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The Canterbury Poets



SIR WALTER SCOTT

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THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

*With Prefatory Notice, Biographical
and Critical.*

BY WILLIAM SHARP.

Vol. II

*THE LADY OF THE LAKE.
THE LORD OF THE ISLES.
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.*

LONDON:
WALTER SCOTT, 24 Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row,
AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

1886.

280. f. 254.





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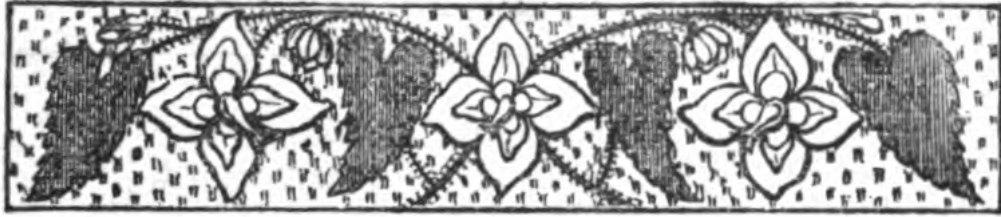
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THE LADY OF THE LAKE.
THE LORD OF THE ISLES.
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.





THE LADY OF THE LAKE:

A POEM IN SIX CANTOS.

ARGUMENT.

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

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 bow'd ;
For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's
matchless 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 touch'd 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-mouth'd 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 antler'd 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,
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III.

Yell'd on the view the opening pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd 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 cower'd 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 failing din
Return'd 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
Disturb'd 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, stay'd perforce,
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
Had 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 wander'd o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And ponder'd refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copsewood grey,
That waved and wept on Loch-Achray,

And mingled with the pine-trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Benvenue.
Fresh vigour with the hope return'd,
With flying foot the heath he spurn'd,
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 tighten'd in despair,
When rose Benledi's ridge in air ;
Who flagg'd upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunn'd 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 far,
That reach'd the lake of Venachar ;
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,
Emboss'd with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strain'd full in view.
Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatch'd 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 toil'd the bloodhounds staunch ;
Nor learer 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 mark'd that mountain high,
The lone lake's western boundary,
And deem'd the stag must turn to bay,
Where that huge rampart barr'd the way ;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes ;
For the death-wound and death-halloo,
Muster'd his breath, his whinyard drew ;
But thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunn'd the shock,
And turn'd 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 couch'd, 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 yell'd again.

IX.

Close on the hounds the Hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanish'd 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,
Stretch'd his stiff limbs, to rise no more ;
Then touch'd with pity and remorse,
He sorrow'd o'er the expiring horse.
" I little thought, when first they rein
I slack'd 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 costs thy life, my gallant grey !"

x.

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.
Back limp'd, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase ;
Close to their master's side they press'd,
With drooping tail and humbled crest ;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolong'd the swelling bugle-note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answer'd with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast,
Till echo seem'd 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 show'd.

XI.

The western waves of ebbing day
Roll'd 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-splinter'd 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.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seem'd fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lack'd they many a banner fair ;
For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dewdrops 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 scatter'd, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child,

Here eglantine embalm'd 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,
Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Grey 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 shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrow'd sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glist'ning 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 stray'd,
Still broader sweeps its channels made.

The shaggy mounds no longer stood,
Emerging from entangled wood,
But, wave-encircled, seem'd 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 burnish'd sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,
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 Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw
Crag, knoll, and mound, confusedly hurl'd,
The fragments of an earlier world ;
A wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-a'an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV.

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed.
And, "What a scene was 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 grey ;
How blithely might the bugle-horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn !
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
Chime, when the groves were 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 matin's 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 bewilder'd stranger call
To friendly feast, and lighted hall.

XVI.

"Blithe were it then to wander here !
But now—beshrew 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 greenwood spent,
Were but to-morrow's merriment :
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better miss'd 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,
Eddying in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow-twigg to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touch'd this silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,
And stood conceal'd 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 seem'd 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 train'd her pace—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dash'd the dew ;
E'en the slight harebell 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 seem'd the maid ;
Her satin snood, her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch, such birth betray'd.
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 confess'd
The guileless movements of her breast ;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claim'd a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion pour'd a prayer,
Or tale of injury call'd forth
The indignant spirit of the North.
One only passion unreveal'd,
With maiden pride the maid conceal'd,
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 utter'd fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
“ A stranger I,” the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid, alarm'd, with hasty oar,
Push'd her light shallop from the shore,
And when a space was gain'd 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 flutter'd 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 press'd its signet sage,
Yet had not quench'd 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 array'd,
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 sheath'd in armour trode the shore.
Slighting the petty need he show'd,
He told of his benighted road ;
His ready speech flow'd fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy ;
Yet seem'd that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII.

A while the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at length replied,

That Highland halls were open still
To wilder'd 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 pull'd 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 err'd," he said ;
"No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer, here by fortune tost,
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 approach'd the side—
"I well believe that ne'er before
Your foot has trod Loch Katrine's shore ;
But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-Bane foretold your plight—
A grey-hair'd sire, whose eye intent
Was on the vision'd future bent.
He saw your steed, a dappled grey,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way ;
Painted exact your form and mien,

Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,
That tassel'd horn so gaily gilt,
That falchion's crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron 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 was borne."

XXIV.

The stranger smiled :—" Since to your home
A destined errant-knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doom'd, 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 suppress'd and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try ;
For seldom sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasp'd 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 dark'ning mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV.

The stranger view'd the shore around,
'Twas all so close with copsewood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain-maiden show'd
A clambering unsuspected road
That winded through the tangled screen,
And open'd 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.
Lopp'd off 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, overhead,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And wither'd 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 favour'd 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 staid,
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 cross'd the threshold—and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.
To his bold brow his spirit rush'd,
But soon for vain alarm he blush'd,
When on the floor he saw display'd,
Cause of the din, a naked blade
Dropp'd 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 broadswords, bows, and arrows store,
With the tusk'd trophies of the boar.
Here 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 stain'd,
That blackening streaks of blood retain'd,

And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
With otter's fur and seals 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 sway'd,
“ I never knew but one,” he said,
“ Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
A blade like this in battle-field.”
She sigh'd, 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 knew,
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 unask'd 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
Unquestion'd 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
Oft for his right with blade in hand.
This morning, with Lord Moray's train,
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here."

XXX.

Fain would the knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire.
Well show'd the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen ;
Ellen, though more her looks display'd
The simple grace of sylvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Show'd she was come of gentle race.
'Twas 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,
Turn'd 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 charmèd rhymes we sing."
 She sung, and still a harp unseen
 Fill'd 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,
 Fairy 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, or 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 day-break 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 awhile 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 slumb'rous 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 clear'd—the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread,
Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
And dream'd their forest sports again.
But vainly did the heath-flower shed
Its moorland fragrance round his head ;
Not Ellen's spell had lull'd to rest
The fever of his troubled breast.
In broken dreams the image rose
Of varied perils, pain, 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 return'd the scenes of youth,
Of confident undoubting truth ;
Again his soul he interchanged
With friends whose hearts were long estranged.
They came, 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 ?
Dream'd he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now ?

XXXIV.

At length, with Ellen in a grove
He seem'd to walk, and speak of love ;
She listen'd 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 darken'd cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore.—
He woke, and panting with affright,
Recall'd 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 fix'd his eye,
Where that huge falchion hung on high,
And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rush'd, chasing countless thoughts along,
Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

XXXV.

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,
Play'd on the water's still expanse—
Wild were the heart whose passions' 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 fever'd dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme ?
I'll dream no more—by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resign'd.
My midnight orisons said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more.”

His midnight orisons he told,
 A prayer with every bead of gold,
 Consign'd to heaven his cares and woes,
 And sunk in undisturb'd repose ;
 Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
 And morning dawn'd on Benvenue.

CANTO SECOND.

THE ISLAND.

I.

AT morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
 'Tis morning prompts the linnets 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 gentle influence roused a minstrel gay,
 And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
 Mix'd with the sounding harp, O white-hair'd Allan-
 Bane !

II.

SONG.

“ Not faster yonder rovers' 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 battle line,
Good hawk and hound for sylvan sport,
Where beauty sees the brave resort,
The honour'd 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 reach'd 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, grey, 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,
Seem'd 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 vex'd spaniel from the beach,
Bay'd at the prize beyond his reach ?
Yet tell me, then, the maid who knows,
Why deepen'd 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 loiter'd on the spot,
It seem'd as Ellen mark'd him not ;
But when he turn'd him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made ;
And after oft the 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,
Watch'd 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 strain'd 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 rush'd,
 When deep the conscious maiden blush'd,
 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 bid'st, O noble maid,"
 Clasping his wither'd hands, he said,
 " Vainly thou bid'st me wake the strain,
 Though all unwont to bid in vain.
 Alas ! than mine a mightier hand
 Has tuned my harp, my strings has spann'd !
 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 sway'd,
 Can thus its master's fate foretell,
 Then welcome be the minstrel's knell !

VIII.

" But ah ! dear lady, thus it sigh'd
 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,
Wail'd loud through Bothwell's banner'd 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 shiver'd shall thy fragments lie,
Thy master cast him down and die ! ”

IX.

Soothing she answer'd him, “ Assuage,
Mine honour'd 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 resign'd
Than yonder oak might give the wind ;
The graceful foliage storms may reave,
The noble stem they cannot grieve.
For me,"—she stoop'd, and, looking round,
Pluck'd 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 wreath'd 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
Thrill'd 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 birth-right 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 sigh'd) ;
“ Yet is this mossy rock to me
Worth splendid chair and canopy ;
Nor would my footsteps 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 repress'd :
“ Ill 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 outlaw'd, 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,
Disown'd 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
Be held in reverence and fear ;
And though to Roderick thou'rt so dear,
That thou might'st 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 sorrow'd 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 grey—
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 slaughter'd 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 shudder'd at his brow of gloom,
 His shadowy plaid, and sable plume ;
 A maiden gown, 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 Tine-man forged by fairy lore,
 What time he leagued, no longer foes,
 His border spears with Hotspur's bows,
 Did, self-unscabbarded, foreshow
 The footstep of a secret foe.
 If courtly spy hath harbour'd here,
 What may we for the Douglas fear ?
 What for this island, deem'd 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 Græme ;
 Still, though thy sire the peace renew'd,
 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 lengthen'd lake were spied
Four darkening specks upon the tide,
That, slow enlarging on the view,
Four mann'd and masted barges grew,
And, bearing downwards from Glengyle,
Steer'd full upon the lonely isle ;
The point of Brianchoil they pass'd,
And, to the windward as they cast,
Against the sun they gave to shine
The bold Sir Roderick's banner'd Pine.
Nearer and nearer as they bear,
Spear, 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 chanters down, and sweep
The furrow'd 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 sound, by distance tame,
Mellow'd along the waters came,
And lingering long by cape and bay,
Wail'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 batter'd earth returns their tread.
Then prelude light, of livelier tone,
Express'd their merry marching on,
Ere peal of closing battle rose,
With mingled outcry, shrieks, and blows ;
And mimic din of stroke and ward,
As broadsword upon target jarr'd ;
And groaning pause, ere yet again,
Condensed, the battle yell'd 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,
Sunk in a moan prolong'd 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.
Each boatman, bending to his oar,
With measured sweep the burden bore,
In such wild cadence, as the breeze
Makes through December's leafless trees.
The chorus first could Allan know,
" Roderick Vich Alpine, ho ! ieroe ! "
And near, and nearer as they row'd,
Distinct the martial ditty flow'd.

XIX.

BOAT SONG.

Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances !
Honour'd and bless'd 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,
Gayly 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 stripp'd every leaf on the
 mountain,
 The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.
 Moor'd 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 thrill'd in Glen Fruin,
 And Bannochar'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 rose-bud that graces yon islands,
 Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine !
 O that some seedling gem,
 Worthy such noble stem,
 Honour'd and bless'd in their shadow might grow ;
 Loud should Clan-Alpine then
 Ring from the deepest 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 call'd 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 obey'd,
And, when a distant bugle rung,
In the mid-path aside she sprung :—
"List, Allan-Bane ! from mainland cast
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 scann'd,
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 heaven :
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 press'd,
Such holy drops her tresses steep'd,
Though 'twas a hero's eye that weep'd,
Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue
Her filial welcomes crowded hung,
Mark'd 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,
Mark'd Roderick landing on the isle ;
His master piteously he eyed
Then gazed upon the Chieftain's pride.
Then dash'd, with hasty hand, away
From his dimm'd 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 arch'd gate of Bothwell proud,
While many a minstrel answer'd loud,
When Percy's Norman pennon, won
In bloody field, before me shone,
And twice ten nights, the least in 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 marshall'd crowd,
Though the waned crescent own'd my might,
And in my train troop'd lord and knight,
Though Blantyre hymn'd 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,
Then 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 appear'd,
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, relax'd 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'erweigh'd 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 tall, and slender frame,
But firmly knit, was Malcolm Græme.
The belted plaid and tartan hose
Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose ;
His flaxen hair of sunny hue,
Curl'd closely round his bonnet blue.
Train'd 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 Malcom bent his sounding bow,
And scarce that doe, though wing'd with fear,
Outstripp'd 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 play'd 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 Græme.

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 return'd? 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 stray'd
Far eastward, in Glenfinlas' shade,
Nor stray'd I safe; for, all around,
Hunters and horsemen scour'd the ground,
This youth, though still a royal ward,
Risk'd 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,
Redden'd at sight of Malcolm Græme,
Yet, not in action, word, or eye,
Fail'd aught in hospitality.
In talk and sport they wiled 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 fix'd them on the ground,
As studying phrase that might avail
Best to convey unpleasant tale.
Long with his dagger's hilt he play'd,
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 honour'd 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 Ettrick 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 turn'd 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 appear'd,
'Twas but for Ellen that he fear'd ;
While, sorrowful, but undismay'd,
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 grey 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 pass'd 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 father's 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 thus not away,
And, mother, cease these signs, I pray;
I meant not all my heart 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 foil'd 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,
Dream'd calmly out their dangerous dream,
Till waken'd by the morning beam;
When, dazzled by the eastern glow,
Such startler cast his glance below,
And saw unmeasur'd 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 yawn'd around,
By crossing terrors wildly toss'd,
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 mark'd the hectic strife,
Where death seem'd combating with life ;
For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
One instant rush'd 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 darken'd brow, where wounded pride
With ire and disappointment vied,

Seem'd, by the torch's gloomy light,
Like the ill Demon of the night,
Stooping his pinions' shadowy sway
Upon the nighted pilgrim's way :
But, unrequited Love ! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenom'd smart,
And Roderick, with thine anguish stung,
At length the hand of Douglas wrung,
While eyes, that mock'd at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.
The death-pangs of long-cherish'd hope
Scarce in that ample breast had scope,
But, struggling with his spirit proud,
Convulsive heav'd its chequer'd 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 naught
The lesson I so lately taught ?

