, from lowly bed
 A captive feebly raised his head:

The wondering Minstrel looked, and knew
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu!
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,
They, erring, deemed the Chief he sought.

XIII.

As the tall ship, whose lofty prow
Shall never stem the billows more,
Deserted by her gallant band,
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—
So, on his couch, lay Roderick Dhu!
And oft his fevered limbs he threw
In toss abrupt, as when her sides
Lie rocking in the advancing tides,
That shake her frame with ceaseless beat,
Yet cannot heave her from her seat;—
Oh, how unlike her course on sea!
Or his free step on hill and lea!—
Soon as the Minstrel he could scan,
—“What of thy lady?—of my clan?—
My mother?—Douglas?—tell me all!—
Have they been ruined in my fall?
Ah, yes! or wherefore art thou here!
Yet speak,—speak boldly,—do not fear.”
(For Allan, who his mood well knew,
Was choked with grief and terror too.)
“Who fought?—who fled?—Old man, be brief;
Some might—for they had lost their Chief.
Who basely live?—who bravely died?”—
“Oh, calm thee, Chief!” the Minstrel cried,
“Ellen is safe;”—“For that, thank Heaven!”—
“And hopes are for the Douglas given;
The Lady Margaret too is well,
And, for thy clan,—on field or fell,
Has never harp of minstrel told,
Of combat fought so true and bold.
Thy stately pine is yet unbent,
Though many a goodly bough is rent.”—

XIV.

The Chieftain reared his form on high,
And fever's fire was in his eye;
But ghastly, pale, and livid streaks
Chequered his swarthy brow and cheeks.
—“Hark, Minstrel! I have heard thee play
With measure bold on festal day,
In yon lone isle, . . . again where ne'er
Shall harper play, or warrior hear, . . .
That stirring air that peals on high,
O'er Dermid's race our victory.—
Strike it!—and then, (for well thou canst,)
Free from thy minstrel-spirit glanced,
Fling me the picture of the fight,
When met my clan the Saxon might.
I'll listen, till my fancy hears
The clang of swords, the crash of spears’

These grates, these walls, shall vanish then,
 For the fair field of fighting men,
 And my free spirit burst away,
 As if it soared from battle fray."—
 The trembling bard with awe obeyed,—
 Slow on the harp his hand he laid;
 But soon remembrance of the sight
 He witnessed from the mountain's height,
 With what old Bertram told at night,
 Awakened the full power of song,
 And bore him in career along;—
 As shallop launched on river's tide,
 That slow and fearful leaves the side,
 But, when it feels the middle stream,
 Drives downward swift as lightning's beam.

XV.

Battle of Beal' an Duine.

"The Minstrel came once more to view
 The eastern ridge of Ben-venue,
 For, ere he parted, he would say,
 Farewell to lovely Loch-Achray—
 Where shall he find, in foreign land,
 So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!—
 There is no breeze upon the fern,
 No ripple on the lake,
 Upon her eyrie nods the erne,
 The deer has sought the brake;
 The small birds will not sing aloud,
 The springing trout lies still,
 So darkly glooms yon thunder-cloud,
 That swathes, as with a purple shroud,
 Benledi's distant hill.
 Is it the thunder's solemn sound
 That mutters deep and dread,
 Or echoes from the groaning ground
 The warrior's measured tread?
 Is it the lightning's quivering glance
 That on the thicket streams,
 Or do they flash on spear and lance
 The sun's retiring beams?
 —I see the dagger-crest of Mar,
 I see the Moray's silver star,
 Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
 That up the lake comes winding far!
 To hero bounè for battle strife,
 Or bard of martial lay,
 'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life.
 One glance at their array!

XVI.

"Their light-armed archers far and near
 Surveyed the tangled ground,
 Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,
 A twilight forest frowned.

Their barb'd horsemen, in the rear,
 The stern battalia crowned.
 No cymbal clashed, no clarion rang,
 Still were the pipe and drum;
 Save heavy tread, and armour's clang,
 The sullen march was dumb.
 There breathed no wind their crests to shake
 Or wave their flags abroad;
 Scarce the frail aspen seemed to quake,
 That shadowed o'er their road.
 Their vaward scouts no tidings bring,
 Can rouse no lurking foe,
 Nor spy a trace of living thing,
 Save when they stirred the roe;
 The host moves, like a deep sea-wave,
 Where rise no rocks its pride to brave,
 High-swelling, dark, and slow.
 The lake is passed, and now they gain
 A narrow and a broken plain,
 Before the Trosach's rugged jaws;
 And here the horse and spear-men pause,
 While, to explore the dangerous glen,
 Dive through the pass the archer-men.

XVII.

"At once there rose so wild a yell
 Within that dark and narrow dell,
 As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,
 Had pealed the banner-cry of hell!
 Forth from the pass in tumult driven,
 Like chaff before the wind of heaven,
 The archery appear:
 For life! for life! their flight they ply—
 And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,
 And plaids and bonnets waving high,
 And broad-swords flashing to the sky,
 Aro maddening in their rear.
 Onward they drive in dreadful race,
 Pursuers and pursued;
 Before that tide of flight and chase,
 How shall it keep its rooted place,
 The spearmen's twilight wood?
 —'Down, down,' cried Mar, 'your lances down!
 Bear back both friend and foe!'

Like reeds before the tempest's frown,
 That serried grove of lances brown
 At once lay levelled low;
 And closely shouldering side to side,
 The bristling ranks the onset bide.—
 'We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
 As their Tinchel* cows the game!

* A circle of sportsmen, who, by surrounding a great space, and gradually narrowing, brought immense quantities of deer together, which usually made desperate efforts to break through the Tinchel.

They come as fleet as forest deer,
We'll drive them back as tame.'—

XVIII.

"Bearing before them, in their cōurse,
The relics of the archer force,
Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,
Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.
Above the tide, each broad-sword bright
Was brandishing like beam of light,
Each targe was dark below;
And with the ocean's mighty swing,
When heaving to the tempest's wing,
They hurled them on the foe.
I heard the lance's shivering crash,
As when the whirlwind rends the ash;
I heard the broad-sword's deadly clang,
As if a hundred anvils rang!
But Moray wheeled his rear-ward rank
Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,
—' My banner-man, advance!
I see,' he cried, 'their column shake.
Now, gallants! for your ladies' sake,
Upon them with the lance!'—
The horsemen dashed among the rout,
As deer break through the broom;
Their steeds are stout, their swords are out.
They soon make lightsome room.
Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne,—
Where, where, was Roderick then!
One blast upon his bugle horn
Were worth a thousand men.
And reflux through the pass of fear
The battle's tide was poured;
Vanished the Saxon's struggling spear,
Vanished the mountain sword.
As Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep,
Receives her roaring linn,
As the dark caverns of the deep
Suck the wild whirlpool in,
So did the deep and darksome pass
Devour the battle's mingled mass;
None linger now upon the plain,
Save those who ne'er shall fight again.

XIX.

"Now westward rolls the battle's din,
That deep and doubling pass within.
Minstrel, away! the work of fate
Is bearing on: its issue wait,
Where the rude Trosach's dread defile
Opens on Katrine's lake and isle.
Gray Ben-venue I soon repassed,
Loch-Katrine lay beneath me cast.
The sun is set—the clouds are met,
The lowering scowl of heaven

An inky hue of livid blue
To the deep lake has given ;
Strange gusts of wind from mountain glen
Swept o'er the lake, then sunk agen.
I heeded not the eddying surge,
Mine eye but saw the Trosach's gorge,
Mine ear but heard that sullen sound,
Which like an earthquake shook the ground.
And spoke the stern and desperate strife
That parts not but with parting life,
Seeming, to minstrel-ear, to toll
The dirge of many a passing soul.
Nearer it comes—the dim-wood glen
The martial flood disgorged agen,
But not in mingled tide ;
The plaided warriors of the North
High on the mountain thunder forth,
And overhang its side ;
While by the lake below appears
The darkening cloud of Saxon spears.
At weary bay each shattered band,
Eyeing their foemen, sternly stand ;
Their banners stream like tattered sail,
That flings its fragments to the gale,
And broken arms and disarray
Marked the fell havoc of the day.

XX.

"Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
The Saxons stood in sullen trance,
Till Moray pointed with his lance,
And cried—"Behold yon isle!—
See! none are left to guard its strand,
But women weak, that wring the hand :
'Tis there of yore the robber band
Their booty wont to pile:—
My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
And loose a shallop from the shore.
Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,
Lords of his mate, and brood, and den."—
Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,
On earth his casque and corselet rung,
He plunged him in the wave:—
All saw the deed—the purpose knew,
And to their clamours Ben-venue
A mingled echo gave ;
The Saxons shout, their mate to cheer,
The helpless females scream for fear,
And yells for rage the mountaineer.
'Twas then, as by the outcry riven,
Poured down at once the lowering heaven ;
A whirlwind swept Loch-Katrine's breast,
Her billows reared their snowy crest.

Well for the swimmer swelled they high,
 To mar the Highland marksman's eye;
 For round him showered, 'mid rain and hail,
 The vengeful arrows of the Gael.—
 In vain.—He nears the isle—and lo!
 His hand is on a shallop's bow.
 —Just then a flash of lightning came,
 It tinged the waves and strand with flame;—
 I marked Duncraggan's widowed dame,
 Behind an oak I saw her stand,
 A naked dirk gleamed in her hand:—
 It darkened,—but amid the moan
 Of waves I heard a dying groan;—
 Another flash!—the spearman floats
 A weltering corse beside the boats,
 And the stern Matron o'er him stood,
 Her hand and dagger streaming blood.

XXII.

“‘Revenge! revenge!’ the Saxons cried;
 The Gaels’ exulting shout replied.
 Despite the elemental rage,
 Again they hurried to engage;
 But, ere they closed in desperate fight,
 Bloody with spurring came a knight,
 Sprung from his horse, and, from a crag,
 Waved ’twixt the hosts a milk-white flag.
 Clarion and trumpet by his side
 Rang forth a truce-note high and wide,
 While, in the Monarch’s name, afar
 A herald’s voice forbade the war,
 For Bothwell’s lord, and Roderick bold,
 Were both, he said, in captive hold.”—
 —But here the lay made sudden stand;
 The harp escaped the minstrel’s hand!—
 Oft had he stolen a glance, to spy
 How Roderick brooked his minstrelsy:
 At first, the Chieftain, to the chime,
 With lifted hand, kept feeble time;
 That motion ceased,—yet feeling strong
 Varied his look as changed the song;
 At length, no more his deafened ear
 The minstrel melody can hear:
 His face grows sharp,—his hands are clenched
 As if some pang his heart-strings wrenched:
 Set are his teeth,—his fading eye
 Is sternly fixed on vacancy.
 Thus, motionless, and moanless, drew
 His parting breath, stout Roderick Dhu!—
 Old Allan-bane looked on aghast,
 While grim and still his spirit pass’d;
 But when he saw that life was fled,
 He poured his wailing o’er the dead.



I marked Doucraggan's widowed dame,
Behind an oak I saw her stand,
A naked dirk gleamed in her hand :—
It darkened,—but amid the moan
Of waves I heard a dying groan.

XXII.

Lament.

"And art thou cold, and lowly laid,
Thy foeman's dread, thy people's aid,
Breadalbane's boast, Clan-Alpine's shade:
For thee shall none a requiem say?—
For thee, who loved the minstrel's lay,
For thee, of Bothwell's house the stay,
The shelter of her exiled line,—
E'en in this prison-house of thine,
I'll wail for Alpine's honoured pine!

"What groans shall yonder valleys fill!
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill!
What tears of burning rage shall thrill,
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,
Thy fall before the race was won,
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!
There breathes not clansman of thy line,
But would have given his life for thine.—
O woe for Alpine's honoured pine!

"Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—
The captive thrush may brook the cage
The prisoned eagle dies for rage.
Brave spirit, do not scorn my strain,
And, when its notes awake again,
Even she, so long beloved in vain,
Shall with my harp her voice combine,
And mix her woe and tears with mine,
To wail Clan-Alpine's honoured pine."

XXIII.

Ellen, the while, with bursting heart,
Remained in lordly bower apart,
Where played, with many-coloured gleams,
Through storied pane the rising beams.
In vain on gilded roof they fall,
And lightened up a tapestried wall,
And for her use a menial train
A rich collation spread in vain.
The banquet proud, the chamber gay,
Scarce drew one curious glance astray;
Or, if she looked, 'twas but to say,
With better omen dawned the day
In that lone isle, where waved on high
The dun deer's hide for canopy;
Where oft her noble father shared
The simple meal her care prepared,
While Lufra, crouching by her side,
Her station claimed with jealous pride,
And Douglas, bent on woodland game,
Spoke of the chase to Malcolm Græme,
Whose answer, oft at random made,
"The wandering of his thoughts betrayed."

Those who such simple joys have known
 Are taught to prize them when they're gone,
 But sudden, see, she lifts her head!
 The window seeks with cautious tread.
 What distant music has the power
 To win her in this woeful hour!
 'Twas from a turret that o'erhung
 Her latticed bower, the strain was sung.

XXIV.

Tag of the imprisoned Huntsman.

"My hawk is tired of perch and hood,
 My idle greyhound loathes his food,
 My horse is weary of his stall,
 And I am sick of captive thrall.
 I wish I were as I have been,
 Hunting the hart in forests green,
 With bended bow and bloodhound free,
 For that's the life is meet for me.

"I hate to learn the ebb of time
 From yon dull steeple's drowsy chime,
 Or mark it as the sunbeams crawl,
 Inch after inch, along the wall.
 The lark was wont my matins ring,
 The sable rook my vespers sing;
 These towers, although a king's they be,
 Have not a hall of joy for me.

"No more at dawning morn I rise,
 And sun myself in Ellen's eyes,
 Drive the fleet deer the forest through,
 And homeward wend with evening dew;
 A blithesome welcome blithely meet,
 And lay my trophies at her feet,
 While fled the eve on wing of glee,—
 That life is lost to love and me!"

XX.

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,
 The listener had not turned her head,
 It trickled still, the starting tear,
 When light a footstep struck her ear,
 And Snowdoun's graceful Knight was near.
 She turned the hastier, lest again
 The prisoner should renew his strain.
 "O welcome, brave Fitz-James!" she said;
 "How may an almost orphan maid
 Pay the deep debt,"—"O say not so!
 To me no gratitude you owe.
 Not mine, alas! the boon to give,
 And bid thy noble father live;
 I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,
 With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.
 No tyrant he, though fire and pride
 May lead his better mood aside.

Come, Ellen, come!—'tis more than time,
He holds his court at morning prime."—
With beating heart, and bosom wrung,
As to a brother's arm she clung.
Gently he dried the falling tear,
And gently whispered hope and cheer;
Her faltering steps half led, half stayed,
Through gallery fair and high arcade,
Till, at his touch, its wings of pride
A portal arch unfolded wide.

XXVI.

Within 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright;
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer even,
And, from their tissue, fancy frames
Aërial knights and fairy dames.
Still by Fitz-James her footing stayed;
A few faint steps she forward made,
Then slow her drooping head she raised,
And fearful round the presence gazed;
For him she sought, who owned this state,
The dreaded prince whose will was fate!—
She gazed on many a princely port,
Might well have ruled a royal court;
On many a splendid garb she gazed,—
Then turned bewildered and amazed,
For all stood bare; and, in the room,
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
To him each lady's look was lent,
On him each courtier's eye was bent;
'Midst furs, and silks, and jewels sheen.
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,
The centre of the glittering ring,—
And Snowdoun's Knight is Scotland's King!

XXVII.

As wreath of snow on mountain breast,
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,
And at the Monarch's feet she lay;
No word her choking voice commands,—
She showed the ring,—she clasped her hands.
Oh, not a moment could he brook,
The generous prince, that suppliant look!
Gently he raised her—and the while
Checked with a glance the circle's smile.
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kissed,
And bade her terrors be dismissed;—
"Yes, Fair; the wandering poor Fitz-James
The fealty of Scotland claims.
To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring;
He will redeem his signet ring.

Ask nought for Douglas,—yester even,
 His prince and he have much forgiven:
 Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue,
 I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.
 We would not to the vulgar crowd
 Yield what they craved with clamour loud;
 Calmly we heard and judged his cause,
 Our council aided and our laws.
 I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern,
 With stout De Vaux and gray Glencairn;
 And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own
 The friend and bulwark of our Throne.—
 But, lovely infidel, how now?
 What clouds thy misbelieving brow?
 Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid;
 Thou must confirm this doubting maid.”—

XXVIII.

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,
 And on his neck his daughter hung.
 The Monarch drank, that happy hour,
 The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—
 When it can say, with godlike voice,
 Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice!
 Yet would not James the general eye
 On nature's raptures long should pry;
 He stepped between—“Nay, Douglas, nay,
 Steal not my proselyte away!
 The riddle 'tis my right to read,
 That brought this happy chance to speed.—
 Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray,
 In life's more low but happier way,
 'Tis under name which veils my power,
 Nor falsely veils—for Stirling's tower
 Of yore the name of Snowdoun claims,
 And Normans call me James Fitz-James.
 Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,
 Thus learn to right the injured cause.”—
 Then, in a tone apart and low,
 —“Ah! little traitress! none must know
 What idle dream, what lighter thought,
 What vanity full dearly bought,
 Joined to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew
 My spell-bound steps to Ben-venue,
 In dangerous hour, and all but gave
 Thy Monarch's life to mountain glaive!”—
 Aloud he spoke:—“Thou still dost hold
 That little talisman of gold,
 Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James's ring—
 What seeks fair Ellen of the King?”

XXIX.

Full well the conscious maiden guessed,
 He probed the weakness of her breast;
 But, with that consciousness, there came
 A lightning of her fears for Græme,

And more she deemed the Monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who, for her sire,
Rebellious broad-sword boldly drew;
And to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.—
“Forbear thy suit;—the King of kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings,
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand;—
My fairest earldom would I give
To bid Clan-Alpine's Chieftain live!—
Hast thou no other boon to crave?
No other captive friend to save?”—
Blushing, she turned her from the King,
And to the Douglas gave the ring,
As if she wished her sire to speak
The suit that stained her glowing cheek.—
“Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,
And stubborn justice holds her course.
Malcolm, come forth!”—And, at the word,
Down kneeled the Græme to Scotland's Lord.
“For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,
And sought amid thy faithful clan,
A refuge for an outlawed man,
Dishonouring thus thy loyal name.—
Fetters and warder for the Græme!”—
His chain of gold the King unstrung,
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

Harp of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,
The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.
Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy;
Thy numbers sweet with Nature's vespers blending,
With distant echo from the fold and lea,
And herd-boy's evening pipe, and hum of housing bee
Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel Harp!
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,
And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay.
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known,
When on the weary night dawned wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devoured alone.
That I o'erlive such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

Hark! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,
Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string!
'Tis now a Seraph bold, with touch of fire,
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing.
Receding now, the dying numbers ring
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring
A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—
And now 'tis silent all!—Enchantress, fare thee well!

THE
VISION OF DON RODERICK.

A Poem.

BY
WALTER SCOTT.

"Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris,
Vox humana valet!"—CLAUDIAN.

TO
JOHN WHITMORE, ESQ.

AND
TO THE COMMITTEE OF SUBSCRIBERS FOR RELIEF
OF THE PORTUGUESE SUFFERERS,

IN WHICH HE PRESIDES,

This Poem,

COMPOSED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND UNDER THEIR
MANAGEMENT, IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

WALTER SCOTT.

Say, have ye lost each wild majestic close,
 That erst the choir of bards or Druids flung,
 What time their hymn of victory arose,
 And Cattraeth's glens with voice of triumph rung,
 And mystic Merlin harped, and gray-haired Llywarch sung*

V.

O! if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,
 As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say,
 When sweeping wild and sinking soft again,
 Like trumpet-jubilee, or harp's wild sway;
 If ye can echo such triumphant lay,
 Then lend the note to him has loved you long!
 Who pious gathered each tradition gray,
 That floats your solitary wastes along,
 And with affection vain gave them new voice in song.

VI.

For not till now, how oft so'er the task
 Of truant verse hath lightened graver care,
 From muse or sylvan was he wont to ask,
 In phrase poetic, inspiration fair;
 Careless he gave his numbers to the air,—
 They came unsought for, if applauses came;
 Nor for himself prefers he now the prayer;
 Let but his verse besit a hero's fame,
 Immortal be the verse!—forgot the poet's name.

VII.

Hark, from yon misty cairn their answer tossed:
 "Minstrel! the fame of whose romantic lyre,
 Capricious swelling now, may soon be lost,
 Like the light flickering of a cottage fire;
 If to such task presumptuous thou aspire,
 Seek not from us the meed to warrior due:
 Age after age has gathered son to sire,
 Since our gray cliffs the din of conflict knew,
 Or, pealing through our vales, victorious bugles blew.

VIII.

"Decayed our old traditionary lore,
 Save where the lingering fays renew their ring,
 By milkmaid seen beneath the hawthorn hoar,
 Or round the marge of Minchmore's haunted spring;
 Seve where their legends gray-haired shepherds sing,
 That now scarce win a listening ear but thine,
 Of feuds obscure, and Border ravaging,
 And rugged deeds recount in rugged line,
 Of moonlight foray made on Teviot, Tweed, or Tyne

IX.

"No! search romantic lands, where the near sun
 Gives with unstinted boon ethereal flame,
 Where the rude villager, his labour done,
 In verse spontaneous chants some favoured name
 Whether Olalia's charms his tribute claim,
 Her eye of diamond, and her locks of jet;
 Or whether, kindling at the deeds of Græma.

He sing, to wild Morisco measure set,
Old Albin's red claymore, green Erin's bayonet.

X.

"Explore those regions, where the flinty crest
Of wild Nevada ever gleams with snows,
Where in the proud Alhambra's ruined breast
Barbaric monuments of pomp repose;
Or where the banners of more ruthless foes
Than the fierce Moor, float o'er Toledo's fane,
From whose tall towers even now the patriot throws
An anxious glance, to spy upon the plain
The blended ranks of England, Portugal, and Spain.

XI.

"There, of Numantian fire a swarthy spark
Still lightens in the sun-burnt native's eye;
The stately port, slow step, and visage dark,
Still mark enduring pride and constancy.
And, if the glow of feudal chivalry
Beam not, as once, thy nobles' dearest pride,
Iberia! oft thy crestless peasantry
Have seen the plumed Hidalgo quit their side;
Have seen, yet dauntless stood—'gainst fortune fought and died

XII.

"And cherished still by that unchanging race,
Are themes for minstrelsy more high than thine;
Of strange tradition many a mystic trace,
Legend and vision, prophecy and sign;
Where wonders wild of Arabesque combine
With Gothic imagery of darker shade,
Forming a model meet for minstrel line.
Go, seek such theme!"—the Mountain Spirit said:
With filial awe I heard—I heard, and I obeyed.

THE VISION.

I.

Rearing their crests amid the cloudless skies,
And darkly clustering in the pale moonlight,
Toledo's holy towers and spires arise,
As from a trembling lake of silver white;
Their mingled shadows intercept the sight
Of the broad burial-ground outstretched below,
And nought disturbs the silence of the night;
All sleeps in sullen shade or silver glow,
All save the heavy swell of Teio's ceaseless flow.

II.

All save the rushing swell of Teio's tide,
Or, distant heard, a courser's neigh or tramp
Their changing rounds as watchful horsemen ride,
To guard the limits of King Roderick's camp.

For, through the river's night-fog rolling damp,
 Was many a proud pavilion dimly seen,
 Which glimmered back, against the moon's fair lamp,
 Tissues of silk and silver twisted sheen,
 And standards proudly pitched, and warders armed between

III.

But of their Monarch's person keeping ward,
 Since last the deep-mouthed bell of vespers tolled,
 The chosen soldiers of the royal guard
 Their post beneath the proud Cathedral hold :
 A band unlike their Gothic sires of old,
 Who, for the cap of steel and iron mace,
 Bear slender darts, and casques bedecked with gold,
 While silver-studded belts their shoulders grace,
 Where ivory quivers ring in the broad falchion's place.

IV.

In the light language of an idle court,
 They murmured at their master's long delay,
 And held his lengthened orisons in sport :—
 "What ! will Don Roderick here till morning stay,
 To wear in shrift and prayer the night away ?
 And are his hours in such dull penance passed
 For fair Florinda's plundered charms to pay ?"—
 Then to the east their weary eyes they cast,
 And wished the lingering dawn would glimmer forth at last

V.

But, far within Toledo's Prelate lent
 An ear of fearful wonder to the King ;
 The silver lamp a fitful lustre sent,
 So long that sad confession witnessing :
 For Roderick told of many a hidden thing,
 Such as are lothly uttered to the air,
 When Fear, Remorse, and Shame, the bosom wring,
 And Guilt his secret burthen cannot bear,
 And Conscience seeks in speech a respite from Despair.

VI.

Full on the Prelate's face, and silver hair,
 The stream of failing light was feebly rolled ;
 But Roderick's visage, though his head was bare,
 Was shadowed by his hand and mantle's fold.
 While of his hidden soul the sins he told,
 Proud Alaric's descendant could not brook
 That mortal man his bearing should behold,
 Or boast that he had seen, when conscience shook,
 Fear tame a monarch's brow, remorse a warrior's look.

VII.

The old man's faded cheek waxed yet more pale,
 As many a secret sad the king bewrayed ;
 And sign and glance eked out the unfinished tale,
 When in the midst his faltering whisper staved,—

"Thus royal Witiza * was slain,"—he said;
 "Yet, holy father, deem not it was I."
 Thus still Ambition strives her crimes to shade—
 "O rather deem 'twas stern necessity!
 Self-preservation bade, and I must kill or die.

VIII.

"And, if Florinda's shrieks alarmed the air,
 If she invoked her absent sire in vain,
 And on her knees implored that I would spare,
 Yet, reverend priest, thy sentence rash refrain!—
 All is not as it seems—the female train
 Know by their bearing to disguise their mood:"—
 But Conscience here, as if in high disdain,
 Sent to the Monarch's cheek the burning blood—
 He stayed his speech abrupt—and up the Prelate stood.

IX.

"O hardened offspring of an iron race!
 What of thy crimes, Don Roderick, shall I say?
 What alms, or prayers, or penance can efface
 Murder's dark spot, wash treason's stain away!
 For the foul ravisher how shall I pray,
 Who, scarce repentant, makes his crime his boast?
 How hope Almighty vengeance shall delay,
 Unless, in mercy to yon Christian host,
 He spare the shepherd, lest the guiltless sheep be lost."

X.

Then kindled the dark Tyrant in his mood,
 And to his brow returned its dauntless gloom;
 "And welcome then," he cried, "be blood for blood,
 For treason treachery, for dishonour doom!
 Yet will I know whence come they, or by whom.
 Show, for thou canst—give forth the fated key,
 And guide me, Priest, to that mysterious room,
 Where, if aught true in old tradition be,
 His nation's future fates a Spanish King shall see."

XI.

"Ill-fated Prince! recall the desperate word,
 Or pause ere yet the omen thou obey!
 Bethink, yon spell-bound portal would afford
 Never to former Monarch entrance-way;
 Nor shall it ever ope, old records say,
 Save to a King, the last of all his line,
 What time his empire totters to decay,
 And treason digs, beneath, her fatal mine,
 And, high above, impends avenging wrath divine."—

XII.

—"Prelate! a Monarch's fate brooks no delay!
 Lead on!"—The ponderous key the old man took,
 And held the winking lamp, and led the way
 By winding stair, dark aisle, and secret nook,

* The predecessor of Roderick upon the Spanish throne, and slain by his connivance, as is affirmed by Rodriguez of Toledo, the father of Spanish history.

Then on an ancient gateway bent his look;
 And, as the key the desperate King essayed,
 Low muttered thunders the Cathedral shook,
 And twice he stopped, and twice new effort made,
 Till the huge bolts rolled back, and the loud hinges brayed.

XIII.

Long, large, and lofty, was that vaulted hall;
 Roof, walls, and floor, were all of marble stone,
 Of polished marble, black as funeral pall,
 Carved o'er with signs and characters unknown.
 A paly light, as of the dawning, shone
 Through the sad bounds, but whence they could not spy;
 For window to the upper air was none;
 Yet, by that light, Don Roderick could descry
 Wonders that ne'er till then were seen by mortal eye.

XIV.

Grim sentinels, against the upper wall,
 Of molten bronze, two Statues held their place;
 Massive their naked limbs, their stature tall,
 Their frowning foreheads golden circles grace.
 Moulded they seemed for kings of giant race,
 That lived and sinned before the avenging flood;
 This grasped a scythe, that rested on a mace;
 This spread his wings for flight, that pondering stood,
 Each stubborn seemed and stern, immutable of mood.

XV.

Fixed was the right-hand Giant's brazen look
 Upon his brother's glass of shifting sand,
 As if its ebb he measured by a book,
 Whose iron volume loaded his huge hand;
 In which was wrote of many a falling land,
 Of empires lost, and kings to exile driven;
 And o'er that pair their names in scroll expand--
 "Lo, DESTINY and TIME! to whom by Heaven
 The guidance of the earth is for a season given."

XVI.

Even while they read, the sand-glass wastes away;
 And, as the last and lagging grains did creep.
 That right-hand Giant 'gan his club upsway
 As one that startles from a heavy sleep.
 Full on the upper wall the mace's sweep
 At once descended with the force of thunder,
 And hurtling down at once, in crumbled heap,
 The marble boundary was rent asunder,
 And gave to Roderick's view new sights of fear and wonder

XVII.

For they might spy, beyond that mighty breach,
 Realms as of Spain in visioned prospect laid,
 Castles and towers, in due proportion each,
 As by some skilful artist's hand portrayed:
 Here, crossed by many a wild Sierra's shade,
 And boundless plains that tire the traveller's eye;
 There, rich with vineyard and with olive-glade

Or deep-embrowned by forests huge and high,
Or washed by mighty streams, that slowly murmured by.

XVIII.

And here, as erst upon the antique stage,
Passed forth the bands of masquers trimly led,
In various forms, and various equipage,
While fitting strains the hearer's fancy fed;
So, to sad Roderick's eye in order spread,
Successive pageants filled that mystic scene,
Showing the fate of battles ere they bled,
And issue of events that had not been;
And ever and anon strange sounds were heard between.

XIX.

First thrilled an unrepeatd female shriek!—
It seemed as if Don Roderick knew the call,
For the bold blood was blanching in his cheek.—
Then answered kettle-drum and atabal,
Gong-peal and cymbal-clank the ear appal,
The Tecbir war-cry, and the Lelie's yell,
Ring wildly dissonant along the hall.
Needs not to Roderick their dread import tell—
"The Moor!" he cried, "the Moor!—ring out the Tocsin bell!

XX.

"They come! they come! I see the groaning lands
White with the turbans of each Arab horde,
Swart Zearah joins her misbelieving bands,
Alla and Mahomet their battle-word,
The choice they yield the Koran or the sword.—
See how the Christians rush to arms amain!—
In yonder shout the voice of conflict roared;
The shadowy hosts are closing on the plain—
Now, God and St Iago strike, for the good cause of Spain!

XXI.

"By heaven, the Moors prevail! the Christians yield!—
Their coward leader gives for flight the sign!
The sceptred craven mounts to quit the field—
Is not yon steed Orelia?—Yes, 'tis mine!
But never was she turned from battle line;
Lo! where the recreant spurs o'er stock and stone!—
Curses pursue the slave and wrath divine!
Rivers ingulf him!"—"Hush," in shuddering tone,
The Prelate said; "rash Prince, yon visioned form's thine
own."—

XXII.

Just then, a torrent crossed the flier's course;
The dangerous ford the Kingly Likeness tried;
But the deep eddies whelmed both man and horse
Swept like benighted peasant down the tide;
And the proud Moslemah spread far and wide,
As numerous as their native locust band;
Berber and Ismael's sons the spoils divide,
With naked scimitars mete out the land,
And for their bondsmen base the freeborn natives brand

XXIII.

Then rose the grated Harem, to enclose
 The loveliest maidens of the Christian line;
 Then, menials to their misbelieving foes,
 Castile's young nobles held forbidden wine;
 Then, too, the holy Cross, salvation's sign,
 By impious hands was from the altar thrown,
 And the deep aisles of the polluted shrine
 Echoed, for holy hymn and organ tone,
 The Santon's frantic dance, the Fakir's gibbering moan.

XXIV.

How fares Don Roderick?—E'en as one who spies
 Flames dart their glare o'er midnight's sable woof,
 And hears around his children's piercing cries,
 And sees the pale assistants stand aloof;
 While cruel Conscience brings him bitter proof,
 His folly, or his crime, have caused his grief;
 And, while above him nods the crumbling roof,
 He curses earth and Heaven—himself in chief—
 Desperate of earthly aid, despairing Heaven's relief!

XXV.

That scythe-armed Giant turned his fatal glass,
 And twilight on the landscape closed her wings;
 Far to Asturian hills the war-sounds pass,
 And in their stead rebeck or timbrel rings;
 And to the sound the bell-decked dancer springs,
 Bazaars resound as when their marts are met,
 In tourney light the Moor his jerrid flings,
 And on the land as evening seemed to set,
 The Imaum's chant was heard from mosque or minaret.

XXVI.

So passed that pageant. Ere another came,
 The visionary scene was wrapped in smoke,
 Whose sulph'rous wreaths were crossed by sheets of flame,
 With every flash a bolt explosive broke,
 Till Roderick deemed the fiends had burst their yoke,
 And waved 'gainst heaven the infernal gonfalone!
 For War a new and dreadful language spoke,
 Never by ancient warrior heard or known;
 Lightning and smoke her breath, and thunder was her tone

XXVII.

From the dim landscape roll the clouds away—
 The Christians have regained their heritage:
 Before the Cross has waned the Crescent's ray,
 And many a monastery decks the stage,
 And lofty church, and low-browed hermitage.
 The land obeys a Hermit and a Knight,—
 The Genii those of Spain for many an age;
 This clad in sackcloth, that in armour bright,
 And that was VALOUR named, this BIGOTRY was hight.

XXVIII.

VALOUR was harnessed like a Chief of old,
 Armed at all points, and prompt for knightly geat:

His sword was tempered in the Ebro cold,
 Morena's eagle-plume adorned his crest,
 The spoils of Afric's lion bound his breast.
 Fierce he stepped forward and flung down his gage,
 As if of mortal kind to brave the best.
 Him followed his Companion, dark and sage,
 As he, my Master, sung the dangerous Archimage.

XXIX.

Haughty of heart and brow the Warrior came,
 In look and language proud as proud might be,
 Vaunting his lordship, lineage, fights and fame,
 Yet was that bare-foot Monk more proud than he;
 And as the ivy climbs the tallest tree,
 So round the loftiest soul his toils he wound,
 And with his spells subdued the fierce and free,
 Till ermined Age, and Youth in arms renowned,
 Honouring his scourge and hair-cloth, meekly kissed the ground

XXX.

And thus it chanced that VALOUR, peerless Knight,
 Who ne'er to King or Kaisar veiled his crest,
 Victorious still in bull-feast, or in fight,
 Since first his limbs with mail he did invest,
 Stooped ever to that Anchoret's behest;
 Nor reasoned of the right nor of the wrong,
 But at his bidding laid the lance in rest,
 And wrought fell deeds the troubled world along,
 For he was fierce as brave, and pitiless as strong.

XXXI.

Oft his proud galleys sought some new-found world,
 That latest sees the sun, or first the morn;
 Still at that Wizard's feet their spoils he hurled,—
 Ingots of ore from rich Potosi borne,
 Crowns by Caciques, aigrettes by Omrahs worn,
 Wrought of rare gems, but broken, rent, and foul;
 Idols of gold from heathen temples torn,
 Bedabbled all with blood.—With grisly scowl
 The Hermit marked the stains, and smiled beneath his cowl.

XXXII.

Then did he bless the offering, and bade make
 Tribute to heaven of gratitude and praise;
 And at his word the choral hymns awake,
 And many a hand the silver censer sways.
 But with the incense-breath these censers raise,
 Mix steams from corpses smouldering in the fire;
 The groans of prisoned victims mar the lays,
 And shrieks of agony confound the quire,
 While, 'mid the mingled sounds, the darkened scenes expire

XXXIII.

Preluding light, were strains of music heard,
 As once again revolved that measured sand;
 Such sounds as when, for sylvan dance prepared,
 Gay Xeres summons forth her vintage band;

When for the light Bolero ready stand
 The Mozo blithe, with gay Muchacha met,
 He conscious of his broidered cap and band,
 She of her netted locks and light corsette,
 Each tiptoe perched to spring, and shake the castanet.

XXXIV.

And well such strains the opening scene became;
 For VALOUR had relaxed his ardent look,
 And at a lady's feet, like lion tame,
 Lay stretched, full loth the weight of arms to brook;
 And softened BIGOTRY, upon his book,
 Pattered a task of little good or ill:
 But the blithe peasant plied his pruning-hook,
 Whistled the muleteer o'er vale and hill,
 And rung from village green the merry Seguidille.

XXXV.

Gray Royalty, grown impotent of toil,
 Let the grave sceptre slip his lazy hold,
 And careless saw his rule become the spoil
 Of a loose Female and her Minion bold;
 But peace was on the cottage and the fold,
 From court intrigue, from bickering faction far;
 Beneath the chesnut-tree Love's tale was told;
 And to the tinkling of the light guitar,
 Sweet stooped the western sun, sweet rose the evening star.

XXXVI.

As that sea-cloud, in size like human hand,
 When first from Carmel by the Tishbite seen,
 Came slowly overshadowing Israel's land,
 Awhile, perchance, bedecked with colours sheen,
 While yet the sunbeams on its skirts had been,
 Limning with purple and with gold its shroud,
 Till darker folds obscured the blue serene,
 And blotted heaven with one broad sable cloud—
 Then sheeted rain burst down, and whirlwinds howled aloud;

XXXVII.

Even so upon that peaceful scene was poured,
 Like gathering clouds, full many a foreign band,
 And HE, their Leader, wore in sheath his sword,
 And offered peaceful front and open hand;
 Veiling the perjured treachery he planned,
 By friendship's zeal and honour's specious guise,
 Until he won the passes of the land;
 Then, burst were honour's oath, and friendship's ties!
 He clutched his vulture-grasp, and called fair Spain his prize

XXXVIII.

An Iron Crown his anxious forehead bore;
 And well such diadem his heart became,
 Who ne'er his purpose for remorse gave o'er,
 Or checked his course for piety or shame;
 Who, trained a soldier, deemed a soldier's fame
 Might flourish in the wreath of battles won,
 Though neither truth nor honour decked his name;

Who, placed by fortune on a Monarch's throne,
Rocked not of Monarch's faith, or Mercy's kingly tone

XXXIX.

From a rude isle his ruder lineage came:
The spark, that, from a suburb hovel's hearth
Ascending, wraps some capital in flame,
Hath not a meaner or more sordid birth.
And for the soul that bade him waste the earth—
The sable land-flood from some swamp obscure,
That poisons the glad husband-field with dearth,
And by destruction bids its fame endure,
Hath not a source more sullen, stagnant, and impure.

XL.

Before that Leader strode a shadowy Form:
Her limbs like mist, her torch like meteor showed,
With which she beckoned him through fight and storm,
And all he crushed that crossed his desperate road,
Nor thought, nor feared, nor looked on what he trode;
Realms could not glut his pride, blood could not slake,
So oft as e'er she shook her torch abroad—
It was AMBITION bade his terrors wake,
Nor deigned she, as of yore, a milder form to take.

XLI.

No longer now she spurned at mean revenge,
Or stayed her hand for conquered foeman's moan,
As when, the fates of aged Rome to change,
By Cæsar's side she crossed the Rubicon;
Nor joyed she to bestow the spoils she won,
As when the band of powers of Greece were tasked,
To war beneath the Youth of Macædon:
No seemly veil her modern minion asked,
He saw her hideous face, and loved the fiend unmasked.

XLII.

That Prelate marked his march—On banners blazed
With battles won in many a distant land,
On eagle-standards and on arms he gazed;
"And hopest thou, then," he said, "thy power shall stand?
O thou hast builded on the shifting sand,
And thou hast tempered it with slaughter's flood;
And know, fell scourge in the Almighty's hand!
Gore-moistened trees shall perish in the bud,
And, by a bloody death, shall die the Man of Blood!"—

XLIII.

The ruthless Leader beckoned from his train
A wan fraternal Shade, and bade him kneel,
And paled his temples with the crown of Spain,
While trumpets rang, and heralds cried, "Castile!"
Not that he loved him—No!—in no man's weal,
Scarce in his own, e'er joyed that sullen heart;
Yet round that throne he bade his warriors wheel,
That the poor puppet might perform his part,
And be a sceptred slave, at his stern beck to start.

XLIV.

But on the Natives of that Land misused,
 Not long the silence of amazement hung,
 Nor brooked they long their friendly faith abused,
 For, with a common shriek, the general tongue
 Exclaimed, "To arms!" and fast to arms they sprung;
 And VALOUR woke, that Genius of the land!
 Pleasure, and ease, and sloth, aside he flung,
 As burst the awakening Nazarite his band,
 When 'gainst his treacherous foes he clenched his dreadful hand

XLV.

That mimic Monarch now cast anxious eye
 Upon the Satraps that begirt him round,
 Now doffed his royal robe in act to fly,
 And from his brow the diadem unbound.
 So oft, so near, the Patriot bugle wound,
 From Tarik's walls to Bilboa's mountains blown,
 These martial satellites hard labour found,
 To guard awhile his substituted throne—
 Light recking of his cause, but battling for their own.

XLVI.

From Alpuhara's peak that bugle rung,
 And it was echoed from Corunna's wall;
 Stately Seville responsive war-shout flung,
 Granada caught it in her Moorish hall;
 Galicia bade her children fight or fall,
 Wild Biscay shook his mountain-coronet,
 Valencia roused her at the battle-call,
 And, foremost still where Valour's sons are met,
 Fast started to his gun each fiery Miquelet.

XLVII.

But unappalled and burning for the fight,
 The Invaders march, of victory secure;
 Skilful their force to sever or unite,
 And trained alike to vanquish or endure.
 Nor skilful less, cheap conquest to ensure,
 Discord to breathe, and jealousy to sow,
 To quell by boasting, and by bribes to lure;
 While nought against them bring the unpractised foe,
 Save hearts for freedom's cause, and hands for freedom's blow

XLVIII.

Proudly they march—but O! they march not forth
 By one hot field to crown a brief campaign,
 As when their eagles, sweeping through the North,
 Destroyed at every stoop an ancient reign!
 Far other fate had Heaven decreed for Spain;
 In vain the steel, in vain the torch was plied,
 New Patriot armies started from the slain,
 High blazed the war, and long, and far, and wide,
 And oft the God of Battles blessed the righteous side.

XLIX.

Nor unatoned, where Freedom's foes prevail,
 Remained their savage waste. With blade and brand,

By day the Invaders ravaged hill and dale,
 But, with the darkness, the Guerilla band
 Came like Night's tempest, and avenged the laud,
 And claimed for blood the retribution due,
 Probed the hard heart, and lopped the murderous hand;
 And Dawn, when o'er the scene her beams she threw,
 Midst ruins they had made the spoilers' corpses knew.

L.

What minstrel verse may sing, or tongue may tell,
 Amid the visioned strife from sea to sea,
 How oft the Patriot banners rose or fell,
 Still honoured in defeat as victory!
 For that sad pageant of events to be,
 Showed every form of fight by field and flood;
 Slaughter and Ruin, shouting forth their glee,
 Beheld, while riding on the tempest-scud,
 The waters choked with slain, the earth bedrenched with blood:

LI.

Then Zaragoza—blighted be the tongue
 That names thy name without the honour due!
 For never hath the harp of minstrel rung,
 Of faith so felly proved, so firmly true!
 Mine, sap, and bomb, thy shattered ruins knew,
 Each art of war's extremity had room,
 Twice from thy half-sacked streets the foe withdrew,
 And when at length stern Fate decreed thy doom,
 They won not Zaragoza, but her children's bloody tomb.

LII.

Yet raise thy head, sad City! Though in chains
 Enthralled thou canst not be! Arise and claim
 Reverence from every heart where Freedom reigns,
 For what thou worshippest!—thy sainted Dame,
 She of the Column, honoured be her name,
 By all, whate'er their creed, who honour love!
 And like the sacred relics of the flame,
 That gave some martyr to the blessed above,
 To every loyal heart may thy sad embers prove!

LIII.

Nor thine alone such wreck. Gerona fair!
 Faithful to death thy heroes should be sung,
 Manning the towers while o'er their heads the air
 Swart as the smoke from raging furnace hung;
 Now thicker darkening where the mine was sprung,
 Now briefly lightened by the cannon's flare,
 Now arched with fire-sparks as the bomb was flung,
 And reddening now with conflagration's glare,
 While by the fatal light the foes for storm prepare.

LIV.

While all around was danger, strife, and fear,
 While the earth shook, and darkened was the sky,
 And wide Destruction stunned the listening ear,
 Appalled the heart, and stupified the eye,—

Afar was heard that thrice-repeated cry,
 In which old Albion's heart and tongue unite,
 Whene'er her soul is up and pulse beats high,
 Whether it hail the wine-cup or the fight,
 And bid each arm be strong, or bid each heart be light.

LV.

Don Roderick turned him as the shout grew loud—
 A varied scene the changeeful vision showed,
 For where the ocean mingled with the cloud,
 A gallant navy stemmed the billows broad.
 From mast and stern St George's symbol flowed,
 Blent with the silver cross to Scotland dear;
 Mottling the sea their landward barges rowed,
 And flashed the sun on bayonet, brand, and spear,
 And the wild beach returned the seaman's jovial cheer.

LVI.

It was a dread, yet spirit-stirring sight!
 The billows foamed beneath a thousand oars,
 Fast as they land the red-cross ranks unite,
 Legions on legions brightening all the shores.
 Then banners rise, and cannon-signal roars,
 Then peals the warlike thunder of the drum,
 Thrills the loud fife, the trumpet-flourish pours,
 And patriot hopes awake, and doubts are dumb,
 For, bold in Freedom's cause, the bands of Ocean come!

LVII.

A various host they came—whose ranks display
 Each mode in which the warrior meets the fight,
 The deep battalion locks its firm array,
 And meditates his aim the marksman light;
 Far glance the lines of sabres flashing bright,
 Where mounted squadrons shake the echoing mead.
 Lacks not artillery breathing flame and night,
 Nor the fleet ordnance whirled by rapid steed,
 That rivals lightning's flash in ruin and in speed.

LVIII.

A various host—from kindred realms they came,
 Brethren in arms, but rivals in renown—
 For you fair bands shall merry England claim,
 And with their deeds of valour deck her crown.
 Hers their bold port, and hers their martial frown,
 And hers their scorn of death in freedom's cause,
 Their eyes of azure, and their locks of brown,
 And the blunt speech that bursts without a pause,
 And freeborn thoughts, which league the Soldier with the Laws.

LIX.

And O! loved warriors of the Minstrel's land!
 Yonder your bonnets nod, your tartans wave;
 The rugged form may mark the mountain band,
 And harsher features, and a mien more grave;
 But ne'er in battle-field throbb'd heart so brave
 As that which beats beneath the Scottish plaid,
 And when the pibroch bids the battle rave.

And level for the charge your arms are laid,
Where lives the desperate foe, that for such onset stayed!

IX.

Hark! from yon stately ranks what laughter rings,
Mingling wild mirth with war's stern minstrelsy,
His jest while each blithe comrade round him flings,
And moves to death with military glee:
Boast, Erin, boast them! tameless, frank, and free,
In kindness warm, and fierce in danger known,
Rough Nature's children, humorous as she:
And HE, yon Chieftain—strike the proudest tone
Of thy bold harp, green Isle!—the HERO is thine own.

LXI.

Now on the scene Vimeira should be shown,
On Talavera's fight should Roderick gaze,
And hear Corunna wail her battle won,
And see Busaco's crest with lightning blaze:—
But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise?
Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room?
And dare her wild-flowers mingle with the bays,
That claim a long eternity to bloom
Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb?

LXII.

Or may I give adventurous Fancy scope,
And stretch a bold hand to the awful veil
That hides futurity from anxious hope,
Bidding beyond it scenes of glory hail,
And painting Europe rousing at the tale
Of Spain's invaders from her confines hurled,
While kindling Nations buckle on their mail,
And Fame, with clarion blast and wings unfurled,
To freedom and revenge awakes an injured World?

LXIII.

O vain, though anxious, is the glance I cast,
Since Fate has marked futurity her own:—
Yet Fate resigns to Worth the glorious past,
The deeds recorded and the laurels won.
Then, though the Vault of Destiny be gone,
King, Prelate, all the phantasms of my brain,
Melted away like mist-wreaths in the sun,
Yet grant for faith, for valour, and for Spain,
One note of pride and fire, a Patriot's parting strain.

CONCLUSION.

I.

Who shall command Estrella's mountain-tide
Back to the source, when tempest-chafed, to lie?
Who, when Gascogne's vexed gulf is raging wide,
Shall hush it as a nurse her infant's cry?

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

His magic power let such vain boaster try,
 And when the torrent shall his voice obey,
 And Biscay's whirlwinds list his lullaby,
 Let him stand forth and bar mine eagles' way,
 And they shall heed his voice, and at his bidding stay.

II.

"Else, ne'er to stoop, till high on Lisbon's towers,
 They close their wings the symbol of our yoke,
 And their own sea hath whelmed yon red-cross Powers!"--
 Thus, on the summit of Alverca's rock,
 To Marshal, Duke, and Peer, Gaul's Leader spoke.
 While downward on the land his legions press,
 Before them it was rich with vine and flock,
 And smiled like Eden in her summer dress;--
 Behind their wasteful march, a recking wilderness.

III.

And shall the boastful Chief maintain his word,
 Though Heaven hath heard the wailings of the land,
 Though Lusitania whet her vengeful sword,
 Though Britons arm, and WELLINGTON command!
 No! grim Busaco's iron ridge shall stand
 An adamant barrier to his force!
 And from its base shall wheel his shattered band,
 As from the unshaken rock the torrent hoarse
 tears off its broken waves, and seeks a devious course.

IV.

Yet not because Alcoba's mountain-hawk
 Hath on his best and bravest made her food,
 In numbers confident, yon Chief shall balk
 His Lord's imperial thirst for spoil and blood:
 For full in view the promised conquest stood,
 And Lisbon's matrons, from their walls, might sum
 The myriads that had half the world subdued,
 And hear the distant thunders of the drum,
 That bids the band of France to storm and havoc come.

V.

Four moons have heard these thunders idly rolled,
 Have seen these wistful myriads eye their prey,
 As famished wolves survey a guarded fold--
 But in the middle path, a Lion lay!
 At length they move--but not to battle-fray,
 Nor blaze yon fires where meets the manly fight;
 Beacons of infamy, they light the way,
 Where cowardice and cruelty unite,
 To damn with double shame their ignominious flight.

VI.

O triumph for the Fiends of Dust and Wrath!
 Ne'er to be told, yet ne'er to be forgot,
 What wanton horrors marked their wrackful path!
 The peasant butchered in his ruined cot,

The hoary priest even at the altar shot,
 Childhood and age given o'er to sword and flame,
 Woman to infamy;—no crime forgot,
 By which inventive demons might proclaim
 Immortal hate to Man, and scorn of God's great name!

VII.

The rudest sentinel, in Britain born,
 With horror paused to view the havoc done,
 Gave his poor crust to feed some wretch forlorn,
 Wiped his stern eye, then fiercer grasped his gun.
 Nor with less zeal shall Britain's peaceful son
 Exult the debt of sympathy to pay;
 Riches nor poverty the tax shall shun,
 Nor prince nor peer, the wealthy nor the gay,
 For the poor peasant's mite, nor bard's more worthless lay,

VIII.

But thou—unfoughten wilt thou yield to Fate,
 Minion of Fortune, now miscalled in vain!
 Can vantage-ground no confidence create,
 Marcella's pass, nor Guarda's mountain-chain?
 Vain-glorious Fugitive! yet turn again!
 Behold, where, named by some Prophetic Seer,
 Flows Honour's Fountain,* as fore-doomed the stain
 From thy dishonoured name and arms to clear--
 Fallen Child of Fortune, turn, redeem her favour here!

IX.

Yet, ere thou turn'st, collect each distant aid:
 Those chief that never heard the Lion roar!
 Within whose souls lives not a trace portrayed,
 Of Talavera, or Mondego's shore!
 Marshal each band thou hast, and summon more;
 Of war's fell stratagems exhaust the whole;
 Rank upon rank, squadron on squadron pour,
 Legion on legion on thy foeman roll,
 And weary out his arm—thou canst not quell his soul.

X.

O vainly gleams with steel Agueda's shore,
 Vainly thy squadrons hide Assuava's plain,
 And front the flying thunders as they roar,
 With frantic charge, and tenfold odds, in vain!
 And what avails thee that, for CAMERON slain,
 Wild from his plaided ranks the yell was given—
 Vengeance and grief gave mountain rage the rein,
 And, at the bloody spear-point headlong driven,
 The Despot's giant guards fled like the rack of heaven.

XI.

Go, baffled Boaster! teach thy haughty mood
 To plead at thine imperious master's throne!
 Say, thou hast left his legions in their blood,
 Deceived his hopes, and frustrated thine own;

* The literal translation of *Fuentes d'Honoro*.

Say, that thine utmost skill and valour shown
 By British skill and valour were outvied;
 Last say, thy conqueror was WELLINGTON!
 And if he chafe, be his own fortune tried—
 God and our cause to friend, the venture we'll abide.

XII.

But ye, the heroes of that well-fought day,
 How shall a bard, unknowing and unknown,
 His meed to each victorious leader pay,
 Or bind on every brow the laurels won?
 Yet fain my harp would wake its boldest tone,
 O'er the wide sea to hail CADOGAN brave;
 And he, perchance, the minstrel note might own,
 Mindful of meeting brief that Fortune gave
 'Mid yon far western isles, that hear the Atlantic rave.

XIII.

Yes! hard the task, when Britons wield the sword,
 To give each Chief and every field its fame:
 Hark! Albuera thunders BERESFORD,
 And red Barossa shouts for dauntless GREME!
 O for a verse of tumult and of flame,
 Bold as the bursting of their cannon sound,
 To bid the world re-echo to their fame!
 For never, upon gory battle-ground,
 With conquest's well-bought wreath were braver victors crowned.

XIV.

O who shall grudge him Albuera's bays,
 Who brought a race regenerate to the field,
 Roused them to emulate their fathers' praise,
 Tempered their headlong rage, their courage steeled,
 And raised fair Lusitania's fallen shield,
 And gave new edge to Lusitania's sword,
 And taught her sons forgotten arms to wield—
 Shivered my harp, and burst its every chord,
 If it forget thy worth, victorious BERESFORD!

XV.

Not on that bloody field of battle won,
 Though Gaul's proud legions rolled like mist away,
 Was half his self-devoted valour shown,—
 He gaged but life on that illustrious day;
 But when he toiled those squadrons to array,
 Who fought like Britons in the bloody game,
 Sharper than Polish pike or assagay,
 He braved the shafts of censure and of shame,
 And, dearer far than life, he pledged a soldier's fame

XVI.

Nor be his praise o'erpassed who strove to hide
 Beneath the warrior's vest affection's wound,
 Whose wish, Heaven for his country's weal denied;
 Danger and fate he sought, but glory found.
 From clime to clime, where'er war's trumpets sound,
 The wanderer went; yet, Caledonia! still
 Thine was his thought in march and tented ground:

He dreamed 'mid Alpine cliffs of Athole's hill,
And heard in Ebro's roar his Lyndoch's lovely rill.

XVII.

O hero of a race renowned of old,
Whose war-cry oft has waked the battle-swell,
Since first distinguished in the onset bold,
Wild sounding when the Roman rampart fell !
By Wallace' side it rung the Southron's knell,
Alderne, Kilsythe, and Tibber owned its fame,
Tummell's rude pass can of its terrors tell,
But ne'er from prouder field arose the name,
Than when wild Ronda learned the conquering shout of GÈRME !

XVIII.

But all too long, through seas unknown and dark,
(With Spenser's parable I close my tale,)
By shoal and rock hath steered my venturous bark ;
And landward now I drive before the gale :
And now the blue and distant shore I hail,
And nearer now I see the port expand,
And now I gladly furl my weary sail,
And, as the prow light touches on the strand,
I strike my red-cross flag, and bind my skiff to land.



ROKEBY

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

TO
JOHN B. S. MORRITT, ESQ.,

On his Poem,

THE SCENE OF WHICH IS LAID IN HIS BEAUTIFUL
DELIERNE OF ROKEBY,

IS INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF SINCERE FRIENDSHIP,

BY
WALTER SCOTT.

December 31, 1812.

ADVERTISEMENT TO FIRST EDITION, 1813.

THE scene of this poem is laid at Rokeby, near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, and shifts to the adjacent fortress of Barnard Castle, and to other places in that vicinity.

The time occupied by the action is a space of Five Days, three of which are supposed to elapse between the end of the Fifth and beginning of the Sixth Canto.

The date of the supposed events is immediately subsequent to the great battle of Marston Moor, 3d July 1644. This period of public confusion has been chosen, without any purpose of combining the Fable with the Military or Political Events of the Civil War, but only as affording a degree of probability to the Fictitious Narrative now presented to the Public.

ROKBY.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

THE Moon is in her summer glow,
But hoarse and high the breezes blow,
And, racking o'er her face, the cloud
Varies the tincture of her shroud;
On Barnard's towers, and Tees's stream,
She changes as a guilty dream,
When Conscience, with remorse and fear,
Goads sleeping Fancy's wild career.
Her light seemed now the blush of shame,
Seemed now fierce anger's darker flame,
Shifting that shade, to come and go,
Like apprehension's hurried glow;
Then sorrow's livery dims the air,
And dies in darkness, like despair.
Such varied hues the warder sees
Reflected from the woodland Tees,
Then from old Baliol's tower looks forth,
Sees the clouds mustering in the north,
Hears, upon turret-roof and wall,
By fits the plashing rain-drop fall,
Lists to the breeze's boding sound,
And wraps his shaggy mantle round.

II.

Those towers, which in the changeful gleam
Throw murky shadows on the stream,
Those towers of Barnard hold a guest,
The emotions of whose troubled breast,
In wild and strange confusion driven,
Rival the flitting rack of heaven.
Ere sleep stern OSWALD's senses tied,
Oft had he changed his weary side,
Composed his limbs and vainly sought
By effort strong to banish thought.
Sleep came at length, but with a train
Of feelings true and fancies vain,
Mingling, in wild disorder cast,
The expected future with the past

Conscience, anticipating time,
 Already rues the enacted crime,
 And calls her furies forth, to shake
 The sounding scourge and hissing snake;
 While her poor victim's outward throes
 Bear witness to his mental woes,
 And show what lesson may be read
 Beside a sinner's restless bed.

III.

Thus Oswald's labouring feelings trace
 Strange changes in his sleeping face,
 Rapid and ominous as these
 With which the moonbeams tinge the Tees.
 There might be seen of shame the blush,
 There anger's dark and fiercer flush,
 While the perturbed sleeper's hand
 Seemed grasping dagger-knife, or brand.
 Relaxed that grasp, the heavy sigh,
 The tear in the half-opening eye,
 The pallid cheek and brow confessed
 That grief was busy in his breast;
 Nor paused that mood—a sudden start
 Impelled the life-blood from the heart:
 Features convulsed, and mutterings dread,
 Show terror reigns in sorrow's stead.
 That pang the painful slumber broke,
 And Oswald with a start awoke.

IV.

He woke, and feared again to close
 His eyelids in such dire repose;
 He woke,—to watch the lamp, and tell
 From hour to hour the castle-bell.
 Or listen to the owl's cry,
 Or the sad breeze that whistles by,
 Or catch, by fits, the tuneless rhyme
 With which the warder cheats the time,
 And envying think, how, when the sun
 Bids the poor soldier's watch be done,
 Couched on his straw, and fancy-free,
 He sleeps like careless infancy.

V.

Far townward sounds a distant tread,
 And Oswald, starting from his bed,
 Hath caught it, though no human ear,
 Unsharpened by revenge and fear,
 Could e'er distinguish horse's clank,
 Until it reached the castle bank.
 Now nigh and plain the sound appears,
 The warder's challenge now he hears,
 Then clanking chains and levers tell,
 That o'er the moat the drawbridge fell.
 And, in the castle court below,
 Voices are heard, and torches glow,

As marshalling the stranger's way,
 Straight for the room where Oswald lay;
 The cry was,—“Tidings from the host,
 Of weight—a messenger comes post.”—
 Stiffing the tumult of his breast,
 His answer Oswald thus expressed—
 “Bring food and wine, and trim the fire;
 Admit the stranger and retire.”—

VI.

The stranger came with heavy stride,
 The morion's plumes his visage hide,
 And the buff-coat, an ample fold,
 Mantles his form's gigantic mould.
 Full slender answer design'd he
 To Oswald's anxious courtesy,
 But marked, by a disdainful smile,
 He saw and scorned the petty wile,
 When Oswald changed the torch's place
 Anxious that on the soldier's face
 Its partial lustre might be thrown,
 To show his looks, yet hide his own.
 His guest, the while, laid slow aside
 The ponderous cloak of tough bull's hide,
 And to the torch glanced broad and clear
 The corslet of a cuirassier;
 Then from his brows the casque he drew,
 And from the dank plumes dashed the dew,
 From gloves of mail relieved his hands,
 And spread them to the kindling brands,
 And, turning to the genial board,
 Without a health; or pledge, or word
 Of meet and social reverence said,
 Deeply he drank, and fiercely fed;
 As free from ceremony's sway,
 As famished wolf that tears his prey.

VII.

With deep impatience, tinged with fear,
 His host beheld him gorge his cheer,
 And quaff the full carouse, that lent
 His brow a fiercer hardiment.
 Now Oswald stood a space aside,
 Now paced the room with hasty stride,
 In feverish agony to learn
 Tidings of deep and dread concern,
 Cursing each moment that his guest
 Protracted o'er his ruffian feast.
 Yet viewing with alarm, at last,
 The end of that uncouth repast,
 Almost he seemed their haste to rue,
 As, at his sign, his train withdrew,
 And left him with the stranger, free
 To question of his mystery.
 Then did his silence long proclaim
 A struggle between fear and shame.

VIII.

Much in the stranger's mien appears,
 To justify suspicious fears.
 On his dark face a scorching clime,
 And toil, had done the work of time,
 Roughened the brow, the temples bared,
 And sable hairs with silver shared,
 Yet left—what age alone could tame—
 The lip of pride, the eye of flame,
 The full-drawn lip that upward curled,
 The eye, that seemed to scorn the world,
 That lip had terror never blenched;
 Ne'er in that eye hath tear-drop quenched
 The flash severe of swarthy glow,
 That mocked at pain, and knew not woe;
 Inured to danger's direst form,
 Tornade and earthquake, flood and storm,
 Death had he seen by sudden blow,
 By wasting plague, by tortures slow,
 By mine or breach, by steel or ball,
 Knew all his shapes, and scorned them all.

IX.

But yet, though BERTRAM's hardened look
 Unmoved could blood and danger brook,
 Still worse than apathy had place
 On his swart brow and callous face;
 For evil passions, cherished long,
 Had ploughed them with impressions strong
 All that gives gloss to sin, all gay
 Light folly, passed with youth away,
 But rooted stood, in manhood's hour,
 The weeds of vice without their flower.
 And yet the soil in which they grew,
 Had it been tamed when life was new,
 Had depth and vigour to bring forth
 The hardier fruits of virtuous worth.
 Not that, e'en then, his heart had known
 The gentler feelings' kindly tone;
 But lavish waste had been refined
 To bounty in his chastened mind,
 And lust of gold, that waste to feed,
 Been lost in love of glory's meed,
 And, frantic then no more, his pride
 Had ta'en fair virtue for its guide.

X.

Even now, by conscience unrestrained,
 Clogged by gross vice, by slaughter stained,
 Still knew his daring soul to soar,
 And mastery o'er the mind he bore;
 For meaner guilt, or heart less hard,
 Quailed beneath Bertram's bold regard
 And this felt Oswald, while in vain
 He strove, by many a winding train.

To lure his sullen guest to show,
Unasked, the news he longed to know,
While on far other subject hung
His heart, than faltered from his tongue.
Yet nought for that his guest did deign
To note or spare his secret pain,
But still, in stern and stubborn sort,
Returned him answer dark and short,
Or started from the theme, to range
In loose digression wild and strange,
And forced the embarrassed host to buy,
By query close, direct reply.

XI.

A while he glozed upon the cause
Of Commons, Covenant, and Laws,
And Church reformed—but felt rebuke
Beneath grim Bertram's sneering look.
Then stammered—"Has a field been fought?
Has Bertram news of battle brought?
For sure a soldier, famed so far
In foreign fields for feats of war,
On eve of fight ne'er left the host,
Until the field were won or lost."—
"Here, in your towers by circling Tees,
You, Oswald Wycliffe, rest at ease;
Why deem it strange that others come
To share such safe and easy home,
From fields where danger, death, and toil,
Are the reward of civil broil?"—
"Nay, mock not, friend!—since well we know
The near advances of the foe,
To mar our northern army's work,
Encamped before beleaguered York;
Thy horse with valiant Fairfax lay,
And must have fought—how went the day?"

XII.

"Wouldst hear the tale?—On Marston heath
Met, front to front, the ranks of death;
Flourished the trumpets fierce, and now
Fired was each eye, and flushed each brow;
On either side loud clamours ring,
'God and the Cause!'—'God and the King!'
Right English all, they rushed to blows,
With nought to win, and all to lose.
I could have laughed—but lacked the time—
To see, in phrenesy sublime,
How the fierce zealots fought and bled,
For king or state, as humour led;
Some for a dream of public good,
Some for church-tippet, gown and hood,
Draining their veins, in death to claim
A patriot's or a martyr's name.—

Led Bertram Risingham the hearts,
 That countered there on adverse parts,
 No superstitious fool had I
 Sought El Dorados in the sky!
 Chili had heard me through her states,
 And Lima oped her silver gates,
 Rich Mexico I had marched through,
 And sacked the splendours of Peru,
 Till sunk Pizarro's daring name,
 And, Cortez, thine, in Bertram's fame."
 —"Still from the purpose wilt thou stray!
 Good gentle friend, how went the day?"

XIII.

—"Good am I deemed at trumpet-sound,
 And good where goblets dance the round,
 Though gentle ne'er was joined, till now,
 With rugged Bertram's breast and brow.—
 But I resume. The battle's rage
 Was like the strife which currents wage,
 Where Orinoco, in his pride,
 Rolls to the main no tribute tide,
 But 'gainst broad ocean urges far
 A rival sea of roaring war;
 While, in ten thousand eddies driven,
 The billows fling their foam to heaven,
 And the pale pilot seeks in vain,
 Where rolls the river, where the main.
 Even thus, upon the bloody field,
 The eddying tides of conflict wheeled
 Ambiguous, till that heart of flame,
 Hot Rupert, on our squadrons came,
 Hurling against our spears a line
 Of gallants, fiery as their wine;
 Then ours, though stubborn in their zeal,
 In zeal's despite began to reel.
 What wouldst thou more?—in tumult tossed,
 Our leaders fell, our ranks were lost.
 A thousand men, who drew the sword
 For both the Houses and the Word,
 Preached forth from hamlet, grange, and down,
 To curb the crosier and the crown,
 Now, stark and stiff, lie stretched in gore,
 And ne'er shall rail at mitre more.—
 Thus fared it, when I left the fight,
 With the good Cause and Commons' right."

XIV.

"Disastrous news!" dark Wycliffe said;
 Assumed despondence bent his head,
 While troubled joy was in his eye,
 The well-feigned sorrow to belie.—
 "Disastrous news!—when needed most,
 Told ye not that your chiefs were lost?—
 Complete the woeful tale, and say,
 Who fell upon that fatal day;

What leaders of repute and name
 Bought by their death a deathless fame!
 If such my direst foeman's doom,
 My tears shall dew his honoured tomb.—
 No answer?—Friend, of all our host,
 Thou know'st whom I should hate the most,
 Whom thou too, once, wert wont to hate,
 Yet leavest me doubtful of his fate.”—
 With look unmoved,—“Of friend or foe,
 Aught,” answered Bertram, “wouldst thou know.
 Demand in simple terms and plain,
 A soldier's answer shalt thou gain;
 For question dark, or riddle high,
 I have not judgment nor reply.”

XV.

The wrath his art and fear suppressed,
 Now blazed at once in Wycliffe's breast;
 And brave, from man so meanly born,
 Roused his hereditary scorn.
 “Wretch! hast thou paid thy bloody debt?
 PHILIP OF MORTHAM, lives he yet?
 False to thy patron or thine oath,
 Trait'rous or perjured, one or both.
 Slave! hast thou kept thy promise plight,
 To slay thy leader in the fight?”—
 Then from his seat the soldier sprung,
 And Wycliffe's hand he strongly wrung;
 His grasp, as hard as glove of mail,
 Forced the red blood-drop from the nail—
 “A health!” he cried; and, ere he quaffed,
 Flung from him Wycliffe's hand, and laughed!
 —“Now, Oswald Wycliffe, speaks thy heart!
 Now play'st thou well thy genuine part!
 Worthy, but for thy craven fear,
 Like me to roam a buccaneer.
 What reck'st thou of the Cause divine,
 If Mortham's wealth and lands be thine?
 What carest thou for beleaguered York,
 If this good hand have done its work?
 Or what, though Fairfax and his best
 Are reddening Marston's swarthy breast,
 If Philip Mortham with them lie,
 Lending his life-blood to the dyo?—
 Sit, then! and as 'mid comrades free
 Carousing after victory,
 When tales are told of blood and fear,
 That boys and women shrink to hear,
 From point to point I frankly tell
 The deed of death as it befell.

XVI.

“When purposed vengeance I forego,
 Term me a wretch, nor deem me foe;
 And when an insult I forgive,
 Then brand me as a slave, and live!—

Philip of Mortham is with those
Whom Bertram Risingham calls foes;
Or whom more sure revenge attends,
If numbered with ungrateful friends.
As was his wont, ere battle glowed,
Along the marshalled ranks he rode,
And wore his visor up the while.
I saw his melancholy smile,
When, full opposed in front, he knew
Where Rokeby's kindred banner flew.
'And thus,' he said, 'will friends divide!'—
I heard, and thought how, side by side,
We two had turned the battle's tide,
In many a well-debated field,
Where Bertram's breast was Philip's shield.
I thought on Darien's deserts pale,
Where death bestrides the evening gale,
How o'er my friend my cloak I throw,
And fenceless faced the deadly dew:
I thought on Quariana's cliff,
Where, rescued from our foundering skiff,
Through the white breakers' wrath I bore
Exhausted Mortham to the shore;
And when his side an arrow found,
I sucked the Indian's venomed wound.
These thoughts like torrents rushed along,
To sweep away my purpose strong.

XVII.

"Hearts are not flint, and flints are rent;
Hearts are not steel, and steel is bent.
When Mortham bade me, as of yore,
Be near him in the battle's roar,
I scarcely saw the spears laid low,
I scarcely heard the trumpets blow;
Lost was the war in inward strife,
Debating Mortham's death or life.
'Twas then I thought, how, lured to come,
As partner of his wealth and home,
Years of piratic wandering o'er,
With him I sought our native shore.
But Mortham's lord grew far estranged
From the bold heart with whom he ranged;
Doubts, horrors, superstitious fears,
Saddened and dimmed descending years;
The wily priests their victim sought,
And damned each free-born deed and thought
Then must I seek another home,
My licence shook his sober dome;
If gold he gave, in one wild day
I revelled thrice the sum away.
An idle outcast then I strayed,
Unfit for tillage or for trade.
Deemed, like the steel of rusted lance,
Useless and dangerous at once.

The women feared my hardy look,
At my approach the peaceful shook;
The merchant saw my glance of flame,
And locked his hoards when Bertram came;
Each child of coward peace kept far
From the neglected son of war.

XVIII.

"But civil discord gave the call,
And made my trade the trade of all.
By Mortham urged, I came again
His vassals to the fight to train.
What guerdon waited on my care?
I could not cant of creed or prayer;
Sour fanatics each trust obtained,
And I, dishonoured and disdained,
Gained but the high and happy lot,
In these poor arms to front the shot!—
All this thou know'st, thy gestures tell;
Yet hear it o'er, and mark it well.
'Tis honour bids me now relate
Each circumstance of Mortham's fate.

XIX.

"Thoughts, from the tongue that slowly part,
Glance quick as lightning through the heart.
As my spur pressed my courser's side,
Philip of Mortham's cause was tried,
And, ere the charging squadrons mixed,
His plea was cast, his doom was fixed.
I watched him through the doubtful fray,
That changed as March's moody day,
Till, like a stream that bursts its bank,
Fierce Rupert thundered on our flank.
'Twas then, 'midst tumult, smoke, and strife,
Where each man fought for death or life,
'Twas then I fired my petronel,
And Mortham, steed and rider, fell.
One dying look he upward cast,
Of wrath and anguish—'twas his last.
Think not that there I stopped to view
What of the battle should ensue;
But ere I cleared that bloody press,
Our northern horse ran masterless;
Monckton and Mitton told the news,
How troops of Roundheads choked the Ouse,
And many a bonny Scot, aghast,
Spurring his palfrey northward, passed,
Cursing the day when zeal or meed
First lured their Lesley o'er the Tweed.
Yet when I reached the banks of Swale,
Had rumour learned another tale;
With his barbed horse, fresh tidings say,
Stout Cromwell has redeemed the day;
But whether false the news, or true,
Oswald, I reck as light as you."

XX.

Not then by Wycliffe might be shown,
 How his pride startled at the tone
 In which his complice, fierce and free,
 Asserted guilt's equality.
 In smoothest terms his speech he wove,
 Of endless friendship, faith, and love;
 Promised and vowed in courteous sort,
 But Bertram broke professions short.
 "Wycliffe, be sure not here I stay,
 No, scarcely till the rising day;
 Warned by the legends of my youth,
 I trust not an associate's truth.
 Do not my native dales prolong
 Of Percy Rede the tragic song,
 Trained forward to his bloody fall,
 By Girsonfield, that treacherous Hall?
 Oft, by the Pringle's haunted side,
 The shepherd sees his spectre glide.
 And near the spot that gave me name,
 The moated mound of Risingham,
 Where Reed upon her margin sees
 Sweet Woodburn's cottages and trees,
 Some ancient sculptor's art has shown
 An outlaw's image on the stone:
 Unmatched in strength, a giant he,
 With quivered back, and kirtled knee.
 Ask how he died, that hunter bold,
 The tameless monarch of the wold,
 And age and infancy can tell,
 By brother's treachery he fell.—
 Thus warned by legends of my youth,
 I trust to no associate's truth.

XXI.

"When last we reasoned of this deed,
 Nought, I bethink me, was agreed,
 Or by what rule, or when, or where,
 The wealth of Mortham we should share;
 Then list, while I the portion name,
 Our differing laws give each to claim.
 Thou, vassal sworn to England's throne,
 Her rules of heritage must own;
 They deal thee, as to nearest heir,
 Thy kinsman's lands and livings fair,
 And these I yield:—do thou revere
 The statutes of the buccaneer.
 Friend to the sea, and foeman sworn
 To all that on her waves are borne,
 When falls a mate in battle broil,
 His comrade heirs his portioned spoil;
 When dies in fight a daring foe,
 He claims his wealth who struck the blow,
 And either rule to me assigns
 Those spoils of Indian seas and mines

Hoarded in Mortham's caverns dark;
Ingot of gold and diamond spark,
Chalice and plate from churches borne,
And gems from shrieking beauty torn,
Each string of pearl, each silver bar,
And all the wealth of western war.
I go to search, where, dark and deep,
Those Trans-Atlantic treasures sleep.
Thou must along—for, lacking thee,
The heir will scarce find entrance free;
And then farewell. I haste to try
Each varied pleasure wealth can buy;
When cloyed each wish, these wars afford
Fresh work for Bertram's restless sword."—

XXII.

An undecided answer hung
On Oswald's hesitating tongue.
Despite his craft, he heard with awe
This ruffian stabber fix the law;
While his own troubled passions veer,
Through hatred, joy, regret, and fear;—
Joyed at the soul that Bertram flies,
He grudged the murderer's mighty prize,
Hated his pride's presumptuous tone,
And feared to wend with him alone.
At length, that middle course to steer,
To cowardice and craft so dear,
"His charge," he said, "would ill allow
His absence from the fortress now;
WILFRID on Bertram should attend,
His son should journey with his friend."—

XXIII.

Contempt kept Bertram's anger down,
And wreathed to savage smile his frown.
"Wilfrid, or thou—'tis one to me,
Whichever bears the golden key.
Yet think not but I mark, and smile
To mark thy poor and selfish wile!
If injury from me you fear,
What, Oswald Wycliffe, shields thee here?
I've sprung from walls more high than these,
I've swam through deeper streams than Tees.
Might I not stab thee, ere one yell
Could rouse the distant sentinel?
Start not—it is not my design,
But, if it were, weak fence were thine;
And, trust me, that, in time of need,
This hand hath done more desperate deed.—
Go, haste and rouse thy slumbering son;
Time calls, and I must needs be gone."—

XXIV.

Nought of his sire's ungenerous part
Polluted Wilfrid's gentle heart:

A heart, too soft from early life
 To hold with fortune needful strife.
 His sire, while yet a hardier race
 Of numerous sons were Wycliffe's grace,
 On Wilfrid set contemptuous brand,
 For feeble heart and forceless hand;
 But a fond mother's care and joy
 Were centred in her sickly boy.
 No touch of childhood's frolic mood
 Showed the elastic spring of blood;
 Hour after hour he loved to pore
 On Shakspeare's rich and varied lore,
 But turned from martial scenes and light,
 From Falstaff's feast and Percy's fight,
 To ponder Jaques' moral strain,
 And muse with Hamlet, wise in vain;
 And weep himself to soft repose
 O'er gentle Desdemona's woes.

XXV.

In youth he sought not pleasures found
 By youth in horse, and hawk, and hound,
 But loved the quiet joys that wake
 By lonely stream and silent lake;
 In Deepdale's solitude to lie,
 Where all is cliff, and copse, and sky;
 To climb Catcastle's dizzy peak,
 Or lone Pendragon's mound to seek.
 Such was he wont; and there his dream
 Soared on some wild fantastic theme,
 Of faithful love, or ceaseless Spring,
 Till Contemplation's wearied wing
 The enthusiast could no more sustain,
 And sad he sunk to earth again.

XXVI.

He loved—as many a lay can tell,
 Preserved in Stanmore's lonely dell;
 For his was minstrel's skill, he caught
 The art unteachable, untaught;
 He loved—his soul did nature frame
 For love, and fancy nursed the flame;
 Vainly he loved—for seldom swain
 Of such soft mould is loved again;
 Silent he loved—in every gaze
 Was passion, friendship in his phrase.
 So mused his life away—till died
 His brethren all, their father's pride.
 Wilfrid is now the only heir
 Of all his stratagems and care,
 And destined, darkling, to pursue
 Ambition's maze by Oswald's clue.

XXVII.

Wilfrid must love and woo the bright
 Matilda, heir of Rokeby's knight.

To love her was an easy hest,
The secret empress of his breast;
To woo her was a harder task
To one that durst not hope or ask.
Yet all Matilda could, she gave
In pity to her gentle slave;
Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,
And praise, the poet's best reward!
She read the tales his taste approved,
And sung the lays he framed or loved;
Yet, loth to nurse the fatal flame
Of hopeless love in friendship's name,
In kind caprice she oft withdrew
The favouring glance to friendship due,
Then grieved to see her victim's pain,
And gave the dangerous smiles again.

XXVIII.

So did the suit of Wilfrid stand,
When war's loud summons waked the land.
Three banners, floating o'er the Tees,
The woe-foreboding peasant sees;
In concert oft they braved of old
The bordering Scot's incursion bold;
Frowning defiance in their pride,
Their vassals now and lords divide.
From his fair hall on Greta banks,
The Knight of Rokeby led his ranks,
To aid the valiant northern Earls
Who drew the sword for royal Charles;
Mortham, by marriage near allied,—
His sister had been Rokeby's bride,
Though long before the civil fray,
In peaceful grave the lady lay,—
Philip of Mortham raised his band,
And marched at Fairfax's command;
While Wycliffe, bound by many a train
Of kindred art with wily Vane,
Less prompt to brave the bloody field,
Made Barnard's battlements his shield,
Secured them with his Lunedale powers,
And for the Commons held the towers.

XXIX.

The lovely heir of Rokeby's knight
Waits in the halls the event of fight;
For England's war revered the claim
Of every unprotected name,
And spared, amid its fiercest rage,
Childhood and womanhood and age.
But Wilfrid, son to Rokeby's foe,
Must the dear privilege forego,
By Greta's side, in evening gray,
To steal upon Matilda's way,
Striving, with fond hypocrisy,
For careless step and vacant eye.

Calming each anxious look and glance,
 To give the meeting all to chance,
 Or framing as a fair excuse,
 The look, the pencil, or the muse;
 Something to give, to sing, to say,
 Some modern tale, some ancient lay.
 Then, while the longed-for minutes last,—
 Ah! minutes quickly over-passed!—
 Recording each expression free,
 Of kind or careless courtesy,
 Each friendly look, each softer tone,
 As food for fancy when alone.
 All this is o'er—but still, unseen,
 Wilfrid may lurk in Eastwood green,
 To watch Matilda's wonted round,
 While springs his heart at every sound.
 She comes!—'tis but a passing sight,
 Yet serves to cheat his weary night;
 She comes not—He will wait the hour,
 When her lamp lightens in the tower;
 'Tis something yet, if, as she passed,
 Her shade is o'er the lattice cast.
 "What is my life, my hope?" he said;
 Alas! a transitory shade."—

XXX.

Thus wore his life, though reason strove
 For mastery in vain with love,
 Forcing upon his thoughts the sum
 Of present woe and ills to come,
 While still he turned impatient ear
 From Truth's intrusive voice severe.
 Gentle, indifferent, and subdued,
 In all but this, unmoved he viewed
 Each outward change of ill and good:
 But Wilfrid, docile, soft, and mild,
 Was Fancy's spoiled and wayward child;
 In her bright car she bade him ride,
 With one fair form to grace his side,
 Or, in some wild and lone retreat,
 Flung her high spells around his seat,
 Bathed in her dew his languid head,
 Her fairy mantle o'er him spread;
 For him her opiates gave to flow,
 Which he who tastes, can ne'er forego,
 And placed him in her circle, free
 From every stern reality,
 Till, to the Visionary, seem
 Her day-dreams truth, and truth a dream.

XXXI.

Woe to the youth whom Fancy gains,
 Winning from Reason's hand the reins,
 Pity and woe! for such a mind
 Is soft, contemplative, and kind;

And woe to those who train such youth,
 And spare to press the rights of truth,
 The mind to strengthen and anneal,
 While on the stithy glows the steel!
 O teach him, while your lessons last
 To judge the present by the past;
 Remind him of each wish pursued,
 How rich it glowed with promised good;
 Remind him of each wish enjoyed,
 How soon his hopes possession cloyed!
 Tell him, we play unequal game,
 Whene'er we shoot by Fancy's aim;
 And, ere he strip him for her race,
 Show the conditions of the chase.
 Two Sisters by the goal are set,
 Cold Disappointment and Regret.
 One disenchant the winner's eyes,
 And strips of all its worth the prize.
 While one augments its gaudy show,
 More to enhance the loser's woe.
 The victor sees his fairy gold,
 Transformed, when won, to drossy mold,
 But still the vanquished mourns his loss,
 And rues, as gold, that glittering dross.

XXXII.

More wouldst thou know—yon tower survey,
 Yon couch unpressed since parting day,
 Yon untrimmed lamp, whose yellow gleam,
 Is mingling with the cold moonbeam,
 And yon thin form!—the hectic red
 On his pale cheek unequal spread;
 The head reclined, the loosened hair,
 The limbs relaxed, the mournful air.—
 See, he looks up;—a woeful smile
 Lightens his woe-worn cheek a while,—
 'Tis Fancy wakes some idle thought,
 To gild the ruin she has wrought;
 For, like the bat of Indian brakes,
 Her pinions fan the wound she makes,
 And soothing thus the dreamer's pain,
 She drinks his life-blood from the vein.
 Now to the lattice turn his eyes,
 Vain hope! to see the sun arise.
 The moon with clouds is still o'ercast;
 Still howls by fits the stormy blast;
 Another hour must wear away,
 Ere the East kindle into day,
 And, hark! to waste that weary hour.
 He tries the minstrel's magic power.

XXXIII.

Song.

To the Moon.

Hail to thy cold and clouded beam,
 Pale pilgrim of the troubled sky!

Hail, though the mists that o'er thee stream
 Lend to thy brow their sullen dye!
 How should thy pure and peaceful eye
 Untroubled view our scenes below,
 Or how a tearless beam supply
 To light a world of war and woe!

Fair Queen! I will not blame thee now,
 As once by Greta's fairy side;
 Each little cloud that dimmed thy brow
 Did then an angel's beauty hide.
 And of the shades I then could chide,
 Still are the thoughts to memory dear,
 For, while a softer strain I tried,
 They hid my blush, and calmed my fear.

Then did I swear thy ray serene
 Was formed to light some lonely dell,
 By two fond lovers only seen,
 Reflected from the crystal well,
 Or sleeping on their mossy cell,
 Or quivering on the lattice bright,
 Or glancing on their couch, to tell
 How swiftly wanes the summer night!

XXXIV.

He starts—a step at this lone hour!
 A voice!—his father seeks the tower,
 With haggard look and troubled sense,
 Fresh from his dreadful conference.
 “Wilfrid!—what, not to sleep addressed?
 Thou hast no cares to chase thy rest.
 Mortham has fallen on Marston-moor:
 Bertram brings warrant to secure
 His treasures, bought by spoil and blood,
 For the state's use and public good.
 The menials will thy voice obey;
 Let his commission have its way,
 In every point, in every word.”—
 Then, in a whisper,—“Take thy sword!
 Bertram is—what I must not tell.
 I hear his hasty step—farewell!”

CANTO SECOND.

I.

FAR in the chambers of the west,
 The gale had sighed itself to rest;
 The moon was cloudless now and clear,
 But pale, and soon to disappear.
 The thin gray clouds waxed dimly light
 On Brusleton and Houghton height;
 And the rich dale, that eastward lay,
 Waited the wakening touch of day.

To give its woods and cultured plain,
And towers and spires, to light again.
But, westward, Stanmore's shapeless swell.
And Lunedale wild, and Kelton-fell,
And rock-begirdled Gilmanscar,
And Arkingarth, lay dark afar;
While, as a livelier twilight falls,
Emerge proud Barnard's bannered walls.
High crowned he sits, in dawning pale,
The sovereign of the lovely vale.

II.

What prospects, from the watch-tower high,
Gleam gradual on the warder's eye!—
Far sweeping to the east, he sees
Down his deep woods the course of Tees,
And tracks his wanderings by the steam
Of summer vapours from the stream;
And ere he pace his destined hour
By Brackenbury's dungeon-tower,
These silver mists shall melt away,
And dew the woods with glittering spray.
Then in broad lustre shall be shown
That mighty trench of living stone,
And each huge trunk that, from the side,
Reclines him o'er the darksome tide,
Where Tees, full many a fathom low,
Wears with his rage no common foe;
For pebbly bank, nor sand-bed here,
Nor clay-mound, checks his fierce career,
Condemned to mine a channelled way,
O'er solid sheets of marble gray.

III.

