

William Weld.







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POETICAL WORKS

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR ARCH. CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH:

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN;

JOHN MURRAY; AND HURST, ROBINSON, AND CO.,

LONDON.

1822.

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THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

CANTO SIXTH.

The Guard-Room.



THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

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 its 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 glimmering pale,
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble
wail.

II.

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang
With soldier-step and weapon-clang,
While drums, with rolling note, foretell
Relief to weary centinel.
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 shew'd wild shapes in garb of war,
Faces deform'd with beard and scar,
All hagard 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,
Shew'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 shew'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 halbert, brand, and shield ;
In camps licentious, wild, and bold ;
In pillage, fierce and uncontroul'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 token of the mountain sword,
Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard,
Their prayers and feverish wails were heard ;
Sad burden to the ruffian joke,
And savage oath by fury spoke !—
At length up-started John of Brent,
A yeoman from the banks of Trent ;
A stranger to respect or fear,
In peace a chaser of the deer,
In host a hardy mutineer,
But still the boldest of the crew,
When deed of danger was to do.

He grieved, that day, their games cut short,
And 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 jolly 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 Belzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,
And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye ;

* A Bacchanalian interjection, borrowed from the Dutch.

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,
For none shall do them shame or harm."—
"Hear ye his boast!" cried John of Brent,
Ever to strife and jangling bent;
"Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,
And yet the jealous niggard grudge
To pay the forester his fee!
I'll have my share howe'er it be,
Despite of Moray, Mar, or thee."—
Bertram his forward step withstood;
And, burning in his vengeful mood,
Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
Laid hand upon his dagger-knife;
But Ellen boldly 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 halbert on the floor ;
And he that steps my halbert o'er,
To do the maid injurious part,
My shaft shall quiver in his heart !—
Beware loose speech, or jesting rough :
Ye all know John de Brent. Enough.”—

IX.

Their Captain came, a gallant young,—
(Of Tullibardine's house he sprung,)
Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight ;
Gay was his mien, his humour light,
And, though by courtesy controul'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 arrant 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 attendance 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 sooth 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 sooth 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 artists 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 may'st remain
Till the Leach 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 lee !—
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 of minstrel told,

Of combat fought so true and bold.

Thy stately Pine is yet unbent,

Though many a goodly bough is rent.”—

XIV.

The Chieftain 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 Ben-venue,
For, ere he parted, he would say
Farewell to lovely Loch-Achray—
Where shall he find, in foreign land,
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!—

There is no breeze upon the fern,

No ripple on the lake,

Upon her eyrie nods the erne,
The deer has sought the brake ;
The small birds will not sing aloud,
The springing trout lies still,
So darkly glooms yon thunder-cloud,
That swathes, as with a purple shroud,
Benledi's distant hill.

Is it the thunder's solemn sound
That mutters deep and dread,
Or echoes from the groaning ground
The warrior's measured tread ?
Is it the lightning's quivering glance
That on the thicket streams,
Or do they flash on spear and lance
The sun's retiring beams ?

—I see the dagger-crest of Mar,
I see the Moray's silver star,
Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
That up the lake comes winding far !

To hero bounè for battle-strife,
Or bard of martial lay,
'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array !

XVI.

“ Their light-arm'd archers far and near
Survey'd the tangled ground,
Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,
A twilight forest frown'd,
Their barded horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crown'd.
No cymbal 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,
Where 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 spear-men pause,
While to explore the dangerous glen,
Dive through the pass the archer-men.

XVII.

“ At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell,
As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,
Had 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 flight they ply—

And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,

And plaids and bonnets waving high,

And broad-swords 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 to side,

The bristling ranks the onset bide.—

—‘ We’ll quell the savage mountaineer,
As their Tinchel * cows the game !
They come as fleet as forest 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 broad-sword bright
Was brandishing like beam of light,
Each targe was dark below ;
And with the ocean’s mighty swing,
When heaving to the tempest’s wing,
They hurl’d them on the foe.

* A circle of sportsmen, who, by surrounding a great space, and gradually narrowing, brought immense quantities of deer together, which usually made desperate efforts to break through the *Tinchel*.

I heard the lance's shivering crash,
As when the whirlwind rends the ash ;
I heard the broad-sword's deadly clang,
As if an hundred anvils rang !

But Moray wheel'd his rear-ward rank
Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,—

—‘ My banner-man advance !

I see,’ he cried, ‘ their column shake.—

Now, gallants ! for your ladies' sake,

Upon them with the lance !’—

The horsemen dash'd among the route,

As deer break through the broom ;

Their steeds are stout, their swords are out,

They soon make lightsome room.

Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne—

Where, where, was Roderick then !

One blast upon his bugle-horn

Were worth a thousand men.

And reflux through the pass of fear

The battle's tide was 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 hue of livid blue
To the deep lake has given ;
Strange gusts of wind from mountain glen
Swept o'er the lake, then sunk agen.
I heeded not the eddying surge,
Mine eye but saw the Trosach's gorge,
Mine ear but heard 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 clouds 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 havock of the day.

XX.

“ Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
The Saxons stood in sullen trance,
Till Moray pointed with his lance,
And cried—‘ Behold yon isle !—
See ! none are left to guard its strand,
But women weak, that wring the hand :
'Tis there of yore the robber band
Their booty wont to pile ;—
My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
And loose a shallop from the shore.

Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,

Lords of his mate, and brood, and den.'—

Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,

On earth his casque and 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 Loch-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 fixed 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 vallies fill!
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill!

What tears of burning rage shall thrill,
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,
Thy fall before the race was won,
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!
There breathes not clansman of thy line,
But would have given his life for thine.—
O woe for Alpine's 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 tired of perch and hood,
My idle grey-hound 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 blood-hound 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 sun-beams 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 light a 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 lead his better mood aside.
Come, Ellen, come!—'tis more than time,
He holds his court at morning prime."——
With beating heart, and bosom wrung,
As to a brother's arm she clung.
Gently he dried the falling tear,
And gently 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
Aerial 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 bewilder'd 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 choaking voice commands,—
She shew'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 judged 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 Snowdon 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 trait'ress ! 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 lightning of her fears for Græme,
And more she deem'd the Monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who, for her sire,
Rebellious broad-sword boldly drew ;
And, to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.—
“ Forbear thy suit :—the King of Kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings.
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand :—
My fairest earldom would I give
To bid Clan-Alpine's Chieftain live !—
Hast thou no other boon to crave ?
No other captive friend to save ?”
Blushing, she 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.

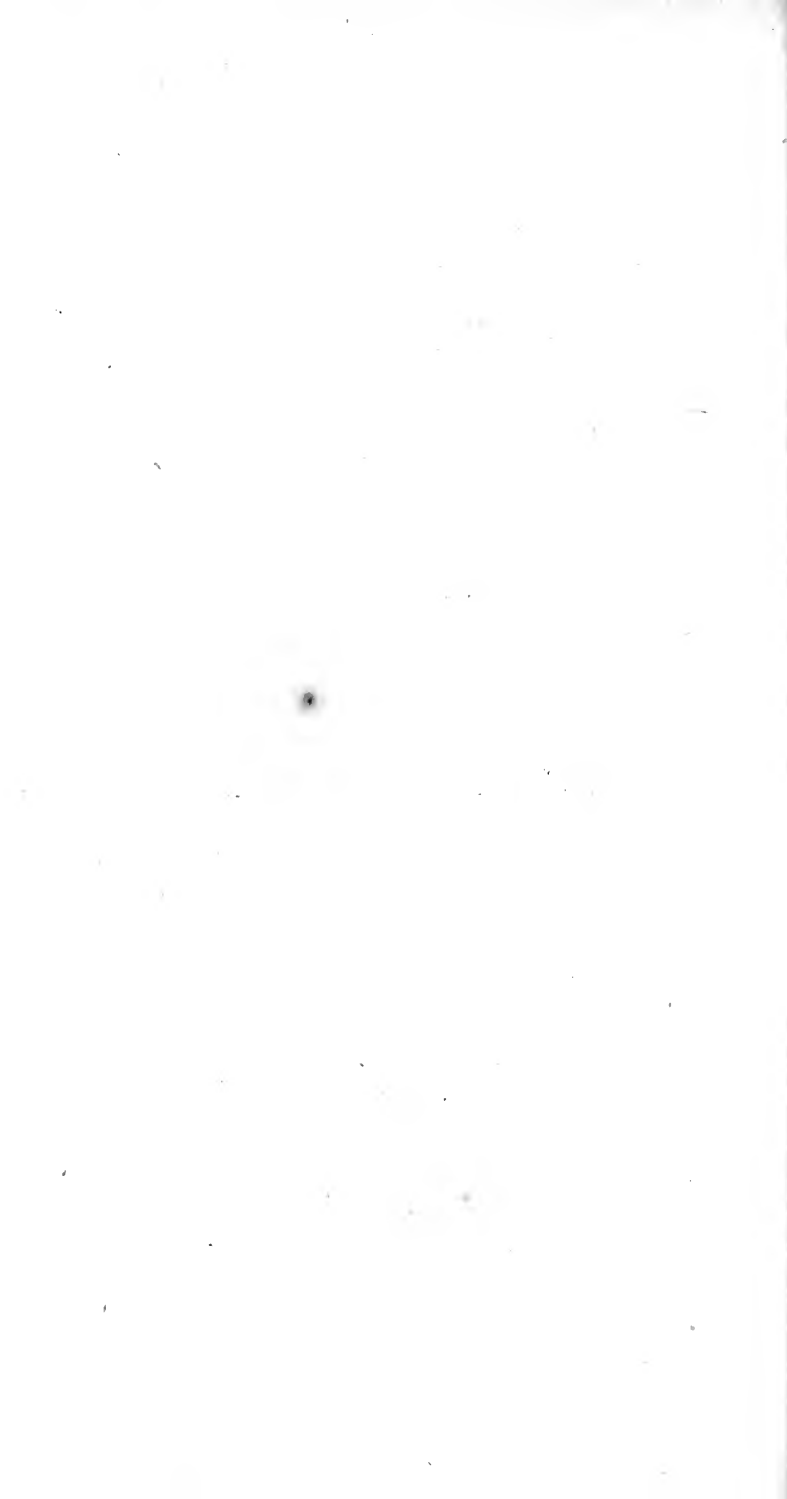
Hark ! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,
Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string !
'Tis now a seraph bold, with touch of fire,
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing.
Receding now, the dying numbers ring
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring
A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—
And now, tis silent all !—Enchantress, fare thee well !

END OF CANTO SIXTH.

NOTES

TO

The Lady of the Lake.



NOTES TO CANTO VI.

Note I.

*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——P. 6.*

The Scottish armies consisted chiefly of the nobility and barons, with their vassals, who held lands under them, for military service by themselves and their tenants. The patriarchal influence exercised by the heads of clans in the Highlands and Borders was of a different nature, and sometimes at variance with feudal principles. It flowed from the *Patria Potestas*, exercised by the chieftain as representing the original father of the whole name, and was often obeyed in contradiction to the feudal superior. James V. seems first to have introduced, ⁱⁿ

addition to the militia furnished from these sources, the service of a small number of mercenaries, who formed a body-guard, called the Foot-Band. The satirical poet, Sir David Lindsay, (or the person who wrote the prologue to his play of the "Three Estaites,") has introduced Finlay of the Foot-Band, who, after much swaggering upon the stage, is at length put to flight by the fool, who terrifies him by means of a sheep's skull upon a pole. I have rather chosen to give them the harsh features of the mercenary soldiers of the period, than of this Scottish Thraso. These partook of the character of the Adventurous Companions of Froissart, or the Condottieri of Italy.

One of the best and liveliest traits of such manners is the last will of a leader, called Geffroy Tete Noir, who having been slightly wounded in a skirmish, his intemperance brought on a mortal disease. When he found himself dying, he summoned to his bed-side the adventurers whom he commanded, and thus addressed them :—

"Fayre sirs, quod Geffray, I knowe well ye have alwayes served and honoured me as men ought to serve their soverayne and capitayne, and I shal be the gladder if ye will agree to have to your capitayne one that is descended of my blode. Behold here Aleyne Roux, my cosyn, and Peter his brother, who are men of armes and of my blode. I require you to make Aleyne your capitayne, and to swere to him faythe, obey-saunce, love, and loyalte, here in my presence, and also to his brother : howe be it, I wyll that Aleyne have the soverayne charge. Sir, quod they, we are well content, for ye haue ryght well chosen. There all the companyons made theym

servyant to Aleyne Roux and to Peter his brother. Whan all that was done, then Geffraye spake agayne, and sayd : Nowe, sirs, ye haue obeyed to my pleasure, I canne you great thanke ; wherefore, sirs, I wyll ye have parte of that ye have holpen to conquere. I say unto you, that in yonder chest that ye se stande yonder, therein is to the some of xxx thousande frankes,—I wyll give them accordyng to my consyence. Wyll ye all be content to fulfyl my testament ; howe saye ye ? Sir, quod they, we be ryght well contente to fulfyl your commaundement. Thane firste, quod he, I wyll and give to the chapell of Saynt George, here in this castell, for the reparacions thereof, a thousande and five hundrede frankes : and I give to my lover, who hath truly served me, two thousand and five hundrede frankes : and also I give to Aleyne Roux, your new capitayne, foure thousande frankes : also to the varlettes of my chamber I gyve fyve hundrede frankes. To mine offycers I gyve a thousand and five hundrede frankes. The rest I gyve and bequeth as I sha shew you. Ye be upon a thyrtye companyons all of one sorte : ye ought to be bretherne, and all of one aly-aunce, without debate, ryotte, or strife among you. All this that I have shewed you ye shall fynde in yonder cheste : I wyll that ye departe all the residue equally and truely bitwene you thyrtye. And if ye be nat thus contente, but that the devylle wyll set debate bytwene you, than beholde yonder is a strong axe, breke up the coffer, and gette it who can. To these words every man ansuered and said, Sir, and dere maiester, we are and shall be all of one accorde. Sir, we have so moch loved and doated you, that we will breke no coffer, nor

breke no poynt of that ye have ordayned and commanded.”—
Lord BERNERS’ *Froissart*.

Note II.

*Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp ;
Get thee an ape and trudge the land,
The leader of a juggler band.*—P. 10.