This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delay'd."
Eager as greyhound on his game,
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græne.
"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 fall'n so far,
His daughter's hand is doom'd 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 falter'd through terrific dream.
Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword,
And veil'd his wrath in scornful word.
"Rest safe till morning; pity 'twere
Such cheek should feel the midnight air!
Then mayest thou to James Stuart tell,
Roderick will keep the lake and fell,
Nor lackey, with his freeborn 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 answer'd, calm and bold,
“ Fear nothing for thy favourite hold ;
The spot an angel deign'd to grace
Is bless'd, 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 follow'd 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 broadsword roll'd,
His ample plaid in tighten'd fold,
And stripp'd 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 press'd,—
"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 honour'd Douglas dwell,
Like hunted stag in mountain cell;
Nor, ere yon pride-swoll'n 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 strain'd 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 swim,
The swimmer plied each active limb;

Then landing in the moonlight dell,
Loud shouted of his weal 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 happ'd by land or sea,
How are they blotted from the things that be !
How few, all weak, and wither'd 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 cease-
less 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, [sound,
While clamorous war-pipes yell'd the gathering
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 kiss'd the lake, just stirr'd 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 rear'd of silver bright ;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn,
Begemm'd with dew-drops, led her fawn ;
The grey mist left the mountain-side,
The torrent show'd 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 coo'd 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 broadsword 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 Benvenue,
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 wither'd 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 grisled beard and matted hair
Obscured a visage of despair ;
His naked arms and legs, seam'd 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 harden'd heart and eye might brook
On human sacrifice to look ;
And much, 'twas said, of heathen lore

Mix'd in the charms he mutter'd o'er.
The hallow'd creed gave only worse
And deadlier emphasis of curse ;
No peasant sought that Hermit's prayer,
His cave the pilgrim shunn'd with care,
The eager huntsman knew his bound,
And in mid-chase call'd off his hound ;
Or if, in lonely glen or strath,
The desert-dweller met his path,
He pray'd, and sign'd the cross between,
While terror took devotion's mien.

v.

Of Brian's birth strange tales were told :
His mother watch'd a midnight fold,
Built deep within a dreary glen,
Where scatter'd lay the bones of men,
In some forgotten battle slain,
And bleach'd by drifting wind and rain.
It might have tamed a warrior's heart,
To view such mockery of his art !
The knot-grass fetter'd there the hand
Which once could burst an iron band ;
Beneath the broad and ample bone,
That buckler'd heart to fear unknown,
A feeble and a timorous guest,
The field-fare framed her lowly nest,
There the slow blind-worm left his slime
On the fleet limbs that mock'd at time ;
And there, too, lay the leader's skull,
Still wreathed with chaplet, flush'd 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,
Nor sought she, from that fatal night,
Or holy church or blessed rite,
But lock'd her secret in her breast,
And died in travail, unconfess'd.

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 pale
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
Unclasp'd the sable-letter'd 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 watch'd 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,
Swell'd 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 hurl'd,
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 Bau-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 augur'd 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 clogg'd beard and shaggy limb,
Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer,
A slender crosslet form'd with care,
A cubit's length in measure due ;
The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
Whose parents in Inch-Cailliach 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 form'd, 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 muster'd force,
Burst, with loud roar, their answer hoarse,
 “ Woe to the traitor, woe !”
Ben-a'an's grey scalp the accents knew,
The joyous wolf from covert drew,
The exulting eagle scream'd afar—
They knew the voice of Alpine's war.

X.

The shout was hush'd on lake and fell,
The monk resumed his mutter'd spell :
Dismal and low its accents came,
The while he scathed the Cross with flame ;
And the few words that reach'd 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 stammer'd 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 grey 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 glow'd like fiery brand,
He meditated curse more dread,
And deadlier, on the clansman's head,
Who, summon'd to his Chieftain's aid,
The signal saw and disobey'd.

The crosslet's points of sparkling wood
He quench'd among the bubbling blood,
And, as again the sign he rear'd,
Hollow and hoarse his voice was heard :
" When flits this Cross from man to man,
Vich-Alpine's summons to his clan,
Curst be the ear that fails to heed !
Palsied the foot that shuns to speed !
May ravens 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 barge-men row,
The bubbles, where they launch'd the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had near'd the mainland hill ;

And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathoms 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 :
Parch'd 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 through 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 pour'd each hardy tenant down.
Nor slack'd the messenger his pace ;
He show'd the sign, he named the place
And, pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamour and surprise behind.
The fishermen forsook the strand,
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand ;
With changèd cheer, the mower blithe
Left in the half-cut swathe the scythe ;
The herds without a keeper stray'd,
The plough was in mid-furrow staid,
The falc'ner toss'd his hawk away,
The hunter left the stag at bay ;
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rush'd 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 past,
Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half seen,
Half hidden in the copse so green ;
There may'st 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 valiant 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 searest,
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,
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 besmear'd 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 broadsword tied ;

But when he saw his mother's eye
Watch him in speechless agony,
Back to her open'd arms he flew,
Press'd on her lips a fond adieu—
"Alas!" she sobb'd,— "and yet, be gone,
And speed thee forth, like Duncan's son!"
One look he cast upon the bier,
Dash'd from his eye the gathering tear,
Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
And toss'd aloft his bonnet crest.
Then, like the high-bred colt, when, freed,
First he essays his fire and speed,
He vanish'd, 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 mark'd 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 fall'n—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
Snatch'd 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 borrow'd force,
Grief claim'd his right, and tears their course.

XIX.

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
It glanced like lightning up Strath-Ire.
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew ;
The tear that gather'd 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 St. Bride was seen.
Swoln was the stream, remote the bridge,
But Angus paused not on the edge ;
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
Though reel'd his sympathetic eye,
He dash'd amid the torrent's roar ;
His right hand high the crosslet bore,
His left the pole-axe grasp'd, to guide
And stay his footing in the tide.
He stumbled twice—the foam splash'd high,
With hoarser swell the stream raced by ;
And had he fall'n,—for ever there,
Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir !
But still, as if in parting life,
Firmer he grasp'd the Cross of strife,
Until the opposing bank he gain'd,
And up the chapel pathway strain'd.

XX.

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
Had sought the chapel of St. Bride.
Her troth Tombea'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-soil'd 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 link'd 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, brook 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 startling 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 stirr'd ?
The sickening pang of hope deferr'd,
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 brae,
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 you 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 return'd from conquer'd 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,
Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,
Rushing, in conflagration strong,
Thy deep ravines and dells along,
Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
And reddening 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
Alarm'd, Balvaig, thy swampy course ;
Thence southward turn'd 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 grey 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 sequester'd glen,
Muster'd its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height
In Highland dales 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 train'd 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
Survey'd the skirts of Benvenue,
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 Græme and Bruce,
In Rednoch courts no horsemen wait,
No banner waved on Cardross gate,
On Duchray's towers no beacon shone,
Nor scared the herons from Loch Con ;
All seem'd at peace.—Now, wot ye why
The Chieftain, with such anxious eye,
Ere to the muster he repair,
This western frontier scann'd with care ?
In Benvenue'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 the deep sequester'd 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 call'd the grot 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
Yawn'd like a gash on warrior's breast ;
Its trench had staid full many a rock,
Hurl'd by primeval earthquake shock
From Benvenue's grey summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frown'd incumbent o'er the spot,
And form'd 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
Seem'd nodding o'er the cavern grey.
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.
Grey Superstition's whisper dread
Debarr'd 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,
Repass'd the heights of Benvenue.
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-levell'd 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 war-like group they stand,
That well became such mountain-strand.

XXVIII.

Their Chief, with step reluctant, still
Was lingering on a craggy hill,

Hard by where turn'd 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 stems 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 measure 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 banish'd, 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 list'ning 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 Laurick height,
Where muster'd, in the vale below,
Clan Alpine's men in martial show.

XXXI.

A various scene the clansmen made,
Some sate, some stood, some slowly stray'd ;
But most with mantles folded round,
Were couch'd to rest upon the ground,
Scarce to be known by curious eye,
From the deep heather where they lie,
So well was match'd 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 shade.
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 return'd 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 wash'd with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalm'd 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 stripp'd 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 glance and step I know
Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe.”—
(For while the Fiery Cross hied 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 call'd a slumberer by his side,
And stir'd him with his slacken'd 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 foemen ?" Norman said.—
"Varying reports from near and far ;
This certain—that a band of war
Has for two days been ready boune,
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
Bespeaks 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 call’d ; by which, afar,
Our sires foresaw the events of war.
Duncraggan’s milk-white bull they slew.”

MALISE.

“Ah ! well the gallant brute I knew !
The choicest of the prey we had,
When swept our merry-men Gallangad.
His hide was snow, his horns were dark,
His red eye glow’d 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 pikemen’s goad,
And when we came to Dennan’s Row,
A child might scatheless stroke his brow.”—

V.

NORMAN.

“That bull was slain : his reeking hide
They stretch’d 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.
 Couch'd on a shelve 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 slaughter'd 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, glean'd 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 endow'd 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 unfurl'd
The curtain of the future world.
Yet, witness every quaking limb,
My sunken pulse, my 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 fatal 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 FOEMAN'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 broadswords tasted blood.
A surer victim still I know,
Self-offer'd to the auspicious blow ;
A spy has sought my land this morn—

No eye shall witness his return !
 My followers guard each pass's mouth,
 To east, to westward, and to south ;
 Red Murdock, 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 mark'd 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 noon
 Will see them here for battle boune.” —
 “ Then shall it see a meeting stern !—
 But, for the place—say, couldst thou learn
 Nought of the friendly clans of Earn ?
 Strengthen'd 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-omen'd 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 broadswords 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 grey stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan,
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are pour'd 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 swarm
Are cow'd by the approaching storm.
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 mark'd at morn how close they ride,
Thick moor'd 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 mainland 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 glisten'd in his eye
Drown'd not his purpose fix'd on high.
My soul, though feminine and weak,
Can image his ; e'en as the lake,
Itself disturb'd by slightest stroke,
Reflects the invulnerable rock.
He hears report of battle rife,
He deems himself the cause of strife.
I saw him redden, when the theme
Turn'd, Allan, on thine idle dream,
Of Malcolm Græme, in fetters bound,
Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
Think'st thou he trow'd 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 Cambuskenneth's fane,
If e'er 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' 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 vision'd 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 greenwood,
Where 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 went on harp to stray,
A cloak must sheer from the slaughter'd 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 grey,
As gay the forest green.

“ 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 greenwood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing ;
On the beech's pride, and oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,
Who wonn'd within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruin'd 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 fairies' fatal green ?

“ Up, Urgan, up ! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christen'd man ;
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For muttered word or ban.

“Lay on him the curse of the wither'd 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 greenwood,
Though the birds have still'd 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 cross'd and bless'd 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 stepp'd 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 Fairy-land,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch’s
side,
With bit and bridle ringing:

“And gaily shines the Fairy-land—
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 snatch’d 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 cross'd him once—she cross'd him twice—
That lady was so brave :
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She cross'd him thrice, that lady bold ;
He rose beneath her hand
The fairest knight on Scottish mold,
Her brother, Ethert Brand !

Merry it is in good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
But merrier were they in Dunfermline grey,
When all the bells were ringing.

XVI.

Just as the minstrel sounds were staid,
A stranger climb'd the steepy glade :
His martial step, his stately mien,
His hunting suit of Lincoln green,
His eagle glance, remembrance claims—
'Tis Snowdoun's Knight, 'tis James Fitz-James.
Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then, starting, scarce suppress'd 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 marshall'd, 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 kern,
—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 weigh'd 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
Outlaw'd and exiled, under ban ;
The price 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 seal'd her Malcolm's doom,
And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.
Hope vanish'd from Fitz-James's eye,
But not with hope fled sympathy.
He proffer'd to attend her side,
As brother would a sister guide.—
“O ! little know'st thou Roderick's heart !

Safer for both we go apart,
O haste thee, and from Allan learn,
If thou may'st trust yon wily kern."
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 cross'd his brain,
He paused, and turn'd, 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—kiss'd her hand—and then was gone.
The aged Minstrel stood aghast,
So hastily Fitz-James shot past.

He join'd 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 whoop'd loud and high—
"Murdoch! was that a signal cry?"—
He stammer'd forth,—"I shout to scare
Yon raven from his dainty fare."
He look'd—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 tatter'd weeds and wild array,
Stood on a cliff beside the way,
And glancing round her restless eye,
Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
Seem'd nought to mark, yet all to spy.
Her brow was wreath'd 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 shriek'd till all the rocks replied ;
As loud she laugh'd 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 ;
And now, tho' strain'd and roughen'd, still
Rung wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII.

SONG.

“ They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
They say my brain is warp'd and wrung—
I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
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 made 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 drown'd 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 grey,
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 foray'd Devan-side.
The gay bridegroom resistance made,
And felt our Chief's unconquer'd 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 pitch'd a bar!"—
"Thanks, champion, thanks!" the Maniac cried,
And press'd her to Fitz-James's side.
"See the grey 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 briar in mid air staid,
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 trill'd 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 fix'd her apprehensive eye;
Then turn'd it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV.

“The toils are pitch'd 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 its 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 warn'd 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-toss'd,
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 thrill'd 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 couch'd upon the heathery moor ;
Them couldst thou reach—it may not be—
Thine ambush'd kin thou ne'er shalt see,
The fiery Saxon gains on thee !