Nor Tees alone, in dawning bright,
Shall rush upon the ravished sight:
But many a tributary stream
Each from its own dark dell shall gleam:
Staindrop, who, from her sylvan bowers
Salutes proud Raby's battled towers;
The rural brook of Eglistone,
And Balder, named from Odin's son;
And Greta, to whose banks ere long
We lead the lovers of the song;
And silver Lune, from Stanmore wild,
And fairy Thorsgill's murmuring child,
And last and least, but loveliest still,
Romantic Deepdale's slender rill.
Who in that dim-wood glen hath strayed,
Yet longed for Roslin's magic glade?
Who, wandering there, hath sought to change
Even for that vale so stern and strange,
Where Cartland's Crags, fantastic rent,
Through her green copse like spires are sent?
Yet, Albin, yet the praise be thine,
Thy scenes and story to combine!

Thou bidd'st him, who by Roslin strays,
 List to the deeds of other days;
 'Mid Cartland's Crags thou show'st the cave,
 The refuge of thy champion brave;
 Giving each rock its storied tale,
 Pouring a lay for every dale,
 Knitting, as with a moral band,
 Thy native legends with thy land,
 To lend each scene the interest high
 Which genius beams from beauty's eye.

IV.

Bertram awaited not the sight
 Which sunrise shows from Barnard's height,
 But from the towers, preventing day,
 With Wilfrid took his early way,
 While misty dawn, and moonbeam pale,
 Still mingled in the silent dale.
 By Barnard's bridge of stately stone,
 The southern bank of Tees they won;
 Their winding-path then eastward cast,
 And Eglistone's gray ruins passed;
 Each on his own deep visions bent,
 Silent and sad they onward went.
 Well may you think that Bertram's mood,
 To Wilfrid savage seemed and rude;
 Well may you think bold Risingham
 Held Wilfrid trivial, poor, and tame;
 And small the intercourse, I ween,
 Such uncongenial souls between.

V.

Stern Bertram shunned the nearer way,
 Through Rokeby's park and chase that lay,
 And, skirting high the valley's ridge,
 They crossed by Greta's ancient bridge,
 Descending where her waters wind
 Free for a space and unconfined,
 As, 'scaped from Brignal's dark wood glen,
 She seeks wild Mortham's deeper den.
 There, as his eye glanced o'er the mound,
 Raised by that Legion long renowned,
 Whose votive shrine asserts their claim,
 Of pious, faithful, conquering fame,
 "Stern sons of war!" said Wilfrid sighed,
 "Behold the boast of Roman pride!
 What now of all your toils are known?
 A grassy trench, a broken stone!"—
 This to himself; for moral strain
 To Bertram were addressed in vain.

VI.

Of different mood, a deeper sigh
 Awoke, when Rokeby's turrets high
 Were northward in the dawning seen
 To rear them o'er the thicket green.
 O then, though Spenser's self had strayed

Beside him through the lovely glade,
Lending his rich luxuriant glow
Of Fancy, all its charms to show,
Pointing the stream rejoicing free,
As captive set at liberty,
Flashing her sparkling waves abroad,
And clamouring joyful on her road;
Pointing where, up the sunny banks,
The trees retire in scattered ranks,
Save where, advanced before the rest,
On knoll or hillock rears his crest,
Lonely and huge, the giant Oak;
As champions, when their band is broke,
Stand forth to guard the rearward post,
The bulwark of the scattered host—
All this, and more, might Spenser say,
Yet waste in vain his magic lay,
While Wilfrid eyed the distant tower,
Whose lattice lights Matilda's bower.

VII.

The open vale is soon passed o'er,
Rokeby, though nigh, is seen no more;
Sinking 'mid Greta's thickets deep,
A wild and darker course they keep,
A stern and lone, yet lovely road,
As e'er the foot of Minstrel trode!
Broad shadows o'er their passage fell,
Deeper and narrower grew the dell;
It seemed some mountain rent and riven,
A channel for the stream had given,
So high the cliffs of limestone gray
Hung beetling o'er the torrent's way,
Yielding, along their rugged base,
A flinty footpath's niggard space,
Where he, who winds 'twixt rock and wave,
May hear the headlong torrent rave,
And like a steed in frantic fit,
That flings the froth from curb and bit,
May view her chafe her waves to spray,
O'er every rock that bars her way,
Till foam-globes on her eddies ride,
Thick as the schemes of human pride,
That down life's current drive amain,
As frail, as frothy, and as vain!

VIII.

The cliffs that rear their haughty head
High o'er the river's darksome bed,
Were now all naked, wild, and gray,
Now waving all with greenwood spray;
Here trees to every crevice clung,
And o'er the dell their branches hung;
And there, all splintered and uneven,
The shivered rocks ascend to heaven;
Oft, too, the ivy swathed their breast,

And wreathed its garland round their crest,
Or from the spires bade loosely flare
Its tendrils in the middle air.
As pennons wont to wave of old
O'er the high feast of Baron bold,
When revelled loud the feudal rout,
And the arched halls returned their shout;
Such and more wild is Greta's roar,
And such the echoes from her shore.
And so the ivied banners' gleam
Waved wildly o'er the brawling stream.

IX.

Now from the stream the rocks recede,
But leave between no sunny mead,
No, nor the spot of pebbly sand,
Of found by such a mountain strand;
Forming such warm and dry retreat,
As fancy deems the lonely seat,
Where hermit, wandering from his cell,
His rosary might love to tell.
But here, 'twixt rock and river grew
A dismal grove of sable yew,
With whose sad tints were mingled seen
The blighted fir's sepulchral green.
Seemed that the trees their shadows cast
The earth that nourished them to blast;
For never knew that swarthy grove
The verdant hue that fairies love;
Nor wilding green, nor woodland flower.
Arose within its baleful bower;
The dank and sable earth receives
Its only carpet from the leaves,
That from the withering branches cast,
Bestrewed the ground with every blast.
Though now the sun was o'er the hill,
In this dark spot 'twas twilight still,
Save that on Greta's farther side
Some straggling beams through copsewood glide
And wild and savage contrast made
That dingle's deep and funeral shade,
With the bright tints of early day,
Which, glimmering through the ivy spray,
On the opposing summit lay.

X.

The lated peasant shunned the dell;
For Superstition wont to tell
Of many a grisly sound and sight,
Scaring its path at dead of night.
When Christmas logs blaze high and wide
Such wonders speed the festal tide;
While Curiosity and Fear,
Pleasure and Pain, sit crouching near,
Till childhood's cheek no longer glows,
And village maidens lose the rose.

The thrilling interest rises higher,
The circle closes nigh and nigher,
And shuddering glance is cast behind,
As louder moans the wintry wind.
Believe, that fitting scene was laid
For such wild tales in Mortham glade;
For who had seen on Greta's side,
By that dim light fierce Bertram stride,
In such a spot, at such an hour,—
If touched by Superstition's power,
Might well have deemed that hell had given
A murderer's ghost to upper heaven,
While Wilfrid's form had seemed to glide
Like his pale victim by his side.

XI.

Nor think to village swains alone
Are these unearthly terrors known;
For not to rank nor sex confined
Is this vain ague of the mind:
Hearts firm as steel, as marble hard,
'Gainst faith, and love, and pity barred
Have quaked, like aspen leaves in May,
Beneath its universal sway.
Bertram had listed many a tale
Of wonder in his native dale,
That in his secret soul retained
The credence they in childhood gained;
Nor less his wild adventurous youth
Believed in every legend's truth,
Learned when, beneath the tropic gale,
Full swelled the vessel's steady sail,
And the broad Indian moon her light
Poured on the watch of middle night,
When seamen love to hear and tell
Of portent, prodigy, and spell;
What gales are sold on Lapland's shore,
How whistle rash bids tempests roar.
Of witch, of mermaid, and of sprite,
Of Erick's cap and Elmo's light;
Or of that Phantom Ship, whose form
Shoots like a meteor through the storm;
When the dark scud comes driving hard,
And lowered is every top-sail yard,
And canvas, wove in earthly looms,
No more to brave the storm presumes!
Then 'mid the war of sea and sky,
Top and top-gallant hoisted high,
Full spread and crowded every sail,
The Demon Frigate braves the gale;
And well the doomed spectators know
The harbinger of wreck and woe.

XII.

Then, too, were told, in stifled tone,
Marvels and omens all their own;

How, by some desert isle or key,
 Where Spaniards wrought their cruelty,
 Or where the savage pirate's mood
 Repaid it home in deeds of blood,
 Strange nightly sounds of woe and fear
 Appalled the listening buccaneer,
 Whose light-armed shallop anchored lay
 In ambush by the lonely bay.
 The groan of grief, the shriek of pain,
 Ring from the moonlight groves of cane;
 The fierce adventurer's heart they scare,
 Who wearies memory for a prayer,
 Curses the roadstead, and with gale
 Of early morning lifts the sail,
 To give, in thirst of blood and prey,
 A legend for another bay.

XIII.

Thus, as a man, a youth, a child
 Trained in the mystic and the wild,
 With this on Bertram's soul at times
 Rushed a dark feeling of his crimes;
 Such to his troubled soul their form,
 As the pale death-ship to the storm,
 And such their omen dim and dread,
 As shrieks and voices of the dead.
 That pang, whose transitory force
 Hovered 'twixt horror and remorse;
 That pang, perchance, his bosom pressed,
 As Wilfrid sudden he addressed:—
 "Wilfrid, this glen is never trod
 Until the sun rides high abroad;
 Yet twice have I beheld to-day
 A form, that seemed to dog our way:
 Twice from my glance it seemed to flee
 And shroud itself by cliff or tree.
 How think'st thou?—Is our path waylaid?
 Or hath thy sire my trust betrayed?
 If so"—Ere, starting from his dream,
 That turned upon a gentler theme,
 Wilfrid had roused him to reply,
 Bertram sprung forward, shouting high,
 "Whate'er thou art, thou now shalt stand!"
 And forth he darted, sword in hand.

XIV.

As bursts the levin in its wrath,
 He shot him down the sounding path;
 Rock, wood, and stream, rang wildly out,
 To his loud step and savage shout.
 Seems that the object of his race
 Hath scaled the cliffs; his frantic chase
 Sidelong he turns, and now 'tis bent
 Right up the rock's tall battlement;
 Straining each sinew to ascend,
 Foot, hand, and knee, their aid must lend.

Wilfrid, all dizzy with dismay,
Views from beneath his dreadful way.
Now to the oak's warped roots he clings,
Now trusts his weight to ivy strings;
Now, like the wild goat, must he dare
An unsupported leap in air;
Hid in the shrubby rain-course now.
You mark him by the crashing bough,
And by his corslet's sullen clank,
And by the stones spurned from the bank,
And by the hawk scared from her nest,
And ravens croaking o'er their guest,
Who deem his forfeit limbs shall pay
The tribute of his bold essay.

XV.

See, he emerges!—desperate now
All farther course—Yon beetling brow,
In craggy nakedness sublime,
What heart or foot shall dare to climb?
It bears no tendril for his clasp,
Presents no angle to his grasp;
Sole stay his foot may rest upon,
Is yon earth-bedded jetting stone.
Balanced on such precarious prop,
He strains his grasp to reach the top.
Just as the dangerous stretch he makes,
By Heaven, his faithless footstool shakes!
Beneath his tottering bulk it bends,
It sways, it loosens, it descends!
And downward holds its headlong way,
Crashing o'er rock and copsewood spray.
Loud thunders shake the echoing dell!—
Fell it alone?—alone it fell.
Just on the very verge of fate,
The hardy Bertram's falling weight
He trusted to his sinewy hands,
And on the top unharmed he stands!

XVI.

Wilfrid a safer path pursued,
At intervals where, roughly hewed,
Rude steps ascending from the dell
Rendered the cliffs accessible.
By circuit slow he thus attained
The height that Risingham had gained.
And when he issued from the wood,
Before the gate of Mortham stood.
'Twas a fair scene! the sunbeam lay
On battled tower and portal gray,
And from the grassy slope he sees
The Greta flow to meet the Tees;
Where, issuing from her darksome bed,
She caught the morning's eastern red,
And through the softening vale below
Rolled her bright waves, in rosy glow.

All blushing, to her bridal bed,
Like some shy maid in convent bred.
While linnet, lark, and blackbird gay,
Sing forth her nuptial roundelay.

XVII.

'Twas sweetly sung that roundelay,
That summer morn shone blithe and gay;
But morning beam, and wild-bird's call,
Awaked not Mortham's silent hall.
No porter, by the low-browed gate,
Took in the wonted niche his seat;
To the paved court no peasant drew;
Waked to their toil no menial crew;
The maiden's carol was not heard,
As to her morning task she fared:
In the void offices around,
Rung not a hoof, nor bayed a hound;
Nor eager steed, with shrilling neigh,
Accused the lagging groom's delay;
Untrimmed, undressed, neglected now,
Was alleyed walk and orchard bough;
All spoke the master's absent care,
All spoke neglect and disrepair.
South of the gate, an arrow flight,
Two mighty elms their limbs unite,
As if a canopy, to spread
O'er the lone dwelling of the dead;
For their huge boughs in arches bent
Above a massive monument,
Carved o'er in ancient Gothic wise,
With many a scutcheon and device:
There, spent with toil and sunk in gloom,
Bertram stood pondering by the tomb.

XVIII.

"It vanished like a fitting ghost!
Behind this tomb," he said, "'Twas lost--
This tomb, where oft I deemed lies stored
Of Mortham's Indian wealth the hoard.
'Tis true, the aged servants said
Here his lamented wife is laid;
But weightier reasons may be guessed
For their lord's strict and stern behest,
That none should on his steps intrude,
Whene'er he sought this solitude.—
An ancient mariner I knew,
What time I sailed with Morgan's crew,
Who oft, 'mid our carousals, spake
Of Raleigh, Forbisher, and Drake;
Adventurous hearts! who bartered, bold,
Their English steel for Spanish gold.
Trust not, would his experience say,
Captain or comrade with your prey;
But seek some charnel, when, at full,
The moon gilds skeleton and skull:

There dig, and tom! your precious heap,
And bid the dead your treasure keep;
Sure stewards they, if fitting spell
Their service to the task compel.
Lacks there such charnel?—kill a slave
Or prisoner, on the treasure-grave;
And bid his discontented ghost
Stalk nightly on his lonely post.—
Such was his tale. Its truth, I ween
Is in my morning vision seen.”—

XIX.

Wilfrid, who scorned the legend wild,
In mingled mirth and pity smiled,
Much marvelling that a breast so bold
In such fond tale belief should hold;
But yet of Bertram sought to know
The apparition's form and show.—
The power within the guilty breast,
Oft vanquished, never quite suppressed.
That unsubdued and lurking lies,
To take the felon by surprise,
And force him, as by magic spell,
In his despite his guilt to tell,—
That power in Bertram's breast awoke;
Scarce conscious he was heard, he spoke:
“’Twas Mortham's form, from foot to head!
His morion, with the plume of red,
His shape, his mien—’twas Mortham, right
As when I slew him in the fight.”—
“Thou slay him?—thou?”—With conscious start
He heard, then manned his haughty heart.—
“I slew him?—I!—I had forgot
Thou, stripling, knewst not of the plot.
But it is spoken—nor will I
Deed done, or spoken word, deny.
I slew him; I! for thankless pride;—
’Twas by this hand that Mortham died.”—

XX.

Wilfrid, of gentle hand and heart,
Averse to every active part,
But most averse to martial broil,
From danger shrunk, and turned from toil;
Yet the meek lover of the lyre
Nursed one brave spark of noble fire;
Against injustice, fraud, or wrong,
His blood beat high, his hand waxed strong.
Not his the nerves that could sustain
Unshaken, danger, toil, and pain;
But, when that spark blazed forth to flame,
He rose superior to his frame.
And now it came, that generous mood;
And, in full current of his blood,
On Bertram he laid desperate hand,
Placed firm his foot, and drew his brand.

"Should every fiend, to whom thou'rt sold,
Rise in thine aid, I keep my hold.—
Arouse there, ho! take spear and sword!
Attack the murderer of your lord!"

XXI.

A moment fixed, as by a spell,
Stood Bertram—it seemed miracle,
That one so feeble, soft, and tame,
Set grasp on warlike Risingham.
But when he felt a feeble stroke,
The fiend within the ruffian woko!
To wrench the sword from Wilfrid's hand,
To dash him headlong on the sand,
Was but one moment's work,—one more
Had drenched the blade in Wilfrid's gore;
But, in the instant it arose,
To end his life, his love, his woes,
A warlike Form, that marked the scene,
Presents his rapier sheathed between,
Parries the fast-descending blow,
And steps 'twixt Wilfrid and his foe;
Nor then unscabbarded his brand,
But, sternly pointing with his hand,
With monarch's voice forbade the fight,
And motioned Bertram from his sight.
"Go, and repent,"—he said, "while time
Is given thee; add not crime to crime."—

XXII.

Mute, and uncertain, and amazed,
As on a vision, Bertram gazed!
'Twas Mortham's bearing, bold and high,
His sinewy frame, his falcon eye,
His look and accent of command,
The martial gesture of his hand,
His stately form, spare-built and tall,
His war-bleached locks—'twas Mortham all.
Through Bertram's dizzy brain career
A thousand thoughts, and all of fear;
His wavering faith received not quite
The form he saw as Mortham's sprite,
But more he feared it, if it stood
His lord, in living flesh and blood.—
What spectre can the charnel send;
So dreadful as an injured friend?
Then, too, the habit of command,
Used by the leader of the band,
When Risingham, for many a day,
Had marched and fought beneath his sway,
Tamed him—and, with reverted face,
Backwards he bore his sullen pace,
Oft stopped, and oft on Mortham stared,
And dark as rated mastiff glared;
But when the tramp of steeds was heard,
Plunged in the glen, and disappeared.

Nor longer there the warrior stood,
Retiring eastward through the wood;
But first to Wilfrid warning gives,
"Tell thou to none that Mortham lives."—

XXIII.

Still rung these words in Wilfrid's ear,
Hinting he knew not what of fear,
When nearer came the coursers' tread,
And, with his father at their head,
Of horsemen armed a gallant power
Reined up their steeds before the tower.
"Whence these pale looks, my son?" he said:
"Where's Bertram? Why that naked blade?"—
Wilfrid ambiguously replied,
(For Mortham's charge his honour tied,)
"Bertram is gone—the villain's word
Avouched him murderer of his lord!
Even now we fought—but, when your tread
Announced you nigh, the felon fled."—
In Wycliffe's conscious eye appear
A guilty hope, a guilty fear;
On his pale brow the dew-drop broke,
And his lip quivered as he spoke;—

XXIV.

"A murderer!—Philip Mortham died
Amid the battle's wildest tide.
Wilfrid, or Bertram raves, or you!
Yet, grant such strange confession true,
Pursuit were vain—let him fly far—
Justice must sleep in civil war."—
A gallant youth rode near his side,
Brave Rokeby's page in battle tried;
That morn, an embassy of weight
He brought to Barnard's castle gate,
And followed now in Wycliffe's train,
An answer for his lord to gain.
His steed, whose arched and sable neck
A hundred wreaths of foam bedeck,
Chafed not against the curb more high
Than he at Oswald's cold reply;
He bit his lip, implored his saint,
(His the old faith)—then burst restraint.

XXV.

"Yes! I beheld his bloody fall,
By that base traitor's dastard ball,
Just when I thought to measure sword,
Presumptuous hope! with Mortham's lord.
And shall the murderer 'scape, who slew
His leader generous, brave, and true?
Escape! while on the dew you trace
The marks of his gigantic pace?
No! ere the sun that dew shall dry,
False Risingham shall yield or die."—

Ring out the castle 'larum bell!
 Arouse the peasants with the knell!
 Meantime, disperse—ride, gallants, ride!
 Beset the wood on every side.
 But if among you one there be,
 That honours Mortham's memory,
 Let him dismount and follow me!
 Else on your crests sit fear and shame,
 And foul suspicion dog your name!"—

XXVI.

Instant to earth young REDMOND sprang;
 Instant on earth the harness rung
 Of twenty men of Wycliffe's band,
 Who waited not their lord's command.
 Redmond his spurs from buskins drew,
 His mantle from his shoulders threw,
 His pistols in his belt he placed,
 The green-wood gained, the footsteps traced,
 Shouted like huntsman to his hounds,
 "To cover, hark!"—and in he bounds.
 Scarce heard was Oswald's anxious cry,
 "Suspicion!—yes—pursue him—fly—
 But venture not, in useless strife,
 On ruffian desperate of his life.
 Whoever finds him, shoot him dead!
 Five hundred nobles for his head!"

XXVII.

The horsemen galloped to make good
 Each path that issued from the wood,
 Loud from the thickets rung the shout
 Of Redmond and his eager rout;
 With them was Wilfrid, stung with ire,
 And envying Redmond's martial fire,
 And emulous of fame.—But where
 Is Oswald, noble Mortham's heir?
 He, bound by honour, law, and faith,
 Avenger of his kinsman's death?—
 Leaning against the elmin tree,
 With drooping head and slackened knee,
 And clenched teeth, and close-clasped hands,
 In agony of soul he stands!
 His downcast eye on earth is bent,
 His soul to every sound is lent;
 For in each shout that cleaves the air,
 May ring discovery and despair.

XXVIII.

What 'vailed it him, that brightly played
 The morning sun on Mortham's glade?
 All seems in giddy round to ride,
 Like objects on a stormy tide,
 Seen eddying by the moonlight dim,
 Imperfectly to sink and swim.
 What 'vailed it, that the fair domain,
 Its battled mansion, hill and plain,

On which the sun so brightly shone,
Envied so long, was now his own?
The lowest dungeon, in that hour,
Of Brackenbury's dismal tower,
Had been his choice, could such a doom
Have opened Mortham's bloody tomb!
Forced, too, to turn unwilling ear
To each surmise of hope or fear,
Murmured among the rustics round,
Who gathered at the 'larum sound,
He dared not turn his head away,
Even to look up to heaven to pray,
Or call on hell, in bitter mood,
For one sharp death-shot from the wood!

XXIX.

At length o'erpassed that dreadful space,
Back straggling came the scattered chase
Jaded and weary, horse and man,
Returned the troopers, one by one.
Wilfrid, the last, arrived to say,
All trace was lost of Bertram's way,
Though Redmond still, up Brignal wood,
The hopeless quest in vain pursued.—
O, fatal doom of human race!
What tyrant passions passions chase!
Remorse from Oswald's brow is gone,
Avarice and pride resume their throne;
The pang of instant terror by,
They dictate thus, their slave's reply:

XXX.

"Ay—let him range like hasty hound!
And if the grim wolf's lair be found,
Small is my care how goes the game
With Redmond or with Risingham.
Nay, answer not, thou simple boy!
Thy fair Matilda, all so coy
'To thee, is of another mood
To that bold youth of Erin's blood.
Thy ditties will she freely praise,
And pay thy pains with courtly phrase;
In a rough path will oft command—
Accept at least—thy friendly hand;
His she avoids, or, urged and prayed,
Unwilling takes his proffered aid,
While conscious passion plainly speaks
In downcast look and blushing cheeks.
Whene'er he sings, will she glide nigh,
And all her soul is in her eye,
Yet doubts she still to tender free
The wonted words of courtesey.
These are strong signs!—yet wherefore sigh
And wipe, effeminate, thine eye?
Thine shall she be, if thou attend
The counsels of thy sire and friend.

XXXI.

"Scarce wert thou gone, when peep of light
 Brought genuine news of Marston's fight.
 Brave Cromwell turned the doubtful tide,
 And conquest blessed the rightful side;
 Three thousand cavaliers lie dead,
 Rupert and that bold Marquis fled;
 Nobles and knights, so proud of late,
 Must fine for freedom and estate.
 Of these, committed to my charge,
 Is Rokeby, prisoner at large;
 Redmond, his page, arrived to say
 He reaches Barnard's towers to-day.
 Right heavy shall his ransom be,
 Unless that maid compound with thee!
 Go to her now—be bold of cheer,
 While her soul floats 'twixt hope and fear
 It is the very change of tide,
 When best the female heart is tried—
 Pride, prejudice, and modesty,
 Are in the current swept to sea;
 And the bold swain, who plies his oar,
 May lightly row his bark to shore."

CANTO THIRD.

I.

THE hunting tribes of air and earth
 Respect the brethren of their birth;
 Nature, who loves the claim of kind,
 Less cruel chase to each assigned.
 The falcon, poised on soaring wing,
 Watches the wild-duck by the spring;
 The slow-hound wakes the fox's lair;
 The greyhound presses on the hare;
 The eagle pounces on the lamb;
 The wolf devours the fleecy dam;
 Ev'n tiger fell, and sullen bear,
 Their likeness and their lineage spare.
 Man, only, mars kind Nature's plan,
 And turns the fierce pursuit on man;
 Plying war's desultory trade,
 Incursion, flight, and ambuscade,
 Since Nimrod, Cush's mighty son,
 At first the bloody game begun.

II.

The Indian, prowling for his prey,
 Who hears the settlers track his way,
 And knows in distant forest far
 Camp his red brethren of the war;
 He, when each double and disguise
 To baffle the pursuit he tries.

Low crouching now his head to hide,
Where swampy streams through rushes glide,
Now covering with the withered leaves
The foot-prints that the dew receives;
He, skilled in every sylvan guile,
Knows not, nor tries, such various wile,
As Risingham, when on the wind
Arose the loud pursuit behind.
In Redesdale his youth had heard
Each art her wily dalesmen dared,
When Rookens-edge, and Redswair high
To bugle rung and bloodhound's cry,
Announcing Jedwood-axe and spear,
And Lid'sdale riders in the rear;
And well his venturous life had proved
The lessons that his childhood loved.

III.

Oft had he shown, in climes afar,
Each attribute of roving war;
The sharpened ear, the piercing eye,
The quick resolve in danger nigh;
The speed, that in the flight or chase,
Outstripped the Charib's rapid race:
The steady brain, the sinewy limb,
To leap, to climb, to dive, to swim;
The iron frame, inured to bear
Each dire inclemency of air,
Nor loss confirmed to undergo
Fatigue's faint chill, and famine's throes.
These arts he proved, his life to save
In peril oft by land and wave,
On Arawac's desert shore,
Or where La Plata's billows roar,
When oft the sons of vengeful Spain
Tracked the marauder's steps in vain.
These arts, in Indian warfare tried,
Must save him now by Greta's side.

IV.

'Twas then, in hour of utmost need,
He proved his courage, art, and speed.
Now slow he stalked with stealthy paco,
Now started forth in rapid race,
Oft doubling back in mazy train,
To blind the trace the dews retain;
Now clombe the rocks projecting high,
To baffle the pursuer's eye,
Now sought the stream, whose brawling sound
The echo of his footsteps drowned.
But if the forest verge he nears,
There trample steeds, and glimmer spears -
If deeper down the copse he drew,
He heard the rangers' loud halloo,
Beating each cover while they came,
As if to start the sylvan game.

"Twas then,—like tiger close beset
 At every pass with toil and net,
 'Countered where'er he turns his glare,
 By clashing arms and torches' flare,
 Who meditates, with furious bound,
 To burst on hunter, horse, and hound,—
 'Twas then that Bertram's soul arose,
 Prompting to rush upon his foes:
 But as that crouching tiger, cowed
 By brandished steel and shouting crowd,
 Retreats beneath the jungle's shroud,
 Bertram suspends his purpose stern,
 And crouches in the brake and fern,
 Hiding his face, lest foemen spy
 The sparkle of his swarthy eye.

V.

Then Bertram might the bearing trace
 Of the bold youth who led the chase,
 Who paused to list for every sound,
 Climbed every height to look around,
 Then rushing on with naked sword,
 Each dingle's bosky depths explored.
 'Twas Redmond—by the azure eye;
 'Twas Redmond—by the locks that fly
 Disordered from his glowing cheek;
 Mien, face, and form, young Redmond speak
 A form more active, light, and strong,
 Ne'er shot the ranks of war along;
 The modest, yet the manly mien,
 Might grace the court of maiden queen.
 A face more fair you well might find,
 For Redmond's knew the sun and wind,
 Nor boasted, from their tinge when free,
 The charm of regularity;
 But every feature had the power
 To aid the expression of the hour:
 Whether gay wit, and humour sly,
 Danced laughing in his light-blue eye;
 Or bended brow, and glance of fire,
 And kindling cheek, spoke Erin's ire;
 Or soft and saddened glances show
 Her ready sympathy with woe;
 Or in that wayward mood of mind,
 When various feelings are combined,
 When joy and sorrow mingle near,
 And hope's bright wings are checked by fear
 And rising doubts keep transport down,
 And anger lends a short-lived frown;
 In that strange mood which maids approve
 Even when they dare not call it love:
 With every change his features played,
 As aspens show the light and shade.

VI.

Well Risingham young Redmond knew
 And much he marvelled that the crew,
 Roused to revenge bold Mortham dead,
 Were by that Mortham's foeman led;
 For never felt his soul the woe
 That wails a generous foeman low
 Far less that sense of justice strong
 That wreaks a generous foeman's wrong.
 But small his leisure now to pause;
 Redmond is first, whate'er the cause:
 And twice that Redmond came so near
 Where Bertram couched like hunted deer,
 The very boughs his steps displace,
 Rustled against the ruffian's face,
 Who, desperate, twice prepared to start,
 And plunge his dagger in his heart!
 But Redmond turned a different way,
 And the bent boughs resumed their sway,
 And Bertram held it wise, unseen,
 Deeper to plunge in coppice green.
 Thus, circled in his coil, the snake,
 When roving hunters beat the brake,
 Watches with red and glistening eye,
 Prepared, if heedless step draw nigh,
 With forked tongue and venom'd fang,
 Instant to dart the deadly pang;
 But if the intruders turn aside,
 Away his coils unfolded glide,
 And through the deep savanna wind,
 Some undisturbed retreat to find.

VII.

But Bertram, as he backward drew,
 And heard the loud pursuit renew,
 And Redmond's halloo on the wind,
 Oft mutter'd in his savage mind—
 "Redmond O'Neale! were thou and I
 Alone this day's event to try,
 With not a second here to see,
 But the gray cliff and oaken tree,—
 That voice of thine, that shouts so loud,
 Should ne'er repeat its summons proud!
 No! nor e'er try its melting power
 Again in maiden's summer bower."—
 Eluded, now behind him die,
 Faint and more faint, each hostile cry;
 He stands in Scargill wood alone,
 Nor hears he now a harsher tone
 Than the hoarse cushat's plaintive cry,
 Or Greta's sound that murmurs by
 And on the dale, so lone and wild.
 The summer sun in quiet smiled.

VIII.

He listened long with anxious heart,
 Ear bent to hear, and foot to start,
 And, while his stretched attention glows,
 Refused his weary frame repose.
 'Twas silence all—he laid him down,
 Where purple heath profusely strown,
 And throatwort with its azure bell,
 And moss and thyme his cushion swell.
 There, spent with toil, he listless eyed
 The course of Greta's playful tide;
 Beneath, her banks now eddying dun,
 Now brightly gleaming to the sun,
 As, dancing over rock and stone,
 In yellow light her currents shone,
 Matching in hue the favourite gem
 Of Albin's mountain-diadem.
 Then, tired to watch the current's play,
 He turned his weary eyes away,
 To where the bank opposing showed
 Its huge, square cliffs through shaggy wood.
 One, prominent above the rest,
 Reared to the sun its pale gray breast;
 Around its broken summit grew
 The hazel rude, and sable yew;
 A thousand varied lichens dyed
 Its waste and weather-beaten side,
 And round its rugged basis lay,
 By time or thunder rent away,
 Fragments, that, from its frontlet torn
 Were mantled now by verdant thorn.
 Such was the scene's wild majesty,
 That filled stern Bertram's gazing eye.

IX.

In sullen mood he lay reclined,
 Revolving, in his stormy mind,
 The felon deed, the fruitless guilt,
 His patron's blood by treason spilt;
 A crime it seemed, so dire and dread,
 That it had power to wake the dead.
 Then, pondering on his life betrayed
 By Oswald's art to Redmond's blade,
 In treacherous purpose to withhold,
 So seemed it, Mortham's promised gold,
 A deep and full revenge he vowed
 On Redmond, forward, fierce, and proud;
 Revenge on Wilfrid—on his sire
 Redoubled vengeance, swift and dire!—
 If, in such mood, (as legends say,
 And well believed that simple day,)
 The Enemy of Man has power
 To profit by the evil hour,
 Here stood a wretch, prepared to change
 His soul's redemption for revenge!

But though his vows, with such a fire
Of earnest and intense desire
For vengeance dark and fell, were made,
As well might reach hell's lowest shade,
No deeper clouds the grove embrowned,
No nether thunders shook the ground;
The demon knew his vassal's heart,
And spared temptation's needless art.

X.

Oft, mingled with the direful theme,
Came Mortham's form.—Was it a dream?
Or had he seen, in vision true,
That very Mortham whom he slew?
Or had in living flesh appeared
The only man on earth he feared?—
To try the mystic cause intent,
His eyes, that on the cliff were bent,
'Countered at once a dazzling glance,
Like sunbeam flashed from sword or lance
At once he started as for fight,
But not a foeman was in sight;
He heard the cushat's murmur hoarse,
He heard the river's sounding course;
The solitary woodlands lay,
As slumbering in the summer ray.
He gazed, like lion roused, around,
Then sunk again upon the ground.
'Twas but, he thought, some fitful beam,
Glanced sudden from the sparkling stream;
Then plunged him in his gloomy train
Of ill-connected thoughts again,
Until a voice behind him cried,
"Bertram! well met on Greta side."—

XI.

Instant his sword was in his hand,
As instant sunk the ready brand;
Yet, dubious still, opposed he stood
To him that issued from the wood:—
"Guy Denzil!—is it thou?" he said;
"Do we two meet in Scargill shade?—
Stand back a space!—thy purpose show,
Whether thou comest as friend or foe.
Report hath said, that Denzil's name
From Rokeby's band was razed with shame."—
"A shame I owe that hot O'Neale,
Who told his knight, in peevish zeal,
Of my marauding on the clowns
Of Calverley and Bradford downs.—
I reck not. In a war to strive,
Where, save the leaders, none can thrive,
Suits ill my mood; and better game
Awaits us both, if thou'rt the same
Unscrupulous, bold Risingham.

Who watched with me in midnight dark,
To snatch a deer from Rokeby-park.
How think'st thou?"—"Speak thy purpose out;
I love not mystery or doubt."—

XII.

"Then, list.—Not far there lurk a crew
Of trusty comrades staunch and true,
Gleaned from both factions—Roundheads, freed
From cant of sermon and of creed;
And Cavaliers, whose souls, like mine,
Spurn at the bonds of discipline.
Wiser, we judge, by dale and wold,
A warfare of our own to hold,
Than breathe our last on battle-down.
For cloak or surplice, mace or crown.
Our schemes are laid, our purpose set,
A chief and leader lack we yet.—
Thou art a wanderer, it is said;
For Mortham's death, thy steps waylaid,
Thy head at price—so say our spies,
Who range the valley in disguise.
Join then with us; though wild debate
And wrangling rend our infant state,
Each, to an equal loath to bow,
Will yield to chief renowned as thou."—

XIII.

"Even now," thought Bertram, "passion-stirred,
I called on hell, and hell has heard!
What lack I, vengeance to command,
But of staunch comrades such a band?
This Denzil, vowed to every evil,
Might read a lesson to the devil.
Well, be it so! each knave and fool
Shall serve as my revenge's tool."—
Aloud, "I take thy proffer, Guy,
But tell me where thy comrades lie?"—
"Not far from hence," Guy Denzil said;
"Descend, and cross the river's bed,
Where rises yonder cliff so gray."—
"Do thou," said Bertram, "lead the way."
Then muttered, "It is best make sure,
Guy Denzil's faith was never pure."—
He followed down the steep descent,
Then through the Greta's streams they went;
And, when they reached the farther shore,
They stood the lonely cliff before.

XIV.

With wonder Bertram heard within
The flinty rock a murmured din;
But when Guy pulled the wilding spray,
And brambles, from its base away,
He saw, appearing to the air,
A little entrance, low and square,

Like opening cell of hermit lone,
 Dark, winding through the living stone.
 Here entered Denzil, Bertram here;
 And loud and louder on their ear,
 As from the bowels of the earth,
 Resounded shouts of boisterous mirth
 Of old, the cavern strait and rude,
 In slaty rock the peasant hewed;
 And Brignal's woods, and Scargill's wave,
 E'en now, o'er many a sister cave,
 Where, far within the darksome rift,
 The wedge and lever ply their thrift.
 But war had silenced rural trade,
 And the deserted mine was made
 The banquet-hall and fortress too,
 Of Denzil and his desperate crew.—
 There Guilt his anxious revel kept;
 There, on his sordid pallet, slept
 Guilt-born Excess, the goblet drained
 Still in his slumbering grasp retained;
 Regret was there, his eye still cast
 With vain repining on the past;
 Among the feasters waited near
 Sorrow, and unrepentant Fear,
 And Blasphemy, to frenzy driven,
 With his own crimes reproaching Heaven,
 While Bertram showed, amid the crew,
 The Master-Fiend that Milton drew.

XV.

Hark! the loud revel wakes again,
 To greet the leader of the train.
 Behold the group by the pale lamp,
 That struggles with the earthy damp.
 By what strange features Vice has known,
 To single out and mark her own!
 Yet some there are, whose brows retain
 Less deeply stamped her brand and stain.
 See yon pale stripling! when a boy,
 A mother's pride, a father's joy!
 Now, 'gainst the vault's rude walls reclined,
 An early image fills his mind:
 The cottage, once his sire's, he sees,
 Embowered upon the banks of Tees;
 He views sweet Winston's woodland scene,
 And shares the dance on Gainford-green.
 A tear is springing—but the zest
 Of some wild tale, or brutal jest,
 Hath to loud laughter stirred the rest.
 On him they call, the aptest mate
 For jovial song and merry feast;
 Fast flies his dream—with dauntless air,
 As one victorious o'er despair,
 He bids the ruddy cup go round,
 Till sense and sorrow both are drowned

And soon, in merry wassail, he,
The life of all their revelry,
Peals his loud song!—The muse has found
Her blossoms on the wildest ground,
Mid noxious weeds at random strewed,
Themselves all profitless and rude.—
With desperate merriment he sung,
The cavern to the chorus rung;
Yet mingled with his reckless glee
Remorso's bitter agony.

XVI.

Song.

O, Brignal banks are wild and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there,
Would grace a summer queen.
And as I rode by Dalton-hall,
Beneath the turrets high,
A Maiden on the castle wall
Was singing merrily,—

Chorus.

“O, Brignal banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen.”
“If, Maiden, thou wouldst wend with me,
To leave both tower and town,
Thou first must guess what life lead we,
That dwell by dale and down:
And if thou canst that riddle read,
As read full well you may,
Then to the greenwood shalt thou speed,
As blithe as Queen of May.”—

Chorus.

Yet sung she, “Brignal banks are fair,
And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen.

XVII.

“I read you, by your bugle-horn,
And by your palfrey good,
I read you for a ranger sworn,
To keep the king's greenwood.”—
‘A ranger, lady, winds his horn,
And 'tis at peep of light;
His blast is heard at merry morn,
And mine at dead of night.”—

Chorus.

Yet sung she, “Brignal banks are fair,
And Greta woods are gay;

I would I were with Edmund there,
To reign his Queen of May!

"With burnished brand and musketoen,
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
That lists the tuck of drum."—
"I list no more the tuck of drum,
No more the trumpet hear;
But when the beetle sounds his hum,
My comrades take the spear.

Chorus.

"And, O! though Brignal banks be fair,
And Greta woods be gay,
Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
Would reign my Queen of May!

XVIII.

"Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
A nameless death I'll die;
The fiend, whose lantern lights the mead,
Were better mate than I!
And when I'm with my comrades met,
Beneath the greenwood bough,
What once we were we all forget,
Nor think what we are now.

Chorus.

"Yet Brignal banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there
Would grace a summer queen."—

When Edmund ceased his simple song,
Was silence on the sullen throng,
Till waked some ruder mate their glee
With note of coarser minstrelsy.
But, far apart, in dark divan,
Denzil and Bertram many a plan,
Of import foul and fierce, designed,
While still on Bertram's grasping mind
The wealth of murdered Mortham hung;
Though half he feared his daring tongue,
When it should give his wishes birth,
Might raise a spectre from the earth!

XIX.

At length his wondrous tale he told:
When, scornful, smiled his comrade bold
For, trained in licence of a court,
Religion's self was Denzil's sport:
Then judge in what contempt he held
The visionary tales of eld!
His awe for Bertram scarce repressed
The unbeliever's sneering jest.

"'Twere hard," he said, "for sage or seer
 To spell the subject of your fear;
 Nor do I boast the art renowned,
 Vision and omen to expound.
 Yet, faith if I must needs afford
 To spectre watching treasured hoard,
 As ban-dog keeps his master's roof,
 Bidding the plunderer stand aloof,
 This doubt remains—thy goblin gaunt
 Hath chosen ill his ghostly haunt;
 For why his guard on Mortham hold,
 When Rokeby Castle hath the gold
 Thy patron won on Indian soil,
 By stealth, by piracy, and spoil?"—

XX.

At this he paused—for angry shame
 Lowered on the brow of Risingham.
 He blushed to think, that he should seem
 Asserter of an airy dream,
 And gave his wrath another theme.
 "Denzil," he says, "though lowly laid,
 Wrong not the memory of the dead;
 For, while he lived, at Mortham's look
 Thy very soul, Guy Denzil, shook!
 And when he taxed thy breach of word
 To yon fair Rose of Allenford,
 I saw thee crouch like chastened hound,
 Whose back the huntsman's lash hath found.
 Nor dare to call his foreign wealth
 The spoil of piracy or stealth;
 He won it bravely with his brand,
 When Spain waged warfare with our land.
 Mark, too,—I brook no idle jeer,
 Nor couple Bertram's name with fear;
 Mine is but half the demon's lot,
 For I believe, but tremble not,—
 Enough of this.—Say, why this hoard
 Thou deem'st at Rokeby Castle stored;
 Or think'st that Mortham would bestow
 His treasure with his faction's foe?"—

XXI.

Soon quenched was Denzil's ill-timed mirth;
 Rather he would have seen the earth
 Give to ten thousand spectres birth,
 Than venture to awake to flame
 The deadly wrath of Risingham.
 Submiss he answered,—“Mortham's mind,
 Thou know'st, to joy was ill inclined.
 In youth, 'tis said, a gallant free,
 A lusty reveller was he;
 But since returned from over sea,
 A sullen and a silent mood
 Hath numbed the current of his blood.

Hence he refused each kindly call
To Rokeby's hospitable hall,
And our stout Knight, at dawn of morn
Who loved to hear the bugle-horn,
Nor less, when eve his oaks embrowned,
To see the ruddy cup go round,
Took umbrage that a friend so near
Refused to share his chase and cheer;
Thus did the kindred barons jar,
Ere they divided in the war.
Yet, trust me, friend, Matilda fair
Of Mortham's wealth is destined heir."

XXII.

"Destined to her! to yon slight maid!
The prize my life had well nigh paid,
When 'gainst Laroche, by Cayo's wave
I fought, my patron's wealth to save!—
Denzil, I knew him long, but ne'er
Knew him that joyous cavalier,
Whom youthful friends and early fame
Called soul of gallantry and game.
A moody man, he sought our crew,
Desperate and dark, whom no one knew;
And rose, as men with us must rise,
By scorning life and all its ties.
On each adventure rash he roved,
As danger for itself he loved;
On his sad brow nor mirth nor wine
Could e'er one wrinkled knot untwine;
Ill was the omen if he smiled,
For 'twas in peril stern and wild;
But when he laughed, each luckless mate
Might hold our fortune desperate.
Foremost he fought in every broil,
Then scornful turned him from the spoil;
Nay, often strove to bar the way
Between his comrades and their prey;
Preaching, e'en then, to such as we,
Hot with our dear-bought victory,
Of mercy and humanity!

XXIII.

"I loved him well—His fearless part,
His gallant leading, won my heart.
And after each victorious fight,
'Twas I that wrangled for his right,
Redeemed his portion of the prey
That greedier mates had torn away:
In field and storm thrice saved his life,
And once amid our comrades' strife.—
Yes, I have loved thee! Well hath proved
My toil, my danger, how I loved!
Yet will I mourn no more thy fate,
Ingrate in life, in death ingrate.

Rise if thou canst!" he looked around,
And sternly stamped upon the ground—
"Rise, with thy bearing proud and high,
E'en as this morn it met mine eye,
And give me, if thou darest, the lie!"
He paused—then, calm and passion-freed,
Bade Denzil with his tale proceed.

XXIV.

"Bertram, to thee I need not tell,
What thou hast cause to wot so well,
How Superstition's nets were twined
Around the Lord of Mortham's mind;
But since he drove thee from his tower,
A maid he found in Greta's bower,
Whose speech, like David's harp, had sway
To charm his evil fiend away.
I know not if her features moved
Remembrance of the wife he loved;
But he would gaze upon her eye,
Till his mood softened to a sigh.
He, whom no living mortal sought
To question of his secret thought,
Now every thought and care confessed
To his fair niece's faithful breast;
Nor was there aught of rich and rare,
In earth, in ocean, or in air,
But it must deck Matilda's hair.
Her love still bound him unto life;
But then awoke the civil strife,
And menials bore, by his commands,
Three coffers, with their iron bands,
From Mortham's vault, at midnight deep,
To her lone bower in Rokeby-keep,
Ponderous with gold and plate of pride—
His gift, if he in battle died."

XXV.

"Then, Denzil, as I guess, lays train,
These iron-banded chests to gain;
Else, wherefore should he hover here,
Where many a peril waits him near,
For all his feats of war and peace,
For plundered boors, and harts of greece?
Since through the hamlets as he fared,
What hearth has Guy's marauding spared,
Or where the chase that hath not rung
With Denzil's bow, at midnight strung?"—
"I hold my wont—my rangers go
E'en now to track a milk-white doe.
By Rokeby-hall she takes her lair,
In Greta woods she harbours fair,
And when my huntsman marks her way,
What think'st thou, Bertram, of the prey?"

* Deer in season.

Were Rokeby's daughter in our power,
We rate her ransom at her dower."—

XXVI.

"'Tis well!—there's vengeance in the thought,
Matilda is by Wilfrid sought;
And hot-brained Redmond, too, 'tis said,
Pays lover's homage to the maid.
Bertram she scorned—if met by chance,
She turned from me her shuddering glance,
Like a nice dame, that will not brook
On what she hates and loathes to look;
She told to Mortham she could ne'er
Behold me without secret fear,
Foreboding evil:—she may rue
To find her prophecy fall true!—
The war has weeded Rokeby's train,
Few followers in his halls remain;
If thy scheme miss, then, brief and bold,
We are enow to storm the hold,
Bear off the plunder, and the dame,
And leave the castle all in flame."—

XXVII.

"Still art thou Valour's venturous son!
Yet ponder first the risk to run:
The menials of the castle, true,
And stubborn to their charge, though few;
The wall to scale—the moat to cross—
The wicket-grate—the inner fosse"—
"Fool! if we blench for toys like these,
On what fair guerdon can we seize?
Our hardest venture, to explore
Some wretched peasant's fenceless door,
And the best prize we bear away,
The earnings of his sordid day."—
"A while thy hasty taunt forbear:
In sight of road more sure and fair,
Thou wouldst not choose, in blindfold wrath,
Or wantonness, a desperate path?
List, then;—for vantage or assault,
From gilded vane to dungeon vault,
Each pass of Rokeby-house I know:
There is one postern, dark and low,
That issues at a secret spot,
By most neglected or forgot.
Now, could a spial of our train
On fair pretext admittance gain,
That sally-port might be unbarred:
Then, vain were battlement and ward!"—

XXVIII.

"Now speak'st thou well:—to me the same,
If force or art shall urge the game;
Indifferent, if like fox I wind,
Or spring like tiger on the hind.—

But, hark! our merry men so gay
Troll forth another roundelay,—

Song.

“A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine!
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine!
A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green,—
No more of me you knew,
My love!
No more of me you knew.

“This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain;
But she shall bloom in winter snow,
Ere we two meet again.”
He turned his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle-reins a shake,
Said, “Adieu for evermore,
My love!
And adieu for evermore.”—

XXIX.

“What youth is this, your band among
The best for minstrelsy and song?
In his wild notes seem aptly met
A strain of pleasure and regret.”—
“Edmund of Winston is his name;
The hamlet sounded with the fame
Of early hopes his childhood gave,—
Now centered all in Brignal cave!
I watch him well—his wayward course
Shows oft a tincture of remorse.
Some early love-shaft grazed his heart,
And oft the scar will ache and smart.
Yet is he useful;—of the rest,
By fits, the darling and the jest,
His harp, his story, and his lay
Oft aid the idle hours away:
When unemployed, each fiery mate
Is ripe for mutinous debate.
He tuned his strings e'en now—again
He wakes them, with a blither strain.

XXX.

Song.

ALLEN-A-DALE.

Allen-a-Dale has no faggot for burning,
Allen-a-Dale has no furrow for turning,
Allen-a-Dale has no fleece for the spinning,
Yet Allen-a-Dale has red gold for the winning.

Come, read me my riddle! come, hearken my tale!
And tell me the craft of bold Allen-a-Dale.

The Baron of Ravensworth prances in pride,
And he views his domains upon Arkindale side.
The mere for his net, and the land for his game,
The chase for the wild, and the park for the tame;
Yet the fish of the lake, and the deer of the vale,
Are less free to Lord Dacre than Allen-a-Dale!

Allen-a-Dale was ne'er belted a knight,
Though his spur be as sharp, and his blade be as bright;
Allen-a-Dale is no baron or lord,
Yet twenty tall yeomen will draw at his word;
And the best of our nobles his bonnet will vail,
Who at Rere-cross on Stanmore meets Allen-a-Dale.

Allen-a-Dale to his wooing is come;
The mother, she asked of his household and home:
"Though the castle of Richmond stand fair on the hill,
My hall," quoth bold Allen, "shows gallanter still;
'Tis the blue vault of heaven, with its crescent so pale,
And with all its bright spangles!" said Allen-a-Dale.

The father was steel, and the mother was stone;
They lifted the latch, and they bade him be gone;
But loud, on the morrow, their wail and their cry:
He had laughed on the lass with his bonny black eye,
And she fled to the forest to hear a love-tale,
And the youth it was told by was Allen-a-Dale!

XXXI.

"Thou seest that, whether sad or gay,
Love mingles ever in his lay.
But when his boyish wayward fit
Is o'er, he hath address and wit;
O! 'tis a brain of fire, can ape
Each dialect, each various shape."—
"Nay, then, to aid thy project, Guy—
Soft! who comes here?"—"My trusty spy.
Speak, Hamlin! hast thou lodged our deer?"
"I have—but two fair stags are near.
I watched her as she slowly strayed
From Eglistone up Thorsgill glade;
But Wilfrid Wycliffe sought her side,
And then young Redmond, in his pride,
Shot down to meet them on their way:
Much, as it seemed, was theirs to say:
There 's time to pitch both toil and net.
Before their path be homeward set."—
A hurried and a whispered speech
Did Bertram's will to Denzil teach,
Who, turning to the robber band,
Bade four, the bravest, take the brand

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

WHEN Denmark's Raven soared on high,
 Triumphant through Northumbrian sky,
 Till, hovering near, her fatal croak
 Made Reged's Britons dread the yoke,
 And the broad shadow of her wing
 Blackened each cataract and spring,
 Where Tees in tumult leaves his source,
 Thundering o'er Caldron and High-Force:
 Beneath the shade the Northmen came,
 Fixed on each vale a Runic name,
 Reared high their altars' rugged stone,
 And gave their gods the land they won.
 Then, Balder, one bleak garth was thine,
 And one sweet brooklet's silver line,
 And Woden's Croft did title gain
 From the stern Father of the Slain;
 But to the Monarch of the Mace,
 That held in fight the foremost place,
 To Odin's son, and Sifia's spouse,
 Near Stratforth high they paid their vows,
 Remembered Thor's victorious fame,
 And gave the dell the Thunderer's name.

II.

Yet Scald or Kemper erred, I ween,
 Who gave that soft and quiet scene,
 With all its varied light and shade,
 And every little sunny glade,
 And the blithe brook that strolls along
 Its pebbled bed with summer song,
 To the grim god of blood and scar,
 The grisly King of Northern War.
 O, better were its banks assigned
 To spirits of a gentler kind!
 For where the thicket-groups recede,
 And the rathe primrose decks the mead,
 The velvet grass seems carpet meet
 For the light fairies' lively feet.
 Yon tufted knoll, with daisies strown,
 Might make proud Oberon a throne,
 While, hidden in the thicket nigh,
 Puck should brood o'er his frolic sly;
 And where profuse the wood-veitch cling
 Round ash and elm, in verdant rings,
 Its pale and azure-pencilled flower
 Should canopy Titania's bower.

III.

Here rise no cliffs the vale to shade,
 But, skirting every sunny glade,
 In fair variety of green
 The woodland lends its sylvan screen;

Hoary, yet haughty, frowns the oak,
Its boughs by weight of ages broke;
And towers erect, in sable spire,
The pine-tree scathed by lightning-fire;
The drooping ash and birch, between,
Hang their fair tresses o'er the green,
And all beneath, at random grow
Each coppice dwarf of varied show,
Or, round the stems profusely twined,
Fling summer odours on the wind
Such varied group Urbino's hand
Round him of Tarsus nobly planned,
What time he bade proud Athens own
On Mars's Mount the God Unknown!
Then gray Philosophy stood nigh,
Though bent by age, in spirit high;
There rose the scar-seamed Veteran's spear
There Grecian Beauty bent to hear,
While Childhood at her foot was placed,
Or clung delighted to her waist.

IV.

"And rest we here," Matilda said,
And sate her in the varying shade.
"Chance-met, we well may steal an hour
To friendship due from fortune's power.
Thou, Wilfrid, ever kind, must lend
Thy counsel to thy sister-friend;
And, Redmond, thou, at my behest,
No farther urge thy desperate quest.
For to my care a charge is left,
Dangerous to one of aid bereft,
Well nigh an orphan, and alone,
Captive her sire, her house o'erthrown." -
Wilfrid, with wonted kindness graced,
Beside her on the turf she placed,
Then paused, with downcast look and eye,
Nor bade young Redmond seat him nigh,
Her conscious diffidence he saw,
Drew backward as in modest awe,
And sat a little space removed,
Unmarked to gaze on her he loved.

V.

Wreathed in its dark-brown rings, her hair
Half hid Matilda's forehead fair,
Half hid and half revealed to view
Her full dark eye of hazel hue.
The rose, with faint and feeble streak,
So slightly tinged the maiden's cheek,
That you had said her hue was pale,
But if she faced the summer gale,
Or spoke, or sung, or quicker moved,
Or heard the praise of those she loved,
Or when of interest was expressed
Aught that waked feeling in her breast.

The mantling blood in ready play
 Rivalled the blush of rising day.
 There was a soft and pensive grace,
 A cast of thought upon her face,
 That suited well the forehead high,
 The eye-lash dark, and downcast eye;
 The mild expression spoke a mind
 In duty firm, composed, resigned;—
 'Tis that which Roman art has given,
 To mark their maiden Queen of Heaven.
 In hours of sport, that mood gave way
 To Fancy's light and frolic play;
 And when the dance, or tale, or song,
 In harmless mirth sped time along,
 Full oft her doating sire would call
 His Maud the merriest of them all.
 But days of war, and civil crime,
 Allowed but ill such festal time,
 And her soft pensiveness of brow
 Had deepened into sadness now.
 In Marston field her father ta'en,
 Her friends dispersed, brave Mortham slain,
 While every ill her soul foretold,
 From Oswald's thirst of power and gold,
 And boding thoughts that she must part
 With a soft vision of her heart,—
 All lowered around the lovely maid,
 To darken her dejection's shade.

VI.

Who has not heard—while Erin yet
 Strove 'gainst the Saxon's iron bit—
 Who has not heard how brave O'Neale
 In English blood imbrued his steel,
 Against St George's cross blazed high
 The banners of his Tanistry,
 To fiery Essex gave the foil,
 And reigned a prince on Ulster's soil?
 But chief arose his victor pride,
 When that brave Marshal fought and died,
 And Avon-Duff to ocean bore
 His billows red with Saxon gore.
 'Twas first in that disastrous fight,
 Rokeby and Mortham proved their might.
 There had they fallen amongst the rest,
 But pity touched a chieftain's breast;
 The Tanist he to great O'Neale,
 He checked his followers' bloody zeal,
 To quarter took the kinsmen bold,
 And bore them to his mountain-hold,
 Gave them each sylvan joy to know,
 Slieve-Donard's cliffs and woods could show,
 Shared with them Erin's festal cheer,
 Showed them the chase of wolf and deer,

And, when a fitting time was come,
Safe and unransomed sent them home,
Loaded with many a gift, to prove
A generous foe's respect and love.

VII.

Years speed away. On Rokeby's head
Some touch of early snow was shed;
Calm he enjoyed, by Greta's wave,
The peace which James the Peaceful gave,
While Mortham, far beyond the main,
Waged his fierce wars on Indian Spain.—
It chanced upon a wintry night,
That whitened Stanmore's stormy height,
The chase was o'er, the stag was killed,
In Rokeby-hall the cups were filled,
And by the huge stone chimney sate
The Knight in hospitable state.
Moonless the sky, the hour was late,
When a loud summons shook the gate,
And sore for entrance and for aid
A voice of foreign accent prayed.
The porter answered to the call,
And instant rushed into the hall
A Man, whose aspect and attire
Startled the circle by the fire.

VIII.

His plaited hair in elf-locks spread
Around his bare and matted head;
On leg and thigh, close stretched and trim,
His vesture showed the sinewy limb;
In saffron dyed, a linen vest
Was frequent folded round his breast;
A mantle long and loose he wore,
Shaggy with ice, and stained with gore,
He clasped a burden to his heart,
And, resting on a knotted dart,
The snow from hair and beard he shook,
And round him gazed with wildered look;
Then up the hall, with staggering pace
He hastened by the blaze to place,
Half lifeless from the bitter air,
His load, a Boy of beauty rare.
To Rokeby, next, he louted low,
Then stood erect his tale to show,
With wild majestic port and tone,
Like envoy of some barbarous throne.
"Sir Richard, Lord of Rokeby, hear!
Turlough O'Neale salutes thee dear;
He graces thee, and to thy care
Young Redmond gives, his grandson fair.
He bids thee breed him as thy son,
For Turlough's days of joy are done;
And other lords have seized his land,
And faint and feeble is his hand."

And all the glory of Tyrone
 Is like a morning vapour flown.
 To bind the duty on thy soul,
 He bids thee think on Erin's bowl!
 If any wrong the young O'Neale,
 He bids thee think of Erin's steel.
 To Mortham first this charge was due,
 But, in his absence, honours you.—
 Now is my master's message by,
 And Ferraught will contented die.”—

IX.

His look grew fixed, his cheek grew pale,
 He sunk when he had told his tale;
 For, hid beneath his mantle wide,
 A mortal wound was in his side.
 Vain was all aid—in terror wild,
 And sorrow, screamed the orphan child.
 Poor Ferraught raised his wistful eyes,
 And faintly strove to soothe his cries;
 All reckless of his dying pain,
 He blessed and blessed him o'er again!
 And kissed the little hands outspread,
 And kissed and crossed the infant head,
 And, in his native tongue and phrase,
 Prayed to each saint to watch his days;
 Then all his strength together drew,
 The charge to Rokeby to renew.
 When half was faltered from his breast,
 And half by dying signs expressed,
 “Bless thee, O'Neale!” he faintly said,
 And thus the faithful spirit fled.

X.

’Twas long ere soothing might prevail
 Upon the child to end the tale;
 And then he said, that from his home
 His grandsire had been forced to roam,
 Which had not been if Redmond's hand
 Had but had strength to draw the brand,
 The brand of Lenaugh More the Red,
 That hung beside the gray wolf's head.—
 ’Twas from his broken phrase descried,
 His foster-father was his guide,
 Who, in his charge, from Ulster bore
 Letters, and gifts a goodly store;
 But ruffians met them in the wood.
 Ferraught in battle boldly stood,
 Till wounded and o'erpowered at length,
 And stripped of all, his failing strength
 Just bore him here—and then the child
 Renewed again his moaning wild.

XI.

The tear, down Childhood's cheek that flows,
 Is like the dew-drop on the rose;

When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry.
Won by their care, the orphan child
Soon on his new protector smiled,
With dimpled cheek and eye so fair,
Through his thick curls of flaxen hair.
But blithest laughed that cheek and eye
When Rokeby's little maid was nigh;
'Twas his, with elder brother's pride,
Matilda's tottering steps to guide;
His native lays in Irish tongue,
To soothe her infant ear he sung,
And primrose twined with daisy fair,
To form a chaplet for her hair.
By lawn, by grove, by brooklet's strand,
The children still were hand in hand,
And good Sir Richard smiling eyed
The early knot so kindly tied.

XII.

But summer months bring wilding shoot
From bud to bloom, from bloom to fruit;
And years draw on our human span,
From child to boy, from boy to man;
And soon in Rokeby's woods is seen
A gallant boy in hunter's green.
He loves to wake the felon boar,
In his dark haunt on Greta's shore,
And loves, against the deer so dun,
To draw the shaft, or lift the gun:
Yet more he loves, in autumn prime,
The hazel's spreading bows to climb,
And down its clustered stores to hail
Where young Matilda holds her veil.
And she, whose veil receives the shower,
Is altered too, and knows her power;
Assumes a monitress's pride,
Her Redmond's dangerous sports to chide,
Yet listens still to hear him tell
How the grim wild-boar fought and fell,
How at his fall the bugle rung,
Till rock and greenwood answer flung;
Then blesses her, that man can find
A pastime of such savage kind!

XIII.

But Redmond knew to weave his tale
So well with praise of wood and dale,
And knew so well each point to trace,
Gives living interest to the chase,
And knew so well o'er all to throw
His spirit's wild romantic glow,
That, while she blamed, and while she feared,
She loved each venturous tale she heard.

Oft, too, when drifted snow and rain
 To bower and hall their steps restrain,
 Together they explored the page
 Of glowing bard or gifted sage;
 Oft, placed the evening fire beside,
 The minstrel art alternate tried,
 While gladsome harp and lively lay
 Bade winter night sit fast away:
 Thus from their childhood blending still
 Their sport, their study, and their skill,
 An union of the soul they prove,
 But must not think that it was love
 But though they dared not, envious Fame
 Soon dared to give that union name:
 And when so often, side by side,
 From year to year the pair she eyed,
 She sometimes blamed the good old Knight
 As dull of ear and dim of sight,
 Sometimes his purpose would declare,
 That young O'Neale should wed his heir.

XIV.

The suit of Wilfrid rent disguise
 And bandage from the lovers' eyes;
 'Twas plain that Oswald, for his son,
 Had Rokeby's favour well-nigh won.
 Now must they meet with change of cheer,
 With mutual looks of shame and fear;
 Now must Matilda stray apart,
 To school her disobedient heart;
 And Redmond now alone must rue
 The love he never can subdue.
 But factions rose, and Rokeby sware
 No rebel's son should wed his heir;
 And Redmond, nurtured while a child
 In many a bard's traditions wild,
 Now sought the lonely wood or stream,
 To cherish there a happier dream,
 Of maiden won by sword or lance,
 As in the regions of romance;
 And count the heroes of his line,
 Great Nial of the Pledges Nine,
 Shane-Dymas wild, and Geraldine,
 And Connan-More, who vowed his race
 For ever to the fight and chase,
 And cursed him, of his lineage born,
 Should sheathe the sword to reap the corn,
 Or leave the mountain and the wold,
 To shroud himself in castled hold.
 From such examples hope he drew,
 And brightened as the trumpet blew.

XV.

If brides were won by heart and blade,
 Redmond had both his cause to aid,

And all beside of nurture rare
That might beseem a baron's heir.
Turlough O'Neale, in Erin's strife,
On Rokeby's Lord bestowed his life,
And well did Rokeby's generous knight
Young Redmond for the deed requite.
Nor was his liberal care and cost
Upon the gallant stripling lost:
Seek the North Riding broad and wide,
Like Redmond none could steed bestride;
From Tynemouth search to Cumberland,
Like Redmond none could wield a brand;
And then, of humour kind and free,
And bearing him to each degree
With frank and fearless courtesy,
There never youth was formed to steal
Upon the heart like brave O'Neale.

XVI.

Sir Richard loved him as his son;
And when the days of peace were done,
And to the gales of war he gave
The banner of his sires to wave,
Redmond, distinguished by his care,
He chose that honoured flag to bear,
And named his page, the next degree
In that old time to chivalry.
In five pitched fields he well maintained
The honoured place his worth obtained,
And high was Redmond's youthful name
Blazed in the roll of martial fame.
Had fortune smiled on Marston fight,
The eve had seen him dubbed a knight;
Twice 'mid the battle's doubtful strife,
Of Rokeby's Lord he saved the life,
But when he saw him prisoner made,
He kissed and then resigned his blade,
And yielded him an easy prey
To those who led the Knight away;
Resolved Matilda's sire should prove,
In prison, as in fight, his love.

XVII.

When lovers meet in adverse hour,
'Tis like a sun-glimpse through a shower,
A watery ray, an instant seen
The darkly closing clouds between.
As Redmond on the turf reclined,
The past and present filled his mind:
"It was not thus," Affection said,
"I dreamed of my return, dear maid!
Not thus, when from thy trembling hand,
I took the banner and the brand,
When round me, as the bugles blew,
Their blades three hundred warriors drew,

And, while the standard I unrolled,
Clashed their bright arms with clamour bold
Where is that banner now?—its pride
Lies 'whelmed in Ouse's sullen tide!
Where now these warriors?—in their gore,
They cumber Marston's dismal moor!
And what avails a useless brand,
Held by a captive's shackled hand,
That only would his life retain
To aid thy sire to bear his chain!"—
Thus Redmond to himself apart,
Nor lighter was his rival's heart;
For Wilfrid, while his generous soul
Disdained to profit by control,
By many a sign could mark too plain,
Save with such aid, his hopes were vain.
But now Matilda's accents stole
On the dark visions of their soul,
And bade their mournful musing fly,
Like mist before the zephyr's sigh.

XVIII.

"I need not to my friends recall,
How Mortham shunned my father's hall;
A man of silence and of woe,
Yet ever anxious to bestow
On my poor self whate'er could prove
A kinsman's confidence and love.
My feeble aid could sometimes chase
The clouds of sorrow for a space:
But oftener, fixed beyond my power,
I marked his deep despondence lower.
One dismal cause, by all unguessed,
His fearful confidence confessed,
And twice it was my hap to see
Examples of that agony,
Which for a season can o'erstrain
And wreck the structure of the brain.
He had the awful power to know
The approaching mental overthrow,
And while his mind had courage yet
To struggle with the dreadful fit,
The victim writhed against its throes,
Like wretch beneath a murderer's blows.
This malady, I well could mark,
Sprung from some direful cause and dark
But still he kept its source concealed,
Till arming for the civil field;
Then in my charge he bade me hold
A treasure huge of gems and gold,
With this disjointed dismal scroll,
That tells the secret of his soul,
In such wild words as oft betray
A mind by anguish forced astray.

XIX.

Mortham's History.

"Matilda! thou hast seen me start,
As if a dagger thrilled my heart,
When it has happed some casual phrase
Waked memory of my former days.
Believe that few can backward cast
Their thoughts with pleasure on the past;
But I!—my youth was rash and vain,
And blood and rage my manhood stain,
And my gray hairs must now descend
To my cold grave without a friend!
Even thou, Matilda, wilt disown
Thy kinsman, when his guilt is known.
And must I lift the bloody veil,
That hides my dark and fatal tale!
I must—I will—Pale phantom, cease,
Leave me one little hour in peace!
Thus haunted, think'st thou I have skill,
Thine own commission to fulfil?
Or, while thou point'st with gesture fierce,
Thy blighted cheek, thy bloody hearse,
How can I paint thee as thou wert,
So fair in face, so warm in heart!—

XX.

"Yes, she was fair!—Matilda, thou
Hast a soft sadness on thy brow;
But hers was like the sunny glow
That laughs on earth and all below!
We wedded secret—there was need—
Differing in country and in creed;
And when to Mortham's tower she came,
We mentioned not her race and name,
Until thy sire, who fought afar,
Should turn him home from foreign war,
On whose kind influence we relied
To soothe her father's ire and pride.
Few months we lived retired, unknown,
To all but one dear friend alone,
One darling friend—I spare his shame,
I will not write the villain's name!
My trespasses I might forget,
And sue in vengeance for the debt
Due by a brother worm to me,
Ungrateful to God's clemency,
That spared me penitential time,
Nor cut me off amid my crime.—

XXI.

"A kindly smile to all she lent,
But on her husband's friend 'twas bent
So kind, that from its harmless glee,
The wretch misconstrued villany.

Repulsed in his presumptuous love,
 A vengeful snare the traitor wove.
 Alone we sat—the flask had flowed,
 My blood with heat unwonted glowed,
 When through the alleys walk we spied
 With hurried step my Edith glide,
 Cowering beneath the verdant screen,
 As one unwilling to be seen.
 Words cannot paint the fiendish smile
 That curled the traitor's cheek the while!
 Fiercely I questioned of the cause;
 He made a cold and artful pause,
 Then prayed it might not chafe my mood—
 'There was a gallant in the wood!'—
 We had been shooting at the deer;—
 My cross-bow (evil chance!) was near:
 That ready weapon of my wrath
 I caught, and, hasting up the path,
 In the yew grove my wife I found,
 A stranger's arms her neck had bound!
 I marked his heart—the bow I drew—
 I loosed the shaft—'twas more than true!
 I found my Edith's dying charms
 Locked in her murdered brother's arms!—
 He came in secret to inquire
 Her state, and reconcile her sire.—

XXII.

"All fled my rage—the villain first,
 Whose craft my jealousy had nursed;
 He sought in far and foreign clime
 To 'scape the vengeance of his crime.
 The manner of the slaughter done
 Was known to few, my guilt to none;
 Some tale my faithful steward framed—
 I know not what—of shaft mis-aimed;
 And even from those the act who knew,
 He hid the hand from which it flew.
 Untouched by human laws I stood,
 But GOD had heard the cry of blood!—
 There is a blank upon my mind,
 A fearful vision ill-defined,
 Of raving till my flesh was torn,
 Of dungeon-bolts and fetters worn—
 And when I waked to woe more mild,
 And questioned of my infant child—
 (Have I not written, that she bare
 A boy, like summer morning fair?)
 With looks confused my menials tell,
 That armed men in Mortham dell
 Beset the nurse's evening way,
 And bore her, with her charge, away.
 My faithless friend, and none but he,
 Could profit by this villany;



In the yew grove my wife I found,
A stranger's arms her neck had bound !
I marked his heart—the bow I drew—
I loosed the shaft—'twas more than true !
I found my Edith's dying charms
Locked in her murdered brother's arms !

Him, then, I sought, with purpose dread
Of treble vengeance on his head!
He 'scaped me—but my bosom's wound
Some faint relief from wandering found;
And over distant land and sea
I bore my load of misery.

XXIII.

"'Twas then that fate my footsteps led
Among a daring crew and dread,
With whom full oft my hated life
I ventured in such desperate strife,
That even my fierce associates saw
My frantic deeds with doubt and awe.
Much then I learned, and much can show,
Of human guilt and human woe,
Yet ne'er have, in my wanderings, known
A wretch, whose sorrows matched my own!
It chanced, that after battle fray,
Upon the bloody field we lay;
The yellow moon her lustre shed
Upon the wounded and the dead,
While, sense and toil in wassail drowned,
My ruffian comrades slept around.
There came a voice—its silver tone
Was soft, Matilda, as thine own—
'Ah, wretch!' it said, 'what makest thou here,
While unavenged my bloody bier,
While unprotected lives mine heir,
Without a father's name and care?'"

XXIV.

"I heard—obeyed—and homeward drew;
The fiercest of our desperate crew
I brought at time of need to aid
My purposed vengeance, long delayed.
But, humble be my thanks to Heaven,
That better hopes and thoughts has given,
And by our Lord's dear prayer has taught,
Mercy by mercy must be bought!—
Let me in misery rejoice—
I've seen his face—I've heard his voice—
I claimed of him my only child—
As he disowned the theft, he smiled!
That very calm and callous look,
That fiendish sneer his visage took,
As when he said, in scornful mood,
'There is a gallant in the wood!'
—I did not slay him as he stood—
All praise be to my Maker given!
Long-sufferance is one path to heaven."

XXV.

Thus far the woeful tale was heard,
When something in the thicket stirred.
Up Redmond sprung; the villain Guy
(For he it was that lurked so nigh)

Drew back—he durst not cross his steel
 A moment's space with brave O'Neale,
 For all the treasured gold that rests
 In Mortham's iron-banded chests.
 Redmond resumed his seat;—he said,
 Some roe was rustling in the shade.
 Bertram laughed grimly, when he saw
 His timorous comrade backward draw:
 "A trusty mate art thou, to fear
 A single arm, and aid so near!
 Yet have I seen thee mark a deer.
 Give me thy carbine—I'll show
 An art that thou wilt gladly know,
 How thou mayst safely quell a foe."—

XXVI.

On hands and knees fierce Bertram drew
 The spreading birch and hazels through,
 Till he had Redmond full in view;
 The gun he levelled—mark like this
 Was Bertram never known to miss,
 When fair opposed to aim there sate
 An object of his mortal hate.
 That day young Redmond's death had seen,
 But twice Matilda came between
 The carbine and Redmond's breast,
 Just ere the spring his finger pressed.
 A deadly oath the ruffian swore,
 But yet his fell design forbore:
 "It ne'er," he muttered, "shall be said,
 That thus I scathed thee, haughty maid!"
 Then moved to seek more open aim,
 When to his side Guy Denzil came:
 "Bertram, forbear!—we are undone
 For ever, if thou fire the gun.
 By all the fiends, an armed force
 Descends the dell, of foot and horse!
 We perish if they hear a shot—
 Madman! we have a safer plot—
 Nay, friend, be ruled, and bear thee back!
 Behold, down yonder hollow track,
 The warlike leader of the band
 Comes, with his broadsword in his hand."—
 Bertram looked up; he saw, he knew
 That Denzil's fears had counselled true,
 Then cursed his fortune and withdrew,
 Threaded the woodlands undescried,
 And gained the cave on Greta side.

XXVII.

They whom dark Bertram, in his wraith,
 Doomed to captivity or death,
 Their thoughts to one sad subject lent,
 Saw not nor heard the ambushment.
 Heedless and unconcerned they sate,
 While on the very verge of fate;

Heedless and unconcerned remained,
 When Heaven the murderer's arm restrained :
 As ships drift darkling down the tide,
 Nor see the shelves o'er which they glide.
 Uninterrupted thus they heard
 What Mortham's closing tale declared.
 He spoke of wealth as of a load,
 By Fortune on a wretch bestowed,
 In bitter mockery of hate,
 His cureless woes to aggravate ;
 But yet he prayed Matilda's care
 Might save that treasure for his heir
 His Edith's son—for still he raved
 As confident his life was saved ;
 In frequent vision, he averred,
 He saw his face, his voice he heard.
 Then argued calm—had murder been,
 The blood, the corpses, had been seen ;
 Some had pretended, too, to mark
 On Windermere a stranger bark,
 Whose crew, with jealous care, yet mild,
 Guarded a female and a child.
 While these faint proofs he told and pressed,
 Hope seemed to kindle in his breast ;
 Though inconsistent, vague, and vain,
 It warped his judgment, and his brain.

XXVIII.

These solemn words his story close :—
 " Heaven witness for me, that I chose
 My part in this sad civil fight,
 Moved by no cause but England's right.
 My country's groans have bid me draw
 My sword for gospel and for law ;—
 These righted, I fling arms aside,
 And seek my son through Europe wide.
 My wealth, on which a kinsman nigh
 Already casts a grasping eye,
 With thee may unsuspected lie.
 When of my death Matilda hears,
 Let her retain her trust three years ;
 If none, from me, the treasure claim,
 Perished is Mortham's race and name ;
 Then let it leave her generous hand,
 And flow in bounty o'er the land ;
 Soften the wounded prisoner's lot,
 Rebuild the peasant's ruined cot :
 So spoils, acquired by fight afar,
 Shall mitigate domestic war."—

XXIX.

The generous youths, who well had known,
 Of Mortham's mind the powerful tone,
 To that high mind, by sorrow swerved,
 Gave sympathy his woes deserved :

But Wilfrid chief, who saw revealed,
Why Mortham wished his life concealed,
In secret, doubtless, to pursue
The schemes his wildered fancy drew.
Thoughtful he heard Matilda tell,
That she would share her father's cell,
His partner of captivity,
Where'er his prison-house should be;
Yet grieved to think that Rokeby-hall,
Dismantled, and forsook by all,
Open to rapine and to stealth,
Had now no safeguard for the wealth
Intrusted by her kinsman kind,
And for such noble use designed.
"Was Barnard Castle then her choice,"
Wilfrid inquired with hasty voice,
"Since there the victor's laws ordain,
Her father must a space remain?"—
A fluttered hope his accents shook,
A fluttered joy was in his look.
Matilda hastened to reply,
For anger flashed in Redmond's eye;—
"Duty," she said, with gentle grace,
"Kind Wilfrid, has no choice of place,
Else had I for my sire assigned
Prison less galling to his mind,
Than that his wild-wood haunts which sees,
And hears the murmur of the Tees,
Recalling thus, with every glance,
What captive's sorrow can enhance;
But where those woes are highest, there
Needs Rokeby most his daughter's care."—

xxx.

He felt the kindly check she gave,
And stood abashed—then answered grave:—
"I sought thy purpose, noble maid,
Thy doubts to clear, thy schemes to aid.
I have beneath mine own command,
So wills my sire, a gallant band,
And well could send some horseman wight,
To bear the treasure forth by night,
And so bestow it as you deem
In these ill days may safest seem."
"Thanks, gentle Wilfrid, thanks," she said:
"O be it not one day delayed!
And, more thy sister-friend to aid,
Be thou thyself content to hold,
In thine own keeping, Mortham's gold,
Safest with thee."—While thus she spake,
Armed soldiers on their converse broke,
The same of whose approach afraid,
The ruffians left their ambuscade.
Their chief to Wilfrid bended low,
Then looked around as for a foe.

"What mean'st thou, friend," young Wycliffe said,
"Why thus in arms beset the glade?"
"That would I gladly learn from you,
For up my squadron as I drew,
To exercise our martial game
Upon the moor of Barningham,
A stranger told you were waylaid,
Surrounded, and to death betrayed.
He had a leader's voice, I ween,
A falcon glance, a warrior's mien.
He bade me bring you instant aid;
I doubted not, and I obeyed."—

XXXI.

Wilfrid changed colour, and amazed,
Turned short, and on the speaker gazed;
While Redmond every thicket round
Tracked earnest as a questing hound,
And Denzil's carbine he found;
Sure evidence, by which they knew
The warning was as kind as true.
Wiseest it seemed, with cautious speed
To leave the dell. It was agreed,
That Redmond, with Matilda fair,
And fitting guard, should home repair;
At nightfall Wilfrid should attend,
With a strong band, his sister-friend,
To bear with her from Rokeby's bowers
To Barnard Castle's lofty towers,
Secret and safe the banded chests,
In which the wealth of Mortham rests.
This hasty purpose fixed, they part,
Each with a grieved and anxious heart.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

THE sultry summer day is done,
The western hills have hid the sun,
But mountain peak and village spire
Retain reflection of his fire.
Old Barnard's towers are purple still,
To those that gaze from Toller-hill;
Distant and high, the tower of Bowes
Like steel upon the anvil glows;
And Stanmore's ridge, behind that lay,
Rich with the spoils of parting day,
In crimson and in gold arrayed,
Streaks yet a while the closing shade,
Then slow resigns to darkening heaven
The tints which brighter hours had given.
Thus aged men, full loath and slow,
The vanities of life forego,

And count their youthful follies o'er,
Till Memory lends her light no more.

II.

The eve, that slow on upland fades,
Has darker closed on Rokeby's glades,
Where, sunk within their banks profound,
Her guardian streams to meeting wound.
The stately oaks, whose sombre frown
Of noontide made a twilight brown,
Impervious now to fainter light,
Of twilight make an early night.
Hoarse into middle air arose
The vespers of the roosting crows,
And with congenial murmurs seem
To wake the Genii of the stream;
For louder clamoured Greta's tide,
And Tees in deeper voice replied,
And fitful waked the evening wind,
Fitful in sighs its breath resigned.
Wilfrid, whose fancy-nurtured soul
Felt in the scene a soft control,
With lighter footstep pressed the ground,
And often paused to look around;
And, though his path was to his love,
Could not but linger in the grove,
To drink the thrilling interest dear,
Of awful pleasure checked by fear.
Such inconsistent moods have we,
Even when our passions strike the key.

III.

Now through the wood's dark mazes passed,
The opening lawn he reached at last,
Where, silvered by the moonlight ray,
The ancient Hall before him lay.
Those martial terrors long were fled,
That frowned of old around its head:
The battlements, the turrets gray,
Seemed half abandoned to decay;
On barbican and keep of stone
Stern Time the foeman's work had done;
Where banners the invader braved,
The harbell now and wallflower waved;
In the rude guard-room, where of yore
Their weary hours the warders wore,
Now, while the cheerful faggots blaze,
On the paved floor the spindle plays;
The flanking guns dismounted lie,
The moat is ruinous and dry,
The grim portcullis gone—and all
The fortress turned to peaceful hall.

IV.

But yet precautions, lately ta'en,
Showed danger's day revived again:

The court-yard wall showed marks of care,
The fallen defences to repair,
Lending such strength as might withstand
The insult of marauding band.
The beams once more were taught to bear
The trembling drawbridge into air,
And not till questioned o'er and o'er,
For Wilfrid oped the jealous door;
And when he entered, bolt and bar
Resumed their place with sullen jar;
Then as he crossed the vaulted porch,
The old gray porter raised his torch,
And viewed him o'er, from foot to head,
Ere to the hall his steps he led.
That huge old hall, of knightly state,
Dismantled seemed and desolate.
The moon through transom-shafts of stone,
Which crossed the latticed oriels, shone,
And by the mournful light she gave,
The Gothic vault seemed funeral cave.
Pennon and banner waved no more
O'er beams of stag or tusks of boar,
Nor glimmering arms were marshalled stern,
To glance those sylvan spoils between.
Those arms, those ensigns, borne away,
Accomplished Rokeby's brave array,
But all were lost on Marston's day!
Yet here and there the moonbeams fall
Where armour yet adorns the wall,
Cumbrous of size, uncouth to sight,
And useless in the modern fight;
Like veteran relic of the wars,
Known only by neglected scars.

V.

Matilda soon to greet him came,
And bade them light the evening flame;
Said, all for parting was prepared,
And tarried but for Wilfrid's guard.
But then, reluctant to unfold
His father's avarice of gold,
He hinted, that, lest jealous eye
Should on their precious burden pry,
He judged it best the castle gate
To enter when the night wore late;
And therefore he had left command
With those he trusted of his band,
That they should be at Rokeby met,
What time the midnight-watch was set.
Now Redmond came, whose anxious care
Till then was busied to prepare
All needful, meetly to arrange
The mansion for its mournful change.
With Wilfrid's care and kindness pleased,
His cold unready hand he seized,

And pressed it, till his kindly strain
 The gentle youth returned again.
 Seemed as between them this was said,
 "Awhile let jealousy be dead;
 And let our contest be, whose care
 Shall best assist this helpless fair."—

VI.

There was no speech the truce to bind,
 It was a compact of the mind;
 A generous thought, at once impressed
 On either rival's generous breast.
 Matilda well the secret took,
 From sudden change of mien and look,
 And—for not small had been her fear
 Of jealous ire and danger near—
 Felt, even in her dejected state,
 A joy beyond the reach of fate,
 They closed beside the chimney's blaze,
 And talked and hoped for happier days,
 And lent their spirits' rising glow
 Awhile to gild impending woe;—
 High privilege of youthful time,
 Worth all the pleasures of our prime!
 The bickering faggot sparkled bright,
 And gave the scene of love to sight,
 Bade Wilfrid's cheek more lively glow,
 Played on Matilda's neck of snow
 Her nut-brown curls and forehead high,
 And laughed in Redmond's azure eye.
 Two lovers by the maiden sate,
 Without a glance of jealous hate;
 The maid her lovers sat between,
 With open brow and equal mien:—
 It is a sight but rarely spied,
 Thanks to man's wrath and woman's pride.

VII.

While thus in peaceful guise they sate,
 A knock alarmed the outer gate,
 And ere the tardy porter stirred,
 The tinkling of a harp was heard.
 A manly voice of mellow swell,
 Bore burden to the music well.

Song.

"Summer eve is gone and passed,
 Summer dew is falling fast;
 I have wandered all the day,
 Do not bid me further stray!
 Gentle hearts of gentle kin,
 Take the wandering Harper in!"

But the stern porter answer gave,
 With "Get thee hence, thou strolling knave!"

The king wants soldiers; war, I know,
Were meeter trade for such as thou."—
At this unkind reproof again
Answered the ready minstrel's strain.

Song resumed.

"Bid not me, in battle-field,
Buckler lift, or broadsword wield!
All my strength and all my art
Is to touch the gentle heart,
With the wizard notes that ring
From the peaceful minstrel-string."—

The porter, all unmoved, replied,—
"Depart in peace, with Heaven to guide;
If longer by the gate thou dwell,
Trust me, thou shalt not part so well."—

VIII.

With somewhat of appealing look,
The Harper's part young Wilfrid took;
"These notes so wild and ready thrill,
They show no vulgar minstrel's skill;
Hard were his task to seek a home
More distant, since the night is come;
And for his faith I dare engage—
Your Harpool's blood is soured by age;
His gate, once readily displayed,
To greet the friend, the poor to aid,
Now even to me, though known of old,
Did but reluctantly unfold."—
—"O blame not as poor Harpool's crime,
An evil of this evil time.
He deems dependent on his care,
The safety of his patron's heir,
Nor judges meet to ope the tower
To guest unknown at parting hour,
Urging his duty to excess
Of rough and stubborn faithfulness.
For this poor Harper I would fain
He may relax:—Hark to his strain!"—

IX.

Song resumed.

"I have song of war for knight,
Lay of love for lady bright,
Fairy tale to lull the heir,
Goblin grim the maids to scare;
Dark the night, and long till day,
Do not bid me further stray!"

"Rokeby's lords of martial fame,
I can count them name by name;
Legends of their line there be,
Known to few, but known to me;

If you honour Rokeby's kin,
Take the wandering Harper in!

"Rokeby's lords had fair regard
For the harp, and for the bard;
Baron's race throve never well,
Where the curse of minstrel fell.
If you love that noble kin,
Take the weary Harper in!"—

"Hark! Harpool parleys—there is hope,"
Said Redmond, "that the gate will ope."—

"For all thy brag and boast, I trow,
Nought know'st thou of the Felon Sow,"
Quoth Harpool, "nor how Greta-side
She roamed, and Rokeby forest wide;
Nor how Ralph Rokeby gave the beast
To Richmond's friars to make a feast.
Of Gilbert Griffinson the tale
Goes, and of gallant Peter Dale,
That well could strike with sword amain,
And of the valiant son of Spain,
Friar Middleton, and blithe Sir Ralph;
There were a jest to make us laugh!
If thou canst tell it, in yon shed,
Thou'st won thy supper and thy bed."—

X.