The jongleurs, or jugglers, as we learn from the elaborate work of the late Mr Strutt, on the sports and pastimes of the people of England, used to call in the aid of various assistants, to render these performances as captivating as possible. The glee-maiden was a necessary attendant. Her duty was tumbling and dancing ; and therefore the Anglo-Saxon version of Saint Mark’s Gospel states Herodias to have vaulted or tumbled before King Herod. In Scotland, these poor creatures seem, even at a late period, to have been bonds-women to their masters, as appears from a case reported by Fountainhall.

“ Reid the mountebank pursues Scot of Harden and his lady, for stealing away from him a little girl, called the tumbling-lassie, that danced upon his stage : and he claimed damages, and produced a contract, whereby he bought her from her mother for 30*l.* Scots. But we have no slaves in Scotland, and mothers cannot sell their bairnes ; and physicians attested, the employment of tumbling would kill her ; and her joints were now grown stiff, and she declined to return ; though she was at least a ’prentice, and so could not run away from her master : yet some cited Moses’s law, that if a servant shelter himself with thee, against his master’s cruelty, thou shalt surely not

deliver him up. The lords, *renitente cancellario*, assoilzied Harden, on the 27th of January, (1687.)"—FOUNTAINHALL'S *Decisions*, vol. I. p. 439.*

The facetious qualities of the ape soon rendered him an acceptable addition to the strolling band of the jongleur. Ben Jonson, in his splenetic introduction to the comedy of "Bartholomew Fair," is at pains to inform the audience "that he has ne'er a sword and buckler man in his Fair, nor a juggler, with a well-educated ape, to come over the chaine for the King of England, and back again for the prince, and sit still on his haunches for the Pope and the King of Spaine."

Note III.

That stirring air which peals on high,

O'er Dermid's race our victory,

Strike it ! ————— P. 22.

There are several instances, at least in tradition, of persons so much attached to particular tunes, as to require to hear them on their death-bed. Such an anecdote is mentioned by

* Though less to my purpose, I cannot help noticing a circumstance respecting another of this Mr Reid's attendants, which occurred during James II.'s zeal for catholic proselytism, and is told by Fountainhall, with dry Scottish irony. "January 17th, 1687.—Reid the mountebank is received into the popish church, and one of his blackamores was persuaded to accept of baptism from the popish priests, and to turn Christian papist : which was a great trophy : he was called James, after the king and chancellor, and the Apostle James."—*Ibid*, p. 440.

the late Mr Riddel of Glenriddel, in his collection of Border tunes, respecting an air called the “ Dandling of the Bairns,” for which a certain Gallovidian laird is said to have evinced this strong mark of partiality. It is popularly told of a famous freebooter, that he composed the tune known by the name of Macpherson’s Rant while under sentence of death, and played it at the gallows-tree. Some spirited words have been adapted to it by Burns. A similar story is recounted of a Welch bard, who composed and played on his death-bed the air called *Dafydddy Garregg Wen*.

But the most curious example is given by Brantome, of a maid of honour at the court of France, entitled, Mademoiselle de Limeuil. “ Durant sa maladie, dont e le trespasa, jamais elle ne cessa, ains causa tousjours ; car elle estoit fort grande parleuse, brocardeuse, et très-bien et fort à propos, et très-belle avec cela. Quand l’heure de sa fin fut venue, elle fit venir a soy son valet, (ainsi que le filles de la cour en ont chacune un) qui s’appeloit Julien, et scavoit très-bien jôier du violon. ‘ Julien, luy dit elle, prenez vostre violon et sonnez moy tousjours jusques a ce que me voyez morte (car je m’y en vais,) la défaite des Suisses, et le mieux que vous pourrez, et quand vous serez sur le mot, ‘ Tout est perdu,’ sonnez le par quatre ou cinq fois, le plus piteusement que vous pourrez,’ ce qui fit l’autre, et elle-mesme luy aidoit de la voix, et quand ce vint ‘ tout est perdu,’ alle le rëitera par deux fois ; et se tournant de l’autre costé du chevet, elle dit à ses compagnes : ‘ Tout est perdu à ce coup, et à bon escient ;’ et ainsi décéda. Voila une morte joyeuse et plaisante. Je tiens ce conte de deux de

ses compagnes, dignes de foi, qui virent jouïr ce mystere.”—*Oeuvres de Brantome*, III. 507.

The tune to which this fair lady chose to make her final exit was composed on the defeat of the Swiss at Marignano. The burden is quoted by Panurge, in Rabelais, and consists of these words, imitating the jargon of the Swiss, which is a mixture of French and German :

“ Tout est velore
La Tintelore,
Tout est verlore bi Got !”

Note IV.

Battle of Beal an Duine.—P. 23.

A skirmish actually took place at a pass thus called in the Trosachs, and closed with the remarkable incident mentioned in the text. It was greatly posterior in date to the reign of James V.

“ In this roughly-wooded island,* the country people secreted their wives and children, and their most valuable effects, from the rapacity of Cromwell’s soldiers, during their inroad into this country, in the time of the republic. These invaders, not venturing to ascend by the ladders, along the side of the lake,

* That at the eastern extremity of Loch Katrine, so often mentioned in the text.

took a more circuitous road, through the heart of the Trosachs, the most frequented path at that time, which penetrates the wilderness about half way between Binean and the lake, by a tract called Yea-chilleach, or the Old Wife's Bog.

“ In one of the defiles of this by-road, the men of the country at that time hung upon the rear of the invading enemy, and shot one of Cromwell's men, whose grave marks the scene of action, and gives name to that pass.* In revenge of this insult the soldiers resolved to plunder the island, to violate the women, and put the children to death. With this brutal intention, one of the party, more expert than the rest, swam towards the island, to fetch the boat to his comrades, which had carried the women to their asylum, and lay moored in one of the creeks. His companions stood on the shore of the main land, in full view of all that was to pass, waiting anxiously for his return with the boat. But just as the swimmer had got to the nearest point of the island, and was laying hold of a black rock, to get on shore, a heroine, who stood on the very point where he meant to land, hastily snatching a dagger from below her apron, with one stroke severed his head from the body. His party seeing this disaster, and relinquishing all future hope of revenge or conquest, made the best of their way out of their perilous situation. This amazon's great-grandson lives at Bridge of Turk, who, besides others, attests the anecdote.”—*Sketch*

* Beallach an duine.

of the Scenery near Callander. Stirling, 1806, p. 20. I have only to add to this account, that the heroine's name was Helen Stuart.

NOTE V.

And Snowdown's knight is Scotland's king.—P. 33.

This discovery will probably remind the reader of the beautiful Arabian tale of *Il Bondocani*. Yet the incident is not borrowed from that elegant story, but from Scottish tradition. James V., of whom we are treating, was a monarch whose good and benevolent intentions often rendered his romantic freaks venial, if not respectable, since, from his anxious attention to the interests of the lower and most oppressed class of his subjects, he was, as we have seen, popularly termed the *King of the Commons*. For the purpose of seeing that justice was regularly administered, and frequently from the less justifiable motive of gallantry, he used to traverse the vicinage of his several palaces in various disguises. The two excellent comic songs, entitled “The Gaberlunzie Man,” and “We’ll gae nae mair a roving,” are said to have been founded upon the success of his amorous adventures when travelling in the disguise of a beggar. The latter is perhaps the best comic ballad in any language.

Another adventure, which had nearly cost James his life, is said to have taken place at the village of Cramond, near Edinburgh, where he had rendered his addresses acceptable to a pretty girl of the lower rank. Four or five persons, whether relations or lovers of his mistress is uncertain, beset the dis-

guised monarch, as he returned from his rendezvous. Naturally gallant, and an admirable master of his weapon, the king took post on the high and narrow bridge over the Almond river, and defended himself bravely with his sword. A peasant, who was threshing in a neighbouring barn, came out upon the noise, and, whether moved by compassion or by natural gallantry, took the weaker side, and laid about with his flail so effectually, as to disperse the assailants, well threshed, even according to the letter. He then conducted the king into his barn, where his guest requested a basin and a towel, to remove the stains of the broil. This being procured with difficulty, James employed himself in learning what was the summit of his deliverer's earthly wishes, and found that they were bounded by the desire of possessing, in property, the farm of Braehead, upon which he laboured as a bondsman. The lands chanced to belong to the crown ; and James directed him to come to the palace of Holy-Rood, and inquire for the Guidman (*i. e.* farmer) of Ballengiech, a name by which he was known in his excursions, and which answered to the *Il Bondocani* of Haroun Alraschid. He presented himself accordingly, and found, with due astonishment, that he had saved his monarch's life, and that he was to be gratified with a crown-charter of the lands of Braehead, under the service of presenting an ewer, basin, and towel, for the king to wash his hands, when he shall happen to pass the Bridge of Cramond. This person was ancestor of the Howisons of Braehead, in Mid Lothian, a respectable family, who continue to hold the lands (now passed into the female line) under the same tenure.

Another of James's frolics is thus narrated by Mr Campbell, from the Statistical Account. " Being once benighted when out a-hunting, and separated from his attendants, he happened to enter a cottage in the midst of a moor, at the foot of the Ochil hills, near Alloa, where, unknown, he was kindly received. In order to regale their unexpected guest, the *gudeman*, (*i. e.* landlord, farmer,) desired the *gudewife* to fetch the hen that roosted nearest the cock, which is always the plump-est, for the stranger's supper. The king, highly pleased with his night's lodging and hospitable entertainment, told mine host, at parting, that he should be glad to return his civility, and requested that the first time he came to Stirling he would call at the castle, and inquire for the *Gudeman of Ballenguich*. Donaldson, the landlord, did not fail to call on the *Gudeman of Ballenguich*, when his astonishment at finding that the king had been his guest afforded no small amusement to the merry monarch and his courtiers ; and, to carry on the pleasantry, he was thenceforth designated by James with the title of King of the Moors, which name and designation have descended from father to son ever since, and they have continued in possession of the identical spot, the property of Mr Erskine of Mar, till very lately, when this gentleman, with reluctance, turned out the descendant and representative of the King of the Moors, on account of his majesty's invincible indolence, and great dislike to reform or innovation of any kind, although, from the spirited example of his neighbour tenants on the same estate, he is convinced similar exertion would promote his advantage."

The author requests permission yet farther to verify the subject of his poem, by an abstract from the genealogical work of Buchanan of Auchmar, upon Scottish surnames.

“ This John Buchanan of Auchmar and Arnpryor was afterwards termed King of Kippen,* upon the following account : King James V., a very sociable, debonair prince, residing at Stirling, in Buchanan of Arnpryor’s time, carriers were very frequently passing along the common road, being near Arnpryor’s house, with necessaries for the use of the king’s family ; and he, having some extraordinary occasion, ordered one of these carriers to leave his load at his house, and he would pay him for it ; which the carrier refused to do, telling him he was the king’s carrier, and his load for his majesty’s use ; to which Arnpryor seemed to have small regard, compelling the carrier, in the end, to leave his load ; telling him, if King James was King of Scotland, he was King of Kippen, so that it was reasonable he should share with his neighbour king in some of these loads, so frequently carried that road. The carrier representing this usage, and telling the story, as Arnpryor spoke it, to some of the king’s servants, it came at length to his majesty’s ears, who, shortly thereafter, with a few attendants, came to visit his neighbour king, who was in the mean time at dinner. King James having sent a servant to demand access, was denied the same by a tall fellow with a battle-axe, who

* A small district of Perthshire.

stood porter at the gate, telling, there could be no access till dinner was over. This answer not satisfying the king, he sent to demand access a second time ; upon which he was desired by the porter to desist, otherwise he would find cause to repent his rudeness. His majesty finding this method would not do, desired the porter to tell his master that the Goodman of Ballageigh desired to speak with the King of Kippen. The porter telling Arnpryor so much, he, in all humble manner, came and received the king, and having entertained him with much sumptuousness and jollity, became so agreeable to King James, that he allowed him to take so much of any provision he found carrying that road as he had occasion for ; and seeing he made the first visit, desired Arnpryor in a few days to return him a second to Stirling, which he performed, and continued in very much favour with the king, always thereafter being termed King of Kippen while he lived.”—BUCHANAN’S *Essay upon the Family of Buchanan*. Edin. 1775, 8vo. p. 74.

The readers of Ariosto must give credit for the amiable features with which he is represented, since he is generally considered as the prototype of Zerbino, the most interesting hero of the Orlando Furioso.

Note VI.

—————*Stirling’s Tower*

Of yore the name of Snowdown claims.—P. 36.

William of Worcester, who wrote about the middle of the

fifteenth century, calls Stirling Castle Snowdoun. Sir David Lindsay bestows the same epithet upon it in his Complaint of the Papingo :

Adieu, fair Snawdoun, with thy towers high,
Thy chaple-royal, park, and table round ;
May, June, and July, would I dwell in thee,
Were I a man, to hear the birdis sound,
Whilk doth againe thy royal rock rebound.

Mr Chalmers, in his late excellent edition of Sir David Lindsay's works, has refuted the chimerical derivation of Snawdoun from *snedding*, or cutting. It was probably derived from the romantic legend which connected Stirling with King Arthur, to which the mention of the Round Table gives countenance. The ring within which justs were formerly practised, in the castle park, is still called the Round Table. Snawdoun is the official title of one of the Scottish heralds, whose epithets seem in all countries to have been fantastically adopted from ancient history or romance.