—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 sat 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 grey,
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 dimm'd 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 honour'd 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 pour'd his eyes at pity's claims,
 And now with mingled grief and ire,
 He saw the murder'd 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."

Barr'd 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 turn'd back.
Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
From lack of food and loss of strength,
He couch'd him in a thicket hoar,
And thought his toils and perils o'er :—
“ Of all my rash adventures past,
This frantic feat must prove the last !
Who e'er so mad but might have guess'd,
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 farther through the wilds I go,
I only fall upon the foe :
I'll couch me here till evening grey,
Then darkling try my dangerous way.”

XXIX.

The shades of eve come slowly down,
The woods are wrapt 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,
Temper'd the midnight mountain air,

But every breeze that swept the wold,
 Benumb'd his drenchèd limbs with cold.
 In dread, in danger, and alone,
 Famish'd and chill'd, through ways unknown,
 Tangled and steep, he journey'd on ;
 Till, as a rock's huge point he turn'd,
 A watch-fire close before him burn'd.

XXX.

Beside its embers red and clear,
 Bask'd, 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 chill'd 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 reck'd, where, how, or when,
 The prowling fox was trapp'd 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 mayest 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 harden’d 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 farther speech address’d :
“Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
A clansman born, a kinsman true ;
Each word against his honour spoke,
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, not for clan, nor kindred’s cause,
Will I depart from honour’s laws ;
To assail a wearied man were shame,
And 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 Coilantogle'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 gather'd 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 bewilder'd 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,
Look'd out upon the dappled sky,
Mutter'd 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 grey.
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 beneath that lie,
'Till Stirling's turrets melt in sky;
Then, sunk in copse, their farthest glance
Gain'd not the length of horseman's lance,
'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;
An 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 torrents down had borne,
And heap'd upon the cumber'd 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 ask'd 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 dreamt not now to claim its aid.
When here, but three days since, I came,
Bewilder'd in pursuit of game,
All seem'd 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 fix'd 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 stray'd,
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 nought 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 ought, 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,
Bewilder'd in the mountain game,
Whence the bold boast by which you show
Vich-Alpine's vow'd and mortal foe ? ”—
“ Warrior, but yester-morn, I knew
Nought of thy Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,

Save as an outlaw'd desperate man,
The chief of a rebellious clan,
Who, in the Regent's court and sight,
With ruffian dagger stabb'd a knight :
Yet this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart."

VI.

Wrathful at such arraignment foul,
Dark lower'd the clansman's sable scowl.
A space he paused, then sternly said,
"And heard'st thou why he drew his blade ?
Heard'st thou that shameful word and blow
Brought Roderick's vengeance on his foe ?
What reck'd 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 claim'd sovereignty his due ;
While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrow'd truncheon of command,
The young King, mew'd in Stirling tower,
Was stranger to respect and power.
But then, thy Chieftain's robber life !—
Winning mean prey by causeless strife,
Wrenching from ruin'd Lowland swain
His herds and harvest rear'd 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 answer'd with disdainful smile—

“Saxon, from yonder mountain high,
I mark'd 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 soften'd vale,
Were once the birthright of the Gael ;
The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers rest 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 fatten'd 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.

Answer'd Fitz-James—"And, if I sought,
Think'st thou no other could be brought?
What deem ye of my path waylaid?
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 stray'd,
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 doom'd to die,
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 answer'd 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 grey 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 arm'd for strife.
That whistle garrison'd 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 verge,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain-side they hung.
The Mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fix'd 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 thrill'd with sudden start,
He mann'd himself with dauntless air,
Return'd 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 mark'd—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 vanish'd where he stood,
In broom or bracken, heath or wood ;
Sunk brand and spear and bended bow,
In osiers pale and copses low ;
It seem'd as if their mother Earth
Had swallow'd up her warlike birth.
The wind's last breath had toss'd 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 grey stone.

XI.

Fitz-James look'd 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 temper'd flood,
As following Roderick's stride, he drew
That seeming onesome pathway through,
Which yet, by fearful proof, was rife
With lances, that, to take his life,
Waited but signal from a guide,
So late dishonour'd and defied.
Ever, by stealth, his eye sought round
The vanish'd guardians of the ground,
And still, from copse and heather deep,
Fancy saw spear and broadsword 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 reach'd 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 unfurl'd.
And here his course the Chieftain staid,
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,
Arm'd, 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 delay'd,
When foeman bade me draw my blade ;
Nay, more, brave Chief, I vow'd 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 flash'd from Roderick's eye—
"Soars thy presumption, then, so high,
Because a wretched kern 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 look'd 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 dash'd aside ;
For, train'd 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 maintain'd unequal war

Three times in closing strife they stood,
And thrice the Saxon blade drank blood ;
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.
Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,
And shower'd his blows like wintry rain ;
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,
Against the winter shower is proof,
The foe, invulnerable still,
Foil'd his wild rage by steady skill :
Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand,
And backward 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 reck'd not of a wound,
And lock'd 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 compress'd,
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 gleam'd 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 gleam'd on high,
Reel'd soul and sense, reel'd 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 falter'd thanks to Heaven for life,
Redeem'd, unhop'd, from desperate strife ;
Next on his foe his look he cast,
Whose every gasp appear'd his last ;
In Roderick's gore he dipt 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 loosen'd rein, a saddled steed :
Each onward held his headlong course,
And by Fitz-James rein'd up his horse—
With wonder view'd the bloody spot—
—“ Exclaim not, gallants ! question not.—
You, Herbert and Luffness, alight,
And bind the wounds of yonder knight ;
Let the grey 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 boune,
To see the archer-game at noon :
But lightly Bayard clears the lea—
De Vaux and Herriers, follow me.

XVIII.

“ Stand, Bayard, stand ! ”—the steed obey'd,
With arching neck and bending head,
And glancing eye and quivering ear,
As if he loved his lord to hear.
No foot Fitz-James in stirrup staid,
No grasp upon the saddle laid,
But wreath'd his left hand in the mane,
And lightly bounded from the plain,
Turn'd on the horse his armèd heel,
And stirr'd his courage with the steel.
Bounded the fiery steed in air,
The rider sate erect and fair,
Then like a bolt from steel crossbow
First launch'd, along the plain they go.
They dashed that rapid torrent through,

And up Carhonie's hill they flew ;
Still at the gallop prick'd the Knight,
His merry-men follow'd as they might.
Along thy banks, swift Teith ! they ride,
And in the race they mock'd thy tide ;
Torry and Lendrick now are past,
And Deanstown lies behind them cast :
They rise, the banner'd towers of Doune,
They sink in distant woodland soon ;
Blair-Drummond sees the hoof strike fire,
They sweep like breeze through Ochtertyre :
They mark just glance and disappear
The lofty brow of ancient Kier ;
They bathe their courser's sweltering sides,
Dark Forth ! amid thy sluggish tides,
And on the opposing shore take ground
With splash, with scramble, and with bound.
Right-hand they leave thy cliffs, Craig-Forth !
And soon the bulwark of the North,
Grey Stirling, with her towers and town,
Upon their fleet career look'd down.

XIX.

As up the flinty path they strain'd
Sudden his steed the leader rein'd ;
A signal to his squire he flung,
Who instant to his stirrup sprung :—
“Seest thou, De Vaux, yon woodsman grey
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 banish'd 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 grey,
Now, as he climb'd 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 pardon'd 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 hast 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 rock'd and rung,
And echo'd 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 blush'd for pride and shame.
And well the simperer 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 throng'd peer and knight,
And noble dame and damsel bright,
Whose fiery steeds ill brook'd the stay
Of the steep street and crowded way.
—But in the train you might discern
Dark lowering brow and visage stern ;
There nobles mourn'd their pride restrain'd,
And the mean burgher's joy disdain'd ;
And chiefs, who, hostage for their clan,
Were each from home a banish'd man,
There thought upon their own grey tower,
Their waving woods, their feudal power,
And deem'd themselves a shameful part
Of pageant which they cursed in heart.

XXII.

Now, in the Castle-park, drew out
Their chequer'd bands the joyous rout.

The 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 quarterstaff and cowl,
Old Scathelock with his surly scowl,
Maid Marion, 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 centered 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 archer's stake ;
Fondly he watch'd, 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 call'd in vain ; for Douglas came.
—For life is Hugh of Larbert lame ;
Scarce better John of Alloa'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 suppress'd ;
Indignant then he turn'd 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 farthest mark ;—
And still in Stirling's royal park,
The grey-hair'd 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 unmov'd, bestow'd
A purse well fill'd 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 grey man ;
Till whispers rose among the throng,
That heart so free, and hand so strong,
Must to the Douglas blood belong ;
The old men mark'd, and shook the head,
To see his hair with silver spread,
And wink'd 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 wreck'd 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 murmur 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 call'd the banish'd man to mind ;
No, not from those who, at the chase,
Once held his side the honour'd 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 ere 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 antler'd 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 darken'd 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 clamour'd loud the royal train,
And brandish'd 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, doom'd 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 misproud, 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 yeomen 'gan to bend their bows,—
"Break off the sports !" he said, and frown'd,
"And bid our horsemen clear the ground."

XXVII.

Then uproar wild and misarray
Marr'd the fair form of festal day.
The horsemen prick'd among the crowd,
Repell'd 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 the rear in thunder pour
The rabble with disorder'd 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 cords 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 pray'd
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,
Bless'd him who staid the civil strife ;
And mothers held their babes on high,
The self-devoted Chief to spy,
Triumphant over wrongs 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 resign'd his honour'd 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
Strain'd for King James their morning note ;
With like acclaim they hail'd 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 fever'd 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 outlaw'd Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Has summon'd his rebellious crew ;
'Tis said, in James of Bothwell's aid
These loose banditti stand array'd.
The Earl of Mar, this morn, from Doune,
To break their muster march'd, 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 look'd 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 meed.
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 hath 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 turn'd his steed,—" My liege, I hie.—
Yet, ere I cross this lily lawn,
I fear the broadswords will be drawn."
The turf the flying courser spurn'd.
And to his towers the King return'd.

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 sadden'd town
The evening sunk in sorrow down.
The burghers spoke of civil jar,
Of rumour'd feuds and mountain war,
Of Moray, Mar, and Roderick Dhu,
All up in arms :—the Douglas too.
They mourn'd him pent within the hold,
" Where stout Earl William was of old"—
And there his word the speaker staid,
And finger on his lip he laid,

Or pointed to his dagger blade.
But jaded horsemen from the west,
At evening to the castle press'd ;
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.

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, O ! what scenes of woe,
Are witness'd by that red and struggling beam !
The fever'd patient, from his pallet low,
Through crowded hospital, beholds it stream ;

The ruin'd maiden trembles at its gleam,
The debtor wakes to thought of gyve and jail,
The love-lorn wretch starts from tormenting
dream ;
The wakeful mother, by the glimering 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 barr'd,
The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,
And struggling with the smoky air,
Deaden'd the torches' yellow glare.
In comfortless alliance shone
The lights through arch of blacken'd stone,
And show'd wild shapes in garb of war,
Faces deform'd with beard and scar,
All haggard from the midnight watch,
And fever'd with the stern debauch ;
For the oak table's massive board,
Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,
And beakers drain'd, and cups o'erthrown,
Show'd in what sport the night had flown.
Some, weary, snored on floor and bench,
Some labour'd still their thirst to quench ;
Some, chill'd 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 own'd 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 show'd French and German name ;
And merry England's exiles came,
To share, with ill-conceal'd disdain,
Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.
All brave in arms, well-train'd to wield
The heavy halberd, brand, and shield :
In camps licentious, wild, and bold ;
In pillage fierce and uncontroll'd ;
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 tokens 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 marr'd the dicer's 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.

SOLDIER'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 bonny black-
jack,
And the seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack :
Yet whoop, Barnaby ! off with thy liquor,
Drink upsees out, and a fig for the vicar !

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,
Staid 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, grey, and scarr'd,
Was entering now the Court of Guard,
A harper with him, and in plaid
All muffled close, a mountain maid,
Who backward shrunk to 'scape the view
Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.
“ What news ? ” they roar'd :—“ 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,
Nor 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 with his vengeful mood,
Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
Laid hand upon his dagger-knife ;
But Ellen boldly stepp’d between,
And dropp’d 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, abash'd and tamed,
Stood half admiring, half ashamed.

VIII.

Boldly she spoke,—“Soldiers, attend!
My father was the soldier's friend;
Cheer'd 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.”
Answer'd De Brent, most forward still
In every feat or good or ill,
“I shame me of the part I play'd:
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 halberd on the floor;
And he that steps my halberd 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 controll'd,
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 flash'd ;—she paused and sigh'd ;—
“ O 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 alter'd look ;
And said—“ This ring our duties own ;
And pardon, if to worth unknown,
In semblance mean obscurely veil'd,
Lady, in aught my folly fail'd.
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 attendants shall obey
Your hest, for service or array.
Permit I marshal you the way."
But, ere she follow'd, 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 proffer'd gold ;
"Forgive a haughty English heart,
And O 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, O 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 sires
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 Beaudesert !
And, but I loved to drive the deer
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 pass'd, 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 artist form'd, who deem'd it shame
And sin to give their work a name.

They halted at a low-brow'd porch,
And Brent to Allan gave the torch.
While bolt and chain he backward roll'd,
And made the bar unhasp its hold.
They enter'd :—'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
Deck'd the sad walls and oaken floor ;
Such as the rugged days of old
Deem'd 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 growl'd anew.
Roused at the sound, from lowly bed
A captive feebly raised his head ;
The wondering Minstrel look'd, and knew—
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu !
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,
They, erring, deem'd the Chief he sought.

XIII.

As the tall ship, whose lofty prore
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 fever'd 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 ;
 O ! how unlike her course at 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 ruin'd 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 ?"
 " O 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 a 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 rear'd his form on high,
 And fever's fire was in his eye ;
 But ghastly, pale, and livid streaks
 Chequer'd 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 soar'd from battle fray."
The trembling bard with awe obey'd,—
Slow on the harp his hand he laid ;
But soon remembrance of the sight
He witness'd from the mountain's height,
With what old Bertram told at night,
Awaken'd the full power of song,
And bore him in career along ;—
As shallop launch'd 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 Benvenue,
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,
Nor ripple on the lake,
Upon her eyry 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 bound for battle-strife,
Or bard of martial lay,
'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array !