Matilda smiled; "Cold hope," said she,
"From Harpool's love of minstrelsy!
But, for this Harper, may we dare,
Redmond, to mend his couch and fare?"—

"O ask not me!—at minstrel-string
My heart from infancy would spring;
Nor can I hear its simplest strain,
But it brings Erin's dream again,
When placed by Owen Lysagh's knee,
(The Fílea of O'Neale was he,
A blind and bearded man, whose eld
Was sacred as a prophet's held.)
I've seen a ring of rugged kerne,
With aspects shaggy, wild, and stern,
Enchanted by the master's lay,
Linger around the livelong day,
Shift from wild rage to wilder glee,
To love, to grief, to ecstasy,
And feel each varied change of soul
Obedient to the bard's control.—
Ah, Clandeboy! thy friendly floor
Eileve-Donard's oak shall light no more;
Nor Owen's harp, beside the blaze,
Tell maiden's love, or hero's praise!
The mantling brambles hide thy hearth,
Centre of hospitable mirth;
All undistinguished in the glade,
My sires' glad home is prostrate laid.

Their vassals wander wide and far,
Serve foreign lords in distant war,
And now the stranger's sons enjoy
The lovely woods of Clandeboy!"—
He spoke, and proudly turned aside,
The starting tear to dry and hide.

XI.

Matilda's dark and softened eye
Was glistening ere O'Neale's was dry.
Her hand upon his arm she laid,—
"It is the will of Heaven," she said.
"And think'st thou, Redmond, I can part
From this loved home with lightsome heart,
Leaving to wild neglect whate'er
Even from my infancy was dear?
For in this calm domestic bound
Were all Matilda's pleasures found.
That hearth, my sire was wont to grace,
Full soon may be a stranger's place;
This hall, in which a child I played,
Like thine, dear Redmond, lowly laid,
The bramble and the thorn may braid;
Or, passed for aye from me and mine,
It ne'er may shelter Rokeby's line.
Yet is this consolation given,
My Redmond,—'tis the will of Heaven."—
Her word, her action, and her phrase,
Were kindly as in early days;
For cold reserve had lost its power,
In sorrow's sympathetic hour.
Young Redmond dared not trust his voice;
But rather had it been his choice
To share that melancholy hour,
Than, armed with all a chieftain's power,
In full possession to enjoy
Slieve-Donard wide, and Clandeboy.

XII.

The blood left Wilfrid's ashen cheek;
Matilda sees, and hastes to speak.—
"Happy in friendship's ready aid,
Let all my murmurs here be stayed!
And Rokeby's maiden will not part
From Rokeby's hall with moody heart.
This night at least, for Rokeby's fame,
The hospitable hearth shall flame,
And, ere its native heir retire,
Find for the wanderer rest and fire,
While this poor Harper, by the blaze,
Recounts the tale of other days.
Bid Harpool open the door with speed,
Admit him, and relieve each need.—
Meantime, kind Wycliffe, wilt thou try
Thy minstrel skill?—nay, no reply—

And look not sad!—I guess thy thought,
 Thy vorse with laurels would be bought;
 And poor Matilda, landless now,
 As not a garland for thy brow.
 rue, I must leave sweet Rokeby's glads,
 Or wander more in Greta shales;
 ut sure, no rigid jailer, thou
 Wilt a short prison-walk allow,
 Where summer flowers grow wild at will,
 n Marwood-chase and Toller Hill;
 hen holly green and lily gay
 Shall twine in guerdon of thy lay."—
 he mournful youth, a space aside,
 o tune Matilda's harp applied;
 nd then a low sad descant rung,
 s prelude to the lay he sung.

XIII.

The Cypress Wreath.

O Lady, twine no wreath for me,
 Or twine it of the cypress-tree!
 Too lively glow the lilies light,
 The varnished holly's all too bright,
 The May-flower and the eglantine
 May shade a brow less sad than mine;
 But, Lady, weave no wreath for me,
 Or weave it of the cypress-tree!
 Let dimpled Mirth his temples twine
 With tendrils of the laughing vine;
 The manly oak, the pensive yew,
 To patriot and to sage be due;
 The myrtle bough bids lovers live,
 But that Matilda will not give;
 Then, Lady, twine no wreath for me,
 Or twine it of the cypress-tree!
 Let merry England proudly rear
 Her blended roses, bought so dear;
 Let Albin bind her bonnet blue
 With heath and harebell dipped in dew;
 On favoured Erin's crest be seen
 The flower she loves of emerald green—
 But, Lady, twine no wreath for me,
 Or twine it of the cypress-tree!
 Strike the wild harp, while maids prepar-
 The ivy meet for minstrel's hair;
 And, while his crown of laurel-leaves
 With bloody hand the victor weaves,
 Let the loud trump his triumph tell;
 But when you hear the passing bell,
 Then, Lady, twine a wreath for me,
 And twine it of the cypress-tree!
 Yes! twine for me the cypress bough
 But, O Matilda, twine not now!

Stay till a few brief months are passed,
 And I have looked and loved my last!
 When villagers my shroud bestrew
 With pansies, rosemary, and rue,—
 Then, Lady, weave a wreath for me,
 And weave it of the cypress-tree!

XIV.

O'Neale observed the starting tear,
 And spoke with kind and blithesome cheer—
 "No, noble Wilfrid! ere the day
 When mourns the land thy silent lay,
 Shall many a wreath be freely wove
 By hand of friendship and of love.
 I would not wish that rigid Fate
 Had doomed thee to a captive's state,
 Whose hands are bound by honour's law,
 Who wears a sword he must not draw;
 But were it so, in minstrel pride
 The land together would we ride,
 On prancing steeds, like harpers old,
 Bound for the halls of barons bold;
 Each lover of the lyre we'd seek,
 From Michael's Mount to Skiddaw's Peak,
 Survey wild Albin's mountain strand,
 And roam green Erin's lovely land,
 While thou the gentler souls should move,
 With lay of pity and of love,
 And I, thy mate, in rougher strain,
 Would sing of war and warriors slain.
 Old England's bards were vanquished then,
 And Scotland's vaunted Hawthornden,*
 And, silenced on Iernian shore,
 M'Curtin's harp should charm no more!"
 In lively mood he spoke, to wile
 From Wilfrid's woe-worn cheek a smile.

XV.

"But," said Matilda, "ere thy name,
 Good Redmond, gain its destined fame,
 Say, wilt thou kindly deign to call
 Thy brother minstrel to the hall?
 Bid all the household, too, attend,
 Each in his rank an humble friend;
 I know their faithful hearts will grieve,
 When their poor Mistress takes her leave,
 So let the horn and beaker flow
 To mitigate their parting woe."—
 The Harper came:—in youth's first prime
 Himself; in mode of olden time
 His garb was fashioned, to express
 The ancient English minstrel's dress,

* Drummond of Hawthornden was in the zenith of his reputation as a poet during the civil wars. He died in 1649.

A seemly gown of Kendal green,
 With gorget closed of silver sheen,
 His harp in silken scarf was slung,
 And by his side an anlace hung.
 It seemed some masquer's quaint array,
 For revel or for holiday.

XVI.

He made obeisance with a free
 Yet studied air of courtesy.
 Each look and accent, framed to please,
 Seemed to affect a playful ease;
 His face was of that doubtful kind,
 That wins the eye, but not the mind;
 Yet harsh it seemed to deem amiss
 Of brow so young and smooth as this.
 His was the subtle look and sly,
 That, spying all, seems nought to spy;
 Round all the group his glances stole,
 Unmarked themselves, to mark the whole;
 Yet sunk beneath Matilda's look,
 Nor could the eye of Redmond brook.
 To the suspicious, or the old,
 Subtle and dangerous and bold
 Had seemed this self-invited guest;
 But young our lovers,—and the rest,
 Wrapt in their sorrow and their fear
 At parting of their mistress dear,
 Tear-blinded to the Castle hall,
 Came as to bear her funeral pall.

XVII.

All that expression base was gone,
 When waked the guest his minstrel tone;
 It fled at inspiration's call,
 As erst the Demon fled from Saul.
 More noble glance he cast around,
 More free-drawn breath inspired the sound,
 His pulse beat bolder and more high,
 In all the pride of minstrelsy!
 Alas! too soon that pride was o'er,
 Sunk with the lay that bade it soar!
 His soul resumed, with habit's chain,
 Its vices wild and follies vain,
 And gave the talent, with him born,
 To be a common curse and scorn.
 Such was the youth whom Rokeby's maid,
 With condescending kindness, prayed
 Here to renew the strain she loved,
 At distance heard and well approved.

XVIII.

Song.

THE HARP.

I was a wild and wayward boy,
 My childhood scorned each childish toy;

Retired from all, reserved, and coy,
 To musing prone,
 I wooed my solitary joy,
 My Harp alone.

My youth, with bold Ambition's mood,
 Despised the humble stream and wood,
 Where my poor father's cottage stood,
 To fame unknown;—
 What should my soaring views make good?
 My Harp alone.

Love came with all his frantic fire,
 And wild romance of vain desire;
 The Baron's daughter heard my lyre,
 And praised the tone;—
 What could presumptuous hope inspire?
 My Harp alone.

At Manhood's touch the bubble burst,
 And Manhood's pride the vision cursed,
 And all that had my folly nursed
 Love's sway to own;
 Yet spared the spell that lulled me first,
 My Harp alone.

Woe came with war, and want with woe;
 And it was mine to undergo
 Each outrage of the rebel foe.—
 Can aught atone
 My fields laid waste, my cot laid low?
 My Harp alone!

Ambition's dreams I've seen depart,
 Have rued of penury the smart,
 Have felt of love the venom'd dart
 When hope was flown;
 Yet rests one solace to my heart,—
 My Harp alone!

Then, over mountain, moor, and hill,
 My faithful harp, I'll bear thee still;
 And when this life of want and ill
 Is well nigh gone,
 Thy strings mine elegy shall thrill,
 My Harp alone!

XIX.

"A pleasing lay!" Matilda said;
 But Harpool shook his old gray head
 And took his baton and his torch,
 To seek his guard-room in the porch.
 Edmund observed—with sudden change,
 Among the strings his fingers range,
 Until they waked a bolder glee
 Of military melody;
 Then paused amid the martial sound,
 And looked with well-feigned fear around—

"None to this noble house belong,"
 He said, "that would a minstrel wrong,
 Whose fate has been, through good and ill,
 To love his Royal Master still;
 And, with your honoured leave, would fain
 Rejoice you with a loyal strain."—
 Then, as assured by sign and look,
 The warlike tone again he took;
 And Harpool stopped, and turned to hear,
 A ditty of the Cavalier.

XX.

Song.

THE CAVALIER.

While the dawn on the mountain was misty and gray,
 My True Love has mounted his steed and away,
 Over hill, over valley, o'er dale, and o'er down;
 Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown!

He has doffed the silk doublet the breastplate to bear,
 He has placed the steel-cap o'er his long flowing hair,
 From his belt to his stirrup his broadsword hangs down,—
 Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown!

For the rights of fair England that broadsword he draws;
 Her King is his leader, her Church is his cause;
 His watchword is honour, his pay is renown,—
 God strike with the gallant that strikes for the Crown!

They may boast of their Fairfax, their Waller, and all
 The round-headed rebels of Westminster Hall;
 But tell these bold traitors of London's proud town,
 That the spears of the North have encircled the Crown!

There's Derby and Cavendish, dread of their foes;
 There's Erin's high Ormond, and Scotland's Montrose!
 Would you match the base Skippon, and Massey, and Brown
 With the Barons of England, that fight for the Crown!

Now joy to the crest of the brave Cavalier!
 Be his banner unconquered, resistless his spear,
 Till in peace and in triumph his toils he may drown,
 In a pledge to fair England, her Church, and her Crown!

XXI.

"Alas!" Matilda said, "that strain,
 Good Harper, now is heard in vain!
 The time has been, at such a sound,
 When Rokeby's vassals gathered round,
 A hundred manly hearts would bound;
 But now, the stirring verse we hear
 Like trump in dying soldier's ear!
 Listless and sad the notes we own,
 The power to answer them is flown.
 Yet not without his meet applause
 Be he that sings the rightful cause.

Even when the crisis of its fate
 To human eye seems desperate.
 While Rokeby's Heir such power retains,
 Let this slight guerdon pay thy pains :—
 And lend thy harp ; I fain would try,
 If my poor skill can aught supply,
 Ere yet I leave my fathers' hall,
 To mourn the cause in which we fall."—

XXII.

The Harper, with a downcast look,
 And trembling hand, her bounty took.
 As yet, the conscious pride of art
 Had steeled him in his treacherous part ;
 A powerful spring, of force unguessed,
 That hath each gentler mood suppressed,
 And reigned in many a human breast,
 From his that plans the red campaign,
 To his that wastes the woodland reign.
 The falling wing, the blood-shot eye,
 The sportsman marks with apathy,
 Each feeling of his victim's ill
 Drowned in his own successful skill.
 The veteran, too, who now no more
 Aspires to head the battle's roar,
 Loves still the triumph of his art,
 And traces on the pencilled chart
 Some stern invader's destined way,
 Through blood and ruin to his prey ;
 Patriots to death, and towns to flame,
 He dooms, to raise another's name,
 And shares the guilt, though not the fate.
 What pays him for his span of time
 Spent in premeditated crime ?
 What against pity arms his heart ?—
 It is the conscious pride of art.

XXIII.

But principles in Edmund's mind
 Were baseless, vague, and undefined.
 His soul, like bark with rudder lost,
 On passion's changeful tide was tossed ;
 Nor Vice nor Virtue had the power
 Beyond the impression of the hour ;
 And, oh, when passion rules, how rare
 The hours that fall to Virtue's share !
 Yet now she roused her—for the pride,
 That lack of sterner guilt supplied,
 Could scarce support him when arose
 The lay that mourned Matilda's woes.

Song.

THE FAREWELL.

The sound of Rokeby's woods I hear,
 They mingle with the song ;

Dark Greta's voice is in mine ear,
 I must not hear them long.
 From every loved and native haunt
 The native heir must stray,
 And, like a ghost whom sunbeams daunt,
 Must part before the day.

Soon from the halls my fathers reared,
 Their scutcheons may descend.
 A line so long beloved and feared
 May soon obscurely end.
 No longer here Matilda's tone
 Shall bid these echoes swell,
 Yet shall they hear her proudly own
 The cause in which we fell.

The Lady paused, and then again
 Resumed the lay in loftier strain.

XXIV.

Let our halls and towers decay,
 Be our name and line forgot,
 Lands and manors pass away,—
 We but share our monarch's lot.
 If no more our annals show
 Battles won and banners taken,
 Still in death, defeat, and woe,
 Ours be loyalty unshaken!
 Constant still in danger's hour,
 Princes owned our fathers' aid;
 Lands and honours, wealth and power,
 Well their loyalty repaid.
 Perish wealth, and power, and pride!
 Mortal boons by mortals given;
 But let Constancy abide,
 Constancy's the gift of Heaven.

XXV.

While thus Matilda's lay was heard,
 A thousand thoughts in Edmund stirred.
 In peasant life he might have known
 As fair a face, as sweet a tone;
 But village notes could ne'er supply
 That rich and varied melody,
 And ne'er in cottage maid was seen
 The easy dignity of mien,
 Claiming respect, yet waving state,
 That marks the daughters of the great.
 Yet not, perchance, had these alone
 His scheme of purposed guilt o'erthrown;
 But, while her energy of mind
 Superior rose to griefs combined,
 Lending its kindling to her eye,
 Giving her form new majesty,—

To Edmund's thought Matilda seemed
The very object he had dreamed,
When, long ere guilt his soul had known,
In Winston's bowers he mused alone,
Taxing his fancy to combine
The face, the air, the voice divine,
Of princess fair, by cruel fate
Reft of her honours, power, and state,
Till to her rightful realm restored
By destined hero's conquering sword.

XXVI.

"Such was my vision!" Edmund thought;
"And have I, then, the ruin wrought
Of such a maid, that fancy ne'er
In fairest vision formed her peer?
Was it my hand that could uncloze
The postern to her ruthless foes?
Foes, lost to honour, law, and faith,
Their kindest mercy sudden death!
Have I done this? I! who have sworn,
That if the globe such angel bore,
I would have traced its circle broad,
To kiss the ground on which she trod!—
And now—O! would that earth would rive,
And close upon me while alive!—
Is there no hope? Is all then lost?—
Bertram's already on his post!
Even now, beside the hall's arched door,
I saw his shadow cross the floor!
He was to wait my signal strain
A little respite thus we gain:—
By what I heard the menials say
Young Wycliffe's troop are on their way—
Alarm precipitates the crime!
My harp must wear away the time."—
And then, in accents faint and low,
He faltered forth a tale of woe.

XXVII.

25affab.

"And whither would you lead me, then?"
Quoth the Friar of orders gray;
And the ruffians twain replied again,
"By a dying woman to pray."—
"I see," he said, "a lovely sight,
A sight bodes little harm,
A lady as a lily bright,
With an infant on her arm."—
"Then do thine office, Friar gray,
And see thou shrive her free!
Else shall the sprite, that parts to-night,
Fling all its guilt on thee.

"Let mass be said, and trentals read,
When thou'rt to convent gone,
And bid the bell of St Benedict
Toll out its deepest tone."—

The shrift is done, the Friar is gone,
Blindfolded as he came—
Next morning, all in Littlecot Hall
Were weeping for their dame.

Wild Darrell is an altered man,
The village crones can tell;
He looks pale as clay, and strives to pray,
If he hears the convent bell.

If prince or peer cross Darrell's way,
He'll beard him in his pride—
If he meet a Friar of orders gray,
He droops and turns aside.

XXVIII.

"Harper! methinks thy magic lays,"
Matilda said, "can goblins raise!
Well nigh my fancy can discern,
Near the dark porch, a visage stern;
E'en now, in yonder shadowy nook
I see it!—Redmond, Wilfrid, look!—
A human form distinct and clear—
God, for thy mercy!—It draws near!"—
She saw too true. Stride after stride,
The centre of that chamber wide
Fierce Bertram gained; then made a stand,
And, proudly waving with his hand,
Thundered—"Be still, upon your lives!
He bleeds who speaks, he dies who strives."—
Behind their chief, the robber crew
Forth from the darkened portal drew,
In silence—save that echo dread
Returned their heavy measured tread.
The lamp's uncertain lustre gave
Their arms to gleam, their plumes to wave;
File after file in order pass,
Like forms on Banquo's mystic glass.
Then, halting at their leader's sign,
At once they formed and curv'd their line,
Hemming within its crescent drear
Their victims, like a herd of deer.
Another sign, and to the aim
Levelled at once their muskets came,
As waiting but their chieftain's word,
To make their fatal volley heard.

XXIX.

Back in a heap the menials drew,
Yet, even in mortal terror, true,
Their pale and startled group oppose
Between Matilda and the foes.

"O, haste thee, Wilfrid!" Redmond cried;
"Undo that wicket by thy side!
Bear hence Matilda—gain the wood—
The pass may be a while made good—
Thy band, ere this, must sure be nigh—
O speak not—dally not—but fly!"—
While yet the crowd their motions hide,
Through the low wicket door they glide.
Through vaulted passages they wind,
In Gothic intricacy twined;
Wilfrid half led, and half he bore,
Matilda to the postern door,
And safe beneath the forest tree
The Lady stands at liberty.
The moonbeams, the fresh gale's caress,
Renewed suspended consciousness:—
"Where's Redmond?" eagerly she cries:
"Thou answer'st not—he dies! he dies!
And thou hast left him, all bereft
Of mortal aid—with murderers left!—
I know it well—he would not yield
His sword to man—his doom is sealed!
For my scorned life, which thou hast bought
At price of his, I thank thee not."—

XXX.

The unjust reproach, the angry look,
The heart of Wilfrid could not brook.
"Lady," he said, "my band so near,
In safety thou mayst rest thee here.
For Redmond's death thou shalt not mourn,
If mine can buy his safe return."—
He turned away—his heart throbbed high,
The tear was bursting from his eye.
The sense of her injustice pressed
Upon the maid's distracted breast,—
"Stay, Wilfrid, stay! all aid is vain!"—
He heard, but turned him not again;
And now he gains the postern door,
Now enters—and is seen no more.

XXXI.

With all the agony that e'er
Was gendered 'twixt suspense and fear,
She watched the line of windows tall,
Whose Gothic lattice lights the hall,
Distinguished by the paly red
The lamps in dim reflection shed,
While all beside in wan moonlight
Each grated casement glimmered white.
No sight of harm, no sound of ill,
It is a deep and midnight still.
Who looked upon the scene had guessed
All in the Castle were at rest:
When sudden on the windows shone
A lightning flash, just seen and gone!

A shot is heard—Again the flame
Flashed thick and fast—a volley came!
Then echoed wildly, from within,
Of shout and scream the mingled din,
And weapon-clash and maddening cry
Of those who kill, and those who die!
As filled the hall with sulphurous smoke,
More red, more dark, the death-flash broke,
And forms were on the lattice cast,
That struck, or struggled, as they passed.

XXXII.

What sounds upon the midnight wind
Approach so rapidly behind?
It is, it is the tramp of steeds!
Matilda hears the sound, she speeds,
Seizes upon the leader's rein—
"O haste to aid, ere aid be vain!
Fly to the postern—gain the hall!"—
From saddle spring the troopers all;
Their gallant steeds, at liberty,
Run wild along the moonlight lea.
But, ere they burst upon the scene,
Full stubborn had the conflict been.
When Bertram marked Matilda's flight,
It gave the signal for the fight;
And Rokeby's veterans, seamed with scars
Of Scotland's and of Erin's wars,
Their momentary panic o'er,
Stood to the arms which then they bore;
(For they were weaponed, and prepared
Their mistress on her way to guard.)
Then cheered them to the fight O'Neale,
Then pealed the shot, and clashed the steel;
The war-smoke soon with sable breath
Darkened the scene of blood and death,
While on the few defenders close
The Bandits with redoubled blows,
And, twice driven back, yet fierce and fell
Renew the charge with frantic yell.

XXXIII.

Wilfrid has fallen—but o'er him stood
Young Redmond, soiled with smoke and blood.
Cheering his mates, with heart and hand
Still to make good their desperate stand.
"Up, comrades, up! in Rokeby's halls
Ne'er be it said our courage falls.
What! faint ye for their savage cry,
Or do the smoke-wreaths daunt your eye?
These rafters have returned a shout
As loud at Rokeby's wassail rout,
As thick a smoke these hearths have given
At Hallow tide or Christmas even,
Stand to it yet! renew the fight,
For Rokeby's and Matilda's right!

These slaves! they dare not, hand to hand,
Bide buffet from a true man's brand."—
Impetuous, active, fierce, and young,
Upon the advancing foes he sprung.
Woe to the wretch at whom is bent
His brandished falchion's sheer descent!
Backward they scattered as he came,
Like wolves before the levin flame,
When, 'mid their howling conclave driven,
Hath glanced the thunderbolt of heaven.
Bertram rushed on—but Harpool clasped,
His knees, although in death he gasped,
His falling corpse before him flung,
And round the trammelled ruffian clung.
Just then, the soldiers filled the dome,
And, shouting, charged the felons home
So fiercely, that in panic dread,
They broke, they yielded, fell, or fled.
Bertram's stern voice they heed no more,
Though heard above the battle's roar,
While, trampling down the dying man,
He strove, with volleyed threat and ban,
In scorn of odds, in fate's despite,
To rally up the desperate fight.

XXXIV.

Soon murkier clouds the hall enfold,
Than e'er from battle-thunders rolled;
So dense, the combatants scarce know
To aim or to avoid the blow.
Smothering and blindfold grows the fight—
But soon shall dawn a dismal light!
'Mid cries, and clashing arms, there came
The hollow sound of rushing flame;
New horrors on the tumult dire
Arise—the Castle is on fire!
Doubtful, if chance had cast the brand,
Or frantic Bertram's desperate hand.
Matilda saw—for frequent broke
From the dim casements gusts of smoke.
Yon tower, which late so clear defined
On the fair hemisphere reclined,
That, pencilled on its azure pure,
The eye could count each embrasure,
Now, swathed within the sweeping cloud,
Seems giant-spectre in his shroud;
Till, from each loop-hole flashing light,
A spout of fire shines ruddy bright,
And, gathering to united glare,
Streams high into the midnight air,
A dismal beacon, far and wide,
That wakened Greta's slumbering side.
Soon all beneath, through gallery long
And pendent arch, the fire flashed strong,

Snatching whatever could maintain,
 Raise, or extend its furious reign;
 Startling, with closer cause of dread,
 The females who the conflict fled,
 And now rushed forth upon the plain,
 Filling the air with clamours vain.

XXXV.

But ceased not yet, the hall within,
 The shriek, the shout, the carnage-din,
 Till bursting lattices give proof,
 The flames have caught the raftered roof.
 What! wait they till its beams amain
 Crash on the slayers and the slain?
 The alarm is caught—the drawbridge falls,
 The warriors hurry from the walls,
 But, by the conflagration's light,
 Upon the lawn renew the fight.
 Each straggling felon down was hewed,
 Not one could gain the sheltering wood;
 But forth the affrighted Harper sprung,
 And to Matilda's robe he clung.
 Her shriek, entreaty, and command,
 Stopped the pursuer's lifted hand.
 Denzil and he alive were ta'en;
 The rest, save Bertram, all are slain.

XXXVI.

And where is Bertram?—Soaring high,
 The general flame ascends the sky;
 In gathered group the soldiers gaze
 Upon the broad and roaring blaze,
 When, like infernal demon, sent
 Red from his penal element,
 To plague and to pollute the air,—
 His face all gore, on fire his hair,
 Forth from the central mass of smoke
 The giant form of Bertram broke!
 His brandished sword on high he rears,
 Then plunged among opposing spears;
 Round his left arm his mantle trussed,
 Received and foiled three lances' thrust;
 Nor these his headlong course withstood,
 Like reeds he snapped the tough ash-wood.
 In vain his foes around him clung;
 With matchless force aside he flung
 Their boldest,—as the bull, at bay,
 Tosses the ban-dogs from his way.
 Through forty foes his path he made,
 And safely gained the forest glade.

XXVII.

Scarce was this final conflict o'er,
 When from the postern Redmond bore
 Wilfrid, who, as of life bereft,
 Had in the fatal hall been left,

Deserted there by all his train;
But Redmond saw, and turned again.—
Beneath an oak he laid him down,
That in the blaze gleamed ruddy brown,
And then his mantle's clasp undid;
Matilda held his drooping head,
Till, given to breathe the freer air,
Returning life repaid their care.
He gazed on them with heavy sigh,—
“I could have wished even thus to die!”—
No more he said—for now with speed
Each trooper had regained his steed;
The ready palfreys stood arrayed,
For Redmond and for Rokeby's Maid;
Two Wilfrid on his horse sustain,
One leads his charger by the rein.
But oft Matilda looked behind,
As up the vale of Tees they wind,
Where far the mansion of her sires
Beaconed the dale with midnight fires.
In gloomy arch above them spread,
The clouded heaven lowered bloody red;
Beneath, in sombre light, the flood
Appeared to roll in waves of blood.
Then, one by one, was heard to fall
The tower, the donjon-keep, the hall.
Each rushing down with thunder sound,
A space the conflagration drowned;
Till, gathering strength, again it rose,
Announced its triumph in its close,
Shook wide its light the landscape o'er,
Then sunk—and Rokeby was no more!

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

THE summer sun, whose early power
Was wont to gild Matilda's bower,
And rouse her with his matin ray
Her duteous orisons to pay,
That morning sun has three times seen
The flowers unfold on Rokeby green,
But sees no more the slumbers fly
From fair Matilda's hazel eye;
That morning sun has three times broke
On Rokeby's glades of elm and oak,
But, rising from their sylvan screen,
Marks no gray turret's glance between!
A shapeless mass lie keep and tower,
That, hissing to the morning shower,
Can but with smouldering vapour pay
The early smile of summer day.

The peasant, to his labour bound,
 Pauses to view the blackened mound,
 Striving, amid the ruined space,
 Each well-remembered spot to trace.
 That length of frail and fire-scorched wall
 Once screened the hospitable hall;
 When yonder broken arch was whole,
 'Twas there was dealt the weekly dole;
 And where yon tottering columns nod,
 The chapel sent the hymn to God.
 So fits the world's uncertain span!
 Nor zeal for God, nor love for man,
 Gives mortal monuments a date
 Beyond the power of Time and Fate.
 The towers must share the builder's doom
 Ruin is theirs, and his a tomb:
 But better boon benignant Heaven
 To Faith and Charity has given,
 And bids the Christian hope sublime
 Transcend the bounds of Fate and Time.

II.

Now the third night of summer came,
 Since that which witnessed Rokeby's flame
 On Brignal cliffs and Scargill brake
 The owl's homilies awake,
 The bittern screamed from rush and flag,
 The raven slumbered on his crag,
 Forth from his den the otter drew,—
 Grayling and trout their tyrant knew,
 As between reed and sedge he peers,
 With fierce round snout and sharpened ears,
 Or, prowling by the moonbeam cool,
 Watches the stream or swims the pool;—
 Perched on his wonted eyrie high,
 Sleep sealed the tercelet's wearied eye,
 That all the day had watched so well,
 The cushat dart across the dell.
 In dubious beam reflected shone
 That lofty cliff of pale gray stone,
 Beside whose base the secret cave
 To rapine late a refuge gave.
 The crag's wild crest of copse and yew
 On Greta's breast dark shadows threw;
 Shadows that met or shunned the sight,
 With every change of fitful light;
 As hope and fear alternate chase
 Our course through life's uncertain race.

III.

Guiding by crag and copsewood green,
 A solitary Form was seen
 To trace with stealthy pace the wold,
 Like fox that seeks the midnight fold,
 And pauses oft, and cowers dismayed
 At every breath that stirs the shade.

He passes now the ivy bush,
The owl has seen him and is hush ;
He passes now the doddered oak,
He heard the startled raven croak ;
Lower and lower he descends,
Rustle the leaves, the brushwood bonds ;
The otter hears him tread the shore,
And dives, and is beheld no more ;
And by the cliff of pale gray stone
The midnight wanderer stands alone.
Methinks, that by the moon we trace
A well-remembered form and face !
That stripling shape, that cheek so pale,
Combine to tell a rueful tale,
Of powers misused, of passion's force,
Of guilt, of grief, and of remorse !
'Tis Edmund's eye, at every sound
That flings that guilty glance around ;
'Tis Edmund's trembling haste divides
The brushwood that the cavern hides,
And, when its narrow porch lies bare,
'Tis Edmund's form that enters there.

IV.

His flint and steel have sparkled bright,
A lamp hath lent the cavern light.
Fearful and quick his eye surveys
Each angle of the gloomy maze.
Since last he left that stern abode,
It seemed as none its floor had trod ;
Untouched appeared the various spoil,
The purchase of his comrades' toil ;
Masks and disguises grimed with mud,
Arms broken and defiled with blood,
And all the nameless tools that aid
Night-felons in their lawless trade,
Upon the gloomy walls were hung,
Or lay in nooks obscurely flung.
Still on the sordid board appear
The relics of the noontide cheer ;
Flagons and empty flasks were there
And bench o'erthrown, and shattered chair ;
And all around the semblance showed,
As when the final revel glowed,
When the red sun was setting fast,
And parting pledge Guy Denzil passed.
To Rokeby treasure-vaults ! they quaffed,
And shouted loud and wildly laughed,
Poured maddening from the rocky door,
And parted—to return no more !
They found in Rokeby vaults their doom,—
A bloody death, a burning tomb.

V.

There his own peasant dress he spies,
Doffed to assume that quaint disguise,

And shuddering thought upon his glee,
 When pranked in garb of minstrelsy.
 "Oh, be the fatal art accursed,"
 He cried, "that moved my folly first,
 Till, bribed by bandits' base applause,
 I burst through God's and Nature's laws
 Three summer days are scantily passed
 Since I have trod this cavern last,
 A thoughtless wretch, and prompt to err--
 But, oh, as yet no murderer!
 Even now I list my comrades' cheer,
 That general laugh is in mine ear,
 Which raised my pulse and steeled my heart,
 As I rehearsed my treacherous part--
 And would that all since then could seem
 The phantom of a fever's dream!
 But fatal Memory notes too well
 The horrors of the dying yell,
 From my despairing mates that broke,
 When flashed the fire and rolled the smoke,
 When the avengers shouting came,
 And hemmed us 'twixt the sword and flame!
 My frantic flight--the lifted brand--
 That angel's interposing hand!----
 If for my life from slaughter freed,
 I yet could pay some grateful meed!--
 Perchance this object of my quest
 May aid"--he turned, nor spoke the rest.

VI.

Due northward from the rugged hearth,
 With paces five he metes the earth,
 Then toiled with mattock to explore
 The entrails of the cavern floor,
 Nor paused till, deep beneath the ground,
 His search a small steel casket found.
 Just as he stooped to loose its hasp,
 His shoulder felt a giant grasp;
 He started, and looked up aghast,
 Then shrieked!--'twas Bertram held him fast.
 "Fear not!" he said; but who could hear
 That deep stern voice, and cease to fear?
 "Fear not!--by Heaven, he shakes as much
 As partridge in the falcon's clutch!"--
 He raised him, and unloosed his hold,
 While from the opening casket rolled
 A chain and reliquaire of gold.
 Bertram beheld it with surprise,
 Gazed on its fashion and device,
 Then, cheering Edmund as he could,
 Somewhat he smoothed his rugged mood;
 For still the youth's half-lifted eye
 Quivered with terror's agony,
 And sidelong glanced, as to explore,
 In meditated flight, the door

"Sit," Bertram said, "from danger free;
 Thou canst not, and thou shalt not, flee.
 Chance brings me hither; hill and plain
 I've sought for refuge-place in vain.
 And tell me now, thou aquish boy,
 What makest thou here? what means this toy?
 Denzil and thou, I marked, were ta'en;
 What lucky chance unbound your chain?
 I deemed, long since on Baliol's tower,
 Your heads were warped with sun and shower.
 Tell me the whole—and, mark! nought e'er
 Chafes me like falsehood, or like fear."—
 Gathering his courage to his aid,
 But trembling still, the youth obeyed.

VII.

"Denzil and I two nights passed o'er
 In fetters on the dungeon floor.
 A guest the third sad morrow brought;
 Our hold dark Oswald Wycliffe sought,
 And eyed my comrade long askance,
 With fixed and penetrating glance.
 'Guy Denzil art thou called?'—'The same.'—
 'At Court who served wild Buckingham;
 Thence banished, won a keeper's place,
 So Villiers willed, in Marwood-chase;
 That lost—I need not tell thee why—
 Thou madest thy wit thy wants supply,
 Then fought for Rokeby:—have I guessed
 My prisoner right?'—'At thy behest.'—
 He paused a while, and then went on
 With low and confidential tone;
 Me, as I judge, not then he saw,
 Close nestled in my couch of straw.—
 'List to me, Guy. Thou know'st the great
 Have frequent need of what they hate;
 Hence, in their favour oft we see
 Unscrupled, useful men like thee.
 Were I disposed to bid thee live,
 What pledge of faith hast thou to give?'—

VIII.

"The roady fiend, who never yet
 Hath failed to sharpen Denzil's wit,
 Prompted his lie—'His only child
 Should rest his pledge.'—The Baron smiled
 And turned to me—'Thou art his son?'
 I bowed—our fetters were undone,
 And we were led to hear apart
 A dreadful lesson of his art.
 Wilfrid, he said, his heir and son,
 Had fair Matilda's favour won;
 And long since had their union been
 But for her father's bigot spleen,
 Whose brute and blindfold party rage
 Would, force per force, her hand engage

To a base kerne of Irish earth,
 Unknown his lineage and his birth,
 Save that a dying ruffian bore
 The infant brat to Rokeby door.
 Gentle restraint, he said, would lead
 Old Rokeby to enlarge his creed;
 But fair occasion he must find
 For such restraint well-meant and kind,
 The knight being rendered to his charge
 But as a prisoner at large.

IX.

"He schooled us in a well-forged tale,
 Of scheme the Castle walls to scale,
 To which was leagued each cavalier
 That dwells upon the Tyne and Wear;
 That Rokeby, his parole forgot,
 Had dealt with us to aid the plot.
 Such was the charge, which Denzil's zeal
 Of hate to Rokeby and O'Neale
 Proffered, as witness, to make good,
 Even though the forfeit were their blood.
 I scrupled, until o'er and o'er
 His prisoners' safety Wycliffe swore,
 And then—alas! what needs there more?
 I knew I should not live to say
 The proffer I refused that day;
 Ashamed to live, yet loath to die,
 I soiled me with their infamy!"—
 "Poor youth," said Bertram, "wavering still,
 Unfit alike for good or ill!
 But what fell next?"—"Soon as at large
 Was scrolled and signed our fatal charge,
 There never yet, on tragic stage,
 Was seen so well a painted rage
 As Oswald's showed! with loud alarm
 He called his garrison to arm;
 From tower to tower, from post to post,
 He hurried as if all were lost;
 Consigned to dungeon and to chain
 The good old knight and all his train;
 Warned each suspected cavalier,
 Within his limits, to appear
 To-morrow, at the hour of noon,
 In the high church of Eglistone."—

X.

"Of Eglistone! Even now I passed,"
 Said Bertram, "as the night closed fast;
 Torches and cressets gleamed around,
 I heard the saw and hammer sound,
 And I could mark they toiled to raise
 A scaffold, hung with sable baize,
 Which the grim headsman's scene displayed.
 Block, axe, and sawdust ready laid.

Some evil deed will there be done,
 Unless Matilda wed his son ;—
 She loves him not—'tis shrewdly guessed
 That Rodmond rules the damsel's breast.
 This is a turn of Oswald's skill ;
 But I may meet and foil him still !—
 How camest thou to thy freedom ?"—"There
 Lies mystery more dark and rare.
 In midst of Wycliffe's well-feigned rage,
 A scroll was offered by a page,
 Who told, a muffled horseman late
 Had left it at the Castle gate.
 He broke the seal—his cheek showed change,
 Sudden, portentous, wild, and strange
 The mimic passion of his eye
 Was turned to actual agony,
 His hand like summer sapling shook,
 Terror and guilt were in his look.
 Denzil he judged, in time of need,
 Fit counsellor for evil deed,
 And thus apart his counsel broke,
 While with a ghastly smile he spoke :—

XI.

"As in the pageants of the stage,
 The dead awake in this wild age,
 Mortham,—whom all men deemed decreed
 In his own deadly snare to bleed,
 Slain by a bravo, whom, o'er sea,
 He trained to aid in murdering me,—
 Mortham has 'scaped ; the coward shot
 The steed, but harmed the rider not."—
 Here, with an execration fell,
 Bertram leaped up, and paced the cell ;—
 "Thine own gray head, or bosom dark,"
 He muttered, "may be surer mark !"—
 Then sat, and signed to Edmund, pale
 With terror, to resume his tale.
 "Wycliffe went on :—'Mark with what flight
 Of wildered reverie he writes :

The Letter.

"Ruler of Mortham's destiny !
 Though dead, thy victim lives to thee.
 Once had he all that binds to life,
 A lovely child, a lovelier wife ;
 Wealth, fame, and friendship, were his own—
 Thou gavest the word, and they are flown.
 Mark how he pays thee :—to thy hand
 He yields his honours and his land,
 One boon promised ;—Restore his child !
 And, from his native land exiled,
 Mortham no more returns to claim
 His lands, his honours, or his name ;

Refuse him this, and from the slain
Thou shalt see Mortham rise again.'—

XII.

"This billet while the Baron read,
His faltering accents showed his dread;
He pressed his forehead with his palm,
Then took a scornful tone and calm;
'Wild as the winds, as billows wild!
What wot I of his spouse or child?
Hither he brought a joyous dame,
Unknown her lineage or her name:
Her, in some frantic fit, he slew;
The nurse and child in fear withdrew.
Heaven be my witness! wist I where
To find this youth, my kinsman's heir,—
Unguarded, I would give with joy
The father's arms to fold his boy,
And Mortham's lands and towers resign
To the just heirs of Mortham's line.'—
Thou know'st that scarcely e'en his fear
Suppresses Denzil's cynic sneer;—
'Then happy is thy vassal's part,'
He said, 'to ease his patron's heart!
In thine own jailer's watchful care
Lies Mortham's just and rightful heir;
Thy generous wish is fully won,—
Redmond O'Neale is Mortham's son.'—

XIII.

"Up starting with a frenzied look,
His clenched hand the Baron shook:
'Is Hell at work? or dost thou rave,
Or darest thou palter with me, slave!
Perchance thou wot'st not, Barnard's towers
Have racks, of strange and ghastly powers.'—
Denzil, who well his safety knew,
Firmly rejoined, 'I tell thee true.
Thy racks could give thee but to know
The proofs, which I, untortured, show.—
It chanced upon a winter night,
When early snow made Stanmore white,
That very night, when first of all
Redmond O'Neale saw Rokeby-hall,
It was my goodly lot to gain
A reliquary and a chain,
Twisted and chased of massive gold.
—Demand not how the prize I hold!
It was not given, nor lent, nor sold.—
Gilt tablets to the chain were hung,
With letters in the Irish tongue.
I hid my spoil, for there was need
That I should leave the land with speed;
Nor then I deemed it safe to bear
On mine own person gems so rare.

Small heed I of the tablets took,
But since have spelled them by the book,
When some sojourn in Erin's land
Of their wild speech had given command.
But darkling was the sense; the phrase
And language those of other days,
Involved of purpose, as to foil
An interloper's prying toil.
The words, but not the sense, I knew,
Till fortune gave the guiding clue.

xiv.

"Three days since was that clue revealed
In Thorsgil as I lay concealed,
And heard at full when Rokeby's Maid
Her uncle's history displayed;
And now I can interpret well
Each syllable the tablets tell.
Mark, then: Fair Edith was the joy
Of old O'Neale of Clandeboy,
But from her sire and country fled,
In secret Mortham's Lord to wed.
O'Neale, his first resentment o'er,
Despatched his son to Greta's shore,
Enjoining he should make him known
(Until his further will were shown)
To Edith, but to her alone.
What of their ill-starred meeting fell,
Lord Wycliffe knows, and none so well.

xv.

"O'Neale it was, who, in despair,
Robbed Mortham of his infant heir;
He bred him in their nurture wild,
And called him murdered Connal's child.
Soon died the nurse; the clan believed
What from their chieftain they received.
His purpose was, that ne'er again
The boy should cross the Irish main,
But, like his mountain sires, enjoy
The woods and wastes of Clandeboy.
Then on the land wild troubles came,
And stronger chieftains urged a claim,
And wrested from the old man's hands
His native towers, his father's lands.
Unable then, amid the strife,
To guard young Redmond's rights or life,
Late and reluctant he restores
The infant to his native shores,
With goodly gifts and letters stored,
With many a deep conjuring word,
To Mortham and to Rokeby's Lord.
Nought knew the clod of Irish earth,
Who was the gulde, of Redmond's birth;
But deemed his chief's commands were laid
On both, by both to be obeyed.

How he was wounded by the way
I need not, and I list not say.'—

XVI.

" 'A wondrous tale! and, grant it true,
What,' Wycliffe answered, 'might I do?
Heaven knows, as willingly as now
I raise the bonnet from my brow,
Would I my kinsman's manors fair
Restore to Mortham, or his heir;
But Mortham is distraught—O'Neale
Has drawn for tyranny his steel,
Malignant to our rightful Cause,
And trained in Rome's delusive laws.
Hark thee apart!'—They whispered long,
Till Denzil's voice grew bold and strong:—
'My proofs! I never will,' he said,
'Show mortal man where they are laid.
Nor hope discovery to foreclose,
By giving me to feed the crows;
For I have mates at large, who know
Where I am wont such toys to stow.
Free me from peril and from band,
These tablets are at thy command;
Nor were it hard to form some train,
To wile old Mortham o'er the main.
Then, lunatic's nor Papist's hand
Should wrest from thine the goodly land.'—
—'I like thy wit,' said Wycliffe, 'well;
But here in hostage shalt thou dwell.
Thy son, unless my purpose err,
May prove the trustier messenger.
A scroll to Mortham shall he bear
From me, and fetch these tokens rare.
Gold shalt thou have, and that good store
And freedom, his commission o'er;
But if his faith should chance to fail,
The gibbet frees thee from the jail.'—

XVII.

" Meshed in the net himself had twined,
What subterfuge could Denzil find?
He told me, with reluctant sigh,
That hidden here the tokens lie;
Conjured my swift return and aid,
By all he scoffed and disobeyed;
And looked as if the noose were tied,
And I the priest who left his side.
This scroll for Mortham, Wycliffe gave,
Whom I must seek by Greta's wave;
Or in the hut where chief he hides,
Where Thoragill's forester resides,
(Thence chanced it, wandering in the glade,
That he descried our ambuscade.)
I was dismissed as evening fell,
And reached but now this rocky cell."—

"Give Oswald's letter."--Bertram read,
 And tore it fiercely, shred by shred :--
 "All lies and villany! to blind
 His noble kinsman's generous mind,
 And train him on from day to day,
 Till he can take his life away.--
 And now, declare thy purpose, youth,
 Nor dare to answer, save the truth;
 If aught I mark of Denzil's art,
 I'll tear the secret from thy heart!"--

XVIII.

"It needs not. I renounce," he said,
 "My tutor and his deadly trade.
 Fixed was my purpose to declare
 To Mortham, Redmond is his heir;
 To tell him in what risk he stands,
 And yield these tokens to his hands.
 Fixed was my purpose to atone,
 Far as I may, the evil done,
 And fixed it rests--if I survive
 This night, and leave this cave alive."--
 "And Denzil?"--"Let them ply the rack,
 Ever till his joints and sinews crack!
 If Oswald tear him limb from limb,
 What ruth can Denzil claim from him,
 Whose thoughtless youth he led astray,
 And damned to this unhallowed way?
 He schooled me, faith and vows were vain;
 Now let my master reap his gain."--
 "True," answered Bertram, "'tis his meed;
 There's retribution in the deed.
 But thou--thou art not for our course,
 Hast fear, hast pity, hast remorse;
 And he, with us the gale who braves,
 Must heave such cargo to the waves,
 Or lag with overloaded prore,
 While barks unburdened reach the shore."--

XIX.

He paused, and, stretching him at length,
 Seemed to repose his bulky strength.
 Communing with his secret mind,
 As half he sat, and half reclined,
 One ample hand his forehead pressed,
 And one was dropped across his breast.
 The shaggy eyebrows deeper came
 Above his eyes of swarthy flame;
 His lip of pride awhile forbore
 The haughty curve till then it wore;
 The unaltered fierceness of his look
 A shade of darkened sadness took,--
 For dark and sad a presage pressed
 Resistlessly on Bertram's breast,--
 And when he spoke, his wonted tone,
 So fierce, abrupt, and brief, was gone.

His voice was steady, low, and deep,
 Like distant waves when breezes sleep;
 And sorrow mixed with Edmund's fear,
 Its low unbroken depth to hear.

XX.

• Edmund, in thy sad tale I find
 The woe that warped my patron's mind;
 'Twould wake the fountains of the eye
 In other men, but mine are dry.
 Mortham must never see the fool,
 That sold himself base Wycliffe's tool!
 Yet less from thirst of sordid gain,
 Than to avenge supposed disdain.
 Say, Bertram rues his fault;—a word,
 Till now, from Bertram never heard:
 Say, too, that Mortham's Lord he prays
 To think but on their former days;
 On Quariana's beach and rock,
 On Cayo's bursting battle shock,
 On Darien's sands and deadly dew,
 And on the dart Tlatzeca threw;—
 Perchance my patron yet may hear
 More that may grace his comrade's bier.
 My soul hath felt a secret weight,
 A warning of approaching fate:
 A priest had said, 'Return, repent!'
 As well to bid that rock be rent.
 Firm as that flint I face mine end;
 My heart may burst, but cannot bend.

XXI.

"The dawning of my youth, with awe
 And prophecy, the Dalesmen saw;
 For over Redesdale it came,
 As bodeful as their beacon-flame.
 Edmund, thy years were scarcely mine,
 When, challenging the Clans of Tyne
 To bring their best my brand to prove,
 O'er Hexham's altar hung my glove;
 But Tynedale, nor in tower nor town,
 Held champion meet to take it down.
 My noontide, India may declare;
 Like her fierce Sun, I fired the air!
 Like him, to wood and cave bade fly
 Her natives, from mine angry eye.
 Panama's maids shall long look pale
 When Risingham inspires the tale;
 Chili's dark matrons long shall tame
 The froward child with Bertram's name.
 And now, my race of terror run,
 Mine be the eve of tropic Sun!
 No pale gradations quench his ray,
 No twilight dews his wrath allay;
 With disk like battle-target red,
 He rushes to his burning bed.

Dyes the wide wave with bloody light,
Then sinks at once—and all is night.

XXII.

"Now to thy mission, Edmund. Fly;
Seek Mortham out, and bid him hie
To Richmond, where his troops are laid,
And lead his force to Redmond's aid.
Say, till he reaches Eglistone,
A friend will watch to guard his son.
Now, fare thee well; for night draws on,
And I would rest me here alone."—
Despite his ill-dissembled fear,
There swam in Edmund's eye a tear;
A tribute to the courage high,
Which stooped not in extremity,
But strove, irregularly great,
To triumph o'er approaching fate!
Bertram beheld the dew-drop start,
It almost touched his iron heart:—
"I did not think there lived," he said,
"One, who would tear for Bertram shed."—
He loosened then his baldric's hold,
A buckle broad of massive gold;—
"Of all the spoil that paid his pains,
But this with Risingham remains;
And this, dear Edmund, thou shalt take,
And wear it long for Bertram's sake.
Once more—to Mortham speed amain;
Farewell! and turn thee not again."—

XXIII.

The night has yielded to the morn,
And far the hours of prime are worn.
Oswald, who, since the dawn of day,
Had cursed his messenger's delay,
Impatient questioned now his train,
"Was Denzil's son returned again?"—
It chanced there answered of the crew,
A menial, who young Edmund knew:
"No son of Denzil this," he said;
"A peasant boy from Winston glade,
For song and minstrelsy renowned,
And knavish pranks, the hamlets round."—
—"Not Denzil's son!—from Winston vale!
Then it was false, that specious tale;
Or, worse—he hath despatched the youth
To show to Mortham's Lord its truth.
Fool that I was!—but 'tis too late;—
This is the very turn of fate!—
The tale, or true or false, relies
On Denzil's evidence:—He dies!—
—Ho! Provost Marshal! instantly
Lead Denzil to the gallows-tree!
Allow him not a parting word;
Short be the shrift, and sure the cord!

Then let his gory head appal
 Marauders from the Castle wall.
 Lead forth thy guard, that duty done,
 With best despatch to Eglistone.—
 —Basil, tell Wilfrid he must straight
 Attend me at the Castle gate.”—

XXIV.

“Alas!” the old domestic said,
 And shook his venerable head,
 “Alas, my Lord! full ill to-day
 May my young master brook the way!
 The leech has spoke with grave alarm,
 Of unseen hurt, of secret harm,
 Of sorrow lurking at the heart,
 That mars and lets his healing art.”—
 —“Tush, tell not me!—Romantic boys
 Pine themselves sick for airy toys.
 I will find cure for Wilfrid soon;
 Bid him for Eglistone be bouned,
 And quick—I hear the dull death-drum
 Tell Denzil’s hour of fate is come.”—
 He paused with scornful smile, and then
 Resumed his train of thought agen.
 “Now comes my fortune’s crisis near!
 Entreaty boots not—instant fear,
 Nought else, can bend Matilda’s pride,
 Or win her to be Wilfrid’s bride.
 But when she sees the scaffold placed,
 With axe and block and headsman graced,
 And when she deems, that to deny
 Dooms Redmond and her sire to die,
 She must give way.—Then, were the line
 Of Rokeby once combined with mine,
 I gain the weather-gage of fate!
 If Mortham come, he comes too late,
 While I, allied thus and prepared,
 Bid him defiance to his beard.—
 —If she prove stubborn, shall I dare
 To drop the axe?—soft! pause we there.
 Mortham still lives—yon youth may tell
 His tale—and Fairfax loves him well;—
 Else, wherefore should I now delay
 To sweep this Redmond from my way?—
 But she to piety perforce
 Must yield.—Without there! Sound to horse.”—

XXV.

’Twas bustle in the court below.—
 “Mount, and march forward!”—forth they go;
 Steeds neigh and trample all around,
 Steel rings, spears glimmer, trumpets sound.—
 Just then was sung his parting hymn;
 And Denzil turned his eyeballs dim,
 And scarcely conscious what he sees,
 Follows the horsemen down the Tees,

And scarcely conscious what he hears,
 The trumpets tingle in his ears.
 O'er the long bridge they're sweeping now,
 The van is hid by greenwood bough;
 But ere the rearward had passed o'er,
 Guy Denzil heard and saw no more!
 One stroke, upon the Castle bell,
 To Oswald rung his dying knell.

XXVI.

O for that pencil, erst profuse
 Of chivalry's emblazoned hues,
 That traced of old, in Woodstocke bowcz,
 The pageant of the Leaf and Flower,
 And bodied forth the tourney high,
 Held for the hand of Emily!
 Then might I paint the tumult broad,
 That to the crowded abbey flowed,
 And poured, as with an ocean's sound.
 Into the church's ample bound!
 Then might I show each varying mien,
 Exulting, woeful, or serene;
 Indifference with his idiot stare,
 And Sympathy with anxious air;
 Paint the dejected Cavalier,
 Doubtful, disarmed, and sad of cheer;
 And his proud foe, whose formal eye
 Claimed conquest now and mastery;
 And the brute crowd, whose envious zeal
 Huzzas each turn of Fortune's wheel,
 And loudest shouts when lowest lie
 Exalted worth and station high.
 Yet what may such a wish avail?
 'Tis mine to tell an onward tale,
 Hurrying, as best I can, along
 The hearers and the hasty song;—
 Like traveller when approaching home,
 Who sees the shades of evening come,
 And must not now his course delay,
 Or choose the fair, but winding way;
 Nay, scarcely may his pace suspend,
 Where o'er his head his wildings bend,
 To bless the breeze that cools his brow,
 Or snatch a blossom from the bough.

XXVII.

The reverend pile lay wild and waste,
 Profaned, dishonoured, and defaced.
 Through storied lattices no more
 In softened light the sunbeams pour,
 Gilding the Gothic sculpture rich
 Of shrine, and monument, and niche
 The Civil fury of the time
 Made sport of sacrilegious crime;
 For dark Fanaticism rent
 Altar, and screen, and ornaments,

And peasant hands the tombs o'erthrew
 Of Bowes, of Rokeby, and Fitz-Hugh.
 And now was seen unwonted sight,
 In holy walls a scaffold dight!
 Where once the priest, of grace divine
 Dealt to his flock the mystic sign,
 There stood the block displayed, and there
 The headsman grim his hatchet bare;
 And for the word of Hope and Faith,
 Resounded loud a doom of death.
 Thrice the fierce trumpet's breath was heard,
 And echoed thrice the herald's word,
 Dooming, for breach of martial laws,
 And treason to the Commons' cause,
 The Knight of Rokeby and O'Neale
 To stoop their heads to block and steel.
 The trumpets flourished high and shrill,
 Then was a silence dead and still;
 And silent prayers to Heaven were cast,
 And stifled sobs were bursting fast,
 Till from the crowd began to rise
 Murmurs of sorrow or surprise,
 And from the distant aisles there came
 Deep-muttered threats, with Wycliffe's name.

XXVIII.

But Oswald, guarded by his band,
 Powerful in evil, waved his hand,
 And bade Sedition's voice be dead,
 On peril of the murmurer's head.
 Then first his glance sought Rokeby's Knight;
 Who gazed on the tremendous sight,
 As calm as if he came a guest
 To kindred Baron's feudal feast,
 As calm as if that trumpet-call
 Were summons to the bannered hall;
 Firm in his loyalty he stood,
 And prompt to seal it with his blood.
 With downcast look drew Oswald nigh,—
 He durst not cope with Rokeby's eye!—
 And said, with low and faltering breath,
 "Thou know'st the terms of life and death."
 The Knight then turned, and sternly smiled;
 "The maiden is mine only child,
 Yet shall my blessing leave her head,
 If with a traitor's son she wed."—
 Then Redmond spoke; "The life of one
 Might thy malignity atone,
 On me be flung a double guilt!
 Spare Rokeby's blood, let mine be spilt!"—
 Wycliffe had listened to his suit,
 But dread prevailed, and he was mute.

XXIX.

And now he pours his choice of fear
 In secret on Matilda's ear;

"An union formed with me and mine.
 Ensures the faith of Rokeby's line.
 Consent, and all this dread array,
 Like morning dream shall pass away;
 Refuse, and, by my duty pressed,
 I give the word—thou know'st the rest."—
 Matilda, still and motionless,
 With terror heard the dread address,
 Pale as the sheeted maid who dies
 To hopeless love a sacrifice;
 Then wrung her hands in agony,
 And round her cast bewildered eye,
 Now on the scaffold glanced, and now
 On Wycliffe's unrelenting brow.
 She veiled her face, and, with a voice
 Scarce audible,—“I make my choice!
 Spare but their lives!—for aught beside,
 Let Wilfrid's doom my fate decide.
 He once was generous!”—As she spoke,
 Dark Wycliffe's joy in triumph broke:—
 “Wilfrid, where loitered ye so late?—
 Why upon Basil rest thy weight?
 Art spell-bound by enchanter's wand?—
 Kneel, kneel, and take her yielded hand;
 Thank her with raptures, simple boy!
 Should tears and trembling speak thy joy?”—
 “O hush my sire! to prayer and tear
 Of mine thou hast refused thine ear;
 But now the awful hour draws on,
 When truth must speak in loftier tone.”—

XXX.

He took Matilda's hand:—“Dear maid,
 Couldst thou so injure me,” he said,
 “Of thy poor friend so basely deem,
 As blend him with this barbarous scheme?
 Alas! my efforts, made in vain,
 Might well have saved this added pain.
 But now, bear witness earth and heaven,
 That ne'er was hope to mortal given,
 So twisted with the strings of life,
 As this—to call Matilda wife!
 I bid it now for ever part,
 And with the effort bursts my heart.”—
 His feeble frame was worn so low,
 With wounds, with watching, and with wor,
 That nature could no more sustain
 The agony of mental pain.
 He kneeled—his lip her hand had pressed,—
 Just then he felt the stern arrest;
 Lower and lower sunk his head,—
 They raised him,—but the life was fled!
 Then first alarmed, his sire and train
 Tried every aid, but tried in vain.

The soul, too soft its ill to bear,
 Had left our mortal hemisphere,
 Had sought in better world the meed,
 To blameless life by Heaven decreed.

XXXI.

The wretched sire beheld, aghast,
 With Wilfrid all his projects passed,
 All turned and centred on his son,
 On Wilfrid all—and he was gone.
 "And am I childless now," he said,
 "Childless, through that relentless maid
 A lifetime's arts, in vain essayed,
 Are bursting on their artist's head!—
 Here lies my Wilfrid dead—and there
 Comes hated Mortham for his heir,
 Eager to knit in happy band
 With Rokeby's heiress Redmond's hand.
 And shall their triumph soar o'er all
 The schemes deep-laid to work their fall?
 No!—deeds, which prudence might not dare,
 Appal not vengeance and despair.
 The murderess weeps upon his bier—
 I'll change to real that feigned tear!
 They all shall share destruction's shock;—
 Ho! lead the captives to the block!"—
 But ill his provost could divine
 His feelings, and forbore the sign.
 "Slave! to the block!—or I, or they,
 Shall face the judgment-seat this day!"—

XXXII.

The outmost crowd have heard a sound,
 Like horse's hoof on hardened ground;
 Nearer it came, and yet more near,—
 The very deaths-men paused to hear.
 'Tis in the churchyard now—the tread
 Hath waked the dwelling of the dead!
 Fresh sod, and old sepulchral stone,
 Return the tramp in varied tone,
 All eyes upon the gateway hung,
 When through the Gothic arch there sprung
 A Horseman armed, at headlong speed,—
 Sable his cloak, his plume, his steed.
 Fire from the flinty floor was spurned,
 The vaults unwonted clang returned!—
 One instant's glance around he threw,
 From saddlebow his pistol drew.
 Grimly determined was his look!
 His charger with the spurs he strook—
 All scattered backward as he came,
 For all knew Bertram Risingham!
 Three bounds that noble courser gave:
 The first has reached the central nave,
 The second cleared the chancel wide,
 The third,—he was at Wycliffe's side.

Full levelled at the Baron's head,
Rung the report—the bullet sped—
And to his long account, and last,
Without a groan dark Oswald passed!
All was so quick, that it might seem
A flash of lightning, or a dream.

XXXIII.

While yet the smoke the deed conceals,
Bertram his ready charger wheels;
But floundered on the pavement floor
The steed, and down the rider bore,
And, bursting in the headlong sway,
The faithless saddle-girths gave way.
'Twas while he toiled him to be freed,
And with the rein to raise the steed,
That from amazement's iron trance
All Wycliffe's soldiers waked at once.
Sword, halbert, musket-butt, their blows
Hailed upon Bertram as he rose;
A score of pikes, with each a wound,
Bore down and pinned him to the ground;
But still his struggling force he rears,
'Gainst hacking brands and stabbing spears;
Thrice from assailants shook him free,
Once gained his feet, and twice his knee.
By tenfold odds oppressed at length,
Despite his struggles and his strength,
He took a hundred mortal wounds,
As mute as fox 'mongst mangling hounds;
And when he died, his parting groan
Had more of laughter than of moan!
—They gazed, as when a lion dies,
And hunters scarcely trust their eyes,
But bend their weapons on the slain,
Lest the grim king should rouse again!—
Then blow and insult some renewed,
And from the trunk the head had hewed,
But Basil's voice the deed forbade;
A mantle o'er the corse he laid:—
"Fell as he was in act and mind,
He left no bolder heart behind:
Then give him, for a soldier meet,
A soldier's cloak for winding-sheet."—

XXXIV.

No more of death and dying pang,
No more of trump and bugle-clang,
Though through the sounding woods there come
Bannner and bugle, trump and drum.
Armed with such powers as well had freed
Young Redmond at his utmost need,
And backed with such a band of horse,
As might less ample powers enforce;
Possessed of every proof and sign
That gave an heir to Mortham's line.

And yielded to a father's arms
An image of his Edith's charms,—
Mortham is come, to hear and see
Of this strange morn the history.
What saw he?—not the church's floor,
Cumbered with dead and stained with gore;
What heard he?—not the clamorous crowd,
That shout their gratulations loud;
Redmond he saw and heard alone,
Clasped him, and sobbed, "My son!"—

XXXV.

This chanced upon a summer morn,
When yellow waved the heavy corn;
But when brown August o'er the land
Called for the reapers' busy band,
A gladsome sight the sylvan road
From Eglistone to Mortham showed.
A while the hardy rustic leaves
The task to bind and pile the sheaves,
And maids their sickles fling aside,
To gaze on bridegroom and on bride,
And Childhood's wondering group draws near
And from the gleaner's hand the ear
Drops, while she folds them for a prayer
And blessing on the lovely pair.
'Twas then the Maid of Rokeby gave
Her plighted troth to Redmond brave;
And Teesdale can remember yet
How Fate to Virtue paid her debt,
And, for their troubles, bade them prove,
A lengthened life of peace and love.

Time and Tide had thus their sway,
Yielding, like an April day,
Smiling noon for sullen morrow,
Years of joy for hours of sorrow!

THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN;
OR,
THE VALE OF ST JOHN.
IN THREE CANTOS.

An elf-quene wol I love I wis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make in toun;
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

RIME OF SIR THOMAS.

First published anonymously at Edinburgh, in 1813



PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

In the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for the year 1809, three Fragments were inserted, written in imitation of Living Poets. It must have been apparent, that by these prologues, nothing burlesque, or disrespectful to the authors was intended, but that they were offered to the public as serious, though certainly very imperfect, imitations of that style of composition by which each of the writers is supposed to be distinguished. As these exercises attracted a greater degree of attention than the author anticipated, he has been induced to complete one of them, and present it as a separate publication.

It is not in this place that an examination of the works of the master whom he has here adopted as his model, can, with propriety, be introduced; since his general acquiescence in the favourable suffrage of the public must necessarily be inferred from the attempt he has now made. He is induced, by the nature of his subject, to offer a few remarks on what has been called ROMANTIC POETRY;—the popularity of which has been revived in the present day, under the auspices, and by the unparalleled success, of one individual.

The original purpose of poetry is either religious or historical, or, as must frequently happen, a mixture of both. To modern readers, the poems of Homer have many of the features of pure romance; but, in the estimation of his contemporaries, they probably derived their chief value from their supposed historical authenticity. The same may be generally said of the poetry of all early ages. The marvels and miracles which the poet blends with his song, do not exceed in number or extravagance the fictions of the historians of the same period of society; and, indeed, the difference betwixt poetry and prose, as the vehicles of historical truth, is always of late introduction. Poets, under various denominations of Bards, Scalds, Chroniclers, and so forth, are the first historians of all nations. Their intention is to relate the events they have witnessed, or the traditions that have reached them; and they clothe the relation in rhyme, merely as the means of rendering it more solemn in the narrative, or more easily committed to memory. But as the poetical historian improves in the art of conveying information, the authenticity of his narrative unavoidably declines. He is tempted to dilate and dwell upon the events that are interesting to his imagination, and, conscious how indifferent his audience is to the naked truth of his poem, his history gradually becomes a romance.

It is in this situation that those epics are found, which have been generally regarded the standards of poetry; and it has happened somewhat strangely, that the moderns have pointed out as the characteristics and peculiar excellences of narrative poetry, the very circumstances which the authors themselves adopted, only because their art involved the duties of the historian as well as the poet. It cannot be believed, for example, that Homer selected the siege of Troy as the most appropriate subject for poetry; his purpose was to write the early history of his country: the event he has chosen, though not very fruitful in varied incident, nor perfectly well adapted for poetry, was nevertheless combined with traditionary and genealogical anecdotes extremely

interesting to those who were to listen to him, and this he has adorned by the exertions of a genius, which, if it has been equalled, has certainly never been surpassed. It was not till comparatively a late period that the general accuracy of his narrative, or his purpose in composing it, was brought into question. Δοκεῖ πρῶτος (ὁ Ἀναξαγόρας καθά φησι Φαβρίκιος ἐν παντοδαπῇ Ἱστορίᾳ) τὴν Ὀμήρου ποιήσιν ἀποφύνασθαι εἶναι περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης.* But whatever theories might be framed by speculative men, his work was of an historical, not of an allegorical nature. Ἐναντίλλετο μετὰ τοῦ Μένρεω, καὶ ὅπου ἐκάστοτε ἀφίκοντο, πάντα τὰ ἐπιχώρια διεωρᾶτο, καὶ ἱστορίων ἐπυνθάνετο· εἰκὸς δέ μιν ἦν καὶ μνημόσυνα πάντων γράφεσθαι.† Instead of recommending the choice of a subject similar to that of Homer, it was to be expected that critics should have exhorted the poets of these later days to adopt or invent a narrative in itself more susceptible of poetical ornament, and to avail themselves of that advantage in order to compensate, in some degree, the inferiority of genius. The contrary course has been inculcated by almost all the writers upon the *Epopœia*; with what success the fate of Homer's numerous imitators may best show. The *ultimum supplicium* of criticism was inflicted on the author if he did not choose a subject which at once deprived him of all claim to originality, and placed him, if not in actual contest, at least in a fatal comparison with those giants in the land, whom it was most his interest to avoid. The celebrated receipt for writing an epic poem, which appeared in the *Guardian*, was the first instance in which common sense was applied to this department of poetry; and indeed, if the question be considered on its own merits, we must be satisfied that narrative poetry, if strictly confined to the great occurrences of history, would be deprived of the individual interest which it is so well calculated to excite.

Modern poets may therefore be pardoned in seeking simpler subjects of verse, more interesting in proportion to their simplicity. Two or three figures, well grouped, suit the artist better than a crowd, for whatever purpose assembled. For the same reason, a scene immediately presented to the imagination, and directly brought home to the feelings, though involving the fate of but one or two persons, is more favourable for poetry than the political struggles and convulsions which influence the fate of kingdoms. The former are within the reach and comprehension of all, and if depicted with vigour, seldom fail to fix attention: the other, if more sublime, are more vague and distant, less capable of being distinctly understood, and infinitely less capable of exciting those sentiments which it is the very purpose of poetry to inspire. To generalise is always to destroy effect. We would, for example, be more interested in the fate of an individual soldier in combat, than in the grand events of a general action; with the happiness of two lovers raised from misery and anxiety to peace and union, than with the successful exertions of a whole nation. From what causes this may originate, is a separate and obviously an immaterial consideration. Before ascribing this peculiarity to causes decidedly and odiously selfish, it is proper to recollect, that while men see only a limited space, and while their affections and conduct are regulated, not by aspiring at an universal good, but by exerting their

* Diogenes Laertius, lib. ii.

† Homeri Vita.

power of making themselves and others happy within the limited scale allotted to each individual, so long will individual history and individual virtue be the reader and more accessible road to general interest and attention; and perhaps we may add, that it is the more useful, as well as the more accessible, inasmuch as it affords an example capable of being easily imitated.

According to the author's idea of Romantic Poetry, as distinguished from Epic, the former comprehends a fictitious narrative, framed and combined at the pleasure of the writer; beginning and ending as he may judge best; which neither exacts nor refuses the use of supernatural machinery; which is free from the technical rules of the *Epos*, and is subject only to those which good sense, good taste, and good morals apply to every species of poetry without exception. The date may be in a remote age, or in the present; the story may detail the adventures of a prince or of a peasant. In a word, the author is absolute master of his country and its inhabitants, and everything is permitted to him, excepting to be heavy or prosaic, for which, free and unembarrassed as he is, he has no manner of apology. Those, it is probable, will be found the peculiarities of this species of composition: and, before joining the outcry against the vitiated taste that fosters and encourages it, the justice and grounds of it ought to be made perfectly apparent. If the want of sieges and battles and great military evolutions in our poetry is complained of, let us reflect, that the campaigns and heroes of our days are perpetuated in a record that neither requires nor admits of the aid of fiction; and if the complaint refers to the inferiority of our bards, let us pay a just tribute to their modesty, limiting them, as it does, to subjects which, however indifferently treated, have still the interest and charm of novelty, and which thus prevents them from adding insipidity to their other more imperable defects.

THE BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN;

OR,

THE VALE OF SAINT JOHN.

A Tower's Tale.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

COME, Lucy! while 'tis morning hour,
The woodland brook we needs must pass;
So, ere the sun assume his power,
We shelter in our poplar bower,
Where dew lies long upon the flower,
Though vanished from the velvet grass.
Curbing the stream, this stony ridge
May serve us for a sylvan bridge;
For here, compelled to disunite,
Round petty isles the runnels glide,
And, chafing off their puny spite,
The shallow murmurers waste their might,
Yielding to footstep free and light
A dry-shod pass from side to side.

II.

Nay, why this hesitating pause?
And, Lucy, as thy step withdraws,
Why sidelong eye the streamlet's brim?
Titania's foot without a slip,
Like thine though timid, light, and slim,
From stone to stone might safely trip,
Nor risk the glow-worm clasp to dip
That binds her slipper's silken rim.
Or trust thy lover's strength; nor fear
That this same stalwart arm of mine,
Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear,
Shall shrink beneath the burden dear
Of form so slender, light and fine.—
So,—now, the danger dared at last,
Look back, and smile at perils passed!

III.

And now we reach the favourite glade,
Paled in by copsewood, cliff, and stone,

Where never harsher sounds invade,
To break Affection's whispering tone,
Than the deep breeze that waves the shade,
Than the small brooklet's feeble moan:
Come! rest thee on thy wonted seat;
Mossed is the stone, the turf is green,
A place where lovers best may meet,
Who would not that their love be seen.
The boughs, that dim the summer sky,
Shall hide us from each lurking spy,
That fain would spread the invidious tale,
How Lucy of the lofty eye,
Noble in birth, in fortunes high,
She for whom lords and barons sigh,
Meets her poor Arthur in the dale.

IV.

How deep that blush!—how deep that sigh!
And why does Lucy shun mine eye?—
Is it because that crimson draws
Its colour from some secret cause,
Some hidden movement of the breast,
She would not that her Arthur guessed?
Oh, quicker far is lovers' ken
Than the dull glance of common men,
And, by strange sympathy, can spell
The thoughts the loved one will not tell!
And mine, in Lucy's blush, saw met
The hues of pleasure and regret;
Pride mingled in the sigh her voice,
And shared with Love the crimson glow,
Well pleased that thou art Arthur's choice,
Yet shame thine own is placed so low.
Thou turn'st thy self-confessing cheek,
As if to meet the breeze's cooling;
Then, Lucy, hear thy tutor speak,
For Love, too, has his hours of schooling.

V.

Too oft my anxious eye has spied
That secret grief thou fain wouldst hide,
The passing pang of humbled pride:
Too oft, when through the splendid hall,
The load-star of each heart and eye,
My fair one leads the glittering ball,
Will her stolen glance on Arthur fall,
With such a blush and such a sigh!
Thou wouldst not yield, for wealth or rank,
The heart thy worth and beauty won,
Nor leave me on this mossy bank,
To meet a rival on a throne:
Why, then, should vain repinings rise,
That to thy lover fate denies
A nobler name, a wide domain,
A baron's birth, a menial train,

Since Heaven assigned him, for his part,
A lyre, a falchion, and a heart?

VI.

My sword—its master must be dumb;
But, when a soldier names my name,
Approach, my Lucy! fearless come,
Nor dread to hear of Arthur's shame.
My heart—'mid all yon courtly crew,
Of lordly rank and lofty line,
Is there to love and honour true,
That boasts a pulse so warm as mine?
They praised thy diamonds' lustre rare—
Matched with thine eyes, I thought it faded;
They praised the pearls that bound thy hair—
I only saw the locks they braided;
They talked of wealthy dower and land,
And titles, of high birth the token—
I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,
Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.
And yet, if ranked in Fortune's roll,
I might have learned their choice unwise,
Who rate the dower above the soul,
And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

VII.

My lyre—it is an idle toy,
That borrows accents not its own,
Like warbler of Columbian sky,
That sings but in a mimic tone.*
Ne'er did it sound o'er sainted well,
Nor boasts it aught of Border spell;
Its strings no feudal slogan pour,
Its heroes draw no broad claymore;
No shouting clans applauses raise,
Because it sung their fathers' praise;
On Scottish moor, or English down,
It ne'er was graced with fair renown;
Nor won,—best meed to minstrel true,—
One favouring smile from fair BUCCLEUGH!
By one poor streamlet sounds its tone,
And heard by one dear maid alone.

VIII.

But, if thou bidd'st, these tones shall tell
Of errant knight and damozelle;
Of the dread knot a wizard tied,
In punishment of maiden's pride;
In notes of marvel and of fear,
That best may charm romantic ear.
For Lucy loves,—like COLLINS, ill-starred name!
Whose lay's requital was that tardy Faine,
Who bound no laurel round his living head,
Should hang it o'er his monument when dead,—

* The necking-bird.

For Lucy loves to tread enchanted strand,
And thread, like him, the maze of Fairy land;
Of golden battlements to view the gleam,
And slumber soft by some Elysian stream:
Such lays she loves,—and, such my Lucy's choice,
What other song can claim her poet's voice?

CANTO FIRST.

I.

WHERE is the maiden of mortal strain,
That may match with the Baron of Triermaln?
She must be lovely and constant and kind,
Holy and pure and humble of mind,
Blithe of cheer and gentle of mood,
Courteous and generous and noble of blood—
Lovely as the sun's first ray,
When it breaks the clouds of an April day;
Constant and true as the widowed dove,
Kind as a minstrel that sings of love;
Pure as the fountain in rocky cave,
Where never sunbeam kissed the wave;
Humble as maiden that loves in vain,
Holy as hermit's vesper strain;
Gentle as breeze that but whispers and dies,
Yet blithe as the light leaves that dance in its sighs;
Courteous as monarch the morn he is crowned,
Generous as spring-dews that bless the glad ground;
Noble her blood as the currents that met
In the veins of the noblest Plantagenet—
Such must her form be, her mood and her strain,
That shall match with Sir Roland of Triermaln.

II.

Sir Roland de Vaux he hath laid him to sleep,
His blood it was fevered, his breathing was deep.
He had been pricking against the Scot,
The foray was long and the skirmish hot;
His dinted helm and his buckler's plight
Bore token of a stubborn fight.

All in the Castle must hold them still,
Harpers must lull him to his rest,
With the slow soft tunes he loves the best,
Till sleep sink down upon his breast,
Like the dew on a summer hill.

III.

It was the dawn of an autumn day;
The sun was struggling with frost-fog gray,
That like a silvery crape was spread
Round Skiddaw's dim and distant head,
And faintly gleamed each painted pane
Of the lordly halls of Triermaln.

When that Baron bold awoke.
 Starting he woke, and loudly did call,
 Rousing his menials in bower and hall,
 While hastily he spoke :—

IV.

“Hearken, my minstrels! Which of you all
 Touched his harp with that dying fall,
 So sweet, so soft, so faint,
 It seemed an angel’s whispered call
 To an expiring saint?
 And hearken, my merry-men! What time or where
 Did she pass, that maid with her heavenly brow,
 With her look so sweet and her eyes so fair,
 And her graceful step and her angel air,
 And the eagle plume on her dark-brown hair,
 That passed from my bower e’en now?”

V.

Answered him Richard de Brettville; he
 Was chief of the Baron’s minstrelsy,—
 “Silent, noble chieftain, we
 Have sat since midnight close,
 When such lulling sounds as the brooklet sings,
 Murmured from our melting strings,
 And hushed you to repose.
 Had a harp-note sounded here,
 It had caught my watchful ear,
 Although it fell as faint and shy
 As bashful maiden’s half-formed sigh,
 When she thinks her lover near.”—
 Answered Philip of Fasthwaite tall,
 He kept guard in the outer-hall,—
 “Since at eve our watch took post,
 Not a foot has thy portal crossed;
 Else had I heard the steps, though low
 And light they fell, as when earth receives,
 In morn of frost, the withered leaves,
 That drop when no winds blow.”—

VI.

“Then come thou hither, Henry, my page,
 Whom I saved from the sack of Hermitage,
 When that dark castle, tower, and spire,
 Rose to the skies a pile of fire,
 And reddened all the Nine-stane Hill.
 And the shrieks of death, that wildly broke
 Through devouring flame and smothering smoke.
 Made the warrior’s heart-blood chill!
 The trustiest thou of all my train,
 My fleetest courser thou must rein,
 And ride to Lyulph’s tower,
 And from the Baron of Triermaln
 Greet well that sage of power.
 He is sprung from Druid sires,
 And British bards that tuned their lyres

To Arthur's and Pendragon's praise,
And his who sleeps at Dunmailraise.
Gifted like his gifted race,
He the characters can trace,
Graven deep in elder time
Upon Helvellyn's cliffs sublime;
Sign and sigil well doth he know,
And can bode of weal and woe,
Of kingdoms' fall, and fate of wars,
From mystic dreams and course of stars.
He shall tell me if middle earth
To that enchanting shape gave birth,
Or if 'twas but an airy thing,
Such as fantastic slumbers bring,
Framed from the rainbow's varying dyes.
Or fading tints of western skies.
For, by the blessed rood I swear,
If that fair form breathe vital air,
No other maiden by my side
Shall ever rest De Vaux's bride!"—

VII.

The faithful page he mounts his steed,
And soon he crossed green Irthing's mead,
Dashed o'er Kirkoswald's verdant plain,
And Eden barred his course in vain.
He passed red Penrith's Table Round,
For feats of chivalry renowned,
Left Mayburgh's mound and stones of power,
By Druids raised in magic hour,
And traced the Eamont's winding way,
Till Ulfo's lake beneath him lay.

VIII.

Onwards he rode, the pathway still
Winding betwixt the lake and hill;
Till on the fragment of a rock,
Struck from its base by lightning shock,
He saw the hoary sage:
The silver moss and lichen twined,
With fern and deer-hair checked and lined,
A cushion fit for age;
And o'er him shook the aspen-tree,
A restless rustling canopy.
Then sprung young Henry from his sella,
And greeted Lyulph grave,
And then his master's tale did tell,
And then for counsel crave.
The Man of Years mused long and deep,
Of time's lost treasures taking keep,
And then, as rousing from a sleep,
His solemn answer gave.

IX.

"That maid is born of middle earth.
And may of man be won

Though there have glided since her birth
 Five hundred years and one.
 But where's the knight in all the north
 That dare the adventure follow forth
 So perilous to knightly worth,
 In the Valley of St John?
 Listen, youth, to what I tell,
 And bind it on thy memory well;
 Nor muse that I commence the rhyme
 Far distant 'mid the wrecks of time.
 The mystic tale, by bard and sage,
 Is handed down from Merlin's age.

I.

Uguth's Tale.

"KING ARTHUR has ridden from merry Carlisle
 When Pentecost was o'er;
 He journeyed like errant-knight the while,
 And sweetly the summer sun did smile
 On mountain, moss, and moor.
 Above his solitary track
 Rose Glaramara's ridgy back,
 Amid whose yawning gulfs the sun
 Cast umbered radiance red and dun,
 Though never sunbeam could discern
 The surface of that sable tarn,
 In whose black mirror you may spy
 The stars, while noontide lights the sky.
 The gallant king he skirted still
 The margin of that mighty hill;
 Rock upon rocks incumbent hung,
 And torrents, down the gullies flung,
 Joined the rude river that brawled on,
 Recolling now from crag and stone,
 Now diving deep from human ken,
 And raving down its darksome glen.
 The monarch judged this desert wild,
 With such romantic ruin piled,
 Was theatre by Nature's hand
 For feat of high achievement planned.

XI.

"O rather he chose, that monarch bold,
 On venturous quest to ride,
 In plate and mail, by wood and wold,
 Than, with ermine trapped and cloth of gold,
 In princely bower to bide;
 The bursting crash of a foeman's spear,
 As it shivered against his mail,
 Was merrier music to his ear
 Than courtier's whispered tale
 And the clash of Caliburn more

When on the hostile casque it rung,
Than all the lays
To their monarch's praise
That the harpers of Reged sung.
He loved better to rest by wood or river,
Than in bower of his bride, dame Guenever,
For he left that lady so lovely of cheer,
To follow adventures of danger and fear;
And the frank-hearted monarch full little did wot
That she smiled, in his absence, on brave Lancelot.

XII.

"He rode, till over down and dell
The shade more broad and deeper fell,
And though around the mountain's head
Flowed streams of purple, gold, and red,
Dark at the base, unblest by beam,
Frowned the black rocks, and roared the stream.
With toil the king his way pursued
By lonely Threlkeld's waste and wood,
Till on his course obliquely shone
The narrow Valley of SAINT JOHN,
Down sloping to the western sky,
Where lingering sunbeams love to lie.
Right glad to feel those beams again,
The king drew up his charger's rein;
With gauntlet raised he screened his sight,
As dazzled with the level light,
And, from beneath his glove of mail,
Scanned at his ease the lovely vale,
While 'gainst the sun his armour bright
Gleamed ruddy like the beacon's light.

XIII.

"Paled in by many a lofty hill,
The narrow dale lay smooth and still,
And, down its verdant bosom led,
A winding brooklet found its bed.
But, midmost of the vale, a mound
Arose, with airy turrets crowned,
Buttress, and rampire's circling bound,
And mighty keep and tower;
Seemed some primeval giant's hand
The Castle's massive walls had planned,
A ponderous bulwark, to withstand
Ambitious Nimrod's power.
Above the moated entrance slung,
The balanced drawbridge trembling hung,
As jealous of a foe;
Wicket of oak, as iron hard,
With iron studded, clenched, and barred,
And pronged portcullis, joined to guard
The gloomy pass below.
But the gray walls no banners crowned,
Upon the watch-tower's airy round
No warder stood his horn to sound,

No guard beside the bridge was found,
And, where the Gothic gateway frowned,
Glanced neither bill nor bow.

XIV.

"Beneath the Castle's gloomy pride,
In ample round did Arthur ride
Three times; nor living thing he spied,
Nor heard a living sound,
Save that, awakening from her dream,
The owllet now began to scream,
In concert with the rushing stream,
That washed the battled mound.
He lighted from his goodly steed,
And he left him to graze on bank and mead;
And slowly he climbed the narrow way,
That reached the entrance grim and gray,
And he stood the outward arch below,
And his bugle-horn prepared to blow,
In summons blithe and bold,
Deeming to rouse from iron sleep
The guardian of this dismal keep,
Which well he guessed the hold
Of wizard stern, or goblin grim,
Or pagan of gigantic limb,
The tyrant of the wold.

XV.

"The ivory bugle's golden tip
Twice touched the monarch's manly lip,
And twice his hand withdrew.
Think not but Arthur's heart was good!
His shield was crossed by the blessed rood,
Had a pagan host before him stood,
He had charged them through and through;
Yet the silence of that ancient place
Sunk on his heart, and he paused a space
Ere yet his horn he blew.
But, instant as its 'larum rung,
The Castle gate was open flung,
Portcullis rose with crashing groan
Full harshly up its groove of stone,
The balance-beams obeyed the blast,
And down the trembling drawbridge cast.
The vaulted arch before him lay,
With nought to bar the gloomy way.
And onward Arthur paced, with hand
On Caliburn's resistless brand.

XVI.

"A hundred torches, flashing bright,
Dispelled at once the gloomy night
That loured along the walls,
And showed the king's astonished sight
The inmates of the halls.
Nor wizard stern, nor goblin grim,
Nor giant huge of form and limb.

Nor heathen knight, was there;
But the cressets, which odours flung aloft,
Showed, by their yellow light and soft,
A band of damsels fair!
Onward they came, like summer wave
That dances to the shore;
A hundred voices welcome gave,
And welcome o'er and o'er!
A hundred lovely hands assail
The bucklers of the monarch's mail,
And busy laboured to unhasp
Rivet of steel and iron clasp;
One wrapped him in a mantle fair,
And one flung odours on his hair;
His short curled ringlets one smoothed down,
One wreathed them with a myrtle crown.
A bride upon her wedding-day
Was tended ne'er by troop so gay.

XVII.

"Loud laughed they all,—the king, in vain,
With questions tasked the giddy train;
Let him entreat, or crave, or call,
'Twas one reply,—loud laughed they all.
Then o'er him mimic chains they fling,
Framed of the fairest flowers of spring.
While some their gentle force unite,
Onward to drag the wondering knight,
Some, bolder, urge his pace with blows,
Dealt with the lily or the rose.
Behind him were in triumph borne
The warlike arms he late had worn.
Four of the train combined to rear
The terrors of Tintadgel's spear;
Two, laughing at their lack of strength,
Dragged Caliburn in cumbersome length;
One, while she aped a martial stride,
Placed on her brows the helmet's pride,
Then screamed, 'twixt laughter and surprise,
To feel its depth o'erwhelm her eyes.
With revel-shout, and triumph-song,
Thus gaily marched the giddy throng.

XVIII.

"Through many a gallery and hall
They led, I ween, their royal thrall.
At length, beneath a fair arcade
Their march and song at once they stayed.
The eldest maiden of the band,
(The lovely maid was scarce eighteen,)
Raised, with imposing air, her hand,
And reverent silence did command,
On entrance of their Queen,
And they were mute.—But as a glance
They steal on Arthur's countenance

Bewildered with surprise,
 Their smothered mirth again 'gan speak,
 In archly dimpled chin and cheek,
 And laughter-lighted eyes.

XIX.