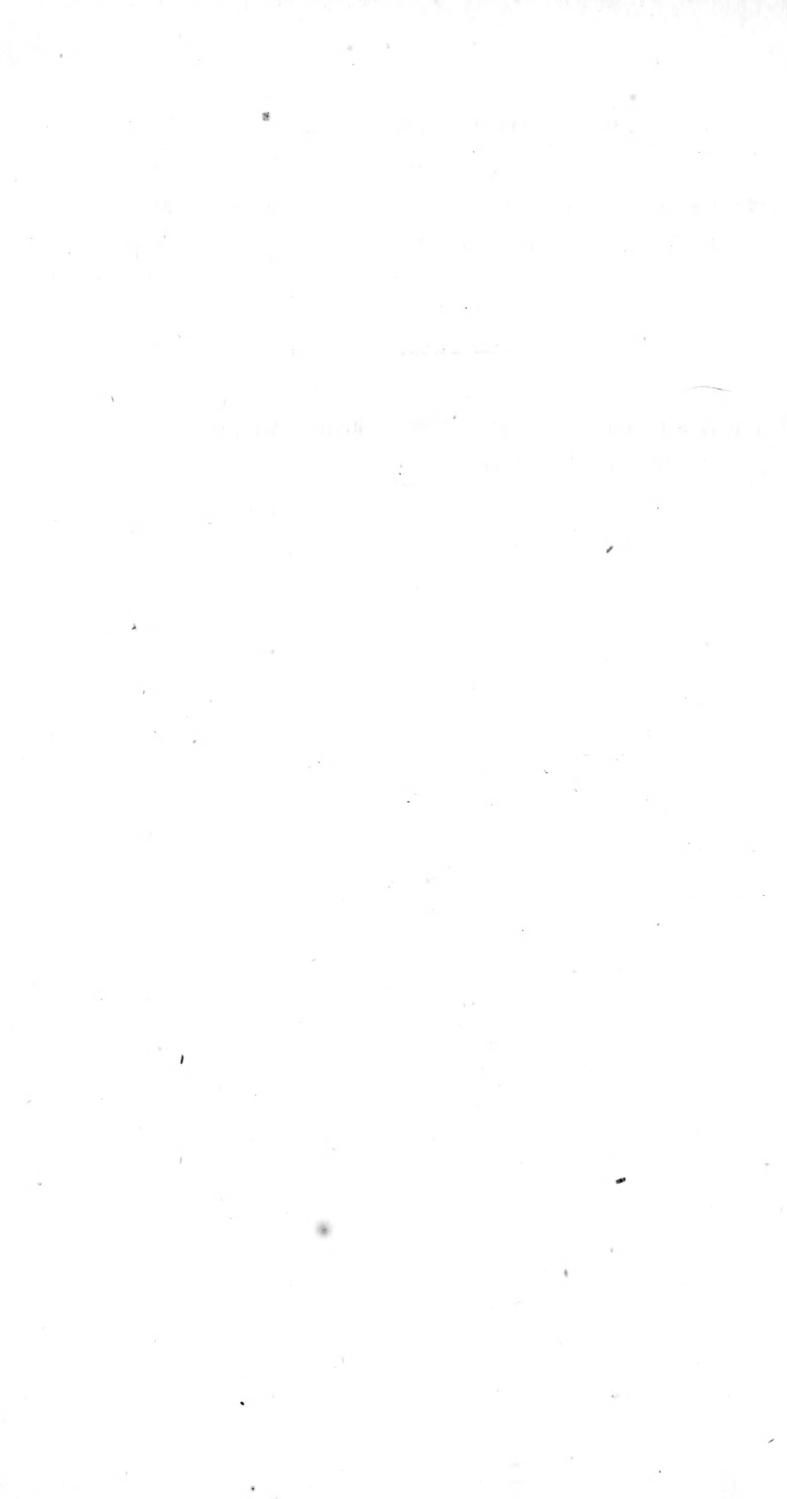
It appears from the preceding note, that the real name by which James was actually distinguished in his private excursions, was the Goodman of Ballenguich ; derived from a steep pass leading up to the Castle of Stirling, so called. But the epithet would not have suited poetry, and would besides at

once, and prematurely, have announced the plot to many of my countrymen, among whom the traditional stories above mentioned are still current.



The Author has to apologize for the inadvertent appropriation of a whole line from the tragedy of Douglas,

“ I hold the first who strikes, my foe.”



THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMALN;
OR,
THE VALE OF ST JOHN.

A LOVER'S TALE.

An elf-quene wol I love ywis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make in toun :
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

RIME OF SIR THOPAS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PREFACE

TO THE EARLY EDITIONS.

IN the EDINBURGH ANNUAL REGISTER for the year 1809, three Fragments were inserted, written in imitation of Living Poets. It must have been apparent, that by these prolusions, nothing burlesque, or disrespectful to the authors, was intended, but that they were offered to the public as serious, though certainly very imperfect, imitations of that style of composition, by which each of the writers is supposed to be distinguished. As these exercises attracted a greater degree of attention than the author anticipated, he has been induced to complete one of them, and present it as a separate publication.

It is not in this place that an examination of the works of the master whom he has here adopted as his model, can, with propriety, be introduced ; since his general acquiescence in the favourable suffrage of the public must necessarily be inferred from the attempt he has now made. He is induced by the nature of his subject, to offer a few remarks on what has been called ROMANTIC POETRY ;—the popularity of which has been revived in the present day, under the auspices, and by the unparalleled success, of one individual.

The original purpose of poetry is either religious or historical, or, as must frequently happen, a mixture of both. To modern readers, the poems of Homer have many of the features of pure romance ; but in the estimation of his contemporaries, they probably derived their chief value from their supposed historical authenticity. The same may be generally said of the poetry of all early ages. The marvels and miracles which the poet blends with his song, do not exceed in number

or extravagance the figments of the historians of the same period of society ; and, indeed, the difference betwixt poetry and prose, as the vehicles of historical truth, is always of late introduction. Poets, under various denominations of Bards, Scalds, Chroniclers, and so forth, are the first historians of all nations. Their intention is to relate the events they have witnessed, or the traditions that have reached them ; and they clothe the relation in rhyme, merely as the means of rendering it more solemn in the narrative, or more easily committed to memory. But as the poetical historian improves in the art of conveying information, the authenticity of his narrative unavoidably declines. He is tempted to dilate and dwell upon the events that are interesting to his imagination, and, conscious how indifferent his audience is to the naked truth of his poem, his history gradually becomes a romance.

It is in this situation that those epics are found which have been generally regarded the

standards of poetry ; and it has happened somewhat strangely, that the moderns have pointed out as the characteristics and peculiar excellencies of narrative poetry, the very circumstances which the authors themselves adopted, only because their art involved the duties of the historian as well as the poet. It cannot be believed, for example, that Homer selected the siege of Troy as the most appropriate subject for poetry ; his purpose was to write the early history of his country : the event he has chosen, though not very fruitful in varied incident, nor perfectly well adapted for poetry, was nevertheless combined with traditionary and genealogical anecdotes extremely interesting to those who were to listen to him ; and this he has adorned by the exertions of a genius, which, if it has been equalled, has certainly never been surpassed. It was not till comparatively a late period that the general accuracy of his narrative, or his purpose in composing it, was brought into question. Δοκεῖ πρῶτος ὁ Ἀναξαγόρας (καθὰ φησι Φαῖδρος)

εν παντοδαπῇ Ἱστορίᾳ) τὴν Ὅμηρον ποιῆσιν ἀποφῆνασθαι εἶναι ἀρίστης καὶ δικαιοσύνης.* But whatever theories might be framed by speculative men, his work was of an historical, not of an allegorical nature. Ἐναυλιλλέιο μέλα τέ Μενέως, καὶ ὅπως ἑκάσθ' ὅτε ἀφικοῖτο, πάντα τὰ ἐπιχωρία διερωτάτο, καὶ ἱστορεῦναι ἐπυνθάνετο. εἰκος δὲ μὴν ἦν καὶ μνημόσυνα πάντων γρῶφεσθαι.† Instead of recommending the choice of a subject similar to that of Homer, it was to be expected that critics should have exhorted the poets of these later days to adopt or invent a narrative in itself more susceptible of poetical ornament, and to avail themselves of that advantage in order to compensate, in some degree, the inferiority of genius. The contrary course has been inculcated by almost all the writers upon the *Ἐποποιία*; with what success, the fate of Homer's numerous imitators may best shew. The *ultimum supplicium* of criticism was inflicted on the author if he did not

* Diogenes Laertius, l. 11, p. 8.

† Homeri Vita.

chuse a subject which at once deprived him of all claim to originality, and placed him, if not in actual contest, at least in fatal comparison, with those giants in the land, whom it was most his interest to avoid. The celebrated recipe for writing an epic poem, which appeared in the *Guardian*, was the first instance in which common sense was applied to this department of poetry ; and indeed, if the question be considered on its own merits, we must be satisfied that narrative poetry, if strictly confined to the great occurrences of history, would be deprived of the individual interest which it is so well calculated to excite.

Modern poets may therefore be pardoned in seeking simpler subjects of verse, more interesting in proportion to their simplicity. Two or three figures, well grouped, suited the artist better than a crowd, for whatever purpose assembled. For the same reason, a scene immediately presented to the imagination, and directly brought home to the feelings, though involving the fate but of one or two persons,

is more favourable for poetry than the political struggles and convulsions which influence the fate of kingdoms. The former are within the reach and comprehension of all, and, if depicted with vigour, seldom fail to fix attention: The other, if more sublime, are more vague and distant, less capable of being distinctly understood, and infinitely less capable of exciting those sentiments which it is the very purpose of poetry to inspire. To generalize is always to destroy effect. We would, for example, be more interested in the fate of an individual soldier in combat, than in the grand event of a general action; with the happiness of two lovers raised from misery and anxiety to peace and union, than with the successful exertions of a whole nation. From what causes this may originate, is a separate, and obviously an immaterial consideration. Before ascribing this peculiarity to causes decidedly and odiously selfish, it is proper to recollect, that while men see only a limited space, and while their affections and conduct are regulated, not by aspi-

ring at an universal good, but by exerting their power of making themselves and others happy within the limited scale allotted to each individual, so long will individual history and individual virtue be the readier and more accessible road to general interest and attention ; and perhaps we may add, that it is the more useful, as well as the more accessible, inasmuch as it affords an example capable of being easily imitated.

According to the author's idea of Romantic Poetry, as distinguished from Epic, the former comprehends a fictitious narrative, framed and combined at the pleasure of the writer ; beginning and ending as he may judge best ; which neither exacts nor refuses the use of supernatural machinery ; which is free from the technical rules of the *Epée* ; and is subject only to those which good sense, good taste, and good morals, apply to every species of poetry without exception. The date may be in a remote age, or in the present ; the story may detail the adventures of a prince or of a peasant. In a

word, the author is absolute master of his country and its inhabitants, and every thing is permitted to him, excepting to be heavy or prosaic, for which, free and unembarrassed as he is, he has no manner of apology. Those, it is probable, will be found the peculiarities of this species of composition ; and, before joining the outcry against the vitiated taste that fosters and encourages it, the justice and grounds of it ought to be made perfectly apparent. If the want of sieges and battles and great military evolutions in our poetry is complained of, let us reflect, that the campaigns and heroes of our day are perpetuated in a record, that neither requires nor admits of the aid of fiction ; and if the complaint refers to the inferiority of our bards, let us pay a just tribute to their modesty, limiting them, as it does, to subjects, which, however indifferently treated, have still the interest and charm of novelty, and which thus prevents them from adding insipidity to their other more insuperable defects.

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THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

COME, Lucy ! while 'tis morning hour,
The woodland brook we needs must pass ;
So, ere the sun assume his power,
We shelter in our poplar bower,
Where dew lies long upon the flower,
Though vanish'd from the velvet grass.
Curbing the stream, this stony ridge
May serve us for a sylvan bridge ;
For here, compell'd to disunite,
Round petty isles the runnels glide,

And chafing off their puny spite,
The shallow murmurers waste their might,
Yielding to footstep free and light
A dry-shod pass from side to side.

II.

Nay, why this hesitating pause?
And, Lucy, as thy step withdraws,
Why sidelong eye the streamlet's brim?
Titania's foot without a slip,
Like thine, though timid, light, and slim,
From stone to stone might safely trip,
Nor risk the glow-worm clasp to dip
That binds her slipper's silken rim.
Or trust thy lover's strength : nor fear
That this same stalwart arm of mine,
Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear,
Shall shrink beneath the burthen dear
Of form so slender, light, and fine.—
So,—now, the danger dared at last,
Look back and smile at perils past !

III.

And now we reach the favourite glade,
Paled in by copse-wood, cliff, and stone,
Where never harsher sounds invade,
To break affection's whispering tone,
Than the deep breeze that waves the shade,
Than the small brooklet's feeble moan.
Come ! rest thee on thy wonted seat ;
Moss'd is the stone, the turf is green,
A place where lovers best may meet,
Who would not that their love be seen.
The boughs, that dim the summer sky,
Shall hide us from each lurking spy,
That fain would spread the invidious tale,
How Lucy of the lofty eye,
Noble in birth, in fortunes high,
She for whom lords and barons sigh,
Meets her poor Arthur in the dale.

IV.

How deep that blush ! how deep that sigh !

And why does Lucy shun mine eye ?—

Is it because that crimson draws

Its colour from some secret cause,

Some hidden movement of the breast,

She would not that her Arthur guess'd ?

O ! quicker far is lovers' ken

Than the dull glance of common men,

And, by strange sympathy, can spell

The thoughts the loved one will not tell !

And mine, in Lucy's blush, saw met

The hue of pleasure and regret ;

Pride mingled in the sigh her voice,

And shared with Love the crimson glow,

Well pleased that thou art Arthur's choice,

Yet shamed thine own is placed so low.

Thou turn'st thy self-confessing cheek,

As if to meet the breeze's cooling ;

Then, Lucy, hear thy tutor speak,
For Love, too, has his hours of schooling.

V.

Too oft my anxious eye has spied
That secret grief thou fain would'st hide,
The passing pang of humbled pride ;
Too oft, when through the splendid hall,
The load-star of each heart and eye,
My fair one leads the glittering ball,
Will her stolen glance on Arthur fall,
With such a blush and such a sigh !
Thou would'st not yield, for wealth or rank,
The heart thy worth and beauty won,
Nor leave me on this mossy bank,
To meet a rival on a throne :
Why, then, should vain repinings rise,
That to thy lover fate denies
A nobler name, a wide domain,
A Baron's birth, a menial train,

Since heaven assign'd him, for his part,
A lyre, a faulchion, and a heart ?

VI.

My sword——its master must be dumb ;
But, when a soldier names my name,
Approach, my Lucy ! fearless come,
Nor dread to hear of Arthur's shame.
My heart——'mid all yon courtly crew,
Of lordly rank and lofty line,
Is there to love and honour true,
That boasts a pulse so warm as mine ?
They praised thy diamonds' lustre rare—
Match'd with thine eyes, I thought it faded ;
They praised the pearls that bound thy hair—
I only saw the locks they braided ;
They talk'd of wealthy dower and land,
And titles of high birth the token—
I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,
Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.

And yet, if rank'd in Fortune's roll,
I might have learn'd their choice unwise,
Who rate the dower above the soul,
And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

VII.

My lyre—it is an idle toy,
That borrows accents not its own,
Like warbler of Columbian sky,
That sings but in a mimic tone.*
Ne'er did it sound o'er sainted well,
Nor boasts it aught of Border spell;
Its strings no feudal slogan pour,
Its heroes draw no broad claymore;
No shouting clans applauses raise,
Because it sung their fathers' praise;
On Scottish moor, or English down,
It ne'er was graced with fair renown;
Nor won,—best meed to minstrel true,—
One favouring smile from fair BUCCLEUCH!