XVI.

“ Their light-arm'd archers far and near
Survey'd the tangled ground,
Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,
A twilight forest frown'd,
Their barbèd horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crown'd.

No cymbals clash'd, 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 seem'd to quake,
That shadow'd 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 stirr'd the roe ;
The host moves like a deep-sea wave,
When rise no rocks its pride to brave,
High-swelling, dark, and slow.
The lake is pass'd, and now they gain
A narrow and a broken plain,
Before the Trosach's rugged jaws ;
And here the horse and spearmen 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 peal'd 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 plight they ply
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,
And plaids and bonnets waving high,

And broadswords flashing to the sky,
 Are maddening in the 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 levell'd low ;
 And closely shouldering side by side,
 The bristling ranks the onset bide.—
 ' We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
 As their Tinchel cows the game !
 They come as fleet as mountain deer,
 We'll drive them back as tame '—

XVIII.

" Bearing before them, in their course,
 The relics of the archer force,
 Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,
 Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.
 Above the tide, each broadsword 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 hurl'd them on the foe.
 I heard the lance's shivering crash,
 As when the whirlwind rends the ash,
 I heard the broadsword's deadly clang,
 As if an hundred anvils rang !

But Murray wheel'd his rearward rank
Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,
—' My banner-men, advance !
I see,' he cried, ' their column shake.—
Now, gallants ! for your ladies' sake
Upon them with the lance !'—
The horsemen dash'd amidst 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 !
A reflux through the pass of fear
The battle's tide was pour'd ;
Vanish'd the Saxon's struggling spear,
Vanish'd 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.—
Grey Benvenue I soon repass'd,
Loch Katrine lay beneath me cast.
The sun is set ;—the clouds are met,
The lowering scowl of heaven
An inky view of vivid blue
To the deep blue 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 the 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 dark'ning cloud of Saxon spears.
At weary bay each shatter'd band,
Eyeing their foemen, sternly stand :
Their banners stream like tatter'd sail,
That flings its fragments to the gale,
And broken arms and disarray
Mark'd the fell havoc of the day.

XX.

“ Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
The Saxon 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 corslet rung,
 He plunged him in the wave :—
All saw the deed—the purpose knew,
And to their clamours Benvenue
 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,
Pour'd down at once the lowering heaven ;
A whirlwind swept Lock Katrine's breast,
Her billows rear'd their snowy crest.
Well for the swimmer swell'd they high,
To mar the Highland marksman's eye :
For round him shower'd, '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 mark'd Duncraggan's widow'd dame.
Behind an oak I saw her stand,
A naked dirk gleam'd in her hand :
It darken'd—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.

XXI.

“ ‘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
Rung forth a truce-note high and wide,
While, in the Monarch's name, afar
An 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 brook'd 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 deafen'd ear
The minstrel melody can hear ;
His face grows sharp—his hands are clench'd,
As if some pang his heart-strings wrench'd ;
Set are his teeth, his fading eye
Is sternly fix'd on vacancy ;
Thus motionless, and moanless, drew
His parting breath, stout Roderick Dhu !—
Old Allan-Bane look'd on aghast,
While grim and still his spirit pass'd :
But when he saw that life was fled,
He pour'd his wailing o'er the dead.

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 honour'd 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,
The 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 honour'd Pine!—

“Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—
The captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prison'd 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 honour'd Pine.”

XXIII.

Ellen, the while, with bursting heart,
Remain'd in lordly bower apart,
Where play'd with many-colour'd gleams,
Through storied pane the rising beams.
In vain on gilded roof they fall,
And lighten'd 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 look'd, 'twas but to say,
With better omen dawn'd 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 claim'd 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 betray'd.—
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.

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED HUNTSMAN.

“ My hawk is tried 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 forest 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 !”

XXV.

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,
The list'ner had not turn'd her head,
It trickled still, the starting tear,
When a light footstep struck her ear,
And Snowdown's graceful knight was near.
She turn'd 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 ire and pride
May lay 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 whisper'd hope and cheer ;
Her faltering steps half led, half staid,
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 glow'd 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 staid ;
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 own'd 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 turn'd bewild'rd 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 show'd the ring, she clasp'd her hands.
O ! not a moment could he brook,
The generous prince, that suppliant look !
Gently he raised her ; and, the while,
Check'd with a glance the circle's smile ;
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kiss'd,
And bade her terrors be dismiss'd :—
“ 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 judg'd his cause,
Our council aided, and our laws.
I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern,
With stout De Vaux and Grey 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 stepp'd 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,
Join'd to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew
My spell-bound steps to Benvenue,
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 guess'd
He probed the weakness of her breast ;
But, with that consciousness, there came
A lightening of her fears for Græme,

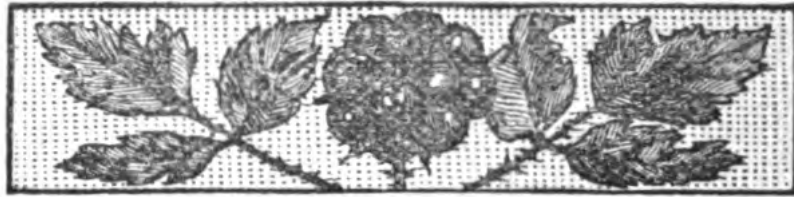
And more she deem'd the Monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who, for her sire,
Rebellious broadsword boldly drew ;
And, to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.
" Forbear thy suit :—the King of Kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings.
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have 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 turn'd her from the King,
And to the Douglas gave the ring,
As if she wish'd her sire to speak
The suit that stain'd 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 kneel'd 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 outlaw'd 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 dawn'd wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devour'd 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!





NOTES.

THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

"*Tine-man*," p. 42.—Archibald, the third Earl of Douglas, was so unfortunate in all his enterprises that he acquired the epithet of "Tineman," because he *tined*, or lost, his followers in every battle which he fought.

"*And Satyrs*," etc., p. 82.—Scott is not here guilty of any anachronism, though the word "satyr" is doubtless misleading. The Highlanders had a mythological satyr, or *urisk*.

"*As their Tinchel*," etc., p. 158 —A circle of sportsmen, who, by surrounding a greater space, and gradually narrowing, brought immense quantities of deer together, which usually made desperate efforts to break through the *Tinchel*.

THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

"*By Woden wild—my grandsire's oath*," p. 212.—The Macleods were of Scandinavian descent—ancient worshippers of Thor and Woden.

"*Up Tarbert's western lake they bore,
Then dragg'd their bark the isthmus o'er*."—P. 250.

The peninsula of Cantire is joined to South Knapdale by a very narrow isthmus, formed by the western and eastern Loch of Tarbert. These two saltwater lakes, or bays, encroach so far upon the land, and the extremities come so near to each other that there is not a mile of land to divide them. "Tarbert" itself is anglicised Gaelic for "an isthmus."



THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

IN SIX CANTOS.

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 1307, 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 Rachtin, 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.

CANTO FIRST.

AUTUMN departs—but still his mantle's fold
Rests on the groves of noble Somerville,
Beneath a shroud of russet dropp'd 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 reaper's mirth we hear.
The last blithe shout hath died upon our ear,
And harvest-home hath hush'd the clanging wain,
On the waste hill no forms of life appear,
Save where, sad laggard of the autumnal train,
Some age-struck wanderer gleans few ears of scatter'd
grain.

Deem'st thou these saddened scenes have pleasure still,
Lovest thou through Autumn's fading realms to stray,
To see the heath-flower wither'd on the hill,
To listen to the wood's 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?—
O ! if such scenes thou lovest, scorn not the minstrel
strain.

No ! 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 relics 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.
Lull'd were the winds of 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 dishonour'd 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
Were 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-Cailliach’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.

“O wake, while Dawn, with dewy shine,
Wakes Nature’s charms to vie with thine !
She bids the mottled thrush rejoice
To mate 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,” grey Ferrand cried ;
“Brethren, let softer spell be tried,
Those notes prolong’d, 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 mann’d,
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 array'd,
Cathleen of Ulne, '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, bleach'd Lochryan's depths within,
Seem'd dusky still on Edith's skin.
But Einion, of experience old,
Had weightiest task—the mantle's fold
In many an artful plait she tied,
To show the form it seem'd to hide,
Till on the floor descending roll'd
Its waves of crimson blent with gold.

VI.

O ! lives there now so cold a maid,
Who thus in beauty's pomp array'd,
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 scorn'd 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)—
Grey 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 mark'd her child receive their care,
Cold as the image sculptured fair
(Form of some sainted patroness),
Which cloister'd maids combine to dress ;
She mark'd—and knew her nursling's heart
In the vain pomp took little part.
Wistful a while she gazed—then press'd
The maiden to her anxious breast
In finish'd loveliness—and led
To where a turret's airy head,
Slender and steep, and battled round,
O'erlook'd, dark Mull ! thy mighty Sound,
Where thwarting tides, with mingled roar,
Part thy swarth hills from Morven's shore.

VIII.

“ Daughter,” she said, “ these seas behold,
Round twice a hundred islands roll'd,
From Hirt, that hears their northern roar,
To the green Ilay's fertile shore ;
Or mainland turn, where many a tower
Own thy bold brother'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 frown'd,
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 tower to bondsman'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 claim'd 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 check'd 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 gauds 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 stiled
Edith of Lorn,—while yet a child,
She tripp'd 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,
Train'd to believe our fates the same,
My bosom throb'd 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 touch'd the harp to heroes' praise,
But his achievements swell'd 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 seem'd 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 shunn'd the spousal day.—
It dawns, and Ronald is not here!—
Hunts he Bentalla's nimble deer,
Or loiters he in secret dell
To bide 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 grey
His fleet unmoor from Aros bay!
See'st 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 veil'd its banner'd 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 sigh'd,
Blush'd, 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 view'd 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 their course they urge,
As if they fear'd Artornish more
Than adverse winds and breakers' roar.”

XIV.

Sooth spoke the maid.—Amid the tide
The skiff she mark'd lay tossing sore,

And shifted oft her stooping side,
In weary tack from shore to shore.
Yet on her destined course no more
She gain'd, of forward way,
Than what a minstrel may compare
To the poor meed which peasants share,
Who toil the livelong day ;
And such the risk her pilot braves,
That oft, before she wore,
Her bowsprit kiss'd the broken waves,
Where in white foam the ocean raves
Upon the shelving shore.
Yet, to their destined purpose true,
Undaunted toil'd her hardy crew,
Nor look'd where shelter lay,
Nor for Artornish Castle drew,
Nor steer'd for Aros bay.

XV.

Thus while they strove with wind and seas,
Borne onward by the willing breeze,
Lord Ronald's fleet swept by,
Streamer'd with silk, and trick'd with gold,
Mann'd 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 chafes the war-horse in his might,
That fieldward 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 burnish'd fold,
That shimmer'd fair and free ;
And each proud galley, as she pass'd,
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 answer'd 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 famish'd wolf, that prowls the wold,
Had scatheless pass'd the unguarded fold,
Ere, drifting by the 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 sail'd 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 route,
With tale, romance, and lay ;
And of wild mirth each clamorous art
Which, if it cannot cheer the heart,
May stupefy 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,
Labour that strain'd each sinew stiff,
And one sad Maiden's wail.

XVIII.

All day with fruitless strife they toil'd,
With eve the ebbing currents boil'd
More fierce from strait and lake ;
And midway though 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 strain'd 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 dull'd nor terror shook,
Thus to the Leader spoke—
“ Brother, how hop'st thou to abide
The fury of this wilder'd 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 see'st 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 shatter'd 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-distress'd,
 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 consign'd,
Gave the reef'd sail to meet the wind,
 And on her alter'd 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 lucid flakes
 In envious pageantry,
To match the meteor-light that streaks
 Grim Hecla's midnight sky.

XXII.

Nor lack'd they steadier light to keep
Their course upon the darken'd 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 steer'd,
Whose lustre mingled well
With the pale beam that now appear'd,
As the cold moon her head uprear'd
Above the eastern fell.

XXIII.

Thus guided, on their course they bore,
Until they near'd 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 deepen'd shadow made,
Far lengthen'd on the main below,
Where, dancing in reflected glow,
A hundred torches play'd,

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 staid their course in quiet sea.
Hewn in the rock, a passage there
Sought the dark fortress by a stair,
So straight, so high, so steep,
With peasant's staff one valiant hand
Might well the dizzy pass have mann'd,
'Gainst hundreds arm'd with spear and brand,
And plunged them in the deep.
His bugle then the helmsman wound ;
Loud answer'd every echo round,
From turret, rock, and bay,
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 staid,
And, vex'd at thy delay,
Fear'd 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 breath'd upon by May.
And for our storm-toss'd skiff we seek
Short shelter in this leeward creek,
Prompt when the dawn the east shall streak
Again to bear away."—
Answer'd the Warder—" In what name
Assert ye hospitable claim ?
Whence come, or whither bound ?
Hath Erin seen your parting sails ?
Or come ye on Norwayan 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
Scorn'd by the noble and the bold,
Shunn'd 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,
Though urged in tone that more express’d
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 hostile sword
’Gainst our ally, great England’s Lord,
Or mail upon your shoulders borne,
To battle with the Lord of Lorn,
Or, outlaw’d, 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 lean’d her head,
And down her long dark tresses shed,
As the wild vine in tendrils spread,
Droops from the mountain oak.

Him follow'd close that elder Lord,
And in his hand a sheathèd sword,
Such as few arms could wield ;
But when he boun'd 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,
Flank'd 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 unbarr'd,
And all the passage free
To one low-brow'd 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 chequer'd 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 honour'd 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 appear'd the Seneschal,
Commission'd 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 pour'd,
Let mirth and music sound the dirge of Care !
But ask thou not if Happiness be there,
If the loud laugh disguise convulsive throe,
Or if the brow the heart's true livery wear ;
Lift not the fatal 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 deem'd gay,
The Island Chieftain feasted high ;
But there was in his troubled eye
A gloomy fire, and on his brow,
Now sudden flush'd, and faded now,
Emotions such as drew 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
Mark'd 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
Seem'd bursts of bridegroom's ecstasy.
Nor thus alone misjudged the crowd,
Since lofty Lorn, suspicious, proud,
And jealous of his honour'd line,
And that keen knight, De Argentine
(From England sent on errand high,
The western league more firm to tie),
Both deem'd in Roland's mood to find
A lover's transport-troubled mind.
But one sad heart, one tearful eye,
Pierced deeper through the mystery,
And watch'd, with agony and fear,
Her wayward bridegroom's varied cheer.