"The attributes of these high days
 Now only live in minstrel-lays;
 For Nature, now exhausted, still
 Was then profuse of good and ill
 Strength was gigantic, valour high,
 And wisdom soared beyond the sky,
 And beauty had such matchless beam,
 As lights not now a lover's dream.
 Yet, e'en in that romantic age,
 Ne'er were such charms by mortal seen
 As Arthur's dazzled eyes engage,
 When forth on that enchanted stage,
 With glittering train of maid and page,
 Advanced the Castle's Queen.
 While up the hall she slowly passed,
 Her dark eye on the king she cast,
 That flashed expression strong;
 The longer dwelt that lingering look,
 Her cheek the livelier colour took,
 And scarce the shame-faced king could brook
 The gaze that lasted long.
 A sage, who had that look espied,
 Where kindling passion strove with pride,
 Had whispered, 'Prince, beware!
 From the chafed tiger rend the prey,
 Rush on the lion when at bay,
 Bar the fell dragon's blighted way,
 But shun that lovely snare!'

XX.

"At once, that inward strife suppressed,
 The dame approached her warlike guest,
 With greeting in that fair degree,
 Where female pride and courtesy
 Are blended with such passing art
 As awes at once and charms the heart.
 A courtly welcome first she gave,
 Then of his goodness 'gan to crave
 Construction fair and true
 Of her light maidens' idle mirth,
 Who drew from lonely glens their birth,
 Nor knew to pay to stranger worth
 And dignity their due;
 And then she prayed that he would rest
 That night her Castle's honoured guest.
 The monarch meetly thanks expressed;
 The banquet rose at her behest.
 With lay and tale, and laugh and jest,
 Apace the evening flew.

XXI.

"The lady sate the monarch by,
Now in her turn abashed and shy,
And with indifference seemed to hear
The toys he whispered in her ear.
Her bearing modest was and fair,
Yet shadows of constraint were there,
That showed an over-cautious care
Some inward thought to hide;
Oft did she pause in full reply,
And oft cast down her large dark eye,
Oft checked the soft voluptuous sigh,
That heaved her bosom's pride.
Slight symptoms these, but shepherds know
How hot the mid-day sun shall glow
From the mist of morning sky;
And so the wily monarch guessed,
That this assumed restraint expressed
More ardent passions in the breast,
Than ventured to the eye.
Closer he pressed, while beakers rang,
While maidens laughed and minstrels sang,
Still closer to her ear—
But why pursue the common tale?
Or wherefore show how knights prevail
When ladies dare to hear?
Or wherefore trace, from what slight cause
Its source one tyrant passion draws,
Till, mastering all within,
Where lives the man that has not tried,
How mirth can into folly glide,
And folly into sin!"

CANTO SECOND.

I.

Kuph's Tale continued.

"ANOTHER day, another day,
And yet another, glides away!
The Saxon stern, the pagan Dane,
Maraud on Britain's shores again.
Arthur, of Christendom the flower,
Lies loitering in a lady's bower;
The horn, that foemen wont to fear,
Sounds but to wake the Cumbrian deer,
And Caliburn, the British pride,
Hangs useless by a lover's side.

II.

"Another day, another day,
And yet another, glides away!
Heroic plans in pleasure drowned.
He thinks not of the Table Round :

In lawless love dissolved his life,
He thinks not of his beauteous wife;
Better he loves to snatch a flower
From bosom of his paramour,
Than from a Saxon knight to wrest
The honours of his heathen crest;
Better to wreath, 'mid tresses brown,
The heron's plume her hawk struck down,
Than o'er the altar give to flow
The banners of a paynim foe.
Thus, week by week, and day by day,
His life inglorious glides away,
But she, that soothes his dream, with fear
Beholds his hour of wakening near.

III.

"Much force have mortal charms to stay
Our pace in Virtue's toilsome way;
But Guendolen's might far outshine
Each maid of merely mortal line.
Her mother was of human birth,
Her sire a Genie of the earth,
In days of old deemed to preside
O'er lovers' wiles and beauty's pride,
By youths and virgins worshipped long,
With festive dance and choral song,
Till, when the cross to Britain came,
On heathen altars died the flame.
Now, deep in Wastdale's solitude,
The downfall of his rights he rued,
And, born of his resentment heir,
He trained to guile that lady fair,
To sink in slothful sin and shame
The champions of the Christain name.
Well skilled to keep vain thoughts alive,
And all to promise, nought to give,
The timid youth had hope in store,
The bold and pressing gained no more.
As wildered children leave their home,
After the rainbow's arch to roam,
Her lovers bartered fair esteem,
Faith, fame, and honour, for a dream.

IV.

"Her sire's soft arts the soul to tame
She practised thus—till Arthur came;
Then, frail humanity had part,
And all the mother claimed her heart.
Forgot each rule her father gave,
Sunk from a princess to a slave,
Too late must Guendolen deplore,
He, that has all, can hope no more!
Now must she see her lover strain,
At every turn, her feeble chain;
Watch, to new-bind each knot, and shrink
To view each fast-decaying link.

Art she invokes to Nature's aid,
Her vest to zone, her locks to braid;
Each varied pleasure heard her call;
The feast, the tourney, and the ball:
Her storied lore she next applies,
'Taxing her mind to aid her eyes;
Now more than mortal wise, and then
In female softness sunk again;
Now, raptured, with each wish complying,
With feigned reluctance now denying;
Each charm she varied, to retain
A varying heart—and all in vain!

V.

"Thus in the garden's narrow bound,
Flanked by some castle's Gothic round,
Fain would the artist's skill provide,
The limits of his realm to hide.
The walks in labyrinths he twines,
Shade after shade with skill combines,
With many a varied flowery knot,
And copse and arbour decks the spot,
Tempting the hasty foot to stay,
And linger on the lovely way—
Vain art! vain hope! 'tis fruitless all!
At length we reach the bounding wall,
And, sick of flower and trim-dressed tree,
Long for rough glades and forest tree.

VI.

"Three summer months had scantily flown,
When Arthur, in embarrassed tone,
Spoke of his liegemen and his throne;
Said, all too long had been his stay,
And duties, which a monarch sway,
Duties, unknown to humbler men,
Must tear her knight from Guendolen.—
She listened silently the while,
Her mood expressed in bitter smile;
Beneath her eye must Arthur quail,
And oft resume the unfinished tale,
Confessing, by his downcast eye,
The wrong he sought to justify.
He ceased. A moment mute she gazed,
And then her looks to heaven she raised;
One palm her temples veiled, to hide
The tear that sprung in spite of pride;
The other for an instant pressed
The foldings of her silken vest!

VII.

"At her reproachful sign and look,
The hint the monarch's conscience took.
Eager he spoke—"No, lady, no!
Deem not of British Arthur so,
Nor think he can deserter prove
To the dear pledge of mutual love!

I swear by sceptre and by sword,
As belted knight and Britain's lord,
That, if a boy shall claim my care,
That boy is born a kingdom's heir;
But, if a maiden Fate allows,
To choose that maid a fitting spouse,
A summer-day in lists shall strive
My knights,—the bravest knights alive,—
And he, the best and bravest tried,
Shall Arthur's daughter claim for bride.²
He spoke, with voice resolved and high—
The lady deigned him not reply.

VIII.

"At dawn of morn, ere on the brake
His matins did a warbler make,
Or stirred his wing to brush away
A single dew-drop from the spray,
Ere yet a sunbeam, through the mist,
The castle-battlements had kissed,
The gates revolve, the drawbridge falls,
And Arthur sallies from the walls.
Doffed his soft garb of Persia's loom,
And steel from spur to helmet-plume,
His Lybian steed full proudly trode,
And joyful neighed beneath his load.
The monarch gave a passing sigh
To penitence and pleasures by,
When, lo! to his astonished ken
Appeared the form of Guendolen.

IX.

"Beyond the outmost wall she stood,
Attired like huntress of the wood:
Sandalled her feet, her ankles bare,
And eagle-plumage decked her hair;
Firm was her look, her bearing bold,
And in her hand a cup of gold.
'Thou goest!' she said, 'and ne'er again
Must we two meet, in joy or pain.
Full fain would I this hour delay,
Though weak the wish—yet, wilt thou stay?
No! thou look'st forward. Still attend,—
Part we like lover and like friend.'—
She raised the cup—'Not this the juice
The sluggish vines of earth produce;
Pledge we, at parting, in the draught
Which Genii love!'—she said, and quaffed;
And strange unwonted lustres fly
From her flushed cheek and sparkling eye.

X.

"The courteous monarch bent him low,
And, stooping down from saddlebow,
Lifted the cup, in act to drink.
A drop escaped the goblet's brink—

Intense as liquid fire from hell,
Upon the charger's neck it fell.
Screaming with agony and fright,
He bolted twenty feet upright—
—The peasant still can show the dint,
Where his hoofs lighted on the flint.
From Arthur's hand the goblet flew,
Scattering a shower of fiery dew,
That burned and blighted where it fell;
The frantic steed rushed up the dell,
As whistles from the bow the reed;
Nor bit nor rein could check his speed
Until he gained the hill;
Then breath and sinew failed apace,
And, reeling from the desperate race,
He stood exhausted, still.
The monarch, breathless and amazed,
Back on the fatal castle gazed—
Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,
Darkening against the morning sky;
But, on the spot where once they frowned,
The lonely streamlet brawled around
A tufted knoll, where dimly shone
Fragments of rock and rifted stone.
Musing on this strange hap the while,
The king wends back to fair Carlisle;
And cares, that cumber royal sway,
Wore memory of the past away.

XI.

“Full fifteen years, and more, were sped,
Each brought new wreaths for Arthur's head.
Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,
The Saxons to subjection brought;
Rythen, the mighty giant, slain
By his good brand, relieved Bretagne;
The Pictish Gillamore in fight,
And Roman Lucius, owned his might;
And wide was through the world renowned
The glories of his Table Round.
Each knight, who sought adventurous fame,
To the bold court of Britain came,
And all who suffered causeless wrong,
From tyrant proud, or faitour strong,
Sought Arthur's presence to complain,
Nor there for aid implored in vain.

XII.

“For this the king, with pomp and pride,
Held solemn court at Whitsuntide,
And summoned prince and peer,
All who owed homage for their land,
Or who craved knighthood from his hand,
Or who had succour to demand,
To come from far and near.

At such high tide, were glee and game
 Mingled with feats of martial fame,
 For many a stranger champion came
 In lists to break a spear;
 And not a knight of Arthur's host,
 Save that he trode some foreign coast,
 But at this feast of Pentecost
 Before him must appear.—
 Ah, Minstrels! when the Table Round
 Arose, with all its warriors crowned,
 There was a theme for bards to sound
 In triumph to their string!
 Five hundred years are passed and gone,
 But Time shall draw his dying groan,
 Ere he behold the British throne
 Begirt with such a ring!

XIII.

“The heralds named the appointed spot,
 As Caerleon or Camelot,
 Or Carlisle fair and free.
 At Penrith, now, the feast was set,
 And in fair Eamont's vale were met
 The flower of chivalry.
 There Galaad sate with manly grace,
 Yet maiden meekness in his face;
 There Morolt of the iron mace,
 And love-lorn Tristrem there;
 And Dinadam with lively glance,
 And Lanval with the fairy lance,
 And Mordred with his look askance,
 Brunor and Bevidere.
 Why should I tell of numbers more?
 Sir Cay, Sir Banier, and Sir Bore,
 Sir Carodac the keen,
 The gentle Gawain's courteous lore,
 Hector de Mares and Pellinore,
 And Lancelot, that ever more
 Looked stolen-wise on the Queen.

XIV.

“When wine and mirth did most abound,
 And harpers played their blithest round,
 A shrilly trumpet shook the ground,
 And marshals cleared the ring;
 A Maiden, on a palfrey white,
 Heading a band of damsels bright,
 Paced through the circle, to alight
 And kneel before the king.
 Arthur, with strong emotion, saw
 Her graceful boldness checked by awe,
 Her dress like huntress of the wold,
 Her bow and baldrick trapped with gold,
 Her sandalled feet, her ankles bare,
 And the eagle-plume that decked her hair.

Graceful her veil she backwards flung—
The King, as from his seat, he sprung,
Almost cried, 'Guendolen!'
But 'twas a face more frank and wild,
Betwixt the woman and the child,
Where less of magic beauty smiled
Than of the race of men;
And in the forehead's haughty grace,
The lines of Britain's royal race,
Pendragon's you might ken.

XV.

"Faltering, yet gracefully, she said—
'Great Prince! behold an orphan maid,
In her departed mother's name,
A father's vowed protection claim!
The vow was sworn in desert lone,
In the deep Valley of Saint John.'—
At once the King the suppliant raised,
And kissed her brow, her beauty praised;
His vow, he said, should well be kept,
Ere in the sea the sun was dipped:
Then, conscious, glanced upon his queen:
But she, unruffled at the scene,
Of human frailty construed mild,
Looked upon Lancelot and smiled.

XVI.

"'Up! up! each knight of gallant crest!
Take buckler, spear, and brand!
He that to-day shall bear him best,
Shall win my Gyneth's hand.
And Arthur's daughter, when a bride,
Shall bring a noble dower;
Both fair Strath-Clyde and Reged wide,
And Carlisle town and tower.'—
Then might you hear each valiant knight,
To page and squire that cried,
'Bring my armour bright, and my courser wight!
'Tis not each day that a warrior's might
May win a royal bride.'—
Then cloaks and caps of maintenance
In haste aside they fling;
The helmets glance, and gleams the lance,
And the steel-waved hauberks ring.
Small care had they of their peaceful array,
They might gather it that wolde;
For brake and bramble glittered gay,
With pearls and cloth of gold.

XVII.

"Within trumpet-sound of the Table Round
Were fifty champions free;
And they all arise to fight that prize,—
They all arise but three.
Nor love's fond troth, nor wedlock's oath,
One gallant could withhold.

For priests will allow of a broken vow,
 For penance or for gold.
 But sigh and glance from ladies bright
 Among the troop were thrown,
 To plead their right, and true-love plight,
 And plain of honour flown.
 The knights they busied them so fast,
 With buckling spur and belt,
 That sigh and look, by ladies cast,
 Were neither seen nor felt.
 From pleading, or upbraiding glance,
 Each gallant turns aside,
 And only thought, 'If speeds my lance,
 A queen becomes my bride!
 She has fair Strath-Clyde, and Reged wide,
 And Carlisle tower and town;
 She is the loveliest maid, beside,
 That ever heired a crown.'—
 So in haste their coursers they bestride,
 And strike their vizors down.

XVIII.

"The champions, armed in martial sort,
 Have thronged into the list,
 And but three knights of Arthur's court
 Are from the tourney missed.
 And still these lovers' fame survives
 For faith so constant shown,—
 There were two who loved their neighbours' wives,
 And one who loved his own.
 The first was Lancelot de Lac,
 The second Tristrem bold,
 The third was valiant Carodac,
 Who won the cup of gold,
 What time, of all King Arthur's crew,
 (Thereof came jeer and laugh,)
 He, as the mate of lady true,
 Alone the cup could quaff.
 Though envy's tongue would fain surmise
 That, but for very shame,
 Sir Carodac, to fight that prize,
 Had given both cup and dame;
 Yet, since but one of that fair court
 Was true to wedlock's shrine,
 Brand him who will with base report,—
 He shall be free from mine.

XIX.

"Now caracoled the steeds in air,
 Now plumes and pennons wantoned fair,
 As all around the lists so wide
 In panoply the champions ride.
 King Arthur saw, with startled eye,
 The flower of chivalry march by,
 The bulwark of the Christian creed,
 The kingdom's shield in hour of need.

Too late he thought him of the woe
 Might from their civil conflict flow;
 For well he knew they would not part
 Till cold was many a gallant heart.
 His hasty vow he 'gan to rue,
 And Gyneth then apart he drew;
 To her his leading-staff resigned,
 But added caution grave and kind.

XX.

"Thou seest, my child, as promise-bound,
 I bid the trump for tourney sound.
 Take thou my warder, as the queen
 And umpire of the martial scene;
 But mark thou this:—as Beauty bright
 Is polar star to valiant knight,
 As at her word his sword he draws,
 His fairest guerdon her applause,
 So gentle maid should never ask
 Of knighthood vain and dangerous task;
 And Beauty's eyes should ever be.
 Like the twin stars that soothe the sea,
 And Beauty's breath should whisper peace,
 And bid the storm of battle cease.
 I tell thee this, lest all too far
 These knights urge tourney into war.
 Blithe at the trumpet let them go,
 And fairly counter blow for blow;—
 No striplings these, who succour need
 For a razed helm or falling steed.
 But, Gyneth, when the strife grows warm,
 And threatens death or deadly harm,
 Thy sire entreats, thy king commands,
 Thou drop the warder from thy hands.
 Trust thou thy father with thy fate,
 Doubt not he choose thee fitting mate;
 Nor be it said, through Gyneth's pride
 A rose of Arthur's chaplet died."

XXI.

"A proud and discontented glow
 O'ershadowed Gyneth's brow of snow;
 She put the warder by:—
 'Reserve thy boon, my liege,' she said,
 'Thus chaffered down and limited,
 Debased and narrowed, for a maid
 Of less degree than I.
 No petty chief but holds his heir
 At a more honoured price and rare
 Than Britain's king holds me!
 Although the sunburnt maid, for dower,
 Has but her father's rugged tower,
 His barren hill and lea.
 King Arthur swore, "by crown and sword.
 As belted knight and Britain's lord,

That a whole summer's day should strive
 His knights, the bravest knights alive!"
 Recall thine oath! and to her glen
 Poor Gyneth can return agen;
 Not on thy daughter will the stain,
 That soils thy sword and crown, remain.
 But think not she will e'er be bride
 Save to the bravest, proved and tried;
 Pendragon's daughter will not fear
 For clashing sword or splintered spear,
 Nor shrink though blood should flow;
 And all too well sad Guendolen
 Hath taught the faithlessness of men,
 That child of hers should pity, when
 Their meed they undergo.'—

XXII.

'He frowned and sighed, the monarch bold:—
 'I give, what I may not withhold;
 For, not for danger, dread, nor death,
 Must British Arthur break his faith.
 Too late I mark, thy mother's art
 Hath taught thee this relentless part.
 I blame her not, for she had wrong;
 But not to these my faults belong.
 Use, then, the warder as thou wilt;
 But trust me, that, if life be spilt,
 In Arthur's love, in Arthur's grace,
 Gyneth shall lose a daughter's place.'
 With that he turned his head aside,
 Nor brooked to gaze upon her pride,
 As, with the truncheon raised, she sate
 The arbitress of mortal fate;
 Nor brooked to mark, in ranks disposed,
 How the bold champions stood opposed,
 For shrill the trumpet-flourish fell
 Upon his ear, like passing bell!
 Then first from sight of martial fray
 Did Britain's champion turn away.

XXIII.

"But Gyneth heard the clangour high,
 As hears the hawk the partridge cry.
 Oh, blame her not! the blood was hers,
 That at the trumpet's summons stirs;—
 And e'en the gentlest female eye
 Might the brave strife of chivalry
 A while untroubled view;
 So well accomplished was each knight,
 To strike and to defend in fight,
 Their meeting was a goodly sight,
 While plate and mail held true.
 The lists with painted plumes were strown,
 Upon the wind at random thrown,
 But helm and breastplate bloodless shone;
 It seemed their feathered crests alone

Should this encounter rue.
And ever, as the combat grows,
The trumpet's cheery voice arose
Like lark's shrill song the flourish flows.
Heard while the gale of April blows
The merry greenwood through.

XXIV.

But soon to earnest grew their game,
The spears drew blood, the swords struck flames.
And, horse and man, to ground there came
Knights, who shall rise no more!
Gone was the pride the war that graced,
Gay shields were cleft, and crests defaced,
And steel coats riven, and helms unbraced,
And pennons streamed with gore.
Gone, too, were fence and fair array,
And desperate strength made deadly way
At random through the bloody fray,
And blows were dealt with headlong sway,
Unheeding where they fell;
And now the trumpet's clamours seem
Like the shrill sea-bird's wailing scream,
Heard o'er the whirlpool's gulping stream,
The sinking seaman's knell!

XXV.

"Seemed in this dismal hour, that Fate
Would Camlan's ruin antedate,
And spare dark Mordred's crime:
Already gasping on the ground,
Lie twenty of the Table Round,
Of chivalry the prime.
Arthur, in anguish, tore away
From head and beard his tresses gray,
And she, proud Gyneth, felt dismay,
And quaked with ruth and fear;
But still she deemed her mother's shade
Hung o'er the tumult, and forbade
The sign that had the slaughter stayed,
And chid the rising tear.
Then Brunor, Tanlas, Mador, fell,
Helias the White, and Lionel,
And many a champion more;
Rochemont and Dinadam are down,
And Ferrand of the Forest Brown
Lies gasping in his gore.
Vanoc by mighty Morolt pressed,
Even to the confines of the list,
Young Vanoc of the beardless face,
(Fame spoke the youth of Merlin's race,)
O'erpowered at Gyneth's footstool bled,
His heart's blood dyed her sandals red.
But then the sky was overcast,
Then howled at once a whirlwind's blast.

And, rent by sudden throes,
Yawned in mid lists the quaking earth,
And from the gulf, tremendous birth !
The form of Merlin rose.

XXVI.

" Sternly the wizard prophet eyed
The dreary lists with slaughter dyed,
And sternly raised his hand :—
' Madmen ! ' he said, ' your strife forbear !
And thou, fair cause of mischief, hear
The doom thy fates demand !
Long shall close in stony sleep
Eyes for ruth that would not weep,
Iron lethargy shall seal
Heart that pity scorned to feel.
Yet, because thy mother's art
Warped thine unsuspecting heart,
And for love of Arthur's race,
Punishment is blent with grace.
Thou shalt bear thy penance lone.
In the Valley of Saint John,
And this weird* shall overtake thee ;—
Sleep, until a knight shall wake thee,
For feats of arms as far renowned
As warrior of the Table Round.
Long endurance of thy slumber
Well may teach the world to number
All their woes from Gyneth's pride,
When the Red Cross champions died.'—

XXVII.

" As Merlin speaks, on Gyneth's eye
Slumber's load begins to lie ;
Fear and Anger vainly strive
Still to keep its light alive.
Twice, with effort and with pause,
O'er her brow her hand she draws ;
Twice her strength in vain she tries,
From the fatal chair to rise ;
Merlin's magic doom is spoken,
Vancoc's death must now be wroken.
Flow the dark-fringed eyelids fall,
Curtaining each azure ball,
Slowly as on summer eves
Violets fold their dusky leaves.
The weighty baton of command
Now bears down her dusky leaves,
On her shoulder droops her head ;
Net of pearl and golden thread,
Bursting, gave her locks to flow
O'er her arm and breast of snow.
And so lovely seemed she there,
Spell-bound in her ivory chair.

* Doom.

That her angry sire, repenting,
Craved stern Merlin for relenting,
And the champions, for her sake,
Would again the contest wake;
Till, in necromantic night,
Gyneth vanished from their sight.

XXVIII.

"Still she bears her weird alone,
In the Valley of Saint John;
And her semblance oft will seem
Mingling in a champion's dream,
Of her weary lot to plain,
And crave his aid to burst her chain.
While her wondrous tale was new,
Warriors to her rescue drew,
East and west, and south and north,
From the Liffy, Thames, and Forth.
Most have sought in vain the glen,
Tower nor castle could they ken;
Not at every time or tide,
Nor by every eye descried.
Fast and vigil must be borne,
Many a night in watching worn,
Ere an eye of mortal powers
Can discern those magic towers.
Of the persevering few,
Some from hopeless task withdrew,
When they read the dismal threat
Graved upon the gloomy gate.
Few have braved the yawning door,
And those few returned no more.
In the lapse of time forgot,
Well-nigh lost is Gyneth's lot;
Sound her sleep as in the tomb,
Till wakened by the trump of doom."

END OF LYULPH'S TALE.

Here pause, my tale; for all too soon,
My Lucy, comes the hour of noon.
Already from thy lofty dome
Its courtly inmates 'gin to roam,
And each, to kill the goodly day
That God has granted them, his way
Of lazy sauntering has sought;

Lordlings and witlings not a few,
Incapable of doing aught,

Yet ill at ease with nought to do.
Here is no longer place for me;
For, Lucy, thou wouldst blush to see
Some phantom, fashionably thin,
With limb of lath and kerchiefed chin,
And lounging gape, or sneering grin,
Steal sudden on our privacy.

And how should I, so humbly born,
Endure the graceful spectre's scorn?
Faith! ill, I fear, while conjuring wand
Of English oak is hard at hand.

II.

Or grant the hour be all too soon
For Hessian boot and pantaloons,
And grant the lounge seldom strays
Beyond the smooth and gravelled maze,
Laud we the gods, that Fashion's train
Holds hearts of more adventurous strain.
Artists are hers, who scorn to trace
Their rules from Nature's boundless grace,
But their right paramount assert
To limit her by pedant art,
Damning whate'er of vast and fair
Exceeds a canvas three feet square.
This thicket, for their *gumption* fit,
May furnish such a happy *bit*.
Bards, too, are hers, wont to recite
Their own sweet lays by waxen light,
Half in the salver's tangle drowned,
While the *chasse-café* glides around;
And such may hither secret stray,
To labour an extempore:
Or sportsman, with his boisterous hollo,
May here his wiser spaniel follow,
Or stage-struck Juliet may presume
To choose this bower for tiring-room;
And we alike must shun regard,
From painter, player, sportsman, bard.
Insects that skim in Fashion's sky,
Wasp, blue-bottle, or butterfly,
Lucy, have all alarms for us,
For all can hum and all can buzz.

III.

But oh, my Lucy, say how long
We still must dread this trifling throng,
And stoop to hide, with coward art,
The genuine feelings of the heart!
No parents thine, whose just command
Should rule their child's obedient hand—
Thy guardians, with contending voice,
Press each his individual choice.
And which is Lucy's?—Can it be
That puny fop, trimmed cap-a-pea,
Who loves in the saloon to show
The arms that never knew a foe;
Whose sabre trails along the ground,
Whose legs in shapeless boots are drowned;
A new Achilles, sure,—the steel
Fled from his breast to fence his heel;
One, for the simple manly grace
That wont to deck our martial race.

Who comes in foreign trashery
 Of tinkling chain and spur,
 A walking haberdashery,
 Of feathers, lace, and fur:
 In Rowley's antiquated phrase,
 Horse-milliner* of modern days?

IV.

Or is it he, the wordy youth,
 So early trained for statesman's part,
 Who talks of honour, faith, and truth,
 As themes that he has got by heart;
 Whose ethics Chesterfield can teach,
 Whose logic is from Single-speech;
 Who scorns the meanest thought to vent,
 Save in the phrase of parliament;
 Who, in a tale of cat and mouse,
 Calls "order," and "divides the house,"
 Who "craves permission to reply,"
 Whose "noble friend is in his eye;"
 Whose loving tender some have reckoned
 A *motion* you should gladly *second*!

V.

What, neither? Can there be a third,
 To such resistless swains preferred?—
 Oh, why, my Lucy, turn aside,
 With that quick glance of injured pride!
 Forgive me, love, I cannot bear
 That altered and resentful air.
 Were all the wealth of Russel mine,
 And all the rank of Howard's line,
 All would I give for leave to dry
 That dewdrop trembling in thine eye.
 Think not I fear such fops can wile
 From Lucy more than careless smile;
 But yet if wealth and high degree
 Give gilded counters currency,
 Must I not fear, when rank and birth
 Stamp the pure ore of genuine worth?
 Nobles there are, whose martial fires
 Rival the fame that raised their sires,
 And patriots, skilled through storms of fate
 To guide and guard the reeling state.
 Such, such there are—if such should come,
 Arthur must tremble and be dumb,
 Self-exiled seek some distant shore,
 And mourn till life and grief are o'er.

VI.

What sight, what signal of alarm,
 That Lucy clings to Arthur's arm?
 Or is it, that the rugged way
 Makes Beauty lean on lover's stay?

The trammels of the palfraye pleased his sight.
 And the horse-millanere his head with roses dight."

Rowley's Ballads of Charitie

Oh no! for on the vale and brake,
 Nor sight nor sounds of danger wake,
 And this trim sward of velvet green
 Were carpet for the fairy queen.
 That pressure slight was but to tell,
 That Lucy loves her Arthur well,
 And fain would banish from his mind
 Suspicious fear and doubt unkind.

VII.

But wouldst thou bid the demons fly
 Like mist before the dawning sky,
 There is but one resistless spell—
 Say, wilt thou guess, or must I tell?
 'Twere hard to name, in minstrel phrase,
 A landaulet and four blood-bays,
 But bards agree this wizard band
 Can but be bound in Northern Land.
 'Tis there—nay, draw not back thy hand!
 'Tis there this slender finger round
 Must golden amulet be bound,
 Which, blessed with many a holy prayer,
 Can change to rapture lovers' care,
 And doubt and jealousy shall die,
 And fears give place to ecstasy.

VIII.

Now, trust me, Lucy, all too long
 Has been thy lover's tale and song.
 Oh, why so silent, love, I pray?
 Have I not spoke the livelong day?
 And will not Lucy deign to say
 One word her friend to bless?
 I ask but one—a simple sound,
 Within three little letters bound,
 Oh let the word be YES!

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO THIRD.

I.

LONG loved, long wooed, and lately won,
 My life's best hope, and now mine own!
 Doth not this rude and Alpine glen
 Recall our favourite haunts agen?
 A wild resemblance we can trace,
 Though reft of every softer grace,
 As the rough warrior's brow may bear
 A likeness to a sister fair.
 Full well advised our Highland host,
 That this wild pass on foot be crossed,
 While round Ben-Cruach's mighty base
 Wheel the slow steeds and lingering chase.
 The keen old Carle, with Scottish pride,
 He praised his glen and mountains wide;

An eye he bears for Nature's face,
Ay, and for woman's lovely grace.
E'en in such mean degree we find
The subtle Scot's observing mind;
For, nor the chariot nor the train
Could gape of vulgar wonder gain,
But when old Allan would expound
Of Beal-na-paish * the Celtic sound,
His bonnet doffed, and bow, applied
His legend to my bonny bride;
While Lucy blushed beneath his eye,
Courteous and cautious, shrewd and sly.

II.

Enough of him.—Now, ere we lose,
Plunged in the vale, the distant views,
Turn thee, my love! look back once more
To the blue lake's retiring shore.
On its smooth breast the shadows seem
Like objects in a morning dream,
What time the slumberer is aware
He sleeps, and all the vision's air:
E'en so, on yonder liquid lawn,
In hues of bright reflection drawn,
Distinct the shaggy mountains lie,
Distinct the rocks, distinct the sky;
The summer-clouds so plain we note,
That we might count each dappled spot;
We gaze and we admire, yet know
The scene is all delusive show.
Such dreams of bliss would Arthur draw,
When first his Lucy's form he saw;
Yet sighed and sickened as he drew,
Despairing they could ere prove true!

III.

But, Lucy, turn thee now, to view
Up the fair glen, our destined way:
The fairy path that we pursue,
Distinguished but by greener hue,
Winds round the purple brae,
While Alpine flowers of varied dye
For carpet serve, or tapestry.
See how the little runnels leap,
In threads of silver, down the steep,
To swell the brooklet's moan!
Seems that the Highland Naiad grieves,
Fantastic while her crown she weaves,
Of rowan, birch, and alder leaves,
So lovely, and so lone.
There's no illusion there; these flowers,
That wailing brook, these lovely bowers,
Are, Lucy, all our own;

* Beal-na-paish, the Vale of the Bridal.

And, since thine Arthur called thee wife,
 Such seems the prospect of his life!
 A lovely path, on-winding still,
 By gurgling brook and sloping hill.
 'Tis true, that mortals cannot tell
 What waits them in the distant dell;
 But be it hap, or be it harm,
 We tread the pathway arm in arm.

IV.

And now, my Lucy, wot'st thou why
 I could thy bidding twice deny,
 When twice you prayed I would again
 Resume the legendary strain
 Of the bold Knight of Triermain?
 At length yon peevish vow you swore,
 That you would sue to me no more,
 Until the minstrel fit drew near,
 And made me prize a listening ear.
 But, loveliest, when thou first didst pray
 Continuance of the knightly lay,
 Was it not on the happy day
 That made thy hand mine own?
 When, dizzied with mine ecstasy,
 Nought past, or present, or to be,
 Could I or think on, hear, or see,
 Save, Lucy, thee alone!
 A giddy draught my rapture was,
 As ever chemist's magic gas.

V.

Again the summons I denied
 In yon fair capital of Clyde;
 My Harp—or let me rather choose
 The good old classic form—my Muse,
 (For Harp's an over-scuteh'd phrase,
 Worn out by bards of modern days,)
 My Muse, then—seldom will she wake
 Save by dim wood and silent lake;
 She is a wild and rustic Maid,
 Whose foot unsandalled loves to tread
 Where the soft greensward is inlaid
 With varied moss and thyme;
 And, lest the simple lily-braid,
 That coronets her temples, fade,
 She hides her still in greenwood shade,
 To meditate her rhyme.

VI.

And now she comes! The murmur dear
 Of the wild brook hath caught her ear,
 The glade hath won her eye;
 She longs to join with each blithe rill
 That dances down the Highland hill,
 Her blither melody.

And now, my Lucy's way to cheer,
She bids Ben-Cruach's echoes hear
How closed the tale, my love whilere
Loved for its chivalry.
List how she tells, in notes of flame,
"Child Roland to the dark tower came!"

CANTO THIRD.

I.

BEWCASTLE now must keep the Hold,
Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall
Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold
Must only shoot from battled wall;
And Liddesdale may buckle spur,
And Teviot now may belt the brand,
Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,
And Eskdale foray Cumberland.
Of wasted fields and plundered flocks
The Borderers bootless may complain,
They lack the sword of brave De Vaux,
There comes no aid from Triermain.
That lord, on high adventure bound,
Hath wandered forth alone,
And day and night keeps watchful round
In the Valley of Saint John.

II.

When first began his vigil bold,
The moon twelve summer nights was old,
And shone both fair and full;
High in the vault of cloudless blue,
O'er streamlet, dale, and rock, she threw
Her light composed and cool.
Stretched on the brown hill's heathy breast
Sir Roland eyed the vale;
Chief where, distinguished from the rest,
Those clustering rocks upreared their crest
The dwelling of the Fair distressed,
As told gray Lyulph's tale.
Thus as he lay, the lamp of night
Was quivering on his armour bright,
In beams that rose and fell,
And danced upon his buckler's boss,
That lay beside him on the moss,
As on a crystal well.

III.

Ever he watched, and oft he deemed,
While on the mound the moonlight streamed,
It altered to his eyes;
Fain would he hope the rocks 'gan change
To buttressed walls their shapeless range.
Fain think, by transmutation strange,
He saw gray turrets rise.

But scarce his heart with hope throbb'd high,
 Before the wild illusions fly,
 Which fancy had conceived,
 Abetted by an anxious eye
 That longed to be deceived.
 It was a fond deception all,
 Such as, in solitary hall,
 Beguiles the musing eye,
 When, gazing on the sinking fire,
 Bulwark and battlement and spire
 In the red gulf we spy.
 For, seen by moon of middle night,
 Or by the blaze of noontide bright,
 Or by the dawn of morning light,
 Or evening's western flame,
 In every tide, at every hour,
 In mist, in sunshine, and in shower,
 The rocks remained the same.

IV.

Oft has he traced the charmed mound,
 Oft climbed its crest, or paced it round,
 Yet nothing might explore,
 Save that the crags so rudely piled,
 At distance seen, resemblance wild
 To a rough fortress bore.
 Yet still his watch the Warrior keeps,
 Feeds hard and spare, and seldom sleeps,
 And drinks but of the well;
 Ever by day he walks the hill,
 And when the evening gale is chill,
 He seeks a rocky cell,
 Like hermit poor to bid his bead,
 And tell his Ave and his Creed,
 Invoking every Saint at need,
 For aid to burst the spell.

V.

And now the moon her orb has hid,
 And dwindled to a silver thread,
 Dim seen in middle heaven,
 While o'er its curve careering fast,
 Before the fury of the blast
 The midnight clouds are driven.
 The brooklet raved, for on the hills
 The upland showers had swoln the rills,
 And down the torrents came;
 Muttered the distant thunder dread,
 And frequent o'er the vale was spread
 A sheet of lightning flame.
 De Vaux, within his mountain cave,
 (No human step the storm durst brave,)
 To moody meditation gave

Each faculty of soul,
Till, lulled by distant torrent sound,
And the sad winds that whistled round,
Upon his thoughts, in musing drowned,
A broken slumber stole.

VI.

'Twas then was heard a heavy sound,
(Sound, strange and fearful there to hear,
'Mongst desert hills, where, leagues around,
Dwelt but the gorcock and the deer :)
As starting from his couch of fern,
Again he heard, in clangour stern,
That deep and solemn swell;
Twelve times, in measured tone, it spoke,
Like some proud minster's pealing clock,
Or city's 'larum-bell.
What thought was Roland's, first when fell,
In that deep wilderness, the knell
Upon his startled ear?—
To slander warrior were I loth,
Yet must I hold my minstrel troth,—
It was a thought of fear.

VII.

But lively was the mingled thrill
That chased that momentary chill,
For Love's keen wish was there,
And eager Hope, and Valour high,
And the proud glow of Chivalry,
That burned to do and dare.
Forth from the cave the Warrior rushed,
Long ere the mountain-voice was hushed,
That answered to the knell;
For long and far the unwonted sound,
Eddying in echoes round and round,
Was tossed from fell to fell;
And Glaramara answer flung,
And Grisdale-pike responsive rung,
And Legbert heights their echoes swung,
As far as Derwent's dell.

VIII.

Forth upon trackless darkness gazed
The Knight, bedeaftened and amazed,
Till all was hushed and still,
Save the swollen torrent's sullen roar,
And the night-blast that wildly bore
Its course along the hill.
Then on the northern sky there came
A light, as of reflected flame,
And over Legbert-head,
As if by magic art controlled,
A mighty Meteor slowly rolled

its orb of fiery red;
 Thou wouldst have thought some demon dire
 Came mounted on that car of fire,
 To do his errand dread.
 Far on the sloping valley's course,
 On thicket, rock, and torrent hoarse,
 Shingle and Scrae,* and Fell and Foice,
 A dusky light arose:
 Displayed, yet altered, was the scene;
 Dark rock, and brook of silver sheen,
 Even the gay thicket's summer green,
 In bloody tincture glows.

IX.

De Vaux had marked the sunbeams set,
 At eve, upon the coronet
 Of that enchanted mound,
 And seen but crags at random flung,
 That, o'er the brawling torrent hung,
 In desolation frowned.
 What sees he by that meteor's lur?—
 A bannered Castle, Keep, and Tower,
 Return the lurid gleam;
 With battled walls and buttress fast,
 And barbican† and ballium‡ vast,
 And airy flanking towers that cast,
 Their shadows on the stream.
 'Tis no deceit! distinctly clear
 Crenell|| and parapet appear,
 While o'er the pile that meteor drear
 Makes momentary pause;
 Then forth its solemn path it drew,
 And fainter yet and fainter grew
 Those gloomy towers upon the view,
 As its wild light withdraws.

X.

Forth from the cave did Roland rush,
 O'er crag and stream, through brier and bush;
 Yet far he had not sped,
 Ere sunk was that portentous light
 Behind the hills, and utter night
 Was on the valley spread.
 He paused perforce,—and blew his horn,
 And on the mountain-echoes borne
 Was heard an answering sound,
 A wild and lonely trumpet-note,
 In middle air it seemed to float
 High o'er the battled mound;
 And sounds were heard, as when a guard
 Of some proud castle, holding ward,
 Pace forth their nightly round.

* Bank of loose stones.

† Waterfall.

‡ The outer defence of the Castle gate.

|| Fortified court.

|| Apertures for shooting

The valiant Knight of Triermaln
Rung forth his challenge-blast again,
But answer came there none;
And 'mid the mingled wind and rain,
Darkling he sought the vale in vain,
Until the dawning shone;
And when it dawned, that wondrous sight,
Distinctly seen by meteor light,
It all had passed away!
And that enchanted mound once more
A pile of granite fragments bore,
As at the close of day.

XI.

Steeled for the deed, De Vaux's heart
Scorned from his venturous quest to part,
He walks the vale once more;
But only sees, by night or day,
That shattered pile of rocks so gray,
Hears but the torrent's roar.
Till when, through hills of azure borne,
The moon renewed her silver horn,
Just at the time her waning ray
Had faded in the dawning day.

A summer mist arose;
Adown the vale the vapours float,
And cloudy undulations moat
That tufted mound of mystic note,
As round its base they close.
And higher now the fleecy tide
Ascends its stern and shaggy side,
Until the airy billows hide
The rock's majestic isle:
It seemed a veil of filmy lawn,
By some fantastic fairy drawn
Around enchanted pile.

XII.

The breeze came softly down the brook,
And sighing as it blew,
The veil of silver mist it shook,
And to De Vaux's eager look
Renewed that wondrous view.
For, though the loitering vapour braved
The gentle breeze, yet oft it waved
Its mantle's dewy fold;
And still, when shook that filmy screen,
Were towers and bastions dimly seen,
And Gothic battlements between
Their gloomy length unrolled.
Speed, speed, De Vaux, ere on thine eye
Once more the fleeting vision die!—
The gallant Knight can speed
As prompt and light as, when the hound
Is opening, and the horn is wound,
Careers the hunter's steed.

Down the steep dell his course amain
 Hath rivalled archer's shaft;
 But ere the mound he could attain,
 The rocks their shapeless form regain,
 And mocking loud his labour vain,
 The mountain spirits laughed;
 Far up the echoing dell was borne
 Their wild unearthly shout of scorn.

XIII.

Wroth waxed the Warrior.—“Am I then
 Fooled by the enemies of men,
 Like a poor hind, whose homeward way
 Is haunted by malicious fay?
 Is Triermain become your taunt,
 De Vaux your scorn? False fiends, avaunt!
 A weighty curtal-axe he bare;
 The baleful blade so bright and square,
 And the tough shaft of heben wood,
 Were oft in Scottish gore imbrued.
 Backward his stately form he drew,
 And at the rocks the weapon threw,
 Just where one crag's projected crest
 Hung proudly balanced o'er the rest.
 Hurled with main force, the weapon's shock
 Rent a huge fragment of the rock.
 If by mere strength 'twere hard to tell
 Or if the blow dissolved some spell.
 But down the headlong ruin came,
 With cloud of dust and flash of flame.
 Down bank, o'er bush, its course was borne,
 Crushed lay the copse, the earth was torn.
 Till, stayed at length, the ruin dread
 Cumbered the torrent's rocky bed,
 And bade the water's high-swoln tide
 Seek other passage for its pride.

XIV.

When ceased that thunder, Triermain
 Surveyed the mound's rude front again;
 And lo! the ruin had laid bare,
 Hewn in the stone, a winding stair,
 Whose mossed and fractured steps might lend
 The means the summit to ascend,
 And by whose aid the brave De Vaux
 Began to scale these magic rocks,
 And soon a platform won,
 Where, the wild witchery to close,
 Within three lances' length arose
 The Castle of Saint John!
 No misty phantom of the air.
 No metegr-blazoned show was there;
 In morning splendour, full and fair,
 The massive fortress shone.

XV.

Embattled high and proudly towered,
Shaded by ponderous flankers, lowered
The portal's gloomy way.
Though for six hundred years and more,
Its strength had brooked the tempest's roar,
The scutcheon'd emblems that it bore
Had suffered no decay;
But from the eastern battlement
A turret had made sheer descent,
And down in recent ruin rent,
In the mid torrent lay.
Else, o'er the Castle's brow sublime,
Insults of violence or of time
Unfelt had passed away.
In shapeless characters of yore,
The gate this stern inscription bore :

XVI.

Inscription.

"Patience waits the destined day,
Strength can clear the cumbered way.
Warrior, who hast waited long,
Firm of soul, of sinew strong,
It is given to thee to gaze
On the pile of ancient days.
Never mortal builder's hand
This enduring fabric planned;
Sign and sigil, word of power,
From the earth raised keep and tower.
View it o'er, and pace it round,
Rampart, turret, battled mound;
Dare no more! to cross the gate
Were to tamper with thy fate;
Strength and fortitude were vain,
View it o'er—and turn again."

XVII.

"That would I," said the Warrior bold,
"If that my frame were bent and old,
And my thin blood dropped slow and cold
As icicle in thaw;
But while my heart can feel it dance,
Blithe as the sparkling wine of France,
And this good arm wields sword or lance,
I mock these words of awe!"
He said; the wicket felt the sway
Of his strong hand, and straight gave way.
And, with rude crash and jarring bray,
The rusty bolts withdraw;
But o'er the threshold as he strode,
And forward took the vaulted road,
An unseen arm, with force amain,
The ponderous gate flung close again.

And rusted bolt and bar
 Spontaneous took their place once more,
 While the deep arch with sullen roar
 Returned their surly jar.
 "Now closed is the gin and the prey within,
 By the Rood of Lanercost!
 But he that would win the war-wolf's skin,
 May rue him of his boast."—
 Thus muttering, on the Warrior went,
 By dubious light down steep descent.

XVIII.

Unbarred, unlocked, unwatched, a port
 Led to the Castle's outer court;
 There the main fortress, broad and tall,
 Spread its long range of bower and hall,
 And towers of varied size,
 Wrought with each ornament extreme,
 That Gothic art, in wildest dream
 Of fancy, could devise.
 But full between the Warrior's way
 And the main portal arch, there lay
 An inner moat;
 Nor bridge nor boat
 Affords De Vaux the means to cross
 The clear, profound, and silent fosse.
 His arms aside in haste he flings,
 Cuirass of steel and hauberk rings,
 And down falls helm, and down the shield,
 Rough with the dints of many a field.
 Fair was his manly form, and fair
 His keen dark eye, and close curled hair,
 When,—all unarmed, save that the brand
 Of well-proved metal graced his hand,
 With nought to fence his dauntless breast
 But the close gipon's* under-vest,
 Whose sullied buff the sable stains
 Of hauberk and of mail retains,—
 Roland De Vaux upon the brim
 Of the broad moat stood prompt to swim.

XIX.

Accountred thus he dared the tide,
 And soon he reached the further side,
 And entered soon the Hold,
 And paced a hall, whose walls so wide
 Were blazoned all with feats of pride,
 By warriors done of old.
 In middle lists they countered here,
 While trumpets seemed to blow;
 And there, in den or desert drear,
 They quelled gigantic foe,
 Braved the fierce griffon in his ire,
 Or faced the dragon's breath of fire.

* A sort of doublet, worn beneath the armor.

Strange in their arms, and strange in face,
Heroes they seemed of ancient race,
Whose deeds of arms, and race, and name,
Forgotten long by later fame,
Were here depicted to appal
Those of an age degenerate,
Whose bold intrusion braved their fate
In this enchanted hall.
For some short space, the venturous Knight
With these high marvels fed his sight;
Then sought the chamber's upper end,
Where three broad easy steps ascend
To an arched portal door,
In whose broad folding leaves of state
Was framed a wicket window-grate,
And ere he ventured more,
The gallant Knight took earnest view
The grated wicket-window through.

XX.

Oh, for his arms! Of martial weed
Had never mortal knight such need!—
He spied a stately gallery; all
Of snow-white marble was the wall,
The vaulting, and the floor;
And, contrast strange! on either hand
There stood arrayed in sable band,
Four Maids whom Afric bore;
And each a Lybian tiger led,
Held by as bright and frail a thread
As Lucy's golden hair,
For the leash that bound these monsters dread
Was but of gossamer.
Each Maiden's short barbaric vest
Left all unclosed the knee and breast,
And limbs of shapely jet;
White was their vest and turban's fold,
On arms and ankles rings of gold
In savage pomp were set;
A quiver on their shoulders lay,
And in their hand an assagay.
Such and so silent stood they there,
That Roland well-nigh hoped
He saw a band of statues rare,
Stationed the gazer's soul to scare.
But, when the wicket oped,
Each grisly beast 'gan upward draw,
Rolled his grim eye, and spread his claw,
Scented the air, and licked his jaw;
While these weird Maids, in Moorish tongue,
A wild and dismal warning sung:—

XXI.

"Rash Adventurer, bear thee back!
Dread the spell of Dahomay!

Fear the race of Zaharak,
Daughters of the burning day!

"When the whirlwind's gusts are wheeling,
Ours it is the dance to braid;
Zarah's sands in pillars reeling,
Join the measure that we tread;
When the Moon has donned her cloak,
And the stars are red to see,
Shrill when pipes the sad Siroc,
Music meet for such as we.

"Where the shattered columns lie,
Showing Carthage once had been,
If the wandering Santon's eye
Our mysterious rites has seen,—
Oft he cons the prayer of death,
To the nations preaches doom,
'Azrael's brand hath left the sheath,
Moslems, think upon the tomb!"

"Ours the scorpion, ours the snake,
Ours the hydra of the fen,
Ours the tiger of the brake,
All that plagues the sons of men.
Ours the tempest's midnight wrack,
Pestilence that wastes by day—
Dread the race of Zaharak!
Fear the spell of Dahomay!"

XXII.

Uncouth and strange the accents shrill
Rung those vaulted roofs among,
Long it was ere, faint and still,
Died the far-resounded song.
While yet the distant echoes roll,
The Warrior communed with his soul:—
"When first I took this venturesome quest,
I swore upon the rood,
Neither to stop, nor turn, nor rest,
For evil or for good.
My forward path too well I ween,
Lies yonder fearful ranks between;
For man unarmed, 'tis bootless hope
With tigers and with fiends to cope—
Yet, if I turn, what waits me there,
Save famine dire and fell despair?—
Other conclusion let me try,
Since, choose how'er I list, I die.
Forward, lies faith and knightly fame;
Behind, are perjury and shame.
In life or death I hold my word!"—
With that he drew his trusty sword,
Caught down a banner from the wall,
And entered thus the fearful hall.

XXIII.

On high each wayward Maiden threw
Her swarthy arm, with wild halloo!
On either side a tiger sprung—
Against the leftward foe he flung
The ready banner, to engage
With tangling folds the brutal rage;
The right-hand monster in mid air
He struck so fiercely and so fair,
Through gullet and through spinal bone
The trenchant blade had sheerly gone.
His grisly brethren ramped and yelled,
But the slight leash their rage withheld,
Whilst, 'twixt their ranks, the dangerous road
Firmly, though swift, the champion strode.
Safe to the gallery's bound he drew,
Safe passed an open portal through;
And when 'gainst followers he flung
The gate, judge if the echoes rung!
Onward his daring course he bore,
While, mixed with dying growl and roar,
Wild jubilee and loud hurra
Pursued him on his venturesome way.

XXIV.

"Hurra, hurra! Our watch is done!
We hail once more the tropic sun.
Pallid beams of northern day,
Farewell, farewell! Hurra, hurra!
"Five hundred years o'er this cold glen
Hath the pale sun come round agen;
Foot of man, till now, hath ne'er
Dared to cross the Hall of Fear.
"Warrior! thou, whose dauntless heart
Gives us from our ward to part,
Be as strong in future trial,
Where resistance is denial.
"Now for Afric's glowing sky,
Zwenga wide and Atlas high,
Zaharak and Dahomay!—
Mount the winds! Hurra, hurra!"—

XXV.

The wizard song at distance died,
As if in ether borne astray,
While through waste halls and chambers wide
The Knight pursued his steady way,
Till to a lofty dome he came,
That flashed with such a brilliant flame,
As if the wealth of all the world
Were there in rich confusion hurled.
For here the gold, in sandy heaps,
With duller earth incorporate sleeps:

W^{ere} there in ingots piled, and there
 Coined badge of empery it bare;
 Yonder, huge bars of silver lay,
 Dimmed by the diamond's neighbouring ray,
 Like the pale moon in morning day;
 And in the midst four Maidens stand,
 The daughters of some distant land.
 Their hue was of the dark-red dye,
 That fringes oft a thunder sky;
 Their hands palmetto baskets bare,
 And cotton fillets bound their hair;
 Slim was their form, their mien was say,
 To earth they bent the humbled eye,
 Folded their arms, and suppliant kneeled,
 And thus their proffered gifts revealed.

XXVI.

CHORUS.

"See the treasures Merlin piled,
 Portion meet for Arthur's child.
 Bathe in wealth's unbounded stream,
 Wealth that Avarice ne'er could dream!"

FIRST MAIDEN.

"See these clots of virgin gold!
 Severed from the spary mould,
 Nature's mystic alchemy
 In the mine thus bade them be;
 And their orient smile can win
 Kings to stoop, and saints to sin."—

SECOND MAIDEN.

"See these pearls, that long have slept!
 These were tears by Naiads wept
 For the loss of Marinel;
 Tritons in the silver shell
 Treasured them, till hard and white
 As the teeth of Amphitrite."—

THIRD MAIDEN.

"Does a livelier hue delight?
 Here are rubies blazing bright,
 Here the emerald's fairy green,
 And the topaz glows between;
 Here their varied hues unite,
 In the changeful chrysolite."—

FOURTH MAIDEN.

"Leave these gems of poorer shine,
 Leave them all, and look on mine!
 While their glories I expand,
 Shade thine eyebrows with thy hand.
 Mid-day sun and diamond's blaze
 Blind the rash beholder's gaze."—

CHORUS.

"Warrior, seize the splendid store;
 Would 'twere all our mountains bore!

We should ne'er in future story.
Read, Peru, thy perished glory!"—

XXVII.

Calmly and unconcerned the Knight
Waved aside the treasures bright:
"Gentle Maidens, rise, I pray!
Bar not thus my destined way.
Let these boasted brilliant toys
Braid the hair of girls and boys!
Bid your streams of gold expand
O'er proud London's thirsty land.
De Vaux of wealth saw never need,
Save to purvey him arms and steed,
And all the ore he deigned to hoard
Inlays his helm, and hilt his sword."—
Thus gently parting from their hold,
He left unmoved, the dome of gold.

XXVIII.

And now the morning sun was high,
De Vaux was weary, faint and dry;
When lo! a plashing sound he hears,
A gladsome signal that he hears
Some frolic water-run;
And soon he reached a court-yard square,
Where dancing in the sultry air,
Tossed high aloft, a fountain fair
Was sparkling in the sun.
On right and left, a fair arcade,
In long perspective view displayed,
Alleys and bowers, for sun or shade;
But, full in front, a door,
Low-browed and dark, seemed as it led
To the lone dwelling of the dead,
Whose memory was no more.

XXIX.

Here stopped De Vaux an instant's space,
To bathe his parched lips and face,
And marked with well-pleased eye,
Refracted on the fountain stream,
In rainbow hues the dazzling beam
Of that gay summer sky.
His senses felt a mild control,
Like that which lulls the weary soul,
From contemplation high
Relaxing, when the ear receives
The music that the greenwood leaves
Make to the breezes' sigh.

XXX.

And oft, in such a dreamy mood,
The half-shut eye can frame
Fair apparitions in the wood,
As if the nymphs of field and flood
In gay procession came.

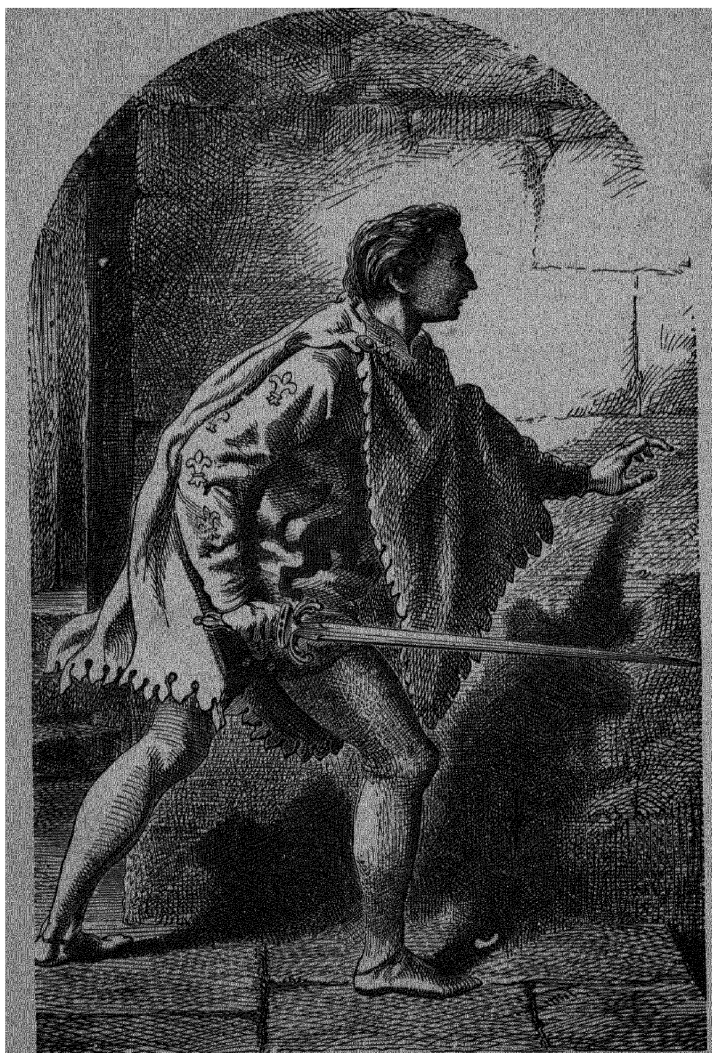
Are these of such fantastic mould,
 Seen distant down the fair arcade,
 These Maids enlinked in sister-fold,
 Who, late at bashful distance stayed,
 Now tripping from the greenwood shade,
 Nearer the musing champion draw,
 And, in a pause of seeming awe,
 Again stand doubtful now?—
 Ah, that sly pause of witching powers!
 That seems to say, "To please be ours,
 Be yours to tell us how."—
 Their hue was of the golden glow
 That suns of Candahar bestow,
 O'er which in slight suffusion flows
 A frequent tinge of paly rose;
 Their limbs were fashioned fair and free,
 In Nature's justest symmetry,
 And, wreathed with flowers, with odours graced,
 Their raven ringlets reached the waist:
 In eastern pomp, its gilding pale
 The hennah lent each shapely nail,
 And the dark sumah gave the eye
 More liquid and more lustrous dye.
 The spotless veil of misty lawn,
 In studied disarrangement, drawn
 The form and bosom o'er,
 To win the eye, or tempt the touch,
 For modesty showed all too much—
 Too much—yet promised more.

XXXI.

"Gentle Knight, a while delay,"
 Thus they sung, "thy toilsome way,
 While we pay the duty due
 To our Master and to you.
 Over Avarice, over Fear,
 Love triumphant led thee here;
 Warrior, list to us, for we
 Are slaves to Love, are friends to thee.

"Though no treasured gems have we,
 To proffer on the bended knee,
 Though we boast nor arm nor heart
 For the assagay or dart,
 Swains have given each simple girl
 Ruby lip and teeth of pearl:
 Or, if dangers more you prize,
 Flatterers find them in our eyes.

"Stay, then, gentle Warrior, stay,
 Rest till evening steal on day;
 Stay, oh, stay!—in yonder bowers
 We will braid thy locks with flowers,
 Spread the feast and fill the wine,
 Charm thy ear with sounds divine.



Downward De Vaux through darksome ways
And ruined vaults has gone,
Till issue from their wildered maze,
Or safe retreat seemed none,
And e'en the dismal path he strays
Grew worse as he went on.

Weave our dances till delight
Yield to languor, day to night.

"Then shall she you most approve
Sing the lays that best you love,
Soft thy mossy couch shall spread,
Watch thy pillow, prop thy head,
Till the weary night be o'er—
Gentle Warrior, wouldst thou more!—
Wouldst thou more, fair Warrior,—she
Is slave to Love and slave to thee."—

XXXII.

O do not hold it for a crime
In the bold hero of my rhyme,
For stoic look,
And meet rebuke,
He lacked the heart or time!
As round the band of syrens trip,
He kissed one damsel's laughing lip,
And pressed another's proffered hand,
Spoke to them all in accents bland,
But broke their magic circle through;
"Kind Maids," said he, "adieu, adieu!
My fate, my fortune, forward lies."—
He said, and vanished from their eyes;
But, as he dared that darksome way,
Still heard behind their lovely lay:
"Fair Flower of Courtesy, depart!
Go, where the feelings of the heart
With the warm pulse in concord move;
Go, where Virtue sanctions love!"—

XXXIII.

Downward De Vaux through darksome ways
And ruined vaults has gone,
Till issue from their wildered maze,
Or safe retreat seemed none,
And e'en the dismal path he strays
Grew worse as he went on.
For cheerful sun, for living air,
Foul vapours rise and mine-fires glare,
Whose fearful light the dangers showed
That dogged him on that dreadful road.
Deep pits, and lakes of waters dun,
They showed, but showed not how to shun.
These scenes of desolate despair,
These smothering clouds of poisoned air,
How gladly had De Vaux exchanged,
Though 'twere to face yon tigers ranged!
Nay, soothful bards have said,
So perilous his state seemed now,
He wished him under arbour bough
With Asia's willing maid.
When, joyful sound! at distance near
A trumpet flourished loud and clear,

And as it ceased, a lofty lay
Seemed thus to chide his lagging way :-

XXXIV.

"Son of Honour, theme of story,
Think on the reward before ye!
Danger, darkness, toil despise;
'Tis Ambition bids thee rise.

"He, that would her heights ascend,
Many a weary step must wend;
Hand and foot and knee he tries:
Thus Ambition's minions rise.

"Lag not now, though rough the way,
Fortune's mood brooks no delay;
Grasp the boon that's spread before ye,
Monarch's power, and Conqueror's glory!"--

It ceased. Advancing on the sound,
A steep ascent the wanderer found,
And then a turret stair:
Nor climbed he far its steepy round
Till fresher blew the air,
And next a welcome glimpse was given,
That cheered him with the light of heaven.

At length his toil had won
A lofty hall with trophies dressed,
Where, as to greet imperial guest,
Four Maidens stood, whose crimson vest
Was bound with golden zone.

XXXV.

Of Europe seemed the damsels all;
The first a nymph of lively Gaul,
Whose easy step and laughing eye
Her borrowed air of awe belie;
The next a maid of Spain,
Dark-eyed, dark-haired, sedate, yet bold;
While ivory skin and tress of gold,
Her shy and bashful comrade told

For daughter of Ailmaine.
These Maidens bore a royal robe,
With crown, with sceptre, and with globe,
Emblems of empery;
The fourth a space behind them stood,
And leant upon a harp, in mood
Of minstrel ecstasy.

Of merry England she, in dress
Like ancient British Druidess;
Her hair an azure fillet bound,
Her graceful vesture swept the ground,
And, in her hand displayed,
A crown did that fourth Maiden hold,
But unadorned with gems and gold,
Of glossy laurel made.

XXXVI.

At once to brave De Vaux knelt down
 These foremost Maidens three,
 And proffered sceptre, robe, and crown,
 Liegdom and seignorie
 O'er many a region wide and fair,
 Destined, they said, for Arthur's heir;
 But homage would he none:—
 "Rather," he said, "De Vaux would ride,
 A Warden of the Border-side,
 In plate and mail, than, robed in pride,
 A monarch's empire own;
 Rather, far rather, would he be
 A free-born Knight of England free,
 Than sit on Despot's throne."
 So passed he on, when that fourth Maid,
 As starting from a trance,
 Upon the harp her fingers laid;
 Her magic touch the chords obeyed,
 Their soul awaked at once!

SONG OF THE FOURTH MAIDEN.

"Quake to your foundations deep,
 Stately Towers, and bannered Keep!
 Bid your vaulted echoes moan,
 As the dreaded step they own.
 "Fiends! that wait on Merlin's spell,
 Hear the foot-fall! mark it well!
 Spread your dusky wings abroad,
 Boune ye for your homeward road!
 "It is *HIS*, the first who e'er
 Dared the dismal Hall of Fear;
HIS, who hath the snares defied
 Spread by Pleasure, Wealth, and Pride.
 "Quake to your foundations deep,
 Bastion huge, and Turret steep!
 Tremble Keep, and totter Tower!
 This is Gyneth's waking hour."—

XXXVII.

Thus while she sung, the venturous Knight
 Has reached a bower, where milder light
 Through crimson curtains fell;
 Such softened shade the hill receives,
 Her purple veil when twilight leaves
 Upon its western swell.
 That bower, the gazer to bewitch,
 Hath wondrous store of rare and rich
 As e'er was seen with eye;
 For there by magic skill, I wis,
 Form of each thing that living is
 Was limned in proper dye

All seemed to sleep—the timid hare
 On form, the stag upon his lair,
 The eagle in her eyrie fair
 Between the earth and sky.
 But what of pictured rich and rare
 Could win De Vaux's eye-glance, where,
 Deep slumbering in the fatal chair,
 He saw King Arthur's child!
 Doubt, and anger, and dismay,
 From her brow had passed away,
 Forgot was that fell tourney-day,
 For, as she slept, she smiled.
 It seemed that the repentant Seer
 Her sleep of many a hundred year
 With gentle dreams beguiled.

XXXVIII.

That form of maiden loveliness,
 'Twixt childhood and 'twixt youth,
 That ivory chair, that sylvan dress,
 The arms and ankles bare, express
 Of Lyulph's tale the truth.
 Still upon her garment's hem
 Vanoc's blood made purple gem,
 And the warder of command
 Cumbered still her sleeping hand;
 Still her dark locks dishevelled flow
 From net of pearl o'er breast of snow;
 And so fair the slumberer seems,
 That De Vaux impeached his dreams,
 Vapid all and void of might,
 Hiding half her charms from sight.
 Motionless a while he stands,
 Folds his arms and clasps his hands,
 Trembling in his fitful joy,
 Doubtful how he shall destroy
 Long-enduring-spell;
 Doubtful too, when slowly rise
 Dark-fringed lids of Gyneth's eyes,
 What these eyes shall tell.
 "St George! St Mary! can it be,
 That they will kindly look on me!"—

XXXIX.

Gently, lo! the Warrior kneels,
 Soft that lovely hand he steals,
 Soft to kiss, and soft to clasp—
 But the warder leaves her grasp;
 Lightning flashes, rolls the thunder!
 Gyneth startles from her sleep,
 Totters tower, and trembles keep,
 Burst the Castle walls asunder!
 Fierce and frequent were the shocks,
 Melt the magic halls away.—

—But beneath their mystic rocks,
In the arms of bold De Vaux,
Safe the Princess lay!
Safe and free from magic power,
Blushing like the rose's flower
Opening to the day;
And round the Champion's brows were bound
The crown that Druidess had wound,
Of the green laurel-bay.
And this was what remained of all
The wealth of each enchanted hall,
The Garland and the Dame:—
But where should Warrior seek the meed,
Due to high worth for daring deed,
Except from LOVE and FAME!

CONCLUSION.

I.

MY LUCY, when the maid is won,
The Minstrel's task, thou know'st, is done.
And to require of bard
That to the dregs his tale should run,
Were ordinance too hard.
Our lovers, briefly be it said,
Wedded as lovers wont to wed,
When tale or play is o'er;
Lived long and blessed, loved fond and true,
And saw a numerous race renew
The honours that they bore.
Know, too, that when a pilgrim strays,
In morning mist or evening maze,
Along the mountain lone,
That fairy fortress often mocks
His gaze upon the castled rocks
Of the Valley of Saint John;
But never man since brave De Vaux
The charmed portal won:
'Tis now a vain illusive show,
That melts whene'er the sunbeams glow,
Or the fresh breeze hath blown.

II.

But see, my love, where far below
Our lingering wheels are moving slow,
The whiles up-gazing still,
Our menials eye our steepy way,
Marvelling, perchance, what whim can stay
Our steps when eve is sinking gray
On this gigantic hill.
So think the vulgar—Life and time
Ring all their joys in one dull chime
Of luxury and ease;

And O ! beside these simple knaves,
How many better born are slaves
To such coarse joys as these ;
Dead to the nobler sense that glows
When Nature's grander scenes unclose.
But, Lucy, we will love them yet,
The mountain's misty coronet,

The greenwood, and the wold ;
And love the more, that of their maze
Adventure high of other days

By ancient bards is told,
Bringing, perchance, like my poor tale,
Some moral truth in fiction's veil :
Nor love them less, that o'er the hill
The evening breeze, as now, comes chill ;

My love shall wrap her warm,
And, fearless of the slippery way,
While safe she trips the heathy brae,
Shall hang on Arthur's arm.

THE
LORD OF THE ISLES.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

First published January 2, 181

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Scene of this Poem lies, at first, in the Castle of Artornish, on the coast of Argyleshire; and, afterwards, in the Islands of Skye and Arran, and upon the coast of Ayrshire. Finally, it is laid near Stirling. The story opens in the spring of the year 1807, when Bruce, who had been driven out of Scotland by the English, and the Barons who adhered to that foreign interest, returned from the Island of Rathrin, on the coast of Ireland, again to assert his claims to the Scottish crown. Many of the personages and incidents introduced are of historical celebrity. The authorities used are chiefly those of the venerable Lord Hailes, as well entitled to be called the restorer of Scottish history, as Bruce the restorer of Scottish monarchy; and of Archdeacon Barbour, a correct edition of whose Metrical History of Robert Bruce will soon, I trust, appear under the care of my learned friend, the Rev. Dr Jamieson.

ARROTSFORD, 10th December 1814.

THE
LORD OF THE ISLES.

CANTO FIRST.

AUTUMN departs—but still his mantle's fold
Rests on the groves of noble Somerville,
Beneath a shroud of russet dropped with gold
Tweed and his tributaries mingle still;
Hoarser the wind, and deeper sounds the rill,
Yet lingering notes of sylvan music swell,
The deep-toned cushat, and the redbreast shrill;
And yet some tints of summer splendour tell
When the broad sun sinks down on Ettrick's western fell
Autumn departs—from Gala's fields no more
Come rural sounds our kindred banks to cheer;
Blent with the stream, and gale that wafts it o'er,
No more the distant reapers' mirth we hear.
The last blithe shout hath died upon our ear,
And harvest-home hath hushed the clanging wain,
On the waste hill no forms of life appear,
Save where, sad laggard of the autumnal train,
Some age-struck wanderer gleams few ears of scattered grain
Doom'st thou these saddened scenes have pleasure still,
Lovest thou through Autumn's fading realms to stray,
To see the heath-flower withered on the hill,
To listen to the woods' expiring lay,
To note the red leaf shivering on the spray,
To mark the last bright tints the mountain stain,
On the waste fields to trace the gleaner's way,
And moralise on mortal joy and pain?—
Oh, if such scenes thou lovest, scorn not the minstrel strain!
Nor do not scorn, although its hoarser note
Scarce with the cushat's homely song can vie,
Though faint its beauties as the tints remote
That gleam through mist in Autumn's evening sky,
And few as leaves that tremble, sear and dry,
When wild November hath his bugle wound;
Nor mock my toil—a lonely gleaner I,
Through fields time-wasted, on sad inquest bound,
Where happier bards of yore have richer harvest found

So shalt thou list, and haply not unmoved,
 To a wild tale of Albyn's warrior day;
 In distant lands, by the rough West reprov'd,
 Still live some reliques of the ancient lay.
 For, when on Coolin's hills the lights decay,
 With such the Seer of Skye the eve beguiles.
 'Tis known amid the pathless wastes of Reay,
 In Harries known, and in Iona's piles,
 Where rest from mortal coil the Mighty of the Isles.

I.

"WAKE, Maid of Lorn!" the Minstrels sung.
 Thy rugged halls, Artornish! rung,
 And the dark seas, thy towers that lave,
 Heaved on the beach a softer wave,
 As 'mid the tuneful choir to keep
 The diapason of the Deep.
 Lulled were the winds on Inninmore,
 And green Loch-Alline's woodland shore,
 As if wild woods and waves had pleasure
 In listing to the lovely measure.
 And ne'er to symphony more sweet
 Gave mountain echoes answer meet,
 Since, met from mainland and from isle,
 Ross, Arran, Ilay, and Argyle,
 Each minstrel's tributary lay
 Paid homage to the festal day.
 Dull and dishonoured were the bard,
 Worthless of guerdon and regard,
 Deaf to the hope of minstrel fame,
 Or lady's smiles, his noblest aim,
 Who on that morn's resistless call
 Was silent in Artornish Hall.

II.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn!" 'twas thus they sung
 And yet more proud the descant rung,
 "Wake, Maid of Lorn! high right is ours,
 To charm dull sleep from Beauty's bowers;
 Earth, Ocean, Air, have nought so shy
 But owns the power of minstrelsy.
 In Lettermore the timid deer
 Will pause, the harp's wild chime to hear;
 Rude Heiskar's seal through surges dark
 Will long pursue the minstrel's bark;
 To list his notes, the eagle proud
 Will poise him on Ben-Caillach's cloud;
 Then let not Maiden's ear disdain
 The summons of the minstrel train,
 But, while our harps wild music make,
 Edith of Lorn, awake, awake!

III.

"Oh, wake, while Dawn, with dewy shine,
 Wakes Nature's charms to vie with thine!
 She bids the mottled thrush rejoice
 To make thy melody of voice;

The dew that on the violet lies
Mocks the dark lustre of thine eyes;
But, Edith, wake, and all we see
Of sweet and fair shall yield to thee!"—
"She comes not yet," gray Ferrand cried;
"Brethren, let softer spell be tried,
Those notes prolonged, that soothing theme,
Which best may mix with Beauty's dream,
And whisper, with their silvery tone,
The hope she loves, yet fears to own."—
He spoke, and on the harp-strings died
The strains of flattery and of pride;
More soft, more low, more tender fell
The lay of love he bade them tell.

IV.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn! the moments fly,
Which yet that maiden-name allow;
Wake, maiden, wake! the hour is nigh,
When Love shall claim a plighted vow.
By Fear, thy bosom's fluttering guest,
By Hope, that soon shall fears remove,
We bid thee break the bonds of rest,
And wake thee at the call of Love!

"Wake, Edith, wake! in yonder bay
Lies many a galley gaily manned,
We hear the merry pibrochs play,
We see the streamers' silken band.
What Chieftain's praise these pibrochs swell,
What crest is on these banners wove,
The harp, the minstrel, dare not tell—
The riddle must be read by Love."

V.

Retired her maiden train among,
Edith of Lorn received the song,
But tamed the Minstrel's pride had been
That had her cold demeanour seen;
For not upon her cheek awoke
The glow of pride when Flattery spoke,
Nor could their tenderest numbers bring
One sigh responsive to the string.
As vainly had her maidens vied
In skill to deck the princely bride.
Her locks, in dark-brown length arrayed,
Cathleen of Ulna, 'twas thine to braid;
Young Eva with meet reverence drew
On the light foot the silken shoe,
While on the ankle's slender round
Those strings of pearl fair Bertha wound,
That, bleached Lochryan's depth within,
Seemed dusky still on Edith's skin.
But Elinor, of experience old,
Had weightiest task—the mantle's fold

In many an artful plait she tied,
To show the form it seemed to hide,
Till on the floor descending rolled
Its waves of crimson blent with gold.

VI.

Oh! lives there now so cold a maid,
Who thus in beauty's pomp arrayed,
In beauty's proudest pitch of power,
And conquest won—the bridal hour—
With every charm that wins the heart,
By Nature given, enhanced by Art,
Could yet the fair reflection view,
In the bright mirror pictured true,
And not one dimple on her cheek
A tell-tale consciousness bespeak?—
Lives still such maid?—Fair damsels, say,
For further vouches not my lay,
Save that such lived in Britain's isle,
When Lorn's bright Edith scorned to smile.

VII.

But Morag, to whose fostering care
Proud Lorn had given his daughter fair,
Morag, who saw a mother's aid
By all a daughter's love repaid,
(Strict was that bond—most kind of all—
Inviolable in Highland hall—)
Gray Morag sate a space apart,
In Edith's eyes to read her heart.
In vain the attendants' fond appeal
To Morag's skill, to Morag's zeal;
She marked her child receive their care,
Cold as the image sculptured fair,
(Form of some sainted patroness,
Which cloistered maids combine to dress;
She marked—and knew her nursling's heart
In the vain pomp took little part.
Wistful a while she gazed—then pressed
The maiden to her anxious breast
In finished loveliness—and led
To where a turret's airy head,
Slender and steep, and battled round,
O'erlooked, dark Mull! thy mighty Sound,
Where thwarting tides, with mingled roar,
Part thy swarth hills from Morvern's shore.

VIII.

"Daughter," she said, "these seas behold,
Round twice a hundred islands rolled,
From Hirt, that hears their northern roar,
To the green Ilay's fertile shore;
Or mainland turn, where many a tower
Owns thy bold father's feudal power,
Each on its own dark cape reclined,
And listening to its own wild wind,

From where Mingarry, sternly placed,
 O'erawes the woodland and the waste,
 To where Dunstaffnage hears the raging
 Of Connal with his rocks engaging.
 Think'st thou, amid this ample round,
 A single brow but thine has frowned,
 To sadden this auspicious morn,
 That bids the daughter of high Lorn
 Impledge her spousal faith to wed
 The Heir of mighty Somerled;
 Ronald, from many a hero sprung,
 The fair, the valiant, and the young,
 LORD OF THE ISLES, whose lofty name
 A thousand bards have given to fame,
 The mate of monarchs, and allied
 On equal terms with England's pride?—
 From chieftain's towers to bondman's cot
 Who hears the tale, and triumphs not?
 The damsel dons her best attire,
 The shepherd lights his beltane fire,
 Joy, Joy! each warder's horn hath sung,
 Joy, Joy! each matin bell hath rung;
 The holy priest says grateful mass,
 Loud shouts each hardy galla-glass,
 No mountain den holds outcast boor,
 Of heart so dull, of soul so poor,
 But he hath flung his task aside,
 And claimed this morn for holy-tide;
 Yet, empress of this joyful day,
 Edith is sad, while all are gay.”—

IX.

Proud Edith's soul came to her eye,
 Resentment checked the struggling sigh,
 Her hurrying hand indignant dried
 The burning tears of injured pride—
 “Morag, forbear! or lend thy praise
 To swell yon hireling harpers' lays;
 Make to yon maids thy boast of power,
 That they may waste a wondering hour,
 Telling of banners proudly borne,
 Of pealing bell and bugle-horn,
 Or, theme more dear, of robes of price,
 Crownlets and gawds of rare device.
 But thou, experienced as thou art,
 Think'st thou with these to cheat the heart,
 That, bound in strong affection's chain,
 Looks for return and looks in vain?
 No! sum thine Edith's wretched lot
 In these brief words—He loves her not!

X.

“Debate it not—too long I strove
 To call his cold observance love,
 All blinded by the league that styled
 Edith of Lorn,—while, yet a child,

She tripped the heath by Morag's side,—
 The brave Lord Ronald's destined bride.
 Ere yet I saw him, while afar
 His broadsword blazed in Scotland's war,
 Trained to believe our fates the same,
 My bosom throbbed when Ronald's name
 Came gracing Fame's heroic tale,
 Like perfume on the summer gale.
 What pilgrim sought our halls, nor told
 Of Ronald's deeds in battle bold;
 Who touched the harp to heroes' praise,
 But his achievements swelled the lays?
 Even Morag—not a tale of fame
 Was hers but closed with Ronald's name.
 He came! and all that had been told
 Of his high worth seemed poor and cold,
 Tame, lifeless, void of energy,
 Unjust to Ronald and to me!

XI.

"Since then, what thought had Edith's heart
 And gave not plighted love its part!—
 And what requital? cold delay—
 Excuse that shunned the spousal day.—
 It dawns, and Ronald is not here!—
 Hunts he Bentalla's nimble deer,
 Or loiters he in secret dell
 To bid some lighter love farewell,
 And swear that though he may not scorn
 A daughter of the House of Lorn.
 Yet, when these formal rites are o'er,
 Again they meet to part no more?"—

XII.

—"Hush, daughter, hush! thy doubts remove,
 More nobly think of Ronald's love.
 Look, where beneath the castle gray
 His fleet unmoor from Aros-bay!
 Seest not each galley's topmast bend,
 As on the yards the sails ascend?
 Hiding the dark-blue land they rise,
 Like the white clouds on April skies;
 The shouting vassals man the oars,
 Behind them sink Mull's mountain shores;
 Onward their merry course they keep,
 Through whistling breeze and foaming deep.
 And mark the headmost, seaward cast,
 Stoop to the freshening gale her mast,
 As if she veiled its bannered pride,
 To greet afar her prince's bride!
 Thy Ronald comes, and while in speed
 His galley mates the flying steed,
 He chides her sloth!"—Fair Edith sighed,
 Blushed, sadly smiled, and thus replied:—

XIII.

"Sweet thought, but vain!—No, Morag! mark,
Type of his course, yon lonely bark,
That oft hath shifted helm and sail,
To win its way against the gale.
Since peep of morn, my vacant eyes
Have viewed by fits the course she tries :
Now, though the darkening scud comes on
And dawn's fair promises be gone,
And though the weary crew may see
Our sheltering haven on their lee,
Still closer to the rising wind
They strive her shivering sail to bind,
Still nearer to the shelves' dread verge
At every tack her course they urge,
As if they feared Artornish more
Than adverse winds and breakers' roar."—

XIV.

Sooth spoke the Maid.—Amid the tide
The skiff she marked lay tossing sore,
And shifted oft her stooping side,
In weary tack from shore to shore.
Yet on her destined course no more
She gained of forward way,
Than what a minstrel may compare
With the poor meed which peasants share,
Who toil the live-long day ;
And such the risk her pilot braves,
That oft, before she wore,
Her boltsprit kissed the broken waves,
Where in white foam the ocean raves
Upon the shelving shore.
Yet, to their destined purpose true,
Undaunted toiled her hardy crew,
Nor looked where shelter lay,
Nor for Artornish Castle drew,
Nor steered for Aros-bay.

XV.

Thus while they strove with wind and seas
Borne onward by the willing breeze,
Lord Ronald's fleet swept by,
Streamered with silk, and tricked with gold
Manned with the noble and the bold
Of Island chivalry.
Around their prows the ocean roars,
And chafes beneath their thousand oars,
Yet bears them on their way :
So fumes the war-horse in his might,
That field-ward bears some valiant knight,
Champs till both bit and boss are white,
But, foaming, must obey.
On each gay deck they might behold
Lances of steel and crests of gold,
And hauberks with their burnished fold,

That shimmered fair and free;
 And each proud galley, as she passed,
 To the wild cadence of the blast
 Gave wilder minstrelsy.
 Full many a shrill triumphant note
 Saline and Scallastle bade float
 Their misty shores around;
 And Morven's echoes answered well,
 And Duart heard the distant swell
 Come down the darksome Sound.

XVI.

So bore they on with mirth and pride,
 And if that labouring bark they spied,
 'Twas with such idle eye
 As nobles cast on lowly boor,
 When, toiling in his task obscure,
 They pass him careless by.
 Let them sweep on with heedless eyes!
 But, had they known what mighty prize
 In that frail vessel lay,
 The famished wolf that prowls the wold,
 Had scathless passed the unguarded fold,
 Ere, drifting by these galleys bold,
 Unchallenged were her way!
 And thou, Lord Ronald, sweep thou on,
 With mirth and pride and minstrel tone!
 But hadst thou known who sailed so nigh,
 Far other glance were in thine eye!
 Far other flush were on thy brow,
 That, shaded by the bonnet, now
 Assumes but ill the blithesome cheer
 Of bridegroom when the bride is near!

XVII.

Yes, sweep they on!—We will not leave,
 For them that triumph, those who grieve.
 With that armada gay
 Be laughter loud and jocund shout,
 And bards to cheer the wassail rout,
 With tale, romance, and lay;
 And of wild mirth each clamorous art,
 Which, if it cannot cheer the heart,
 May stupify and stun its smart,
 For one loud busy day.
 Yes, sweep they on!—But with that skiff
 Abides the minstrel tale,
 Where there was dread of surge and cliff,
 And toil that strained each sinew stiff,
 And one sad Maiden's wail.

XVIII.

All day with fruitless strife they toiled,
 With eve the ebbing currents boiled
 More fierce from strait and lake;
 And midway through the channel met
 Conflicting tides that foam and fret

And high their mingled billows jet,
 As spears, that, in the battle set,
 Spring upward as they break.
 Then too the lights of eve were past,
 And louder sung the western blast
 On rocks of Inninmore;
 Rent was the sail, and strained the mast
 And many a leak was gaping fast,
 And the pale steersman stood aghast,
 And gave the conflict o'er.

XIX.

"Twas then that One, whose lofty look
 Nor labour dulled nor terror shook,
 Thus to the Leader spoke:
 "Brother, how hopest thou to abide
 The fury of this wildered tide,
 Or how avoid the rock's rude side,
 Until the day has broke?
 Didst thou not mark the vessel reel,
 With quivering planks, and groaning keel?
 At the last billow's shock?
 Yet how of better counsel tell,
 Though here thou seest poor Isabel
 Half-dead with want and fear;
 For look on sea, or look on land,
 Or yon dark sky, on every hand
 Despair and death are near.
 For her alone I grieve—on me
 Danger sits light by land and sea,
 I follow where thou wilt;
 Either to bide the tempest's lour,
 Or wend to yon unfriendly tower,
 Or rush amid their naval power,
 With war-cry wake their wassail-hour,
 And die with hand on hilt."—

XX.

That elder Leader's calm reply
 In steady voice was given,——
 "In man's most dark extremity
 Oft succour dawns from Heaven.
 Edward, trim thou the shattered sail,
 The helm be mine, and down the gale
 Let our free course be driven;
 So shall we 'scape the western bay,
 The hostile fleet, the unequal fray,
 So safely hold our vessel's way
 Beneath the Castle wall;
 For if a hope of safety rest,
 'Tis on the sacred name of guest,
 Who seeks for shelter, storm-distressed,
 Within a chieftain's hall.
 If not—it best beseems our worth,
 Our name, our right, our lofty birth,
 By noble hands to fall."—

XXI.

The helm, to his strong arm consigned,
 Gave the reefed sail to meet the wind,
 And on her altered way,
 Fierce bounding, forward sprung the ship,
 Like greyhound starting from the slip
 To seize his flying prey.
 Awaked before the rushing prow,
 The mimic fires of ocean glow,
 Those lightnings of the wave;
 Wild sparkles crest the broken tides,
 And, flashing round, the vessel's sides
 With elvish lustre lave,
 While, far behind, their livid light
 To the dark billows of the night
 A gloomy splendour gave.
 It seems as if old Ocean shakes
 From his dark brow the livid flakes
 In envious pageantry,
 To match the meteor light that streaks
 Grim Hecla's midnight sky.

XXII.

Nor lacked they steadier light to keep
 Their course upon the darkened deep;—
 Artornish, on her frowning steep
 'Twixt cloud and ocean hung,
 Glanced with a thousand lights of glee,
 And landward far, and far to sea,
 Her festal radiance flung.
 By that blithe beacon-light they steered,
 Whose lustre mingled well
 With the pale beam that now appeared,
 As the cold Moon her head upreared
 Above the eastern Fell.

XXIII.

Thus guided, on their course they bore
 Until they neared the mainland shore,
 When frequent on the hollow blast
 Wild shouts of merriment were cast,
 And wind and wave and sea-birds' cry
 With wassail sounds in concert vie,
 Like funeral shrieks with revelry,
 Or like the battle-shout
 By peasants heard from cliffs on high,
 When Triumph, Rage, and Agony,
 Madden the fight and rout.
 Now nearer yet, through mist and storm
 Dimly arose the Castle's form,
 And deepened shadow made,
 Far lengthened on the main below,
 Where, dancing in reflected glow,
 A hundred torches played,

Spangling the wave with lights as vain
As pleasures in this vale of pain,
That dazzle as they fade.

XXIV.