* The Mocking Bird.

By one poor streamlet sounds its tone,
And heard by one dear Maid alone.

VIII.

But, if thou bid'st, these tones shall tell,
Of errant knight and damozelle ;
Of the dread knot a Wizard tied,
In punishment of maiden's pride,
In notes of marvel and of fear,
That best may charm romantic ear.
For Lucy loves,—like COLLINS, ill-starr'd name !
Whose lay's requital was, that tardy Fame,
Who bound no laurel round his living head,
Should hang it o'er his monument when dead,—
For Lucy loves to tread enchanted strand,
And thread, like him, the maze of Fairy-land ;
Of golden battlements to view the gleam,
And slumber soft by some Elysian stream :
Such lays she loves,—and, such my Lucy's choice,
What other song can claim her Poet's voice ?

THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO FIRST.



THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO FIRST.

WHERE is the maiden of mortal strain,
That may match with the Baron of Triermain ?
She must be lovely and constant and kind,
Holy and pure and humble of mind,
Blithe of cheer and gentle of mood,
Courteous and generous and noble of blood—
Lovely as the sun's first ray,
When it breaks the clouds of an April day ;
Constant and true as the widow'd dove,
Kind as a minstrel that sings of love ;
Pure as the fountain in rocky cave,
Where never sun-beam kiss'd the wave ;

Humble as maiden that loves in vain,
Holy as hermit's vesper strain ;
Gentle as breeze that but whispers and dies,
Yet blithe as the light leaves that dance in its sighs ;
Courteous as monarch the morn he is crown'd,
Generous as spring-dews that bless the glad ground ;
Noble her blood as the currents that met
In the veins of the noblest Plantagenet—
Such must her form be, her mood and her strain,
That shall match with Sir Roland of Triermain.

Sir Roland de Vaux he hath laid him to sleep,
His blood it was fever'd, his breathing was deep.
He had been pricking against the Scot,
The foray was long and the skirmish hot ;
His dinted helm and his buckler's plight
Bore token of a stubborn fight.

All in the castle must hold them still,
Harpers must lull him to his rest,
With the slow soft tunes he loves the best,

Till sleep sink down upon his breast,
Like the dew on a summer-hill.

III.

It was the dawn of an autumn day ;
The sun was struggling with frost-fog grey,
That like a silvery crape was spread
Round Skiddaw's dim and distant head,
And faintly gleam'd each painted pane
Of the lordly halls of Triermain,
When that Baron bold awoke.
Starting he woke, and loudly did call,
Rousing his menials in bower and hall,
While hastily he spoke.

IV.

" Harken, my minstrels ! Which of ye all
Touch'd his harp with that dying fall,
So sweet, so soft, so faint,
It seem'd an angel's whisper'd call
To an expiring saint ?

And harken, my merry-men ! What time or where
Did she pass, that maid with her heavenly brow,
With her look so sweet and her eyes so fair,
And her graceful step and her angel air,
And the eagle-plume in her dark-brown hair,
That pass'd from my bower e'en now ?"—

V.

Answer'd him Richard de Brettville ; he
Was chief of the Baron's minstrelsy,—
“ Silent, noble Chieftain, we
Have sate since midnight close,
When such lulling sounds as the brooklet sings,
Murmur'd from our melting strings,
And hush'd you to repose.
Had a harp-note sounded here,
It had caught my watchful ear,
Although it fell as faint and shy
As bashful maiden's half-form'd sigh,
When she thinks her lover near.”—
Answer'd Philip of Fasthwaite tall,
He kept guard in the outer hall,—

“ Since at eve our watch took post,
Not a foot has thy portal cross’d ;
Else had I heard the steps, though low
And light they fell as when earth receives,
In morn of frost, the wither’d leaves,
That drop when no winds blow.”—

VI.

“ Then come thou hither, Henry, my page,
Whom I saved from the sack of Hermitage,
When that dark castle, tower, and spire,
Rose to the skies a pile of fire,
And redden’d all the Nine-stane Hill,
And the shrieks of death, that wildly broke
Through devouring flame and smothering smoke,
Made the warrior’s heart-blood chill !
The trustiest thou of all my train,
My fleetest courser thou must rein,
And ride to Lyulph’s tower,
And from the Baron of Triermain
Greet well that Sage of power.

He is sprung from Druid sires,
And British bards that tuned their lyres,
To Arthur's and Pendragon's praise,
And his who sleeps at Dunmailraise.
Gifted like his gifted race,
He the characters can trace,
Graven deep in elder time
Upon Helvellyn's cliffs sublime ;
Sign and sigil well doth he know,
And can bode of weal and woe,
Of kingdoms' fall, and fate of wars,
From mystic dreams and course of stars.
He shall tell if middle earth
To that enchanting shape gave birth,
Or if 'twas but an airy thing,
Such as fantastic slumbers bring,
Framed from the rainbow's varying dyes,
Or fading tints of western skies.
For, by the blessed rood I swear,
If that fair form breathe vital air,

No other maiden by my side
Shall ever rest De Vaux's bride !"—

VII.

The faithful Page he mounts his steed,
And soon he cross'd green Irthing's mead,
Dash'd o'er Kirkoswald's verdant plain,
And Eden barr'd his course in vain.
He pass'd red Penrith's Table Round,
For feats of chivalry renown'd,
Left Mayburgh's mound and stones of power,
By druids raised in magic hour,
And traced the Eamont's winding way,
Till Ulfo's lake beneath him lay.

VIII.

Onward he rode, the path-way still
Winding betwixt the lake and hill ;
Till on the fragment of a rock,
Struck from its base by lightning shock,

He saw the hoary Sage :
The silver moss and lichen twined,
With fern and deer-hair check'd and lined,
A cushion fit for age ;
And o'er him shook the aspin tree,
A restless rustling canopy.
Then sprung young Henry from his selle,
And greeted Lyulph grave,
And then his master's tale did tell,
And then for counsel crave.
The Man of Years mused long and deep,
Of time's lost treasures taking keep,
And then, as rousing from a sleep,
His solemn answer gave.

IX.

“ That Maid is born of middle earth,
And may of man be won,
Though there have glided since her birth,
Five hundred years and one.

But where's the Knight in all the north,
That dare the adventure follow forth,
So perilous to knightly worth,
In the Valley of St John ?

Listen, Youth, to what I tell,
And bind it on thy memory well ;
Nor muse that I commence the rhyme
Far distant mid the wrecks of time.
The mystic tale, by bard and sage,
Is handed down from Merlin's age.

X.

Lyulph's Tale.

KING ARTHUR has ridden from merry Carlisle,
When Pentecost was o'er ;
He journey'd like errant knight the while,
And sweetly the summer sun did smile
On mountain, moss, and moor.
Above his solitary track
Rose Glaramara's ridgy back,

Amid whose yawning gulphs the sun
Cast umber'd radiance red and dun,
Though never sun-beam could discern
The surface of that sable tarn,
In whose black mirror you may spy
The stars, while noon-tide lights the sky.
The gallant King he skirted still
The margin of that mighty hill.
Rocks upon rocks incumbent hung,
And torrents, down the gullies flung,
Join'd the rude river that brawl'd on,
Recoiling now from crag and stone,
Now diving deep from human ken,
And raving down its darksome glen.
The Monarch judged this desert wild,
With such romantic ruin piled,
Was theatre by Nature's hand
For feat of high achievement plann'd.

XI.

O rather he chose, that Monarch bold,
On vent'rous quest to ride,
In plate and mail, by wood and wold,
Than, with ermine trapp'd and cloth of gold,
In princely bower to bide ;
The bursting crash of a foeman's spear,
As it shiver'd against his mail,
Was merrier music to his ear
Than courtier s whisper'd tale ;
And the clash of Caliburn more dear,
When on the hostile casque it rung,
Than all the lays
To their Monarch's praise
That the harpers of Reged sung.
He loved better to rest by wood or river,
Than in bower of his bride, Dame Guenever ;
For he left that lady so lovely of cheer,
To follow adventures of danger and fear ;

And the frank-hearted Monarch full little did wot,
That she smiled, in his absence, on brave Lancelot.

XII.

He rode, till over down and dell
The shade more broad and deeper fell ;
And though around the mountain's head
Flow'd streams of purple, and gold, and red,
Dark at the base, unblest by beam,
Frown'd the black rocks, and roar'd the stream.
With toil the King his way pursued
By lonely Threlkeld's waste and wood,
Till on his course obliquely shone
The narrow valley of SAINT JOHN,
Down sloping to the western sky,
Where lingering sun-beams love to lie.
Right glad to feel those beams again,
The King drew up his charger's rein ;
With gauntlet raised he screen'd his sight,
As dazzled with the level light,

And, from beneath his glove of mail,
Scann'd at his ease the lovely vale,
While 'gainst the sun his armour bright
Gleam'd ruddy like the beacon's light.

XIII.

Paled in by many a lofty hill,
The narrow dale lay smooth and still,
And, down its verdant bosom led,
A winding brooklet found its bed.
But, midmost of the vale, a mound
Arose, with airy turrets crown'd,
Buttress and rampire's circling bound,

And mighty keep and tower ;
Seem'd some primeval giant's hand
The castle's massive walls had plann'd,
A pondrous bulwark to withstand

Ambitious Nimrod's power.

Above the moated entrance slung,
The balanced draw-bridge trembling hung,

As jealous of a foe ;
Wicket of oak, as iron hard,
With iron studded, clench'd, and barr'd,
And prong'd portcullis, join'd to guard
The gloomy pass below.
But the grey walls no banners crown'd,
Upon the watch-tower's airy round
No warder stood his horn to sound,
No guard beside the bridge was found,
And, where the gothic gateway frown'd,
Glanced neither bill nor bow.

XIV.

Beneath the castle's gloomy pride,
In ample round did Arthur ride
Three times ; nor living thing he spied,
Nor heard a living sound,
Save that, awakening from her dream,
The owlet now began to scream,
In concert with the rushing stream,

That wash'd the battled mound.

He lighted from his goodly steed,

And he left him to graze on bank and mead ;

And slowly he climb'd the narrow way,

That reach'd the entrance grim and grey,

And he stood the outward arch below,

And his bugle horn prepared to blow,

In summons blithe and bold,

Deeming to rouse from iron sleep

The guardian of this dismal Keep ;

Which well he guess'd the hold

Of wizard stern, or goblin grim,

Or pagan of gigantic limb,

The tyrant of the wold.

XV.

The ivory bugle's golden tip

Twice touch'd the Monarch's manly lip,

And twice his hand withdrew.

—Think not but Arthur's heart was good !

His shield was cross'd by the blessed rood,
Had a pagan host before him stood,
 He had charged them through and through ;
Yet the silence of that ancient place
Sunk on his heart, and he paused a space
 Ere yet his horn he blew.

But, instant as its larum rung,
The castle-gate was open flung,
Portcullis rose with crashing groan
Full harshly up its groove of stone,
The balance-beams obey'd the blast,
And down the trembling draw-bridge cast.
The vaulted arch before him lay,
With nought to bar the gloomy way ;
And onward Arthur paced, with hand
On Caliburn's resistless brand.

XVI.

A hundred torches, flashing bright,
Dispell'd at once the gloomy night

That lour'd along the walls,
And shew'd the King's astonish'd sight
The inmates of the halls.
Nor wizard stern, nor goblin grim,
Nor giant huge of form and limb,
Nor heathen knight was there ;
But the cressets, which odours flung aloft,
Shew'd, by their yellow light and soft,
A band of damsels fair.
Onward they came, like summer wave
That dances to the shore ;
An hundred voices welcome gave,
And welcome o'er and o'er !
An hundred lovely hands assail
The bucklers of the Monarch's mail,
And busy labour'd to unhasp
Rivet of steel and iron clasp.
One wrapp'd him in a mantle fair,
And one flung odours on his hair ;
His short curl'd ringlets one smooth'd down,
One wreath'd them with a myrtle crown.

A bride, upon her wedding day,
Was tended ne'er by troop so gay.

XVII.

Loud laugh'd they all,—the King, in vain,
With questions task'd the giddy train ;
Let him entreat, or crave, or call,
'Twas one reply,—loud laugh'd they all.
Then o'er him mimic chains they fling,
Framed of the fairest flowers of spring.
While some their gentle force unite,
Onward to drag the wondering knight,
Some, bolder, urge his pace with blows,
Dealt with the lily or the rose.
Behind him were in triumph borne
The warlike arms he late had worn.
Four of the train combined to rear
The terrors of Tintadgel's spear ;
Two, laughing at their lack of strength,
Dragg'd Caliburn in cumbrous length ;

One, while she aped a martial stride,
Placed on her brows the helmet's pride,
Then scream'd, 'twixt laughter and surprise,
To feel its depth o'erwhelm her eyes.
With revel-shout, and triumph-song,
Thus gaily march'd the giddy throng.

XVIII.

Through many a gallery and hall
They led, I ween, their royal thrall ;
At length, beneath a fair arcade,
Their march and song at once they staid.
The eldest maiden of the band,
 (The lovely maid was scarce eighteen,)
Raised, with imposing air, her hand,
And reverent silence did command,
 On entrance of their Queen ;
And they were mute.—But as a glance
They steal on Arthur's countenance
 Bewilder'd with surprise,

Their smother'd mirth again 'gan speak,
In archly dimpled chin and cheek,
And laughter-lighted eyes.

XIX.

The attributes of those high days
Now only live in minstrel lays ;
For Nature, now exhausted, still
Was then profuse of good and ill.
Strength was gigantic, valour high,
And wisdom soar'd beyond the sky ;
And beauty had such matchless beam,
As lights not now a lover's dream.
Yet e'en in that romantic age,
Ne'er were such charms by mortal seen
As Arthur's dazzled eyes engage,
When forth on that enchanted stage,
With glittering train of maid and page,
Advanced the castle's Queen !

While up the hall she slowly pass'd,
Her dark eye on the King she cast,
That flash'd expression strong ;
The longer dwelt that lingering look,
Her cheek the livelier colour took,
And scarce the shame-faced King could brook
The gaze that lasted long.
A sage, who had that look espied,
Where kindling passion strove with pride,
Had whisper'd, " Prince, beware !
From the chafed tyger rend the prey,
Rush on the lion when at bay,
Bar the fell dragon's blighted way,
But shun that lovely snare !" —

XX.