IV.

She watch'd—yet fear'd to meet his glance,
And he shunn'd 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 mann'd his heart
To play his hard but destined part,
And from the table sprang.

“ Fill me the mighty cup ! ” he said,
“ Erst own'd 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,
Respited 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 presences may grace,
 And bid them welcome free ! ”
With solemn step, and silver wand,
The Seneschal the presence scann'd
Of these strange guests ; and well he knew
How to assign their rank its due ;
 For though the costly furs
That erst had deck'd their caps were torn,
And their gay robes were over-worn,
 And soil'd 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 marshall'd 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 honour'd trade.
Worship and birth to me are known
By look, by bearing, and by tone,
Not by furr'd robe or broider'd 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;—
Mark'd ye the younger stranger's eye,
My mates, how quick, how keen, how high
How fierce its flashes fell,
Glancing among the noble 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
Scann'd the gay presence o'er,
Like being of superior kind,
In whose high-toned impartial mind
Degrees of mortal rank and state
Seems 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 could her form's fair symmetry."

IX.

Suspicious doubt and lordly scorn
Lour'd on the haughty front of Lorn.
From underneath his brows of pride
The stranger guests he sternly eyed,

And whisper'd closely what the ear
Of Argentine alone might hear ;
Then question'd, 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 outlaw'd Chief !
And if, their winter's exile o'er,
They harbour'd still by Ulster's shore,
Or launch'd 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 quench'd 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 whisper'd 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 swart 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 overweening 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 !

“ When the gem was won and lost,
Widely was the war-cry toss'd !
Rung aloud Bendourish fell,
Answer'd Douchart's sounding dell,
Fled the deer from wild Teyndrum,
When the homicide, o'ercome,
Hardly 'scaped, with scathe 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,
Beam'd upon the breast of Lorn.

“ Farthest 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,
Dogg'd by Comyn's vengeful ghost,
While his spoils, in triumph worn,
Long shall grace victorious Lorn !”

XIV.

As glares the tiger on his foes,
Hemm'd 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 grasp'd 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 clench'd within their dying grasp,
What time a hundred foemen more
Rush'd 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 for the distress’d,
No slaughter-house for shipwreck’d guest.”—
“ Talk not to me,” fierce Lorn replied,
“ Of odds or match !—when Comyn died,
Three daggers clash’d within his side !
Talk not to me of sheltering hall,
The Church of God saw Comyn fall !
On God’s own altar stream’d his blood,
While o’er my prostrate kinsman stood
The ruthless murderer—e’en as now—
With armèd hand and scornful brow !—
Up, all who love me ! blow on blow !
And lay the outlaw’d felons low ! ”

XVI.

Then up sprang many a mainland Lord,
Obedient to their Chieftain’s word.
Barcaldine’s arm is high in air,
And Kinloch-Aline’s blade is bare,
Black Murthok’s dirk has left its sheath,
And clench’d is Dermid’s hand of death.

Their mutter'd 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 darken'd 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 Torquil 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 suppress'd, full oft renew'd,
Glow'd 'twixt the chieftains of Argyle
And many a lord of ocean's isle.
Wild was the scene—each sword was bare,
Back stream'd each chieftain's shaggy hair,
In gloomy opposition set,
Eyes, hands, and brandish'd weapons met ;
Blue gleaming o'er the social board,
Flash'd 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, match'd in numbers and in might,
Doubtful and desperate seem'd 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
Show'd 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 she clung,
Away her veil the stranger flung,
And, lovely 'mid her wild despair,
Fast stream'd her eyes, wide flow'd 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, butcher'd thus in peaceful hall,
Those once thy friends, my brethren, fall !”
To Argentine she turn'd her word,
But her eye sought the Island Lord.
A flush like evening's setting flame
Glow'd 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 tremor 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 spurr'd a steed)—
And Ronald, who his meaning guess'd,
Seem'd 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 whisper'd of a lawful claim,
That calls the Bruce fair Scotland's Lord,
Though dispossess'd 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 summon'd 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 banish'd 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 favour'd 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 hundred-fold),
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 sandall'd monks, who relics bore,
With many a torch-bearer before,
And many a cross behind.
Then sunk each fierce uplifted hand,
And dagger bright and flashing brand
Dropp'd swiftly at the sight ;
They vanish'd from the Churchman's eye,
As shooting stars, that glance 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 flow'd his hood,
The torch's glaring ray
Show'd, in its red and flashing light,
His wither'd cheek and amice white,
His blue eye glistening cold and bright,
His tresses scant and grey.
"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 summon'd to unite
Betrothèd hearts and hands ?"

XXIV.

Then, cloaking hate with fiery zeal,
Proud Lorn first answer'd the appeal ;—
“Thou com'st, 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 mayest 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 pray'rs and tears to back the plea :
And Edith lent her generous aid,
And wept, and Lorn for mercy pray'd.
“Hence,” he exclaim'd, “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 relax'd his brow of awe.

XXVI.

Then Argentine, in England's name,
So highly urged his sovereign's claim,
He waked a spark, that, long suppress'd,
Had smoulder'd in Lord Ronald's breast ;
And now, as from the flint the fire,
Flash'd forth at once his generous ire.
"Enough of noble blood," he said,
"By English Edward has been shed,
Since matchless Wallace first had been
In mock'ry crown'd 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 gorged with northern blood ?
Was not the life of Athole shed,
To soothe the tyrant's sicken'd bed ?
And must his word, till 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 attained 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 seem'd with eye severe
The hardy Chieftain's speech to hear ;
Then on King Robert turn'd 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 question'd 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 hallow'd ground,
Flung like vile carrion to the hound ;
Such is the dire and desperate doom
For sacrilege, decreed by Rome ;
And such the well-deservèd meed
Of thine unhallow'd, 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 achieved,

Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved,
Shall many a priest in cope and stole
Say requiem for Red Comyn's soul,
While I the blessed 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 and fast,
And from his pale blue eyes were cast
Strange rays of wild and wandering light ;
Uprise his locks of silver white,
Flush'd is his brow, through every vein
In azure tide the currents strain,
And undistinguish'd 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-controll'd,
I feel within mine aged breast
A power that will not be repress'd.
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'ermaster'd yet by high behest,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be blest!"
He spoke, and o'er the astonish'd throng
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 vanquish'd on the battle-plain,
Thy followers slaughter'd, fled, or ta'en,
A hunted wanderer on the wild,
On foreign shores a man exiled,
Disown'd, deserted, and distress'd,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be bless'd!
Bless'd in the hall and in the field,
Under the mantle as the shield.
Avenger of thy country's shame.
Restorer of her injured fame,
Bless'd in thy sceptre and thy sword,
De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful Lord,
Bless'd in thy deeds and in thy fame,
What lengthen'd 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 bless'd thee, and thou shalt be bless'd !—
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,
Embark'd, raised sail, and bore away.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

HAST thou not mark'd, when o'er thy startled head
Sudden and deep the thunder-peal has roll'd,
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 ruin'd 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 grey Monk
 His prophet speech had spoke ;
And his obedient brethren's sail
Was stretch'd to meet the southern gale
 Before a whisper woke.
Then murmuring sounds of doubt and fear,
Close pour'd 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 seem'd bent to press
What Lorn, by his impatient cheer,
And gesture fierce, scarce deign'd to hear.

III.

Starting at length, with frowning look,
His hand he clench'd, 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 imbrued
 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 Islemen 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, " Falsehood !—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 feignèd prophecy !"
Such was fierce Lorn's indignant cry ;
And Cormac Doil in haste obey'd,
Hoisted his sail, his anchor weigh'd
(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
Echo'd 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 express'd.
"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 launch'd 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 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 Argentine

Should in a tyrant's quarrel shine ;
But for your brave request,
Be sure the honour'd 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 redress'd.
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 roll'd 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 barr'd,
By beam and bolt and chain ;
Then of the guests, in courteous sort,
He pray'd excuse for mirth broke short,
And bade them in Artornish fort
In confidence remain.
Now torch and menial tendance 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 uproused, 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 stept forth, and with him came
Dunvegan's chief—each bent the knee
To Bruce in sign of fealty,
And proffer'd him his sword,
And hail'd him in a monarch's style,
As king of mainland and of isle,
And Scotland's rightful lord.
“And O,” said Ronald, “Own'd of Heaven!
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,”
Answer'd 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 press'd,
And in a sigh conceal'd the rest.

IX.

They proffer'd aid, by arms and might,
To repossess him in his right ;
But well their counsels must be weigh'd,
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 long'd for Carrick's kindred shore.
I thought upon my native Ayr,
And long'd 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 toss'd,
Our barks dispersed, our purpose cross'd,
Mine own, a hostile sail to shun,
Far from her destined course had run,
When that wise will, which masters ours,
Compell'd us to your friendly towers."

X.

Then Torquil 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 arm'd 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 far bounds of friendly Skye,
Torquil 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, renown'd where chiefs debate,
Shalt sway their souls by counsel 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 scatter'd friend."—
Here seem'd it as Lord Roland's ear
Would other counsel gladlier hear ;
But, all achieved as soon as plann'd,
Both barks, in secret arm'd and mann'd,
From out the haven bore ;

On different voyage forth they ply,
This for the coast of wingèd Skye,
And that for Erin's shore.

XII.

With Bruce and Roland 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 shiver'd crest
The sun's arising gleam ;
But such the labour and delay,
Ere they were moor'd in Scavigh bay
(For calmer heaven compell'd 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 launch'd, 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 wander'd o'er,
Clomb many a crag, cross'd 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 happ'd 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 shatter'd 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-bells bud in deep Glencroe,
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 cumber'd track ;
For from the mountain hoar,
Hurl'd headlong in some night of fear,
When yell'd 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 furl'd,
Or on the sable waters curl'd,
Or on the eddy breezes whirl'd,
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,
Whiten'd with foam a thousand streams
Leap from the mountain's crown.

XVI.

"This lake," said Bruce, "whose barriers drear
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 grisly gulfs and slaty rifts,
Which seam its shiver'd 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 Corryvreckin's whirlpool rude,
 When dons the Hag her whiten'd hood—
 'Tis thus our islesmen's fancy frames,
 For scenes so stern, fantastic names."

XVII.

Answer'd 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 slaughter'd 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 array’d,
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 islemen 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 life ! ” he said ;
“ Enough of blood rests on my head,
Too rashly spill’d—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-look’d, unwilling to be seen ;
They moved with half-resolvèd pace,
And bent on earth each gloomy face.
The foremost two were fair array’d,
With brogue and bonnet, trews and plaid,
And bore the arms of mountaineers,
Daggers and broadswords, bows and spears,

The three, that lagg'd small space behind,
Seem'd 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 proffer'd greeting brief and rude,
But acted courtesy so ill,
As seem'd 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 !
Wreck'd 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 glow'd ?”
“ 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 blazen 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 mellow nuts have hardest rind;
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 reach'd the dreary cabin, made
Of sails against a rock display'd,
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 marr'd by care,
 His eyes in sorrow drown'd.
 "Whence this poor boy?"—As Ronald spoke,
 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 turn'd,
 And his dark neck with blushes burn'd.

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?"—
 "Aye; so his mother bade us know,
 A crone in our late shipwreck drown'd,
 And hence the silly stripling's woe.
 More of the youth I cannot say,
 Our captive but since yesterday;
 When wind and weather wax'd 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 turn'd his head,
And one quick glance to Roland 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 hallow'd 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 elder said,
“And hard, methinks, to be obey'd.
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 clench'd, 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 constrain'd,—“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 seem'd 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 mark'd at once,
Which shot a mischief-boding ray,
From under eyebrows shagg'd and grey.
The younger, too, who seem'd his son,
Had that dark look the timid shun ;
The half-clad serfs behind them sate,
And scowl'd a glare 'twixt fear and hate—
Till all, as darkness onward crept,
Couch'd down, and seem'd 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 stretch'd his limbs to slumber laid.

XXVI.

Not in his dangerous host confides
The King, but wary watch provides.
Roland keeps ward till midnight past,
Then wakes the King, young Allan last ;
Thus rank'd, to give the youthful page
The rest required by tender age.

What is Lord Ronald's wakeful thought,
To chase the langour toil had brought?—
(For deem not that he deign'd 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 betrothed bride,
To Edith, turn—O 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,
Answer'd the dog-fox with his howl,
Then wak'd the King—at his request,
Lord Ronald stretch'd 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 storm'd, 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 shunn'd the Monarch's thoughtful eye.
Now over Coolin's eastern head
The greyish light begins to spread,
The otter to his cavern drew,
And clamour'd shrill the wakening mew ;
Then watch'd the page—to needful rest
The King resign'd his anxious breast.

XXVIII.

To Allan's eyes was harder task,
The weary watch their safeties ask.
He trimm'd the fire, and gave to shine
With bickering light the splinter'd pine ;
Then gazed awhile, 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 sisters' greenwood bower,
How there the Easter-gambols pass,
And of Dan Joseph's lengthen'd mass.
But still before his weary eye
In rays prolong'd the blazes die—
Again he roused him—on the lake
Look'd forth, where now the twilight-flake
Of pale cold dawn began to wake.
On Coolin's cliffs the mist lay furl'd,
The morning breeze the lake had curl'd,
The short dark waves, heaved to the land,
With ceaseless plash kiss'd cliff or sand ;—

It was a slumbrous sound—he turn'd
To tales at which his youth had burn'd,
Of pilgrim's path by demon cross'd,
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 Stathaird'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
Snatch'd from the flame a knotted brand,
The nearest weapon of his wrath ;
With this he cross'd the murderer's path,
 And venged young Allan well !
The spatter'd brain and bubbling blood
Hiss'd on the half-extinguish'd wood,
 The miscreant gasp'd and fell !
Nor rose in peace the Island Lord ;
One caitiff 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 gain'd—the captive sprung
 On the raised arm, and closely clung,
 And, ere he shook him loose,
 The master'd felon press'd the ground,
 And gasp'd beneath the mortal wound,
 While o'er him stands the Bruce.