Beneath the Castle's sheltering lee,
They stayed their course in quiet sea.
Hewn in the rock, a passage there
Sought the dark fortress by a stair
So strait, so high, so steep,
With peasant's staff one valiant hand
Might well the dizzy pass have manned,
'Gainst hundreds armed with spear and brand,
And plunged them in the deep.
His bugle then the helmsman wound;
Loud answered every echo round,
From turret, rock, and bar
The postern's hinges crash and groan,
And soon the warder's cresset shone
On those rude steps of slippery stone,
To light the upward way.
"Thrice welcome, holy Sire!" he said;
"Full long the spousal train have stayed,
And, vexed at thy delay,
Feared lest, amidst these wildering seas,
The darksome night and freshening breeze
Had driven thy bark astray."—

XXV.

"Warder," the younger stranger said,
"Thine erring guess some mirth had made
In mirthful hour; but nights like these,
When the rough winds wake western seas,
Brook not of glee. We crave some aid
And needful shelter for this maid
Until the break of day;
For, to ourselves, the deck's rude plank
Is easy as the mossy bank
That's breathed upon by May;
And for our storm-tossed skiff we seek
Short shelter in this leeward creek,
Prompt when the dawn the east shall streak,
Again to bear away."—
Answered the Warder, "In what name
Assert ye hospitable claim?
Whence come, or whither bound?
Hath Erin seen your parting sails?
Or come ye on Norweyan gales?
And seek ye England's fertile vales,
Or Scotland's mountain ground?"—

XXVI.

"Warriors—for other title none
For some brief space we list to own,
Bound by a vow—warriors are we;
In strife by land, and storm by sea.

We have been known to fame;
 And these brief words have import dear,
 When sounded in a noble ear,
 To harbour safe, and friendly cheer,
 That gives us rightful claim.
 Grant us the trivial boon we seek,
 And we in other realms will speak
 Fair of your courtesy;
 Deny—and be your niggard Hold
 Scorned by the noble and the bold,
 Shunned by the pilgrim on the wold,
 And wanderer on the lea!”

XXVII.

“Bold stranger, no—’gainst claim like thine,
 No bolt revolves by hand of mine,
 I hough urged in tone that more expressed
 A monarch than a suppliant guest.
 Be what ye will, Artornish Hall
 On this glad eve is free to all.
 Though ye had drawn a battle sword
 ’Gainst our great ally, Elskand’s Lord,
 Or mail upon your shoulder borne,
 To battle with the Lord of Ardn,
 Or, outlawed, dwelt by greenwood tree
 With the fierce Knight of Ellerslie,
 Or aided even the murderous strife,
 When Comyn fell beneath the knife
 Of that fell homicide The Bruce,
 This night had been a term of truce—
 Ho, vassals! give these guests your care;
 And show the narrow postern stair.”

XXVIII.

To land these two bold brethren leapt,
 (The weary crew their vessel kept)
 And, lighted by the torches’ flare,
 That seaward flung their smoky glare
 The younger knight that maiden bare
 Half lifeless up the rock;
 On his strong shoulder leaned her head,
 And down her long dark tresses shed,
 As the wild vine, in tendrils spread,
 Droops from the mountain oak.
 Him followed close that elder Lord,
 And in his hand a sheathed sword,
 Such as few arms could wield;
 But when he bound him to such task,
 Well could it cleave the strongest casque,
 And rend the surest shield.

XXIX.

The raised portcullis’ arch they pass,
 The wicket with its bars of brass,
 The entrance long and low,

Flanked at each turn by loop-holes strait,
Where bowmen might in ambush wait,
(If force or fraud should burst the gate,)
To gall an entering foe,
But every jealous post of ward
Was now defenceless and unbarred.
And all the passage free
To one low-browed and vaulted room,
Where squire and yeoman, page and groom,
Plied their loud revelry

XXX.

And "Rest ye here," the Warder bade,
"Till to our Lord your suit is said.—
And, comrades, gaze not on the maid,
And on these men who ask our aid
As if ye ne'er had seen
A damsel tired of midnight bark,
Or wanderers of a moulding stark,
And bearing martial mien."
But not for Eachin's reproof
Would page or vassal stand aloof,
But crowded on to stare,
As men of courtesy untaught,
Till fiery Edward roughly caught,
From one the foremost there,
His chequered plaid, and in its shroud,
To hide her from the vulgar crowd,
Involved his sister fair.
His brother, as the clansman bent
His sullen brow in discontent,
Made brief and stern excuse;—
"Vassal, were thine the cloak of pall
That decks thy Lord in bridal hall,
"Twere honoured by her use."—

XXXI.

Proud was his tone, but calm; his eye
Had that compelling dignity,
His mien that bearing haught and high,
Which common spirits fear;
Needed nor word nor signal more,
Nod, wink, and laughter, all were o'er;
Upon each other back they bore,
And gazed like startled deer.
But now appeared the Seneschal,
Commissioned by his Lord to call
The strangers to the Baron's hall,
Where feasted fair and free
That Island Prince in nuptial tide,
With Edith there his lovely bride,
And her bold brother by her side,
And many a chief, the flower and pride
Of Western land and sea.

Here pause we, gentles, for a space;
 And, if our tale hath won your grace,
 Grant us brief patience, and again
 We will renew the minstrel strain.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

FILL the bright goblet, spread the festive board!
 Summon the gay, the noble, and the fair!
 Through the loud hall in joyous concert poured,
 Let mirth and music sound the dirge of Care!
 But ask thou not if Happiness be there,
 If the loud laugh disguise convulsive throes,
 Or if the brow the heart's true livery wear;
 Lift not the festal mask!—enough to know,
 No scene of mortal life but teems with mortal woe.

II.

With beakers' clang, with harpers' lay,
 With all that olden time deemed gay,
 The Island Chieftain feasted high;
 But there was in his troubled eye
 A gloomy fire, and on his brow
 Now sudden flushed, and faded now,
 Emotions such as draw their birth
 From deeper source than festal mirth.
 By fits he paused, and harper's strain
 And jester's tale went round in vain,
 Or fell but on his idle ear
 Like distant sounds which dreamers hear.
 Then would he rouse him, and employ
 Each art to aid the clamorous joy,
 And call for pledge and lay,
 And, for brief space, of all the crowd,
 As he was loudest of the loud,
 Seem gayest of the gay.

III.

Yet nought amiss the bridal throng
 Marked in brief mirth, or musing long;
 The vacant brow, the unlistening ear,
 They gave to thoughts of raptures near,
 And his fierce starts of sudden glee
 Seemed bursts of bridegroom's ecstasy.
 Nor thus alone misjudged the crowd,
 Since lofty Lorn, suspicious, proud,
 And jealous of his honoured line,
 And that keen knight, De Argentine,
 (From England sent on errand high,
 The western league more firm to tie,)
 Both deemed in Ronald's mood to find
 A lover's transport-troubled mind.
 But one sad heart, one tearful eye,
 Pierced deeper through the mystery,

And watched, with agony and fear,
Her wayward bridegroom's varied cheer.

IV.

She watched—yet feared to meet his glance,
And he shunned hers;—till when by chance
They met, the point of foeman's lance
Had given a milder pang!
Beneath the intolerable smart
He writhed;—then sternly manned his heart
To play his hard but destined part,
And from the table sprang.
"Fill me the mighty cup!" he said,
"Erst owned by royal Somerled.
Fill it, till on the studded brim
In burning gold the bubbles swim,
And every gem of varied shine
Glow doubly bright in rosy wine!
To you, brave lord, and brother mine,
Of Lorn, this pledge I drink—
The union of Our House with thine,
By this fair bridal-link!"—

V.

"Let it pass round!" quoth He of Lorn,
"And in good time—that winded horn
Must of the Abbot tell;
The laggard monk is come at last."—
Lord Ronald heard the bugle-blast,
And on the floor at random cast,
The untasted goblet fell.
But when the Warder in his ear
Tells other news, his blither cheer
Returns like sun of May,
When through a thunder-cloud it beams!—
Lord of two hundred isles, he seems
As glad of brief delay,
As some poor criminal might feel,
When from the gibbet or the wheel
Respite for a day.

VI.

"Brother of Lorn," with hurried voice
He said, "And you, fair lords, rejoice!
Here, to augment our glee,
Come wandering knights from travel far,
Well proved, they say, in strife of war,
And tempest on the sea.—
Ho! give them at your board such place
As best their presence seems to grace,
And bid them welcome free!"—
With solemn step, and silver wand,
The Seneschal the presence scanned
Of these strange guests; and well he knew
How to assign their rank its due;

For though the costly furs
That erst had decked their caps were torn,
And their gay robes were over-worn,
And soiled their gilded spurs,
Yet such a high commanding grace
Was in their mien and in their face
As suited best the princely dais
And royal canopy;
And there he marshalled them their place,
First of that company.

VII.

Then lords and ladies spake aside,
And angry looks the error chide,
That gave to guests unnamed, unknown,
A place so near their prince's throne;
But Owen Erraught said,
"For forty years a seneschal,
To marshal guests in bower and hall
Has been my honoured trade.
Worship and birth to me are known,
By look, by bearing, and by tone,
Not by furred robe or brodered zone;
And 'gainst an oaken bough
I'll gage my silver wand of state,
That these three strangers oft have sate
In higher place than now."—

VIII.

"I, too," the aged Ferrand said,
"Am qualified by minstrel trade
Of rank and place to tell;—
Marked ye the younger stranger's eye,
My mates, how quick, how keen, how high,
How fierce its flashes fell,
Glancing among the festal rout
As if to seek the noblest out,
Because the owner might not brook
On any save his peers to look?
And yet it moves me more,
That steady, calm, majestic brow,
With which the elder chief even now
Scanned the gay presence o'er;
Like Being of superior kind,
In whose high-toned impartial mind
Degrees of mortal rank and state
Seem objects of indifferent weight.
The lady too—though closely tied,
The mantle veil both face and eye,
Her motions' grace it could not hide,
Nor cloud her form's fair symmetry."—

IX.

Suspicious doubt and lordly scorn
Loured on the haughty front of Lorn.
From underneath his brows of pride,
The stranger guests he sternly eyed.

And whispered closely what the ear
 Of Argentine alone might hear ;
 Then questioned, high and brief,
 If, in their voyage, aught they knew
 Of the rebellious Scottish crew,
 Who to Rath-Erin's shelter drew,
 With Carrick's outlawed Chief ?
 And if, their winter's exile o'er,
 They harboured still by Ulster's shore,
 Or launched their galleys on the main,
 To vex their native land again ?

X.

That younger stranger, fierce and high,
 At once confronts the Chieftain's eye
 With look of equal scorn :—
 "Of rebels have we nought to show :
 But if of Royal Bruce thou'dst know,
 I warn thee he has sworn,
 Ere thrice three days shall come and go,
 His banner Scottish winds shall blow,
 Despite each mean or mighty foe,
 From England's every bill and bow,
 To Allaster of Lorn."—
 Kindled the mountain Chieftain's ire,
 But Ronald quenched the rising fire ;
 "Brother, it better suits the time
 To chase the night with Ferrand's rhyme,
 Than wake, midst mirth and wine, the jars
 That flow from these unhappy wars."—
 "Content," said Lorn ; and spoke apart
 With Ferrand, master of his art,
 Then whispered Argentine,—
 "The lay I named will carry smart
 To these bold strangers' haughty heart,
 If right this guess of mine."—
 He ceased, and it was silence all,
 Until the Minstrel waked the hall.

XI.

The Brooch of Lorn.

"Whence the brooch of burning gold,
 That clasps the Chieftain's mantle-fold,
 Wrought and chased with rare device,
 Studded fair with gems of price,
 On the varied tartans beaming,
 As, through night's pale rainbow gleaming,
 Fainter now, now seen afar,
 Fitful shines the northern star ?
 "Gem! ne'er wrought on Highland mountain.
 Did the fairy of the fountain,
 Or the mermaid of the wave,
 Frame thee in some coral cave ?

Did in Iceland's darksome mine
Dwarf's swarth hands thy metal twine?
Or, mortal-moulded, comest thou here,
From England's love, or France's fear?

XII.

Song continued.

"No!—thy splendours nothing tell
Foreign art or faëry spell,
Moulded thou for monarch's use,
By the over-weening Bruce,
When the royal robe he tied
O'er a heart of wrath and pride;
Thence in triumph wert thou torn,
By the victor hand of Lorn!

"While the gem was won and lost
Widely was the war-cry tossed!
Rung aloud Bendourish Fell,
Answered Douchart's sounding dell,
Fled the deer from wild Teyndrum,
When the homicide, o'ercome,
Hardly 'scaped with scath and scorn,
Left the pledge with conquering Lorn!

XIII.

Song concluded.

"Vain was then the Douglas brand,
Vain the Campbell's vaunted hand,
Vain Kirkpatrick's bloody dirk,
Making sure of murder's work;
Barendown fled fast away,
Fled the fiery De la Haye,
When this brooch, triumphant borne,
Beamed upon the breast of Lorn.

"Furthest fled its former Lord,
Left his men to brand and cord,
Bloody brand of Highland steel,
English gibbet, axe, and wheel.
Let him fly from coast to coast,
Dogged by Comyn's vengeful ghost,
While his spoils, in triumph worn,
Long shall grace victorious Lorn!"

XIV.

As glares the tiger on his foes,
Hemmed in by hunters, spears, and bows,
And, ere he bounds upon the ring,
Selects the object of his spring,—
Now on the bard, now on his Lord,
So Edward glared and grasped his sword—
But stern his brother spoke,—“Be still.
What! art thou yet so wild of will,
After high deeds and sufferings long,
To chafe thee for a menial's song?”

Well hast thou framed, Old Man, thy strains.
To praise the hand that pays thy pains;
Yet something might thy song have told
Of Lorn's three vassals true and bold,
Who rent their Lord from Bruce's hold,
As underneath his knee he lay,
And died to save him in the fray.
I've heard the Bruce's cloak and clasp
Was clenched within their dying grasp,
What time a hundred foemen more
Rushed in and back the victor bore,
Long after Lorn had left the strife,
Full glad to 'scape with limb and life.—
Enough of this—And, Minstrel, hold,
As minstrel-hire, this chain of gold,
For future lays a fair excuse,
To speak more nobly of the Bruce.”—

XV.

“Now, by Columba's shrine, I swear,
And every saint that's buried there,
’Tis he himself!” Lorn sternly cries,
“And for my kinsman's death he dies.”—
As loudly Ronald calls—“Forbear!
Not in my sight while brand I wear,
O'ermatched by odds, shall warrior fall,
Or blood of stranger stain my hall!
This ancient fortress of my race
Shall be misfortune's resting-place,
Shelter and shield of the distressed,
No slaughter-house for shipwrecked guest.”—
“Talk not to me,” fierce Lorn replied,
“Of odds or match!—when Comyn died,
Three daggers clashed within his side!
Talk not to me of sheltering hall,
The Church of God saw Comyn fall!
On God's own altar streamed his blood,
While o'er my prostrate kinsman stood
The ruthless murderer—e'en as now—
With armed hand and scornful brow.—
Up, all who love me! blow on blow!
And lay the outlawed felons low!”—

XVI.

Then up sprung many a mainland Lord,
Obedient to their Chieftain's word.
Barcaldine's arm is high in air,
And Kinloch-Alline's blade is bare,
Black Murthok's dirk has left its sheath,
And clenched is Dermid's hand of death.
Their muttered threats of vengeance swell
Into a wild and warlike yell;
Onward they press with weapons high,
The affrighted females shriek and fly,
And, Scotland, then thy brightest ray
Had darkened ere its noon of day.

But every chief of birth and fame,
That from the Isles of Ocean came,
At Ronald's side that hour withstood
Fierce Lorn's relentless thirst for blood

XVII.

Brave Torquill from Dunvegan high,
Lord of the misty hills of Skye,
Mac-Niel, wild Bara's ancient thane,
Duart, of bold Clan Gillian's strain,
Fergus, of Canna's castled bay,
Mac-Duffith, Lord of Colonsay,
Soon as they saw the broadswords glance,
With ready weapons rose at once,
More prompt, that many an ancient feud,
Full oft suppressed, full oft renewed,
Glowed 'twixt the chieftains of Argyle,
And many a lord of ocean's isle.
Wild was the scene—each sword was bare.
Back streamed each chieftain's shaggy hair,
In gloomy opposition set,
Eyes, hands, and brandished weapons met;
Blue gleaming o'er the social board,
Flashed to the torches many a sword;
And soon those bridal lights may shine
On purple blood for rosy wine.

XVIII.

While thus for blows and death prepared,
Each heart was up, each weapon bared,
Each foot advanced,—a surly pause
Still revered hospitable laws.
All menaced violence, but alike
Reluctant each the first to strike,
(For aye accursed in minstrel line
Is he who brawls 'mid song and wine,
And, matched in numbers and in might,
Doubtful and desperate seemed the fight.)
Thus threat and murmur died away,
Till on the crowded hall there lay
Such silence, as the deadly still,
Ere bursts the thunder on the hill.
With blade advanced, each Chieftain bold
Showed like the Swordsman's form of old.
As wanting still the torch of life,
To wake the marble into strife.

XIX.

That awful pause the stranger maid,
And Edith, seized to pray for aid.
As to De Argentine they clung,
Away her veil the stranger flung,
And, lovely 'mid her wild despair,
Fast streamed her eyes, wide flowed her hair.
"O thou, of knighthood once the flower,
Sure refuge in distressful hour.

Thou, who in Judah well hast fought
 For our dear faith, and oft hast sought
 Renown in knightly exercise,
 When this poor hand has dealt the prize,
 Say, can thy soul of honour brook
 On the unequal strife to look,
 When butchered thus in peaceful hall,
 Those once thy friends, my brethren, fall! —
 To Argentine she turned her word,
 But her eye sought the Island Lord.
 A flush like evening's setting flame
 Glowed on his cheek; his hardy frame,
 As with a brief convulsion shook:
 With hurried voice and eager look,—
 "Fear not," he said, "my Isabel!
 What said I—Edith!—all is well—
 Nay, fear not,—I will well provide
 The safety of my lovely bride—
 My bride?"—but there the accents clung
 In tremour to his faltering tongue.

XX.

Now rose De Argentine, to claim
 The prisoners in his sovereign's name,
 To England's crown, who, vassals sworn,
 'Gainst their liege Lord had weapon borne—
 (Such speech, I ween, was but to hide
 His care their safety to provide;
 For knight more true in thought and deed
 Than Argentine ne'er spurred a steed)—
 And Ronald, who his meaning guessed,
 Seemed half to sanction the request.
 This purpose fiery Torquil broke;—
 "Somewhat we've heard of England's yoke,"
 He said, "and, in our islands, Fame
 Hath whispered of a lawful claim,
 That calls the Bruce fair Scotland's Lord,
 Though dispossessed by foreign sword.
 This craves reflection—but though right
 And just the charge of England's Knight,
 Let England's crown her rebels seize,
 Where she has power;—in towers like these,
 'Midst Scottish Chieftains summoned here
 To bridal mirth and bridal cheer,
 Be sure, with no consent of mine
 Shall either Lorn or Argentine
 With chains or violence, in our sight,
 Oppress a brave and banished knight."—

XXI.

Then waked the wild debate again,
 With brawling threat and clamour vain.
 Vassals and menials, thronging in,
 Lent their brute rage to swell the din;
 When, far and wide, a bugle-clang
 From the dark ocean upward rang.

"The Abbot comes!" they cry at once,
 "The holy man, whose favoured glance
 Hath sainted visions known;
 Angels have met him on the way,
 Beside the blessed martyrs' bay,
 And by Columba's stone.
 His monks have heard their hymnings high
 Sound from the summit of Dun-Y,
 To cheer his penance lone,
 When at each cross, on girth and wold,
 (Their number thrice a hundredfold,)
 His prayer he made, his beads he told,
 With Aves many a one—
 He comes our feuds to reconcile,
 A sainted man from sainted isle;
 We will his holy doom abide,
 The Abbot shall our strife decide."

XXII.

Scarcely this fair accord was o'er,
 When through the wide-revolving door
 The black-stoled brethren wind;
 Twelve sandalled monks, who reliques bore,
 With many a torch-bearer before,
 And many a cross behind.
 Then sunk each fierce up-lifted hand,
 And dagger bright and flashing brand
 Dropped swiftly at the sight;
 They vanished from the Churchman's eye,
 As shooting stars, that giance and die,
 Dart from the vault of night.

XXIII.

The Abbot on the threshold stood,
 And in his hand the holy rood;
 Back on his shoulders flowed his hood;
 The torches' glaring ray
 Showed, in its red and flashing light,
 His withered cheek and amice white,
 His blue eye glistening cold and bright,
 His tresses scant and gray.
 "Fair Lords," he said, "Our Lady's love,
 And peace be with you from above,
 And Benedicite!—
 —But what means this? no peace is here!
 Do dirks unsheathed suit bridal cheer?
 Or are these naked brands
 A seemly show for Churchman's sight,
 When he comes summoned to unite
 Betrothed hearts and hands?"—

XXIV.

Then, cloaking hate with fiery zeal,
 Proud Lorn first answered the appeal;—
 "Thou comest, O holy Man,

True sons of blessed Church to greet,
But little deeming here to meet

A wretch, beneath the ban
Of Pope and Church, for murder done
Even on the sacred altar-stone!—
Well mayst thou wonder we should know
Such miscreant here, nor lay him low,
Or dream of greeting, peace, or truce,
With excommunicated Bruce!
Yet well I grant, to end debate,
Thy sainted voice decide his fate.”—

XXV.

Then Ronald pled the stranger's cause,
And knighthood's oath and honour's laws;
And Isabel, on bended knee,
Brought prayers and tears to back the plea;
And Edith lent her generous aid,
And wept, and Lorn for mercy prayed.
“Hence,” he exclaimed, “degenerate maid!
Was't not enough to Ronald's bower
I brought thee, like a paramour,
Or bond-maid at her master's gate,
His careless cold approach to wait?—
But the bold Lord of Cumberland,
The gallant Clifford, seeks thy hand;
His it shall be—Nay, no reply!
Hence! till those rebel eyes be dry.”—
With grief the Abbot heard and saw,
Yet nought relaxed his brow of awe.

XXVI.

Then Argentine, in England's name,
So highly urged his sovereign's claim,
He waked a spark, that, long suppressed,
Had smouldered in Lord Ronald's breast;
And now, as from the flint the fire,
Flashed forth at once his generous ire.—
“Enough of noble blood,” he said,
“By English Edward had been shed,
Since matchless Wallace first had been
In mockery crowned with wreaths of green,
And done to death by felon hand
For guarding well his father's land.
Where's Nigel Bruce? and De la Haye,
And valiant Seton—where are they?
Where Somerville, the kind and free?
And Fraser, flower of chivalry?
Have they not been on gibbet bound,
Their quarters flung to hawk and hound.
And hold we here a cold debate,
To yield more victims to their fate?
What! can the English Leopard's mood
Never be gurg'd with northern blood?
Was not the life of Athole shed
To soothe the tyrant's sickened bed?”

And must his word, at dying day,
Be nought but quarter, hang, and slay!—
Thou frown'st, De Argentine,—My gage
Is prompt to prove the strife I wage.”—

XXVII.

“Nor deem,” said stout Dunvegan's knight,
“That thou shalt brave alone the fight!
By saints of isle and mainland both,
By Woden wild, (my grandsire's oath,)
Let Rome and England do their worst,
Howe'er attainted or accursed,
If Bruce shall e'er find friends again
Once more to brave a battle-plain,
If Douglas couch again his lance,
Or Randolph dare another chance,
Old Torquil will not be to lack
With twice a thousand at his back.—
Nay, chafe not at my bearing bold,
Good Abbot! for thou know'st of old,
Torquil's rude thought and stubborn will
Smack of the wild Norwegian still;
Nor will I barter Freedom's cause
For England's wealth, or Rome's applause.”—

XXVIII.

The Abbot seemed with eye severe,
The hardy Chieftain's speech to hear;
Then on the monarch turned the Monk,
But twice his courage came and sunk,
Confronted with the hero's look;
Twice fell his eye, his accents shook;
At length, resolved in tone and brow,
Sternly he questioned him—“And thou,
Unhappy! what hast thou to plead,
Why I denounce not on thy deed
That awful doom which canons tell
Shuts paradise, and opens hell;
Anathema of power so dread,
It blends the living with the dead,
Bids each good angel soar away,
And every ill one claim his prey;
Expels thee from the Church's care,
And deafens Heaven against thy prayer;
Arms every hand against thy life,
Bans all who aid thee in the strife,
Nay, each whose succour, cold and scant,
With meanest alms relieves thy want;
Haunts thee while living,—and, when dead,
Dwells on thy yet devoted head,
Rends Honour's scutcheon from thy hearse,
Stills o'er thy bier the holy verse,
And spurns thy corpse from hallowed ground,
Flung like vile carrion to the hound!
Such 's the dire and desperate doom,
For sacrilege decreed by Rome:

And such the well-deservèd meed
Of thine unhallowed, ruthless deed.”—

XXIX.

“Abbot!” The Bruce replied, “thy charge
It boots not to dispute at large.
This much, howe’er, I bid thee know,
No selfish vengeance dealt the blow,
For Comyn died his country’s foe.
Nor blame I friends whose ill-timed speed
Fulfilled my soon-repentèd deed,
Nor censure those from whose stern tongue
The dire anathema has rung.
I only blame mine own wild ire,
By Scotland’s wrongs incensed to fire.
Heaven knows my purpose to atone.
Far as I may, the evil done,
And hears a penitent’s appeal
From papal curse and prelate’s zeal.
My first and dearest task achievèd,
Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved,
Shall many a priest in cope and stole
Say requiem for Red Comyn’s soul,
While I the blessèd cross advance,
And expiate this unhappy chance,
In Palestine, with sword and lance.
But, while content the Church should know
My conscience owns the debt I owe,
Unto De Argentine and Lorn
The name of traitor I return,
Bid them defiance stern and high,
And give them in their throats the lie!
These brief words spoke, I speak no more.
Do what thou wilt: my shrift is o’er.”—

XXX.

Like man by prodigy amazed,
Upon the King the Abbot gazed;
Then o’er his pallid features glance
Convulsions of ecstatic trance,
His breathing came more thick an’ fast,
And from his pale blue eyes were cast
Strange rays of wild and wandering light;
Uprise his locks of silver white,
Flushed is his brow, through every vein
In azure tide the currents strain,
And undistinguished accents broke
The awful silence ere he spoke:—

XXXI.

“De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread
To speak my curse upon thy head,
And give thee as an outcast o’er
To him who burns to shed thy gore;—

But, like the Midianite of old,
 Who stood on Zophim,* heaven-controlled.
 I feel within mine aged breast
 A power that will not be repressed.
 It prompts my voice, it swells my veins.
 It burns, it maddens, it constrains!—
 De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
 Hath at God's altar slain thy foe:
 O'er-mastered yet by high behest,
 I bless thee, and thou shalt be blest!"—
 He spoke, and o'er the astonished throne
 Was silence, awful, deep, and long.

XXXII.

Again that light has fired his eye,
 Again his form swells bold and high,
 The broken voice of age is gone.
 'Tis vigorous manhood's lofty tone:—
 "Thrice vanquished on the battle-plain,
 Thy followers slaughtered, fled, or ta'en,
 A hunted wanderer on the wild,
 On foreign shores a man exiled,
 Disowned, deserted, and distressed,
 I bless thee, and thou shalt be blessed;
 Blessed in the hall and in the field,
 Under the mantle as the shield.
 Avenger of thy country's shame,
 Restorer of her injured fame,
 Blessed in thy sceptre and thy sword,
 De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful Lord,
 Blessed in thy deeds and in thy fame,
 What lengthened honours wait thy name!
 In distant ages, sire to son
 Shall tell thy tale of freedom won,
 And teach his infants, in the use
 Of earliest speech, to falter Bruce.
 Go, then, triumphant! sweep along
 Thy course, the theme of many a song!
 The Power, whose dictates swell my breast,
 Hath blessed thee, and thou shalt be blessed!—
 Enough—my short-lived strength decays,
 And sinks the momentary blaze.—
 Heaven hath our destined purpose broke—
 Not here must nuptial vow be spoke;
 Brethren, our errand here is o'er,
 Our task discharged.—Unmoor, unmoor!"—
 His priests received the exhausted Monk,
 As breathless in their arms he sunk.
 Punctual his orders to obey,
 The train refused all longer stay,
 Embarked, raised sail, and bore away.

* Numbers, chaps. xxiii. and xxiv.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

HAST thou not marked, when o'er thy startled head
Sudden and deep the thunder-peal has rolled,
How, when its echoes fell, a silence dead
Sunk on the wood, the meadow, and the wold?
The rye-grass shakes not on the sod-built fold,
The rustling aspen's leaves are mute and still,
The wall-flower waves not on the ruined Hold,
Till, murmuring distant first, then near and shrill,
The savage whirlwind wakes, and sweeps the groaning hill.

II.

Artornish! such a silence sunk
Upon thy halls, when that gray Monk
His prophet-speech had spoke;
And his obedient brethren's sail
Was stretched to meet the southern gale
Before a whisper woke.
Then murmuring sounds of doubt and fear,
Close poured in many an anxious ear,
The solemn stillness broke;
And still they gazed with eager guess,
Where, in an oriel's deep recess,
The Island Prince seemed bent to press
What Lorn, by his impatient cheer,
And gesture fierce, scarce deigned to hear.

III.

Starting at length with frowning look,
His hand he clenched, his head he shook,
And sternly flung apart;—
“And deem'st thou me so mean of mood.
As to forget the mortal feud,
And clasp the hand with blood embued
From my dear kinsman's heart?
Is this thy rede?—a due return
For ancient league and friendship sworn!
But well our mountain proverb shows
The faith of Islesmen ebbs and flows.
Be it even so—believe, ere long,
He that now bears shall wreak the wrong.—
Call Edith—call the Maid of Lorn!
My sister, slaves!—for further scorn,
Be sure nor she nor I will stay.—
Away, De Argentine, away!
We nor ally nor brother know,
In Bruce's friend, or England's foe.”—

IV.

But who the Chieftain's rage can tell,
When, sought from lowest dungeon cell
To highest tower the Castle round,
No Lady Edith was there found!
He shouted, “Falschood!—treachery!—

Revenge and blood!—a lordly meed
 To him that will avenge the deed!
 A Baron's lands!"—His frantic mood
 Was scarcely by the news withstood,
 That Morag shared his sister's flight,
 And that, in hurry of the night,
 'Scaped noteless, and without remark,
 Two strangers sought the Abbot's bark.—
 "Man every galley!—fly—pursue!
 The priest his treachery shall rue!
 Ay, and the time shall quickly come,
 When we shall hear the thanks that Rome
 Will pay his feigned prophecy!"—
 Such was fierce Lorn's indignant cry;
 And Cormac Doil in haste obeyed,
 Hoisted his sail, his anchor weighed,
 (For, glad of each pretext for spoil,
 A pirate sworn was Cormac Doil.)
 But others, lingering, spoke apart,—
 "The maid has given her maiden heart
 To Ronald of the Isles,
 And, fearful lest her brother's word
 Bestow her on that English Lord,
 She seeks Iona's piles,
 And wisely deems it best to dwell
 A votaress in the holy cell,
 Until these feuds, so fierce and fell,
 The Abbot reconciles."—

V.

As, impotent of ire, the hall
 Echoed to Lorn's impatient call,
 "My horse, my mantle, and my train!
 Let none who honours Lorn remain!"—
 Courteous, but stern, a bold request
 To Bruce De Argentine addressed.
 "Lord Earl," he said,—“I cannot chuse
 But yield such title to the Bruce,
 Though name and earldom both are gone,
 Since he braced rebel's armour on—
 But, Earl or Serf—rude phrase was thine
 Of late, and launched at Argentine;
 Such as compels me to demand
 Redress of honour at thy hand.
 We need not to each other tell,
 That both can wield their weapons well;
 Then do me but the soldier's grace,
 This glove upon thy helm to place
 Where we may meet in fight;
 And I will say, as still I've said,
 Though by ambition far misled,
 Thou art a noble knight.”—

VI.

“And I,” the princely Bruce replied,
 Might term it stain on knighthood's pride,

That the bright sword of Argentina
Should in a tyrant's quarrel shine;—
But, for your brave request,
Be sure the honoured pledge you gave
In every battle-field shall wave
Upon my helmet-crest;
Believe, that if my hasty tongue
Hath done thine honour causeless wrong
It shall be well-redressed.
Not dearer to my soul was glove,
Bestowed in youth by lady's love,
Than this which thou hast given!
Thus, then, my noble foe I greet;
Health and high fortune till we meet,
And then—what pleases Heaven.”—

VII.

Thus parted they—for now, with sound
Like waves rolled back from rocky ground,
The friends of Lorn retire;
Each mainland chieftain, with his train,
Draws to his mountain towers again,
Pondering how mortal schemes prove vain,
And mortal hopes expire;
But through the Castle double guard,
By Ronald's charge, kept wakeful ward,
Wicket and gate were trebly barred,
By beam and bolt and chain;
Then of the guests, in courteous sort,
He prayed excuse for mirth broke short,
And bade them in Artornish fort
In confidence remain.
Now torch and menial tendence led
Chieftain and knight to bower and bed,
And beads were told, and aves said,
And soon they sunk away
Into such sleep, as wont to shed
Oblivion on the weary head,
After a toilsome day.

VIII.

But soon up-roused, the Monarch cried
To Edward slumbering by his side.
“Awake, or sleep for aye!
Even now there jarred a secret door—
A taper-light gleams on the floor—
Up, Edward, up, I say!
Some one glides in like midnight ghost—
—Nay, strike not! 'tis our noble Host.”—
Advancing then his taper's flame,
Ronald stepped forth, and with him came
Dunvegan's chief—each bent the knee
To Bruce, in sign of fealty,
And proffered him his sword,

And hailed him, in a monarch's style
 As king of mainland and of isle,
 And Scotland's rightful lord.
 "And O," said Ronald, "Owned of Heaven's
 Say, is my erring youth forgiven,
 By falsehood's arts from duty driven,
 Who rebel falchion drew,
 Yet ever to thy deeds of fame,
 Even while I strove against thy claim,
 Paid homage just and true?"—
 "Alas! dear youth, the unhappy time,"
 Answered the Bruce, "must bear the crime,
 Since, guiltier far than you;
 Even I"—he paused; for Falkirk's woes
 Upon his conscious soul arose,
 The Chieftain to his breast he pressed,
 And in a sigh concealed the rest.

IX.

They proffered aid, by arms and might
 To repossess him in his right;
 But well their counsels must be weighed,
 Ere banners raised and musters made,
 For English hire and Lorn's intrigues
 Bound many chiefs in southern leagues.
 In answer, Bruce his purpose bold
 To his new vassals frankly told:—
 "The winter worn in exile o'er,
 I longed for Carrick's kindred shore.
 I thought upon my native Ayr,
 And longed to see the burly fare
 That Clifford makes, whose lordly call
 Now echoes through my father's hall.
 But first my course to Arran led,
 Where valiant Lennox gathers head,
 And on the sea, by tempest tossed,
 Our barks dispersed, our purpose crossed,
 Mine own, a hostile sail to shun,
 Far from her destined course had run,
 When that wise will, which masters ours,
 Compelled us to your friendly towers."—

X.

Then Torquill spoke: "The time craves speed
 We must not linger in our deed,
 But instant pray our Sovereign Liege
 To shun the perils of a siege.
 The vengeful Lorn, with all his powers,
 Lies but too near Artornish towers,
 And England's light-armed vessels ride,
 Not distant far, the waves of Clyde,
 Prompt at these tidings to unmoor,
 And sweep each strait, and guard each shore
 Then, till this fresh alarm pass by,
 Secret and safe my Liege must lie
 In the fair bounds of friendly Skye,

Torquill thy pilot and thy guide."—
"Not so, brave Chieftain," Ronald cried;
"Myself will on my Sovereign wait,
And raise in arms the men of Sleate,
Whilst thou, renowned where chiefs debate,
Shalt awe their souls by counsels sage,
And awe them by thy locks of age."—
"And if my words in weight shall fail,
This ponderous sword shall turn the scale."—

XI.

"The scheme," said Bruce, "contents me well;
Meantime, 'twere best that Isabel,
For safety, with my bark and crew,
Again to friendly Erin drew.
There, Edward, too, shall with her wend,
In need to cheer her and defend,
And muster up each scattered friend."—
Here seemed it as Lord Ronald's ear
Would other counsel gladlier hear;
But, all achieved as soon as planned,
Both barks in secret armed and manned,
From out the haven bore;
On different voyage forth they ply,
This for the coast of winged Skye,
And that for Erin's shore.

XII.

With Bruce and Ronald bides the tale.
To favouring winds they gave the sail,
Till Mull's dark headlands scarce they knew,
And Ardnamurchan's hills were blue.
But then the squalls blew close and hard,
And, fain to strike the galley's yard,
And take them to the oar,
With these rude seas, in weary plight,
They strove the livelong day and night,
Nor till the dawning had a sight
Of Skye's romantic shore.
Where Coolin stoops him to the west,
They saw upon his shivered crest
The sun's arising gleam;
But such the labour and delay,
Ere they were moored in Scaragh bay,
(For calmer heaven compelled to stay,)
He shot a western beam.
Then Ronald said,—"If true mine eye,
These are the savage wilds that lie
North of Strathnardill and Dunskey;
No human foot comes here,
And, since these adverse breezes blow,
If my good Liege love hunter's bow,
What hinders that on land we go,
And strike a mountain deer?"

Allan, my Page, shall with us wend;
 A bow full deftly can he bend,
 And, if we meet a herd, may send
 A shaft shall mend our cheer."—
 Then each took bow and bolts in hand,
 Their row-boat launched and leapt to land.
 And left their skiff and train,
 Where a wild stream, with headlong shock,
 Came brawling down its bed of rock,
 To mingle with the main.

XIII.

A while their route they silent made,
 As men who stalk for mountain deer,
 Till the good Bruce to Ronald said,
 "St Mary! what a scene is here!
 I've traversed many a mountain-strand,
 Abroad and in my native land,
 And it has been my lot to tread
 Where safety more than pleasure led;
 Thus, many a waste I've wandered o'er,
 Clombe many a crag, crossed many a moor
 But, by my halidome,
 A scene so rude, so wild as this,
 Yet so sublime in barrenness,
 Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press,
 Where'er I happened to roam."—

XIV.

No marvel thus the Monarch spake;
 For rarely human eye has known
 A scene so stern as that dread lake,
 With its dark ledge of barren stone.
 Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
 Hath rent a strange and shattered way
 Through the rude bosom of the hill,
 And that each naked precipice,
 Sable ravine and dark abyss,
 Tells of the outrage still.
 The wildest glen, but this, can show
 Some touch of Nature's genial glow:
 On high Benmore green mosses grow,
 And heath-bolls bud in deep Glencoe,
 And copse on Cruchan-Ben;
 But here, above, around, below,
 On mountain or in glen,
 Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
 Nor aught of vegetative power,
 The weary eye may ken.
 For all is rocks at random thrown,
 Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
 As if were here denied
 The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
 That clothe with many a varied hue
 The bleakest mountain-side.

XV.

And wilder, forward as they wound,
Were the proud cliffs and lake profound.
Huge terraces of granite black
Afforded rude and cumbered track;

For from the mountain hoar,
Hurled headlong in some night of fear,
When yelled the wolf and fled the deer,
Loose crags had toppled o'er;
And some, chance-poised and balanced, lay,
So that a stripling arm might sway

A mass no host could raise,
In Nature's rage at random thrown,
Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
On its precarious base.

The evening mists, with ceaseless change,
Now clothed the mountains' lofty range,

Now left their foreheads bare,
And round the skirts their mantle furled.
Or on the sable waters curled,
Or, on the eddying breezes whirled,
Dispersed in middle air.

And oft, condensed, at once they lower,
When, brief and fierce, the mountain shower

Pours like a torrent down,
And when return the sun's glad beams,
Whitened with foam a thousand streams
Leap from the mountain's crown.

XVI.

"This lake," said Bruce, "whose barriers dread
Are precipices sharp and sheer,
Yielding no track for goat or deer,

Save the black shelves we tread,
How term you its dark waves? and how
Yon northern mountain's pathless brow,

And yonder peak of dread,
That to the evening sun uplifts
The griesly gulphs and slaty rifts,
Which seam its shivered head?"—

"Coriskin call the dark lake's name,
Coolin the ridge, as bards proclaim,
From old Cuchullin, chief of fame.

But bards, familiar in our isles
Rather with Nature's frowns than smiles,
Full oft their careless humours please
By sportive names for scenes like these.

I would old Torquil were to show
His Maidens with their breasts of snow,
Or that my noble Liege were nigh
To hear his Nurse sing lullaby!
(The Maids—tall cliffs with breakers white.
The Nurse—a torrent's roaring might.)
Or that your eye could see the mood

Of Corrievreken's whirlpool rude,
When dons the Hag her whitened hood—
'Tis thus our islesmen's fancy frames,
For scenes so stern, fantastic names."

XVII.

Answered the Bruce, "And musing mind
Might here a graver moral find.
These mighty cliffs, that heave on high
Their naked brows to middle sky,
Indifferent to the sun or snow,
Where nought can fade, and nought can blow,
May they not mark a Monarch's fate,—
Raised high 'mid storms of strife and state,
Beyond life's lowlier pleasures placed,
His soul a rock, his heart a waste?
O'er hope and love and fear aloft
High rears his crownèd head—But soft!
Look, underneath yon jutting crag
Are hunters and a slaughtered stag.
Who may they be? But late you said,
No steps these desert regions tread!"

XVIII.

"So said I—and believed in sooth,"
Ronald replied, "I spoke the truth.
Yet now I spy, by yonder stone,
Five men—they mark us, and come on—
And by their badge on bonnet borne,
I guess them of the land of Lorn,
Foes to my Liege."—"So let it be;
I've faced worse odds than five to three—
—But the poor Page can little aid;
Then be our battle thus arrayed,
If our free passage they contest;
Cope thou with two, I'll match the rest."—
"Not so, my Liege—for by my life,
This sword shall meet the treble strife;
My strength, my skill in arms, more small
And less the loss should Ronald fall.
But islesmen soon to soldiers grow,—
Allan has sword as well as bow,
And were my Monarch's order given,
Two shafts should make our number even."
"No! not to save my Me!" he
"Enough of blood—este on my head,
Too rashly spilled—we soon shall know,
Whether they come as friend or foe."

XIX.

Nigh came the strangers, and more nigh;
Still less they pleased the Monarch's eye.
Men were they all of evil mien,
Down-looked, unwilling to be seen;
They moved with half-resolved pace,
And bent on earth each gloomy face.

The foremost two were fair arrayed,
 With brogue and bonnet, trews and plaid,
 And bore the arms of mountaineers,
 Daggers and broadswords, bows and spears.
 The three, that lagged small space behind,
 Seemed serfs of more degraded kind;
 Goat-skins or deer-hides o'er them cast,
 Made a rude fence against the blast;
 Their arms and feet and heads were bare,
 Matted their beards, unshorn their hair;
 For arms, the caitiffs bore in hand
 A club, an axe, a rusty brand.

XX.

Onward, still mute, they kept the track;—
 "Tell who ye be, or else stand back,"
 Said Bruce; "In deserts when they meet
 Men pass not as in peaceful street."—
 Still, at his stern command, they stood,
 And proffered greeting brief and rude,
 But acted courtesy so ill,
 As seemed of fear, and not of will.
 "Wanderers we are, as you may be;
 Men hither driven by wind and sea,
 Who, if you list to taste our cheer,
 Will share with you this fallow deer."—
 "If from the sea, where lies your bark?"
 "Ten fathom deep in ocean dark!
 Wrecked yesternight; but we are men
 Who little sense of peril ken.
 The shades come down—the day is shut—
 Will you go with us to our hut?"
 "Our vessel waits us in the bay;
 Thanks for your proffer—have good day."—
 "Was that your galley, then, which rode
 Not far from shore when evening glowed?"
 "It was."—"Then spare your needless pain.
 There will she now be sought in vain.
 We saw her from the mountain head,
 When with St George's blazon red
 A southern vessel bore in sight,
 And yours raised sail, and took to flight."—

XXI.

"Now, by the rood, unwelcome news:"
 Thus with Lord Ronald communed Bruce;
 "Nor rests there light enough to show
 If this their tale be true or no.
 The men seem bred of churlish kind,
 Yet rugged brows have bosoms kind;
 We will go with them—food and fire
 And sheltering roof our wants require.
 Sure guard 'gainst treachery will we keep,
 And watch by turns our comrades' sleep.—
 Good fellows, thanks; your guests we'll be,
 And well will pay the courtesy.

Come, lead us where your lodging lies,
 —Nay, soft! we mix not companies.—
 Show us the path o'er crag and stone.
 And we will follow you;—lead on.”—

XXII.

They reached the dreary cabin, made
 Of sails against a rock displayed,

And there, on entering, found
 A slender boy, whose form and mien
 Ill suited with such savage scene,
 In cap and cloak of velvet green,

Low seated on the ground.

His garb was such as minstrels wear,
 Dark was his hue, and dark his hair,
 His youthful cheek was marred by care,

His eyes in sorrow drowned.

“Whence this poor boy?”—As Ronald spake,
 The voice his trance of anguish broke;
 As if awaked from ghastly dream,
 He raised his head with start and scream,

And wildly gazed around;

Then to the wall his face he turned,
 And his dark cheek with blushes burned.

XXIII.

“Whose is the boy?” again he said.
 “By chance of war our captive made;
 He may be yours, if you should hold
 That music has more charms than gold;
 For, though from earliest childhood mute.

The lad can deftly touch the lute,
 And on the rote and viol play,
 And well can drive the time away

For those who love such glee;

For me, the favouring breeze, when loud

It pipes upon the galley's shroud,

Makes blither melody.”—

“Hath he, then, sense of spoken sound?”—

“Ay; so his mother bade us know,
 A crone in our late shipwreck drowned,
 And hence the silly stripling's woe.

More of the youth I cannot say,
 Our captive but since yesterday;
 When wind and weather waxed so grim,
 We little listed think of him.—

But why waste time in idle words?
 Sit to your cheer—unbelt your swords.”—

Sudden the captive turned his head,
 And one quick glance to Ronald sped.
 It was a keen and warning look,
 And well the Chief the signal took.

XXIV.

“Kind host,” he said, “our needs require
 A separate board and separate fire:

For know, that on a pilgrimage
Wend I, my comrade, and this page.
And, sworn to vigil and to fast,
Long as this hallowed task shall last,
We never doff the plaid or sword,
Or feast us at a stranger's board;
And never share one common sleep,
But one must still his vigil keep.
Thus, for our separate use, good friend,
We'll hold this hut's remoter end."—
"A churlish vow," the eldest said,
"And hard, methinks, to be obeyed.
How say you, if, to wreak the scorn
That pays our kindness harsh return,
We should refuse to share our meal?"—
—"Then say we, that our swords are steel!
And our vow binds us not to fast,
Where gold or force may buy repast."—
Their host's dark brow grew keen and fell,
His teeth are clenched, his features swell;
Yet sunk the felon's moody ire
Before Lord Ronald's glance of fire,
Nor could his craven courage brook
The Monarch's calm and dauntless look.
With laugh constrained,—"Let every man
Follow the fashion of his clan!
Each to his separate quarters keep,
And feed or fast, or wake or sleep."—

XXV.

Their fire at separate distance burns,
By turns they eat, keep guard by turns;
For evil seemed that old man's eye,
Dark and designing, fierce yet shy.
Still he avoided forward look,
But slow and circumspectly took
A circling, never-ceasing glance,
By doubt and cunning marked at once,
Which shot a mischief-boding ray,
From under eyebrows shagged and gray.
The younger, too, who seemed his son,
Had that dark look, the timid shun;
The half-clad serfs behind them sate,
And scowled a glare 'twixt fear and hate—
Till all, as darkness onward crept,
Couched down and seemed to sleep, or slept.
Nor he, that boy, whose powerless tongue
Must trust his eyes to wail his wrong,
A longer watch of sorrow made,
But stretched his limbs to slumber laid.

XXVI.

Not in his dangerous host confides
The King, but wary watch provides.
Ronald keeps ward till midnight past,
Then wakes the King, young Allan last

Thus ranked, to give the youthful Page
 The rest required by tender age.
 —What is Lord Ronald's wakeful thought,
 To chase the languor toil had brought?—
 (For deem not that he deigned to throw
 Much care upon such coward foe,)
 He thinks of lovely Isabel,
 When at her foeman's feet she fell,
 Nor less when, placed in princely selle,
 She glanced on him with favouring eyes,
 At Woodstock when he won the prize.
 Nor, fair in joy, in sorrow fair,
 In pride of place as 'mid despair,
 Must she alone engross his care.
 His thoughts to his betrothèd bride,
 To Edith, turn—Oh, how decide,
 When here his love and heart are given,
 And there his faith stands plight to Heaven!
 No drowsy ward 'tis his to keep,
 For seldom lovers long for sleep.
 Till sung his midnight hymn the owl,
 Answered the dog-fox with his howl,
 Then waked the King—at his request,
 Lord Ronald stretched himself to rest.

XXVII.

What spell was good King Robert's, say,
 To drive the weary night away?
 His was the patriot's burning thought,
 Of Freedom's battle bravely fought,
 Of castles stormed, of cities freed,
 Of deep design and daring deed,
 Of England's roses reft and torn,
 And Scotland's cross in triumph worn,
 Of rout and rally, war and truce,—
 As heroes think, so thought the Bruce.
 No marvel, 'mid such musings high,
 Sleep shunned the Monarch's thoughtful eye.
 Now over Coolin's eastern head
 The grayish light begins to spread,
 The otter to his cavern drew,
 And clamoured shrill the wakening mew;
 Then watched the Page—to needful rest
 The King resigned his anxious breast.

XXVIII.

To Allan's eyes was harder task.
 The weary watch their safeties ask.
 He trimmed the fire, and gave to shine
 With bickering light the splintered pine;
 Then gazed a while, where silent laid
 Their hosts were shrouded by the plaid.
 But little fear waked in his mind,
 For he was bred of martial kind,
 And, if to manhood he arrive,
 May match the boldest knight alive.

Then thought he of his mother's tower,
His little sister's green-wood bower,
How there the Easter-gambols pass,
And of Dan Joseph's lengthened mass.
But still before his weary eye
In rays prolonged the blazes die—
Again he roused him—on the lake
Looked forth, where now the twilight-flake
Of pale cold dawn began to wake.
On Coolin's cliffs the mist lay furled,
The morning breeze the lake had curled,
The short dark waves, heaved to the land,
With ceaseless plash kissed cliff or sand;—
It was a slumb'rous sound—he turned
To tales at which his youth had burned,
Of pilgrim's path by demon crossed,
Of sprightly elf or yelling ghost,
Of the wild witch's baneful cot,
And mermaid's alabaster grot,
Who bathes her limbs in sunless well
Deep in Strath-aird's enchanted cell.
Thither in fancy rapt he flies,
And on his sight the vaults arise;
That hut's dark walls he sees no more,
His foot is on the marble floor,
And o'er his head the dazzling spars
Gleam like a firmament of stars!
—Hark! hears he not the sea-nymph speak
Her anger in that thrilling shriek?—
No! all too late, with Allan's dream
Mingled the captive's warning scream!
As from the ground he strives to start,
A ruffian's dagger finds his heart!
Upward he casts his dizzy eyes, . . .
Murmurs his master's name, . . . and dies!

XXIX.

Not so awoke the King! his hand
Snatched from the flame a knotted brand,
The nearest weapon of his wrath;
With this he crossed the murderer's path,
And venged young Allan well!
The spattered brain and bubbling blood
Hissed on the half-extinguished wood,
The miscreant gasped and fell!
Nor rose in peace the Island Lord;
One catiff died upon his sword,
And one beneath his grasp lies prone
In mortal grapple overthrown.
But while Lord Ronald's dagger drank
The life-blood from his panting flank,
The Father-ruffian of the band
Behind him rears a coward hand!
—O for a moment's aid,
Till Bruce, who deals no double blow,

Dash to the earth another foe,
 Above his comrade laid!—
 And it is gained—the captive sprung
 On the raised arm, and closely clung,
 And, ere he shook him loose,
 The mastered felon pressed the ground,
 And gasped beneath a mortal wound,
 While o'er him stands the Bruce.

XXX.

“Miscreant! while lasts thy fitting spark,
 Give me to know the purpose dark,
 That armed thy hand with murderous knife,
 Against offenceless stranger’s life?”—
 —“No stranger thou!” with accent fell,
 Murmured the wretch; “I know thee well;
 And know thee for the foeman sworn
 Of my high chief, the mighty Lorn.”—
 —“Speak yet again, and speak the truth
 For thy soul’s sake!—from whence this youth?
 His country, birth, and name declare,
 And thus one evil deed repair.”—
 —“Vex me no more! . . . my blood runs cold
 No more I know than I have told.
 We found him in a bark we sought
 With different purpose . . . and I thought”
 Fate cut him short; in blood and broil,
 As he had lived, died Cormac Doil.

XXXI.

Then resting on his bloody blade,
 The valiant Bruce to Ronald said,
 “Now shame upon us both!—that boy
 Lifts his mute face to heaven,
 And clasps his hands, to testify
 His gratitude to God on high,
 For strange deliverance given.
 His speechless gesture thanks hath paid,
 Which our free tongues have left unsaid!”—
 He raised the youth with kindly word,
 But marked him shudder at the sword;
 He cleansed it from its hue of death,
 And plunged the weapon in its sheath.
 “Alas, poor child! unfitting part
 Fate doomed, when with so soft a hear
 And form so slight as thine,
 She made thee first a pirate’s slave,
 Then, in his stead, a patron gave
 Of wayward lot like mine;
 A landless prince, whose wandering life
 Is but one scene of blood and strife—
 Yet scant of friends the Bruce shall be,
 But he’ll find resting-place for thee.—
 Come, noble Ronald! o’er the dead
 Enough thy generous grief is paid,

And well has Allan's fate been wroke;—
Come, wend we hence—the day has broke.
Seek we our bark—I trust the tale
Was false, that she had hoisted sail.”—

XXXII.

Yet, ere they left that charnel-cell,
The Island Lord bade sad farewell
To Allan:—“Who shall tell this tale,”
He said, “in halls of Donagail!
Oh, who his widowed mother tell,
That, ere his bloom, her fairest fell!—
Rest thee, poor youth! and trust my care,
For mass and knell and funeral prayer;
While o'er those caitiffs, where they lie,
The wolf shall snarl, the raven cry!”—
And now the eastern mountain's head
On the dark lake threw lustre red,
Bright gleams of gold and purple streak
Ravine and precipice and peak—
(So earthly power at distance shows;
Reveals his splendour, hides his woes.)
O'er sheets of granite dark and broad,
Rent and unequal, lay the road.
In sad discourse the warriors wind,
And the mute Page moves slow behind.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

STRANGER! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed,
By lake and cataract, her lonely throne;
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning sky.
Yes! 'twas sublime, but sad.—The loneliness
Loaded thy heart, the desert tired thine eye;
And strange and awful fears began to press
Thy bosom with a stern solemnity.
Then hast thou wished some woodman's cottage nigh,
Something that showed of life, though low and mean;
Glad sight, its curling wreath of smoke to spy,
Glad sound, its cock's blithe carol would have been,
Or children whooping wild beneath the willows green.
Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,
In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise:

Or further, where, beneath the northern skies,
Chides wild Loch-Eribol his caverns hoar—
But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar.

II.

Through such wild scenes the champions passed,
When bold halloo and bugle-blast
Upon the breeze came loud and fast.
"There," said the Bruce, "blew Edward's horn!
What can have caused such brief return?
And see, brave Ronald,—see him dart
O'er stock and stone like hunted hart
Precipitate, as is the use,
In war or sport, of Edward Bruce.
—He marks us, and his eager cry
Will tell his news ere he be nigh."—

III.

Loud Edward shouts, "What make ye here,
Warring upon the mountain deer,
When Scotland wants her King?
A bark from Lennox crossed our track,
With her in speed I hurried back,
These joyful news to bring—
The Stuart stirs in Teviotdale,
And Douglas wakes his native vale,
Thy storm-tossed fleet hath won its way
With little loss to Brodick-Bay,
And Lennox, with a gallant band,
Waits but thy coming and command
To waft them o'er to Carrick strand.
There are blithe news!—but mark the close!
Edward, the deadliest of our foes,
As with his host he northward passed,
Hath on the Borders breathed his last."—

IV.

Still stood the Bruce—his steady cheek
Was little wont his joy to speak,
But then his colour rose:
"Now, Scotland! shortly shalt thou see,
With God's high will, thy children free,
And vengeance on thy foes!
Yet to no sense of selfish wrongs,
Bear witness with me Heaven, belongs
My joy o'er Edward's bier;
I took my knighthood at his hand,
And lordship held of him, and land,
And well may vouch it here,
That, blot the story from his page
Of Scotland ruined in his rage,
You read a monarch brave and sage,
And to his people dear."
"Let London's burghers mourn her Lord,
And Croydon monks his praise record."

The eager Edward said ;
" Eternal as his own, my hate
Surmounts the bounds of mortal fate,
And dies not with the dead !
Such hate was his on Solway's strand,
When vengeance clenched his palsied hand,
That pointed yet to Scotland's land,
As his last accents prayed
Disgrace and curse upon his heir,
If he one Scottish head should spare
Till stretched upon the bloody lair
Each rebel corpse was laid !
Such hate was his, when his last breath
Renounced the peaceful house of death,
And bade his bones to Scotland's coast
Be borne by his remorseless host ;
As if his dead and stony eye
Could still enjoy her misery !
Such hate was his,—dark, deadly, long ;
Mine,—as enduring, deep, and strong !"—

V.

" Let women, Edward, war with words,
With curses monks, but men with swords :
Nor doubt of living foes, to sate
Deepest revenge and deadliest hate.
Now, to the sea ! behold the beach,
And see the galleys' pendants stretch
Their fluttering length down favouring gale !
Aboard ! aboard ! and hoist the sail.
Hold we our way for Arran first,
Where meet in arms our friends dispersed ;
Lennox the loyal, De la Haye,
And Boyd the bold in battle fray.
I long the hardy band to head,
And see once more my standard spread.—
Does noble Ronald share our course,
Or stay to raise his island force ?"—
" Come weal, come woe, by Bruce's side,"
Replied the Chief, " will Ronald bide.
And since two galleys yonder ride,
Be mine, so please my Liege, dismissed
To wake to arms the clans of Uist,
And all who hear the Minche's roar,
On the Long Island's lonely shore.
The nearer Isles, with slight delay,
Ourselves may summon in our way ;
And soon on Arran's shore shall meet,
With Torquil's aid, a gallant fleet,
If aught avails their Chieftain's heat
Among the islesmen of the west."—

VI.

Thus was their venturous counsel said.
But, ere their sails the galleys spread.

Coriskin dark and Coolin high
 Echoed the dirge's doleful cry;
 Along that sable lake passed slow,—
 Fit scene for such a sight of woe,—
 The sorrowing islesmen, as they bore
 The murdered Allan to the shore.
 At every pause, with dismal shout,
 Their coronach of grief rung out,
 And ever, when they moved again,
 The pipes resumed their clamorous strain,
 And, with the pibroch's shrilling wail,
 Mourned the young heir of Donagaille.
 Round and around, from cliff and cave,
 His answer stern old Coolin gave,
 Till high upon his misty side
 Languished the mournful notes, and died.
 For never sounds, by mortal made,
 Attained his high and haggard head,
 That echoes but the tempest's moan,
 Or the deep thunder's rending groan.

VII.

Merrily, merrily, bounds the bark,
 She bounds before the gale,
 The mountain breeze from Ben-na-darch
 Is joyous in her sail!
 With fluttering sound like laughter hoarse
 The cords and canvas strain,
 The waves, divided by her force,
 In rippling eddies chased her course,
 As if they laughed again.
 Not down the breeze more blithely flew,
 Skimming the wave, the light sea-mew,
 'Than that gay galley bore
 Her course upon that favouring wind,
 And Coolin's crest has sunk behind,
 And Slapin's caverned shore.
 'Twas then that warlike signals wake
 Dunscaith's dark towers and Eisdor's lake,
 And soon from Cavilgarrigh's head
 Thick wreaths of eddying smoke were spread;
 A summons these of war and wrath
 To the brave clans of Sleate and Strath,
 And, ready at the sight,
 Each warrior to his weapons sprung,
 And targe upon his shoulder flung,
 Impatient for the fight.
 Mac-Kinnon's Chief, in warfare gray
 Had charge to muster their array,
 And guide their barks to Brodick-Bay

VIII.

Signal of Ronald's high command,
 A beacon gleamed o'er sea and land,
 From Canna's tower, that, steep and gray,
 Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay.

Seek not the giddy crag to climb,
 To view the turret scathed by time;
 It is a task of doubt and fear
 To aught but goat or mountain-deer.
 But rest thee on the silver beach,
 And let the aged herdsman teach
 His tale of former day;
 His cur's wild clamour he shall chide,
 And for thy seat by ocean's side
 His varied plaid display;
 Then tell, with Canna's Chieftain came,
 In ancient times, a foreign dame
 To yonder turret gray.
 Stern was her Lord's suspicious mind.
 Who in so rude a jail confined
 So soft and fair a thrall!
 And oft when moon on ocean slept,
 That lovely lady sate and wept
 Upon the Castle wall,
 And turned her eye to southern climes,
 And thought perchance of happier times,
 And touched her lute by fits, and sung
 Wild ditties in her native tongue.
 And still, when on the cliff and bay,
 Placid and pale the moonbeams play,
 And every breeze is mute,
 Upon the loan Hebridean's ear
 Steals a strange pleasure mixed with fear,
 While from that cliff he seems to hear
 The murmur of a lute,
 And sounds, as of a captive loan,
 That mourns her woes in tongue unknown---
 Strange is the tale—but all too long
 Already hath it stayed the song—
 Yet who may pass them by,
 That crag and tower in ruins gray,
 Nor to their hapless tenant pay
 The tribute of a sigh!

IX.

Merrily, merrily, bounds the bark
 O'er the broad ocean driven,
 Her path by Ronin's mountains dark
 The steersman's hand has given.
 And Ronin's mountains dark have sent
 Their hunters to the shore,
 And each his-ashen bow unbent,
 And gave his pastime o'er,
 And at the Island Lord's command,
 For hunting-spear took warrior's brand.
 On Scoor-Bigg next a warning light
 Summoned her warriors to the fight;
 A numerous race, ere stern Macleod
 O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode,

When all in vain the ocean cave
 Its refuge to his victims gave.
 The Chief, relentless in his wrath,
 With blazing heath blockades the path;
 In dense and stifling volumes rolled,
 The vapour filled the caverned Hold!
 The warrior-threat, the infant's plain,
 The mother's screams, were heard in vain;
 The vengeful Chief maintains his fires
 Till in the vault a tribe expires,
 The bones which strew that cavern's gloom,
 Too well attest their dismal doom.

X.

Merrily, merrily, goes the bark
 On a breeze from the northward free,
 So shoots through the morning sky the lark,
 Or the swan through the summer sea.
 The shores of Mull on the eastward lay,
 And Ulva dark and Colonsay,
 And all the group of islets gay
 That guard famed Staffa round.
 Then all unknown its columns rose,
 Where dark and undisturbed repose
 The cormarant had found,
 And the shy seal had quiet home,
 And weltered in that wondrous dome,
 Where, as to shame the temples decked
 By skill of earthly architect,
 Nature herself, it seemed, would raise
 A Minster to her Maker's praise!
 Not for a meaner use ascend
 Her columns, or her arches bend;
 Nor of a theme less solemn tells
 That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
 And still, between each awful pause,
 From the high vault an answer draws,
 In varied tone prolonged and high,
 That mocks the organ's melody.
 Nor doth its entrance front in vain
 To old Iona's holy fane,
 That Nature's voice might seem to say,
 "Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
 Thy humble powers that stately shrine
 Tasked high and hard—but witness mine!

XI.

Merrily, merrily, goes the bark,
 Before the gale she bounds;
 So darts the dolphin from the shark,
 Or the deer before the hounds.
 They left Loch-Tua on their lee,
 And they wakened the men of the wild Tires,
 And the Chief of the sandy Coll;
 They paused not at Columba's isle,
 Though pealed the bells from the holy pile

With long and measured toll;
 No time for matin or for mass,
 And the sounds of the holy summons pass
 Away in the billows' roll.
 Lochbuie's fierce and warlike Lord
 Their signal saw, and grasped his sword,
 And verdant Ilay called her host,
 And the clans of Jura's rugged coast
 Lord Ronald's call obey,
 And Scarba's isle, whose tortured shore
 Still rings to Corrievreken's roar,
 And lonely Colonsay;
 —Scenes sung by him who sings no more!
 His bright and brief career is o'er,
 And mute his tuneful strains;
 Quenched is his lamp of varied lore,
 That loved the light of song to pour;
 A distant and a deadly shore
 Has LEYDEN'S cold remains!

XII.

Ever the breeze blows merrily,
 But the galley ploughs no more the sea.
 Lest, rounding wild Cantire, they meet
 The Southern foemen's watchful fleet,
 They held unwonted way;—
 Up Tarbat's western lake they bore,
 Then dragged their bark the isthmus o'er,
 As far as Kilmacounel's shore,
 Upon the eastern bay.
 It was a wondrous sight to see
 Topmast and pennon glitter free,
 High raised above the greenwood tree,
 As on dry land the galley moves,
 By cliff and copse and alder groves.
 Deep import from that selcouth sign,
 Did many a mountain Seer divine,
 For ancient legends told the Gael,
 That when a royal bark should sail
 O'er Kilmacconnel moss,
 Old Albyn should in fight prevail,
 And every foe should faint and quail
 Before her silver Cross.

XIII.

Now launched once more, the inland sea
 They furrow with fair augury,
 And steer for Arran's isle;
 The sun, ere yet he sunk behind
 Ben-Ghoil, "The Mountain of the Wind,"
 Gave his grim peaks a greeting kind,
 And bade Loch-Ranza smile.
 Thither their destined course they drew;
 It seemed the isle her Monarch knew,
 So brilliant was the landward view.

The ocean so serene;
 Each puny wave in diamonds rolled
 O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold
 With azure strove and green.
 The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,
 Glowed with the tints of evening's hour,
 The beach was silver sheen;
 The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
 And, oft renewed, seemed oft to die,
 With breathless pause between.
 Oh, who, with speech of war and woes,
 Would wish to break the soft repose
 Of such enchanting scene!

XIV.

Is it of war Lord Ronald speaks?
 The blush that dyes his manly cheeks,
 The timid look, and downcast eye,
 And faltering voice, the theme deny.
 And good King Robert's brow expressed,
 He pondered o'er some high request,
 As doubtful to approve;
 Yet in his eye and lip the while
 Dwelt the half-pitying glance and smile,
 Which manhood's graver mood beguile,
 When lovers talk of love.
 Anxious his suit Lord Ronald pled;
 —"And for my bride betrothed," he said,
 "My Liege has heard the rumour spread
 Of Edith from Artornish fled.
 Too hard her fate—I claim no right
 To blame her for her hasty flight;
 Be joy and happiness her lot!—
 But she hath fled the bridal-knot,
 And Lorn recalled his promise plight,
 In the assembled Chieftains' sight.—
 When, to fulfil our father's band,
 I proffered all I could—my hand—
 I was repulsed with scorn;
 Mine honour I should ill assert,
 And worse the feelings of my heart,
 If I should play a suitor's part
 Again, to pleasure Lorn."—

XV.

"Young Lord," the royal Bruce replied,
 "That question must the Church decide,
 Yet seems it hard, since rumours state
 Edith takes Clifford for her mate,
 The very tie, which she hath broke,
 To thee should still be binding yoke.
 But, for my sister Isabel—
 The mood of woman who can tell?
 I guess the Champion of the Rock,
 Victorious in the tourney shock,

That knight unknown, to whom the prize
She dealt,—had favour in her eyes ;
But since our brother Nigel's fate,
Our ruined house and hapless state,
From worldly joy and hope estranged,
Much is the hapless mourner changed.
Perchance," here smiled the noble King,
"This tale may other musings bring.
Soon shall we know—yon mountains hide
The little convent of Saint Bride ;
There, sent by Edward, she must stay,
Till fate shall give more prosperous day ;
And thither will I bear thy suit,
Nor will thine advocate be mute."—

XVI.

As thus they talked in earnest mood,
That speechless boy beside them stood.
He stooped his head against the mast,
And bitter sobs came thick and fast ;
A grief that would not be repressed,
But seemed to burst his youthful breast.
His hands, against his forehead held,
As if by force his tears repelled,
But through his fingers, long and slight,
Fast trilled the drops of crystal bright.
Edward, who walked the deck apart,
First spied this conflict of the heart.
Thoughtless as brave, with bluntness kind
He sought to cheer the sorrower's mind ;
By force the slender hand he drew
From those poor eyes that streamed with dew.
As in his hold the stripling strove,—
('Twas a rough grasp, though meant in love,)
Away his tears the warrior swept,
And bade shame on him that he wept.
"I would to Heaven, thy helpless tongue
Could tell me who hath wrought thee wrong !
For, were he of our crew the best,
The insult went not unredressed.
Come, cheer thee ; thou art now of age
To be a warrior's gallant page ;
Thou shalt be mine !—a palfrey fair
O'er hill and holt my boy shall bear,
To hold my bow in hunting grove,
Or speed on errand to my love ;
For well I wot thou wilt not tell
The temple where my wishes dwell."—

XVII.

Bruce interposed,—"Gay Edward, no,
This is no youth to hold thy bow,
To fill thy goblet, or to bear
Thy message light to lighter fair.
Thou art a patron all too wild
And thoughtless for this orphan child.

Seest thou not how apart he steals,
Keeps lonely couch, and lonely meals?
Fitter by far in yon calm cell
To tend our sister Isabel,
With father Augustin to share
The peaceful change of convent prayer,
Than wander wild adventures through,
With such a reckless guide as you."—
"Thanks, brother!" Edward answered gay.
"For the high laud thy words convey!
But we may learn some future day,
If thou or I can this poor boy
Protect the best, or best employ.
Meanwhile, our vessel nears the strand;
Launch we the boat, and seek the land."—

XVIII.

To land King Robert lightly sprung,
And thrice aloud his bugle rung
With note prolonged and varied strain,
Till bold Ben-Ghoil replied again.
Good Douglas then, and De la Haye,
Had in a glen a hart at bay,
And Lennox cheered the laggard hounds,
When waked that horn the green-wood bounds.
"It is the foe!" cried Boyd, who came
In breathless haste with eye on flame,—
"It is the foe!—Each valiant lord
Fling by his bow, and grasp his sword!"—
"Not so," replied the good Lord James,
"That blast no English bugle claims.
Oft have I heard it fire the fight,
Oheer the pursuit, or stop the flight,
Dead were my heart, and deaf mine ear,
If Bruce should call, nor Douglas hear!
Each to Loch-Ranza's margin spring:
That blast was winded by the King!"—

XIX.

Fast to their mates the tidings spread,
And fast to shore the warriors sped.
Bursting from glen and green-wood tree,
High waked their loyal jubilee!
Around the royal Bruce they crowd,
And clasped his hands, and wept aloud.
Veterans of early fields were there,
Whose helmets pressed their hoary hair,
Whose swords and axes bore a stain
From life-blood of the red-haired Dane;
And boys, whose hands scarce brooked to wield
The heavy sword or bossy shield.
Men too were there, that bore the scars
Impressed in Albyn's woeful wars,
At Falkirk's fierce and fatal flight,
Teyndrum's dread rout, and Methven's flight:

The might of Douglas there was seen,
There Lennox with his graceful mien;
Kirkpatrick, Closeburn's dreaded Knight;
The Lindsay, fiery, fierce, and light;
The Heir of murdered De la Haye,
And Boyd the grave, and Seton gay.
Around their King regained they pressed,
Wept, shouted, clasped him to their breast,
And young and old, and serf and lord,
And he who ne'er unsheathed a sword,
And he in many a peril tried,
Alike resolved the brunt to bide,
And live or die by Bruce's side!

XX.

O War! thou hast thy fierce delight,
Thy gleams of joy, intensely bright!
Such gleams, as from thy polished shield
Fly dazzling o'er the battle-field!
Such transports wake, severe and high,
Amid the pealing conquest-cry
Scarce less, when, after battle lost,
Muster the remnants of a host,
And as each comrade's name they tell
Who in the well-fought conflict fell,
Knitting stern brow o'er flashing eye,
Vow to avenge them or to die!—
Warriors!—and where are warriors found,
If not on martial Britain's ground?
And who, when waked with note of fire,
Love more than they the British lyre?—
Know ye not,—hearts to honour dear!
That joy, deep-thrilling, stern, severe,
At which the heart-strings vibrate high,
And wake the fountains of the eye?
And blame ye, then, the Bruce, if trace
Of tear is on his manly face,
When, scanty relics of the train
That hailed at Scone his early reign,
This patriot band around him hung,
And to his knees and bosom clung?—
Blame ye the Bruce?—his brother blamed
But shared the weakness, while ashamed,
With haughty laugh his head he turned,
And dashed away the tear he scorned.

XXI.

'Tis morning, and the Convent bell
Long time had ceased its matin knell,
Within thy walls, Saint Bride!
An aged Sister sought the cell
Assigned to Lady Isabel,
And hurriedly she cried,
“Haste, gentle Lady, haste—there wait
A noble stranger at the gates;

Saint Bride's poor votaress ne'er has seen
 A Knight of such a princely mien;
 His errand, as he bade me tell,
 Is with the Lady Isabel."—
 The princess rose,—for on her knee
 Low bent she told her rosary,—
 "Let him by thee his purpose teach;
 I may not give a stranger speech."—
 "Saint Bride forefend, thou royal Maid!"
 The pctrress crossed herself, and said,—
 "Not to be prioress might I
 Debate his will, his suit deny."—
 "Has earthly show then, simple fool,
 Power o'er a sister of thy rule?
 And art thou like the worldly train,
 Subdued by splendours light and vain?"—

XXII.

"No, Lady! in old eyes like mine,
 Gauds have no glitter, gems no shine;
 Nor grace his rank attendants vain,
 One youthful page is all his train.
 It is the form, the eye, the word,
 The bearing of that stranger Lord;
 His stature, manly, bold, and tall,
 Built like a castle's battled wall,
 Yet moulded in such just degrees,
 His giant-strength seems lightsome ease.
 Close as the tendrils of the vine
 His locks upon his forehead twine,
 Jet-black, save where some touch of gray
 Has ta'en the youthful hue away.
 Weather and war their rougher trace
 Have left on that majestic face;—
 But 'tis his dignity of eye!
 There, if a suppliant, would I fly,
 Secure, 'mid danger, wrongs, and grief.
 Of sympathy, redress, relief—
 That glance, if guilty, would I dread
 More than the doom that spoke me dead!"—
 "Enough, enough," the princess cried,
 "'Tis Scotland's hope, her joy, her pride!
 To meaner front was ne'er assigned
 Such mastery o'er the common mind—
 Bestowed thy high designs to aid,
 How long, O Heaven! how long delayed!
 Haste, Mona, haste, to introduce
 My darling brother, royal Bruce!"—

XXIII.

They met like friends who part in pain,
 And meet in doubtful hope again.
 But when subdued that fitful swell,
 The Bruce surveyed the humble cell:—
 "And this is thine, poor Isabel!"—

That pallet-couch, and naked wall,
For room of state, and bed of pall;
For costly robes and jewels rare,
A string of beads and zone of hair;
And for the trumpet's sprightly call
To sport or banquet, grove or hall,
The bell's grim voice divides thy care,
"Twixt hours of penitence and prayer!—
Oh, ill for thee, my royal claim
From the First David's sainted name!
Oh, woe for thee, that while he sought
His right, thy brother feebly fought!"—

XXIV.

"Now lay these vain regrets aside,
And be the unshaken Bruce!" she cried.
"For more I glory to have shared
The woes thy venturous spirit dared,
When raising first thy valiant band
In rescue of thy native land,
Than had fair Fortune set me down
The partner of an empire's crown.
And grieve not that on Pleasure's stream
No more I drive in giddy dream,
For Heaven the erring pilot knew,
And from the gulph the vessel drew,
Tried me with judgments stern and great,
My house's ruin, thy defeat,
Poor Nigel's death, till, tamed, I own,
My hopes are fixed on Heaven alone;
Nor e'er shall earthly prospects win
My heart to this vain world of sin."—

XXV.

"Nay, Isabel, for such stern choice,
First wilt thou wait thy brother's voice;
Then ponder if in convent scene
No softer thoughts might intervene—
Say they were of that unknown Knight,
Victor in Woodstock's tourney-fight—
Nay, if his name such blush you owe,
Victorious o'er a fairer foe!"—
Truly his penetrating eye
Hath caught that blush's passing dye,—
Like the last beam of evening thrown
On a white cloud,—just seen and gone.
Soon with calm cheek and steady eye,
The princess made composed reply:—
"I guess my brother's meaning well;
For not so silent is the cell,
But we have heard the islesmen all
Arm in thy cause at Ronald's call,—
And mine eye proves that Knight Unknown
And the brave Island Lord are one.—
Had then his suit been earlier made,

In his own name, with thee to aid,
 (But that his plighted faith forbade,)
 I know not . . . But thy Page so near?—
 This is no tale for menial's ear."—

XXVI.

Still stood that Page, as far apart
 As the small cell would space afford;
 With dizzy eye and bursting heart,
 He leant his weight on Bruce's sword,
 The Monarch's mantle too he bore,
 And drew the fold his visage o'er.
 "Fear not for him—in murderous strife,"
 Said Bruce, "his warning saved my life;
 Full seldom parts he from my side;
 And in his silence I confide,
 Since he can tell no tale again.—
 He is a boy of gentle strain,
 And I have purposed he shall dwell
 In Augustin the chaplain's cell,
 And wait on thee, my Isabel.—
 Mind not his tears; I've seen them flow,
 As in the thaw dissolves the snow.
 'Tis a kind youth, but fanciful,
 Unfit against the tide to pull,
 And those that with the Bruce would sail,
 Must learn to strive with stream and gale.
 But forward, gentle Isabel—
 My answer for Lord Ronald tell."—

XXVII.

"This answer be to Ronald given—
 The heart he asks is fixed on Heaven.
 My love was like a summer flower,
 That withered in the wintry hour,
 Born but of vanity and pride,
 And with these sunny visions died.
 If further press his suit—then say,
 He should his plighted troth obey,
 Troth plighted both with ring and word,
 And sworn on crucifix and sword.—
 Oh, shame thee, Robert! I have seen
 Thou hast a woman's guardian been!
 Even in extremity's dread hour,
 When pressed on thee the Southern power,
 And safety, to all human sight,
 Was only found in rapid flight,
 Thou heardest a wretched female plain
 In agony of travail-pain,
 And thou didst bid thy little band
 Upon the instant turn and stand,
 And dare the worst the foe might do,
 Rather than, like a knight untrue,
 Leave to pursuers merciless
 A woman in her last distress.—

And wilt thou now deny thine aid
To an oppressed and injured maid,
Even plead for Ronald's perfidy,
And press his fickle faith on me?—
So witness Heaven, as true I vow,
Had I those earthly feelings now
Which could my former bosom move
Ere taught to set its hopes above,
I'd spurn each proffer he could bring,
Till at my feet he laid the ring,
The ring and spousal contract both,
And fair acquittal of his oath,
By her who brooks his perjured scorn.
The ill-requited Maid of Lorn!"—

XXVIII.

With sudden impulse forward sprung
The Page, and on her neck he hung;
Then, recollected instantly,
His head he stooped, and bent his knee,
Kissed twice the hand of Isabel,
Arose, and sudden left the cell.—
The princess, loosened from his hold,
Blushed angry at his bearing bold.

But good King Robert cried,
"Chafe not—by signs he speaks his mind,
He heard the plan my care designed,

Nor could his transports hide.—
But, sister, now bethink thee well;
No easy choice the convent cell;
Trust, I shall play no tyrant part,
Either to force thy hand or heart,
Or suffer that Lord Ronald scorn,
Or wrong for thee, the Maid of Lorn.
But think,—not long the time has been
That thou wert wont to sigh unseen,
And wouldst the ditties best approve
That told some lay of hapless love.
Now are thy wishes in thy power,
And thou art bent on cloister-bower!
Oh, if our Edward knew the change,
How would his busy satire range,
With many a sarcasm varied still
On woman's wish, and woman's will!"—

XXIX.

"Brother, I well believe," she said,
"Even so would Edward's part be played.
Kindly in heart, in word severe,
A foe to thought and grief and fear,
He holds his humour uncontrolled;
But thou art of another mould.
Say then to Ronald, as I say,—
Unless before my feet he lay

The ring which bound the faith he swore,
 By Edith freely yielded o'er,
 He moves his suit to me no more.
 Nor do I promise, even if now
 He stood absolved of spousal vow,
 That I would change my purpose made,
 To shelter me in holy shade.—
 Brother, for little space, farewell!
 To other duties warns the bell.”—

XXX.

“Lost to the world,” King Robert said,
 When he had left the royal maid—
 “Lost to the world by lot severe.
 Oh, what a gem lies buried here,
 Nipped by misfortune’s cruel frost,
 The buds of fair affection lost!
 But what have I with love to do?
 Far sterner cares my lot pursue.
 —Pent in this isle we may not lie,
 Nor would it long our wants supply.
 Right opposite, the mainland towers
 Of my own Turnberry court our powers—
 —Might not my father’s beadsman hoar,
 Cuthbert, who dwells upon the shore,
 Kindle a signal-flame, to show
 The time propitious for the blow?—
 It shall be so—some friend shall bear
 Our mandate with despatch and care;
 Edward shall find the messenger.
 That fortress ours, the island fleet
 May on the coast of Carrick meet.—
 O Scotland! shall it e’er be mine
 To wreak thy wrongs in battle-line,
 To raise my victor head, and see
 Thy hills, thy dales, thy people free?—
 That glance of bliss is all I crave,
 Betwixt my labours and my grave!”—
 Then down the hill he slowly went,
 Oft pausing on the steep descent,
 And reached the spot where his bold train
 Held rustic camp upon the plain.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

ON fair Loch-Ranza streamed the early day,
 Thin wreaths of cottage-smoke are upward curfew
 From the lone hamlet, which her inland bay
 And circling mountains sever from the world.
 And there the fisherman his sail unfurled,
 The goat-herd drove his kids to steep Ben-Ghoil.

Before the hut the dame her spindle twirled,
Courting the sunbeam as she plied her toil,—
For, wake where'er he may, Man wakes to care and coil

But other duties called each convent maid,
Roused by the summons of the moss-grown bell;
Sung were the matins and the mass was said,
And every sister sought her separate cell,
Such was the rule, her rosary to tell.
And Isabel has knelt in lonely prayer;
The sunbeam, through the narrow lattice, fell
Upon the snowy neck and long dark hair,
As stooped her gentle head in meek devotion there.

II.

She raised her eyes, that duty done,
When glanced upon the pavement stone,
Gemmed and enchased, a golden ring,
Bound to a scroll with silken string,
With few brief words inscribed to tell,
"This for the Lady Isabel."
Within, the writing further bore,—
"Twas with this ring his plight he swore,
With this his promise I restore;
To her who can the heart command,
Well may I yield the plighted hand.
And, oh, for better fortune born,
Grudge not a passing sigh to mourn
Her who was Edith once of Lorn!"—
One single flash of glad surprise
Just glanced from Isabel's dark eyes,
But vanished in the blush of shame,
That, as its penance, instant came.
"Oh, thought unworthy of my race!
Selfish, ungenerous, mean, and base,
A moment's throb of joy to own,
That rose upon her hopes o'erthrown!—
Thou pledge of vows too well believed,
Of man ingrate and maid deceived,
Think not thy lustre here shall gain
Another heart to hope in vain!
For thou shalt rest, thou tempting gaud,
Where worldly thoughts are overawed,
And worldly splendours sink debased."—
Then by the cross the ring she placed.

III.

Next rose the thought,—its owner far,
How came it here through bolt and bar?
But the dim lattice is ajar—
She looks abroad—the morning dew
A light short step had brushed anew,
And there were foot-prints seen
On the carved buttress rising still,
'Till on the mossy window-sill
Their track effaced the green.

The ivy twigs were torn and frayed,
 As if some climber's steps to aid.—
 But who the hardy messenger,
 Whose venturous path these signs infer?—
 "Strange doubts are mine!—Mona, draw nigh,
 —Nought 'scapes old Mona's curious eye—
 What strangers, gentle mother, say,
 Have sought these holy walls to-day?"—
 "None, Lady, none of note or name;
 Only your brother's foot-page came,
 At peep of dawn—I prayed him pass
 To chapel where they said the mass;
 But like an arrow he shot by,
 And tears seemed bursting from his eye."—

IV.

The truth at once on Isabel,
 As darted by a sunbeam, fell.—
 "'Tis Edith's self!—her speechless woe,
 Her form, her looks, the secret show!
 —Instant, good Mona, to the bay,
 And to my royal brother say,
 I do conjure him seek my cell,
 With that mute page he loves so well."—
 "What! know'st thou not his warlike host
 At break of day has left our coast?
 My old eyes saw them from the tower.
 At eve they couched in green-wood bower,
 At dawn a bugle-signal, made
 By their bold Lord, their ranks arrayed;
 Up sprung the spears through bush and tree,
 No time for benedicite!
 Like deer, that, rousing from their lair,
 Just shake the dew-drops from their hair,
 And toss their armed crests aloft,
 Such matins theirs!"—"Good mother, soft—
 Where does my brother bend his way?"—
 "As I have heard, for Brodick-Bay,
 Across the isle—of barks a score
 Lie there, 'tis said, to waft them o'er
 On sudden news, to Carrick shore."—
 "If such their purpose, deep the need,"
 Said anxious Isabel, "of speed!
 Call Father Augustin, good dame."—
 The nun obeyed, the Father came.

V.

"Kind Father, hie without delay
 Across the hills to Brodick-Bay!
 This message to the Bruce be given;
 I pray him, by his hopes of Heaven,
 That, till he speak with me, he stay.
 Or, if his haste brook no delay,
 That he deliver, on my suit,
 Into thy charge that stripling mute.

Thus prays his sister Isabel,
For causes more than she may tell—
Away, good Father!—take good heed
That life and death are on thy speed."—
His cowl the good old priest did on,
Took his piked staff and sandalled shoon,
And, like a palmer bent by eld,
O'er moss and moor his journey held.

VI.

Heavy and dull the foot of age,
And rugged was the pilgrimage;
But none was there beside, whose care
Might such important message bear.
Through birchen copse he wandered slow,
Stunted and sapless, thin and low;
By many a mountain stream he passed,
From the tall cliffs in tumult cast,
Dashing to foam their waters dun,
And sparkling in the summer sun.
Round his gray head the wild curlew
In many a fearless circle flew.
O'er chasms he passed, where fractures wide
Craved wary eye and ample stride;
He crossed his brow beside the stone
Where Druids erst heard victims groan,
And at the cairns upon the wild,
O'er many a heathen hero piled,
He breathed a timid prayer for those
Who died ere Shiloh's sun arose.
Beside Macfarlane's Cross he stayed,
There told his hours within the shade,
And at the stream his thirst allayed.
Thence onward journeying slowly still,
As evening closed he reached the hill,
Where, rising through the woodland green,
Old Brodick's Gothic towers were seen.
From Hastings, late their English Lord,
Douglas had won them by the sword.
The sun that sunk behind the isle,
Now tinged them with a parting smile.