At once, that inward strife suppress'd,
The dame approach'd her warlike guest,
With greeting in that fair degree,
Where female pride and courtesy

Are blended with such passing art
As awes at once and charms the heart.
A courtly welcome first she gave,
Then of his goodness 'gan to crave
Construction fair and true
Of her light maidens' idle mirth,
Who drew from lonely glens their birth,
Nor knew to pay to stranger worth
And dignity their due ;
And then she pray'd that he would rest
That night her castle's honour'd guest.
The Monarch meetly thanks express'd ;
The banquet rose at her behest,
With lay and tale, and laugh and jest,
Apace the evening flew.

XXI.

The lady sate the Monarch by,
Now in her turn abash'd and shy,

And with indifference seem'd to hear
The toys he whisper'd in her ear.

Her bearing modest was and fair,
Yet shadows of constraint were there,
That shew'd an over-cautious care

Some inward thought to hide ;
Oft did she pause in full reply,
And oft cast down her large dark eye,
Oft check the soft voluptuous sigh,

That heaved her bosom's pride.
Slight symptoms these ; but shepherds know
How hot the mid-day sun shall glow,

From the mist of morning sky ;
And so the wily monarch guess'd,
That this assumed restraint express'd
More ardent passions in the breast,

Than ventured to the eye.
Closer he press'd, while beakers rang,
While maidens laugh'd and minstrels sang,
Still closer to her ear—

But why pursue the common tale ?
Or wherefore shew how knights prevail
 When ladies dare to hear ?
Or wherefore trace, from what slight cause
Its source one tyrant passion draws,
 Till, mastering all within,
Where lives the man that has not tried,
How mirth can into folly glide,
 And folly into sin !

END OF CANTO FIRST.

THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO SECOND.

THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO SECOND.

Lyulph's Tale, continued.

ANOTHER day, another day,
And yet another glides away !
The Saxon stern, the pagan Dane,
Maraud on Britain's shores again.
Arthur, of Christendom the flower,
Lies loitering in a lady's bower ;
The horn, that foemen wont to fear,
Sounds but to wake the Cumbrian deer,

And Caliburn, the British pride,
Hangs useless by a lover's side.

II.

Another day, another day,
And yet another, glides away.
Heroic plans in pleasure drown'd,
He thinks not of the Table Round ;
In lawless love dissolved his life,
He thinks not of his beauteous wife ;
Better he loves to snatch a flower
From bosom of his paramour,
Than from a Saxon knight to wrest
The honours of his heathen crest ;
Better to wreathe, 'mid tresses brown,
The heron's plume her hawk struck down,
Than o'er the altar give to flow
The banners of a Paynim foe.
Thus, week by week, and day by day,
His life inglorious glides away ;

But she, that sooths his dream, with fear
Beholds his hour of waking near.

III.

Much force have mortal charms to stay
Our pace in Virtue's toilsome way ;
But Guendolen's might far outshine
Each maid of merely mortal line.
Her mother was of human birth,
Her sire a Genie of the earth,
In days of old deem'd to preside
O'er lovers' wiles and beauty's pride,
By youths and virgins worshipp'd long
With festive dance and choral son,
Till, when the Cross to Britain came,
On heathen altars died the flame.
Now, deep in Wästdale's solitude,
The downfall of his rights he rued,
And, born of his resentment heir,
He train'd to guile that lady fair,

To sink in slothful sin and shame
The champions of the Christian name.
Well-skill'd to keep vain thoughts alive,
And all to promise, nought to give,
The timid youth had hope in store,
The bold and pressing gain'd no more.
As wilder'd children leave their home,
After the rainbow's arch to roam,
Her lovers barter'd fair esteem,
Faith, fame, and honour, for a dream.

IV.

Her sire's soft arts the soul to tame
She practised thus—till Arthur came ;
Then, frail humanity had part,
And all the mother claim'd her heart.
Forgot each rule her father gave,
Sunk from a princess to a slave,
Too late must Guendolen deplore,
He, that has all, can hope no more !

Now, must she see her lover strain,
At every turn, her feeble chain ;
Watch, to new-bind each knot, and shrink
To view each fast-decaying link.
Art she invokes to Nature's aid,
Her vest to zone, her locks to braid ;
Each varied pleasure heard her call,
The feast, the tourney, and the ball :
Her storied lore she next applies,
Taxing her mind to aid her eyes ;
Now more than mortal wise, and then
In female softness sunk again ;
Now, raptured, with each wish complying,
With feign'd reluctance now denying ;
Each charm she varied, to retain
A varying heart—and all in vain !

V.

Thus in the garden's narrow bound,
Flank'd by some castle's Gothic round,

Fain would the artist's skill provide,
The limits of his realm to hide.
The walks in labyrinths he twines,
Shade after shade with skill combines,
With many a varied flowery knot,
And copse and arbour deck the spot,
Tempting the hasty foot to stay,
And linger on the lovely way——
Vain art ! vain hope ! 'tis fruitless all !
At length we reach the bounding wall,
And, sick of flower and trim-dress'd tree,
Long for rough glades and forest free.

VI.

Three summer months had scantily flown,
When Arthur in embarrass'd tone,
Spoke of his liegemen and his throne ;
Said, all too long had been his stay,
And duties, which a monarch sway,

Duties unknown to humbler men,
Must tear her knight from Guendolen.—

She listen'd silently the while,

Her mood express'd in bitter smile ;

Beneath her eye must Arthur quail,

And oft resume the unfinish'd tale,

Confessing, by his downcast eye,

The wrong he sought to justify.

He ceased. A moment mute she gazed,

And then her looks to heaven she raised ;

One palm her temples veil'd, to hide

The tear that sprung in spite of pride ;

The other for an instant press'd

The foldings of her silken vest !

VII.

At her reproachful sign and look,

The hint the Monarch's conscience took.

Eager he spoke—" No, lady, no !

Deem not of British Arthur so,

Nor think he can deserter prove
To the dear pledge of mutual love.
I swear by sceptre and by sword,
As belted knight and Britain's lord,
That if a boy shall claim my care,
That boy is born a kingdom's heir :
But, if a maiden Fate allows,
To chuse that maid a fitting spouse,
A summer day in lists shall strive
My knights,—the bravest knights alive,—
And he, the best and bravest tried,
Shall Arthur's daughter claim for bride."——
He spoke, with voice resolved and high—
The lady deign'd him not reply.

VIII.

At dawn of morn, ere on the brake
His matins did a warbler make,
Or stirr'd his wing to brush away
A single dew-drop from the spray,

Ere yet a sun-beam, through the mist,
The castle battlements had kiss'd,
The gates revolve, the draw-bridge falls,
And Arthur sallies from the walls,
Doff'd his soft garb of Persia's loom,
And steel from spur to helmet-plume.
His Lybian steed full proudly trode,
And joyful neigh'd beneath his load.
The Monarch gave a passing sigh
To penitence and pleasures by,
When, lo ! to his astonish'd ken
Appear'd the form of Guendolen.

IX.

Beyond the outmost wall she stood,
Attired like huntress of the wood :
Sandall'd her feet, her ancles bare,
And eagle plumage deck'd her hair ;
Firm was her look, her bearing bold,
And in her hand a cup of gold.

“Thou goest!” she said, “and ne’er again
Must we two meet, in joy or pain.
Full fain would I this hour delay,
Though weak the wish—yet, wilt thou stay?
No! thou look’st forward. Still attend,—
Part we like lover and like friend.”
She raised the cup—“Not this the juice
The sluggish vines of earth produce;
Pledge we, at parting, in the draught
Which Genii love!”—she said and quaff’d;
And strange unwonted lustres fly
From her flush’d cheek and sparkling eye.

X.

The courteous Monarch bent him low,
And, stooping down from saddle-bow,
Lifted the cup, in act to drink.
A drop escaped the goblet’s brink—
Intense as liquid fire from hell,
Upon the charger’s neck it fell.

Screaming with agony and fright,
He bolted twenty feet upright—
—The peasant still can shew the dint,
Where his hoofs lighted on the flint.
From Arthur's hand the goblet flew,
Scattering a shower of fiery dew,
That burn'd and blighted where it fell !
The frantic steed rush'd up the dell,
As whistles from the bow the reed ;
Nor bit nor rein could check his speed

 Until he gain'd the hill ;
Then breath and sinew fail'd apace,
And, reeling from the desperate race,

 He stood exhausted, still.
The Monarch, breathless and amazed,
Back on the fatal castle gazed——
Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,
Darkening against the morning sky ;
But, on the spot where once they frown'd,
The lonely streamlet brawl'd around

A tufted knöll, where dimly shone
Fragments of rock and rifted stone.
Musing on this strange hap the while,
The King wends back to fair Carlisle ;
And cares, that cumber royal sway,
Wore memory of the past away.

XI.

Full fifteen years, and more, were sped,
Each brought new wreaths to Arthur's head.
Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,
The Saxons to subjection brought ;
Rython, the mighty giant, slain
By his good brand, relieved Bretagne ;
The Pictish Gillamore in fight,
And Roman Lucius, own'd his might ;
And wide were through the world renown'd
The glories of his Table Round.
Each knight, who sought adventurous fame,
To the bold court of Britain came,

And all who suffer'd causeless wrong,
From tyrant proud or faitour strong,
Sought Arthur's presence to complain,
Nor there for aid implored in vain.

XII.

For this the King, with pomp and pride,
Held solemn court at Whitsuntide,

And summon'd Prince and Peer,
All who owed homage for their land,
Or who craved knighthood from his hand,
Or who had succour to demand,

To come from far and near.

At such high tide, were glee and game
Mingled with feats of martial fame,
For many a stranger champion came

In lists to break a spear ;
And not a knight of Arthur's host,
Save that he trod some foreign coast,
But at this feast of Pentecost

Before him must appear.

Ah, Minstrels ! when the Table Round
Arose, with all its warriors crown'd,
There was a theme for bards to sound
 In triumph to their string !
Five hundred years are past and gone,
But Time shall draw his dying groan,
Ere he behold the British throne
 Begirt with such a ring !

XIII.

The heralds named the appointed spot,
As Caerleon or Camelot,
 Or Carlisle fair and free.
At Penrith, now, the feast was set,
And in fair Eamont's vale were met
 The flower of chivalry.
There Galaad sate with manly grace,
Yet maiden meekness in his face ;
There Morolt of the iron mace,
 And love-lorn Tristrem there ;

And Dinadam with lively glance,
And Lanval with the fairy lance,
And Mordred with his look askaunce,
Brunor and Bevidere.

Why should I tell of numbers more ?

Sir Cay, Sir Banier, and Sir Bore,

Sir Carodac the keen,

The gentle Gawain's courteous lore,

Hector de Mares and Pellinore,

And Lancelot, that ever more

Look'd stol'n-wise on the Queen.

XIV.

When wine and mirth did most abound,

And harpers play'd their blithest round,

A shrilly trumpet shook the ground,

And marshals clear'd the ring ;

A Maiden, on a palfrey white,

Heading a band of damsels bright,

Paced through the circle, to alight

And kneel before the King.

Arthur, with strong emotion, saw
Her graceful boldness check'd by awe,
Her dress like huntress of the wold,
Her bow and baldrick trapp'd with gold,
Her sandall'd feet, her ancles bare,
And the eagle plume that deck'd her hair.
Graceful her veil she backwards flung——
The King, as from his seat he sprung,
 Almost cried, “ Guendolen !”
But 'twas a face more frank and wild,
Betwixt the woman and the child,
Where less of magic beauty smiled
 Than of the race of men ;
And in the forehead's haughty grace,
The lines of Britain's royal race,
 Pendragon's, you might ken.

XV.

Faltering, yet gracefully, she said—
“ Great Prince ! behold an orphan maid,

In her departed mother's name,
A father's vow'd protection claim !
The vow was sworn in desert lone,
In the deep valley of St John."—
At once the King the suppliant raised,
And kiss'd her brow, her beauty praised ;
His vow, he said, should well be kept,
Ere in the sea the sun was dipp'd,—
Then, conscious, glanced upon his queen :
But she, unruffled at the scene,
Of human frailty construed mild,
Look'd upon Lancelot, and smiled.

XVI.

“ Up ! up ! each knight of gallant crest !
Take buckler, spear, and brand !
He that to-day shall bear him best,
Shall win my Gyneth's hand.
And Arthur's daughter, when a bride,
Shall bring a noble dower ;

Both fair Strath-Clyde and Reged wide,
And Carlisle town and tower."—
Then might you hear each valiant knight,
To page and squire that cried,
"Bring my armour bright, and my courser wight!
'Tis not each day that a warrior's might
May win a royal bride."—
Then cloaks and caps of maintenance
In haste aside they fling;
The helmets glance, and gleams the lance,
And the steel-weaved hauberks ring.
Small care had they of their peaceful array,
They might gather it that wolde;
For brake and bramble glitter'd gay,
With pearls and cloth of gold.

XVII.

Within trumpet sound of the Table Round
Were fifty champions free,
And they all arise to fight that prize,—
They all arise, but three.

Nor love's fond troth, nor wedlock's oath,

One gallant could withhold,

For priests will allow of a broken vow,

For penance or for gold.

But sigh and glance from ladies bright

Among the troop were thrown,

To plead their right, and true-love plight,

And plain of honour flown.

The knights they busied them so fast,

With buckling spur and belt,

That sigh and look by ladies cast,

Were neither seen nor felt.

From pleading, or upbraiding glance,

Each gallant turns aside,

And only thought, "If speeds my lance,

A queen becomes my bride !

She has fair Strath-Clyde, and Reged wide,

And Carlisle tower and town ;

She is the loveliest maid, beside,

That ever heir'd a crown."—

So in haste their coursers they bestride,
And strike their visors down.

XVIII.

The champions, arm'd in martial sort,
Have throng'd into the list,
And but three knights of Arthur's court
Are from the tourney miss'd.
And still these lovers' fame survives
For faith so constant shown,—
There were two who loved their neighbours' wives,
And one who loved his own.
The first was Lancelot de Lac,
The second Tristrem bold,
The third was valiant Carodac,
Who won the cup of gold,
What time, of all King Arthur's crew,
(Thereof came jeer and laugh,)
He, as the mate of lady true,
Alone the cup could quaff.

Though envy's tongue would fain surmise,
That, but for very shame,
Sir Carodac, to fight that prize,
Had given both cup and dame ;
Yet, since but one of that fair court
Was true to wedlock's shrine,
Brand him who will with base report,—
He shall be free from mine.