XXX.

“Miscreant ! while lasts thy flitting spark,
 Give me to know the purpose dark,
 That arm'd thy hand with murderous knife,
 Against offenceless stranger's life ?”—
 “No stranger thou !” with accent fell,
 Murmur'd 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 mark'd 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 doom'd, when with so soft a heart,
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 thy left that charnel-cell,
The Island Lord bade sad farewell
To Allan :—“ Who shall tell this tale,”
He said, “ in halls of Donagaile !
Oh, who his widow'd 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 captive moves 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 wish'd some woodman's cottage nigh,
Something that show'd 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 farther, 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 champion pass'd,
When bold halloo and bugle-blast
Upon the breeze came loud and fast.
"There," said the Bruce, "rung 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 cross'd 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-toss'd 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 pass'd,
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 ruin'd 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 clench'd his palsied hand,
That pointed yet to Scotland's land,
As his last accents pray'd
Disgrace and curse upon his heir,
If he one Scottish head should spare,
Till stretch'd 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, dismiss'd
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 best
Among the islesmen of the west."

VI.

Thus was their venturous council said.
But ere their sails the galleys spread,
Coriskin dark, and Coolin high
Echoed the dirge's doleful cry.

Along that sable lake pass'd slow,—
Fit scene for such a sight of woe,
The sorrowing islesmen, as they bore
The murder'd Allan to the shore.
At every pause, with dismal shout,
Their coronach of grief rang out,
And ever, when they moved again,
The pipes resumed their clamorous strain,
And, with the pibroch's shrilling wail,
Mourn'd the young heir of Donagaile.
Round and around, from cliff and cave,
His answer stern old Coolin gave,
Till high upon his misty side
Languish'd the mournful notes, and died.
For never sounds, by mortal made,
Attain'd 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 sounds like laughter hoarse,
The chords and canvas strain,
The waves, divided by her force,
In rippling eddies chased her course,
As if they laugh'd again.
Not down the breeze more blithely flew
Skimming the wave, the light sea-mew,
Then the gay galley bore
Her course upon the favouring wind,

And Coolin's crest has sunk behind,
And Slapin's cavern'd shore.
'Twas then that warlike signals wake
Dunscath's dark towers and Eisord'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 Sleat 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 grey,
Had charge to muster their array,
And guide their barks to Brodick-Bay.

VIII.

Signal of Ronald's high command,
A beacon gleam'd o'er sea and land,
From Canna's tower, that, steep and grey,
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, how with their Chieftain came,
In ancient times, a foreign dame
To yonder turret grey.

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,
The lovely lady sate and wept
 Upon the castle-wall,
And turn'd her eye to southern climes,
And thought perchance of happier times,
And touch'd 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 lone Hebridean's ear
Steals a strange pleasure mix'd with fear,
While from that cliff he seems to hear
 The murmur of a lute,
And sounds, as of a captive lone,
That mourns her woes in tongue unknown.—
Strange is the tale—but all too long,
Already hath it staid the song—
 Yet who may pass them by,
That crag and tower in ruins grey,
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 hath given.
And Ronin's mountains dark have set
 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 Scooreigg next a warning light
Summon'd 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 roll'd,
The vapour filled the cavern'd 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 the 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 undisturb'd repose
The cormorant had found,

And the shy seal had quiet home,
And welter'd in that wondrous dome,
Where, as to shame the temples deck'd
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seem'd 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 prolong'd 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
Task'd 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 waken'd the men of the wild Tiree,
And the Chief of the sandy Coll ;
They paused not at Columba's isle,
Though peal'd 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 billow's roll.
 Lochbuie's fierce and warlike Lord
 Their signal saw, and grasp'd his sword,
 And verdant Islay call'd 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 ;
 Quench'd 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 bleeze blows merrily,
 But the galley ploughs no more the sea.
 Lest, rounding wild Cantyre, they meet
 The southern foemen's watchful fleet,
 They held unwonted way ;—
 Up Tarbert's western lake they bore,
 Then dragg'd their bark the isthmus o'er,
 As far as Kilmaconnel'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 Kilmaconnel moss,
Old Albyn should in fight prevail,
And every foe should faint and quail
Before her silver Cross.

XIII.

Now launch'd 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 seem'd the isle her monarch knew,
So brilliant was the landward view,
The ocean so serene ;
Each puny wave in diamonds roll'd
O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold
With azure strove and green.
The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,
Glow'd with the tints of evening's hour,
The beach was silver sheen,
The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
And, oft renew'd, seem'd oft to die,
With breathless pause between.
O 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 dies his manly cheeks,
The timid look and downcast eye,
And faltering voice the theme deny.
 And good King Robert's brow express'd,
 He ponder'd 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 recall'd his promised plight,
In the assembled chieftains' sight.—
 When, to fulfil our fathers' band,
 I proffer'd 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 ruin'd 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 talk'd in earnest mood,
That speechless boy beside them stood.
He stoop'd his head against the mast,
And bitter sobs came thick and fast,
A grief that would not be repress'd,
But seem'd to burst his youthful breast.
His hands, against his forehead held,
As if by force his tears repell'd,
But through his fingers, long and slight,

Fast trill'd the drops of crystal bright.
Edward, who walk'd 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 stream'd, 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 unredress'd.
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.
See'st 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 answer'd 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 prolong'd 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 cheer'd the laggard hounds,
When waked that horn the greenwood bounds.
"It is the foe!" cried Boyd, who came
In breathless haste, with eye of 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,
Cheer 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 greenwood tree
High waked their loyal jubilee !
Around the royal Bruce they crowd,
And clasp'd his hands, and wept aloud.
Veterans of early fields were there,
Whose helmets press'd their hoary hair,
Whose swords and axes bore a stain
From life-blood of the red-hair'd Dane ;
And boys, whose hands scarce brook'd to wield
The heavy sword or bossy shield.
Men too were there, that bore the scars
Impress'd in Albyn's woeful wars,
At Falkirk's fierce and fatal fight,
Teyndrum's dread rout, and Methven's fight ;
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 murder'd De la Haye,
And Boyd the grave, and Seton gay.
Around their King regain'd they press'd,
Wept, shouted, clasp'd 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.

Oh, War! thou hast thy fierce delight,
Thy gleams of joy, intensely bright!
Such gleams, as from thy polish'd 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,
Muste'r 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 heartstrings 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 hail'd 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 turn'd,
And dash'd away the tear he scorn'd.

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
Assign'd to Lady Isabel,
And hurriedly she cried,
"Haste, gentle Lady, haste—there waits
A noble stranger at the gates ;
Saint Bride's poor vot'ress 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 portress cross'd 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 grey
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 assign'd
Such mastery o'er the common mind—
Bestow'd thy high designs to aid,
How long, O Heaven ! how long delay'd !—
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 survey'd 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 !—
 O ill for thee, my royal claim
 From the First David's sainted name !
 O 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 gulf 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 fix'd 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 fix'd on heaven.
My love was like a summer flower,
That wither'd 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 press'd on thee the Southern power,
And safety, to all human sight,
Was only found in rapid flight,
Thou heard'st 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 oppress'd 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 stoop'd, and bent his knee,
Kiss'd twice the hand of Isabel,
Arose, and sudden left the cell. —
The princess, loosen'd from his hold,
Blush'd angry at his bearing bold ;
But good King Robert cried,
“ Chafe not—by signs he speaks his mind,

He heard the plan my care design'd,
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 !
O ! 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 play'd.
Kindly in heart, in word severe,
A foe to thought, and grief, and fear,
He holds his humour uncontroll'd ;
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,
O what a gem lies buried here,
Nipp'd 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 reach'd the spot where his bold train
Held rustic camp upon the plain.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

ON fair Loch-Ranza stream'd the early day,
Thin wreaths of cottage smoke are upward curl'd
From the lone hamlet, which her inland bay
And circling mountains sever from the world.
And there the fisherman his sail unfurl'd,
The goat-herd drove his kids to steep Ben-Ghoil,
Before the hut the dame her spindle twirl'd,
Courting the sunbeam as she plied her toil,—
For, wake where'er he may, Man wakes to care and
coil.

But other duties call'd 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 stoop'd her gentle head in meek devotion there.

II.

She raised her eyes, that duty done,
When glanced upon the pavement-stone,

Gemm'd 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 O ! 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 vanish'd in the blush of shame,
That, as its penance, instant came.
"O 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 brush'd anew,
 And there were footprints seen
 On the carved buttress rising still,
 Till on the mossy window-sill,
 Their track effaced the green.
 The ivy twigs were torn and fray'd,
 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 pray'd him pass
 To chapel where they said the mass;
 But like an arrow he shot by,
 And tears seem'd 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 couch'd in greenwood bower,
 At dawn a bugle signal, made

By their bold Lord, their ranks array'd ;
Up sprung the spears through bush and tree,
No time for benedicite !
Like deer, that, rousing from their lair,
Just shake the dewdrops from their hair,
And toss their armèd 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 obey'd, 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 ! and take heed,
That life and death are on thy speed."
His cowl the good old priest did on,
Took his spiked staff and sandall'd 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 wander'd slow,
Stunted and sapless, thin and low ;
By many a mountain stream he pass'd,
From the tall cliffs in tumult cast,
Dashing to foam their waters dun,
And sparkling in the summer sun.
Round his grey head the wild curlew
In many a fearless circle flew.
O'er chasms he pass'd, where fractures wide
Craved wary eye and ample stride ;
He cross'd 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 staid,
There told his hours within the shade,
And at the stream his thirst allay'd.
Thence onward journeying, slowly still,
As evening closed he reach'd 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,
The boats and barges some unmoor,
Some raise the sail, some seize the oar ;
Their eyes oft turn'd where glimmer'd far
What might have seem'd 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 unaccustom'd ears,
A language much unmeet he hears,
 While, hastening all on board,
As stormy as the swelling surge
That mix'd its roar, the leaders urge
Their followers to the ocean verge,
 With many a haughty word.

VIII.

Through that wild throng the Father pass'd,
And reach'd 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 loosen'd 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 approach'd 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 show'd,
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
Flash'd joyful at the glad surprise.
He bounded to the skiff, the sail
Was spread before a prosperous gale,
And well my charge he hath obey'd ;
For, see ! the ruddy signal made,
That Clifford, with his merry-men all,
Guards carelessly our father's hall."—

X.

"O wild of thought, and hard of heart !"
Answer'd 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 perill'd thus the helpless child."—
—Offended half, and half submiss,
"Brother and Liege, of blame like this,"
Edward replied, "I little dream'd.
A stranger messenger, I deem'd,
Might safest seek the beadsman's cell,
Where all thy squires are known so well.
Noteless 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 expiate 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 hand
Can chalice raise or cross command,
While my old voice has accents' use,
Can Augustin forget the Bruce!"
Then to his side Lord Ronald press'd,
And whisper'd, "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 threescore 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 mann'd rocks every boat ;
Beneath their oars the ocean's might
Was dash'd 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 turn'd his blessings to renew,
Oft turn'd, till on the darken'd coast
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 desried,

Are gone—and on the placid sea
The rowers ply 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 whiten'd 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
Warn'd 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 seem'd a twinkling star,
Now blazed portentous, fierce, and far.
Dark-red the heaven above it glow'd,
Dark-red the sea beneath it flow'd,
Red rose the rocks on ocean's brim,
In blood-red light her islets swim ;
Wild scream the dazzled sea-fowl gave,
Dropp'd from their crags on plashing wave,
The deer to distant covert drew,
The black-cock deem'd 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 sage,
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 approach'd the land,
But Edward's grounded on the sand ;
The eager Knight leap'd 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,
Seem'd steady as the polar star,
Now, like a prophet's fiery chair,
Seem'd travelling the realms of air.
Wide o'er the sky the splendour glows,
As that portentous meteor rose ;
Helm, axe, and falchion glitter'd bright,
And in the red and dusky light
His comrade's face each warrior saw,
Nor marvell'd it was pale with awe.
Then high in air the beams were lost,
And darkness sunk upon the coast.—
Ronald to Heaven a prayer address'd,
And Douglas cross'd 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 scatter'd 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 ho !
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 harrow'd 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 greenwood 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 ? ”—
Answer'd 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. ”—
Answer'd 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. ”—
Answer'd Lord Roland, “ 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 Haye, and Lennox cried ;
So said, so vow'd, 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 grey-hair'd eld
A superstitious credence held,
That never did a mortal hand
Wake its broad glare on Carrick strand;
Nay, and that on the self-same night
When Bruce cross'd o'er, still gleams the light.
Yearly it gleams o'er mount and moor,
And glittering wave and crimson'd 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 Roland, 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 bull's 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."
—O 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 path he strove,
Fear, toil, and sorrow, lost in love !

XIX.

The barrier of that iron shore,
The rock's steep ledge, is now climb'd 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 gain'd 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 marr'd 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 copsewood 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 shiver'd boughs, was there.
Lovely between, the moonbeams fell
On lawn and hillock, glade and dell.
The gallant Monarch sigh'd 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 lengthen'd 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, dishearten'd, and dismay'd,
Here Amadine let go the plaid :
His trembling limbs their aid refuse,
He sunk among the midnight dews !

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 darken'd cell hath sunk ;
Enter and rest thee there a space,
Wrapt 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 bourne,
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 bestow'd,
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 sobb'd and wept
The page, till, wearied out, he slept—
A rough voice waked his dream—“ Nay, here,
Here by this thicket, pass'd the deer—

Beneath that oak old Ryno staid—
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 bow-string 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 paw'd the ground,
And many a deer-dog howl'd around.
To Amadine, Lorn's well-known word
Replying to that Southern Lord,
Mix'd with this clanging din, might seem
The phantasm of a fever'd dream.
The tone upon his ringing ears
Came like the sound which fancy hears,
When in rude waves or roaring winds
Some words of woe the musser 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 proffer'd ransom-gold to pay,
And they agreed—but ere told o'er,
The winds blow loud, the billows roar;
They sever'd, and they met no more.
He deems—such tempest vex'd 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 pass'd
The thought, but, to his purpose true,
He said not, though he sigh'd, "Adieu !"