VII.

But though the beams of light decay,
'Twas bustle all in Brodick-Bay.
The Bruce's followers crowd the shore,
And boats and barges some unmoor,
Some raise the sail, some seize the oar;
Their eyes oft turned where glimmered far
What might have seemed an early star
On heaven's blue arch, save that its light
Was all too flickering, fierce, and bright.
Far distant in the south, the ray
Shone pale amid retiring day;

But as, on Carrick shore,
 Dim seen in outline faintly blue,
 The shades of evening closer drew,
 It kindled more and more.
 The Monk's slow steps now press the sands.
 And now amid a scene he stands,
 Full strange to churchman's eye:
 Warriors, who, arming for the fight,
 Rivet and clasp their harness light,
 And twinkling spears, and axes bright,
 And helmets flashing high;
 Oft, too, with unaccustomed ears,
 A language much unmeet he hears,
 While, hastening all on board,
 As stormy as the swelling surge
 That mixed its roar, the leaders urge
 Their followers to the ocean verge,
 With many a haughty word.

VIII.

Through that wild through the Father passed,
 And reached the Royal Bruce at last.
 He leant against a stranded boat,
 That the approaching tide must float,
 And counted every rippling wave,
 As higher yet her sides they lave,
 And oft the distant fire he eyed,
 And closer yet his hauberk tied,
 And loosened in its sheath his brand.
 Edward and Lennox were at hand,
 Douglas and Ronald had the care
 The soldiers to the barks to share.—
 The Monk approached and homage paid;
 "And art thou come," King Robert said,
 "So far to bless us ere we part?"—
 —"My Liege, and with a loyal heart!—
 But other charge I have to tell,"—
 And spoke the hest of Isabel.
 —"Now by Saint Giles," the Monarch cried,
 "This moves me much!—this morning tide,
 I sent the stripling to Saint Bride,
 With my commandment there to bide."—
 —"Thither he came the portress showed,
 But there, my Liege, made brief abode."—

IX.

"'Twas I," said Edward, "found employ
 Of nobler import for the boy.
 Deep pondering in my anxious mind
 A fitting messenger to find
 To bear thy written mandate o'er
 To Cuthbert on the Carrick shore,
 I chanced, at early dawn, to pass
 The chapel gate to snatch a mass.

I found the stripling on a tomb
Low-seated, weeping for the doom
That gave his youth to convent-gloom.
I told my purpose, and his eyes
Flashed joyful at the glad surprise.
He bounded to the skiff, the sail
Was spread before a prosperous gale,
And well my charge he hath obeyed;
For, see! the ruddy signal made,
That Clifford, with his merry-men all,
Guards carelessly our father's hall."—

X.

"Oh, wild of thought, and hard of heart!"
Answered the Monarch, "on a part
Of such deep danger to employ
A mute, an orphan, and a boy!
Unfit for flight, unfit for strife,
Without a tongue to plead for life!
Now, were my right restored by Heaven,
Edward, my crown I would have given,
Ere, thrust on such adventure wild,
I perilled thus the helpless child."—
—Offended half, and half submiss,
"Brother and Liege, of blame like this,"
Edward replied, "I little dreamed.
A stranger messenger, I deemed,
Might safest seek the beadsman's cell,
Where all thy squires are known so well.
Noneless his presence, sharp his sense,
His imperfection his defence.
If seen, none can his errand guess;
If ta'en, his words no tale express—
Methinks, too, yonder beacon's shine
Might exiate greater fault than mine."—
"Rash," said King Robert, "was the deed—
But it is done.—Embark with speed!—
Good Father, say to Isabel
How this unhappy chance befell;
If well we thrive on yonder shore,
Soon shall my care her Page restore.
Our greeting to our sister bear,
And think of us in mass and prayer."—

XI.

"Aye!"—said the Priest, "while this poor land
Can chalice raise or cross command,
While my old voice has accents' use,
Can Augustin forget the Bruce!"—
Then to his side Lord Ronald pressed,
And whispered, "Bear thou this request,
That when by Bruce's side I fight,
For Scotland's crown and freedom's right,
The princess grace her knight to bear
Some token of her favouring care;

It shall be shown where England's best
May shrink to see it on my crest.
And for the boy—since weightier care
For Royal Bruce the times prepare,
The helpless youth is Ronald's charge,
His couch my plaid, his fence my targe."—
He ceased; for many an eager hand
Had urged the barges from the strand.
Their number was a score and ten;
They bore thrice three-score chosen men.
With such small force did Bruce at last
The die for death or empire cast!

XII.

Now on the darkening main afloat,
Ready and manned rocks every boat;
Beneath their oars the ocean's might
Was dashed to sparks of glimmering light.
Faint and more faint, as off they bore,
Their armour glanced against the shore,
And, mingled with the dashing tide,
Their murmuring voices distant died.—
"God speed them!" said the Priest, as dark
On distant billows glides each bark;
"O Heaven! when swords for freedom shine,
And monarch's right, the cause is thine!
Edge doubly every patriot blow!
Beat down the banners of the foe!
And be it to the Nations known
That Victory is from God alone!"—
As up the hill his path he drew,
He turned his blessings to renew,
Oft turned, till on the darkened coasts
All traces of their course were lost;
Then slowly bent to Brodick tower,
To shelter for the evening hour.

XIII.

In night the fairy prospects sink,
Where Cumray's isles with verdant link
Close the fair entrance of the Clyde;
The woods of Bute no more descried,
Are gone—and on the placid sea
The rowers plied their task with glee,
While hands that knightly lances bore
Impatient aid the labouring oar.
The half-faced moon shone dim and pale,
And glanced against the whitened sail;
But on that ruddy beacon-light
Each steersman kept the helm aright,
And oft, for such the King's command,
That all at once might reach the strand,
From boat to boat loud shout and hail
Warned them to crowd or slacken sail.
South and by west the armada bore,
And near at length the Carrick shore

As less and less the distance grows,
High and more high the beacon rose;
The light, that seemed a twinkling star,
Now blazed portentous, fierce, and far.
Dark-red the heaven above it glowed,
Dark-red the sea beneath it flowed,
Red rose the rocks on ocean's brim,
In blood-red light her islets swim;
Wild scream the dazaled sea-fowl gave,
Dropped from their crags on plashing wave;
The deer to distant covert drew,
The black-cock deemed it day, and crew.
Like some tall castle given to flame,
O'er half the land the lustre came.
"Now, good my Liege, and brother sago,
What think ye of mine elfin Page?"—
"Row on!" the noble King replied,
"We'll learn the truth whate'er betide;
Yet sure the beadsman and the child
Could ne'er have waked that beacon wild."—

XIV.

With that the boats approached the land.
But Edward's grounded on the sand;
The eager knight leaped in the sea
Waist-deep, and first on shore was he,
Though every barge's hardy band
Contended which should gain the land,
When that strange light, which seen afar,
Seemed steady as the polar star,
Now, like a prophet's fiery chair,
Seemed travelling the realms of air.
Wide o'er the sky the splendour glows,
As that portentous meteor rose;
Helm, axe, and falchion glittered bright,
And in the red and dusky light
His comrade's face each warrior saw,
Nor marvelled it was pale with awe.
Then high in air the beams were lost,
And darkness sunk upon the coast.—
Ronald to Heaven a prayer addressed,
And Douglas crossed his dauntless breast;
"Saint James protect us!" Lennox cried;
But reckless Edward spoke aside,—
"Deem'st thou, Kirkpatrick, in that flame
Red Comyn's angry spirit came,
Or would thy dauntless heart endure
Once more to make assurance sure?"—
"Hush!" said the Bruce, "we soon shall know
If this be sorcerer's empty show,
Or stratagem of Southern foe.
The moon shines out—upon the sand
Let every leader rank his band."—

XV.

Faintly the moon's pale beams supply
 That ruddy light's unnatural dye,
 The dubious cold reflection lay
 On the wet sands and quiet bay.
 Beneath the rocks King Robert drew
 His scattered files to order due,
 Till shield compact and serried spear
 In the cool light shone blue and clear.
 Then down a path that sought the tide,
 That speechless Page was seen to glide;
 He knelt him lowly on the sand,
 And gave a scroll to Robert's hand.
 "A torch," the Monarch cried. "What, he?
 Now shall we Cuthbert's tidings know?"—
 But evil news the letters bare,
 The Clifford's force was strong and ware
 Augmented, too, that very morn,
 By mountaineers who came with Lorn.
 Long harrowed by oppressor's hand,
 Courage and faith had fled the land,
 And over Carrick, dark and deep,
 Had sunk dejection's iron sleep.—
 Cuthbert had seen that beacon-flame,
 Unwitting from what source it came.
 Doubtful of perilous event,
 Edward's mute messenger he sent,
 If Bruce deceived should venture o'er,
 To warn him from the fatal shore.

XVI.

As round the torch the leaders crowd,
 Bruce read these chilling news aloud.
 "What counsel, nobles, have we now?—
 To ambush us in green-wood bough,
 And take the chance which fate may send
 To bring our enterprise to end;
 Or shall we turn us to the main
 As exiles, and embark again?"—
 Answered fierce Edward, "Hap what may,
 In Carrick, Carrick's Lord must stay.
 I would not minstrels told the tale,
 Wildfire or meteor made us quail."—
 Answered the Douglas, "If my Liege
 May win yon walls by storm or siege,
 Then were each brave and patriot heart
 Kindled of new for loyal part."
 Answered Lord Ronald, "Not for shame
 Would I that aged Torquil came
 And found, for all our empty boast,
 Without a blow we fled the coast.
 I will not credit that this land,
 So famed for warlike heart and hand,
 The nurse of Wallace and of Bruce,
 Will long with tyrants hold a truce."—

"Prove we our fate—the brunt we'll bide!"
So Boyd and Hays and Lennox cried;
So said, so vowed, the leaders all;
So Bruce resolved: "And in my hall
Since the bold Southern make their home,
The hour of payment soon shall come,
When, with a rough and rugged host,
Clifford may reckon to his cost.
Meantime, through well-known bosk and dell,
I'll lead where we may shelter well."—

XVII.

Now ask you whence that wondrous light,
Whose fairy glow beguiled their sight?—
It ne'er was known—yet gray-haired eld
A superstitious credence held,
That never did a mortal hand
Wake its broad glare on Carrick strand;
Nay, and that on the selfsame night
When Bruce crossed o'er, still gleams the light—
Yearly it gleams o'er mount and moor,
And glittering wave and crimsoned shore—
But whether beam celestial, lent
By Heaven to aid the King's descent,
Or fire hell-kindled from beneath,
To lure him to defeat and death,
Or were it but some meteor strange,
Of such as oft through midnight range,
Startling the traveller late and lone,
I know not—and it ne'er was known.

XVIII.

Now up the rocky pass they drew,
And Ronald, to his promise true,
Still made his arm the stripling's stay,
To aid him on the rugged way.
"Now cheer thee, simple Amadine!
Why throbs that silly heart of thine?"—
—That name the pirates to their slave
(In Gaelic 'tis the Changeling) gave—
"Dost thou not rest thee on my arm?
Do not my plaid-folds hold thee warm?
Hath not the wild bulls treble hide
This targe for thee and me supplied?
Is not Clan-Colla's sword of steel?
And, trembler, canst thou terror feel?
Cheer thee, and still that throbbing heart;
From Ronald's guard thou shalt not part."—
—Oh, many a shaft, at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant!
And many a word, at random spoken,
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken
Half soothed, half grieved, half terrified,
Close drew the Page to Ronald's side;
A wild delirious thrill of joy
Was in that hour of agony,

As up the steepy pass he strove,
Fear, toil, and sorrow, lost in love!

XIX.

The barrier of that iron shore,
The rock's steep ledge, is now climbed o'er;
And from the Castle's distant wall,
From tower to tower the warders call:
The sound swings over land and sea,
And marks a watchful enemy.—
They gained the Chase, a wide domain,
Left for the Castle's sylvan reign,
(Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,
The boor's dull fence, have marred it now,)
But then, soft swept in velvet green
The plain with many a glade between,
Whose tangled alleys far invade
The depth of the brown forest shade.
Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,
Fair shelter for the sportive fawn;
There, tufted close with copse-wood green,
Was many a swelling hillock seen;
And all around was verdure meet
For pressure of the fairies' feet.
The glossy holly loved the park,
The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,
And many an old oak, worn and bare,
With all its shivered boughs, was there.
Lovely between, the moonbeams fell
On lawn and hillock, glade and dell.
The gallant Monarch sighed to see
These glades so loved in childhood free,
Bethinking that, as outlaw now,
He ranged beneath the forest bough.

XX.

Fast o'er the moonlight Chase they sped.
Well knew the band that measured tread,
When, in retreat or in advance,
The serried warriors move at once;
And evil were the luck, if dawn
Descried them on the open lawn.
Copses they traverse, brooks they cross,
Strain up the bank and o'er the moss.
From the exhausted Page's brow
Cold drops of toil are streaming now;
With effort faint and lengthened pause,
His weary step the stripling draws.
"Nay, droop not yet!" the warrior said;
"Come, let me give thee ease and aid!
Strong are mine arms, and little care
A weight so slight as thine to bear.—
What! wilt thou not?—capricious boy!—
Then thine own limbs and strength employ
Pass but this night, and pass thy care,
I'll place thee with a lady fair.

Where thou shalt tune thy lute to tell
How Ronald loves fair Isabel!"—
Worn out, disheartened, and dismayed,
Here Amadine let go the plaid;
His trembling limbs their aid refuse,
He sunk among the midnight dew!

XXI.

What may be done?—the night is gone—
The Bruce's band moves swiftly on—
Eternal shame, if at the brunt
Lord Ronald grace not battle's front!—
"See yonder oak, within whose trunk
Decay a darkened cell hath sunk:
Enter, and rest thee there a space.
Wrap in my plaid thy limbs, thy face.
I will not be, believe me, far;
But must not quit the ranks of war.
Well will I mark the bosky bourn,
And soon, to guard thee hence, return.—
Nay, weep not so, thou simple boy!
But sleep in peace, and wake in joy."—
In sylvan lodging close bestowed,
He placed the Page, and onward strode
With strength put forth, o'er moss and brook,
And soon the marching band o'ertook.

XXII.

Thus strangely left, long sobbed and wept
The Page, till, wearied out, he slept—
A rough voice waked his dream—"Nay, here,
Here by this thicket passed the deer—
Beneath that oak old Ryno stayed—
What have we here?—a Scottish plaid,
And in its folds a stripling laid?"—
Come forth! thy name and business tell!—
What, silent?—then I guess thee well,
The spy that sought old Cuthbert's cell,
Wafted from Arran yester morn—
Come, comrades, we will straight return.
Our Lord may choose the rack should teach
To this young lurcher use of speech.
Thy bowstring, till I bind him fast."—
"Nay, but he weeps and stands aghast;
Unbound we'll lead him, fear it not;
'Tis a fair stripling, though a Scot."—
The hunters to the Castle sped,
And there the hapless captive led.

XXIII.

Stout Clifford in the Castle-court
Prepared him for the morning sport;
And now with Lorn held deep discourse,
Now gave command for hound and horse.
War-steeds and palfreys pawed the ground,
And many a deer-dog howled around.

To Amadine, Lorn's well-known word
 Replying to that Southern Lord,
 Mixed with this clanging din, might seem
 The phantasm of a fevered dream.
 The tone upon his ringing ears
 Came like the sounds which fancy hears,
 When in rude waves or roaring winds
 Some words of woe the musér finds,
 Until more loudly and more near,
 Their speech arrests the Page's ear.

XXIV.

"And was she thus," said Clifford, "lost?
 The priest should rue it to his cost!
 What says the Monk?"—"The holy Sire
 Owns, that, in masquer's quaint attire,
 She sought his skiff, disguised, unknown
 To all except to him alone.
 But, says the priest, a bark from Lorn
 Laid them aboard that very morn,
 And pirates seized her for their prey.
 He proffered ransom-gold to pay,
 And they agreed—but, ere told o'er,
 The winds blow loud, the billows roar;
 They severed, and they met no more.
 He deems—such tempest vexed the coast—
 Ship, crew, and fugitive, were lost.
 —So let it be, with the disgrace
 And scandal of her lofty race!
 Thrice better she had ne'er been born,
 Than brought her infamy on Lorn!"—

XXV.

Lord Clifford now the captive spied:—
 "Whom, Herbert, hast thou there?" he cried.
 "A spy we seized within the Chase,
 A hollow oak his lurking place."
 "What tidings can the youth afford?"—
 "He plays the mute."—"Then noose a cord—
 Unless brave Lorn reverse the doom
 For his plaid's sake."—"Clan-Colla's loom,"
 Said Lorn, whose careless glances trace
 Rather the vesture than the face—
 "Clan-Colla's dames such tartans twine;
 Wearer nor plaid claims care of mine.
 Give him, if my advice you crave,
 His own scathed oak; and let him wave
 In air, unless, by terror wrung,
 A frank confession find his tongue.—
 Nor shall he die without his rite;
 —Thou, Angus Roy, attend the sight,
 And give Clan-Colla's dirge thy breath,
 As they convey him to his death."—
 "O brother! cruel to the last!"—
 Through the poor captive's bosom passed

The thought, but, to his purpose true
He said not, though he sighed, "Adi

XXVI.

And will he keep his purpose still,
In sight of that last closing ill,
When one poor breath, one single word,
May freedom, safety, life, afford?
Can he resist the instinctive call,
For life that bids us barter all?—
Love, strong as death, his heart hath steeled,
His nerves hath strung—he will not yield!
Since that poor breath, that little word,
May yield Lord Ronald to the sword.—
Clan-Colla's dirge is pealing wide,
The grisly headsmen's by his side;
Along the green-wood Chase they bend,
And now their march has ghastly end!
That old and shattered oak beneath,
They destine for the place of death.
—What thoughts are his, while all in vain
His eye for aid explores the plain?
What thoughts, while, with a dizzy ear,
He hears the death-prayer muttered near?
And must he die such death accurst,
Or will that bosom-secret burst?
Cold on his brow breaks terror's dew
His trembling lips are livid blue;
The agony of parting life
Has nought to match that moment's strife!

XXVII.

But other witnesses are nigh,
Who mock at fear, and death defy!
Soon as the dire lament was played,
It waked the lurking ambuscade.
The Island Lord looked forth, and spied
The cause, and loud in fury cried,
"By Heaven they lead the Page to die,
And mock me in his agony!
They shall abye it!"—On his arm
Bruce laid strong grasp, "They shall not harm
A ringlet of the stripling's hair;
But, till I give the word, forbear.
—Douglas, lead fifty of our force
Up yonder hollow water-course,
And couch thee midway on the wold,
Between the flyers and their Hold.
A spear above the copse displayed,
Be signal of the ambush made.
—Edward, with forty spearmen, straight
Through yonder copse approach the gate,
And, when thou hear'st the battle din,
Rush forward, and the passage win,
Secure the drawbridge—storm the port—
And man and guard the Castle-court. —

The rest move slowly forth with me,
In shelter of the forest tree,
Till Douglas at his post I see."--

XXVIII.

Like war-horse eager to rush on,
Compelled to wait the signal blown,
Hid, and scarce hid, by green-wood bough,
Trembling with rage, stands Ronald now,
And in his grasp his sword gleams blue,
Soon to be dyed with deadlier hue.—
Meanwhile the Bruce, with steady eye,
Sees the dark death-train moving by,
And heedful measures off the space
The Douglas and his band must trace
Ere they can reach their destined ground.
Now sinks the dirge's wailing sound,
Now cluster round the direful tree
That slow and solemn company,
While hymn mistuned and muttered prayer
The victim for his fate prepare.—
What glances o'er the green-wood shade?—
The spear that marks the ambushade!—
"Now, noble Chief! I leave thee loose;
Upon them, Ronald!" said the Bruce.

XXIX.

"The Bruce, the Bruce!" to well-known cry
His native rocks and woods reply.
"The Bruce, the Bruce!" in that dread word
The knell of hundred deaths was heard.
The astonished Southern gazed at first,
Where the wild tempest was to burst,
That waked in that presaging name.
Before, behind, around it came!
Half-armed, surprised, on every side
Hemmed in, hewed down, they bled and died.
Deep in the ring the Bruce engaged,
And fierce Clan-Colla's broadsword raged!
Full soon the few who fought were sped,
Nor better was their lot who fled,
And met, 'mid terror's wild career,
The Douglas's redoubted spear!
Two hundred yeomen on that morn
The Castle left, and none return.

XXX.

Not on their flight pressed Ronald's brand,
A gentler duty claimed his hand.
He raised the Page, where on the plain
His fear had sunk him with the slain:
And twice, that morn, surprise well near
Betrayed the secret kept by fear.
Once, when, with life returning, came
To the boy's lip Lord Ronald's name,
And hardly recollection drowned
The accents in a murmuring sound;

And once, when scarce he could resist
The Chieftain's care to loose the vest,
Drawn tightly o'er his labouring breast
But then the Bruce's bugle blew,
For martial work was yet to do.

XXXI.

A harder task fierce Edward waits.
Ere signal given, the Castle gates
His fury had assailed;
Such was his wonted reckless mood,
Yet desperate valour oft made good,
Even by its daring, venture rude,
Where prudence might have failed.
Upon the bridge his strength he threw,
And struck the iron chain in two
By which its planks arose;
The warder next his axe's edge
Struck down upon the threshold ledge,
"Twixt door and post a ghastly wedge!
The gate they may not close.
Well fought the Southern in the fray,
Clifford and Lorn fought well that day,
But stubborn Edward forced his way
Against a hundred foes.
Loud came the cry, "The Bruce, the Bruce!"
No hope or in defence or truce,
Fresh combatants pour in;
Mad with success, and drunk with gore,
They drive the struggling foe before,
And ward on ward they win.
Unsparring was the vengeful sword,
And limbs were lopped and life-blood poured
The cry of death and conflict roared,
And fearful was the din!
The startling horses plunged and flung,
Clamoured the dogs till turrets rung,
Nor sunk the fearful cry,
Till not a foeman was there found
Alive, save those who on the ground
Groaned in their agony!

XXXII.

The valiant Clifford is no more;
On Ronald's broadsword streamed his gore;
But better hap had he of Lorn,
Who, by the foemen backward borne,
Yet gained with slender train the port.
Where lay his bark beneath the fort,
And cut the cable loose.
Short were his shrift in that debate,
That hour of fury and of fate,
If Lorn encountered Bruce!
Then long and loud the victor shout
From turret and from tower rung out

The rugged vaults replied;
 And from the donjon tower on high,
 The men of Carrick may descry
 Saint Andrew's cross, in blazonry
 Of silver, waving wide!

XXXIII.

The Bruce hath won his father's hall!
 —“Welcome, brave friends and comrades all,
 Welcome to mirth and joy!
 The first, the last, is welcome here,
 From lord and chieftain, prince and peer,
 To this poor speechless boy.
 Great God! once more my sire's abode
 Is mine—behold the floor I trode
 In tottering infancy!
 And there the vaulted arch, whose sound
 Echoed my joyous shout and bound
 In boyhood, and that rung around
 To youth's unthinking glee!
 Oh, first, to thee, all-gracious Heaven,
 Then to my friends, my thanks be given!”—
 He paused a space, his brow he crossed—
 Then on the board his sword he tossed,
 Yet steaming hot; with Southern gore
 From hilt to point 'twas crimsoned o'er.

XXXIV.

“Bring here,” he said, “the mazers four,
 My noble fathers loved of yore.*
 Thrice let them circle round the board,
 The pledge, fair Scotland's rights restored
 And he whose lips shall touch the wine
 Without a vow as true as mine,
 To hold both lands and life at nought
 Until her freedom shall be bought,—
 Be brand of a disloyal Scot,
 And lasting infamy his lot!
 Sit, gentle friends! our hour of glee
 Is brief, we'll spend it joyously!
 Blithest of all the sun's bright beams,
 When betwixt storm and storm he gleams,
 Well is our country's work begun,
 But more, far more, must yet be done!—
 Speed messengers the country through;
 Arouse old friends, and gather new;
 Warn Lanark's knights to gird their mail
 Rouse the brave sons of Teviotdale,
 Let Ettricke's archers sharp their darts,—
 The fairest forms, the truest hearts!
 Call all, call all! from Reeds-wair-path
 To the wild confines of Cape Wrath;
 Wide let the news through Scotland ring,
 The Northern Eagle claps his wing!”—

*.These mazers were large drinking-cups,

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

OH, who that shared them ever shall forget
The emotions of the spirit-rousing time,
When breathless in the mart the couriers met,
Early and late, at evening and at prime;
When the loud cannon and the merry chime
Hailed news on news, as field on field was won,
When Hope, long doubtful, soared at length sublime,
And our glad eyes, awake as day begun,
Watched Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising sun!

Oh, these were hours when thrilling joy repaid
A long, long course of darkness, doubts and fears!
The heart-sick faintness of the hope delayed,
The waste, the woe, the bloodshed, and the tears
That tracked with terror twenty rolling years,—
All was forgot in that blithe jubilee!
Her downcast eye even pale Affliction rears,
To sigh a thankful prayer, amid the glee
That hailed the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty!

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,
When 'gainst the invaders turned the battle's scale,
When Bruce's banner had victorious flowed
O'er Loudoun's mountain, and in Ury's vale;
When English blood oft deluged Douglas-dale,
And fiery Edward routed stout St John,
When Randolph's war-cry swelled the southern gale,
And many a fortress, town, and tower was won,
And Fame still sounded forth fresh deeds of glory done.

II.

Blithe tidings flew from Baron's tower,
To peasant's cot, to forest-bower,
And waked the solitary cell,
Where lone Saint Bride's recluses dwell.
Princess no more, fair Isabel,
A votaress of the order now,
Say, did the rule that bid thee wear
Dim veil and woollen scapulare,
And reft thy locks of dark-brown hair,
That stern and rigid vow,
Did it condemn the transport high,
Which glistened in thy watery eye,
When minstrel or when palmer told
Each fresh exploit of Bruce the Bold?—
And whose the lovely form, that shares
Thy anxious hopes, thy fears, thy prayers?
No sister she of convent shade;
So say these locks in lengthened braid,
So say the blushes and the sighs,
The tremours that unbidden rise,

When, mingled with the Bruce's fame,
The brave Lord Ronald's praises came.

III.

Believe, his father's castle won,
And his bold enterprise begun,
That Bruce's earliest cares restore
The speechless Page to Arran's shore ;
Nor think that long the quaint disguise
Concealed her from a sister's eyes ;
And sister-like in love they dwell
In that lone convent's silent cell.
There Bruce's low assent allows
Fair Isabel the veil and vows ;
And there, her sex's dress regained,
The lovely Maid of Lorn remained,
Unnamed, unknown, while Scotland far
Resounded with the din of war ;
And many a month, and many a day,
In calm seclusion wore away.

IV.

These days, these months, to years had worn,
When tidings of high weight were borne
To that lone island's shore ;
Of all the Scottish conquests made
By the first Edward's ruthless blade,
His son retained no more,
Northward of Tweed, but Stirling's towers,
Belanguered by King Robert's powers ;
And they took term of truce,
If England's King should not relieve
The siege ere John the Baptist's eve,
To yield them to the Bruce.
England was roused—on every side
Courier and post and herald hied,
To summon prince and peer,
At Berwick-bounds to meet their Liege,
Prepared to raise fair Stirling's siege,
With buckler, brand, and spear.
The term was nigh—they mustered fast,
By beacon and by bugle-blast
Forth marshalled for the field ;
There rode each knight of noble name,
There England's hardy archers came,
The land they trode seemed all on flame,
With banner, blade, and shield !
And not famed England's powers alone,
Renowned in arms, the summons own ;
For Neustria's knights obeyed,
Gasconne hath lent her horsemen good,
And Cambria, but of late subdued,
Sent forth her mountain-multitude,
And Connoght poured from waste and wood
Her hundred tribes, whose sceptre rude
Dark Eth O'Connor swayed.

V.

Right to devoted Caledon
The storm of war rolls slowly on,
 With menace deep and dread;
So the dark clouds, with gathering power,
Suspend a while the threatened shower,
Till every peak and summit lower
 Round the pale pilgrim's head.
Not with such pilgrim's startled eye
King Robert marked the tempest nigh!
 Resolved the brunt to bide,
His royal summons warned the land,
That all who owned their King's command
Should instant take the spear and brand,
 To combat at his side.
Oh, who may tell the sons of fame,
That at King Robert's bidding came,
 To battle for the right!
From Cheviot to the shores of Ross,
From Solway-Sands to Marshal's-Moss,
 All bounded them for the fight.
Such news the royal courier tells,
Who came to rouse dark Arran's dells;
But further tidings must the ear
Of Isabel in secret hear.
These in her cloister walk, next morn,
Thus shared she with the Maid of Lorn.

VI.

"My Edith, can I tell how dear
Our intercourse of hearts sincere
 Hath been to Isabel?—
Judge then the sorrow of my heart,
When I must say the words, We part!
 The cheerless convent-cell
Was not, sweet maiden, made for thee;
Go thou where thy vocation free
 On happier fortunes fell.
Nor, Edith, judge thyself betrayed,
Though Robert knows that Lorn's high Maid
And his poor silent Page were one.
Versed in the fickle heart of man,
Earnest and anxious hath he looked
How Ronald's heart the message brooked,
That gave him, with her last farewell,
The charge of Sister Isabel,
To think upon thy better right,
And keep the faith his promise plight.
Forgive him, for thy sister's sake,
At first if vain repinings wake—
 Long since that mood is gone:
Now dwells he on thy juster claims,
And oft his breach of faith he blames
 Forgive him for thine own!"

VII.

"No! never to Lord Ronald's bower
 Will I again as paramour"—
 "Nay, hush thee, too impatient maid,
 Until my final tale be said!—
 The good King Robert would engage
 Edith once more his elfin page,
 By her own heart, and her own eye,
 Her lover's penitence to try—
 Safe in his royal charge, and free,
 Should such thy final purpose be,
 Again unknown to seek the cell,
 And live and die with Isabel."—
 Thus spoke the maid—King Robert's oye
 Might have some glance of policy;
 Dunstaffnage had the Monarch ta'en,
 And Lorn had owned King Robert's reign;
 Her brother had to England fled,
 And there in banishment was dead;
 Ample, through exile, death, and flight,
 O'er tower and land was Edith's right;
 This ample right o'er tower and land
 Were safe in Ronald's faithful hand.

VIII.

Embarrassed eye and blushing cheek
 Pleasure, and shame, and fear bespeak!
 Yet much the reasoning Edith made;
 "Her sister's faith she must upbraid,
 Who gave such secret, dark and dear,
 In council to another's ear.
 Why should she leave the peaceful cell?—
 How should she part with Isabel?—
 How wear that strange attire agen?—
 How risk herself 'midst martial men?—
 And how be guarded on the way?—
 At least she might entreat delay."—
 Kind Isabel, with secret smile,
 Saw and forgave the maiden's wile,
 Reluctant to be thought to move
 At the first call of truant love.

IX.

Oh, blame her not!—when zephyrs wake,
 The aspen's trembling leaves must shake;
 When beams the sun through April's shower,
 It needs must bloom, the violet flower;
 And Love, howe'er the maiden strive,
 Must with reviving hope revive!
 A thousand soft excuses came,
 To plead his cause 'gainst virgin shame.
 Pledged by their sires in earliest youth,
 He had her plighted faith and truth—
 Then, 'twas her Liege's strict command,
 And she, beneath his royal hand,
 A ward in person and in land —

And, last, she was resolved to stay
Only brief space—one little day—
Close hidden in her safe disguise
From all, but most from Ronald's eyes—
But once to see him more!—nor blame
Her wish—to hear him name her name!—
Then, to bear back to solitude
The thought, he had his falsehood rued!
But Isabel, who long had seen
Her pallid cheek and pensive mien,
And well herself the cause might know,
Though innocent, of Edith's woe,
Joyed, generous, that revolving time
Gave means to expiate the crime.
High glowed her bosom as she said,
"Well shall her sufferings be repaid! —
Now came the parting hour—a band
From Arran's mountains left the land;
Their chief, Fitz-Louis, had the care
The speechless Amadine to bear
To Bruce, with honour, as behoved
To page the monarch dearly loved.

X.

The King had deemed the maiden bright
Should reach him long before the fight,
But storms and fate her course delay:
It was on eve of battle-day,
When o'er the Gillie's-hill she rode.
The landscape like a furnace glowed,
And far as e'er the eye was borne
The lances waved like autumn-corn.
In battles four beneath their eye,
The forces of King Robert lie.
And one below the hill was laid,
Reserved for rescue and for aid;
And three, advanced, formed vaward line,
"Twixt Bannock's brook and Ninian's shrine.
Detached was each, yet each so nigh
As well might mutual aid supply.
Beyond, the Southern host appears
A boundless wilderness of spears,
Whose verge or rear the anxious eye
Strove far, but strove in vain, to spy.
Thick flashing in the evening beam,
Glaives, lances, bills, and banners gleam;
And where the heaven joined with the hill,
Was distant armour flashing still,
So wide, so far, the boundless host
Seemed in the blue horizon lost.

XI.

Down from hill the maiden passed,
At the wild show of war aghast;
And traversed first the rearward host,
Reserved for aid where needed most

The men of Carrick and of Ayr,
 Lennox and Lanark too, were there,
 And all the western land;
 With these the valiant of the Isles
 Beneath their chieftains ranked their files,
 In many a plaided band.
 There, in the centre, proudly raised,
 The Bruce's royal standard blazed,
 And there Lord Ronald's banner bore
 A galley driven by sail and oar.
 A wild, yet pleasing contrast, made
 Warriors in mail and plate arrayed,
 With the plumed bonnet and the plaid
 By these Hebrideans worn;
 But, oh, unseen for three long years,
 Dear was the garb of mountaineers
 To the fair Maid of Lorn!
 For one she looked—but he was far
 Busied amid the ranks of war—
 Yet with affection's troubled eye
 She marked his banner boldly fly,
 Gave on the countless foe a glance,
 And thought on battle's desperate chance.

XII.

To centre of the vaward line
 Fitz-Louis guided Amadine.
 Armed all on foot, that host appears
 A serried mass of glimmering spears.
 There stood the Marchers' warlike band,
 The warriors there of Lodon's land;
 Ettricke and Liddel bent the yew,
 A band of archers fierce, though few;
 The men of Nith and Annan's vale,
 And the bold Spears of Teviotdale;—
 The dauntless Douglas these obey,
 And the young Stuart's gentle sway.
 North-eastward by Saint Ninian's shrine,
 Beneath fierce Randolph's charge, combine
 The warriors whom the hardy North
 From Tay to Sutherland sent forth.
 The rest of Scotland's war-array
 With Edward Bruce to westward lay,
 Where Bannock, with his broken bank
 And deep ravine, protects their flank.
 Behind them, screened by sheltering wood,
 The gallant Keith, Lord Marshal, stood:
 His men-at-arms bear mace and lance,
 And plumes that wave, and helms that glance
 Thus fair divided by the King,
 Centre, and right, and left-ward wing.
 Composed his front; nor distant far
 Was strong reserve to aid the war.
 And 'twas to front of this array,
 Her guide and Edith made their way.

XIII.

Here must they pause; for, in advance
As far as one might pitch a lance,
The Monarch rode along the van,
The foe's approaching force to scan,
His line to marshal and to range,
And ranks to square, and fronts to change.
Alone he rode—from head to heel
Sheathed in his ready arms of steel;
Nor mounted yet on war-horse wight,
But, till more near the shock of fight,
Reining a palfrey low and light.
A diadem of gold was set
Above his bright steel basinet,
And clasped within its glittering twine
Was seen the glove of Argentine;
Truncheon or leading staff he lacks,
Bearing, instead, a battle-axe.
He ranged his soldiers for the fight,
Accoutred thus, in open sight
Of either host.—Three bowshots far,
Paused the deep front of England's war,
And rested on their arms a while,
To close and rank their warlike file,
And hold high council, if that night
Should view the strife, or dawning light.

XIV.

Oh, gay, yet fearful to behold,
Flashing with steel and rough with gold,
And bristled o'er with bills and spears,
With plumes and pennons waving fair,
Was that bright battle front! for there
Rode England's King and peers:
And who, that saw that Monarch ride,
His kingdom battled by his side,
Could then his direful doom foretell!—
Fair was his seat in knightly selle,
And in his sprightly eye was set
Some spark of the Plantagenet.
Though light and wandering was his glance,
It flashed at sight of shield and lance.
"Know'st thou," he said, "De Argentine,
Yon knight who marshals thus their line?"—
"The tokens on his helmet tell
The Bruce, my Liege: I know him well."—
"And shall the audacious traitor brave
The presence where our banners wave?"—
"So please my Liege," said Argentine,
"Were he but horsed on steed like mine,
To give him fair and knightly chance,
I would adventure forth my lance."—
"In battle-day," the King replied,
"Nice tourney rules are set aside."

—Still must the rebel dare our wrath?
Set on him—sweep him from our path!"—
And, at King Edward's signal, soon
Dashed from the ranks Sir Henry Boune.

XV.

Of Hereford's high blood he came,
A race renowned for knightly fame.
He burned before his Monarch's eye
To do some deed of chivalry.
He spurred his steed, he couched his lance,
And darted on the Bruce at once.
—As motionless as rocks, that bide
The wrath of the advancing tide,
The Bruce stood fast.—Each breast beat high,
And dazzled was each gazing eye—
The heart had hardly time to think,
The eyelid scarce had time to wink,
While on the King, like flash of flame,
Spurred to full speed the war-horse came!—
The partridge may the falcon mock,
If that slight palfrey stand the shock—
But, swerving from the Knight's career,
Just as they met, Bruce shunned the spear.
Onward the baffled warrior bore
His course—but soon his course was o'er!—
High in his stirrups stood the King,
And gave his battle-axe the swing.
Right on De Boune, the whiles he passed,
Fell that stern dint—the first—the last!—
Such strength upon the blow was put,
The helmet crashed like hazel-nut;
The axe-shaft, with its brazen clasp,
Was shivered to the gauntlet grasp.
Springs from the blow the startled horse,
Drops to the plain the lifeless corse;
—First of that fatal field, how soon,
How sudden, fell the fierce De Boune!

XVI.

One pitying glance the Monarch sped,
Where on the field his foe lay dead;
Then gently turned his palfrey's head,
And, pacing back his sober way,
Slowly he gained his own array.
There round their King the leaders crowd,
And blame his recklessness aloud,
That risked 'gainst each adventurous spear
A life so valued and so dear.
His broken weapon's shaft surveyed
The King, and careless answer made,—
"My loss may pay my folly's tax;
I've broke my trusty battle-axe."
'Twas then Fitz-Louis, bending low,
Did Isabel's commission show:

Edith, disguised, at distance stands,
 And hides her blushes with her hands.
 The Monarch's brow has changed its hue,
 Away the gory axe he threw,
 While to the seeming Page he drew,
 Clearing war's terrors from his eye;
 Her hand with gentle ease he took,
 With such a kind protecting look,
 As to a weak and timid boy
 Might speak, that elder brother's care
 And elder brother's love were there.

XVII.

"Fear not," he said, "young Amadine!"
 Then whispered, "Still that name be thine.
 Fate plays her wonted fantasy,
 Kind Amadine, with thee and me,
 And sends thee here in doubtful hour.
 But soon we are beyond her power;
 For on this chosen battle-plain,
 Victor or vanquished, I remain.
 Do thou to yonder hill repair;
 The followers of our host are there,
 And all who may not weapons bear.—
 Fitz-Louis, have him in thy care.—
 Joyful we meet, if all go well;
 It not, in Arran's holy cell
 Thou must take part with Isabel;
 For brave Lord Ronald, too, hath sworn
 Not to regain the Maid of Lorn,
 (The bliss on earth he covets most,)
 Would he forsake his battle-post,
 Or shun the fortune that may fall
 To Bruce, to Scotland, and to all.—
 But hark! some news these trumpets tell;
 Forgive my haste—farewell—farewell."
 And in a lower voice he said,
 "Be of good cheer—farewell, sweet maid!"—

XVIII.

"What train of dust, with trumpet-sound
 And glimmering spears, is wheeling round
 Our leftward flank?"—the Monarch cried,
 To Moray's Earl, who rode beside:
 "Lo! round thy station pass the foes!
 Randolph, thy wreath has lost a rose."—
 The Earl his visor closed, and said,
 "My wreath shall bloom, or life shall fade.—
 Follow, my household!"—And they go
 Like lightning on the advancing foe.
 "My Liege," said noble Douglas then,
 "Earl Randolph has but one to ten:
 Let me go forth his band to aid!"—
 "Stir not. The error he hath made,
 Let him amend it as he may;
 I will not weaken mine array."—

Then loudly rose the conflict-cry,
 And Douglas's brave heart swelled high,—
 "My Liege," he said, "with patient ear
 I must not Moray's death-knell hear!"—
 "Then go, but speed thee back again."—
 Forth sprung the Douglas with his train;
 But, when they won a rising hill,
 He bade his followers hold them still.—
 "See, see! the routed Southern fly!
 The Earl hath won the victory.
 Lo! where yon steeds run masterless,
 His banner towers above the press.
 Rein up; our presence would impair
 The fame we come too late to share."—
 Back to the host the Douglas rode,
 And soon glad tidings are abroad,
 That, Dayncourt by stout Randolph slain
 His followers fled with loosened rein.—
 That skirmish closed the busy day,
 And couched in battle's prompt array,
 Each army on their weapons lay.

XIX.

It was a night of lovely June,
 High rode in cloudless blue the moon,
 Demayet smiled beneath her ray;
 Old Stirling's towers arose in light,
 And, twined in links of silver bright,
 Her winding river lay.
 Ah, gentle planet! other sight
 Shall greet thee, next returning night,
 Of broken arms and banners tore,
 And marshes dark with human gore,
 And piles of slaughtered men and horse,
 And Forth that floats the frequent corse.
 And many a wounded wretch to plain
 Beneath thy silver light in vain!
 But now, from England's host, the cry
 Thou hear'st of wassail revelry,
 While from the Scottish legions pass
 The murmured prayer, the early mass!—
 Here, numbers had presumption given;
 There, bands o'ermatched sought aid from Heaven.

XX.

On Gillie's-hill, whose height commands
 The battle-field, fair Edith stands,
 With serf and page unfit for war,
 To eye the conflict from afar.
 Oh, with what doubtful agony
 She sees the dawning tint the sky!—
 Now on the Ochils gleams the sun,
 And glistens now Demayet dun;
 Is it the lark that carols shrill?
 Is it the bittern's early hum?

No!—distant, but increasing still,
The trumpet's sound swells up the hill,
With the deep murmur of the drum.
Responsive from the Scottish host,
Pipe-clang and bugle-sound were tossed,
His breast and brow each soldier crossed,
And started from the ground;
Armed and arrayed for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire, and knight,
And in the pomp of battle bright
The dread battalia frowned.

XXI.

Now onward, and in open view,
The countless ranks of England drew,
Dark rolling like the ocean-tide,
When the rough west hath chafed his pride
And his deep roar sends challenge wide
To all that bars his way!
In front the gallant archers trode,
The men-at-arms behind them rode,
And midmost of the phalanx broad
The Monarch held his sway.

Beside him many a war-horse fumes,
Around him waves a sea of plumes,
Where many a knight in battle known,
And some who spurs had first braced on,
And deemed that fight should see them won.

King Edward's hests obey.
De Argentine attends his side,
With stout De Valence, Pembroke's pride,
Selected champions from the train,
To wait upon his bridle-rein.

Upon the Scottish foe he gazed—
—At once, before his sight amazed,
Sunk banner, spear, and shield;
Each weapon-point is downward sent,
Each warrior to the ground is bent.

"The rebels, Argentine, repent!
For pardon they have kneeled."—
"Ayl—but they bend to other powers,
And other pardon sue than ours!
See where yon bare-foot Abbot stands,
And blesses them with lifted hands!
Upon the spot where they have kneeled,
These men will die, or win the field."—
—"Then prove we if they die or win!
Bid Gloster's Earl the fight begin."—

XXII.

Earl Gilbert waved his truncheon high.
Just as the Northern ranks arose,
Signal for England's archery
To halt and bend their bows.
Then stepped each yeoman forth a pace,
Glanced at the intervening space,

And raised his left hand high;
 To the right ear the cords they bring—
 —At once ten thousand bowstrings ring,
 Ten thousand arrows fly!
 Nor paused on the devoted Scot
 The ceaseless fury of their shot;
 As fiercely and as fast,
 Forth whistling came the gray-goose wing,
 As the wild hailstones pelt and ring
 Adown December's blast.
 Nor mountain-targe of tough bull-hide,
 Nor Lowland mail, that storm may bide;
 Woe, woe to Scotland's bannered pride,
 If the fell shower may last!
 Upon the right, behind the wood,
 Each by his steed dismounted, stood
 The Scottish chivalry;—
 With foot in stirrup, hand on mane,
 Fierce Edward Bruce can scarce restrain
 His own keen heart, his eager train,
 Until the archers gained the plain;
 Then, "Mount, ye gallants free!"
 He cried; and, vaulting from the ground,
 His saddle every horseman found.
 On high their glittering crests they toss,
 As springs the wildfire from the moss;
 The shield hangs down on every breast,
 Each ready lance is in the rest,
 And loud shouts Edward Bruce,—
 "Forth, Marshal, on the peasant foe!
 We'll tame the terrors of their bow,
 And cut the bowstring loose!"—

XXIII.

Then spurs were dashed in chargers' flanks,
 They rushed among the archer ranks.
 No spears were there the shock to let,
 No stakes to turn the charge were set,
 And how shall yeoman's armour slight
 Stand the long lance and mace of might?
 Or what may their short swords avail,
 'Gainst barbed horse and shirt of mail?
 Amid their ranks the chargers sprung,
 High o'er their heads the weapons swung,
 And shriek and groan and vengeful shout
 Give note of triumph and of rout!
 A while, with stubborn hardihood,
 Their English hearts the strife made good;
 Borne down at length on every side,
 Compelled to flight, they scatter wide.—
 Let stags of Sherwood leap for glee,
 And bound the deer of Dallom-Lee!
 The broken bows of Bannock's shore
 Shall in the green-wood ring no more!

Round Wakefield's merry may-pole now,
The maids may twine the summer bough,
May northward look with longing glance,
For those that wot to lead the dance,
For the blithe archers look in vain!
Broken, dispersed, in flight o'erta'en,
Pierced through, trode down, by thousands slain,
They cumber Bannock's bloody plain.

XXIV.

The King with scorn beheld their flight.
"Are these," he said, "our yeomen wight?
Each braggart churl could boast before,
Twelve Scottish livers his baldric bore!
Fitter to plunder chase or park,
Than make a manly foe their mark.—
Forward, each gentleman and knight!
Let gentle blood show generous might,
And chivalry redeem the fight!"—
To rightward of the wild affray,
The field showed fair and level way;
But, in mid-space, the Bruce's care
Had bored the ground with many a pit,
With turf and brushwood hidden yet,
That formed a ghastly snare.
Rushing, ten thousand horsemen came,
With spears in rest, and hearts on flame,
That panted for the shock!
With blazing crests and banners spread,
And trumpet-clang and clamour dread,
The wide plain thundered to their tread,
As far as Stirling rock.
Down! down! in headlong overthrow,
Horseman and horse, the foremost go,
Wild floundering on the field!
The first are in destruction's gorge,
Their followers wildly o'er them urge;—
The knightly helm and shield,
The mail, the acorn, and the spear,
Strong hand, high heart, are useless here!
Loud from the mass confused the cry
Of dying warriors swells on high,
And steeds that shriek in agony!
They came like mountain-torrent red,
That thunders o'er its rocky bed;
They broke like that same torrent's wave
When swallowed by a darksome cave.
Billows on billows burst and boil,
Maintaining still the stern turmoil,
And to their wild and tortured groan
Each adds new terrors of his own!

XXV.

Too strong in courage and in might
Was England yet, to yield the fight.

Her noblest all are here;
 Names that to fear were never known,
 Bold Norfolk's Earl De Brotherton,
 And Oxford's famed De Vere.
 There Gloster plied the bloody sword,
 And Berkley, Grey, and Hereford,
 Bottetourt and Sanzavere,
 Ross, Montague, and Mauley, came,
 And Courtenay's pride, and Percy's fame --
 Names known too well in Scotland's war, --
 At Falkirk, Methven, and Dunbar,
 Blazed broader yet in after-years,
 At Cressy red and fell Poitiers.
 Pembroke with these, and Argentine,
 Brought up the rearward battle-line.
 With caution o'er the ground they tread,
 Slippery with blood and piled with dead,
 Till hand to hand in battle set,
 The bills with spears and axes met,
 And, closing dark on every side,
 Raged the full contest far and wide.
 Then was the strength of Douglas tried,
 Then proved was Randolph's generous pride.
 And well did Stuart's actions grace
 The sire of Scotland's royal race!
 Firmly they kept their ground;
 As firmly England onward pressed,
 And down went many a noble crest,
 And rent was many a valiant breast,
 And Slaughter revelled round.

XXVI.

Unflinching foot 'gainst foot was set,
 Unceasing blow by blow was met;
 The groans of those who fell
 Were drowned amid the shriller clang,
 That from the blades and harness rang,
 And in the battle-yell.
 Yet fast they fell, unheard, forgot,
 Both Southron fierce and hardy Scot; --
 And, oh, amid that waste of life,
 What various motives fired the strife!
 The aspiring Noble bled for fame,
 The Patriot for his country's claim;
 This Knight his youthful strength to prove,
 And that to win his lady's love;
 Some fought from ruffian thirst of blood.
 From habit some, or hardihood.
 But ruffian stern, and soldier good,
 The noble and the slave,
 From various cause the same wild road,
 On the same bloody morning, trode,
 To that dark inn, the Grave!

XXVII.

The tug of strife to flag begins,
Though neither loses yet nor wins.
High rides the sun, thick rolls the dust,
And feebler speeds the blow and thrust.
Douglas leans on his war-sword now,
And Randolph wipes his bloody brow.
Nor less had toiled each Southern knight,
From morn till mid-day in the fight.
Strong Egremont for air must gasp,
Beauchamp undoes his visor-clasp,
And Moutague must quit his spear,
And sinks thy falchion, bold De Vere!
The blows of Berkley fall less fast,
And gallant Pembroke's bugle-blast
Hath lost its lively tone;
Sinks, Argentine, thy battle-word,
And Percy's shout was fainter heard,
"My merry-men fight on!"—

XXVIII.

Bruce, with the pilot's wary eye,
The slackening of the storm could spy.
"One effort more, and Scotland's free!
Lord of the Isles, my trust in thee
Is firm as Ailsa-rock;
Rush on with Highland sword and targe,
I, with my Carrick spearmen, charge;
Now, forward to the shock!"—
At once the spears were forward thrown,
Against the sun the broadswords shone;
The pibroch lent its maddening tone,
And loud King Robert's voice was known—
"Carrick, press on—they fail, they fail!
Press on, brave sons of Innisgail,
The foe is fainting fast!
Each strike for parent, child, and wife,
For Scotland, liberty, and life,—
The battle cannot last!"—

XXIX.

The fresh and desperate onset bore
The foes three furlongs back and more,
Leaving their noblest in their gore.
Alone, De Argentine
Yet bears on high his red-cross shield,
Gathers the relics of the field,
Renews the ranks where they have reeled.
And still makes good the line.
Brief strife, but fierce, his efforts raise
A bright but momentary blaze.
Fair Edith heard the Southron shout,
Beheld them turning from the rout,
Heard the wild call their trumpets sent,
In notes 'twixt triumph and lament.

That rallying force, combined anew,
 Appeared, in her distracted view,
 To hem the islesmen round;
 "O God! the combat they renew,
 And is no rescue found!
 And ye that look thus tamely on,
 And see your native land o'erthrown,
 Oh! are your hearts of flesh or stone!"

XXX.

The multitude that watched afar,
 Rejected from the ranks of war,
 Had not unmoved beheld the fight,
 When strove the Bruce for Scotland's right;
 Each heart had caught the patriot spark,
 Old man and stripling, priest and clerk,
 Bondsman and serf; even female hand
 Stretched to the hatchet or the brand;
 But when mute Amadine they heard
 Give to their zeal his signal-word,
 A frenzy fired the throng;—
 "Portents and miracles impeach
 Our sloth—the dumb our duties teach—
 And he that gives the mute his speech,
 Can bid the weak be strong.

To us, as to our lords, are given
 A native earth, a promised heaven;
 To us, as to our lords, belongs
 The vengeance for our nation's wrongs;
 The choice, 'twixt death or freedom, warms
 Our breasts as theirs—"To arms, to arms!"—
 To arms they flew,—axe, club, or spear,—
 And mimic ensigns high they rear.
 And, like a bannered host afar,
 Bear down on England's wearied war.

XXXI.

Already scattered o'er the plain,
 Reproof, command, and counsel vain,
 The rearward squadrons fled amain,
 Or made but doubtful stay;—
 But when they marked the seeming show
 Of fresh and fierce and marshalled foe,
 The boldest broke array.
 O give their hapless prince his due!
 In vain the royal Edward threw
 His person 'mid the spears,
 Cried "Fight!" to terror and despair,
 Menaced, and wept, and tore his hair,
 And cursed their caitiff fears;
 Till Pembroke turned his bridle rein,
 And forced him from the fatal plain.
 With them rode Argentine, until
 They gained the summit of the hill,
 But quitted there the train:—

"In yonder field a gage I left,
I must not live of fame bereft;
I needs must turn again.
Speed hence, my Liege, for on your truce
The fiery Douglas takes the chase,—
I know his banner well.
God send my Sovereign joy and bliss,
And many a happier field than this!—
Once more, my Liege, farewell."

XXXII.

Again he faced the battle-field,—
Wildly they fly, are slain, or yield.
"Now then," he said, and couched his spear,
"My course is run, the goal is near;
One effort more, one brave career,
Must close this race of mine."
Then in his stirrups rising high,
He shouted loud his battle-cry,
"Saint James for Argentine!"
And, of the bold pursuers, four
The gallant knight from saddle bore;
But not unharmed—a lance's point
Has found his breastplate's loosened joint,
An axe has razed his crest;
Yet still on Colonsay's fierce lord,
Who pressed the chase with gory sword,
He rode with spear in rest,
And through his bloody tartans bored,
And through his gallant breast.
Nailed to the earth, the mountaineer
Yet writhed him up against the spear,
And swung his broadsword round!
—Stirrup, steel-boot, and cuish gave way,
Beneath that blow's tremendous away,
The blood gushed from the wound;
And the grim Lord of Colonsay
Hath turned him on the ground,
And laughed in death-pang, that his blade
The mortal thrust so well repaid.

XXXIII.

Now tolled the Bruce, the battle done,
To use his conquest boldly won;
And gave command for horse and spear
To press the Southron's scattered rear,
Nor let his broken force combine,
—When the war-cry of Argentine
Fell faintly on his ear!
"Save, save his life," he cried, "O save
The kind, the noble, and the brave!"—
The squadrons round free passage gave,
The wounded knight drew near.
He raised his red-cross shield no more,—
Helm, cuish, and breastplate streamed with gore,

Yet, as he saw the King advance,
He strove even then to couch his lance—

The effort was in vain!

The spur-stroke failed to rouse the horse;
Wounded and weary, in mid course

He stumbled on the plain.

Then foremost was the generous Bruce
To raise his head, his helm to loose:—

“Lord Earl, the day is thine!

My Sovereign’s charge, and adverse fate,
Have made our meeting all too late:

Yet this may Argentine.

As boon from ancient comrade, crave—
A Christian’s mass, a soldier’s grave.”—

XXXIV.

Bruce pressed his dying hand—its grasp
Kindly replied; but, in his clasp,

It stiffened and grew cold—

And, “Oh, farewell!” the victor cried,
“Of chivalry the flower and pride,

The arm in battle bold,

The courteous mien, the noble race,
The stainless faith, the manly face!—

Bid Ninian’s convent light their shrine,
For late-wake of De Argentine.

O’er better knight on death-bier laid,
Torch never gleamed nor mass was said!”—

XXXV.

Nor for De Argentine alone
Through Ninian’s church these torches shone,
And rose the death-prayer’s awful tone.

That yellow lustre glimmered pale,
On broken plate and bloodied mail,
Rent crest and shattered coronet,

Of Baron, Earl, and Banneret;
And the best names that England knew
Claimed in the death-prayer dismal due.

Yet mourn not, Land of Fame!

Though ne’er the leopards on thy shield
Retreated from so sad a field,

Since Norman William came.

Off may thine annals justly boast
Of battles stern by Scotland lost;

Grudge not her victory,

When for her free-born rights she strove;
Rights dear to all who freedom love,

To none so dear as thee!

XXXVI.

Turn we to Bruce, whose curious ear
Must from Fitz-Louis tidings hear;

With him, a hundred voices tell
Of prodigy and miracle,

"For the mute Page had spoke."—
 "Page!" said Fitz-Louis, "rather say,
 An angel sent from realms of day,
 To burst the English yoke.
 I saw his plume and bonnet drop,
 When hurrying from the mountain top;
 A lovely brow, dark locks that wave,
 To his bright eyes now lustre gave,
 A step as light upon the green,
 As if his pinions waved unseen!"—
 "Spoke he with none?"—"With none—one word
 Burst when he saw the Island Lord,
 Returning from the battle field."—
 "What answer made the Chief?"—"He kneeled,
 Durst not look up, but muttered low,
 Some mingled sounds that none might know,
 And greeted him 'twixt joy and fear,
 As being of superior sphere."—

XXXVII.

Even upon Bannock's bloody plain,
 Heaped then with thousands of the slain,
 'Mid victor monarch's musings high,
 Mirth laughed in good King Robert's eye.
 "And bore he such angelic air,
 Such noble front, such waving hair?
 Hath Ronald kneeled to him?" he said,
 "Then must we call the Church to aid—
 Our will be to the Abbot known,
 Ere these strange news are wider blown,
 To Cambuskenneth straight he pass,
 And deck the church for solemn mass,
 To pay, for high deliverance given,
 A nation's thanks to gracious Heaven.
 Let him array, besides, such state
 As should on princes' nuptials wait.
 Ourself the cause, through fortune's spite,
 That once broke short that spousal rite,
 Ourself will grace, with early morn,
 The bridal of the Maid of Lorn."

CONCLUSION.

Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturous way;
 Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,
 Who chose no patron for his humble lay,
 And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,
 Whose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.
There was—and, oh, how many sorrows crowd
 Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim
 By generous friendship given—had fate allowed,
 It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

All angel now—yet little less than all,
While still a pilgrim in our world below!
What 'vails it us that patience to recall,
Which hid its own, to soothe all other woe;
What 'vails to tell, how VIRTUE's purest glow
Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair;—
And, least of all, what 'vails the world should know,
That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,
Is hung upon thy hearse, to droop and wither there!

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BORDER MINSTRELSY.

GLENFINLAS;

OR,

LORD RONALD'S CORONACH.*

(This ballad first appeared in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*.)

THE simple tradition, upon which the following stanzas are founded, runs thus:—While two Highland hunters were passing the night in a solitary *bothy*, (a hut built for the purpose of hunting,) and making merry over their venison and whisky, one of them expressed a wish that they had pretty lasses to complete their party. The words were scarcely uttered, when two beautiful young women, habited in green, entered the hut, dancing and singing. One of the hunters was seduced, by the syren who attached herself particularly to him, to leave the hut; the other remained, and, suspicious of the fair seducers, continued to play upon a trumpet, or Jew's-harp, some strain consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Day at length came, and the temptress vanished. Searching in the forest, he found the bones of his unfortunate friend, who had been torn to pieces and devoured by the fiend into whose toils he had fallen. The place was from thence called, *The Glen of the Green Women*.

Glenfinlas is a tract of forest-ground, lying in the Highlands of Perthshire, not far from Callender, in Menteith. It was formerly a royal forest, and now belongs to the Earl of Moray. This country, as well as the adjacent district of Balquidder, was, in times of yore, chiefly inhabited by the Macgregors. To the west of the Forest of Glenfinlas, lies Loch Katrine, and its romantic avenue called the *Trossachs*. Benledi, Benmore, and Benvoirlich are mountains in the same district, and at no great distance from Glenfinlas. The river Teith passes Callender and the Castle of Doune, and joins the Forth near Stirling. The Pass of Lenny is immediately above Callender, and is the principal access to the Highlands from that town. Glenartney is a forest near Benvoirlich. The whole forms a sublime tract of Alpine scenery.

“For them the viewless forms of air obey,
Their bidding heed, and at their beck repair;

* *Coronach* is the lamentation for a deceased warrior, sung by the aged of the clan.

They know what spirit brews the stormful day,
And heartless oft, like moody madness, stare,
'To see the phantom train their secret work prepare "

O HONE a rie'! O hone a rie'!
The pride of Albin's line is o'er,
And fallen Glenartney's stateliest tree;
We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!

Oh, sprung from great Macgillianore,
The chief that never feared a foe,
How matchless was thy broad claymore,
How deadly thine unerring bow!

Well can the Saxon † widows tell,
How on the Teith's resounding shore,
The boldest Lowland warriors fell,
As down from Lenny's pass you bore.

But o'er his hills, on festal day,
How blazed Lord Ronald's Beltane-tree, ‡
While youths and maids the light strathspey
So nimbly danced, with Highland glee!

Cheered by the strength of Ronald's shell,
E'en age forgot his tresses hoar;
But now the loud lament we swell,
Oh, ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!

From distant isles a Chieftain came,
The joys of Ronald's halls to find,
And chase with him the dark brown game
That bounds o'er Albin's hills of wind.

'Twas Moy; whom in Columba's isle
The seer's prophetic spirit found,
As, with a minstrel's fire the while,
He waked his harp's harmonious sound.

Full many a spell to him was known,
Which wandering spirits shrink to hear,
And many a lay of potent tone,
Was never meant for mortal ear.

For there, 'tis said, in mystic mood,
High converse with the dead they hold,
And oft espy the fated shroud
That shall the future corpse enfold.

* *O hone a rie'* signifies—"Alas for the prince, or chief."

† The term *Sasennach*, or Saxon, is applied by the Highlanders to their Low-country neighbours.

‡ The fires lighted by the Highlanders, on the first of May, in compliance with a custom derived from the Pagan times, are termed *The Beltane-trees*. It is a festival celebrated with various superstitious rites, both in the north of Scotland and in Wales.

Oh, so it fell, that on a day,
To rouse the red deer from their den,
The chiefs have ta'en their distant way,
And scoured the deep Glenfinlas glen.

No vassals wait their sports to aid,
To watch their safety, deck their board;
Their simple dress, the Highland plaid,
Their trusty guard, the Highland sword.

Three summer days, through brake and dell,
Their whistling shafts successful flew;
And still, when dewy evening fell,
The quarry to their hut they drew.

In gray Glenfinlas deepest nook
The solitary cabin stood,
Fast by Moneira's sullen brook,
Which murmurs through that lonely wood.

Soft fell the night, the sky was calm,
When three successive days had flown;
And summer mist in dewy balm
Steeped heathy bank, and mossy stone.

The moon, half hid in silvery flakes,
Afar her dubious radiance shed,
Quivering on Katrine's distant lakes,
And resting on Benedi's head.

Now in their hut, in social guise,
Their sylvan fare the chiefs enjoy;
And pleasure laughs in Ronald's eyes,
As many a pledge he quaffs to Moy.—

“What lack we here to crown our bliss,
While thus the pulse of joy beats high?
What, but fair woman's yielding kiss,
Her panting breath, and melting eye?”

“To chase the deer of yonder shades,
This morning left their father's pile
The fairest of our mountain maids,
The daughters of the proud Glengyle.

“Long have I sought sweet Mary's heart,
And dropped the tear, and heaved the sigh,
But vain the lover's wily art,
Beneath a sister's watchful eye.

“But thou mayst teach that guardian fair,
While far with Mary I am flown,
Of other hearts to cease her care,
And find it hard to guard her own.

“Touch but thy harp, thou soon shalt see
The lovely Flora of Glengyle,
Unmindful of her charge and me,
Hang on thy notes, 'twixt tear and smile.

"Or, if she choose a melting tale,
All underneath the green-wood bough,
Will good St Oran's rule prevail,
Stern huntsman of the rigid brow?"—

"Since Enrick's fight, since Morna's death,
No more on me shall rapture rise,
Responsive to the panting breath,
The yielding kiss, or melting eyes.

"E'en then, when o'er the heath of woe,
Where sunk my hopes of love and fame,
I bade my harp's wild wailings flow,
On me the Seer's sad spirit came.

"The last dread curse of angry heaven,
With ghastly sights and sounds of woe,
To dash each glimpse of joy, was given—
The gift, the future ill to know.

"The bark thou saw'st, yon summer morn,
So gaily part from Oban's bay,
My eye beheld her dashed and torn,
Far on the rocky Colonsay.

"Thy Fergus too—thy sister's son,
Thou saw'st, with pride, the gallant's power,
As marching 'gainst the Lord of Downe,
He left the skirts of huge Benmore.

"Thou only saw'st their tartans* wave,
As down Benvoirlich's side they wound,
Heardst but the pibroch, answering brave
To many a target clanking round.

"I heard the groans, I marked the tears,
I saw the wound his bosom bore,
When on the serried Saxon spears
He poured his clan's resistless roar.

"And thou, who bidd'st me think of bliss,
And bidd'st my heart awake to glee,
And court, like thee, the wanton kiss,—
That heart, O Ronald, bleeds for thee!

"I see the death-damps chill thy brow;
I hear thy Warning Spirit cry;
The corpse-lights dance—they're gone, and now . . .
No more is given to gifted eye!"—

"Alone enjoy thy dreary dreams,
Sad prophet of the evil hour!
Say, should we scorn joy's transient beams,
Because to-morrow's storm may lour?

"Or false, or sooth, thy words of woe,
Clangillian's chieftain ne'er shall fear;
His blood shall bound at rapture's glow,
Though doomed to stain the Saxon spear.

* The full Highland dress, made of the checkered stuff so termed

"E'en now, to meet me in you dell,
My Mary's buskins brush the dew;"—
He spoke, nor bade the chief farewell,
But called his dogs, and gay withdrew.

Within an hour returned each hound;
In rushed the rousers of the deer;
They howled in melancholy sound,
Then closely couch beside the seer.

No Ronald yet; though midnight came,
And sad were Moy's prophetic dreams,
As, bending o'er the dying flame,
He fed the watch-fire's quivering gleams.

Sudden the hounds erect their ears,
And sudden cease their moaning howl;
Close pressed to Moy, they mark their fear:
By shivering limbs, and stifled growl.

Untouched, the harp began to ring,
As softly, slowly, oped the door;
And shook responsive every string,
As light a footstep pressed the floor.

And by the watch-fire's glimmering light,
Close by the minstrel's side was seen
A huntress maid, in beauty bright,
All dropping wet her robes of green.

All dropping wet her garments seem;
Chilled was her cheek, her bosom bare,
As, bending o'er the dying gleam,
She wrung the moisture from her hair.

With maiden blush she softly said,
"O gentle huntsman, hast thou seen,
In deep Glenfinlas' moonlight glade,
A lovely maid in vest of green:

"With her a chief in Highland pride;
His shoulders bear the hunter's bow,
The mountain dirk adorns his side,
Far on the wind his tartans flow?"—

"And who art thou? and who are they?"
All ghastly gazing, Moy replied:
"And why, beneath the moon's pale ray,
Dare ye thus roam Glenfinlas' side?"—

"Where wild Loch-Katrine pours her tide,
Blue, dark, and deep, round many an isle,
Our father's towers o'erhang her side,
The castle of the bold Glengyle.

"To chase the dun Glenfinlas deer,
Our woodland course this morn we bore,
And haply met, while wandering here,
The son of great Macgillianora.

"Oh, aid me, then, to seek the pair,
Whom, loitering in the woods, I lost;
Alone, I dare not venture there,
Where walks, they say, the shrieking ghost."—

"Yes, many a shrieking ghost walks there;
Then first, my own sad vow to keep,
Here will I pour my midnight prayer,
Which still must rise when mortals sleep."—

"Oh, first, for pity's gentle sake,
Guide a lone wanderer on her way!
For I must cross the haunted brake,
And reach my father's towers ere day."—

"First, three times toll each Ave bead,
And thrice a Pater-noster say;
Then kiss with me the holy reed;
So shall we safely wind our way."—

"Oh, shame to knighthood, strange and foul
Go, doff the bonnet from thy brow,
And shroud thee in the monkish cowl,
Which best befits thy sullen vow.

"Not so, by high Dunlathmon's fire,
Thy heart was froze to love and joy,
When gaily rung thy raptured lyre,
To wanton Morna's melting eye."—

Wild stared the Minstrel's eyes of flame,
And high his sable locks arose,
And quick his colour went and came,
As fear and rage alternate rose.

"And thou, when by the blazing oak
I lay, to her and love resigned,
Say, rode ye on the eddying smoke,
Or sailed ye on the midnight wind?

"Not thine a race of mortal blood,
Nor old Glengyle's pretended line;
'Thy dame, the Lady of the Flood,
Thy sire, the Monarch of the Mine."

He muttered thrice St Oran's rhyme,
And thrice St Fillan's powerful prayer;
Then turned him to the eastern clime,
And sternly shook his coal-black hair:

And, bending o'er his harp, he flung
His wildest witch-notes on the wind;
And loud, and high, and strange, they rung,
As many a magic change they find.

Tall waxed the Spirit's altering form,
Till to the roof her stature grew;
Then, mingling with the rising storm,
With one wild yell, away she flew.

Rain beats, hail rattles, whirlwinds tear;
 The slender hut in fragments flew;
 But not a lock of Moy's loose hair
 Was waved by wind, or wet by dew.

Wild mingling with the howling gale,
 Loud bursts of ghastly laughter rise;
 High o'er the Minstrel's head they sail,
 And die amid the northern skies.

The voice of thunder shook the wood,
 As ceased the more than mortal yell;
 And, spattering foul, a shower of blood
 Upon the hissing firebrands fell.

Next, dropped from high a mangled arm;
 The fingers strained a half-drawn blade:
 And last, the life-blood streaming warm,
 Torn from the trunk, a gasping head.

Oft o'er that head, in battling field,
 Streamed the proud crest of high Benmore;
 That arm the broad claymore could wield,
 Which dyed the Teith with Saxon gore.

Woe to Moneira's sullen rills!
 Woe to Glenfinlas' dreary glen!
 There never son of Albin's hills
 Shall draw the hunter's shaft agen!

E'en the tired pilgrim's burning feet
 At noon shall shun that sheltering den,
 Lest, journeying in their rage, he meet
 The wayward Ladies of the Glen.

And we—behind the chieftain's shield,
 No more shall we in safety dwell;
 None leads the people to the field—
 And we the loud lament must swell.

O hone a rie! O hone a rie!
 The pride of Albin's line is o'er,
 And fallen Glenartney's stateliest tree;
 We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!

THE EVE OF ST JOHN.

SMAYLRO' ME, or Smallholm Tower, the scene of the following ballad, is situated on the northern boundary of Roxburghshire, among a cluster of wild rocks, called Sandyknowe Crags. The tower is a high square building, surrounded by an outer wall, now ruinous. The circuit of the outer court, being defended on three sides by a precipice and morass, is accessible only from the west by a steep and rocky path. The apartments, as is usual in a Border keep or fortress, are placed one above another, and communicate by a narrow stair; on the roof are two bartizans or platforms for defence or pleasure. The

inner door of the tower is wood, the outer an iron gate; the distance between them being nine feet—the thickness, namely, of the wall. From the elevated situation of Smaylho'me Tower, it is seen many miles in every direction. Among the crags by which it is surrounded, one, more eminent, is called the *Watchfold*, and is said to have been the station of a beacon in the times of war with England. Without the tower-court is a ruined chapel. Brotherstone is a heath in the neighbourhood of Smaylho'me Tower.

This ballad was first printed in Mr Lewis's "Tales of Wonder." It is here published, with some additional illustrations, particularly an account of the battle of Ancram Moor, which seemed proper in a work upon Border antiquities. The catastrophe of the tale is founded upon a well-known Irish tradition. This ancient fortress and its vicinity formed the scene of the Editor's infancy, and seemed to claim from him this attempt to celebrate them in a Border tale.

THE Baron of Smaylho'me rose with day,
He spurred his courser on,
Without stop or stay, down the rocky way
That leads to Brotherstone.

He went not with the bold Buccleuch,
His banner broad to rear;
He went not 'gainst the English yew,
To lift the Scottish spear.

Yet his plate-jack* was braced, and his helmet was laced,
And his vaunt-brace of proof he wore;
At his saddle-gerthe was a good steel sperthe,
Full ten pound weight and more.

The Baron returned in three days' space,
And his looks were sad and sour;
And weary was his courser's pace
As he reached his rocky tower.

He came not from where Ancram Moor
Ran red with English blood;
Where the Douglas true, and the bold Buccleuch,
'Gainst keen Lord Evers stood.

Yet was his helmet hacked and hewed,
His acorn pierced and tore;
His axe and his dagger with blood imbrued,—
But it was not English gore.

He lighted at the Chapellage,
He held him close and still;
And he whistled thrice for his little foot-page,
His name was English Will.

"Come thou hither, my little foot-page,
Come hither to my knee;
Thou art young, and tender of age,
I think thou art true to me.

* The plate-jack is coat armour; the vaunt-brace, or wam-brace, armour for the body; the sperthe, a battle-axe.

"Come, tell me all that thou hast seen,
And look thou tell me true!
Since I from Smaylho'me tower have been,
What did thy lady do?"—

"My lady, each night, sought the lonely light
That burns on the wild Watchfold;
For, from height to height, the beacons bright
Of the English foemen told.

"The bittern clamoured from the moss,
The wind blew loud and shrill;
Yet the craggy pathway she did cross,
To the eiry Beacon Hill.

"I watched her steps, and silent came
Where she sat her on a stone;
No watchman stood by the dreary flame;
It burnèd all alone.

"The second night I kept her in sight,
Till to the fire she came,
And, by Mary's might! an armèd Knight
Stood by the lonely flame.

"And many a word that warlike lord
Did speak to my lady there;
But the rain fell fast, and loud blew the blast,
And I heard not what they were.

"The third night there the sky was fair,
And the mountain blast was still,
As again I watched the secret pair,
On the lonesome Beacon Hill.

"And I heard her name the midnight hour,
And name this holy eve;
And say, 'Come this night to thy lady's bower;
Ask no bold Baron's leave.

"He lifts his spear with the bold Buccleuch;
His lady is all alone;
The door she'll undo to her knight so true,
On the eve of good St John.'—

"I cannot come; I must not come;
I dare not come to thee;
On the eve of St John I must wander alone:
In thy bower I may not be.'—

"Now, out on thee, faint-hearted knight!
Thou shouldst not say me nay;
For the eve is sweet, and, when lovers meet,
Is worth the whole summer's day.

"And I'll chain the bloodhound, and the warder
shall not sound,
And rushes shall be strewed on the stair:

So, by the black rood-stone,* and by holy St John,
I conjure thee, my love, to be there!—

“Though the bloodhound be mute, and the rush
beneath my foot,
And the warder his bugle should not blow,
Yet there sleepeth a priest in the chamber to the east,
And my footstep he would know.”—

“Oh, fear not the priest, who sleepeth to the east!
For to Dryburgh the way he has ta'en;
And there to say mass, till three days do pass,
For the soul of a knight that is slayne.”—

“He turned him around, and grimly he frowned;
Then he laughed right scornfully—
‘He who says the mass-rite for the soul of that knight,
May as well say mass for me.

“At the lone midnight hour, when bad spirits have
power,
In thy chamber will I be.’—
With that he was gone, and my lady left alone,
And no more did I see.”—

Then changed, I trow, was that bold Baron's brow,
From the dark to the blood-red high;
“Now, tell me the mien of the knight thou hast seen,
For, by Mary, he shall die!”—

“His arms shone full bright, in the beacon's red light;
His plume it was scarlet and blue;
On his shield was a hound, in a silver leash bound,
And his crest was a branch of the yew.”—

“Thou liest, thou liest, thou little foot-page,
Loud dost thou lie to me!
For that knight is cold, and low laid in the mould,
All under the Eildon-tree.”—†

“Yet hear but my word, my noble lord!
For I heard her name his name;
And that lady bright, she called the knight,
Sir Richard of Coldinghame.”—

The bold Baron's brow then changed, I trow,
From high blood-red to pale—
“The grave is deep and dark—and the corpse is stiff
and stark—
So I may not trust thy tale.

* The black rood of Melrose was a crucifix of black marble, and of superior sanctity.

† Eildon is a high hill, terminating in three conical summits, immediately above the town of Melrose, where are the admired ruins of a magnificent monastery. Eildon-tree is said to be the spot where Thomas the Rhymer uttered his prophecies.

"Where fair Tweed flows round holy Melrose,
And Eildon slopes to the plain,
Full three nights ago, by some secret foe,
That gay gallant was slain.

"The varying light deceived thy sight,
And the wild winds drowned the name;
For the Dryburgh bells ring, and the white monks
do sing,
For Sir Richard of Coldinghame!"

He passed the court-gate, and he oped the tower grate,
And he mounted the narrow stair
To the bartizan-seat, where, with maids that on her wail
He found his lady fair.

That lady sat in mournful mood;
Looked over hill and vale;
Over Tweed's fair flood, and Mertoun's wood,
And all down Teviotdale.

"Now hail, now hail, thou lady bright!"—
"Now hail, thou Baron true!
What news, what news from Ancram fight?
What news from the bold Buccleuch?"—

"The Ancram Moor is red with gore,
For many a Southron fell;
And Buccleuch has charged us, evermore
To watch our beacons well."

The lady blushed red, but nothing she said;
Nor added the Baron a word:
Then she stepped down the stair to her chamber fair
And so did her moody lord.

In sleep the lady mourned, and the Baron tossed
and turned,
And oft to himself he said—
"The worms around him creep, and his bloody
grave is deep . . .
It cannot give up the dead!"

It was near the ringing of matin-bell,
The night was well nigh done,
When a heavy sleep on that Baron fell,
On the eve of good St John.

The lady looked through the chamber fair,
By the light of a dying flame;
And she was aware of a knight stood there—
Sir Richard of Coldinghame!

"Alas! away, away!" she cried,
"For the holy Virgin's sake!"—
"Lady, I know who sleeps by thy side;
But, lady, he will not awake.

"By Eildon-tree, for long nights three,
In bloody grave have I lain;

CADYOW CASTLE

The mass and the death-prayer are said for me,
 But, lady, they are said in vain.
 'By the Baron's brand, near Tweed's fair strand,
 Most foully slain I fell;
 And my restless sprite on the beacon's height
 For a space is doomed to dwell.
 "At our trysting place, for a certain space
 I must wander to and fro;
 But I had not had power to come to thy bower,
 Hadst thou not conjured me so."—
 Love mastered fear—her brow she crossed;
 "How, Richard, hast thou sped?
 And art thou saved, or art thou lost?"—
 The Vision shook his head!
 "Who spilleth life, shall forfeit life,
 So bid thy lord believe;
 That lawless love is guilt above,
 This awful sign receive."
 He laid his left palm on an oaken beam,
 His right upon her hand:
 The lady shrunk, and fainting sunk,
 For it scorched like a fiery brand.
 The sable score, of fingers four,
 Remains on that board impressed;
 And for evermore that lady wore
 A covering on her wrist.
 There is a Nun in Dryburgh bower,
 Ne'er looks upon the sun:
 There is a Monk in Melrose tower,
 He speaketh word to none.
 That Nun, who ne'er beholds the day,
 That Monk, who speaks to none—
 That Nun was Smaylho'me's Lady gay,
 That Monk the bold Baron.

CADYOW CASTLE

ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY ANNE HAMILTON.

The ruins of Cadyow, or Cadzow Castle, the ancient baronial residence of the family of Hamilton, are situated upon the precipitous banks of the river Ewan, about two miles above its junction with the Clyde. The situation of the ruins, embosomed in wood, darkened by ivy and creeping shrubs, and overhanging the brawling torrent, is romantic in the highest degree. In the immediate vicinity of Cadyow is a grove of immense oaks, the remains of the Caledonian Forest, which anciently extended through the south of Scotland, from the Eastern to the Atlantic Ocean. Some of these trees measure twenty-two feet, and upwards, in circumference; and the state of decay in which

they now appear, shows that they may have witnessed the rites of the Druids. The whole scenery is included in the magnificent and extensive park of the Duke of Hamilton. In this forest was long preserved the brood of the Scottish wild cattle, until their ferocity led to their extirpation, about forty years ago. Their appearance was beautiful, being milk-white, with black muzzles, horns, and hoofs. The bulls are described by ancient authors as having white manes; but those of latter days had lost that peculiarity, perhaps by intermixture with the tame breed.

In detailing the death of the Regent Murray, which is made the subject of the following ballad, it would be injustice to my reader to use other words than those of Dr Robertson, whose account of that memorable event forms a beautiful piece of historical painting.

"Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh was the person who committed this barbarous action. He had been condemned to death soon after the battle of Langside, as we have already related, and owed his life to the Regent's clemency. But part of his estate had been bestowed upon one of the Regent's favourites, who seized his house, and turned out his wife naked in a cold night into the open fields, where, before next morning, she became furiously mad. This injury made a deeper impression on him than the benefit he had received, and from that moment he vowed to be revenged of the Regent. Party rage strengthened and inflamed his private resentment. His kinsmen, the Hamiltons, applauded the enterprise. The maxims of that age justified the most desperate course he could take to obtain vengeance. He followed the Regent for some time, and watched for an opportunity to strike the blow. He resolved at last to wait till his enemy should arrive at Linlithgow, through which he was to pass in his way from Stirling to Edinburgh. He took his stand in a wooden gallery, which had a window towards the street—spread a feather-bed on the floor, to hinder the noise of his feet from being heard—hung up a black cloth behind him, that his shadow might not be observed from without—and, after all this preparation, calmly expected the Regent's approach, who had lodged during the night in a house not far distant. Some indistinct information of the danger which threatened him had been conveyed to the Regent, and he paid so much regard to it, that he resolved to return by the same gate through which he had entered, and to fetch a compass round the town. But, as the crowd about the gate was great, and he himself unacquainted with fear, he proceeded directly along the street; and the throng of people obliging him to move very slowly, gave the assassin time to take so true an aim, that he shot him with a single bullet through the lower part of his belly, and killed the horse of a gentleman who rode on his other side. His followers instantly endeavoured to break into the house whence the blow had come; but they found the door strongly barricaded, and before it could be forced open, Hamilton had mounted a fleet horse which stood ready for him at a back passage, and was got far beyond their reach. The Regent died the same night of his wound."—*History of Scotland*, Book v.

The Regent died on the 23d of January 1569. Immediately after the murder, Bothwellhaugh rode to Hamilton, where he was received in triumph.

WHEN princely Hamilton's abode
Ennobled Cadyow's Gothic towers,
The song went round, the goblet flowed,
And revel sped the laughing hours.

Then, thrilling to the harp's gay sound,
So sweetly rung each vaulted wall,
And echoed light the dancers' bound,
As mirth and music cheered the hall

But Cadyow's towers, in ruins laid,
And vaults, by ivy mantled o'er,
Thrill to the music of the shade,
Or echo Evan's hoarser roar.

Yet still, of Cadyow's faded fame,
You bid me tell a minstrel tale,
And tune my harp, of Border frame,
On the wild banks of Evandale.

For thou, from scenes of courtly pride,
From pleasure's lighter scenes, canst turn,
To draw oblivion's pall aside,
And mark the long-forgotten urn.

Then, noble maid ! at thy command,
Again the crumbled halls shall rise ;
Lo ! as on Evan's banks we stand,
The past returns—the present flies.—

Where with the rock's wood-covered side
Were blended late the ruins green,
Rise turrets in fantastic pride,
And feudal banners flaunt between :

Where the rude torrent's brawling course
Was shagged with thorn and tangling sloc,
The ashler buttress braves its force,
And ramparts frown in battled row.

'Tis night—the shade of keep and spire
Obscurely dance on Evan's stream,
And on the wave the warder's fire
Is chequering the moonlight beam.

Fades slow their light ; the east is gray ;
The weary warder leaves his tower ;
Steeds snort ; uncoupled staghounds bay,
And merry hunters quit the bower.

The drawbridge falls—they hurry out—
Clatters each plank and swinging chain,
As, dashing o'er, the jovial rout
Urge the shy steed, and slack the rein.

First of his troop, the chief* rode on ;
His shouting merry-men throng behind ;
The steed of princely Hamilton
Was fleetest than the mountain wind.

* The head of the family of Hamilton at this period was James, Earl of Arran, Duke of Chatelherault, in France, and first peer of the Scottish realm. In 1569, he was appointed by Queen Mary her lieutenant-general in Scotland, under the singular title of her adopted father.

From the thick copse the roebucks bound,
The startling red-deer scuds the plain,
For the hoarse bugle's warrior sound
Has roused their mountain haunts again.

Through the huge oaks of Evandale,
Whose limbs a thousand years have worn,
What sullen roar comes down the gale,
And drowns the hunter's pealing horn?

Mightiest of all the beasts of chase
That roam in woody Caledon,
Crashing the forest in his race,
The Mountain Bull comes thundering on.

Fierce, on the hunters' quivered band
He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,
Spurns, with black hoof and horn, the sand,
And tosses high his mane of snow.

Aimed well, the chieftain's lance has flown;
Struggling in blood the savage lies;
His roar is sunk in hollow groan —
Sound, merry huntsmen! sound the *pryse!**

'Tis noon—against the knotted oak
The hunters rest the idle spear;
Curls through the trees the slender smoke,
Where yeomen dignify the woodland cheer.

Proudly the chieftain marked his clan,
On greenwood lap all careless thrown,
Yet missed his eye the boldest man
That bore the name of Hamilton.

"Why fills not Bothwellhaugh his place,
Still wont our weal and woe to share?
Why comes he not our sport to grace?
Why shares he not our hunters' fare?"—

Stern Claud replied, with darkening face,
(Gray Pasley's haughty lord was he,)

"At merry feast, or buxom chase,
No more the warrior shalt thou see.

"Few suns have set, since Woodhouselee
Saw Bothwellhaugh's bright goblets foam,
When to his hearths, in social glee,
The war-worn soldier turned him home.

"There, wan from her maternal throes,
His Margaret, beautiful and mild,
Sate in her bower, a pallid rose,
And peaceful nursed her new-born child.

"Oh, change accursed! past are those days:
False Murray's ruthless spoilers came,
And, for the hearth's domestic blaze,
Ascends destruction's volumed flame.

* The note blown at the death of the game.

"What sheeted phantom wanders wild,
Where mountain Eske through woodland flows,
Her arms enfold a shadowy child—
Oh, is it she, the pallid rose?

"The wildered traveller sees her glide,
And hears her feeble voice with awe—
'Revenge,' she cries, 'on Murray's pride!
And woe for injured Bothwellhaugh!'"

He ceased—and cries of rage and grief
Burst mingling from the kindred band,
And half arose the kindling chief,
And half unsheathed his Arran brand.

But who, o'er bush, o'er stream, and rock,
Rides headlong, with resistless speed,
Whose bloody poniard's frantic stroke
Drives to the leap his jaded steed;

Whose cheek is pale, whose eyeballs glare,
As one some visioned sight that saw,
Whose hands are bloody, loose his hair?—
'Tis he! 'tis he! 'tis Bothwellhaugh!

From gory selle,* and reeling steed,
Sprung the fierce horseman with a bound,
And, reeking from the recent deed,
He dashed his carbine on the ground.