XIX.

Now caracol'd the steeds in air,
Now plumes and pennons wanton'd fair,
As all around the lists so wide
In panoply the champions ride.
King Arthur saw, with startled eye,
The flower of chivalry march by,
The bulwark of the Christian creed,
The kingdom's shield in hour of need.
Too late he thought him of the woe
Might from their civil conflict flow :

For well he knew they would not part
Till cold was many a gallant heart.
His hasty vow he 'gan to rue,
And Gyneth then apart he drew ;
To her his leading-staff resign'd,
But added caution grave and kind.

XX.

“ Thou see'st, my child, as promise-bound,
I bid the trump for tourney sound.
Take thou my warder, as the queen
And umpire of the martial scene ;
But mark thou this :—as Beauty bright
Is polar star to valiant knight,
As at her word his sword he draws,
His fairest guerdon her applause,
So gentle maid should never ask
Of knighthood vain and dangerous task ;
And Beauty's eye should ever be
Like the twin stars that sooth the sea,

And Beauty's breath should whisper peace,
And bid the storm of battle cease.
I tell thee this, lest all too far
These knights urge tourney into war.
Blithe at the trumpet let them go,
And fairly counter blow for blow ;—
No striplings these, who succour need
For a razed helm or falling steed.
But, Gyneth, when the strife grows warm,
And threatens death or deadly harm,
Thy sire entreats, thy king commands,
Thou drop the warder from thy hands.
Trust thou thy father with thy fate,
Doubt not he chuse thee fitting mate ;
Nor be it said, through Gyneth's pride
A rose of Arthur's chaplet died."—

XXI.

A proud and discontented glow
O'ershadow'd Gyneth's brow of snow ;
She put the warder by :—

“ Reserve thy boon, my liege,” she said,
“ Thus chaffer’d down and limited,
Debased and narrow’d, for a maid
Of less degree than I.

No petty chief, but holds his heir
At a more honour’d price and rare
Than Britain’s king holds me ;
Although the sun-burn’d maid, for dower,
Has but her father’s rugged tower,
His barren hill and lee.

King Arthur swore, ‘ by crown and sword,
‘ As belted knight, and Britain’s lord,
‘ That a whole summer’s day should strive
‘ His knights, the bravest knights alive !’
Recall thine oath ! and to her glen
Poor Gyneth can return agen ;
Not on thy daughter will the stain,
That soils thy sword and crown, remain.
But think not she will e’er be bride
Save to the bravest, proved and tried ;

Pendragon's daughter will not fear
For clashing sword or splinter'd spear,
Nor shrink though blood should flow ;
And all too well sad Guendolen
Hath taught the faithlessness of men,
That child of hers should pity, when
Their meed they undergo."—

XXII.

He frown'd and sigh'd, the Monarch bold :—
“ I give—what I may not withhold ;
For, not for danger, dread, or death,
Must British Arthur break his faith.
Too late I mark, thy mother's art
Hath taught thee this relentless part.
I blame her not, for she had wrong,
But not to these my faults belong.
Use, then, the warder as thou wilt ;
But trust me, that, if life be spilt,

In Arthur's love, in Arthur's grace,
Gyneth shall lose a daughter's place."—
With that he turn'd his head aside,
Nor brook'd to gaze upon her pride,
As, with the truncheon raised, she sate
The arbitress of mortal fate ;
Nor brook'd to mark, in ranks disposed,
How the bold champions stood opposed ;
For shrill the trumpet-flourish fell
Upon his ear like passing-bell !
Then first from sight of martial fray
Did Britain's hero turn away.

XXIII.

But Gyneth heard the clangour high,
As hears the hawk the partridge-cry.
Oh ! blame her not ! the blood was hers,
That at the trumpet's summons stirs !—
And e'en the gentlest female eye
Might the brave strife of chivalry
Awhile untroubled view ;

So well accomplish'd was each knight,
To strike and to defend in fight,
Their meeting was a goodly sight,

While plate and mail held true.

The lists with painted plumes were strown,
Upon the wind at random thrown,
But helm and breast-plate bloodless shone ;
It seem'd their feather'd crests alone

Should this encounter rue.

And ever, as the combat grows,
The trumpet's cheery voice arose,
Like lark's shrill song the flourish flows,
Heard while the gale of April blows
The merry greenwood through.

XXIV.

But soon to earnest grew their game,
The spears drew blood, the swords struck flame,
And, horse and man, to ground there came
Knights, who shall rise no more !

Gone was the pride the war that graced,
Gay shields were cleft, and crests defaced,
And steel coats riven, and helms unbraced,

And pennons stream'd with gore.

Gone, too, were fence and fair array,
And desperate strength made deadly way
At random through the bloody fray,
And blows were dealt with headlong sway,

Unheeding where they fell ;

And now the trumpet's clamours seem
Like the shrill sea-bird's wailing scream,
Heard o'er the whirlpool's gulphing stream,

The sinking seaman's knell !

XXV.

Seem'd in this dismal hour, that Fate
Would Camlan's ruin antedate,

And spare dark Mordred's crime ;

Already gasping on the ground
Lie twenty of the Table Round,

Of chivalry the prime.

Arthur, in anguish, tore away
From head and beard his tresses grey,
And she, proud Gyneth, felt dismay,
 And quaked with ruth and fear ;
But still she deem'd her mother's shade
Hung o'er the tumult, and forbade
The sign that had the slaughter staid,
 And chid the rising tear.

Then Brunor, Taulas, Mador, fell,
Helias the White, and Lionel,

 And many a champion more ;
Rochemont and Dinadam are down,
And Ferrand of the Forest Brown
 Lies gasping in his gore.

Vanoc, by mighty Morolt press'd
Even to the confines of the list,
Young Vanoc of the beardless face,
(Fame spoke the youth of Merlin's race,)
O'erpower'd at Gyneth's footstool bled,
His heart's blood dyed her sandals red.

But then the sky was overcast,
Then howl'd at once a whirlwind's blast,
And, rent by sudden throes,
Yawn'd in mid lists the quaking earth,
And from the gulph,—tremendous birth !
The form of Merlin rose.

XXVI.

Sternly the wizard prophet eyed
The dreary lists with slaughter dyed,
And sternly raised his hand :—
“ Madmen,” he said, “ your strife forbear !
And thou, fair cause of mischief, hear
The doom thy fates demand !
Long shall close in stony sleep
Eyes for ruth that would not weep ;
Iron lethargy shall seal
Heart that pity scorn'd to feel.
Yet, because thy mother's art
Warp'd thine unsuspecting heart,

And for love of Arthur's race,
Punishment is blent with grace.
Thou shalt bear thy penance lone,
In the Valley of Saint John,
And this weird* shall overtake thee ;
Sleep, until a Knight shall wake thee,
For feats of arms as far renown'd
As warrior of the Table Round.
Long endurance of thy slumber
Well may teach the world to number
All their woes from Gyneth's pride,
When the Red Cross champions died."—

XXVII.

As Merlin speaks, on Gyneth's eye
Slumber's load begins to lie ;
Fear and Anger vainly strive
Still to keep its light alive.
Twice, with effort and with pause,
O'er her brow her hand she draws ;

* Doom.

Twice her strength in vain she tries,
From the fatal chair to rise ;
Merlin's magic doom is spoken,
Vanoc's death must now be wroken.
Slow the dark-fringed eye-lids fall,
Curtaining each azure ball,
Slowly as on summer eves
Violets fold their dusky leaves.
The weighty baton of command
Now bears down her sinking hand,
On her shoulder droops her head ;
Net of pearl and golden thread,
Bursting, gave her locks to flow
O'er her arm and breast of snow.
And so lovely seem'd she there,
Spell-bound in her ivory chair,
That her angry sire, repenting,
Craved stern Merlin for relenting,
And the champions, for her sake,
Would again the contest wake ;

Till, in necromantic night,
Gyneth vanish'd from their sight.

XXVIII.

Still she bears her weird alone,
In the Valley of Saint John ;
And her semblance oft will seem
Mingling in a champion's dream,
Of her weary lot to plain,
And crave his aid to burst her chain.
While her wondrous tale was new,
Warriors to her rescue drew,
East and west, and south and north,
From the Liffey, Thames, and Forth.
Most have sought in vain the glen,
Tower nor castle could they ken ;
Not at every time or tide,
Nor by every eye, descried.
Fast and vigil must be borne,
Many a night in watching worn,

Ere an eye of mortal powers
Can discern those magic towers.
Of the persevering few,
Some from hopeless task withdrew,
When they read the dismal threat
Graved upon the gloomy gate.
Few have braved the yawning door,
And those few return'd no more.
In the lapse of time forgot,
Well nigh lost is Gyneth's lot ;
Sound her sleep as in the tomb,
Till waken'd by the trump of doom.

END OF LYULPH'S TALE.

Here pause, my tale ; for all too soon,
My Lucy, comes the hour of noon.
Already from thy lofty dome
Its courtly inmates 'gin to roam,

And each, to kill the goodly day
That God has granted them, his way
Of lazy sauntering has sought ;
 Lordlings and witlings not a few,
Incapable of doing aught,
Yet ill at ease with nought to do.
Here is no longer place for me ;
For, Lucy, thou would'st blush to see
 Some phantom, fashionably thin,
With limb of lath and kerchief'd chin,
And lounging gape, or sneering grin,
Steal sudden on our privacy.
And how should I, so humbly born,
Endure the graceful spectre's scorn ?
Faith ! ill I fear, while conjuring wand
Of English oak is hard at hand.

II.

Or grant the hour be all too soon
For Hessian boot and pantaloon,

And grant the lounge seldom strays
Beyond the smooth and gravell'd maze,
Laud we the gods, that Fashion's train
Holds hearts of more adventurous strain.
Artists are hers, who scorn to trace
Their rules from Nature's boundless grace,
But their right paramount assert
To limit her by pedant art,
Damning whate'er of vast and fair
Exceeds a canvass three feet square.
This thicket, for their *gumption* fit,
May furnish such a happy *bit*.
Bards, too, are hers, wont to recite
Their own sweet lays by waxen light,
Half in the salver's tinkle drown'd,
While the *chasse-café* glides around ;
And such may hither secret stray,
To labour an extempore :
Or sportsman, with his boisterous hollo,
May here his wiser spaniel follow,

Or stage-struck Juliet may presume
To choose this bower for tiring room ;
And we alike must shun regard,
From painter, player, sportsman, bard.
Insects that skim in Fashion's sky,
Wasp, blue-bottle, or butterfly,
Lucy, have all alarms for us,
For all can hum and all can buz.

III.

But oh, my Lucy, say how long
We still must dread this trifling throng,
And stoop to hide, with coward art,
The genuine feelings of the heart !
No parents thine, whose just command
Should rule their child's obedient hand ;
Thy guardians, with contending voice,
Press each his individual choice.
And which is Lucy's ?—Can it be
That puny fop, trimm'd cap-a-pee,

Who loves in the saloon to show
The arms that never knew a foe ;
Whose sabre trails along the ground,
Whose legs in shapeless boots are drown'd ;
A new Achilles, sure,—the steel
Fled from his breast to fence his heel ;
One, for the simple manly grace
That wont to deck our martial race,
Who comes in foreign trashery
Of tinkling chain and spur,
A walking haberdashery,
Of feathers, lace, and fur :
In Rowley's antiquated phrase,
Horse-milliner* of modern days.

* “ The trammels of the palfraye pleased his sight,
And the horse-millanere his head with roses dight.”

ROWLEY'S *Ballads of Charitie.*

IV.

Or is it he, the wordy youth,
So early train'd for statesman's part,
Who talks of honour, faith, and truth,
As themes that he has got by heart ;
Whose ethics Chesterfield can teach,
Whose logic is from Single-speech ;
Who scorns the meanest thought to vent,
Save in the phrase of Parliament ;
Who, in a tale of cat and mouse,
Calls " order," and " divides the house ;"
Who " craves permission to reply,"
Whose " noble friend is in his eye ;"
Whose loving tender some have reckon'd
A *motion*, you should gladly *second* ?

V.

What, neither ? Can there be a third,
To such resistless swains preferr'd ?—

O why, my Lucy, turn aside,
With that quick glance of injured pride ?
Forgive me, love, I cannot bear
That alter'd and resentful air.
Were all the wealth of Russel mine,
And all the rank of Howard's line,
All would I give for leave to dry
That dew-drop trembling in thine eye.
Think not I fear such fops can wile
From Lucy more than careless smile ;
But yet if wealth and high degree
Give gilded counters currency,
Must I not fear, when rank and birth
Stamp the pure ore of genuine worth ?
Nobles there are, whose martial fires
Rival the fame that raised their sires,
And patriots, skill'd through storms of fate
To guide and guard the reeling state.
Such, such there are—if such should come,
Arthur must tremble and be dumb,

Self-exiled seek some distant shore,
And mourn till life and grief are o'er.

VI.

What sight, what signal of alarm,
That Lucy clings to Arthur's arm?
Or is it that the rugged way
Makes Beauty lean on lover's stay?
Oh, no! for on the vale and brake,
Nor sight nor sounds of danger wake,
And this trim sward of velvet green
Were carpet for the fairy queen.
That pressure slight was but to tell,
That Lucy loves her Arthur well,
And fain would banish from his mind
Suspicious fear and doubt unkind.

VII.

But would'st thou bid the demons fly,
Like mist before the dawning sky,

There is but one resistless spell—
Say, wilt thou guess, or must I tell?
'Twere hard to name in minstrel phrase,
A laundaulet and four blood-bays,
But bards agree this wizard band
Can but be bound in Northern Land.
'Tis there—nay, draw not back thy hand!—
'Tis there this slender finger round
Must golden amulet be bound,
Which, bless'd with many a holy prayer,
Can change to rapture lovers' care,
And doubt and jealousy shall die,
And fears give place to ecstasy.

VIII.

Now, trust me, Lucy, all too long
Has been thy lover's tale and song.

O why so silent, love, I pray?
Have I not spoke the livelong day?
And will not Lucy deign to say

One word her friend to bless ?
I ask but one—a simple sound,
Within three little letters bound,
O let the word be YES !

END OF CANTO SECOND.



THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO THIRD.



THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMALN.

CANTO THIRD.

INTRODUCTION.