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 steel'd,
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 headsman by his side ;
Along the greenwood 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 mutter'd 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 play'd,
It waked the lurking ambuscade.
The Island Lord look'd 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 display'd,
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-dogs eager to rush on,
Compell'd to wait the signal blown,
Hid, and scarce hid, by greenwood 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 oft 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 mutter'd prayer
The victim for his fate prepare—
What glances o'er the greenwood 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 astonish’d Southern gazed at first,
Where the wild tempest was to burst,
That waked in that presaging name.
Before, behind, around it came !
Half-arm’d, surprised, on every side
Hemm’d in, hew’d 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 press’d Ronald’s brand,
A gentler duty claim’d 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
Betray’d the secret kept by fear ;
Once, when, with life returning, came
To the boy’s lip Lord Ronald’s name,
And hardly recollection drown’d
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 assail'd ;
Such was his wonted reckless mood,
Yet desperate valour oft made good,
Even by its daring, venture rude,
Where prudence might have fail'd.
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.
Unsparing was the vengeful sword,
And limbs were lopp'd and life-blood pour'd,
The cry of death and conflict roar'd,
And fearful was the din !
The startling horses plunged and flung,
Clamour'd the dogs till turrets rung,
Nor sunk the fearful cry,
Till not a foeman was there found

Alive, save those who on the ground
Groan'd in their agony !

XXXII.

The valiant Clifford is no more :
On Ronald's broadsword stream'd his gore,
But better hap had he of Lorn,
Who, by the foeman backward borne,
Yet gain'd 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 encounter'd 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 !
O first, to thee, all-gracious Heaven,
Then to my friends, my thanks be given !"—
He paused a space, his brow he cross'd—
Then on the board his sword he toss'd,
Yet streaming hot ; with Southern gore
From hilt to point 'twas crimson'd 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 restor'd !
And he whose lip 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 Ettrick's archers sharp their darts,
The fairest forms, the truest hearts !

Call all, call all ! from Reedswair-Path
To the wild confines of Cape-Wrath ;
Wide let the news through Scotland ring,—
The Northern Eagle claps his wing !”

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

O 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
Hail'd news on news, as field on field was won !
When Hope, long doubtful, soar'd at length
 sublime,
And our glad eyes, awake as day begun, [sun !
Watch'd Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising

O these were hours, when thrilling joy repaid
A long, long course of darkness, doubts, and fears !
The heart-sick faintness of the hope delay'd,
The waste, the woe, the bloodshed, and the tears,
That track'd 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 hail'd the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty !

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,
When 'gainst the invaders turn'd the battle's scale,

When Bruce's banner had victorious flow'd
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 vot'ress of the order now,
Say, did the rule that bid thee wear
Dim veil and woollen scapulaire,
And reft thy locks of dark-brown hair,
That stern and rigid vow,
Did it condemn the transport high,
Which glisten'd 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 lengthen'd braid,
So say the blushes and the sighs,
The tremors 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
Conceal'd her from his sister's eyes ;
And sister-like in love they dwell
In that lone convent's silent cell.
There Bruce's slow assent allows
Fair Isabel the veil and vows ;
And there, her sex's dress regain'd,
The lovely Maid of Lorn remain'd,
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 retain'd no more,
Northward of Tweed, but Stirling's towers,
Beleaguer'd 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 muster'd fast,
By beacon and by bugle-blast
 Forth marshall'd for the field ;
There rode each knight of noble name,
There England's hardy archers came,
The land they trode seem'd all on flame,
 With banner, blade, and shield !
And not famed England's powers alone,
Renown'd in arms, the summons own ;
 For Neustria's knights obey'd,
Gascogne hath lent her horsemen good,
And Cambria, but of late subdued,
Sent forth her mountain multitude,
And Connoght pour'd from waste and wood
Her hundred tribes, whose sceptre rude
 Dark Eth O'Connor sway'd.

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 awhile the threaten'd shower,
Till every peak and summit lower
 Round the pale pilgrim's head.
Not with such pilgrim's startled eye
King Robert mark'd the tempest nigh !
 Resolved the brunt to bide,
His royal summons warn'd the land,
That all who own'd their King's command

Should instant take the spear and brand,
To combat at his side.
O 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 boun'd them for the fight.
Such news the royal courier tells,
Who came to rouse dark Arran's dells ;
But farther 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 betray'd,
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 look'd
How Ronald's heart the message brook'd
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 eye
Might have some glance of policy :
Dunstaffnage had the monarch ta'en,
And Lorn had own'd 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 :
The ample right o'er tower and land
Were safe in Ronald's faithful hand.

VIII.

Embarrass'd 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 counsel 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 hopes 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,
Joy'd, generous, that revolving time
Gave means to expiate the crime.
High glow'd 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 deem'd 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 glow'd,
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.
Detach'd 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 join'd with the hill
Was distant armour flashing still,
So wide, so far, the boundless host
Seem'd in the blue horizon lost.

XI.

Down from the hill the maiden pass'd,
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 rank'd 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 array'd,

With the plumed bonnet and the plaid
By these Hebrideans worn ;
But O ! unseen for three long years,
Dear was the garb of mountaineers
To the fair Maid of Lorn !
For one she look'd—but he was far
Busied amid the ranks of war—
Yet with affection's troubled eye
She mark'd 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.
Arm'd 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 ;
Ettrick and Liddell 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, screen'd 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 clasp'd 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 awhile,
To close and rank their warlike file,
And hold high council, if that night
Should view the strife, or dawning light.

XIV.

O 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 flash'd 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
Dash'd from the ranks Sir Henry Bouné.

XV.

Of Hereford's high blood he came,
A race renown'd for knightly fame.
He burn'd before his Monarch's eye
To do some deed of chivalry.
He spurr'd his steed, he couch'd 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,
Spurr'd 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 shunn'd 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 Bouné, the whiles he pass'd,
Fell that stern dint—the first—the last !—
Such strength upon the blow was put,
The helmet crash'd like hazel-nut ;
The axe-shaft, with its brazen clasp,
Was shiver'd 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 turn'd his palfrey's head,
And, pacing back his sober way,
Slowly he gain'd his own array.
There round their King the leaders crowd,
And blame his recklessness aloud,
That risk'd 'gainst each adventurous spear
A life so valued and so dear.
His broken weapon's shaft survey'd
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 whisper'd, “ 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 vanquish'd, 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 ;
If 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 spear, 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 swell'd 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 loosen'd rein.—
That skirmish closed the busy day,
And couch'd 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 slaughter'd 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 murmur'd prayer, the early mass!—
Here, numbers had presumption given;
There, bands o'er-matched 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.
O! 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 toss'd,
His breast and brow each soldier cross'd,
And started from the ground ;
Arm'd and array'd for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire, and knight,
And in the pomp of battle bright
The dread battalia frown'd.

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 deem'd 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 kneel'd.”—
“ Aye !—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 kneel'd,
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 stepp'd 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 bow-strings 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 banner'd 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 gain'd 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 wild-fire 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 bow-string loose ! "

XXIII.

Then spurs were dash'd in chargers' flanks,
They rush'd 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 barbèd 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 !
Awhile, with stubborn hardihood,
Their English hearts the strife made good.

Borne down at length on every side,
Compell'd 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 greenwood 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 wont 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 braggard churl could boast before,
Twelve Scottish lives 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 show'd 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 form'd 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 thunder'd to their tread,
As far as Stirling rock.
Down ! down ! in headlong overthrow,
Horsemen 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 acton, 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 swallow'd 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 press'd,
And down went many a noble crest,
And rent was many a valiant breast,
And Slaughter revell'd round.

XXVI.

Unflinching foot 'gainst foot was set,
Unceasing blow by blow was met,
The groans of those who fell
Were drown'd amid the shriller clang
That from the blades and harness rang,
And in the battle-yell.
Yet fast they fell, unheard, forgot,
Both Southern fierce and hardy Scot ;
And O ! 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 Montague 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 reel'd,
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, combin'd anew,
Appear'd 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,
O ! are your hearts of flesh or stone ? "

XXX.

The multitude that watch'd afar,
Rejected from the ranks of war,
Had not unmov'd 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
Stretch'd to the hatchet or the brand ;
 But, when mute Amadine they heard
 Give to their zeal the 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 promis'd 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 banner'd host afar,
Bear down on England's wearied war.

XXXI.

Already scatter'd o'er the plain,
Reproof, command, and counsel vain,
The rearward squadrons fled amain,
Or made but doubtful stay ;
But when they mark'd the seeming show
Of fresh and fierce and marshall'd 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 turn'd his bridle rein,
And forced him from the fatal plain.
With them rode Argentine, until
They gain'd 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 trace
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 couch’d 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 unharm’d—a lance’s point
Has found his breastplate’s loosen’d joint,
An axe has razed his crest ;
Yet still on Colonsay’s fierce lord,
Who press’d the chase with gory sword,
He rode with spear in rest,
And through his bloody tartans bored,
And through his gallant breast.
Nail’d 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 sway,
The blood gush’d from the wound ;
And the grim Lord of Colonsay
Hath turn’d him on the ground,
And laugh’d in death-pang, that his blade
The mortal thrust so well repaid.

XXXIII.

Now toil’d the Bruce, the battle done,
To use his conquest boldly won ;

And gave command for horse and spear
To press the Southron's scatter'd 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 stream'd 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 fail'd 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 press'd his dying hand—its grasp
Kindly replied ; but, in his clasp,
It stiffen'd and grew cold—
“ And, O 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 gleam'd 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 glimmer'd pale,
 On broken plate and bloodied mail,
 Rent crest and shatter'd coronet,
 Of Baron, Earl, and Banneret ;
 And the best names that England knew,
 Claim'd 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.
 Oft may thine annals justly boast
 Of battles stern by Scotland lost ;
 Grudge not her victory,
 When for her freeborn 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 new 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 kneel’d,
Durst not look up, but mutter’d 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,
Heap’d then with thousands of the slain,
’Mid victor monarch’s musings high,
Mirth laugh’d in good King Robert’s eye.—
“And bore he such angelic air,
Such noble front, such waving hair?
Hath Ronald kneel’d 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 ye 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."





*Ballads, Translated, or Imitated, from the
German.*

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

IMITATED FROM THE "LENORÉ" OF BÜRGER.

I.

FROM heavy dreams fair Helen rose,
And eyed the dawning red :
" Alas, my love, thou tarriest long !
O art thou false or dead ?"—

II.

With gallant Fred'rick'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 ev'ry knight return'd 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.

And 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 sobb'd in his embrace,
And flutt'ring joy in tears and smiles
Array'd 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 past and gone ;
She rends her raven hair,
And in distraction's bitter mood
She weeps with wild despair.

IX.

"O 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 lorn ;
Death, death alone can comfort me ;
O had I ne’er been born !

XI.

“O break, my heart,—O break at once !
Drink my life-blood, Despair !
No joy remains on earth for me,
For me in heaven no share.”—

XII.

“O enter not in judgment, Lord !”
The pious mother prays ;
“Impute not guilt to thy frail child !
She knows not what she says.

XIII.

“O say thy Pater-noster, child !
O turn to God and grace !
His will, that turn’d 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 pray’d for William’s sake,
And all my prayers were vain.”—

XVI.

“O take the sacrament, my child,
And check these tears that flow ;
By resignation’s humble prayer,
O hallow’d 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.

“O break, my heart,—O break at once !
Be thou my god, Despair !
Heaven’s heaviest blow has fallen on me,
And vain each fruitless prayer.”—

XIX.

“O 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 ? [weep'st ?
Wak'st thou, or sleep'st ? laugh'st thou, or
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.

“ O 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.

“ Busk, busk, and boune ! 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 !
O 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.

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 prevail'd : she busks, she bounes,
She mounts the barb behind,
And round her darling William's waist
Her lily arm she twined.

XXXVII.

And, hurry ! hurry ! off they rode,
As fast as fast might be ;
Spurn'd 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 goes my barb—keep hold !
Fear'st thou ?”—“O no !” she faintly said ;
“But why so stern and cold !

XL.

“What yonder rings? what yonder sings?
Why shrieks the owlet grey?”
“’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 coffin’d 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.

XLV.

“O, William, why this savage haste?
And where thy bridal bed?”—
“’Tis distant far, low, damp, and chill,
And 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 scourge 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, th' accursed wheel;
A murderer in his chain.—

LI.

“Hollo! thou felon, follow here:
To bridal bed we ride;
And thou shall 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 show'd !
How fled what darkness hid !
How fled the earth beneath their feet,
The heaven above their head !

LV.

“Dost fear ? dost fear ? The moon shines clear,
And well the dead can ride ;
Does faithful Helen fear for them ?”—
“O 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
Unhallow'd ghosts were heard.

LXI.

O'er many a tomb and tombstone pale
He spurr'd 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 mould'ring 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 flit 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 rest ;
Her spirit be forgiven ! ”*

THE WILD HUNTSMAN.

(This is a translation, or rather an imitation, of the *Wilde Jäger* of the German poet Bürger.)

THE Wildgrave winds his bugle horn,
To horse, to horse ! halloo, halloo !
His fiery courser snuffs the morn,
And thronging serfs their lord pursue.

The eager pack, from couples freed,
Dash through the brush, the briar, the brake :
While answering hound, and horn, and steed,
The mountain echoes startling wake.

The beams of God's own hallow'd day
Had painted yonder spire with gold,
And, calling sinful man to pray,
Loud, long, and deep the bell had toll'd :

But still the Wildgrave onward rides ;
Halloo, halloo ! and, hark again !
When spurring from opposing sides,
Two Stranger Horsemen join the train.

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.

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.

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 ? "

" Cease thy loud bugle's clanging knell, "
Cried the fair youth, with silver voice ;
" And for devotion's choral swell
Exchange the rude unhallow'd noise.