Sternly he spoke—"Tis sweet to hear
In good green-wood the bugle blown:
But sweeter to Revenge's ear,
To drink a tyrant's dying groan.

"Your slaughtered quarry proudly trod,
At dawning morn, o'er dale and down;
But prouder base-born Murray rode
Through old Linlithgow's crowded town.

"From the wild Border's humbled side,
In haughty triumph, marchèd he,
While Knox relaxed his bigot pride,
And smiled the traitorous pomp to see.

"But can stern Power, with all his vaunt,
Or Pomp, with all her courtly glare,
The settled heart of Vengeance daunt,
Or change the purpose of Despair?

"With hackbut bent, my secret stand,
Dark as the purposed deed, I chose,
And marked where, mingling in his band,
Trooped Scottish pikes and English bows.

"Dark Morton,† girt with many a spear,
Murder's foul minion, led the van;

* Saddle. A word used by Spencer, and other old authors.

† Of this noted person, it is enough to say that he was active in the murder of David Rizzio, and at least privy to that of Darnley.

And clashed their broadswords in the rear,
The wild Macfarlanes' plaided clan.

"Glencairn and stout Parkhead were nigh,
Obsequious at their Regent's rein,
And haggard Lindsay's iron eye,
That saw fair Mary weep in vain.

"Mid pennoned spears, a steely grove,
Proud Murray's plumage floated high;
Scarce could his trampling charger move,
So close the minions crowded nigh.

"From the raised visor's shade, his eye,
Dark rolling, glanced the ranks along,
And his steel truncheon, waved on high,
Seemed marshalling the iron throng.

"But yet his saddened brow confessed
A passing shade of doubt and awe;
Some fiend was whispering in his breast,
'Beware of injured Bothwellhaugh!'

"The death-shot parts—the charger springs—
Wild rises tumult's startling roar!—
And Murray's plumed helmet rings—
Rings on the ground, to rise no more.

"What joy the raptured youth can feel
To hear her love the loved one tell,
Or he, who broaches on his steel
The wolf, by whom his infant fell!

"But dearer to my injured eye,
To see in dust vroud Murray roll;
And mine was ten times trebled joy
To hear him groan his felon soul.

"My Margaret's spectre glided near;
With pride her bleeding victim saw;
And shrieked in his death-deafened ear,
'Remember injured Bothwellhaugh!'

"Then speed thee, noble Chatlerault!
Spread to the wind thy bannered tree!
Each warrior bend his Clydesdale bow!—
Murray is fallen, and Scotland free."

Vaults every warrior to his steed;
Loud bugles join their wild acclaim--

"Murray is fallen, and Scotland freed!
Couch, Arran! couch thy spear of flame!

But, see! the minstrel vision fails—
The glimmering spears are seen no more.
The shouts of war die on the gales,
Or sink in Evan's lonely roar.

For the loud bugle, pealing high,
The blackbird whistles down the vale.

And sunk in ivied ruins lie
 The bannered towers of Evandale.
 For chiefs, intent on bloody deed,
 And Vengeance, shouting o'er the slain,
 Lo! high-born Beauty rules the steed,
 Or graceful guides the silken rein.
 And long may Peace and Pleasure own
 The maids, who list the minstrel's tale;
 Nor e'er a ruder guest be known
 On the fair banks of Evandale!

THE GRAY BROTHER.

A FRAGMENT.

THE tradition upon which the tale is founded, regards a house upon the barony of Gilmerton, near Lasswade, in Mid-Lothian. This building, now called Gilmerton Grange, was formerly named Burndale, from the following tragic adventure:—The barony of Gilmerton belonged of yore to a gentleman named Heron, who had one beautiful daughter. This young lady was seduced by the Abbot of Newbattle, a richly-endowed abbey upon the banks of the South Eske, now a seat of the Marquis of Lothian. Heron came to the knowledge of this circumstance, and learned also that the lovers carried on their guilty intercourse by the contrivance of the lady's nurse, who lived at this house of Gilmerton Grange, or Burndale. He formed a resolution of bloody vengeance, undeterred by the supposed sanctity of the clerical character, or by the stronger claims of natural affection. Choosing, therefore, a dark and windy night, when the objects of his vengeance were engaged in a stoler interview, he set fire to a stack of dried thorns and other combustibles which he had caused to be piled against the house, and reduced to a pile of glowing ashes the dwelling, with all its inmates.

The scene with which the ballad opens, was suggested by a curious passage in the life of Alexander Peden, one of the wandering and persecuted teachers of the sect of Cameronians during the reign of Charles II. and that of his successor James II.

THE Pope he was saying the high, high mass,
 All on St Peter's day,
 With the power to him given, by the saints in
 heaven,
 To wash men's sins away.
 The Pope he was saying the blessed mass,
 And the people kneeled around,
 And from each man's soul his sins did pass,
 As he kissed the holy ground.
 And all among the crowded throng
 Was still, both limb and tongue,
 While through vaulted roof, and aisles aloft.
 The holy accents rung.

At the holiest word, he quivered for fear
And faltered in the sound—
And, when he would the chalice rear,
He dropped it on the ground.—

“The breath of one, of evil deed,
Pollutes our sacred day;
He has no portion in our creed,
No part in what I say:

“A being, whom no blessed word
To ghostly peace can bring;
A wretch, at whose approach abhorred,
Recoils each holy thing.

Up, up, unhappy! haste, arise!
My adjuration fear!
I charge thee not to stop my voice,
Nor longer tarry here!”—

Amid them all a Pilgrim kneeled,
In gown of sackcloth gray;
Far journeying from his native field,
He first saw Rome that day.

For forty days and nights so drear,
I ween, he had not spoke,
And, save with bread and water clear,
His fast he ne'er had broke.

Amid the penitential flock,
Seemed none more bent to pray;
But, when the Holy Father spoke,
He rose, and went his way.

Again unto his native land
His weary course he drew,
To Lothian's fair and fertile strand,
And Pentland's mountains blue.

His unblest feet his native seat,
'Mid Eske's fair woods, regain;
Through woods more fair no stream more sweet
Rolls to the eastern main.

And lords to meet the Pilgrim came,
And vassals bent the knee;
For all 'mid Scotland's chiefs of fame,
Was none more famed than he.

And boldly for his country, still,
In battle he had stood,
Ay, e'en when, on the banks of Till,
Her noblest poured their blood.

Sweet are the paths, oh, passing sweet!
By Eske's fair streams that run,
O'er airy steep, through copsewood deep,
Impervious to the sun.

THE GRAY BROTHER.

There the rapt poet's step may rove,
 And yield the muse the day;
 There Beauty, led by timid Love,
 May shun the tell-tale ray;

From that fair dome, where suit is paid
 By blast of bugle free,
 To Auchendinny's hazel glade,
 And haunted Woodhouselee.

Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,
 And Roslin's rocky glen,
 Dalkeith, which all the virtues love,
 And classic Hawthornden?

Yet never a path, from day to day
 The Pilgrim's footsteps range,
 Save but the solitary way
 To Burndale's ruined Grange.

A woeful place was that, I ween,
 As sorrow could desire;
 For, nodding to the fall was each crumbling wall,
 And the roof was scathed with fire.

It fell upon a summer's eve,
 While on Carnethy's head
 The last faint gleams of the sun's low beams
 Had streaked the gray with red;

And the convent bell did vespers tell,
 Newbottle's oaks among,
 And mingled with the solemn knell
 Our Ladye's evening song:

The heavy knell, the choir's faint swell,
 Came slowly down the wind,
 And on the Pilgrim's ear they fell,
 As his wonted path he did find.

Deep sunk in thought, I weon he was,
 Nor ever raised his eye
 Until he came to that dreary place,
 Which did all in ruins lie.

He gazed on the walls, so scathed with fire,
 With many a bitter groan—
 And there was aware of a Gray Friar,
 Resting him on a stone.

"Now, Christ thee save!" said the Gray Brother;
 "Some pilgrim thou seem'st to be;"
 But in sore amaze did Lord Albert gaze,
 Nor answer again made he.

"Oh, come ye from east, or come ye from west,
 Or bring relics from over the sea;
 Or come ye from the shrine of St James the divine,
 Or St John of Beverley?"—

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"I come not from the shrine of St James the
divine,
Nor bring relics from over the sea;
I bring but a curse from our father, the Pope,
Which for ever will cling to me."—

"Now, woeful pilgrim, say not so!
But kneel thee down by me,
And shrive thee so clean of thy deadly sin,
That absolved thou mayst be."—

"And who art thou, thou Gray Brother,
That I should shrive to thee,
When he, to whom are given the keys of earth and
heaven,
Has no power to pardon me?"—

"Oh, I am sent from a distant clime,
Five thousand miles away,
And all to absolve a foul, foul crime,
Done *here* 'twixt night and day."—

The Pilgrim kneeled him on the sand,
And thus began his saye—
When on his neck an ice-cold hand
Did that Gray Brother laye.

* * * * *

THOMAS THE RHYMER.

IN THREE PARTS.

Few personages are so renowned in tradition as Thomas of Erclidoune, known by the appellation of *The Rhymer*. Uniting, or supposing to unite, in his person the powers of poetical composition and of vaticination, his memory, even after the lapse of five hundred years, is regarded with veneration by his countrymen. To give anything like a certain history of this remarkable man would be indeed difficult; but the curious may derive some satisfaction from the particulars here brought together.

It is agreed on all hands that the residence, and probably the birthplace, of this ancient bard, was Erclidoune, a village situated upon the Leader, two miles above its junction with the Tweed. The ruins of an ancient tower are still pointed out as the Rhymer's castle. The uniform tradition bears that his surname was Lermont, or Learmont, and that the appellation of *The Rhymer* was conferred upon him in consequence of his poetical compositions. There remains, nevertheless, some doubt upon the subject.

We are better able to ascertain the period at which Thomas of Erclidoune lived, being the latter end of the thirteenth century. I am inclined to place his death a little further back than Mr Pinkerton, who supposes that he was alive in 1300.—(*List of Scottish Poets*.) It cannot be doubted that Thomas of Erclidoune was a remarkable and important person in his own time, since, very shortly after his death, we find him celebrated as a prophet and as a

poet. Whether he himself made any pretensions to the first of these characters, or whether it was gratuitously conferred upon him by the credulity of posterity, it seems difficult to decide. If we may believe Mackenzie, Learmont only versified the prophecies delivered by Eliza, an inspired nun of a convent at Haddington. But of this there seems not to be the most distant proof. On the contrary, all ancient authors who quote the Rhymer's prophecies uniformly suppose them to have been emitted by himself.

The popular tale bears that Thomas was carried off at an early age to the Fairy Land, where he acquired all the knowledge which made him afterwards so famous. After seven years' residence, he was permitted to return to the earth to enlighten and astonish his countrymen by his prophetic powers; still, however, remaining bound to return to his royal mistress when she should intimate her pleasure. Accordingly, while Thomas was making merry with his friends in the Tower of Ereildoune, a person came running in, and told, with marks of fear and astonishment, that a hart and hind had left the neighbouring forest, and were composedly and slowly parading the street of the village. The prophet instantly arose, left his habitation, and followed the wonderful animals to the forest, whence he was never seen to return. According to the popular belief, he still "drees his weird" in Fairy Land, and is one day expected to revisit earth. In the meanwhile, his memory is held in the most profound respect. The Eildon Tree, from beneath the shade of which he delivered his prophecies, now no longer exists; but the spot is marked by a large stone, called the Eildon Tree Stone. A neighbouring rivulet takes the name of the Bogle Burn (Goblin Brook) from the Rhymer's supernatural visitants.

It seemed to the Editor unpardonable to dismiss a person so important in Border tradition as the Rhymer, without some further notice than a simple commentary upon the following ballad. It is given from a copy obtained from a lady residing not far from Ereildoune, corrected and enlarged by one in Mrs Brown's MSS. The former copy, however, as might be expected, is far more minute as to local description. To this old tale the Editor has ventured to add a Second Part, consisting of a kind of conto from the printed prophecies vulgarly ascribed to the Rhymer; and a Third Part, entirely modern, founded upon the tradition of his having returned with the hart and hind to the Land of Faerie. To make his peace with the more severe antiquaries, the Editor has prefixed to the Second Part some remarks on Learmont's prophecies.

PART FIRST.

ANCIENT.

TRUE Thomas lay on Huntlie bank;
A ferlie he spied wi' his e'e;
And there he saw a ladye bright,
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;
At ilka tott of her horse's mane
Hang fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas, he pulled aff his cap,
And louted low down to his knee,—

"All hail, thou mighty queen of heaven!
For thy peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she said;
"That name does not belong to me
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
That am hither come to visit thee."

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she said;
"Harp and carp along with me,
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird shall never danton me."
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

"Now, ye maun go wi' me," she said;
"True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Through weal or woe as may chance to be."

She mounted on her milk-white steed;
She's ta'en true Thomas up behind;
And aye, whene'er her bridle rung,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

O they rade on, and farther on;
The steed gaed swifter than the wind,
Until they reached a desert wide,
And living land was left behind.

"Light down, light down, now, true Thomas
And lean your head upon my knee:
Abide, and rest a little space,
And I will show you ferlies three."

"O see ye not yon narrow road,
So thick beset with thorns and briers?—
That is the path of righteousness,
Though after it but few inquire."

"And see not ye that braid, braid road,
That lies across that lily leven?—
That is the path of wickedness,
Though some call it the road to heaven."

"And see not ye that bonny road,
That winds about the fernie brae?—
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where thou and I this night maun gae."

"But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever ye may hear or see;
For, if you speak word in Elfynd land,
Ye'll ne'er get back to your ain countrie."

O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded through rivers aboon the knae.

And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk, mirk night, and there was nae stern light,
And they waded through red blude to the kneec,
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
Rins through the springs o' that countrie.

Syne they came on to a garden green,
And she pu'd an apple frae a tree,—
"Take this for thy wages, true Thomas;
It will give thee the tongue that can never lie."

"My tongue is mine ain," true Thomas said—
"A gudely gift ye wad gie to me!
I neither dought to buy nor sell
At fair or tryst where I may be.

"I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye."
"Now hold thy peace!" the ladye said,
"For, as I say, so must it be."

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green;
And, till seven years were gane and past,
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

PART SECOND.

ALTERED FROM ANCIENT PROPHECIES.

THE prophecies ascribed to Thomas of Erildoune have been the principal means of securing to him remembrance "amongst the sons of his people." The author of "Sir Tristrem" would long ago have joined in the vale of oblivion, "Clerk of Tranent, who wrote the adventure of 'Schir Gawain,'" if, by good hap, the same current of ideas respecting antiquity which causes Virgil to be regarded as a magician by the Lazaroni of Naples, had not exalted the bard of Erildoune to the prophetic character. Perhaps, indeed, he himself affected it during his life. We know at least for certain, that a belief in his supernatural knowledge was current soon after his death. His prophecies are alluded to by Barbour, by Winton, and by Henry the Minstrel, or *Blind Harry*, as he is usually termed. None of these authors, however, give the words of any of the Rhymer's vaticinations, but merely narrate historically his having predicted the events of which they speak. The earliest of the prophecies ascribed to him which is now extant, is quoted by Mr Pinkerton from a MS. It is supposed to be a response from Thomas of Erildoune to a question from the heroic Countess of March, renowned for the defence of the Castle of Dunbar against the English, and termed, in the familiar dialect of her time, *Black*

* The traditional commentary upon this ballad informs us, that the apple was the produce of the fatal Tree of Knowledge, and that the garden was the terrestrial paradise. The repugnance of Thomas to be debarred the use of falsehood when he might find it convenient, has a comic effect.

Agnes of Dunbar. This prophecy is remarkable, in so far as it bears very little resemblance to any verses published in the printed copy of the Rhymers' supposed prophecies.

Corspatrick, (Comes Patrick,) earl of March, but more commonly taking his title from his castle of Dunbar, acted a noted part during the wars of Edward I. in Scotland. As Thomas of Erildoune is said to have delivered to him his famous prophecy of King Alexander's death, the author has chosen to introduce him into the following ballad. All the prophetic verses are selected from Hart's publication.

WHEN seven years were come and gane,
The sun blinked fair on pool and stream
And Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
Like one awakened from a dream.

He heard the trampling of a steed,
He saw the flash of armour flee,
And he beheld a gallant knight
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

He was a stalwart knight, and strong;
Of gaint make he 'peared to be;
He stirred his horse, as he were wode,
Wi' gilded spurs, of faushion free.

Says—"Well met, well met, true Thomas!

Some uncouth ferlies show to me."

Says—"Christ thee save, Corspatrick brave!

Thrice welcome, good Dunbar, to me!

"Light down, light down, Corspatrick brave,
And I will show thee curses three,
Shall gar fair Scotland greet and grane,
And change the green to the black livery.

"A storm shall roar, this very hour,
From Rosse's Hills to Solway Sea."
Ye lied, ye lied, ye warlock hoar!
For the sun shines sweet on fauld and lea."

He put his hand on the earlie's head;
He showed him a rock, beside the sea,
Where a king lay stiff, beneath his stead,*
And steel-dight nobles wiped their e'e.

"The neist curse lights on Branxton Hills;
By Flodden's high and heathery side,
Shall wave a banner, red as blude,
And chieftains throng wi' meikle pride.

"A Scottish king shall come full keen;
The ruddy lion beareth he:
A feathered arrow sharp, I ween,
Shall make him wink and warre to sea.

"When he is bloody, and all to bledde,
Thus to his men he still shall say—

* King Alexander, killed by a fall from his horse near Kinghorn

' For God's sake, turn ye back again,
And give yon southern folk a fray!
Why should I lose the right is mine?
My doom is not to die this day.*

' Yet turn ye to the eastern hand,
And woe and wonder ye sall see;
How forty thousand spearmen stand
Where yon rank river meets the sea.

"There shall the lion lose the gylte,
And the libbards bear it clean away;
At Pinkyn Cleuch there shall be spilt
Much gentil blude that day."

"Enough, enough, of curse and ban;
Some blessing show thou now to me,
Or, by the faith o' my bodie," Corspatrick said,
"Ye shall rue the day ye e'er saw me!"

"The first of blessings I shall thee show,
Is by a burn, that's called of bread;
Where Saxon men shall tine the bow,
And find their arrows lack the head.

"Beside that brigg, out ower that burn,
Where the water bickereth bright and sheen,
Shall many a falling courser spurn,
And knights shall die in battle keen.

"Beside a headless cross of stone,
The libbards there shall lose the gree;
The raven shall come, the erne shall go,
And drink the Saxon blood sae free.
The cross of stone they shall not know,
So thick the corses there shall be."

"But tell me now," said brave Dunbar,
"True Thomas, tell now unto me,
What man shall rule the isle Britain,
Even from the north to the southern sea?"

A French queen shall bear the son,
Shall rule all Britain to the sea;
He of the Bruce's blood shall come,
As near as in the ninth degree.

"The waters worship shall his race;
Likewise the waves of the farthest sea;
For they shall ride ower ocean wide,
With hempen bridles, and horse of tree."

* The uncertainty which long prevailed in Scotland concerning the fate of James IV. is well known.

PART THIRD.

MODERN.

THOMAS THE RHYMER was renowned among his contemporaries as the author of the celebrated romance of "Sir Tristrem." Of this once-admired poem, only one copy is now known to exist, which is in the Advocates' Library. The Editor, in 1804, published a small edition of this curious work, which, if it does not revive the reputation of the bard of Ercildoune, is at least the earliest specimen of Scottish poetry hitherto published. Some account of this romance has already been given to the world in Mr ELLIS's "Specimens of Ancient Poetry," vol. i., p. 165, part iii., 410,—a work to which our predecessors and our posterity are alike obliged; the former for the preservation of the best-selected examples of their poetical taste, and the latter for a history of the English language, which will only cease to be interesting with the existence of our mother-tongue, and all that genius and learning have recorded in it. It is sufficient here to mention, that so great was the reputation of the romance of "Sir Tristrem," that few were thought capable of reciting it after the manner of the author.

The following attempt to commemorate the Rhymer's poetical fame, and the traditional account of his marvellous return to Fairy Land, being entirely modern, would have been placed with greater propriety among the class of Modern Ballads, had it not been for its immediate connexion with the First and Second Parts of the same story.

WHEN seven years more had come and gone,
Was war through Scotland spread,
And Ruberslaw showed high Dunyon
His beacon blazing red.

Then all by bonny Coldingknow,
Pitched palliouns took their room,
And crested helms, and spears a rowe,
Glanced gaily through the broom.

The Leader, rolling to the Tweed,
Resounds the ensenzie;*
They roused the deer from Caddenhead,
To distant Torwoodlee.

The feast was spread in Ercildoune,
In Learmont's high and ancient hall;
And there were knights of great renown,
And ladies, laced in pall.

Nor lacked they, while they sat at dine,
The music nor the tale,
Nor goblets of the blood-red wine,
Nor mantling quaighs† of ale.

True Thomas rose, with harp in hand,
When as the feast was done;

* War-cry, or gathering-word.

† Wooden cups, composed of staves hooped together.

(In minstrel strife, in Fairy Land,
The elfin harp he won.)

Hushed were the throng, both limb and tongue,
And harpers for envy pale;
And armed lords leaned on their swords,
And hearkened to the tale.

In numbers high, the witching tale
The prophet poured along;
No after bard might e'er avail
Those numbers to prolong.

Yet fragments of the lofty strain
Float down the tide of years,
As, buoyant on the stormy main,
A parted wreck appears.

He sung King Arthur's table round:
The warrior of the lake;
How courteous Gawaine met the wound,
And bled for ladies' sake.

But chief, in gentle Tristrem's praise,
The notes melodious swell;
Was none excelled in Arthur's days,
The knight of Lionelle.

For Marke, his cowardly uncle's right,
A venomed wound he bore;
When fierce Morholde he slew in fight,
Upon the Irish shore.

No art the poison might withstand;
No medicine could be found,
Till lovely Isolde's lily hand
Had probed the rankling wound.

With gentle hand and soothing tongue,
She bore the leech's part;
And, while she o'er his sick-bed hung,
He paid her with his heart.

Oh, fatal was the gift, I ween!
For, doomed in evil tide,
The maid must be rude Cornwall's queen,
His cowardly uncle's bride.

Their loves, their woes, the gifted bard
In fairy tissue wove;
Where lords, and knights, and ladies bright
In gay confusion strove.

The Garde Joyeuse, amid the tale,
High reared its glittering head;
And Avalon's enchanted vale
In all its wonders spread.

Brangwain was there, and Segramore,
And fiend-born Merlin's gramurys;

Of that famed wizard's mighty lore,
Oh, who could sing but he!

Through many a maze the winning song
In changeful passion led,
Till bent at length the listening throng
O'er Tristrem's dying bed.

His ancient wounds their scars expand
With agony his heart is wrung:
Oh, where is Isolde's lily hand,
And where her soothing tongue?

She comes, she comes!—like flash of flame
Can lovers' footsteps fly:
She comes, she comes!—she only came
To see her Tristrem die.

She saw him die: her latest sigh
Joined in a kiss his parting breath:
The gentlest pair that Britain bare,
United are in death.

There paused the harp; its lingering sound
Died slowly on the ear;
The silent guests still bent around,
For still they seemed to hear.

Then woe broke forth in murmurs weak
Nor ladies heaved alone the sigh;
But, half ashamed, the rugged cheek
Did many a gauntlet dry.

On Leader's stream, and Learmont's tower,
The mists of evening close;
In camp, in castle, or in bower
Each warrior sought repose.

Lord Douglas in his lofty tent,
Dreamed o'er the woeful tale;
When footsteps light, across the bent,
The warrior's ears assail.

He starts, he wakes:—"What, Richard, ho!
Arise, my page, arise!
What venturous wight, at dead of night,
Dare step where Douglas lies?"

Then forth they rushed: by Leader's tide.
A selcouth* sight they see—
A hart and hind pace side by side
As white as snow on Fairnalie.

Beneath the moon, with gesture proud,
They stately move and slow;
Nor scare they at the gathering crowd,
Who marvel as they go.

* Wondrous.

To Learmont's tower a message sped,
As fast as page might run;
And Thomas started from his bed,
And soon his clothes did on.

First he woxe pale, and then woxe red;
Never a word he spake but three;—
"My sand is run; my thread is spun;
This sign regardeth me."

The elfin harp his neck around,
In minstrel guise, he hung;
And on the wind, in doleful sound,
Its dying accents rung.

Then forth he went; yet turned him oft
To view his ancient hall;
On the gray tower, in lustre soft,
The autumn moonbeams fall.

And Leader's waves, like silver sheen,
Danced shimmering in the ray:
In deepening mass, at distance seen,
Broad Soltra's mountains lay.

"Farewell, my father's ancient tower!
A long farewell," said he:
"The scene of pleasure, pomp, or power,
Thou never more shalt be.

"To Learmont's name no foot of earth
Shall here again belong,
And on thy hospitable hearth
The hare shall leave her young.

"Adieu! Adieu!" again he cried.
All as he turned him roun'—
"Farewell to Leader's silver tide!
Farewell to Ercildoune!"

The hart and hind approached the place.
As lingering yet he stood;
And there, before Lord Douglas' face,
With them he crossed the flood.

Lord Douglas leaped on his berry-brown steed,
And spurred him the Leader o'er;
But, though he rode with lightning speed,
He never saw them more.

Some said to hill, and some to glen,
Their wondrous course had been;
But ne'er in haunts of living men
Again was Thomas seen.

WAR SONG

OF THE ROYAL EDINBURGH LIGHT DRAGOONS.

THE following War-song was written during the apprehension of an invasion. The corps of volunteers, to which it was addressed, was raised in 1797, consisting of gentlemen, mounted and armed at their own expense. It still subsists, as the Right Troop of the Royal Mid-Lothian Light Cavalry, commanded by the Hon. Lieutenant-Colonel Dundas. The noble and constitutional measure of arming freemen in defence of their own rights, was nowhere more successful than in Edinburgh, which furnished a force of 3000 armed and disciplined volunteers, including a regiment of cavalry, from the city and county, and two corps of artillery, each capable of serving twelve guns. To such a force, above all others, might, in similar circumstances, be applied the exhortation of our ancient Galgacus: "*Proinde ituri in aciem, et majores vestros et posteros cogitate.*"

To horse! to horse! the standard flies,
The bugles sound the call;
The Gallic navy stems the seas,
The voice of battle's on the breeze,—
Arouse ye, one and all!

From high Dunedin's towers we come,
A band of brothers true;
Our casques the leopard's spoils surround,
With Scotland's hardy thistle crowned;
We boast the red and blue.*

Though tamely crouch to Gallia's frown
Dull Holland's tardy train;
Their ravished toys though Romans mourn,
Though gallant Switzers vainly spurn,
And, foaming, gnaw the chain;

Oh, had they marked the avenging call
Their brethren's† murder gave,
Disunion no'er their ranks had mown.
Nor patriot valour, desperate grown,
Sought freedom in the grave!

Shall we, too, bend the stubborn head,
In Freedom's temple born,
Dress our pale cheek in timid smile,
To hail a master in our isle,
Or brook a victor's scorn?

* The Royal colours.

† The allusion is to the massacre of the Swiss guards, on the fatal 10th August 1792. It is painful, but not useless to remark, that the passive temper with which the Swiss regarded the death of their bravest countrymen, mercilessly slaughtered in discharge of their duty, encouraged and authorised the progressive injustice by which the Alps, once the seat of the most virtuous and free people on the Continent, at length have been converted into the citadel of a foreign and military despot. A state degraded, is half-enslaved.

WAR SONG.

No! though destruction o'er the land
Come pouring as a flood,
The sun, that sees our falling day,
Shall mark our sabres' deadly sway,
And set that night in blood.

For gold let Gallia's legions fight,
Or plunder's bloody gain;
Unbribed, unbought, our swords we draw,
To guard our King, to fence our Law,
Nor shall their edge be vain.

If ever breath of British gale
Shall fan the tricolor,
Or footstep of invader rude,
With rapine foul, and red with blood,
Pollute our happy shore,—

Then farewell, home! and farewell, friends!
Adieu, each tender tie!
Resolved, we mingle in the tide,
Where charging squadrons furious ride,
To conquer, or to die.

To horse! to horse! the sabres gleam;
High sounds our bugle call;
Combined by honour's sacred tie;
Our word is *Laws and Liberty!*
March forward, one and all

TRANSLATIONS AND IMITATIONS OF GERMAN BALLADS.

THE CHASE.

THIS and the following ballad were first published anonymously in a small book, entitled, "The Chase and William and Helen;" two ballads, from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger. Edinburgh: Printed by Mundell and Son, Bank Close, for Manners and Miller, Parliament Square; and sold by T. Cadell, jun., and W. Davies, in the Strand, London. 1796. 4to. It goes generally by the title, "The Wild Huntsman."]

THIS is a translation, or rather an imitation of the "Wilde Jäger" of the German poet Bürger. The tradition upon which it is founded bears, that formerly a Wildgrave, or keeper of a royal forest, named Falkenburg, was so much addicted to the pleasures of the chase, and otherwise so extremely profligate and cruel, that he not only followed this unhallowed amusement on the Sabbath, and other days consecrated to religious duty, but accompanied it with the most unheard-of oppression upon the poor peasants who were under his vassalage. When this second Nimrod died, the people adopted a superstition, founded probably on the many various uncouth sounds heard in the depth of a German forest during the silence of the night. They conceived they still heard the cry of the Wildgrave's hounds; and the well-known cheer of the deceased hunter, the sounds of his horse's feet, and the rustling of the branches before the game, the pack, and the sportsmen, are also distinctly discriminated; but the phantoms are rarely, if ever visible. Once, as a benighted *Chasseur* heard this infernal chase pass by him, at the sound of the halloo with which the Spectre Huntsman cheered his hounds, he could not refrain from crying, "*Glück zu Falkenburg!*" [Good sport to ye, Falkenburg!] "Dost thou wish me good sport?" answered a hoarse voice; "thou shalt share the game;" and there was thrown at him what seemed to be a huge piece of foul carrion. The daring *Chasseur* lost two of his best horses soon after, and never perfectly recovered the personal effects of this ghostly greeting. This tale, though told with some variations, is universally believed all over Germany.

The French had a similar tradition concerning an aerial hunter, who infested the forest of Fontainebleau

I.

THE Wildgrave winds his bugle horn,
To horse, to horse! halloo, halloo!
His fiery courser snuffs the morn,
And thronging serfs their lords pursue

II.

The eager pack, from couples freed,
Dash through the bush, the brier, the brake;
While, answering hound, and horn, and steed,
The mountain echoes startling wake.

III.

The beams of God's own hallowed day
Had painted yonder spire with gold,
And, calling sinful man to pray,
Loud, long, and deep, the bell had tolled.

IV.

But still the Wildgrave onward rides;
Halloo, halloo! and, hark again!
When, spurring from opposing sides,
Two Stranger Horsemen join the train

V.

Who was each Stranger, left and right,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell;
The right-hand steed was silver white,
The left, the swarthy hue of hell.

VI.

The right-hand horseman, young and fair,
His smile was like the morn of May;
The left, from eye of tawny glare,
Shot midnight lightning's lurid ray.

VII.

He waved his huntsman's cap on high,
Cried, "Welcome, welcome, noble lord!
What sport can earth, or sea, or sky,
To match the princely chase afford?"—

VIII.

"Cease thy loud bugle's clanging knell,"
Cried the fair youth with silver voice;
"And for Devotion's choral swell,
Exchange the rude unhalloved noise.

IX.

"To-day, the ill-omened chase forbear,
Yon bell yet summons to the fane;
To-day the Warning Spirit hear,
To-morrow thou mayst mourn in vain."

X.

"Away, and sweep the glades along!"
The Sable Hunter hoarse replies;
"To muttering monks leave matin-song,
And bells, and books, and mysteries."

XI.

The Wildgrave spurred his ardent steed,
And, launching forward with a bound,
"Who, for thy drowsy priestlike rede,
Would leave the jovial horn and hound?"

XII.

"Hence, if our manly sport offend!
With pious fools go chant and pray:—
Well hast thou spoke, my dark-browed friend;
Halloo, halloo! and, hark away!"—

XIII.

The Wildgrave spurred his courser light,
O'er moss and moor, o'erholt and hill;
And on the left, and on the right,
Each Stranger Horseman followed still.

XIV.

Up springs, from yonder tangled thorn,
A stag more white than mountain snow;
And louder rung the Wildgrave's horn,
"Hark, forward, forward! holla, ho!"

XV.

A heedless wretch has crossed the way;
He gasps the thundering hoofs below;—
But, live who can, or die who may,
Still, "Forward, forward!" On they go.

XVI.

See, where yon simple fences meet,
A field with autumn's blessings crowned;
See, prostrate at the Wildgrave's feet,
A husbandman, with toil embrowned:

XVII.

"O mercy, mercy, noble lord!
Spare the poor's pittance," was his cry.
"Earned by the sweat these brows have poured,
In scorching hour of fierce July."—

XVIII.

Earnest the right-hand Stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey;
The impetuous Earl no warning heeds,
But furious holds the onward way.

XIX.

"Away, thou hound! so basely born,
Or dread the scourge's echoing blow!"
Then loudly rung his bugle-horn,
"Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"

XX.

So said, so done:—A single bound
Clears the poor labourer's humble pale;
Wild follows man, and horse, and hound,
Like dark December's stormy gale.

XXI.

And man, and horse, and hound, and horn,
Destructive sweep the field along;
While, joying o'er the wasted corn,
Fell Famine marks the maddening throng.

XXII.

Again up-roused the timorous prey
Scours moss, and moor, andholt, and hill;
Hard run, he feels his strength decay,
And trusts for life his simple skill.

XXIII.

Too dangerous solitude appeared;
He seeks the shelter of the crowd;
Amid the flock's domestic herd
His harmless head he hopes to shroud.

XXIV.

O'er moss, and moor, andholt, and hill,
His track the steady bloodhounds trace;
O'er moss and moor, unwearied still,
The furious Earl pursues the chase.

XXV.

Full lowly did the herdsman fall;—
"O spare, thou noble Baron, spare
These herds, a widow's little all;
These flocks, an orphan's fleecy care."—

XXVI.

Earnest the right-hand Stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey;
The Earl nor prayer nor pity heeds,
But furious keeps the onward way.

XXVII.

—"Unmannered dog! To stop my sport
Vain were thy cant and beggar whine,
Though human spirits, of thy sort,
Were tenants of these carrion kine!"—

XXVIII.

Again he winds his bugle-horn,
"Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"
And through the herd, in ruthless scorn,
He cheers his furious hounds to go.

XXIX.

In heaps the throttled victims fall;
Down sinks their mangled herdsman near,
The murderous cries the stag appal,—
Again he starts, new nerved by fear.

XXX.

With blood besmeared, and white with foam,
While big the tears of anguish pour,
He seeks, amid the forest's gloom,
The humble hermit's hallowed bower.

XXXI.

But man, and horse, and horn, and hound,
 Fast rattling on his traces go;
 The sacred chapel rung around
 With, "Hark away; and, holla, ho!"

XXXII.

All mild, amid the rout profane,
 The holy hermit poured his prayer;—
 "Forbear with blood God's house to stain;
 Revere his altar, and forbear!"

XXXIII.

"The meanest brute has rights to plead,
 Which, wronged by cruelty, or pride,
 Draw vengeance on the ruthless head:
 Be warned at length, and turn aside."—

XXXIV.

Still the Fair Horseman anxious pleads;
 The Black, wild whooping, points the prey:—
 Alas! the Earl no warning heeds,
 But frantic keeps the forward way.

XXXV.

"Holy or not, or right or wrong,
 Thy altar, and its rites, I spurn;
 Not sainted martyrs' sacred song,
 Not God himself, shall make me turn!"—

XXXVI.

He spurs his horse, he winds his horn,
 "Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"—
 But off, on whirlwind's pinions borne,
 The stag, the hut, the hermit, go.

XXXVII.

And horse, and man, and horn, and hound,
 And clamour of the chase was gone;
 For hoofs, and howls, and bugle sound,
 A deadly silence reigned alone.

XXXVIII.

Wild gazed the affrighted Earl around;
 He strove in vain to wake his horn;
 In vain to call; for not a sound
 Could from his anxious lips be borne.

XXXIX.

He listens for his trusty hounds;
 No distant baying reached his ears:
 His courser, rooted to the ground,
 The quickening spur unmindful bears.

XL.

Still dark and darker frown the shades,
 Dark, as the darkness of the grave;
 And not a sound the still invades,
 Save what a distant torrent gave.

THE CHASE

XL.

High o'er the sinner's humbled head
At length the solemn silence broke;
And, from a cloud of swarthy red,
The awful voice of thunder spoke:

XLII.

"Oppressor of creation fair!
Apostate Spirits' hardened tool!
Scorner of God! Scourge of the poor!
The measure of thy cup is full.

XLIII.

"Be chased for ever through the wood,
For ever roam the affrighted wild;
And let thy fate instruct the proud,
God's meanest creature is his child."

XLIV.

'Twas hushed: One flash, of sombre glare
With yellow tinged the forests brown;
Up rose the Wildgrave's bristling hair,
And horror chilled each nerve and bone.

XLV.

Cold poured the sweat in freezing rill;
A rising wind began to sing;
And louder, louder, louder still,
Brought storm and tempest on its wing.

XLVI.

Earth heard the call;—Her entrails rend;
From yawning rifts, with many a yell,
Mixed with sulphureous flames, ascend
The misbegotten dogs of hell.

XLVII.

What ghastly Huntsman next arose,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell;
His eye like midnight lightning glows,
His steed the swarthy hue of hell.

XLVIII.

The Wildgrave flies o'er bush and thorn,
With many a shriek of helpless woe;
Behind him hound, and horse, and horn,
And, "Hark away, and holla, ho!"

XLIX.

With wild despair's reverted eye,
Close, close behind, he marks the throng
With bloody fangs, and eager cry;—
In frantic fear he scours along.

L.

Still, still shall last the dreadful chase,
Till time itself shall have an end:
By day, they scour earth's caverned space,
At midnight's witching hour, ascend.

LI.

This is the horn, the hound, and horse,
That oft the 'lated peasant hears;
Appalled, he signs the frequent cross,
When the wild din invades his ears.

LII.

The wakeful priest oft drops a tear
For human pride, for human woe,
When, at his midnight mass, he hears
The infernal cry of, "Holla, ho!"

WILLIAM AND HELEN

In the preface to the edition published anonymously in 1796, Sir Walter Scott says:—"The first two lines of the forty-seventh stanza, descriptive of the speed of the lovers, may perhaps bring to the recollection of many a passage extremely similar in a translation of "*Leonora*," which first appeared in the "*Monthly Magazine*." In justice to himself, the translator thinks it his duty to acknowledge that his curiosity was first attracted to this truly romantic story by a gentleman, who having heard "*Leonora*" once read in manuscript, could only recollect the general outlines, and part of a couplet which, from the singularity of its structure and frequent recurrence, had remained impressed upon his memory. If, from despair of rendering the passage so happily, the property of another has been invaded, the translator makes the only atonement now in his power by restoring it thus publicly to the rightful owner. For the information of those to whom such obsolete expressions may be less familiar, it may be noticed that the word *serv* means a vassal; and that to *bush* and *bourne*, is to dress and prepare one's self for a journey.

I.

From heavy dreams fair Helen rose
And eyed the dawning red:
"Alas, my love, thou tarriest long!
Oh, art thou false or dead?"

II.

With gallant Frederick's princely power
He sought the bold Crusade;
But not a word from Judah's wars
Told Helen how he sped.

III.

With Paynim and with Saracen
At length a truce was made,
And every knight returned to dry
The tears his love had shed.

IV.

Our gallant host was homeward bound
With many a song of joy;
Green waved the laurel in each plume,
The badge of victory.

V.

Ald old and young, and sire and son,
To meet them crowd the way,
With shouts, and mirth, and melody,
The debt of love to pay.

VI.

Full many a maid her true love met,
And sobbed in his embrace,
And fluttering joy in tears and smiles
Arrayed full many a face.

VII.

Nor joy nor smile for Helen sad;
She sought the host in vain;
For none could tell her William's fate,
If faithless, or if slain.

VIII.

The martial band is passed and gone;
She rends her raven hair,
And in distraction's bitter mood
She weeps with wild despair.

IX.

"Oh, rise, my child," her mother said,
"Nor sorrow thus in vain;
A perjured lover's fleeting heart
No tears recall again."

X.

"O mother, what is gone, is gone,
What's lost, for ever lost:
Death, death alone can comfort me;
Oh, had I ne'er been born!

XI.

Oh, break, my heart, oh, break at once!
Drink my life-blood, Despair!
No joy remains on earth for me,
For me in heaven no share."

XII.

"Oh, enter not in judgment, Lord!"
The pious mother prays;
"Impute not guilt to thy frail child!
She knows not what she says.

XIII.

"Oh, say thy Pater Noster, child!
Oh, turn to God and grace!
His will, that turned thy bliss to bale,
Can change thy bale to bliss."

XIV.

"O mother, mother! What is bliss?
O mother, what is bale?
My William's love was heaven on earth,
Without it earth is hell.

XV.

"Why should I pray to ruthless Heaven,
Since my loved William's slain?
I only prayed for William's sake,
And all my prayers were vain."

XVI.

"Oh, take the sacrament, my child,
And check these tears that flow;
By resignation's humble prayer,
Oh, hallowed be thy woe!"

XVII.

"No sacrament can quench this fire,
Or slake this scorching pain:
No sacrament can bid the dead
Arise and live again."

XVIII.

"Oh, break, my heart, oh, break at once!
Be thou my god, Despair!
Heaven's heaviest blow has fallen on me,
And vain each fruitless prayer."

XIX.

"Oh, enter not in judgment, Lord,
With thy frail child of clay!
She knows not what her tongue has spoke;
Impute it not, I pray!"

XX.

"Forbear, my child, this desperate woe,
And turn to God and grace;
Well can devotion's heavenly glow
Convert thy bale to bliss."

XXI.

"O mother, mother, what is bliss?
O mother, what is bale?
Without my William what were heaven,
Or with him what were hell?"

XXII.

Wild she arraigns the eternal doom,
Upbraids each sacred power,
Till, spent, she sought her silent room
All in the lonely tower.

XXIII.

She beat her breast, she wrung her hands,
Till sun and day were o'er,
And through the glimmering lattice shone
The twinkling of the star.

XXIV.

Then, crash! the heavy drawbridge fell,
That o'er the moat was hung;
And, clatter! clatter! on its boards
The hoof of courser rung.

XXV.

The clank of echoing steel was heard
As off the rider bounded;
And slowly on the winding stair
A heavy footstep sounded.

XXVI.

And hark! and hark! a knock—Tap! tap!
A rustling stifled noise;—
Door-latch and tinkling staples ring—
At length a whispering voice.

XXVII.

"Awake, awake, arise, my love!
How, Helen, dost thou fare?
Wakest thou, or sleep'st? laugh'st thou, or weep'st!
Hast thought on me, my fair?"

XXVIII.

"My love! my love!—so late by night!—
I waked, I wept for thee:—
Much have I borne since dawn of morn;
Where, William, couldst thou be?"

XXIX.

"We saddle late—from Hungary
I rode since darkness fell;
And to its bourne we both return
Before the matin-bell."

XXX.

"Oh, rest this night within my arms,
And warm thee in their fold!
Chill howls through hawthorn-bush the wind:—
My love is deadly cold."

XXXI.

"Let the wind howl through hawthorn-bush!
'This night we must away;
The steed is wight, the spur is bright;
I cannot stay till day."

XXXII.

"Buck, buck, and boun! Thou mount'st behind
Upon my black Barb steed:
O'er stock and stile, a hundred miles,
We haste to bridal bed."

XXXIII.

"To-night—to-night a hundred miles!—
O dearest William, stay!
The bell strikes twelve—dark, dismal hour!
Oh, wait, my love, till day!"

XXXIV.

"Look here, look here—the moon shines clear—
Full fast I ween we ride;
Mount and away! for ere the day
We reach our bridal bed."

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

XXXV.

"The black Barb snorts, the bridle rings;
Haste, busk, and boune, and seat thee!
The feast is made, the chamber spread,
The bridal guests await thee."

XXXVI.

Strong love prevailed: She busks, she bounes,
She mounts the Barb behind,
And round her darling William's waist
Her lily arms she twined.

XXXVII.

And, hurry! hurry! off they rode,
As fast as fast might be;
Spurned from the courser's thundering heels
The flashing pebbles flee.

XXXVIII.

And on the right, and on the left,
Ere they could snatch a view,
Fast, fast each mountain, mead, and plain,
And cot and castle flew.

XXXIX.

"Sit fast—dost fear?—The moon shines clear—
Fleet rides my Barb—keep hold!
Fear'st thou?"—"Oh no!" she faintly said;
"But why so stern and cold?"

XL.

"What yonder rings? what yonder sings?
Why shrieks the owl gray?"—
"'Tis death-bells' clang, 'tis funeral song,
The body to the clay."

XLI.

"With song and clang, at morrow's dawn,
Ye may inter the dead:
To-night I ride, with my young bride,
To deck our bridal bed."

XLII.

"Come with thy choir, thou coffined guest,
To swell our nuptial song!
Come, priest, to bless our marriage feast!
Come all, come all along!"

XLIII.

Ceased clang and song; down sunk the bier;
The shrouded corpse arose:
And, hurry, hurry! all the train
The thundering steed pursues.

XLIV.

And, forward! forward! on they go;
High snorts the straining steed;
Thick pants the rider's labouring breath,
As headlong on they speed.

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

XLV.

O William, why this savage haste?
And where thy bridal bed?"—
"Tis distant far."—"Still short and stern?"
"Tis narrow, trustless maid."

XLVI.

"No room for me?"—"Enough for both;—
Speed, speed, my Barb, thy course!"
O'er thundering bridge, through boiling surge,
He drove the furious horse.

XLVII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The steed is wight, the spur is bright,
The flashing pebbles flee.

XLVIII.

Fled past on right and left how fast
Each forest, grove, and bower;
On right and left fled past how fast
Each city, town, and tower.

XLIX.

"Dost fear? dost fear?—The moon shines clear;—
Dost fear to ride with me?—
Hurrah! hurrah! The dead can ride!"—
"O William, let them be!"

L.

"See there, see there! What yonder swings
And creaks 'mid whistling rain?"—
"Gibbet and steel, the accursed wheel;
A murderer in his chain.

LI.

"Hollo! thou felon, follow here:
To bridal bed we ride;
And thou shalt prance a fetter dance
Before me and my bride."

LII.

And hurry, hurry! clash, clash, clash!
The wasted form descends;
And fleet as wind through hazel-bush
The wild career attends.

LIII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood.
The flashing pebbles flee.

LIV.

How fled what moonshine faintly showed!
How fled what darkness hid!
How fled the earth beneath their feet.
The heaven above their head!



The falling gauntlet quits the rein,
Down drops the casque of steel,
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side,
The spur his gory heel.

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LV.

"Dost fear? dost fear?—The moon shines clear,
And well the dead can ride;
Does faithful Helen fear for them?"—
"Oh, leave in peace the dead!"

LVI.

"Barb! Barb! methinks I hear the cock;
The sand will soon be run:
Barb! Barb! I smell the morning air;
The race is well nigh done."

LVII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The flashing pebbles flee.

LVIII.

"Hurrah! hurrah! well ride the dead,
The bride, the bride is come!
And soon we reach the bridal bed,
For, Helen, here's my home."

LIX.

Reluctant on its rusty hinge
Revolved an iron door,
And by the pale moon's setting beam
Were seen a church and tower.

LX.

With many a shriek and cry whiz round
The birds of midnight, scared;
And rustling like autumnal leaves
Unhallowed ghosts were heard.

LXI.

O'er many a tomb and tombstone pale
He spurred the fiery horse,
Till sudden at an open grave
He checked the wondrous course.

LXII.

The falling gauntlet quits the rein,
Down drops the casque of steel,
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side,
The spur his gory heel.

LXIII.

The eyes desert the naked skull,
The mouldering flesh the bone,
Till Helen's lily arms entwine
A ghastly skeleton.

LXIV.

The furious Barb snorts fire and foam,
And, with a fearful bound
Dissolves at once in empty air,
And leaves her on the ground.

LXV.

Half seen by fits, by fits half heard,
Pale spectres fleet along;
Wheel round the maid in dismal dance,
And howl the funeral song:

LXVI.

"E'en when the heart's with anguish cleft,
Revere the doom of Heaven.
Her soul is from her body reft;
Her spirit be forgiven!"

THE FIRE-KING.

"The blessings of the evil Genii, which are cursors,
wore upon him."—*Eastern Tale.*

THIS ballad was written, at the request of Mr Lewis, to be inserted in his "Tales of Wonder," published in 1801. It is the third in a series of four ballads, on the subject of Elementary Spirits. The story is, however, partly historical, for it is recorded that, during the struggles of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, a knight-templar, called Saint Alban, deserted to the Saracens, and defeated the Christians in many combats, till he was finally routed and slain, in a conflict with King Baldwin, under the walls of Jerusalem.

BOLD knights and fair dames, to my harp give an ear,
Of love, and of war, and of wonder to hear;
And you haply may sigh, in the midst of your glee,
At the tale of Count Albert and fair Rosalie.

Oh, see you that castle, so strong and so high?
And see you that lady, the tear in her eye?
And see you that palmer, from Palestine's land,
The shell on his hat, and the staff in his hand?—

"Now palmer, gray palmer, oh, tell unto me,
What news bring you home from the Holy Countrie?
And how goes the warfare by Galilee's strand?
And how fare our nobles, the flower of the land?"—

'Oh, well goes the warfare by Galilee's wave,
For Gilead, and Nablous, and Ramah we have;
And well fare our nobles by Mount Lebanon,
For the Heathen have lost, and the Christians have won."—

A rich chain of gold 'mid her ringlets there hung;
O'er the palmer's gray locks the fair chain has she flung:
'O palmer, gray palmer, this chain be thy fee,
For the news thou hast brought from the Holy Countrie.

"O palmer, good palmer, by Galilee's wave,
Oh, saw ye Count Albert, the gentle and brave?
When the Crescent went back, and the Red-cross rushed on,
Oh, saw ye him foremost on Mount Lebanon?"—

"O lady, fair lady, the tree green it grows;
O lady, fair lady, the stream pure it flows;
Your castle stands strong, and your hopes soar on high,
But lady, fair lady, all blossoms to die.

"The green boughs they wither, the thunderbolt falls,
It leaves of your castle but levin-scorched walls;
The pure stream runs muddy; the gay hope is gone,
Count Albert is prisoner on Mount Lebanon."

Oh, she's ta'en a horse, should be fleet at her speed;
And she's ta'en a sword, should be sharp at her need;
And she has ta'en shipping for Palestine's land,
To ransom Count Albert from Soldanrie's hand.

Small thought had Count Albert on fair Rosalie,
Small thought on his faith, or his knighthood, had he;
A heathenish damsel his light heart had won,
The Soldan's fair daughter of Mount Lebanon.—

"O Christian, brave Christian, my love wouldst thou be,
Three things must thou do ere I hearken to thee:
Our laws and our worship on thee shalt thou take;
And this thou shalt first do for Zulema's sake.

"And, next, in the cavern, where burns evermore
The mystical flame which the Curdmans adore,
Alone, and in silence, three nights shalt thou wake;
And this thou shalt next do for Zulema's sake.

"And, last, thou shalt aid us with counsel and hand,
To drive the Frank robber from Palestine's land;
For my lord and my love then Count Albert I'll take,
When all this is accomplished for Zulema's sake."

He has thrown by his helmet and cross-handled sword,
Renouncing his knighthood, denying his Lord;
He has ta'en the green caftan, and turban put on,
For the love of the maiden of fair Lebanon.

And in the dread cavern, deep deep under ground,
Which fifty steel gates and steel portals surround,
He has watched until daybreak, but sight saw he none,
Save the flame burning bright on its altar of stone.

Amazed was the princess, the Soldan amazed,
Sore murmured the priests as on Albert they gazed;
They searched all his garments, and, under his weeds,
They found, and took from him, his rosary beads.

Again in the cavern, deep deep under ground,
He watched the lone night, while the winds whistled round,
Far off was their murmur, it came not more nigh,
The flame burned unmoved, and nought else did he spy.

Loud murmured the priests, and amazed was the king,
While many dark spells of their witchcraft they sing;
They searched Albert's body, and lo! on his breast
Was the sign of the Cross, by his father impressed.

The priests they erase it with care and with pain,
And the recreant returned to the cavern again;
But, as he descended, a whisper there fell!—
It was his good angel, who bade him farewell!

High bristled his hair, his heart fluttered and beat,
And he turned him five steps, half resolved to retreat
But his heart it was hardened, his purpose was gone,
When he thought on the maiden of fair Lebanon.

Scarce passed he the archway, the threshold scarce trod,
When the winds from the four points of heaven were
abroad;

They made each steel portal to rattle and ring,
And, borne on the blast, came the dread Fire-King.

Full sore rocked the cavern whene'er he drew nigh,
The fire on the altar blazed bickering and high;
In volcanic explosions the mountains proclaim
The dreadful approach of the Monarch of Flame.

Unmeasured in height, undistinguished in form,
His breath it was lightning, his voice it was storm;
I ween the stout heart of Count Albert was tame,
When he saw in his terrors the Monarch of Flame.

In his hand a broad falchion blue-glimmered through smoke
And Mount Lebanon shook as the monarch he spoke:—
“With this brand shalt thou conquer, thus long, and no
more,

Till thou bend to the Cross, and the Virgin adore.”

The cloud-shrouded arm gives the weapon; and see!
The recreant receives the charmed gift on his knee:
The thunders growl distant, and faint gleam the fires,
As, borne on his whirlwind, the Phantom retires.

Count Albert has armed him the Paynim among—
Though his heart it was false, yet his arm it was strong;
And the Red-cross waxed faint, and the Crescent came on,
From the day he commanded on Mount Lebanon.

From Lebanon's forests to Galilee's wave,
The sands of Samaar drank the blood of the brave;
Till the Knights of the Temple, and Knights of Saint John,
With Salem's King Baldwin, against him came on.

The war-cymbals clattered, the trumpets replied,
The lances were couched, and they closed on each side;
And horsemen and horses Count Albert o'erthrew,
Till he pierced the thick tumult King Baldwin unto.

Against the charmed blade which Count Albert did wield,
The fence had been vain of the King's Red-cross shield;
But a Page thrust him forward the monarch before,
And cleft the proud turban the renegade wore.

So fell was the dint, that Count Albert stooped low
Before the crossed shield, to his steel saddle-bow;

And scarce had he bent to the Red-cross his head,—
"Bonne grace, notre Dame," he unwittingly said.

Sore sighed the charmed sword, for his virtue was o'er;
 It sprung from his grasp, and was never seen more;
 But true men have said, that the lightning's red wing
 Did waft back the brand to the dread Fire-King.

He clenched his set teeth, and his gauntleted hand;
 He stretched, with one buffet, that Page on the strand;
 As back from the stripling the broken casque rolled,
 You might see the blue eyes, and the ringlets of gold.

Short time had Count Albert in horror to stare
 On those death-swimming eyeballs, and blood-clotted hair.
 For down came the Templars, like Cedron in flood,
 And dyed their long lances in Saracen blood.

The Saracens, Curdmans, and Ishmaelites yield
 To the scallop, the saltier, and crosleted shield;
 And the eagles were gorged with the infidel dead,
 From Bethsaida's fountains to Naphtali's head.

The battle is over on Bethsaida's plain.—
 Oh, who is yon Paynim lies stretched 'mid the slain?
 And who is yon Page lying cold at his knee?—
 Oh, who but Count Albert and fair Rosalie!

The Lady was buried in Salem's blessed bound,
 The Count he was left to the vulture and hound:
 Her soul to high mercy our Lady did bring;
 'His went on the blast to the dread Fire-King.

Yet many a minstrel, in harping, can tell,
 How the Red-cross it conquered, the Crescent it fell;
 And lords and gay ladies have sighed, 'mid their glee,
 At the tale of Count Albert and fair Rosalie.

FREDERICK AND ALICE.

THIS tale is imitated, rather than translated, from a fragment introduced in Goethe's "*Claudina von Villa Bella*," where it is sung by a member of a gang of banditti, to engage the attention of the family while his companions break into the castle. It owes any little merit it may possess to my friend Mr Lewis, to whom it was sent in an extremely rude state, and who, after some material improvements, published it in his "*Tales of Wonder*," 1801.

FREDERICK leaves the land of France.

Homewards hastes his steps to measure;
 Careless casts the parting glance,
 On the scene of former pleasure;

Joying in his prancing steed,
 Keen to prove his untried blade,
 Hope's gay dreams the soldier lead
 Over mountain, moor, and glade.

Helpless, ruined, left forlorn,
Lovely Alice wept alone;
Mourned o'er love's fond contract torn,
Hope, and peace, and honour flown.

Mark her breast's convulsive throbs!
See, the tear of anguish flows!—
Mingling soon with bursting sobs,
Loud the laugh of frenzy rose.

Wild she cursed and wild she prayed;
Seven long days and nights are o'er;
Death in pity brought his aid,
As the village bell struck four.

Far from her, and far from France.
Faithless Frederick onward rides,
Marking, blithe, the morning's glance
Mantling o'er the mountain's sides.

Heard ye not the boding sound,
As the tongue of yonder tower,
Slowly, to the hills around,
Told the fourth, the fatal hour?

Starts the steed, and snuffs the air,
Yet no cause of dread appears;
Bristles high the rider's hair,
Struck with strange mysterious fears.

Desperate, as his terrors rise,
In the steed the spur he hides;
From himself in vain he flies;
Anxious, restless, on he rides.

Seven long days, and seven long nights,
Wild he wandered, woe the while!
Ceaseless care, and causeless fright,
Urge his footsteps many a mile.

Dark the seventh sad night descends;
Rivers swell, and rain-streams pour;
While the deafening thunder lends
All the terrors of its roar.

Wearied, wet, and spent with toil,
Where his head shall Frederick hide?
Where, but in yon ruined aisle,
By the lightning's flash descried.

To the portal, dank and low,
Fast his steed the wanderer bound;
Down a ruined staircase slow,
Next his darkling way he wound.

Long drear vaults before him lie!
Glimmering lights are seen to glide!
"Blessed Mary, hear my cry!
Deign a sinner's steps to guide!"

Often lost their quivering beam,
 Still the lights move slow before,
 Till they rest their ghastly gleam
 Right against an iron door.
 Thundering voices from within,
 Mixed with peals of laughter, rose;
 As they fell, a solemn strain
 Lent its wild and wondrous close!
 'Midst the din, he seemed to hear
 Voice of friends, by death removed;—
 Well he knew that solemn air,
 'Twas the air that Alice loved.—
 Hark! for now a solemn knell
 Four times on the still night broke;
 FOUR times, at its deadened swell,
 Echoes from the rains spoke.
 As the lengthened clangours die,
 Slowly opes the iron door!
 Straight a banquet met his eye,
 But a funeral's form it wore!
 Coffins for the seats extend;
 All with black the board was spread,
 Girt by parent, brother, friend,
 Long since numbered with the dead!
 Alice, in her grave-clothes bound,
 Ghastly smiling, points a seat;
 All arose, with thundering sound;
 All the expected stranger greet.
 High their meagre arms they wave,
 Wild their notes of welcome swell;
 "Welcome, traitor, to the grave!
 Perjured, bid the light farewell!"

THE ERL-KING.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

It is necessary the reader should be informed, that in the legends of Danish superstition, certain mischievous spirits are supposed to preside over different elements, and to amuse themselves with inflicting calamities on man. One of these is termed the WATER-KING, another the FIRE-KING, and a third the CLOUD-KING. The hero of the present piece is the ERL or OAK-KING, a fiend who is supposed to dwell in the recesses of the forest, and thence to issue forth upon the benighted traveller to lure him to his destruction.

OH! who rides by night through the woodland so wild?
 It is the fond Father embracing his Child;
 And close the boy nestles within his loved arm,
 From the blast of the tempest—to keep himself warm.

THE ERL-KING.

"O father! see yonder, see yonder!" he says.
"My boy, upon what dost thou fearfully gaze?"—
"Oh, 'tis the Erl-King with his staff and his shroud!"—
"No, my love! it is but a dark wreath of the cloud."

The Phantom speaks.

"Oh, wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest child?
By many gay sports shall thy hours be beguiled;
My mother keeps for thee full many a fair toy,
And many a fine flower shall she pluck for my boy."—

"O father! my father! and did you not hear
The Erl-King whisper so close in my ear?"—
"Be still, my loved darling, my child, be at ease!
't was but the wild blast as it howled through the trees."

The Phantom.

"Oh, wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest boy?
My daughter shall tend thee with care and with joy;
She shall bear thee so lightly through wet and through wild
And hug thee, and kiss thee, and sing to my child."—

"O father! my father! and saw you not plain
The Erl-King's pale daughter glide past through the rain?"—
"Oh no, my heart's treasure! I knew it full soon,
It was the gray willow that danced to the moon."

The Phantom.

"Come with me, come with me, no longer delay!
Or else, silly child, I will drag thee away."—
"O father! O father! now, now, keep your hold!
The Erl-King has seized me—his grasp is so cold."—

Sore trembled the father; he spurred through the wild.
Clasping close to his bosom his shuddering child.
He reaches his dwelling in doubt and in dread;
But, clasped to his bosom, the infant was dead!

MISCELLANEOUS.

HELLVELLYN.

IN the spring of 1805, a young gentleman of talents, and of a most amiable disposition, perished by losing his way on the mountain Hellvellyn. His remains were not discovered till three months afterwards, when they were found guarded by a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent solitary rambles through the wilds of Cumberland and Westmoreland

I CLIMBED the dark brow of the mighty Hellvellyn,
Lakes and mountains beneath me gleamed misty and wide;
All was still, save, by fits, when the eagle was yelling,
And starting around me the echoes replied.

On the right, Striden-edge round the Red-tarn was bending,
And Catchedicam its left verge was defending,
One huge nameless rock in the front was ascending,

When I marked the sad spot where the wanderer had died.

Dark green was that spot 'mid the brown mountain-heather,

Where the Pilgrim of Nature lay stretched in decay,

Like the corpse of an outcast abandoned to weather,

Till the mountain-winds wasted the tenantless clay.

Nor yet quite deserted, though lonely extended,

For, faithful in death, his mute favourite attended,

The much-loved remains of her master defended,

And chased the hill-fox and the raven away.

How long didst thou think that his silence was slumber?

When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start

How many long days and long nights didst thou number

Ere he faded before thee; the friend of thy heart?

And, oh! was it meet, that,—no requiem read o'er him,

No mother to weep, and no friend to deplore him,

And thou, little guardian, alone stretched before him,—

Unhonoured the Pilgrim from life should depart?

When a Prince to the fate of the Peasant has yielded,

The tapestry waves dark round the dim-lighted hall

With scutcheons of silver the coffin is shielded,

And pages stand mute by the canopied pall:

Through the courts, at deep midnight, the torches are gleaming;

In the proudly arched chapel the banners are beaming;

Far adown the long aisle sacred music is streaming,

Lamenting a Chief of the People should fall.

But meeter for thee, gentle lover of nature,
 To lay down thy head like the meek mountain lamb,
 When, wildered, he drops from some cliff huge in stature,
 And draws his last sob by the side of his dam.
 And more stately thy couch by this desert lake lying,
 Thy obsequies sung by the gray plover flying,
 With one faithful friend but to witness thy dying,
 In the arms of Hellvellyn and Catchedicam.

THE MAID OF TORO.

OH, low shone the sun on the fair lake of Toro,
 And weak were the whispers that waved the dark wood,
 All as a fair maiden, bewildered in sorrow,
 Sorely sighed to the breezes, and wept to the flood.
 "O saints! from the mansions of bliss lowly bending;
 Sweet Virgin! who hearest the suppliant's cry;
 Now grant my petition, in anguish ascending,
 My Henry restore, or let Eleanor die!"—
 All distant and faint were the sounds of the battle,
 With the breezes they rise, with the breezes they fall,
 Till the shout, and the groan, and the conflict's dread rattle,
 And the chase's wild clamour, came loading the gale.
 Breathless she gazed on the woodlands so dreary;
 Slowly approaching a warrior was seen;
 Life's ebbing tide marked his footsteps so weary,
 Cleft was his helmet, and woe was his mien.
 "Oh, save thee, fair maid, for our armies are flying!
 Oh, save thee, fair maid, for thy guardian is low!
 Deadly cold on yon heath thy brave Henry is lying;
 And fast through the woodland approaches the foe."—
 Scarce could he falter the tidings of sorrow,
 And scarce could she hear them, benumbed with despair;
 And when the sun sunk on the sweet lake of Toro,
 For ever he set to the Brave, and the Fair.

THE PALMER.

"OH, open the door, some pity to show;
 Keen blows the northern wind,
 The glen is white with the drifted snow,
 And the path is hard to find.
 "No Outlaw seeks your castle-gate,
 From chasing the king's deer,
 Though even an Outlaw's wretched state
 Might claim compassion here.
 "A weary Palmer, worn and weak,
 I wander for my sin:

Oh, open, for your lady's sake,
A pilgrim's blessing win!
"I'll give you pardons from the Pope,
And reliques from o'er the sea,—
Oh, if for these you will not ope,
Yet open for charity.
"The hare is crouching in her form,
The hart beside the hind;
An aged man, amid the storm,
No shelter can I find.
"You hear the Ettricke's sullen roar,
Dark, deep, and strong is he,
And I must ford the Ettricke o'er,
Unless you pity me.
"The iron gate is bolted hard,
At which I knock in vain;
The owner's heart is closer barred,
Who hears me thus complain.
"Farewell, farewell! and Mary grant,
When old and frail you be,
You never may the shelter want,
That's now denied to me."
The Ranger on his couch lay warm,
And heard him plead in vain;
But oft amid December's storm,
He'll hear that voice again.
For, lo, when through the vapours dank,
Morn shone on Ettricke fair,
A corpse amid the alders rank,
The Palmer weltered there.

WANDERING WILLIE

ALL joy was bereft me the day that you left me,
And climbed the tall vessel to sail yon wide sea;
Oh, weary betide it! I wandered beside it,
And bann'd it for parting my Willie and me.
Far o'er the wave hast thou followed thy fortune;
Oft fought the squadrons of France and of Spain;
As kiss of welcome's worth twenty at parting,
Now I hae gotten my Willie again.
When the sky it was mirk, and the winds they were wailing,
I sate on the beach wi' the tear in my ee,
And thought o' the bark where my Willie was sailing,
And wished that the tempest could a' blaw on me.
Now that thy gallant ship rides at her mooring,
Now that my wanderer's in safety at hame,
Music to me were the wildest winds roaring,
That e'er o'er Inchkeith drove the dark ocean fae.

When the lights they did blaze, and the guns they did rattle,
 And blithe was each heart for the great victory,
 In secret I wept for the dangers of battle,
 And thy glory itself was scarce comfort to me.

But now shalt thou tell, while I eagerly listen,
 Of each bold adventure, of every brave scar:
 And, trust me, I'll smile, though my een they may glisten;
 For sweet after danger's the tale of the war.

And, oh, how we doubt when there's distance 'tween lovers,
 When there's naething to speak to the heart through the oo;
 How often the kindest and warmest prove rovers,
 And the love of the faithfulest ebbs like the sea.

Till, at times—could I help it?—I pined and I pondered,
 If love would change notes like the bird on the tree—
 Now I'll ne'er ask if thine eyes may hae wandered,
 Enough, thy leal heart has been constant to me.

Welcome, from sweeping o'er sea and through chauncel,
 Hardships and danger despising for fame,
 Furnishing story for glory's bright annal,
 Welcome, my wanderer, to Jeanie and hame.

Enough now thy story in annals of glory
 Has humbled the pride of France, Holland, and Spain
 No more shalt thou grieve me, no more shalt thou leave me,
 I never will part with my Willie again.

THE MAID OF NEIDPATH.

THERE is a tradition in Tweeddale, that when Neidpath Castle, near Peebles, was inhabited by the Earls of March, a mutual passion subsisted between a daughter of that noble family and a son of the laird of Tushielaw, in Ettrick Forest. As the alliance was thought unsuitable by her parents, the young man went abroad. During his absence, the lady fell into a consumption, and at length, as the only means of saving her life, her father consented that her lover should be recalled. On the day when he was expected to pass through Peebles on the road to Tushielaw, the young lady, though much exhausted, caused herself to be carried to the balcony of a house in Peebles belonging to the family, that she might see him as he rode past. Her anxiety and eagerness gave such force to her organs, that she is said to have distinguished his horse's footsteps at an incredible distance. But Tushielaw, unprepared for the change in her appearance, and not expecting to see her in that place, rode on without recognising her, or even slackening his pace. The lady was unable to support the shock, and, after a short struggle, died in the arms of her attendants. There is an incident similar to this traditional tale in Count Hamilton's "Fleur d'Epine."

OH! lovers' eyes are sharp to see,
 And lovers' ears in hearing;
 And love, in life's extremity,
 Can lend an hour of cheering.

THE BARD'S INCANTATION.

625

Disease had been in Mary's bower,
And slow decay from mourning,
Though now she sits on Neidpath's tower
To watch her love's returning.

All sunk and dim her eyes so bright,
Her form decayed by pining,
Till through her wasted hand, at night,
You saw the taper shining;
By fits, a sultry hectic hue
Across her cheek was flying;
By fits, so ashy pale she grew,
Her maidens thought her dying.

Yet keenest powers, to see and hear,
Seemed in her frame residing;
Before the watch-dog pricked his ear,
She heard her lover's riding;
Ere scarce a distant form was kenned,
She knew, and waved to greet him;
And o'er the battlement did bend,
As on the wing to meet him.

He came—he passed—a heedless gaze,
As o'er some stranger glancing,
Her welcome spoke, in faltering phrase,
Lost in his courser's prancing—
The castle arch, whose hollow tone
Returns each whisper spoken,
Could scarcely catch the feeble moan,
Which told her heart was broken.

THE BARD'S INCANTATION.

WRITTEN UNDER THE THREAT OF INVASION, IN THE
AUTUMN OF 1804.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

THE Forest of Glenmore is drear,
It is all of black pine, and the dark oak-tree;
And the midnight wind, to the mountain deer,
Is whistling the forest lullaby:—
The moon looks through the drifting storm,
But the troubled lake reflects not her form,
For the waves roll whitening to the land,
And dash against the shelvy strand.

There is a voice among the trees
That mingles with the groaning oak—
That mingles with the stormy breeze,
And the lake-waves dashing against the rock:—
There is a voice within the wood,
The voice of the Bard in fitful mood,
His song was louder than the blast,
As the Bard of Glenmore through the forest passed.

"Wake ye from your sleep of death,
Minstrels and Bards of other days!
For the midnight wind is on the heath,
And the midnight meteors dimly blaze.
The spectre with his bloody hand
Is wandering through the wild woodland;
The owl and the raven are mute for dread,
And the time is meet to awake the dead!

"Souls of the mighty! wake and say,
To what high strain your harps were strung
When Lochlin ploughed her billowy way,
And on your shores her Norsemen flung?
Her Norsemen trained to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food,
All by your harpings doomed to die
On bloody Largs and Loncarty.

"Mute are ye all? No murmurs strange
Upon the midnight breeze sail by;
Nor through the pines with whistling change
Mimic the harp's wild harmony!
Mute are ye now?—Ye ne'er were mute
When Murder with his bloody foot,
And Rapine with his iron hand,
Were hovering near your mountain strand!

"Oh, yet awake the strain to tell,
By every deed in song enrolled,
By every chief who fought or fell,
For Albion's weal in battle bold;—
From Coilgach, first who rolled his car,
Through the deep ranks of Roman war,
To him, of veteran memory dear,
Who victor died on Aboukir.

"By all their swords, by all their scars,
By all their names, a mighty spell!
By all their wounds, by all their wars,
Arise, the mighty strain to tell;
For fiercer than fierce Hengist's strain,
More impious than the heathen Dane,
More grasping than all-grasping Rome,
Gaul's ravening legions hither come!"

The wind is hushed, and still the lake—
Strange murmurs fill my tinkling ears,
Bristles my hair, my sinews quake,
At the dread voice of other years—
"When targets clashed, and bugles rung,
And blades round warriors' heads were flung,
The foremost of the band were we,
And hymned the joys of Liberty!"

TO A LADY,

WITH FLOWERS FROM A ROMAN WALL.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808

TAKE these flowers, which, purple waving,
On the ruined rampart grew,
Where, the sons of freedom braving,
Rome's imperial standards flew.

Warriors from the breach of danger
Pluck no longer laurels there:
They but yield the passing stranger
Wild-flower wreaths for Beauty's hair

THE VIOLET.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808

THE violet in her green-wood bower,
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,
Beneath the dewdrop's weight reclining;
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue,
More sweet through watery lustre shining

The summer sun that dew shall dry,
Ere yet the day be passed its morrow;
Nor longer in my false love's eye
Remained the tear of parting sorrow.

HUNTING SONG.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

WAKEN, lords and ladies gay!
On the mountain dawns the day,
All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk, and horse, and hunting-spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay!
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;

THE RESOLVE

Now we come to chant our lay,
 "Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay!
 To the green-wood haste away;
 We can show you where he lies,
 Fleet of foot, and tall of size;
 We can show the marks he made,
 When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed.
 You shall see him brought to bay,—
 "Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Louder, louder chant the lay,
 Waken, lords and ladies gay!
 Tell them youth, and mirth, and glee,
 Run a course as well as we;
 Time, stern huntsman! who can balk,
 Stanch as hound, and fleet as hawk?
 Think of this, and rise with day,
 Gentle lords and ladies gay.

THE RESOLVE

IN IMITATION OF AN OLD ENGLISH POEM.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

My wayward fate I needs must plain,
 Though bootless be the theme;
 I loved, and was beloved again,
 Yet all was but a dream:
 For, as her love was quickly got,
 So it was quickly gone;
 No more I'll bask in flame so hot,
 But coldly dwell alone.

Not maid more bright than maid was e'er
 My fancy shall beguile,
 By flattering word, or feignèd tear,
 By gesture, look, or smile:
 No more I'll call the shaft fair shot
 Till it has fairly flown,
 Nor scorch me at a flame so hot;—
 I'll rather freeze alone.

Each ambushed Cupid I'll defy,
 In cheek, or chin, or brow,
 And deem the glance of woman's eye
 As weak as woman's vow:
 I'll lightly hold the lady's heart,
 That is but lightly won;
 I'll steel my breast to beauty's art,
 And learn to live alone.

The flaunting torch soon blazes out,
 The diamond's ray abides,

The flame its glory hurls about,
 The gem its lustre hides;
 Such gem I fondly deemed was mine,
 And glowed a diamond stone,
 But, since each eye may see it shine,
 I'll darkling dwell alone.

No waking dream shall tinge my thought
 With dyes so bright and vain;
 No silken net, so slightly wrought,
 Shall tangle me again:
 No more I'll pay so dear for wit,
 I'll live upon mine own,
 Nor shall wild passion trouble it,—
 I'll rather dwell alone.

And thus I'll hush my heart to rest,—
 "Thy loving labour's lost;
 Thou shalt no more be wildly blessed,
 To be so strangely crossed:
 The widowed turtles mateless die,
 The phoenix is but one;
 They seek no loves—no more will I,—
 I'll rather dwell alone."

THE LAST WORDS OF CADWALLON;

OR,

THE DYING BARD.

THE Welsh tradition bears, that a bard on his deathbed demanded his harp, and played the air to which these verses are adapted, requesting that it might be performed at his funeral.

Air—Daffydz Gangwen.

I.

DINAS EMLINN, lament; for the moment is nigh
 When mute in the woodlands thine echoes shall die:
 No more by sweet Teivi CADWALLON shall rave,
 And mix his wild notes with the wild dashing wave.

II.

In spring and in autumn, thy glories of shade
 Unhonoured shall flourish, unhonoured shall fade;
 For soon shall be lifeless the eye and the tongue
 That viewed them with rapture, with rapture that sung.

III.

Thy sons, Dinas Emlinn, may march in their pride,
 And chase the proud Saxon from Prestatyn's side;
 But where is the harp shall give life to their name?
 And where is the bard shall give heroes their fame?

THE NORMAN HORSE-SHOE

IV.

And oh, Dinas Emlinn! thy daughters so fair,
 Who heave the white bosom, and wave the dark hair,
 What tuneful enthusiast shall worship their eye,
 When half of their charms with CADWALLON shall die!

V.

Then adieu, silver Teivi! I quit thy loved scene,
 To join the dim choir of the bards who have been;
 With Lewarch, and Meilor, and Merlin the Old,
 And sage Taliessin, high harping to hold.

VI.

And adieu, Dinas Emlinn! still green be thy shades,
 Unconquered thy warriors, and matchless thy maids!
 And thou, whose faint warblings my weakness can tell,
 Farewell, my loved Harp! my last treasure, farewell!

THE NORMAN HORSE-SHOE

THE Welsh, inhabiting a mountainous country, and possessing only an inferior breed of horses, were usually unable to encounter the shock of the Anglo-Norman cavalry. Occasionally, however, they were successful in repelling the invaders; and the following verses celebrate a supposed defeat of Clare, Earl of Striguil and Pembroke, and of Neville, Baron of Chepstow, Lords-Marchers of Monmouthshire. Rymny is a stream which divides the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan; Caerphili, the scene of the supposed battle, is a vale upon its banks, dignified by the ruins of a very ancient castle.

Air—The War-Song of the Men of Glamorgan.

I.

RED glows the forge in Striguil's bounds,
 And hammers din, and anvil sounds,
 And armourers, with iron toil,
 Barb many a steed for battle's broil.
 Foul fall the hand which bends the steel
 Around the courser's thundering heel,
 That e'er shall dint a sable wound
 On fair Glamorgan's velvet ground!

II.

From Chepstow's towers, ere dawn of morn,
 Was heard afar the bugle-horn;
 And forth, in banded pomp and pride,
 Stout Clare and fiery Neville ride.
 They swore, their banners broad should gleam,
 In crimson light, on Rymny's stream;
 They vowed, Caerphili's sod should feel
 The Norman charger's spurning heel.

III.

And south they swore,—the sun arose,
 And Rymny's wave with crimson glows;

For Clare's red banner, floating wide,
 Rolled down the stream to Severn's tide!
 And sooth they vowed,—the trampled green
 Showed where hot Neville's charge had been
 In every sable hoof-tramp stood
 A Norman horseman's curdling blood!

IV.

Old Chepstow's brides may curse the toil
 That armed stout Clare for Cambrian broil;
 Their orphans long the art may rue,
 For Neville's war-horse forged the shoe.
 No more the stamp of armed steed
 Shall dint Glamorgan's velvet meed;
 Nor trace be there, in early spring,
 Save of the Fairies' emerald ring.

THE POACHER.

*This and the following piece were published, under the title of "Fragments,"
 in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.*

WELCOME, grave stranger, to our green retreats,
 Where health with exercise and freedom meets!
 Thrice welcome, sage, whose philosophic plan
 By Nature's limits metes the rights of man;
 Generous as he, who now for freedom bawls,
 Now gives full value for true Indian shawls;
 O'er court and customhouse his shoe who flings,
 Now bilks excisemen, and now bullies kings!
 Like his, I ween, thy comprehensive mind
 Holds laws as mouse-traps baited for mankind;
 Thine eye, applausive, each sly vermin sees,
 That balks the snare, yet battens on the cheese;
 Thine ear has heard, with scorn instead of awe,
 Our bucks-kinned justices expound the law,
 Wire-draw the acts that fix for wires the pain,
 And for the netted partridge noose the swain,
 And thy vindictive arm would fain have broke
 The last light fetter of the feudal yoke,
 To give the denizens of wood and wild,
 Nature's free race, to each her free-born child.
 Hence hast thou marked, with grief, fair London's race
 Mocked with the boon of one poor Easter chase,
 And longed to send them forth as free as when
 Poured o'er Chantilly the Parisian train,
 When musket, pistol, blunderbuss, combined,
 And scarce the field-pieces were left behind!
 A squadron's charge each leveret's heart dismayed,
 On every covey fired a bold brigade—
La Douce Humanité approved the sport,
 For great the alarm indeed, yet small the hurt!

Shouts patriotic solemnised the day,
 And Seine re-echoed *Vive la Liberté!*
 But mad *Citoyen*, meek *Monsieur* again,
 With some few added links resumes his chain;
 Then, since such scenes to France no more are known,
 Come, view with me a hero of thine own!
 One, whose free actions vindicate the cause
 Of sylvan liberty o'er feudal laws.

Seek we yon glades, where the proud oak o'ertops
 Wide-waving seas of birch and hazel copse,
 Leaving between deserted isles of land,
 Where stunted heath is patched with ruddy sand;
 And lonely on the waste the yew is seen,
 Or straggling hollies spread a brighter green.
 Here, little worn, and winding dark and steep,
 Our scarce-marked path descends yon dingle deep:
 Follow—but heedful, cautious of a trip,—
 In earthly mire philosophy may slip.
 Step slow and wary o'er that swampy stream,
 Till, guided by the charcoal's smothering steam,
 We reach the frail yet barricaded door
 Of hovel formed for poorest of the poor;
 No heart in the fire, no vent the smoke receives,
 The walls are wattles, and the covering leaves;
 For, if such hut, our forest statutes say,
 Rise in the progress of one night and day;
 Though placed where still the Conqueror's hests o'craw,
 And his son's stirrup shines the badge of law;
 The builder claims the unenviable boon,
 To tenant dwelling, framed as slight and soon
 As wigwam wild, that shrouds the native frore
 On the bleak coast of frost-barred Labrador.
 Approach, and through the unlatticed window peep—
 Nay, shrink not back, the inmate is asleep;
 Sunk 'mid yon sordid blankets, till the sun
 Stoop to the west, the plunderer's toils are done.
 Loaded and primed, and prompt for desperate hand,
 Rifle and fowling-piece beside him stand;
 While round the hut are in disorder laid
 The tools and booty of his lawless trade;
 For force or fraud, resistance or escape,
 The crow, the saw, the bludgeon, and the crape.
 His pilfered powder in yon nook he hoards,
 And the filched lead the church's roof affords—
 (Hence shall the rector's congregation fret,
 That, while his sermon's dry, his walls are wet.)
 The fish-spear barbed, the sweeping net are there,
 Doe-hides, and pheasant plumes, and skins of hare,
 Cordage for toils, and wiring for the snare;
 Bartered for game from chase or warren won,
 Yon cask holds moonlight, run when moon was none,
 And late-snatched spoils lie stowed in hutch apart.
 To wait the associate higgler's evening cart.

Look on his pallet foul, and mark his rest:
 What scenes perturbed are acting in his breast!
 His sable brow is wet and wrung with pain,
 And his dilated nostril toils in vain;
 For short and scant the breath each effort draws,
 And 'twixt each effort Nature claims a pause.
 Beyond the loose and sable neckcloth stretched,
 His sinewy throat seems by convulsions twitched,
 While the tongue falters, as to utterance loth,
 Sounds of dire import—watchword, threat, and oath.
 Though, stupified by toil, and drugged with gin,
 The body sleep, the restless guest within
 Now plies on wood and wold his lawless trade,
 Now in the fangs of justice wakes dismayed.—

“Was that wild start of terror and despair,
 Those bursting eyeballs, and that wildered air,
 Signs of compunction for a murdered hare?
 Do the locks bristle and the eyebrows arch,
 For grouse or partridge massacred in March?”—

No, scoffers, no! Attend, and mark with awe,
 There is no wicket in the gate of law!
 He, that would e'er so lightly set ajar
 That awful portal, must undo each bar;
 Tempting occasion, habit, passion, pride,
 Will join to storm the breach, and force the barrier wide.

That ruffian, whom true men avoid and dread,
 Whom bruisers, poachers, smugglers, call Black Ned,
 Was Edward Mansell once;—the lightest heart,
 That ever played on holiday his part!
 The leader he in every Christmas game,
 The harvest-feast grew blither when he came,
 And liveliest on the chords the bow did glance
 When Edward named the tune and led the dance.
 Kind was his heart, his passions quick and strong,
 Hearty his laugh, and jovial was his song;
 And if he loved a gun, his father swore,
 “’Twas but a trick of youth would soon be o'er—
 Himself had had the same, some thirty years before.”

But he, whose humours spurn law's awful yoke,
 Must herd with those by whom law's bonds are broke.
 The common dread of justice soon allies
 The clown, who robs the warren, or excise,
 With sterner felons trained to act more dread,
 Even with the wretch by whom his fellow bled.
 Then,—as in plagues the foul contagions pass,
 Leavening and festering the corrupted mass,—
 Guilt leagues with guilt, while mutual motives draw,
 Their hope impunity, their fear the law;
 Their foes, their friends, their rendezvous the same,
 Till the revenue balked, or pilfered game,

Flesh the young culprit, and example leads
To darker villany, and direr deeds.

Wild howled the wind the forest glades along,
And oft the owl renewed her dismal song;
Around the spot where erst he felt the wound,
Red William's spectre walked his midnight round.
When o'er the swamp he cast his blighting look,
From the green marshes of the stagnant brook
The bittern's sullen shout the sedges shook!
The waning moon, with storm-presaging gleam,
Now gave and now withheld her doubtful beam;
The old Oak stooped his arms, then flung them high,
Bellowing and groaning to the troubled sky—
'Twas then, that, couched amid the brushwood sere,
In Malwood-walk young Mansell watched the deer:
The fattest buck received his deadly shot—
The watchful keeper heard, and sought the spot.
Stout were their hearts, and stubborn was their strife,
O'erpowered at length the Outlaw drew his knife!
Next morn a corpse was found upon the fell—
The rest his waking agony may tell!

SONG.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.

OH, say not, my love, with that mortified air,
That your spring-time of pleasure is flown,
Nor bid me to maids that are younger repair,
For those raptures that still are thine own.

Though April his temples may wreath with the vine
Its tendrils in infancy curled,
'Tis the ardour of August matures us the wine,
Whose life-blood enlivens the world.

Though thy form, that was fashioned as light as a faun's
Has assumed a proportion more round,
And thy glance, that was bright as a falcon's at gaze,
Looks soberly now on the ground,—

Enough, after absence to meet me again,
Thy steps still with ecstasy move;
Enough, that those dear sober glances retain
For me the kind language of love.

* * * * *

[The rest was illegible, the fragment being torn across by a rack-
stroke.]

EPITAPH.

DESIGNED FOR A MONUMENT TO BE ERECTED IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL, AGREEABLY
TO THE BEQUEST OF THE LATE MISS ANNA SEWARD, TO DESIGNATE THE BURIAL-
PLACE OF HER FATHER, THE REV. THOMAS SEWARD, A CANON OF THAT CATHEDRAL,
IN WHICH SHE IS HERSELF INTERRED.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.

AMID these aisles, where once his precepts showed
The heavenward pathway which in life he trod,
This simple tablet marks a father's bier,
And those he loved in life, in death are near ;
For him, for them, a daughter bade it rise,
Memorial of domestic charities.

Still wouldst thou know why o'er the marble spread,
In female grace, the willow droops her head ;
Why on her branches, silent and unstrung,
The minstrel harp is emblematic hung ;
What poet's voice is smothered here in dust,
Till waked to join the chorus of the just, —
Lo ! one brief line an answer sad supplies,
Honoured, beloved, and wept, here SEWARD lies !
Her worth, her warmth of heart, let friendship say,
Go seek her genius in her living lay.

★

ON THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE.

"O TELL me, Harper, wherefore flow
Thy wayward notes of wail and woe,
Far down the desert of Glencoe,
Where none may list their melody ?
Say, harp'st thou to the mists that fly,
Or to the dun-deer glancing by,
Or to the eagle, that from high
Screams chorus to thy minstrelsy ?"