LONG loved, long woo'd, and lately won,
My life's best hope, and now mine own !
Doth not this rude and Alpine glen
Recall our favourite haunts agen ?
A wild resemblance we can trace,
Though reft of every softer grace,
As the rough warrior's brow may bear
A likeness to a sister fair.
Full well advised our Highland host,
That this wild pass on foot be cross'd,

While round Ben-Cruach's mighty base
Wheel the slow steeds and lingering chaise.
The keen old carle, with Scottish pride,
He praised his glen and mountains wide ;
An eye he bears for nature's face,
Ay, and for woman's lovely grace.
Even in such mean degree we find
The subtle Scot's observing mind ;
For, nor the chariot, nor the train,
Could gape of vulgar wonder gain,
But when old Allan would expound
Of Beal-na-paish* the Celtic sound,
His bonnet doff'd, and bow, applied
His legend to my bonny bride ;
While Lucy blush'd beneath his eye,
Courteous and cautious, shrewd and sly.

* Beal-na-paish, the Vale of the Bridal.

II.

Enough of him.—Now, ere we lose,
Plunged in the vale, the distant views,
Turn thee, my love ! look back once more
To the blue lake's retiring shore.

On its smooth breast the shadows seem
Like objects in a morning dream,
What time the slumberer is aware
He sleeps, and all the vision's air :

Even so, on yonder liquid lawn,
In hues of bright reflection drawn,
Distinct the shaggy mountains lie,
Distinct the rocks, distinct the sky ;

The summer clouds so plain we note,
That we might count each dappled spot :
We gaze and we admire, yet know
The scene is all delusive show.

Such dreams of bliss would Arthur draw,
When first his Lucy's form he saw ;

Yet sigh'd and sicken'd as he drew,
Despairing they could e'er prove true !

III.

But, Lucy, turn thee now, to view
Up the fair glen our destined way :
The fairy path that we pursue,
Distinguish'd but by greener hue,
Winds round the purple brae,
While Alpine flowers of varied dye
For carpet serve or tapestry.

See how the little runnels leap,
In threads of silver, down the steep,
To swell the brooklet's moan !
Seems that the Highland Naiad grieves,
Fantastic while her crown she weaves,
Of rowan, birch, and alder-leaves,
So lovely, and so lone.

There's no illusion there ; these flowers,
That wailing brook, these lovely bowers,
Are, Lucy, all our own ;

And, since thine Arthur call'd thee wife,
Such seems the prospect of his life,
A lovely path, on-winding still,
By gurgling brook and sloping hill:
'Tis true that mortals cannot tell
What waits them in the distant dell;
But be it hap, or be it harm,
We tread the path-way arm in arm.

IV.

And now, my Lucy, wot'st thou why
I could thy bidding twice deny,
When twice you pray'd I would again
Resume the legendary strain
Of the bold Knight of Triermain?
At length yon peevish vow you swore,
That you would sue to me no more,
Until the minstrel fit drew near,
And made me prize a listening ear.

But, loveliest, when thou first didst pray
Continuance of the knightly lay,
Was it not on the happy day

That made thy hand mine own?

When, dizzied with mine ecstasy,
Nought past, or present, or to be,
Could I or think on, hear, or see,

Save, Lucy, thee alone!

A giddy draught my rapture was,
As ever chemist's magic gas.

V.

Again the summons I denied
In yon fair capital of Clyde:
My Harp—or let me rather chuse
The good old classic form—my Muse,
(For Harp's an over-scutched phrase,
Worn out by bards of modern days,)
My Muse, then—seldom will she wake
Save by dim wood and silent lake.

She is the wild and rustic Maid,
Whose foot unsandall'd loves to tread
Where the soft green-sward is inlaid
 With varied moss and thyme ;
And, lest the simple lily-braid,
That coronets her temples, fade,
She hides her still in greenwood shade,
 To meditate her rhyme.

VI.

And now she comes ! The murmur dear
Of the wild brook hath caught her ear,
 The glade hath won her eye ;
She longs to join with each blithe rill
That dances down the Highland hill,
 Her blither melody.
And now, my Lucy's way to cheer,
She bids Ben-Cruach's echoes hear

How closed the tale, my love whilere
Loved for its chivalry.

List how she tells, in notes of flame,
“ Child Roland to the dark tower came !”

THE
BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

CANTO THIRD.

BEWCASTLE now must keep the Hold,
Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall,
Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold
Must only shoot from battled wall ;
And Liddesdale may buckle spur,
And Teviot now may belt the brand,
Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,
And Esdale forray Cumberland.
Of wasted fields and plunder'd flocks
The Borderers bootless may complain ;
They lack the sword of brave De Vaux,
There comes no aid from Triermain.

That lord, on high adventure bound,
Hath wander'd forth alone,
And day and night keeps watchful round
In the valley of Saint John.

II.

When first began his vigil bold,
The moon twelve summer nights was old,
And shone both fair and full ;
High in the vault of cloudless blue,
O'er streamlet, dale, and rock, she threw
Her light composed and cool.
Stretch'd on the brown hill's heathy breast,
Sir Roland eyed the vale ;
Chief, where, distinguish'd from the rest,
Those clustering rocks uprear'd their crest,
The dwelling of the fair distress'd,
As told grey Lyulph's tale.
Thus as he lay, the lamp of night
Was quivering on his armour bright,

In beams that rose and fell,
And danced upon his buckler's boss,
That lay beside him on the moss,
As on a crystal well.

III.

Ever he watch'd, and oft he deem'd,
While on the mound the moonlight stream'd,
It alter'd to his eyes ;
Fain would he hope the rocks 'gan change
To buttress'd walls their shapeless range,
Fain think, by transmutation strange,
He saw grey turrets rise.
But scarce his heart with hope throb'd high,
Before the wild illusions fly,
Which fancy had conceived,
Abetted by an anxious eye
That long'd to be deceived.
It was a fond deception all,
Such as, in solitary hall,

Beguiles the musing eye,
When, gazing on the sinking fire,
Bulwark and battlement and spire
 In the red gulph we spy.
For, seen by moon of middle night,
Or by the blaze of noontide bright,
Or by the dawn of morning light,
 Or evening's western flame,
In every tide, at every hour,
In mist, in sunshine, and in shower,
 The rocks remain'd the same.

IV.

Oft has he traced the charmed mound,
Oft climb'd its crest, or paced it round,
 Yet nothing might explore,
Save that the crags so rudely piled,
At distance seen, resemblance wild
 To a rough fortress bore.
Yet still his watch the Warrior keeps,
Feeds hard and spare, and seldom sleeps,

And drinks but of the well ;
Ever by day he walks the hill,
And when the evening gale is chill,
He seeks a rocky cell,
Like hermit poor to bid his bead,
And tell his Ave and his Creed,
Invoking every Saint at need,
For aid to burst the spell.

V.

And now the moon her orb has hid,
And dwindled to a silver thread,
Dim seen in middle heaven,
While o'er its curve careering fast,
Before the fury of the blast,
The midnight clouds are driven.
The brooklet raved, for on the hills
The upland showers had swoln the rills,
And down the torrents came ;
Mutter'd the distant thunder dread,

And frequent o'er the vale was spread
 A sheet of lightning flame.
De Vaux, within his mountain cave,
(No human step the storm durst brave,)
To moody meditation gave
 Each faculty of soul,
Till, lull'd by distant torrent-sound,
And the sad wind that whistled round,
Upon his thoughts, in musing drown'd,
 A broken slumber stole.

VI.

Tw'as then was heard a heavy sound :
 (Sound strange and fearful there to hear,
'Mongst desert hills, where, leagues around,
 Dwelt but the gor-cock and the deer :)
As starting from his couch of fern,
Again he heard, in clangor stern,
 That deep and solemn swell ;
Twelve times, in measured tone, it spoke,

Like some proud minster's pealing clock,

Or city's larum-bell.

What thought was Roland's first when fell,

In that deep wilderness, the knell

Upon his startled ear?

To slander warrior were I loth,

Yet must I hold my minstrel troth,—

It was a thought of fear.

VII.

But lively was the mingled thrill

That chased that momentary chill;

For love's keen wish was there,

And eager hope, and valour high,

And the proud glow of chivalry,

That burn'd to do and dare.

Forth from the cave the Warrior rush'd,

Long ere the mountain-voice was hush'd,

That answer'd to the knell;

For long and far the unwonted sound,

Eddying in echoes round and round,
Was toss'd from fell to fell ;
And Glaramara answer flung,
And Grisdale-pike responsive rung,
And Legbert heights their echoes swung,
As far as Derwent's dell.

VIII.

Forth upon trackless darkness gazed
The Knight, bedeaſen'd and amazed,
Till all was hush'd and still,
Save the ſwoll'n torrent's ſullen roar,
And the night-blaſt that wildly bore
Its courſe along the hill.
Then on the northern ſky there came
A light, as of reflected flame,
And over Legbert-head,
As if by magic art controll'd,
A mighty meteor ſlowly roll'd
Its orb of fiery red ;

Thou would'st have thought some demon dire
Came mounted on that car of fire,

To do his errand dread.

Far on the sloping valley's course,
On thicket, rock, and torrent hoarse,
Shingle and scrae,* and fell and force,†

A dusky light arose :

Display'd, yet alter'd was the scene ;
Dark rock, and brook of silver sheen,
Even the gay thicket's summer green,
In bloody tincture glows.

IX.

De Vaux had mark'd the sunbeams set,
At eve, upon the coronet

Of that enchanted mound,
And seen but crags at random flung,
That, o'er the brawling torrent hung,
In desolation frown'd.

* Bank of loose stones.

† Water-fall.

What sees he by that meteor's lour?—
A banner'd Castle, Keep, and Tower,
Return the lurid gleam,
With battled walls and buttress fast,
And barbican* and ballium† vast,
And airy flanking towers, that cast
Their shadows on the stream.
'Tis no deceit; distinctly clear
Crenell‡ and parapet appear,
While o'er the pile that meteor drear
Makes momentary pause;
Then forth its solemn path it drew,
And fainter yet and fainter grew
Those gloomy towers upon the view,
As its wild light withdraws.

* The outer defence of the castle-gate.

† Fortified court.

‡ Apertures for shooting arrows.

X.

Forth from the cave did Roland rush,
O'er crag and stream, through brier and bush ;
 Yet far he had not sped,
Ere sunk was that portentous light
Behind the hills, and utter night
 Was on the valley spread.
He paused perforce,—and blew his horn ;
And on the mountain-echoes borne
 Was heard an answering sound,
A wild and lonely trumpet-note,—
In middle air it seem'd to float
 High o'er the battled mound ;
And sounds were heard, as when a guard
Of some proud castle holding ward,
 Pace forth their nightly round.
The valiant Knight of Triermain
Rung forth his challenge-blast again,

But answer came there none ;
And 'mid the mingled wind and rain,
Darkling he sought the vale in vain,
Until the dawning shone ;
And when it dawn'd, that wondrous sight,
Distinctly seen by meteor-light,
It all had pass'd away !
And that enchanted mound once more
A pile of granite fragments bore,
As at the close of day.

XI.

Steel'd for the deed, De Vaux's heart
Scorn'd from his venturous quest to part,
He walks the vale once more ;
But only sees, by night or day,
That shatter'd pile of rocks so grey,
Hears but the torrent's roar.
Till when, through hills of azure borne,
The moon renew'd her silver horn,

Just at the time her waning ray
Had faded in the dawning day,
 A summer mist arose ;
Adown the vale the vapours float,
And cloudy undulations moat
That tufted mound of mystic note,
 As round its base they close.
And higher now the fleecy tide
Ascends its stern and shaggy side,
Until the airy billows hide
 The rocks' majestic isle ;
It seem'd a veil of filmy lawn,
By some fantastic fairy drawn
 Around enchanted pile.

XII.

The breeze came softly down the brook,
 And, sighing as it blew,
The veil of silver mist it shook,
And to De Vaux's eager look

Renew'd that wondrous view.

For, though the loitering vapour braved
The gentle breeze, yet oft it waved

Its mantle's dewy fold ;

And, still, when shook that filmy screen,
Were towers and bastions dimly seen,
And Gothic battlements between

Their gloomy length unroll'd.

Speed, speed, De Vaux, ere on thine eye
Once more the fleeting vision die !

—The gallant Knight can speed
As prompt and light as, when the hound
Is opening, and the horn is wound,

Careers the hunter's steed.

Down the steep dell his course amain

Hath rivall'd archer's shaft ;
But ere the mound he could attain,
The rocks their shapeless form regain,
And mocking loud his labour vain,
The mountain spirits laugh'd.

Far up the echoing dell was borne
Their wild unearthly shout of scorn.

XIII.

Wroth wax'd the Warrior.—“Am I then
Fool'd by the enemies of men,
Like a poor hind, whose homeward way
Is haunted by malicious fay?
Is Triermain become your taunt,
De Vaux your scorn? False fiends, avaunt!”—
A weighty curtail-axe he bare;
The baleful blade so bright and square,
And the tough shaft of heben wood,
Were oft in Scottish gore embrued.
Backward his stately form he drew,
And at the rocks the weapon threw,
Just where one crag's projected crest
Hung proudly balanced o'er the rest.
Hurl'd with main force, the weapon's shock
Rent a huge fragment of the rock:

If by mere strength 'twere hard to tell,
Or if the blow dissolved some spell,
But down the headlong ruin came,
With cloud of dust and flash of flame.
Down bank, o'er bush, its course was borne,
Crush'd lay the copse, the earth was torn,
Till, staid at length, the ruin dread
Cumber'd the torrent's rocky bed,
And bade the waters' high-swoll'n tide
Seek other passage for its pride.

XIV.

When ceased that thunder, Triermain
Survey'd the mound's rude front again ;
And lo ! the ruin had laid bare,
Hewn in the stone, a winding stair,
Whose moss'd and fractured steps might lend
The means the summit to ascend ;
And by whose aid the brave De Vaux
Began to scale those magic rocks,

And soon a platform won,
Where, the wild witchery to close,
Within three lances' length arose

The Castle of Saint John !

No misty phantom of the air,
No meteor-blazon'd show was there ;
In morning splendour, full and fair,
The massive fortress shone.

XV.

Embattled high and proudly tower'd,
Shaded by pond'rous flankers, lower'd

The portal's gloomy way.

Though for six hundred years and more,
Its strength had brook'd the tempest's roar,
The scutcheon'd emblems that it bore

Had suffer'd no decay ;

But from the eastern battlement
A turret had made sheer descent,
And down in recent ruin rent,

In the mid torrent lay.
Else, o'er the Castle's brow sublime,
Insults of violence or of time
Unfelt had pass'd away.
In shapeless characters of yore,
The gate this stern inscription bore.