" To-day the ill-omen'd chase forbear,
Yon bell yet summons to the fane ;
To-day the Warning Spirit hear,
To-morrow thou mayst mourn in vain. "—

“ Away, and sweep the glades along ! ”
 The Sable Hunter hoarse replies ;
 “ To muttering monks leave matin-song,
 And bells, and books, and mysteries.”

The Wildgrave spurr'd his ardent steed,
 And, launching forward with a bound,
 “ Who for thy drowsy priestlike rede,
 Would leave the jovial horn and hound ?

“ 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 !”

The Wildgrave spurr'd his courser light,
 O'er moss and moor, o'er holt and hill ;
 And on the left and on the right
 Each stranger Horseman followed still.

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 !*”

A heedless wretch has cross'd the way ;
 He gasps the thundering hoofs below :
 But, live who can, or die who may,
 Still, “ *Forward, forward !* ’ on they go.

See, where yon simple fences meet,
 A field with Autumn's blessings crown'd ;
 See, prostrate at the Wildgrave's feet,
 A husbandman with toil embrown'd :

“O mercy, mercy, noble lord !
Spare the poor’s pittance,” was his cry,
“Earned by the sweat these brows have pour’d,
In scorching hour of fierce July.”—

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.

“Away thou hound ! so basely born,
Or dread the scourge’s echoing blow !”—
Then loudly rung his bugle-horn,
“*Hark forward, forward, holla, ho !*”

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.

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.

Again uproused, the timorous prey
Scours moss and moor, and holt and hill ;
Hard run, he feels his strength decay,
And trusts for life his simple skill.

Too dangerous solitude appear’d ;
He seeks the shelter of the crowd ;
Amid the flock’s domestic herd
His harmless head he hopes to shroud.

O'er moss and moor, and holt and hill,
His track the steady blood-hounds trace ;
O'er moss and moor, unwearied still,
The furious Earl pursues the chase.

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 !”—

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.

“Unmanner'd dog! To stop my sport,
Vain were thy cant and beggar whine,
Though human spirits, of thy sort,
Were tenants of these carrion kine !”

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.

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.

With blood besmear'd, and white with foam,
While big the tears of anguish pour,
He seeks, amid the forest's gloom,
The humble hermit's hallow'd bower.

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 !*"

All mild, amid the rout profane,
The holy hermit pour'd his prayer ;
"Forbear with blood God's house to stain ;
Revere His altar, and forbear !

"The meanest brute has rights to plead,
Which, wrong'd by cruelty, or pride,
Draw vengeance on the ruthless head :—
Be warn'd at length, and turn aside."

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.

"Holy or not, or right or wrong,
Thy altar, and its rites, I spurn ;
Not sainted martyrs' sacred song,
Nor God himself, shall make me turn !"

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.

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 reign'd alone.

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.

He listens for his trusty hounds ;
No distant baying reached his ears :
His courser, rooted to the ground,
The quickening spur unmindful bears.

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.

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.

“Oppressor of creation fair !
Apostate Spirits' harden'd tool !
Scorner of God ! Scourge of the poor !
The measure of thy cup is full.

“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.”

'Twas hushed :—One flash of sombre glare,
With yellow tinged the forests brown ;
Uprose the Wildgrave's bristling hair,
And horror chill'd each nerve and bone.

Cold pour'd the sweat in freezing rill ;
A rising wind began to sing ;
And louder, louder, louder still,
Brought storm and tempest on its wing.

Earth heard the call ;—her entrails rend ;
From yawning rifts, with many a yell,
Mix'd with sulphureous flames, ascend
The misbegotten dogs of hell.

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.

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 !*"

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.—

Still, still shall last the dreadful chase,
Till time itself shall have an end ;
By day they scour earth's cavern'd space,
At midnight's witching hour, ascend.

This is the horn, and nound, and horse,
That oft the 'lated peasant hears ;
Appall'd, he signs the frequent cross,
When the wild din invades his ears.

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!*"

THE ERL-KING.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

*(The Erl-King is a goblin that haunts the Black Forest
of Thuringia.)*

O, WHO rides by night thro' the woodland so wild ?
It is the fond father embracing his child ;
And close the boy nestles within his loved arm,
To hold himself fast, and to keep himself warm.

" O father, see yonder ! see yonder ! " he says ;
" My boy, upon what dost thou fearfully gaze ? " —
" O, 'tis the Erl-King with his crown and his shroud. "
" No, my son, it is but a dark wreath of the cloud. "

(THE ERL-KING SPEAKS.)

*" O come and go with me, thou loveliest child ;
By many a gay sport shall thy time be beguiled ;
My mother keeps for thee full many a fair toy,
And many a fine flower shalt she pluck for my boy. "*

" O father, my father, and did you not hear
The Erl-King whisper so low in my ear ? " —
" Be still, my heart's darling—my child, be at ease ;
It was but the wild blast as it sung thro' the trees. "

ERL-KING.

*“O wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest boy?
My daughter shall tend thee with care and with joy;
She shall bear thee so lightly thro’ wet and thro’ wild,
And press 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 thro’ the
rain?”—

“O yes, my loved treasure, I knew it full soon;
It was the grey willow that danced to the moon.”

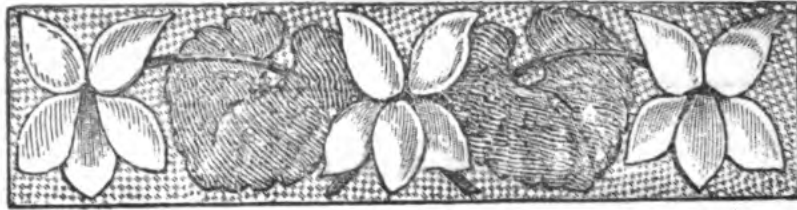
ERL-KING.

*“O come and go 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 spurr’d thro’ the wild,
Clasping close to his bosom his shuddering child;
He reaches his dwelling in doubt and in dread,
But, clasp’d to his bosom, the infant was *dead!*





MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE VIOLET.

[These lines were written in 1797, on the occasion of the poet's disappointment in love.]

THE violet in her green-wood bower,
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, in copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,
Beneath the dew-drop's weight reclining ;
I've seen an eye of lovelier hue,
More sweet through watr'y lustre shining.

The summer sun that dew shall dry,
Ere yet the day be past its morrow ;
No longer in my false love's eye
Remain'd the tear of parting sorrow.

THE PALMER.

“ O 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 :
O open, for Our Lady's sake !
A pilgrim's blessing win !

“ I'll give you pardons from the Pope,
And reliques from o'er the sea—
Or 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 Ettrick's sullen roar,
Dark, deep, and strong is he,
And I must ford the Ettrick o'er,
Unless you pity me.

“ The iron gate is bolted hard,
At which I knock in vain ;
The owner's heart is closer barr'd,
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 Ettrick fair,
 A corpse amid the alders rank,
 The Palmer welter’d there.

THE BOLD DRAGOON ;

OR, THE PLAIN OF BADAJOS.

’TWAS a Maréchal of France, and he fain would honour
 gain,
 And he long’d to take a passing glance at Portugal
 from Spain ;
 With his flying guns this gallant gay,
 And boasted corps d’armée—
 O he feared not our dragoons, with their long swords,
 boldly riding,
 Whack, fal de ral, etc.

To Campo Mayor come, he had quietly sat down,
 Just a fricassee to pick, while his soldiers sack’d the
 town,

When, 'twas *peste ! morbleu ! mon General*,
Hear the English bugle-call !
And behold the light dragoons, with their long swords,
boldly riding,
Whack, fal de ral, etc.

Right about went horse and foot, artillery and all,
And, as the devil leaves a house, they tumbled through
the wall ;
They took no time to seek the door,
But, best foot set before—
O they ran from our dragoons, with their long swords,
boldly riding,
Whack, fal de ral, etc.

Those valiant men of France they had scarcely fled a
mile,
When on their flank there soused at once the British
rank and file ;
For Long, De Grey, and Otway, then
Ne'er minded one to ten,
But came on like light dragoons, with their long
swords, boldly riding,
Whack, fal de ral, etc.

Three hundred British lads they made three thousand
reel,
Their hearts were made of English oak, their swords of
Sheffield steel,
Their horses were in Yorkshire bred,
And Beresford them led ;
So huzza for brave dragoons, with their long swords,
boldly riding,
Whack, fal de ral, etc.

Then here's a health to Wellington, to Beresford, to
 Long,
 And a single word to Bonaparte before I close my
 song :
 The eagles that to fight he brings
 Should serve his men with wings,
 When they meet the bold dragoons, with their long
 swords, boldly riding,
 Whack, fal de ral, etc.

JOCK OF HAZELDEAN.

AIR—*A Border Melody.*

[The first stanza of this ballad is ancient. The others were written by the author 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 peacefu' 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.

PROUD MAISIE.

PROUD Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

“Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?”—

“When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.”

“Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?”—

“The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

“The glow-worm o’er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.

The owl from the steeple sing,
‘Welcome, proud lady.’”

Madge Wildfire’s Song—*Heart of Midlothian*.

MACGREGOR’S GATHERING.

AIR—*Thain’ a Grigalach*.*

[These verses are adapted to a very wild, yet lively gathering-tune, used by the MacGregors. The severe treatment of this Clan, their outlawry, and the proscription of their very name, are alluded to in the Ballad.]

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, etc.

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, etc.

* “The MacGregor is come.”

Glen Orchy's proud mountains, Coalchuirn and her
towers,
Glenstrae and Glenlyon no longer are ours ;
We're landless, landless, landless, Grigalach !
Landless, landless, landless, etc.

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, etc.

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, etc.

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, etc.

Through the depths of Loch Katrine the steed shall
career,
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, etc.

LULLABY OF AN INFANT CHIEF.

AIR—*Cadul gu lo.*

I.

O, HUSH thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight,
 Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright ;
 The woods and the glens, from the towers which we see,
 They all are belonging, dear babie, to thee.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O ho ro, i ri ri, etc.

II.

O, fear not the bugle, though loudly it blows,
 It calls but the warders that guard thy repose ;
 Their bows would be bended, their blades would be red,
 Ere the step of a foeman draws near to thy bed.

O ho ro, i ri ri, etc.

III.

O, hush thee, my babie, the time soon will come,
 When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet and drum ;
 Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while you may,
 For strife comes with manhood, and waking with day.

O ho ro, i ri ri, etc.

THE SUN UPON THE WEIRDLAW HILL.

THE sun upon the Weirdlaw Hill,
 In Ettrick's vale, is sinking sweet ;
 The westland wind is hush and still,
 The lake lies sleeping at my feet.

Yet not the landscape to mine eye
Bears those bright hues that once it bore ;
Though evening, with her richest dye,
Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

With listless look along the plain,
I see Tweed's silver current glide,
And coldly mark the holy fane
Of Melrose rise in ruin'd pride.
The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,—
Are they still such as once they were ?
Or is the dreary change in me ?

Alas, the warp'd and broken board,
How can it bear the painter's dye !
The harp of strain'd and tuneless chord,
How to the minstrel's skill reply !
To aching eyes each landscape lowers,
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill—
And Araby's or Eden's bowers
Were barren as this moorland hill.

BORDER BALLAD.

I.

MARCH, march, Ettrick and Teviotdale,
Why the deil dinna ye march forward in order ?
March, march, Eskdale and Liddesdale,
All the Blue Bonnets are bound for the Border.

Many a banner spread,
Flutters above your head,
Many a crest that is famous in story,
Mount and make ready then,
Sons of the mountain glen,
Fight for the Queen and our old Scottish glory.

II.

Come from the hills where your hirsels are grazing,
Come from the glen of the buck and the roe ;
Come to the crag where the beacon is blazing,
Come with the buckler, the lance, and the bow.
Trumpets are sounding,
War-steeds are bounding,
Stand to your arms, and march in good order,
England shall many a day
Tell of the bloody fray,
When the Blue Bonnets came over the Border.

The Monastery. Chap. xxv.

"TWIST YE, TWINE YE."

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.

Song of Meg Merrilies—*Guy Mannering*.

FALSE LOVE.

FALSE love, and hast thou play'd me this
In summer among the flowers ?
I will repay thee back again
In winter among the showers.
Unless again, again, my love,
Unless you turn again ;
As you with other maidens rove,
I'll smile on other men.

The Knight's to the mountain
His bugle to wind ;
The lady's to greenwood
Her garland to bind.
The bower of Burd Ellen
Has moss on the floor,
That the step of Lord William
Be silent and sure.

David Gellatley's Song in *Waverley*.

COUNTY GUY.

Ah ! County Guy, the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea,
The orange-flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark, his lay who trilled all day,
Sits hush'd his partner nigh ;
Breeze, bird, and flower, confess the hour,
But where is County Guy ?

The village maid steals through the shade
Her shepherd's wish to hear ;
To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high-born cavalier.
The star of love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky ;
And high and low the influence know—
But where is County Guy ?

(*Quentin Durward.*)

ONE HOUR WITH THEE.

AN hour with thee !—When earliest day
Dapples with gold the eastern grey,
Oh, what can frame my mind to bear
The toil and turmoil, cark and care,
New griefs, which coming hours unfold,
And sad remembrance of the old ?
One hour with thee !

One hour with thee ! When burning June
Waves his red flag at pitch of noon ;
What shall repay the faithful swain,
His labour on the sultry plain ;
And more than cave or sheltering bough,
Cool feverish blood, and throbbing brow ?—
One hour with thee !

One hour with thee !—When sun is set,
O, what can teach me to forget
The thankless labours of the day ;
The hopes, the wishes, flung away ;
The increasing wants and lessening gains,
The master's pride, who scorns my pains ?—
One hour with thee !

(*Woodstock.*)

GREEN WOODLANDS.

HIE away, hie away,
Over bank and over brae,
Where the copsewood is the greenest,
Where the fountains glisten sheenest,
Where the lady-fern grows strongest,
Where the morning dew lies longest,
Where the black-cock sweetest sips it,
Where the fairy latest trips it :
Hie to haunts right seldom seen,
Lovely, lonesome, cool, and green,
Over bank and over brae,
Hie away, hie away.

(*Waverley.*)

Printed by **WALTER SCOTT**, *Felling, Newcastle-on-Tyne.*