"No, not to these, for they have rest, —
The mist-wreath has the mountain crest,
The stag his lair, the erne her nest,
Abode of lone security.
But those for whom I pour the lay,
Not wild-wood deep, nor mountain grey,
Not this deep dell, that shrouds from day,
Could screen from treach'rous cruelty.

MACGREGOR'S GATHERING.

" Their Flag was furl'd, and mute their drum,
The very household dogs were dumb,
Unwont to bay at guests that come

In guise of hospitality.

His blithest notes the piper plied,
Her gayest snood the maiden tied,
The dame her distaff flung aside,
To tend her kindly housewifery.

" The hand that mingled in the meal,
At midnight drew the felon steel,
And gave the host's kind breast to feel
Meed for his hospitality !

The friendly hearth which warm'd that hand,
At midnight arm'd it with the brand,
That bade destruction's flames expand
Their red and fearful blazonry.

" Then woman's shriek was heard in vain,
Nor infancy's unpitied plain,
More than the warrior's groan, could gain
Respite from ruthless butchery !

The winter wind that whistled shrill,
The snows that night that clogged the hill,
Though wild and pitiless, had still
Far more than Southern clemency.

" Long have my harp's best notes been gone,
Few are its strings, and faint their tone,
They can but sound in desert lone

Their grey hair'd master's misery.
Were each grey hair a minstrel string,
Each chord should imprecations fling,
Till startled Scotland loud should ring,
' Revenge for blood and treachery ! ' "

MACGREGOR'S GATHERING.

Air—" Thain' a Grigalach."

WRITTEN FOR ALBYN'S ANTHOLOGY.

THE moon's on the lake, and the mist's on the brae,
And the Clan has a name that is nameless by day ;
Then gather, gather, gather Grigalach !
Gather, gather, gather, &c.

Our signal for fight, that from monarchs we drew,
Must be heard but by night in our vengeful haloo !
Then haloo, Grigalach ! haloo, Grigalach !
Haloo, haloo, haloo, Grigalach, &c.

Glen Orchy's proud mountains, Coalchurn and her towers,
Glenstrae and Glenlyon no longer are ours ;

We're landless, landless, landless, Grigalach !
Landless, landless, landless, &c.

But doom'd and devoted by vassal and lord,
MacGregor has still both his heart and his sword !
Then courage, courage, courage, Grigalach !
Courage, courage, courage, &c.

If they rob us of name, and pursue us with beagles,
Give their roofs to the flame, and their flesh to the eagles !
Then vengeance, vengeance, vengeance, Grigalach !
Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance, &c.

While there's leaves in the forest, and foam on the river,
MacGregor, despite them, shall flourish for ever !
Come then, Grigalach, come then, Grigalach,
Come then, come then, come then, &c.

Through the depths of Loch Katrine the steed shall caroor,
O'er the peak of Ben-Lomond the galley shall steer,
And the rocks of Craig-Royston like icicles melt,
Ere our wrongs be forgot, or our vengeance unfelt !
Then gather, gather, gather, Grigalach !
Gather, gather, gather, &c.

"TWIST YE, TWINE YE"

From "Guy Mannering."

Twist ye, twine ye ! even so
Mingle shades of joy and woe,
Hope, and fear, and peace, and strife,
In the thread of human life.

While the mystic twist is spinning,
And the infant's life beginning,
Dimly seen through twilight bending,
Lo, what varied shapes attending !

Passions wild, and follies vain,
Pleasures soon exchanged for pain ;
Doubt, and jealousy, and fear,
In the magic dance appear.

Now they wax, and now they dwindle,
Whirling with the whirling spindle.
Twist ye, twine ye ! even so,
Mingle human bliss and woe.

JOCK OF HAZELDEAN.

*Air—A Border Melody.**The first stanza of this Ballad is ancient. The others were written for Mr Campbell's *Albyn's Anthology**

I.

"WHY weep ye by the tide, ladie?
Why weep ye by the tide?
I'll wed ye to my youngest son,
And ye sall be his bride:
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,
Sae comely to be seen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

II.

"Now let this wilfu' grief be done,
And dry that cheek so pale;
Young Frank is chief of Errington,
And lord of Langley-dale;
His step is first in peaceful ha',
His sword in battle keen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

III.

"A chain of gold ye sall not lack,
Nor braid to bind your hair;
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk,
Nor palfrey fresh and fair;
And you, the foremost o' them a',
Shall ride our forest queen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

IV.

The kirk was deck'd at morning-tide,
The tapers glimmer'd fair;
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride
And dame and knight are there.
They sought her baith by bower and ha';
The ladie was not seen!
She's o'er the Border, and awa'
Wi' Jock of Hazeldean.

FLORA MACIVOR'S SONG.

From "Waverley."

THERE is mist on the mountain, and night on the vale,
But more dark is the sleep of the sons of the Gael.
A stranger commanded—it sunk on the land,
It has frozen each heart, and benumb'd every hand !

The dirk and the target lie sordid with dust,
The bloodless claymore is but redden'd with rust ;
On the hill or the glen if a gun should appear,
It is only to war with the heath-cock or deer.

The deeds of our sires if our bards should rehearse,
Let a blush or a blow be the meed of their verse !
Be mute every string, and be hush'd every tone,
That shall bid us remember the fame that is flown.

But the dark hours of night and of slumber are past,
The morn on our mountains is dawning at last ;
Glenaladale's peaks are illumed with the rays,
And the streams of Glentinnan leap bright in the blaze

O high-minded Moray !—the exiled—the dear !—
In the blush of the dawning the STANDARD uprear !
Wide, wide on the winds of the north let it fly,
Like the sun's latest flash when the tempest is high !

Ye sons of the strong, when that dawning shall break,
Need the harp of the aged remind you to wake ?
That dawn never beam'd on your forefathers' eye,
But it roused each high chieftain to vanquish or die.

O sprung from the Kings who in Islay kept state,
Proud chiefs of Clan-Ranald, Glengary, and Sleat !
Combine like three streams from one mountain of snow,
And resistless in union rush down on the foe.

True son of Sir Evan, undaunted Lochiel,
Place thy targe on thy shoulder and burnish thy steel !
Rough Keppoch, give breath to thy bugle's bold swell,
Till far Coryarrick resound to the knell !

Stern son of Lord Kenneth, high chief of Kintail,
Let the stag in thy standard bound wild in the gale !
May the race of Clàn-Gillian, the fearless and free,
Remember Glenlivat, Harlaw, and Dundee !

Let the clan of grey Fingon, whose offspring has given
Such heroes to earth, and such martyrs to heaven,
Unite with the race of renown'd Rorri More,
To launch the long galley, and stretch to the oar !

REBECCA'S HYMN.

How Mac Shinnai will joy when their chief shall display
 The yew-crested bonnet o'er tresses of grey !
 How the race of wrong'd Alpine and murder'd Glencoe
 Shall shout for revenge when they pour on the foe !

Ye sons of brown Dermid, who slew the wild boar,
 Resume the pure faith of the great Callam-More !
 Mac-Niel of the Islands, and Moy of the Lake,
 For honour, for freedom, for vengeance awake !

Awake on your hills, on your islands awake,
 Brave sons of the mountain, the frith, and the lake !
 'Tis the bugle—but not for the chase is the call ;
 'Tis the pibroch's shrill summons—but not to the hall.

'Tis the summons of heroes for conquest or death,
 When the banners are blazing on mountain and heath ;
 They call to the dirk, the claymore, and the targe,
 To the march and the muster, the line and the charge.

Be the brand of each chieftain like Fin's in his ire !
 May the blood through his veins flow like currents of fire !
 Burst the base foreign yoke as your sires did of yore !
 Or die, like your sires, and endure it no more !

REBECCA'S HYMN.

From "Ivanhoe."

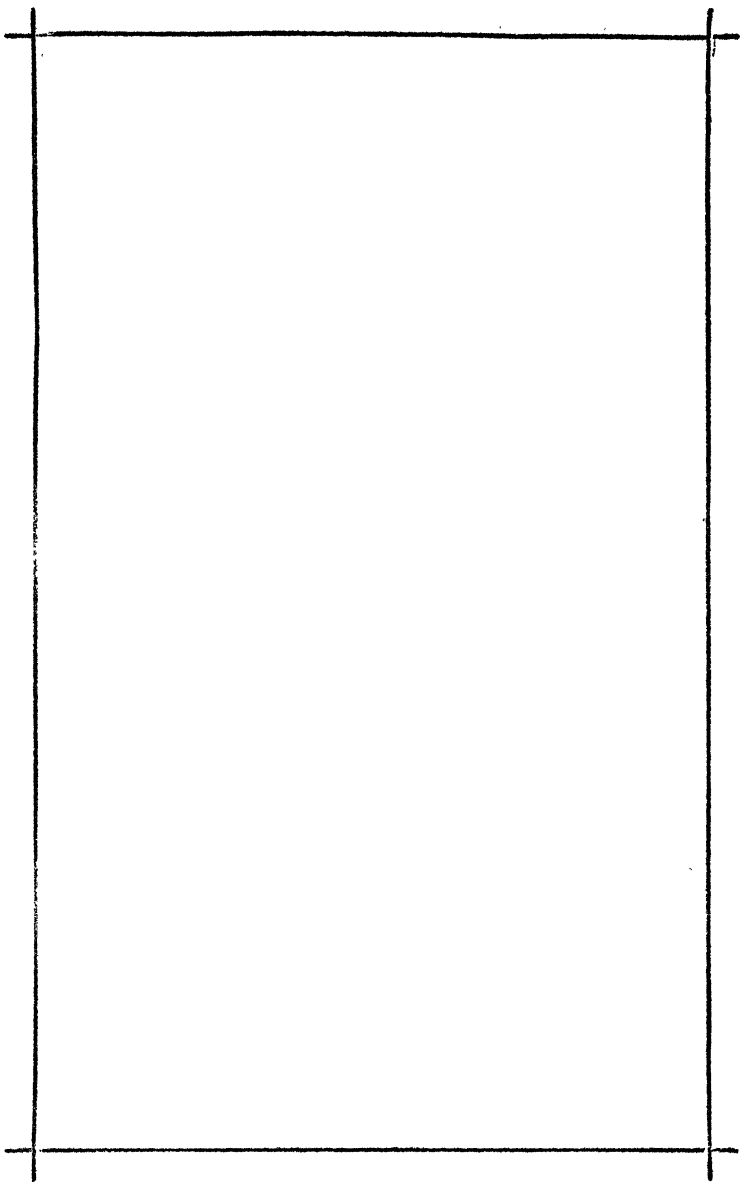
WHEN Israel of the Lord beloved,
 Out from the land of bondage came,
 Her fathers' God before her moved,
 An awful guide in smoke and flame.
 By day, along the astonish'd lands
 The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
 By night, Arabia's crimson'd sands
 Return'd the fiery column's glow.

There rose the choral hymn of praise,
 And trump and timbrel answer'd keen,
 And Zion's daughters pour'd their lays,
 With priest's and warrior's voice between.
 No portents now our foes amaze,
 Forsaken Israel wanders lone :
 Our fathers would not know THY ways,
 And thou hast left them to their own.

But present still, though now unseen !
 When brightly shines the prosperous day,
 Be thoughts of THEE a cloudy screen
 To temper the deceitful ray.

And oh, when stoops on Judah's path
In shade and storm the frequent night,
Be THOU, long-suffering, slow to wrath,
A burning and a shining light !

Our harps we left by Babel's streams,
The tyrant's jest, the Gentile's scorn ;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute are timbrel, harp, and horn.
But THOU hast said, The blood of goat,
The flesh of rams I will not prize ;
A contrite heart, a humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice



NOTES.

THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

He passed where Newark's stately tower.—P. 2.

This old fortress, built by the first Earl of Douglas, and the birthplace of Anne, first Duchess of Buccleuch, may still be seen.

When he kept Court at Holyrood.—P. 4.

This royal residence was built in 1128, the abbey existing before. Little of the ancient building remains. The romantic incidents connected with Holyrood are well known.

The feast was over in Branksome Tower.—P. 6.

A story goes that Sir Thomas Inglis of Manor gave up a half of the large barony of Branksholm to Sir William Scott of Buccleuch in exchange for the property of Murcheston, because the barony was infested by the English. Sir William afterwards drily remarked that the cattle of Cumberland were as fat as those in Teviotdale.

Nine-and-twenty knights of fame.—P. 6.

It is said that the ancient barons of Buccleuch, for the sake of splendour and safety, kept at Branksholm a number of their own fears of the name of Scott for "watch and ward."

And with Jedwood-axe at saddle bow.—P. 7.

Otherwise called the Jeddart staff. The arms of Jedburgh bear this weapon.

Threaten Branksome's lordly towers.—P. 7.

Branksholm Castle, from its situation, was continually at war with its neighbours.

How Lord Walter fell.—P. 7.

The poem is supposed to open shortly after the murder of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, (who succeeded his grandfather, Sir David, in 1492,) by the Kerrs, in Edinburgh, in 1552.

In mutual pilgrimage, they drew.—P. 7.

A bond was entered into in 1529 between the Scotts and Kerrs to make expiatory pilgrimages for the souls of the murdered of either party; but the quarrels broke out anew.

While Cessford owns the rule of Carr.—P. 7.

Cessford Castle, now in ruins, was the baronial residence of the Kerrs of Carrs.

Before Lord Cranstoun she should wed.—P. 8.

Crailing was the seat of the ancient Border family of the Cranstouns.

Of Bethune's line of Picardie.—P. 8.

The Bethunes were originally from Artols in France. It was from the Fife branch that the famous Cardinal and two Archbishops sprung. Dame Janet Bethune, Lady Buccleuch, widow of Sir Walter of Branksholm, was of this family.

In Padua, far beyond the sea.—P. 8.
Padua was a famous school of necromancy.

His form no darkening shadow traced.—P. 8.
A necromancer was supposed to have no shadow.

The viewless forms of air.—P. 8.
The Scotch still, in many places, believe in intermediate spirits with various names.

That chafes against the scaur's red side.—P. 9.
A scaur is a shelving rock or bank.

The ban-dogs bay and howl.—P. 9
A tied-up dog becomes more fierce.

A fancied moss-trooper.—P. 10.
The name of the Border marauders, because they dwelt on the mosses and rode in parties.

Exalt the crescent and the star.—P. 10.
The arms of the Kerrs were, *vert* on a chiveron, betwixt three unicorns' heads erased, *argent*, three mullets, *sable* crest, a unicorn's head erased *proper*. The Scotts of Buccleuch bore *or* on a bend *azure*; a star of six points between two crescents of the first.

She called to her William of Deloraine.—P. 10.
The estate of Deloraine, in Ettrick Forest, was possessed by the Buccleuchs in occupancy without a charter.

Had baffled Percy's best bloodhounds.—P. 11.
There was a studied art to evade bloodhounds.

Were't my neck-verse at Hairibee.—P. 11.
Miserere mei, the beginning of the 51st Psalm, was of old read by criminals. Hairibee was the place of execution at Carlisle.

Dimly he viewed the moat-hill's mound.—P. 12.
A round mount near Hawick. The name may imply that it was used for assembling a national council.

On Minto Crags the moon beams glint.—P. 12.
A range of cliffs in the vale of Teviot, near the family seat of the Mintos.

To ancient Riddell's fair domain.—P. 12.
The Riddell's took their name from Ryedale. Tradition carries them back to 727 and 936, the dates of some stone coffins found there.

Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran.—P. 13.
Melrose Monastery was founded by King David I., in 1136, our finest specimen of Gothic architecture.

When Hawick he passed, had curfew rung.—P. 13.
Hawick is situated at the junction of the Teviot and Slitrig.

And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die.—P. 14.
The richly carved buttresses contained niches for the figures of saints, and were labelled with scrolls, bearing appropriate texts of Scripture.

Then view St David's ruined pile.—P. 14.
David I. has a reputation for piety, in consequence of his practice of founding religious houses.

Had gifted the shrine for their souls' repose.—P. 14.
The Buccleuch family were great benefactors to the Abbey of Melrose.

And beneath their feet were the bones of the dead.—P. 15.
The cloisters often contained the dead.

So had he seen, in fair Castle.—P. 16.
The hurling of darts was much used by the Spaniards.

O gallant Chief of Otterburne.—P. 16.

The fight at Otterburne was on 15th August 1388, between Henry Percy and the Earl of Douglas. The Scots won, taking Percy and losing Douglas.

And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale.—P. 16.

The Knight of Liddesdale, William Douglas, lived in the reign of David II. It was he who slew Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie, because the king had conferred on him the sheriffship of Teviotdale. So weak was the royal authority then, that the king felt himself obliged to give the honour to the murderer.

The moon on the east oriel shone.—P. 13.

One of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture.

They sate them down on a marble stone.—P. 16.

A marble stone in the chancel is said by some to be the monument of Alexander II., by others that of an Abbot Waldeve.

To meet the wondrous Michael Scott.—P. 17.

Sir Michael Scott of Balwearie lived in the thirteenth century. As one of the ambassadors, he brought the Fair Maid of Norway to Scotland. He is here placed in a later era. His works on the abstruse sciences, and his reputation as a wizard, are well known.

That when in Salamanca's cave.—P. 17.

Spain derived its magic from the Moors.

The words that cleft Eildon hills in three.—P. 17.

The old story of Michael Scott being bound to find employment for a spirit, and his request to have a cauld or damhead built across the Tweed, and the Eildon hills split at the top, is well known.

That lamp shall burn unquenchably.—P. 18.

The magicians, Baptista Porta, and others, speak of lamps that burn always four in old sepulchres.

A palmer's amice wrapt him round.—P. 18.

Among the Roman vestments is the amice or amite, a piece of linen first worn over the head, and then thrown over the shoulders.

With a wrought Spanish baldric bound.—P. 18.

A belt or sash of various devices.

The Baron's Dwarf his courser held.—P. 21.

Lord Cranstoun's dwarf is a version of the story of Gilpin Horner, a kind of brownie who stayed at a farm-house on the Borders.

For there, beside our Ladye's lake.—P. 22.

The lake connected with the Loch of the Lowes.

But the Ladye of Branksome gathered a band.—P. 22.

An allusion to the legend that Lady Bucclouch of the Beaton family, with men in armour, went to the kirk of St Mary of the Lowes, to seek for and slay Lord Cranstoun.

Wat of Harden came thither amain.—P. 22.

The famous Walter Scott of Harden in the reign of Queen Mary.

Like a book-bosomed priest should ride.—P. 25.

The book-a-bosom priests were those who went to a distance to baptize or marry with the mass-book in their breasts.

It had much of glamour might.—P. 25.

Glamour, a magic thrown over the eyes to alter the vision of an object.

The running stream dissolves the spell.—P. 26.

It is believed that running water will protect a person against witches and spectres.

Full many a torch and cresset glared.—P. 30.

An open lamp, suspended between the prongs of a fork-like stand.

- On Fenchryst glows a bale of fire.*—P. 36
A Border beacon was a tar-barrel set up on a beam.
- Mount, mount for Branksome, every man!*—P. 30.
A gathering cry of the Scotts.
- On many a cairn's gray pyramid.*—P. 31.
The piles of stones, called cairns, on the tops of hills are supposed, without much reason, to have been sepulchral.
- Fell by the side of great Dundee.*—P. 32.
Lord Dundee, slain at Killiecrankie.
- For pathless marsh, and mountain cell.*—P. 33
Deep morasses were places of refuge.
- Watt Tintinn, from the Liddel-side.*—P. 33.
A celebrated Borderer belonging to the Scotts.
- Could bound like any Bilhope stag.*—P. 33.
A game covert at that time.
- Of silver brooch and bracelet proud.*—P. 33.
The Borderers were fond of adorning their females.
- A battered morion on his brow.*—P. 38.
A skull-cap with rim.
- Belted Will Howard is marching here.*—P. 34.
Introduced here before his time. He was warder of the Western Marches and resided at Naworth Castle.
- And hot Lord Dacre, with many a spear.*—P. 34.
The Dacre family derived their name from their exploits before Acre, in France.
- And all the German hapbut men.*—P. 34.
It was usual for English kings to employ foreign troops in their wars with Scotland.
- His ready lances Thirlstane brave.*—P. 34.
The name of the family of Thirlstane was Scott. One of them, Sir John, got permission from James V. to bear *fleurs-de-luce*, in memory of his consent to follow the king into England,—spears for crest, and motto, "Ready, aye ready."
- Without the bend of Murdieston.*—P. 35.
Scott of Harden.
- Scotts of Eskdale, a stalward band.*—P. 35.
A reference to the manner in which the Scotts got the Valley of the Esk from the Beattisons, who were vassals of Maxwell, Earl of Morton.
- From Yarrow-cleugh to Hindkaugh-swair.*—P. 37.
A cleugh is a shoulder of a height.
- Their gathering-word was "Bellenden!"*—P. 37.
Bellendean, a place near the head of the river Berthwick; a place of meeting, and hence a cry for gathering.
- On battlement and bartizan.*—P. 39.
Projecting turrets of a castle.
- That he may suffer march-treason pain.*—P. 40.
March-treason comprehended various offences, such as riding over the opposite land during truce.
- Will cleanse him, by oath, of march-treason stain.*—P. 41.
A reference to oath was common on the Borders.
- Knighthood he took of Douglas' sword.*—P. 41.
The inferior honour of knighthood at one time could be conferred by a knight.
- When English blood swelled Ancram ford.*—P. 41.
The well-known battle of Ancram Muir in 1548.

Saw the blanchie lion e'er full back.—P. 42.
The crest of the noble house of Howard.

Let Musgrave meet fierce Deloraine.—P. 43.
The trial by combat existed all over Scotland.

But he, the jovial Harper.—P. 44.
Rattling, roaring Willie, a jolly beggar, who was hanged at Jedburgh for killing, in a duel, one of his own order, called "Sweet Milk."

Announcing Douglas' dreaded name.—P. 46.
The Douglasses, Earls of Angus, had a long run of great names. "The bloody heart" was their cognisance, assumed from the old story of Bruce's heart.

Where the Seven Spears of Wedderburne.—P. 46.
These were the seven sons of Sir David Home of Wedderburn, who were slain at Flodden.

And Swinton laid the lance in rest.—P. 46.
The Swintons of Swinton, an old family in Berwickshire. The allusion is to the unhorsing of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, by Sir John Swinton, at the battle of Beaugé, in France.

And shouting still, "A Home! a Home!"—P. 46.
The slogan or war-cry of the Earls of Home, descendants of the Dunbar, Earls of March. The Hepburns of Hailes were in alliance with the Homes. They terminated in the famous Earl of Bothwell.

Pursued the foot-ball play.—P. 47.
A famous sport still in usage.

Those bands, so fair together ranged.—P. 47.
There was often a kindly intercourse between the common people on the two sides of the Borders.

Loud hollo, whoop, or whistle ran.—P. 48.
Those who attended the Protector Somerset on his expedition disgraced themselves by disorderly conduct.

A knight from Hermitage.—P. 49.
Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale, belonging to the Earls of Bothwell—visited by Queen Mary when Bothwell was lying ill. It now belongs to the Buccleuchs.

White was her wimple, and her veil.—P. 51.
A kind of tippet covering the neck and shoulders, sometimes attached to the head.

And with the bugle rouse the fray.—P. 55.
The Border avengers always followed with bloodhounds and horn; this was called the *hot-trod*. The dog might be followed even into the opposite kingdom. The real breed of bloodhounds is extinct in this country.

And kirtles furred with miniver.—P. 57.
Ermine mixed with weasel.

She wrought not by forbidden spell.—P. 58.
There was a difference between the magicians and necromancers or wizards; the first commanded spirits, the latter obeyed them.

A merlin sat upon her wrist.—P. 58.
Latham, on Falconry, says that a merlin, or sparrow-hawk, was usually carried by ladies; a falcon was the attendant of a knight.

And princely peacock's gilded train.—P. 58.
The peacock roasted was considered a delicacy; hence the knights' vows, "Before the peacock and the ladies."

And o'er the bear-head, garnished brave.—P. 58.
A feast of feudal grandeur was the bear's head surrounded with armoured men.

And cygnet from St Mary's wave.—P. 53.

Wild swans are seen on St Mary's lake.

Smote with his gauntlet stout Huntill.—P. 59.

The Rutherfords were numerous on the Borders—those of Huntill the chief. Dickon Draw-the-Sword was son to one of these lairds, called the Cock of Huntill.

But bit his glove, and shook his head.—P. 59.

The biting of the thumb or glove was a sign of a determination to be revenged. It is said that a young man who was reminded of biting his glove against a companion at a drinking, challenged his opponent, and was killed, though he did not recollect for what he so bit his glove.

The pledge to Arthur Fire-the-Braes.—P. 59.

An Elliot bore this formidable name.

When in the cleuch the buck was ta'en—P. 59.

Referring to a tradition.

And first slept forth old Albert Graeme.—P. 60.

A part of the clan Grahame of Monteith retired from displeasure at court, and went into Cumberland in the time of Henry IV. Their posterity continue there.

The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall.—P. 60.

The burden is adopted from an old Scottish song.

Who has not heard of Surrey's fame?—P. 61.

The song is founded on an incident in the travels of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who was shewn by Agrippa the alchemist his lady Geradine in a looking-glass. The earl was beheaded by Henry VIII.

Rose Harold, bairn of brave St Clair.—P. 63.

The St Clairs settled in Scotland in the time of Malcolm Canmore, and obtained large grants of lands in Mid-Lothian. They were often called the St Clairs of Roslin, afterwards Earls of Orkney.

Thy pride and sorrow, fair Kirkwall.—P. 63.

The St Clairs of Orkney built the Castle of Kirkwall, afterwards dismantled by the Earl of Caithness, in 1615.

Their barks the dragons of the wave.—P. 68.

The Vikings, or Scandinavian pirates, had chiefs called *Sækonungr*, or Sea-kings. The Scalds called ships serpents of the ocean.

Of that Sea-Snake, tremendous curled.—P. 63.

The snake mentioned in the Edda, called the *Jormungandr*, and whose folds surround the earth. The god Thor nearly caught it with a hook baited with a bull's head.

Of those dread Maids, whose hideous yell

Maddens the battle's bloody swell.—P. 63.

The collectors of the slain, called *Valkyriur*, sent by Odin from Valhalla. See Gray's "Fatal Sisters."

Ransacked the graves of warriors old.—P. 63.

The practice of burying with arms and jewels was common in the north.

That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.—P. 64.

Henry St Clair, second of the line, married Rosabelle, fourth daughter of the Earl of Strathorne.

Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch.—P. 64.

A castle on a crag between Dysart and Kirkaldy, conferred on William St Clair as a compensation for Orkney by James III.

Seemed all on fire that chapel proud.—P. 64.

Roslin chapel, founded in 1446 by William St Clair, is still in preservation.

Cry, with loud summons, "Gybin, come!"—P. 65.

The call by which the Goblin Page was summoned.

Who spoke the spectre-round in Man.—P. 66.

The ancient Castle of Peel-town in the Isle of Man was said to have been haunted by an apparition called the "Mauthe Doog."

St Bryde of Douglas.—P. 66.

A saint of the house of Douglas.

MARMION.

The ancient minstrel strain.—P. 76.

The "Morte Arthur" contains the adventures of the Round Table. It is a good example of old English.

He took the Sangreal's holy quest.—P. 76.

The knights of the Round Table made a vow to find the Sangreal or vessel out of which the last passover was eaten; but it could only be got by one pure of life, and Sir Launcelot was thus prevented from getting it through his guilty intrigue with Queen Guenever.

And Dryden, in immortal strain.—P. 76.

Dryden's "Essay on Satire" contains an account of his projected epic which was choked by the parsimony of his patrons.

Day set on Norham's castled steep.—P. 77.

Norham Castle is situated on the south side of the Tweed, six miles above Berwick. Edward I. resided there when he was created umpire in the dispute regarding the Scottish succession. It was often taken and retaken in the Border wars. In 1164 it was rebuilt by the Earl of Durham, who added to it a great keep or donjon; but King Henry II. took it in 1174, after which it was considered a royal fortress.

The battled towers, the Donjon Keep.—P. 77.

The donjon was a strong tower used as a first defence. It contained the great hall and rooms of state, as also the prison, whence the name dungeon.

In mail, and plate, of Milan steel.—P. 79.

Milan was famous for armoury.

"Who checks at me, to death is dight."—P. 79.

The crest and motto of Marmion are taken from an old legend.

The gunner held his tinstock yare.—80.

A long match; "yare," ready.

Of Tamworth tower and town.—P. 81.

The principal character of the romance, Lord Marmion, is fictitious, though there was a family of that name, lords of Fontenay, in Normandy one of whom got a grant of the castle and town of Tamworth, and also Scrivelby, in Lincolnshire. These were held by the service of being the royal champion; but this office was afterwards adjudged to Sir John Dymoke, to whom the manor of Scrivelby had descended, and it remains still in that family.

Sir Hugh the Heron bold.—P. 81.

Sir William Heron of Ford, who properly should have stood for the Captain, was husband of the famous Lady Ford whose charms cost James IV. so dear.

He led Lord Marmion to the deas.—P. 81.

The principal table, or raised part of the floor in which it was set.

And taken his life at the Deadman's-shaw.—P. 82.

Taken from the recitation of an old Northumbrian woman.

Warbeck, that Flemish counterfeit.—P. 83.

The story of Perkin Warbeck, otherwise Richard, Duke of York, is well known. In 1495, James IV. conferred on him in marriage his relative, Lady Catherine Gordon.

*For here be some have pricked as far
On Scottish ground, as to Dunbar.*—P. 84.

The English castles of Wark, Norham, and Berwick, were troublesome neighbours to Scotland. The English captain of Wark harried the barony of Blythe in Lauderdale of 5000 sheep, 200 milt, 30 horses and mares, and every thing that was portable, at one sweep.

And given them light to set their hoods.—P. 84.

Scotch marauders were not less active than their English neighbours, often making a joke of their depredations; as when they burned the Castle of Lochwood, they said they did so to give Lady Johnstone "light to set her hood."

Saint Rosalie retired to God.—P. 86.

Dryden (the poet's son) in his "Voyage to Sicily," says that Sante Rosalia, born of a noble family in Palermo, so abhorred the vanities of the world, that she dedicated herself entirely to God, and, by divine inspiration, forsook her father's house, and was never more heard of, till her body was found in that cleft of a rock, on that inaccessible mountain where now the chapel stands.

Himself still sleeps before his beads

Have marked ten ayes and two creeds.—P. 87.

Rabelais also speaks of the soporific effect of the beads and breviary.

The summoned Palmer came in place.—P. 87.

A Palmer dedicated his whole life to the visitation of holy shrines; a Pilgrim made only a visit, and then retired home.

Good St Rule.—P. 88.

St Regulus or St Rule, a monk in Achaia, landed at St Andrews in 870, where he founded a chapel and tower, the latter of which is still standing, and is one of the most ancient edifices in Scotland. The place got the name of St Andrews, because the monk brought with him the bones of that saint.

Thence to St Fillan's blessed well.—P. 88.

In Perthshire healing wells are dedicated to St Fillan, and are still frequented by Protestants, as having virtue from the saint.

Where flourished once a forest fair.—P. 89.

Ettrick Forest, once the hunting-field of the Scottish kings, is now almost entirely a sheep-walk, but copses soon arise without any planting, a fact suggestive of the permanency of the seeds of plants.

Where erst the Outlaw drew his arrow.—P. 90.

The "Border Minstrelsy," contains the tale of the outlaw Murray, who held out Newark Castle against the king.

By lone St Mary's silent lake.—P. 91.

St Mary's lake is the head of the Yarrow; it is connected with the Loch of the Lowes. The Flower of Yarrow, Mary Scott, was born in Dryhope Tower, near the lower extremity of the lake.

Hath laid Our Lady's chapel low.—P. 92.

On the eastern side of the Lake of the Lowes was the chapel of St Mary. The lake belongs to Lord Napier.

To sit upon the Wizard's grave.—P. 92.

A small mound near the chapel is called *Binram's Corse*, from a tenant of the chaplainry, a necromantic priest.

Like that which frowns round dark Loch-skene.—P. 93.

Loch-skene is at the head of Moffat-water. In falling into the river it forms the famous cataract, called "The Gray Mare's Tail."

Marriot, thy harp, on Isis strung.—P. 94.

The "Border Minstrelsy" contains some of M. Marriot's ballads.

Bound to St Outhbert's Holy Isle.—P. 94.

Whithy Abbey, on the coast of Yorkshire, was founded in 657, in terms of a vow of Oswy, King of Northumberland. The monastery was afterwards

ruined by the Danes, and rebuilt by William Percy, in the reign of the Conqueror. Lindisfarne, an isle on the coast of Northumberland, was called Holy Island, from its monastery, and being the episcopal seat of the see of Durham. Lindisfarne is not properly an island, but rather, as Bede says, a kind of semi-isle. The ruins are very ancient—but some pointed windows show that additions or renovations were introduced upon the Saxon work.

Must menial service do.—P. 99.

See a popular account of this service in "A True Account," printed at Whitby.

The lovely Edelfled.—P. 99.

Daughter of King Oswy, who dedicated Edelfleda to the service of God, in gratitude for his battle against Penda, King of Mercia, in 655.

His body's resting-place, of old,

How oft their patron changed, they told.—P. 99.

St Cuthbert died in 688 in a hermitage upon the Farne Islands. His body was brought to Lindisfarne, where it remained until 793, when the monastery was nearly destroyed by the descent of the Danes. It was subsequently carried about on men's shoulders through the country, being at last deposited at a place named Wardlaw, fixed upon from the circumstance that he became there immovable—that is, his bearers had got tired.

Even Scotland's dawnless king, and heir,

Before his standard fled.—P. 100.

Reference to the battle of Northallerton, or Cuton-moor, 1138.

And turned the Conqueror back again.—P. 100.

Simcon of Durham says that the saint appeared in a vision to Alfred when lurking in the morasses of Glastonbury. The terror inspired by William the Conqueror made the monks fly to Holy Island with the body of the saint. It was, however, replaced before William left the north.

The sea-born beads that bear his name.—P. 100.

St Cuthbert's beads are the *Entrochi* found among the rocks, and supposed to be forged at an anvil by St Cuthbert during the night.

Old Colwulf built it, for his fault.—P. 100.

Ceowulf, or Colwulf, a king of Northumberland, of the eighth century. The penitential vaults were the *Geissel-gewölbe* of the German convents.

Tynemouth's haughty prioress.—P. 101.

There was an ancient priory at Tynemouth. It was at one time a nunnery. Virca, the abbess, presented St Cuthbert with a winding-sheet while he was still alive.

On those the wall was to enclose,

Alive, within the tomb.—P. 103.

As among the Romans, so among the old Catholics. A breach of the vow of chastity in a nun was punished in an awful manner. She was immured in a niche of the wall, with a mere pittance of bread and water, and the parting words sounded in her ear, VADE IN PACE. In the abbey of Coldingham the skeleton of one of these victims was discovered.

To William Erskine, Esq.—P. 107.

William Erskine was the poet's friend. He was a judge of the Court of Session.

For ever quenched in Jena's stream.—P. 108.

The Duke of Brunswick died of his wounds received at the battle of Jena, October 14, 1806.

Old Gifford's towers and hamlet lay.—P. 112.

The village of Gifford is at a little distance from Huddington.

The village inn seemed large though rude.—P. 112.

We have some notion of a Scottish hostelry in the sixteenth century from Dunbar's tale of "The Friars of Berwick." Simon Lauder, the "gay ostler," was a comfortable liver; and his wife decorated her person with a red kirtle, a belt of silk and silver, and finger-rings, while she feasted her paramour with rabbits, capons, partridges, and Bourdeaux wine.

Seemed in mine ear a death-peal rung.—P. 116.

The Scotch peasantry have still faith in the "dead bell," explained by Hogg as a tinkling in the ears before the death of a friend.

The founder of the Goblin Hall.—P. 118.

Under the old hall of Gifford, or Yester, for it is called by both names, there is a vaulted hall, the construction of which is ascribed to magic.

There floated Haco's banner trim.—P. 119.

Haco, King of Norway, made a descent at Largs, on the Frith of Clyde, in 1268. He was defeated by Alexander III., and retired to Orkney, where he died.

But in his wizard habit strange.—P. 119.

Reginald Scott, in his "Discovery of Witchcraft," describes a magician's vestments:—"Their caps are oval, or like pyramids, with lappets on each side and fur within. Their gowns are long, and furred with fox-skins, under which they have a linen garment reaching to the knees. Their girdles are three inches broad, and have many cabalistical names, with crosses, trines, and circles inscribed on them. Their shoes should be of now russet leather, with a cross cut upon them. Their knives are dagger-fashion, and their swords have neither guard nor scabbard."

Upon his breast a pentacle.—P. 119.

A pentacle is a piece of linen, folded with five corners, hence the name. This represents the five senses, and is inscribed with characters. The magician holds out the pentacle when he invokes.

As born upon that blessed night.—P. 120.

That to be born on Christmas-day or Good Friday is to have the power of seeing spirits, is still an article of faith among the common people.

To James Skene, Esq.—P. 124.

Skene of Rubislaw, Aberdeenshire.

The morn may find the stiffened swain.—P. 126.

The poet says, that on the evening these lines were written, a man perished in this manner within five miles of Ashetiel.

Scarcely had lamented Forbes paid

The tribute to his Minstrel's shade.—P. 126.

Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Bart., author of the "Life of Beattie," whom he befriended.

Then he, whose absence we deplore.—P. 128.

Colin McKenzie of Portmore; died in 1830.

And thou, and I, and dear-loved R——.—P. 128.

Sir William Rao.

And one whose name I may not say.—P. 128.

John Hay Forbes.

Been lanthorn-led by Friar Rush.—P. 129.

An *esprit follet*, Robin Goodfellow, or Jack-o'-Lantern, who sometimes got into a monastery as a scullion, and played many tricks.

Of Caxton or De Worde.—P. 130.

William Caxton, the first English printer; died 1492. De Worde, Caxton's successor.

His cap of maintenance.—P. 131.

A cap of state made of crimson velvet, lined with ermine, carried before our king at his coronation.

Sir David Lindsay of the Mount.—P. 131.

"I am uncertain," says the author, "if I abuse poetical licence by introducing Sir David Lindsay in his character of Lion-Herald sixteen years before he obtained that office."

Where Oricktown Castle crowns the bank.—P. 132.

Orickton Castle on the Tyne, about nine miles from Edinburgh.

Earl Adam Hepburn.—P. 182.
Second Earl of Bothwell. He fell at Flodden.

*A tale, which chronicles of old
 In Scottish story have enrolled.—P. 194*
 The story is in Pitscottie and Buchanan.

The wild buck bells from ferny brake.—P. 194.
 The cry of the deer, a contraction of *bellow*.

June saw his father's overthrow.—P. 184.
 The rebellion against James III. was signalised by the presence of the son against the father. The manner of his death at Bannockburn is well known.

And fingers red with gore.—P. 187.
 See the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders" for the traditions respecting Bulmer and the spectre called Lhamdearg, or Bloody-hand.

Spread o'er the Borough-moor below.—P. 188.
 The Borough-moor, which now gives name to the district called Borough-muirhead, was not a moor, but a forest, extending from the southern wall to the Braid Hills. The inhabitants of Edinburgh had permission granted them to use the trees for building the projections on the upper storeys of their houses, with the view of demolishing the forest. The "Hare Stane," built into the wall not far from the Bruntsfield Links, was the mark for raising the royal standard in the forest; *Har*, signifying an army.

O'er the pavilions flew.—P. 189.
 In the account of Somerset's expedition, there is a curious description of an encampment of a Scottish army,—that of Pinkey, in 1547.

The ruddy lion ramped in gold.—P. 140.
 The arms of Scotland. If we believe Boethius and Buchanan, the double tressure round the shield, counter *fleur-de-lisé*, or lingued and armed azure, was first assumed by Achalus, king of Scotland; but later antiquaries make poor Eochy, or Achy, little better than a sort of king of Brentford, whom old Grig (who has swelled into Gregorius Magnus) associated with himself in the government of part of the north-east of Scotland.

To George Ellis, Esq.—P. 142.
 George Ellis, a friend of the author's, who wrought in the "Anti-Jacobin" with Canning, and edited "Specimens of Early English Poetry."

True,—Caledonia's Queen is changed.—P. 148.
 Edinburgh had a lake in the north, and a wall on the south.

Flinging thy white arms to the sea.—P. 143.
 Borrowed from a chorus in "Caractacus."

To Henry meek she gave repose.—P. 144.
 Scotland received Henry VI. and his queen after the battle of Towton. The queen came to Edinburgh, but it is doubtful if the king did.

The cloth-yard arrows flew like hail.—P. 143.
 This is no poetical exaggeration. In some counties in England, shafts of extraordinary length were used.

To pass, to wheel, the croupe to gain.—P. 146.
 See Lord Herbert's *Life* for an account of the *airs* or actions of war-horses.

He saw the hardy burghers there.—P. 147.
 Like yeomen, the Scottish burgesses carried arms of a particular kind,—bows and sheaves, sword, buckler, knife, spear, or a good axe, instead of a bow, if worth £100. They had bright steel caps, called white hats. In this costume they appeared at weapon-schawings.

On foot the yeomen too.—P. 147.
 The Scotch never took kindly to the bow and quiver: though recommended by statute, they preferred the spear and axe. They wore the plate-jack, hawk-bark, or brigantine. The Scottish forces almost always appeared on foot.

A banquet rich, and costly wines.—P. 149.

A present of wine was a common item in almost all transactions.

The pressure of his iron belt.—P. 151.

James's penitential belt was added to every year, to increase its weight. It is strange that, if he fell at Flodden, this belt was never shown by the English.

O'er James's heart, the courtiers say,

Sir Hugh the Heron's wife held sway.—P. 151.

James's connexion with Lady Heron did not commence until he marched into England. Historians say that the delays produced by this fatal passion were the cause of the disaster at Flodden.

Sent him a turquois ring and glove.—P. 151.

The turquois ring supposed to be preserved in the College of Heralds, London.

Archibald Bell-the-Cat.—P. 154.

Archibald Douglas, so well known as Bell-the-Cat.

Against the war had Angus stood.—P. 154.

Angus, then an old man, spoke much against the invasion, whereupon James said, "If he was afraid, he might go home." He did, and left his sons, who were slain.

Then rest you in Tantallon Hold.—P. 154.

Tantallon Castle, on a high rock, two miles east of North Berwick.

And had made league with Martin Swart.—P. 157.

A German general, who commanded the forces sent by the Duchess of Burgundy. His name is preserved in that of "Swart-moor," where he fell.

Perchance in prayer or faith he swerved.—P. 158.

Those who believed in the Divine judgment shown, in proofs, by battle, always resorted to salvos, to save the belief. We use these salvos in defence of many beliefs.

Dun-Edin's cross, a pillared stone.—P. 160.

The Cross of Edinburgh was destroyed in 1756.

This awful summons came.—P. 160.

This supernatural citation is mentioned by all our Scottish historians.

Before a venerable pile.—P. 162.

There was a convent of Cistercian nuns near North Berwick, founded by Duncan, Earl of Fife, in 1216.

— *One of his own ancestry*

Drove the Monks forth of Coventry.—P. 164.

The story of the catastrophe of the real Robert of Marmion, in the reign of King Stephen, is told by William of Newbury.

Mertoun House.—P. 166.

Mertoun House, on the Tweed, a little below Dryburgh Abbey.

— *The savage Dane*

At Iot more deep the mead did drain.—P. 166.

See Mallet's "Northern Antiquities."

On Christmas-eve the mass was sung.—P. 167.

It is only at Christmas that mass is said at night.

Who lists may in their mumming see

Traces of ancient mystery.—P. 168.

The mummers of England and the guisards of Scotland present a shadow of the old mysteries which preceded the English drama.

Though Leyden aids, alas, no more.—P. 169.

John Leyden died in India, August 1811.

He fears the vengeful Elfin King.—P. 169.

The *Daoine shì*, or Men of Peace, of the Scottish Highlanders, resemble the Scandinavian *Dvergjar* rather than the English fairies. They wear green, and are not pleased when mortals do so. See Dr Graham's "Picturesque Sketches of Perthshire."

The very form of Hilda fair.—P. 173.

The Lady Hilda is believed to render herself visible, on some occasions, in the abbey of Steanshalk, or Whitby.

A bishop by the altar stood.—P. 177

Gawain Duglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, son of Archibald Bel'-the-Cat, was author of a version of the *Æneid* and other pieces.

His foeman's limbs to shred away,

As wood-knife lops the sapling spray.—P. 177.

Angus had strength and activity along with his courage.

Where Lennel's convent closed their march.—P. 181.

A Cistercian house of religion, now almost entirely demolished. It is situated near Coldstream and Flodden.

The Till by Twisel-bridge.—P. 182.

The battle of Flodden was fought on the hill of that name belonging to the ridge of the Cheviot. The Till, a deep and slow river, was between the armies; and it is said that, when Surrey was crossing Twisel-bridge, James might have fallen upon the English and routed them. He chose gallantly to give them a fair field, and lost the battle and his life, with the flower of the Scottish people.

With Brian Tunstall, stainless knight.—P. 185.

Sir Brian Tunstall was called the undefiled, from his clear armour and pure loyalty.

Reckless of life, he desperate fought,

And fell on Flodden plain.—P. 192.

Though the English could never show James's iron belt, it is certain that he was killed at Flodden. The French *Gazette* said he fell within a lance-length of Surrey. An unhewn stone marks the spot still called The King's Stone.

'Twas levelled, when fanatic Brook

The fair cathedral stormed and took.—P. 192.

The storm of Lichfield Cathedral took place during the Civil War. Lord Brook, who commanded, was shot through the visor of his helmet; a circumstance which made the Royalists say that he was shot in the very eye by which he had said he would see the ruin of all the cathedrals in England.

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

Disturbed the heights of Uam-Var.—P. 198.

Uaigh-mor is a mountain to the north-east of the village of Callander; the same signifies the great den.

And deemed the stag must turn to bay.—P. 200.

The practice of killing the stag at bay by the hand was held dangerous, from some notion that the wound inflicted by the horn was poisoned.

No pathway meets the wanderer's ken.—P. 203.

The present road through the romantic pass is modern. Previously there was no mode of getting out of the defile but by a sort of ladder made of larches and roots of trees.

To meet with Highland plunderers here

Were worse than loss of steel or deer.—P. 203.

The clans about Loch Katrine were remarkable for their predatory habits.

*A gray-haired sire, whose eye intent
Was on the visioned future bent.*—P. 206.

There is scarcely any mystery better supported by evidence than that of the second sight.

Some chief had framed a rustic bower.—P. 207.

All the Celtic chieftains had refuges for necessity,—a tower, cavern, or hut. One of these last gave shelter to Charles Edward in his wanderings after the battle of Culloden.

Pour forth the glory of the Græme.—P. 214.

The Grahams, once a powerful family, had their possessions in Dumbarton-shire and Stirlingshire.

This harp, which erst St Modan swayed.—P. 214.

If St Modan was not a performer on the harp, it is certain that St Dunstan played on that instrument, which, retaining its sanctity, announced future events by its spontaneous sound.

Ere Douglasses to ruin driven.—P. 215.

Allusion is here made to the fall of the house of Angus, in the time of James V.

In Holy-Rood a knight he slew.—P. 216.

Murder in Holyrood was not an uncommon occurrence.

The Douglas, like a stricken deer,

Disowned by every noble peer.—P. 216.

The hatred of James against the Douglasses was so well known, that their allies and friends disowned them for fear of the royal anger.

A votaress in Maronnan's cell.—P. 217.

Kilmaronok, at the eastern extremity of Loch Lomond, gets its name from a cell or chapel of St Moronoch, or Marnoch.

But wild as Bracklinn's thundering wave.—P. 217.

A fine cascade at the Bridge of Bracklin, produced by a fall of the Keltie, about a mile from Callander, in Mentath.

For Tine-man forged by fairy lore.—P. 218.

The third Earl of Douglas was so unfortunate in his enterprises, that he got the name of *Tine-man*, from *tinie* or losing his men.

Did, self-unsabbarred, foreshow

The footstep of a secret foe.—P. 218.

The ancient warriors augured from their swords, especially when they were fabricated by enchanted skill, as was sometimes thought they were.

And louder rung the pibroch proud.—P. 219.

A well-composed pibroch was thought to contain the sounds of march, conflict, flight, pursuit, and all "the current of a heady fight."

Boat-song.—P. 220.

The boat-song is intended as an imitation of the *jorrams* of the Highlanders usually sung in boats. They kept time with the sweep of the oars.

"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"—P. 220.

Besides the ordinary name and surname, and also in addition to another expressing his chieftainship, the Highlanders had often names indicating complexion or form, as *dhu* or *roy*, *beg* or *more*.

List all!—The King's vindictive pride

Boasts to have tamed the Border-side.—P. 224.

In 1529 James V. made a convention at Edinburgh for quelling the Bòrcar chiefs, who, during his minority, had used great licence.

And while the Fiery Cross glanced, like a meteor, round.—P. 229.

The Fiery Cross, intended as a call to arms, was made by making a cross of light wood charring the ends, and dipping them in the blood of a goat

stain for the purpose. Every one was bound to carry the cross forward as he got it from his neighbour—the name of the rendezvous being mentioned by one to another.

No peasant sought that Hermit's prayer.—P. 281.

The people in the middle ages, when far from a place of worship, contrived to get some ghostly confessors to relieve them of their sins, and these were accommodating.

The virgin smood did Alice wear.—P. 281.

The smood, or ribbon, on the head of the Scotch lasses was renounced for the surch, toy, or coif, when she was married.

Beheld the river demon rise.—P. 282.

The demon, or river-horse, is the water-kelpy of the Lowlands, a malicious fiend, who on one occasion, at Loch Venachar, destroyed a whole funeral party.

Noontide hag, or goblin grim.—P. 282.

The noontide hag, in Gaelic *Glas-lich*, a gigantic female figure, was principally known about Knoidar.

The fatal Ben-shie's boding scream.—P. 282.

Most Highland families of name had their domestic spirit, who intimated, by wailing, any calamity. The Ben-shie is the head of the fairies, and is visible as an old woman with blue mantle and streaming hair.

Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,

Of charging steeds, careering fast.—P. 282.

A presage of the kind alluded to in the text is still believed to announce a death to the M'Leans of Lochbuy. The spirit of an ancestor slain in battle rides thrice round the family mansion, ringing his fairy bridle, and thus announcing the coming calamity.

Whose parents in Inch-Caillach wave.—P. 283.

The Isle of Nuns, in the lower extremity of Loch Lomond.

Speed, Makise, speed! the dun deer's hide

On fleetest foot was never tied.—P. 285.

The *brogue* is made of half-tanned leather, with holes to let the water in and out.

The dismal coronach resound.—P. 286.

The *coronach*, or the lamentation of the Highlanders over their dead, is similar to the *Ulutatus* of the Romans, or *Ululoo* of the Irish.

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,

Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze.—P. 240.

The burning of the heather is resorted to for producing a crop of young grass for the sheep.

No oath, but by his Chieftain's hand.—P. 241.

"By Chieftain's hand," a common form of oath.

Has Coir-nan-Uriskin been sung.—P. 241.

Coir-nan-Uriskin, a romantic hollow in Ben-venue, implying the den of the wild man—*Urisk*, meaning a figure between a goat and a man.

Through the wild pass of Beal-nam-bo.—P. 242.

Bealach-nam-bo, or pass of cattle, a fine glade on Ben-venue.

A single page, to bear his sword,

Alone attended on his lord.—P. 242.

The following were the officers attached to a chief:—In addition to the *Zuchttach*, or body-guard, the henchman, the bard, the *Bladier*, or spokesman, *Gillie-castue*, or carrier over fords, *Gillie-comstraine*, leader of the chief's horse, *Gillie Trushanartnah*, the baggage-man, the piper, and the piper's *gillie*, who carried the bagpipe.

*Brian an augury hath tried,
The Taghairm called.*—P. 246.

The Highlanders were great inquirers into futurity. One superstition was the *Taghairm*, where a man, rolled up in a hide, was deposited in some wild place, and thus came to see what was to happen.

When swept our merry-men Gallangad.—P. 246.

This passage is taken from the mouth of an old Kerne, or Kesteran, who used to narrate the merry doings of the good old time when he was a follower of *Ghluns Dhu*, or Black-knee, a relative of Rob Roy Macgregor.

*Of that huge cliff, whose ample verge
Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.*—P. 246.

There is a cataract in the forest of Glenfinlas, on a rock near the bottom of which an outlaw took refuge. His provisions were supplied to him by a woman, who let them down by a string.

*Watching while the deer is broke,
His morsel claims with sullen croak.*—P. 247.

The breaking of a stag was a solemnity in which forester, the bounds, and the birds had their portions allotted to them.

Alice Brand.—P. 250.

This little fairy tale is founded on a Danish ballad in the "*Kiempe Viser*," a collection of heroic songs.

*Or who comes here to chase the deer
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?*—P. 251.

Fairies, like other proprietors of forests, were jealous of their rights of venison. This jealousy was also an attribute of the northern dwarfs. Sir Hildebrand, in the "*Heiden-Buch*," was punished for a violation of an Elfin garden.

The fairies' fatal green.—P. 251.

The "*Men of Peace*" were, as we have said, jealous of their colour, green. Indeed "*green*" is held to be unlucky by some tribes, such as the Ogilvys and Grahames.

But all is glistening show.—P. 252.

The illusory nature of the fairies' splendour is well known.

*'Twixt life and death, was snatched away
To the joyless Elfin bower.*—P. 252.

The fairies recruited their ranks by stolen infants, sometimes adults.

The hardened flesh of mountain deer.—P. 260.

The Highlanders are said to have sometimes eaten their venison raw; but our only authority is a Frenchman, the Vidame of Chartres, who, in the reign of Edward VI., travelled in the remote Highlands. He says the savages merely pressed the blood out by putting a piece between two batons of wood, and then devoured it. This, after all, was probably only a rude kind of deer ham.

*While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrowed truncheon of command.*—P. 263.

The minority of James V. was remarkable for feuds and quarrels.

*Thou art my guest;—I pledged my word
As far as Coiltantogle ford.*—P. 266.

A peculiarity of the ancient Gael was the alternation of generosity and revenge.

*Where Rome, the Empress of the world,
Of yore her eagle wings unfurled.*—P. 267.

The torrent which falls from Loch Vennesshar sweeps a muir called Bochartle. The *Dun* of Bochartle is thought to have been a Roman camp.

See, here, all vanitageless I stand.—P. 267.

In former times private duellists did not insist always for an equality of arms.

On the field his target he threw.—P. 268.

The round target of leather was necessary to the Highlander. On this he received the thrust of the bayonet, turned it aside, and then struck with his broadsword.

Fits-James's blade was sword and shield.—P. 268.

The use of the buckler was general in Queen Elizabeth's time.

Full at Fits-James's throat he sprung.—P. 269.

This duel was not so savagely desperate as that recorded of Sir Ewan of Lochiel, chief of the Camerons, called Ewan Dhu, from his dark complexion.

The burghers hold their sports to-day.—P. 272.

Every burgh in Scotland had its play or festival, with feats of archery, wrestling, and hurling the bar, and other gymnastics.

Bold Robin Hood and all his band.—P. 273.

The exhibition of Robin Hood and his band was a favourite frolic at such festivals, down to the end of the sixteenth century. These plays were profane enough to call down the censure of the Church.

The Douglas bent a bow of might.—P. 273.

The Douglas of the poem is an imaginary person, but the king's behaviour is imitated from a real story, by Hume of Gods-croft.

Prize of the wrestling match, the King

To Douglas gave a golden ring.—P. 273.

The usual prize of a wrestling was a ram and a ring.

These drew not for their fields the sword,

Like tenants of a feudal lord.—P. 279.

The Scottish armies consisted of the nobles and barons with their vassals. The patriarchal feature of the Highlanders was in some degree different, there being more love and fealty.

The leader of a juggler band.—P. 281.

The jongleurs or jugglers had various assistants, among whom was the glee-maiden, who sang, danced, and tumbled.

That stirring air that peals on high,

O'er Dermid's race our victory.—

Strike it!—P. 285.

There are several instances of people being so attached to particular tunes as to wish them sung to them on their death-bed. A Gallovidian laird is said to have evinced this partiality to the tune called the "Dandling of the Bairns."

Battle of the Beal' an Duine.—P. 286.

A skirmish, which closed with the remarkable incident in the text, actually took place at the Trosachs.

My purse with bonnet-pieces store.—P. 289.

A gold coin of James V. with the effigy of the king wearing a bonnet.

And Snowdown's Knight is Scotland's King!—P. 293.

The discovery is like that in the Arabian tale, "Il Rondocani." James's frolics are well known.

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

And Cattraeth's glens with voice of triumph rung.—P. 299.

The poetry of Wales often extends in its subjects to the north-west of England. The battle of Cattraeth, lamented by Aneurin, is supposed by Leyden to have been fought near Ettrick Forest.

Round the marge of Minchmore's haunted spring.—P. 300.

A fountain on the ridge of Minchmore called the Cheesewell, is supposed to be sacred to the fairies.

In verse spontaneous chants some favoured name.—P. 800.

The power of improvisation in Italy and Spain owes much to the flexibility of the languages of these countries.

For fair Florinda's plundered charms to pay.—P. 802.

The Spanish historians ascribe the invasion of the Moors to the violation by Roderick of Florinda, called Caba or Cava by the Moors, Count Julian's daughter. The Count, in revenge, joined Musa, the caliph's lieutenant, and the Saracens commanded by Tarik undertook the enterprise.

His nation's future fate a Spanish King shall see.—P. 803.

The Fated Chamber of Don Roderick is derived from an incident in history.

The Tecbir war-cry, and the Lelia's yell.—P. 805.

The Tecbir was the war-cry of the Saracens. The Lelia is the *Alla illa Alla* of the Mohammedan confession of faith.

By heaven, the Moors prevail! the Christians yield!—P. 805.

The place of Tarik's landing, in 713, was Gibraltar (*Gibei al Tar*..., mountain of Tarik). He was joined by Count Julian, and ravaged Andalusia. The Saracens returned to Spain in 714.

When for the light Bolero ready stand

The Mozo blithe, with gay Muchacha met.—P. 808.

The Bolero is a light dance, with castanets. Mozo and Muchacha correspond to our lad and lass.

While trumpets rang, and heralds cried, "Castile!"—P. 809.

The word "Castilla" is pronounced three times at the coronation of a Spanish king.

They won not Zaragoza, but her children's bloody tomb.—P. 811.

Mr Vaughan, in his interesting account, has made us familiar with the siege of Zaragoza.

Then, though the Vault of Destiny be gone.—P. 813.

The legend of the Enchanted Cavern of Don Roderick is made use of in one of Calderon's plays, "La Virgen del Sagrario."

Gave his poor crust to feed some wretch forlorn.—P. 815.

The gallantry of the British army in 1810-11 was equalled by its humanity, the soldiers sharing their pittance with the famishing inhabitants.

Vain-glorious Fugitive! yet turn again!—P. 815.

The French have shewn their usual *fanfarronnade* in describing this memorable retreat as if it were a great victory.

Vainly thy squadrons hide Assuava's plain.—P. 815.

In the battle of Fuentes d'Honoro, 5th May 1811, the French cavalry attacked the right of the British, covered by two guns. After suffering from the fire of these, the enemy distributed brandy among their troopers, to make them carry the field-pieces with the desperation of drunken fury; but Captain Ramsay's exploit, in changing his artillerymen into dragoons, helped to defeat the attack.

And what avails thee that, for Cameron slain.—P. 815.

The gallant Colonel Cameron was mortally wounded during the contest, in the streets of Fuentes d'Honoro. The Highlanders raised their shriek, and charged with irresistible fury the pick of Napoleon's grenadiers.

Oh, who shall grudge him Albuquerque's days,

Who brought a race regenerate to the field.—P. 816.

The self-devotion of Marshal Beresford, in training the Portuguese troops, deserves all praise.

ROKEBY.

On Barnard's towers, and Tees's stream.—P. 321.

Barnard's tower stands upon the Tees, raised upon a high bank, and includes a circle of six acres. It derives its name from its founder, Barnard Baliol, the ancestor of the short dynasty of Baliol, in Scotland.

The morion's plumes his visage hide.—P. 323.

Complete suits of armour fell into disuse about the period of the civil war. The buff-coat, or jerkin, of leather, took the place of the steel corslet, and was so thick that it could often resist the stroke of a sword.

*On his dark face a scorching clime,
And toil, had done the work of time.*—P. 324.

From the time of Elizabeth, the exploits of Drake and Raleigh were imitated, on a small scale, by bands of pirates.

Wouldst hear the tale?—On Marston heath

Met, front to front, the ranks of death.—P. 325.

The battle of Marston Muir commenced under very different auspices.

Monckton and Milton told the news,

How troops of Roundheads choked the Ouse.—P. 329.

These are villages near the scene of the battle. The particulars of the action were violently disputed at the time.

Stout Cromwell has redeemed the day.—P. 329.

Cromwell, with his cuirassiers, turned the fate of the day.

Of Percy Rede the tragic song.—P. 330.

For this tragic story, see "The Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel," Newcastle, 1809.

The moated mound of Risingham.—P. 330.

Risingham, upon the Reed, near Woodburn, is an ancient Roman station. It is said to have been the residence of a giant, or deity, called Magon.

The statutes of the buccaneer.—P. 330.

There was a kind of equity in the laws of the buccaneers,—honesty among thieves.

Far sweeping to the east, he sees

Down his deep woods the course of Tees.—P. 337.

The finest view of the course of the Tees is from the bridge built by Mr Morritt of Rokeby.

And Eglistone's gray ruins passed.—P. 338.

The ruins of this abbey, or priory, are beautifully situated upon the angle of a little dell called Thorsgill, at its junction with the Tees.

As his eye glanced o'er the mound,

Raised by that Legion long renowned.—P. 338.

Behind the George Inn at Greta Bridge, is a well-preserved Roman encampment, with triple ditch and the four entrances.

When Rokeby's turrets high.—P. 338.

This ancient manor gave name to a family from the Conquest downwards. It suffered much for having taken the part of Charles I.

A stern and lone, yet lovely road.—P. 339.

What follows, is an attempt to describe the glen through which the Greta flows.

What gales are sold on Lapland's shore.—P. 341.

The Finlanders say Olaus Magnus sold winds to detained vessels.

How whistle rash bids tempests roar.—P. 341.

A general superstition among sailors. "The most formidable whistler I remember to have met with, was the apparition of a certain Mrs Leakey, who about 1686, resident, we are told, at Mynthead, in Somerset."

Of Erick's cap and Elmo's light.—P. 341.

This Erlous, king of Sweden, was so great a magician, that he made the wind blow in the direction he turned his cap.

The Demon Frigate braves the gale.—P. 341.

An allusion to the Flying Dutchman.

*How, by some desert isle or key,
Where Spaniards wrought their cruelty.*—P. 342.

The security of the buccaneers lay in the little sandy islets called keys, where they got plenty of turtle, and could hide treasure.

Before the gate of Mortham stood.—P. 343.

The Castle of Mortham, "Mr Rokeby's place," was about a quarter of a mile from Greta Bridge. The battlements, as yet seen, are singularly beautiful.

And bid the dead your treasure keep.—P. 345.

The buccaneers were so cruel and superstitious, that they killed a negro or Spaniard, and buried him, as a guardian, with the concealed treasure.

*And force him, as by magic spell,
In his despite his guilt to tell.*—P. 345.

The infatuation of felons in making confidences has been often remarked. Witness the case of Eugene Aram.

Of Brackenbury's dismal tower.—P. 349.

This tower is situated on the north-east extremity of the wall which encloses Barnard Castle.

*Nobles and knights, so proud of late,
Must fine for freedom and estate.*—P. 350.

After the battle of Marston Moor, the Duke of Newcastle retired beyond seas, and many of his supporters made compositions with the Committees.

The Indian, prowling for his prey.—P. 350.

The agility and address of the American Indians in pursuit of plunder or vengeance are well known.

*In Redesdale his youth had heard
Each art her wily dalesmen dared.*—P. 351.

The inhabitants of the valleys of the Tyne and Reed were greatly addicted to depredations and rapine. A beggar, in an old play, calls them good men, "saving a little shifting for their living, God help them."

When Rookens-edge, and Redswair high.—P. 351.

Redswair is on the very edge of the Carter-Fell, which divides England from Scotland. The Rookens is a place upon the Reed Water.

And throatwort with its azure bell.—P. 354.

The *Campanula latifolia*, or Canterbury Bells, grows in profusion on the Greta.

*Here stood a wretch, prepared to change
His soul's redemption for revenge!*—P. 354.

Revenge was almost always the motive for the compact between Satan and his vassals.

*Who told his knight, in peevish zeal,
Of my marauding on the clowns.*—P. 355.

The troops of Charles, when they first took the field, were well disciplined, but licence came afterwards to prevail.

*Of old, the cavern strait and rude,
In slaty rock the peasant hewed.*—P. 357.

The banks of the Greta abound in slate, the working of which has made many artificial caves.

When Spain waged warfare with our land.—P. 360.

The short war with Spain in 1625-6, agrees with the chronology of the poem. Indeed, the Spaniards were always aggressing, and the buccaneers merely repaid them in their own coin.

*Redeemed his portion of the prey
That greedier mates had torn away.*—P. 361.

The quarrels among the buccaneers about the division of spoil fill their history.

And adieu for evermore.—P. 364.

The last verse is taken from a fragment of an old ballad.

The Baron of Ravensworth prances in pride.—P. 365.

The ruins of Ravensworth Castle are in the North Riding of Yorkshire, three miles from the town of Richmond.

Who at Rere-cross on Stanmore meets Allen-a-Dale.—P. 365.

This is a fragment of an old cross with its pediment, surrounded by an in-trenchment, at the very summit of Stanmore Ridge.

Speak, Hamlin! hast thou lodged our deer?—P. 365.

The prickler harboured the deer; i.e., discovered his retreat.

When Denmark's Raven soared on high.—P. 366.

About the year 866, the Danes, under Ingvar, invaded Northumberland. They carried the magical standard called *REAFEN*, or *Raufan*, from its bearing the figure of a raven. The district to the west of York called *Roged* had never been conquered by the Saxons.

Where Tees in tumult leaves his source.—P. 366.

The Tees rises about the skirts of Crossfell, and falls over the cataracts named in the text.

Fixed on each vale a Runic name.—P. 366.

The heathen Danes have left several traces of their religion in the upper part of Teesdale. *Balder-garth*, *Woden Croft*, and *Thorsgill*, are names of places that bespeak their origin.

Who has not heard how brave O'Neale

In English blood inbrued his steel?—P. 368.

The O'Neale is a great name in Ireland, the chief being successively Baron Dungannon and Earl of Tyrone, under which latter title he baffled the gallant Earl of Essex.

But chief arose his victor pride,

When that brave Marshal fought and died.—P. 368.

The chief victory obtained by Tyrone over the English was in a battle fought near Blackwater, or, in Irish, *Avon-Duff*.

His plaited hair in elf-locks spread, &c.—P. 369.

The Irish dress is here described, which was similar to that of the Scotch Highlanders.

With wild majestic port and tone.—P. 369.

The Irish chiefs assumed the language and style of independent royalty.

His foster-father was his guide.—P. 370.

Among the Irish, no tie was more sacred than that between the child and foster-father and nurse.

Great Nial of the Pledges Nine.—P. 372.

Niell Naighvallach, or *Of the Nine Hostages*, is said to have been monarch of all Ireland, at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century.

Shane-Dymas wild, and Geraldine.—P. 372.

Shane-Dymas, or John the Wanton, held the power of O'Neale in Elizabeth's time. The O'Neales were allied to the Gerald's, Earls of Kildare.

And named his page, the next degree

In that old time to chivalry.—P. 373.

Chivalry embraced three ranks,—the page, the squire, the knight; a gradation imitated in *Freemasoury*.

The ancient Hall before him lay.—P. 382.

The ancient Castle of *Rok* stood on the side of the present mansion, near the junction of the *Creta* and the *Tees*.

Rokeby's lords of martial fame.—P. 385.

The Rokebys came over, it is said, with William the Conqueror.

Nought know'st thou of the Felon Sow.—P. 386.

The comic romance was a parody on the usual subjects of minstrel poetry. A good example is "The Hunting of the Felon Sow of Rokeby by the Friars of Richmond."

The Fillea of O'Neale was he.—P. 386

The Fillea, or Ollamh Re Dan, was the proper bard, or poet, as the name implies. Every chieftain had one.

Ah, Clandeboy! thy friendly floor

Slieve-Donard's oak shall light no more.—P. 386.

Clandeboy is a distict in Ulster, possessed by the O'Neales; and Slieve-Donard, a romantic mountain in the same province.

On Marwood-chase and Toller Hill.—P. 388.

Marwood chase is a park attached to Barnard Castle. Toller Hill is an eminence on the Yorkshire side.

M'Curtin's harp should charm no more.—P. 389.

M'Curtin was hereditary Ollamh of North Munster, and Fillea to Donough, Earl of Thomond.

The ancient English minstrel's dress.—P. 389.

Mr Laneham has given us a particular account of the dress of the Minstrel who was introduced to Elizabeth at Kenilworth.

Next morning, all in Littlecot Hall

Were weeping for their dame.—P. 396.

The tradition of this ballad was supplied by a friend, and some circumstances are added, derived from an Edinburgh story.

As thick a smoke these hearths have given

At Hallowtide or Christmas even.—P. 398.

Such an exhortation was, in similar circumstances, actually given to his followers by a Welsh chieftain.

O'er Hexham's altar hung my glove.—P. 412.

This custom among the Redesdale and Tynedale borderers is mentioned in the interesting Life of Bernard Gilpin.

A Horseman armed, at headlong speed.—P. 418.

This is taken from a real achievement performed by Major Robert Philipson, called, from his courage, Robin the Devil.

THE BRIDAL OF TRIERMALN.

For Lucy loves,—like Collins, ill-starred name!—P. 428.

Of Collins, Johnson says that he was "delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters."

That may match with the Baron of Triermaln.—P. 429.

Triermaln was a fief of the barony of Gilsland, in Cumberland. At the time of the Conquest it belonged to a Saxon family, but afterwards it went to the family of Vaux.

And his who sleeps at Dunmailraie.—P. 431.

One of the grand passes from Cumberland into Westmoreland, and taking its name from Dunmail, last king of Cumberland.

He passed red Penrith's Table Round.—P. 431.

The Table Round is a circular entrenchment about half a mile from Penrith. The circle within the ditch is about 160 paces in circumference.

Left Mayburgh's mound and stones of power.—P. 491.

At some distance from Arthur's Round Table, and further up the river Eamont, is a prodigious collection of stones on the hill called Mayburgh, of Druidical origin.

The surface of that sable tarn.—P. 492.

The small lake, Scales-tarn, embosomed in the recesses of Saddleback, so as never to be visited by the sun.

On Caliburn's resistless brand.—P. 494.

The name of King Arthur's sword, otherwise called Excalibar.

From Arthur's hand the goblet flew.—P. 441.

Something of this kind is said to have befallen one of the kings of Denmark.

Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,

Darkening against the morning sky.—P. 441.

The vale of St John is a very narrow dell hemmed in by mountains. In the widest part appear the ruins of an old castle, which, as you approach, turn out to be a pile of stones. Hence the notion that genii govern the place.

Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,

The Saxons to subjection brought.—P. 441.

Arthur is said to have defeated the Saxons in twelve pitched battles.

There Morolt of the iron mace, &c.—P. 442.

All the characters mentioned in the text are met with in the romances connected with the Round Table.

Lancelot, that ever more

Looked stolen-wise on the Queen.—P. 442.

As to the guilt of Queen Guenever, see Richard Robinson's "Assertion of King Arthure," London, 1682.

There were two who loved their neighbours' wives,

And one who loved his own.—P. 444.

As to the morals of the Knights of the Round Table, see "Ascham's Schoolmaster."

The third was valiant Carodac,

Who won the cup of gold.—P. 444.

See the comic tale of the Boy and the Mantle, in Percy's "Reliques."

THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

Thy rugged halls, Artornish! rung.—P. 478.

The ruins of Artornish are still to be seen on a promontory of Murven, or mainland side of the Sound of Mull. The castle was one of the principal strongholds of the Lords of the Isles. One of these, John de Yle, entered into a treaty with Edward IV. in 1461, by which he agreed to become vassal to the King of England.

Rude Helstar's seal through surges dark

Will long pursue the minstrel's bark.—P. 478.

Seals will follow a boat where music is played.

O'erlooked, dark Mull! thy mighty Sound.—P. 480.

The Sound of Mull is one of the most striking scenes of the Hebrides. On the mainland side are seen the towering mountains, of which Ben Cruachan is the chief, and further north the Ardnamurchan hills.

Round twice a hundred islands rolled.—P. 480.

The number of the western islands exceeds two hundred.

The Heir of mighty Somerled.—P. 481.

Somerled was thane of Argyle and Lord of the Isles in the twelfth century. He was independent of Scotland, and made war against Malcolm. From him, through the eldest son, Ronald, descended the Lords of the Isles, and through his second, Dougal, the Lords of Lorn.

Lord of the Isles, whose lofty name.—P. 481.

Angus Og was the Lord of the Isles at the period of the poem.

A daughter of the House of Lorn.—P. 482.

The house of Lorn comprehended several districts in Argyleshire. The chiefs carried the name of MacDougal.

Those lightnings of the wave.—P. 486.

The phosphorescent appearances called by the sailors Sea-fire are beautifully displayed among the Hebrides.

Beneath the Castle's sheltering lee.—P. 487.

The stronghold of a Hebridean chief was almost always on the sea-shore. It was guarded by a watch, called the Cockman.

And that keen knight, De Argentine.—P. 490.

Sir Egidius, or Giles de Argentine, was one of the most accomplished knights of the period.

"Fill me the mighty cup!" he said,

"Ere owned by royal Somerled."—P. 491.

A Hebridean drinking-cup, of ancient and curious workmanship, is preserved in Dunvegan Castle, in Skye, the seat of MacLeod of MacLeod. Dr Johnson records another horn of less pretensions, called that of Roris More, preserved in the same family.

Who to Rath-Erin's shelter drew.—P. 493.

After Bruce had slain Comyn at Dumfries, he was reduced to great extremities. After the disaster at Methven, near Perth, he retired to Rath-Erin, or Raoulrine, the Recina of Ptolemy, an island opposite to Ballycastle, in Ireland.

The Brooch of Lorn.—P. 493.

The history of this brooch is pretty well known. The Lord of Lorn, having attacked Bruce personally, after his defeat at Methven, would have been worsted had it not been that a father and son, called M'Keoch, came to the assistance of their lord. Bruce rid himself of them by two blows of his battle-axe; but he was otherwise so pressed that he abandoned his mantle and brooch. The latter was long in the possession of the MacDougals.

Studded fair with gems of price.—P. 493.

Great art was expended upon the brooch, or *fibula*, which secured the plaid of a person of importance.

Fain the Campbell's vaunted hand.—P. 494.

Sir Nigel, or Niel Campbell, was in the unfortunate skirmish of Dalry, where the great Lord Douglas was wounded.

Vain Kirkpatrick's bloody dirk,

Making sure of murder's work.—P. 494.

The murder of Comyn was the proximate cause of Bruce asserting his right to the crown of Scotland. The story has been often told.

Barendown fled fast away,

Fled the fiery De la Haye.—P. 494.

These knights are enumerated by Barbour. Gilbert de la Haye, Lord of Errol, was a staunch defender of Bruce, by whom he was created Lord High Constable of Scotland.

To praise the hand that pays thy pains.—P. 495.

The Highland bard, once so important a personage, gradually sank into contempt.

Was't not enough to Ronald's lover

I brought thee, like a paramour?—P. 499.

It was anciently the custom of the Highlands to bring the bride to the house of the husband. In some cases, she remained there, upon trial, for a twelvemonth; and even after that period the husband had the power of parting with her. A feud arose between the MacDonalds and MacLeods, owing to the chief of the former sending back a daughter to Dunvegan.

*Where's Nigel Bruce? and De la Haye,
And valiant Selon—where are they?
Where Somerville, the kind and free?*—P. 499.

Hugh de la Haye and Thomas Somerville of Lintoun and Cowdally, ancestors of Lord Somerville, were made prisoners at the battle of Methven. Sir Nigel Bruce was the younger brother of Robert. He was tried at Berwick, and executed.

*Was not the life of Athole shed,
To soothe the tyrant's sickened bed?*—P. 499.

John de Strathbogie, Earl of Athole, in an attempt to escape, was cast by a storm upon the coast, and afterwards tried and executed at London.

*And must his word, at dying day,
Be nought but quarter, hang and slay!*—P. 500.

Barbour says that the prisoners taken at Kildrummie surrendered upon conditions; but Edward's will was always evil to the Scots.

By Woden wild, (my grandsire's oath.)—P. 500.

The MacLeods, and most other Hebridean families, are of Scandinavian origin.

*And expiate this unhappy chance.
In Palestine, with sword and lance.*—P. 501.

Bruce professed compunction for the slaughter of Comyn.

*De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread
To speak my curse upon thy head.*—P. 501.

As soon as the news of Comyn's slaughter reached Rome, Bruce and his followers were excommunicated, but the thunder of Rome descended with little effect upon the Scotch mountains.

A hunted wanderer on the wild.—P. 502.

Bloodhounds were employed in tracking the king. Barbour has a curious story on the subject.

A pirate sworn was Cormac Doil.—P. 504.

Pirates were very common among the isles at the time of the poem.

*For Falkirk's woes
Upon his conscious soul arose.*—P. 506.

Though the author has followed the vulgar tradition, it is certain that Bruce never fought against Wallace.

*These are the savage wilds that lie
North of Strathnardill and Dunskey.*—P. 507.

That part of the frontier of MacLeod's country bordering on the estate of MacAllister of Straith-aird, or Strathnardill, is perhaps the most extraordinary piece of scenery, for rudeness and grandeur, in Scotland.

*Men were they all of evil mien,
Down-looked, unwilling to be seen.*—P. 510.

The story of Bruce meeting with banditti is taken from Barbour.

Deep in Strath-aird's enchanted cell.—P. 515.

Nothing can be conceived more beautiful than the cave discovered not many years ago on the estate of Strath-aird. It is a splendid gallery adorned with crystallisations. See Dr Mac-Leay of Oban's account of it.

*When Vengeance clenched his palsted hand,
That pointed yet to Scotland's land.*—P. 519.

The pertinacity with which Edward pursued his ambition to govern Scotland is well known.

*From Canna's tower, that steep and gray,
Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay.*—P. 520.

The little island of Canna adjoins Rùm and Mulek. One of the Lords of the Isles is said to have confined a beautiful lady here.

Her path by Ronin's mountains dark.—P. 521.

Ronin or Rùm is adjacent to Elgy and Canna.

A numerous race, ere stern Macleod

O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode.—P. 521.

Referring to a tale of feudal vengeance, which reliques attest as too true.

And all the group of islets gay

That guard famed Staffa round.—P. 522.

The little archipelago of islets round Staffa present an interesting aspect.

Scenes sung by him who sings no more!—P. 523.

The ballad called "Macphail of Colonsay and the Mermaid of Corrie vreden," was composed by John Leyden.

Then dragged their bark the isthmus o'er.—P. 523.

The peninsula of Cantyre is joined to south Knapdale by a very narrow isthmus.

And bade Loch-Ranza smile.—P. 523.

Loch Ranza, a bay on the northern extremity of Arran. Ben-Ghaoll, "the Mountain of the Winds," is generally called Goatfield.

And dashed away the tear he scorned.—P. 527.

Barbour paints well the kind and fiery character of Edward Bruce.

The princess rose,—for on her knee

Low bent she told her rosary.—P. 528.

Edward started with the Lady Isabel for Ireland, but suddenly returned.

Thou hast a woman's guardian been!—P. 530.

This incident is one of the simple and natural traits of Bruce narrated by Barbour.

O'er chasms he passed, where fractures wide

Craved wary eye and ample stride.—P. 535.

The interior of Arran is replete with the finest scenery.

And at the cairns upon the wild,

O'er many a heathen hero piled.—P. 535.

Many reliques of heathen and Druidical superstitions are to be found in Arran, rude stones and sepulchral piles containing urns.

Old Brodick's Gothic towers were seen.—P. 535.

Brodick or Brothwick Castle, in Arran, is an ancient fortress near Brodick Bay.

A language much unmeet he hears.—P. 536.

That swearing was confined to the military in those days, is proved by Douglas having discovered soldiers in a house by hearing an oath.

For, see! the ruddy signal made.—P. 537.

Bruce's false idea that a fire was lighted at Turnberry, by which he was induced to enter Scotland, is recorded by Barbour.

Now ask you whence that wondrous light,

Whose fairy glow beguiled their sight?—P. 541.

It is still believed that this fire was the work of supernatural power.

Left for the Castle's sylvan reign.—P. 542.

The Castle of Turnberry, in Ayrshire, was the property of Robert Bruce by his mother.

The Bruce hath won his father's hall!—P. 543.

This is the tradition, but it is not accurate. Bruce was only strong enough to drive in the English outposts.

Let Ettrick's archers sharp their darts.—P. 543.

The forest of Selkirk, or Ettricks, occupied all the district which retains that denomination, with Tweeddale and a part of Upper Clydesdale. It was a part of the Caledonian forest.

When Bruce's banner had victorious flowed

O'er Loudoun's mountain, and in Ury's vale.—P. 549.

The first advantage gained by Bruce after landing at Turnberry was at Loudoun Hill, in the west of Scotland.

When Randolph's war-cry swelled the southern gale.—P. 549.
 Thomas Randolph, son of Bruce's sister.

And Cambria, but of late subdued.—P. 550.

Edward I. employed the Welsh to assist him in the Scottish wars, but not with much success.

Their chief, Fitz-Louis, had the care.—P. 553.

Fitz-Louis, or Mac-Louis, otherwise called Fullarton, is a family of ancient descent in Arran. They are of French origin.

In battles four beneath their eye,

The forces of King Robert lie.—P. 553.

Barbour gives the arrangements adopted by King Robert previous to the battle of Bannockburn.

With these the valiant of the Isles.—P. 554.

The men of Argyle, the islanders, and the Highlanders, were ranked in the rear.

The Monarch rode along the van.—P. 555.

The English vanguard, commanded by the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford, came in sight on 23d June. It was then the battle between Bruce and Bohun was fought.

"What train of dust, with trumpet-sound

And glimmering spears, is wheeling round

Our leftward flank?"—P. 557.

While the English van advanced, a detached party attempted to relieve Stirling.

Responses from the Scottish host,

Pipe-clang and bugle-sound were tossed.—P. 559.

There is an old tradition, that the well-known Scottish tune, "Hey, tutti taitti," was Bruce's march. Mr Ritson denies that the Scots had any martial music at that time, and horns are the only instruments mentioned by Barbour. We retain the tune, however, to "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled."

See where yon bare-foot Abbot stands.—P. 559.

Maurice, abbot of Inchaffray, celebrated mass in sight of the Scottish army, and then passed along the ranks. When the Scots knelt the English thought they were imploring mercy.

Down! down! in headlong overthrow,

Horseman and horse, the foremost go.—P. 561.

Barbour does not mention that the English men-at-arms fell into the hidden snare.

And steeds that shriek in agony!—P. 561.

The author says that he once heard a thrilling scream from a horse—the most melancholy sound he ever heard.

I, with my Carrick spearmen, charge.—P. 563.

Bruce made a decisive movement by bringing up the Scottish reserve.

To arms they flew,—axe, club, or spear.—P. 564.

The followers of the camp on Gillies'-hill assumed what arms they could get, and made a feint as if they had been a new force coming to aid.

In vain the royal Edward threw

His person 'mid the spears.—P. 564.

Edward II. fought well at Bannockburn.

NOTES TO SMALLER POEMS.

Will good St Oran's rule prevail?—P. 572.

St Oran was a follower of St Columba, and was buried at Icolmkill. He consented to be buried alive. After being in the earth three days, he was dug up again, when he declared there was neither God nor devil in the universe.

And thrice St Fillan's powerful prayer.—P. 574.

St Fillan, an abbot of Pittenweem, has given his name to many chapels.

He came not from where Ancrum Moor

Ran red with English blood.—P. 576.

In the year 1554-dreadful ravages were committed in Scotland by Lord Evers and Sir Brian Latoun. They afterwards repeated the experiment, and were defeated at Ancrum Moor by Angus.

For to Dryburgh the way he has ta'en.—P. 578.

Dryburgh Abbey, on the Tweed, is now the seat of the Earl of Buchan.

There is a Nun in Dryburgh bower.—P. 580.

The nun "who never saw the day" is not altogether a myth. An unfortunate female took a vow, that while her lover was absent she would not look on the sun; she took up her residence in a dark vault in Dryburgh Abbey, (coming out only at night,) and there died.

Stern Claud replied, with darkening face.—P. 583.

Lord Claud Hamilton, second son of the Duke of Chathelherault, and commendator of the abbey of Paisley, acted a distinguished part during the troubles of Queen Mary's reign, and remained unalterably attached to the cause of that unfortunate princess.

Few suns have set since Woodhouselee.—P. 583.

This barony, stretching along the banks of the Eske, near Auchendinny, belonged to Bothwellhaugh, in right of his wife. The ruins of the mansion, from whence she was expelled in the brutal manner which occasioned her death, are still to be seen in a hollow glen beside the river. Popular report tenants them with the restless ghost of the Lady Bothwellhaugh. She always appears in white, and with her child in her arms.

With hackbut bent, my secret stand.—P. 584.

Hackbut bent, that is, gun cocked. The carbine is still preserved in Hamilton Palace.

The wild Macfarlanes' plaided clan.—P. 585.

These Lennox Highlanders were attached to the Regent Murray.

Glencairn and stout Parkhead were nigh.—P. 585.

The Earl of Glencairn was an adherent of the Regent; also George Douglas of Parkhead, a natural brother of the Earl of Morton.

And haggard Lindsay's iron eye.—P. 585.

Lord Lindsay, of the Byres, a ferocious man, who extorted Mary's signature to her deed of resignation.

So close the minions crowded nigh.—P. 585.

The Regent had intimation of the intended attempt, but thought it a sufficient precaution to ride quick.

From that fair dome, where suit is paid

By blast of bugle free.—P. 588.

The barony of Pennyquik is held by the tenure of the proprietor being bound to sit on the Buckstane, and to blow three blasts of a trumpet, when the king shall hunt on the Borough Muir.

To Auchendinny's hazel glade.—P. 588.

Auchendinny, on the Eske, where the author of the "Man of Feeling" resided.

Who knows not Melville's beechy grove.—P. 588.

Melville Castle, situated on the Eske, gave the title to Lord Melville.

And Roslin's rocky glen.—P. 588.

Roslin Castle belongs now to the Earl of Roslin, as representing the St. Clairs.

Dalketh, which all the virtues love.—P. 588.

The village and castle of Dalketh belonged once to the Mortons, and is now the residence of the Duke of Buccleuch.

And classic Hawthornden.—P. 588.

The residence of the poet Drummond, where he met Ben Jonson.

The spectre with his bloody hand.—P. 626.

The forest of Glenmore is haunted by the Lhamdearg, or Red-hand.

On bloody Largs and Loncarty.—P. 626.

Where the Norwegian invader of Scotland received two bloody defeats.

For, if such hut, our forest statutes say,

Rise in the progress of one night and day, &c.—P. 632.

Such is the law in the New Forest. Hampshire.