XVI.

Inscription.

“ Patience waits the destined day,
Strength can clear the cumber'd way.
Warrior, who hast waited long,
Firm of soul, of sinews strong,
It is given to thee to gaze
On the pile of ancient days.
Never mortal builder's hand
This enduring fabric plann'd ;
Sign and sigil, word of power,
From the earth raised keep and tower.

View it o'er, and pace it round,
Rampart, turret, battled mound.
Dare no more !—to cross the gate
Were to tamper with thy fate :
Strength and fortitude were vain !
View it o'er—and turn again.”—

XVII.

“ That would I,” said the Warrior bold,
“ If that my frame were bent and old,
And my thin blood dropp'd slow and cold
 As icicle in thaw ;
But while my heart can feel it dance,
Blithe as the sparkling wine of France,
And this good arm wields sword or lance,
 I mock these words of awe !”—
He said ; the wicket felt the sway
Of his strong hand, and straight gave way,
And with rude crash and jarring bray,
 The rusty bolts withdraw ;

But o'er the threshold as he strode,
And forward took the vaulted road,
An unseen arm with force amain
The ponderous gate flung close again,
 And rusted bolt and bar
Spontaneous took their place once more,
While the deep arch with sullen roar
 Return'd their surly jar.
“ Now closed is the gin and the prey within,
 By the rood of Lanercost !
But he that would win the war-wolf's skin,
 May rue him of his boast.”—
Thus muttering, on the Warrior went,
By dubious light down steep descent.

XVIII.

Unbarr'd, unlock'd, unwatch'd, a port
Led to the Castle's outer court :
There the main fortress, broad and tall,
Spread its long range of bower and hall,

And towers of varied size,
Wrought with each ornament extreme,
That Gothic art, in wildest dream
Of fancy, could devise.
But full between the Warrior's way
And the main portal-arch, there lay
An inner moat ;
Nor bridge nor boat
Affords de Vaux the means to cross
The clear, profound, and silent fosse.
His arms aside in haste he flings,
Cuirass of steel and hauberk rings,
And down falls helm, and down the shield,
Rough with the dints of many a field.
Fair was his manly form, and fair
His keen dark eye, and close-curl'd hair,
When,—all unarm'd, save that the brand
Of well-proved metal graced his hand,
With nought to fence his dauntless breast
But the close gipon's* under-vest,

* A sort of doublet, worn beneath the armour.

Whose sullied buff the sable stains
Of hauberk and of mail retains,—
Roland De Vaux upon the brim
Of the broad moat stood prompt to swim.

XIX.

Accouter'd thus he dared the tide,
And soon he reach'd the farther side,
And enter'd soon the Hold,
And paced a hall, whose walls so wide
Were blazon'd all with feats of pride,
By warriors done of old.
In middle lists they counter'd here,
While trumpets seem'd to blow ;
And there, in den or desert drear,
They quell'd gigantic foe,
Braved the fierce griffon in his ire,
Or faced the dragon's breath of fire.
Strange in their arms, and strange in face,
Heroes they seem'd of ancient race,

Whose deeds of arms, and race, and name,
Forgotten long by latter fame,

Were here depicted to appal
Those of an age degenerate,
Whose bold intrusion braved their fate
In this enchanted hall.

For some short space, the venturous Knight
With these high marvels fed his sight ;
Then sought the chamber's upper end,
Where three broad easy steps ascend
To an arch'd portal door,
In whose broad folding leaves of state
Was framed a wicket window-grate ;
And ere he ventured more,
The gallant Knight took earnest view
The grated wicket-window through.

XX.

Oh for his arms ! Of martial weed
Had never mortal Knight such need !—

He spied a stately gallery ; all
Of snow-white marble was the wall,
The vaulting, and the floor ;
And, contrast strange ! on either hand
There stood array'd in sable band

Four Maids, whom Afric bore ;
And each a Lybian tyger led,
Held by as bright and frail a thread
As Lucy's golden hair ;
For the leash that bound these monsters dread
Was but of gossamer.

Each Maiden's short barbaric vest
Left all unclosed the knee and breast,
And limbs of shapely jet ;
White was their vest and turban's fold,
On arms and ancles rings of gold
In savage pomp were set ;
A quiver on their shoulders lay,
And in their hand an assagay.
Such and so silent stood they there,
That Roland well nigh hoped,

He saw a band of statues rare,
Station'd the gazer's soul to scare ;

But, when the wicket oped,
Each griesly breast 'gan upward draw,
Roll'd his grim eye, and spread his claw,
Scented the air, and lick'd his jaw ;
While these weird Maids, in Moorish tongue,
A wild and dismal warning sung.

XXI.

“ Rash adventurer, bear thee back !

Dread the spell of Dahomay !

Fear the race of Zaharak,

Daughters of the burning day !

“ When the whirlwind's gusts are wheeling,

Our's it is the dance to braid ;

Zarah's sands in pillars reeling,

Join the measure that we tread,

When the Moon hath don'd her cloak,
And the stars are red to see,
Shrill when pipes the sad Siroc,
Music meet for such as we.

“ Where the shatter'd columns lie,
Shewing Carthage once had been,
If the wandering Santon's eye
Our mysterious rites hath seen,—
Oft he cons the prayer of death,
To the nations preaches doom,
' Azrael's brand hath left the sheath !
Moslems, think upon the tomb !’—

“ Our's the scorpion, our's the snake,
Our's the hydra of the fen,
Our's the tyger of the brake,
All that plagues the sons of men.
Our's the tempest's midnight wrack,
Pestilence that wastes by day—

Dread the race of Zaharak !

Fear the spell of Dahomay !"—

XXII.

Uncouth and strange the accents shrill

Rung those vaulted roofs among ;

Long it was ere, faint and still,

Died the far-resounding song.

While yet the distant echoes roll,

The Warrior communed with his soul.

“ When first I took this venturous quest,

I swore upon the rood,

Neither to stop, nor turn, nor rest,

For evil or for good.

My forward path, too well I ween,

Lies yonder fearful ranks between ;

For man unarm'd, 'tis bootless hope

With tygers and with fiends to cope—

Yet, if I turn, what waits me there,

Save famine dire and fell despair ?—

Other conclusion let me try,
Since, chuse howe'er I list, I die.
Forward, lies faith and knightly fame ;
Behind, are perjury and shame.
In life or death I hold my word :"—
With that he drew his trusty sword,
Caught down a banner from the wall,
And enter'd thus the fearful hall.

XXIII.

On high each wayward Maiden threw
Her swarthy arm, with wild halloo !
On either side a tyger sprung—
Against the leftward foe he flung
The ready banner, to engage
With tangling folds the brutal rage ;
The right-hand monster in mid air
He struck so fiercely and so fair,
Through gullet and through spinal bone
The trenchant blade hath sheerly gone.

His griesly brethren ramp'd and yell'd,
But the slight leash their rage withheld,
Whilst, 'twixt their ranks, the dangerous road
Firmly, though swift, the champion strode.
Safe to the gallery's bound he drew,
Safe past an open portal through ;
And when 'gainst followers he flung
The gate, judge if the echoes rung !
Onward his daring course he bore,
While, mix'd with dying growl and roar,
Wild jubilee and loud hurra
Pursued him on his venturous way.

XXIV.

“ Hurra, hurra ! Our watch is done !
We hail once more the tropic sun.
Pallid beams of northern day,
Farewell, farewell ! Hurra, hurra !

“ Five hundred years o'er this cold glen
Hath the pale sun come round agen ;

Foot of man, till now, hath ne'er
Dared to cross the Hall of Fear.

“Warrior! thou, whose dauntless heart
Gives us from our ward to part,
Be as strong in future trial,
Where resistance is denial.

“Now for Afric’s glowing sky,
Zwenga wide and Atlas high,
Zaharak and Dahomay!——
Mount the winds! Hurra, hurra!”—

XXV.

The wizard song at distance died
As if in ether borne astray,
While through waste halls and chambers wide
The Knight pursued his steady way,
Till to a lofty dome he came,
That flash’d with such a brilliant flame,

As if the wealth of all the world
Were there in rich confusion hurl'd.
For here the gold, in sandy heaps,
With duller earth incorporate sleeps ;
Was there in ingots piled, and there
Coin'd badge of empery it bare ;
Yonder, huge bars of silver lay,
Dimm'd by the diamond's neighbouring ray,
Like the pale moon in morning day ;
And in the midst four Maidens stand,
The daughters of some distant land.
Their hue was of the dark-red dye,
That fringes oft a thunder-sky ;
Their hands palmetto baskets bare,
And cotton fillets bound their hair ;
Slim was their form, their mien was shy,
To earth they bent the humbled eye,
Folded their arms, and suppliant kneel'd,
And thus their proffer'd gifts reveal'd.

XXVI.

Chorus.

“ See the treasures Merlin piled,
Portion meet for Arthur’s child.
Bathe in Wealth’s unbounded stream,
Wealth that Avarice ne’er could dream !”—

First Maiden.

“ See these clots of virgin gold !
Sever’d from the sparry mould,
Nature’s mystic alchemy
In the mine thus bade them lie ;
And their orient smile can win
Kings to stoop, and saints to sin.”—

Second Maiden.

“ See these pearls, that long have slept ;
These were tears by Naiads wept

For the loss of Marinel.
Tritons in the silver shell
Treasured them, till hard and white
As the teeth of Amphitrite."—

Third Maiden.

"Does a livelier hue delight?
Here are rubies blazing bright,
Here the emerald's fairy green,
And the topaz glows between;
Here their varied hues unite
In the changeful chrysolite."—

Fourth Maiden.

"Leave these gems of poorer shine,
Leave them all, and look on mine!
While their glories I expand,
Shade thine eye-brows with thy hand.
Mid-day sun and diamond's blaze
Blind the rash beholder's gaze."—

Chorus.

“Warrior, seize the splendid store :
Would ’twere all our mountains bore !
We should ne’er in future story,
Read, Peru, thy perish’d glory !”——

XXVII.

Calmly and unconcern’d, the Knight
Waved aside the treasures bright :
“Gentle Maidens, rise, I pray !
Bar not thus my destined way.
Let these boasted brilliant toys
Braid the hair of girls and boys !
Bid your streams of gold expand
O’er proud London’s thirsty land.
De Vaux of wealth saw never need,
Save to purvey him arms and steed,
And all the ore he deign’d to hoard
Inlays his helm, and hilts his sword.”——

Thus gently parting from their hold,
He left, unmoved, the dome of gold.

XXVIII.

And now the morning sun was high,
De Vaux was weary, faint, and dry :
When lo ! a plashing sound he hears,
A gladsome signal that he nears
Some frolic water-run ;
And soon he reach'd a court-yard square,
Where dancing in the sultry air,
Toss'd high aloft, a fountain fair
Was sparkling in the sun.
On right and left, a fair arcade
In long perspective view display'd
Alleys and bowers, for sun or shade ;
But, full in front, a door,
Low-brow'd and dark, seem'd as it led
To the lone dwelling of the dead,
Whose memory was no more.

Here stopp'd De Vaux an instant's space,
To bathe his parched lips and face,
 And mark'd with well-pleased eye,
Refracted on the fountain stream,
In rainbow hues, the dazzling beam
 Of that gay summer sky.
His senses felt a mild controul,
Like that which lulls the weary soul,
 From contemplation high
Relaxing, when the ear receives
The music that the green-wood leaves
 Make to the breezes' sigh.

XXIX.

And oft in such a dreamy mood,
 The half-shut eye can frame
Fair apparitions in the wood,
As if the nymphs of field and flood
 In gay procession came.

Are these of such fantastic mould,
Seen distant down the fair arcade,
These Maids enlink'd in sister-fold,
Who, late at bashful distance staid,
Now tripping from the greenwood shade,
Nearer the musing champion draw,
And, in a pause of seeming awe,
Again stand doubtful now?—
Ah, that sly pause of witching powers!
That seems to say, "To please be ours,
Be yours to tell us how."
Their hue was of the golden glow
That suns of Candahar bestow,
O'er which in slight suffusion flows
A frequent tinge of paly rose;
Their limbs were fashion'd fair and free,
In nature's justest symmetry,
And wreath'd with flowers, with odours graced,
Their raven ringlets reach'd the waist;
In eastern pomp, its gilding pale
The hennah lent each shapely nail,

And the dark sumah gave the eye
More liquid and more lustrous dye.
The spotless veil of misty lawn,
In studied disarrangement, drawn
 The form and bosom o'er,
To win the eye, or tempt the touch,
For modesty shew'd all too much—
 Too much—yet promised more.

XXX.

“ Gentle Knight, awhile delay,”
Thus they sung, “ thy toilsome way,
While we pay the duty due
To our Master and to you.
Over Avarice, over Fear,
Love triumphant led thee here ;
Warrior, list to us, for we
Are slaves to Love, are friends to thee.

“ Though no treasured gems have we,
To proffer on the bended knee,

Though we boast nor arm nor heart,
For the assagay or dart,
Swains have given each simple girl
Ruby lip and teeth of pearl ;
Or, if dangers more you prize,
Flatterers find them in our eyes.

“ Stay, then, gentle Warrior, stay,
Rest till evening steal on day ;
Stay, O stay !—in yonder bowers
We will braid thy locks with flowers,
Spread the feast and fill the wine,
Charm thy ear with sounds divine,
Weave our dances till delight
Yield to languor, day to night.

“ Then shall she you most approve,
Sing the lays that best you love,
Soft thy mossy couch shall spread,
Watch thy pillow, prop thy head,

Till the weary night be o'er—
Gentle Warrior, would'st thou more ?
Would'st thou more, fair Warrior,—she
Is slave to Love, and slave to thee.”—

XXXI.

O do not hold it for a crime
In the bold hero of my rhyme,
 For stoic look,
 And meet rebuke,
He lack'd the heart or time !
As round the band of syrens trip,
He kiss'd one damsel's laughing lip,
And press'd another's proffer'd hand,
Spoke to them all in accents bland,
But broke their magic circle through ;
“ Kind Maids,” he said, “ adieu, adieu !
My fate, my fortune, forward lies.”—
He said, and vanish'd from their eyes ;
But, as he dared that darksome way,
Still heard behind their lovely lay :

“ Fair Flower of Courtesy, depart !
Go, where the feelings of the heart
With the warm pulse in concord move :
Go, where Virtue sanctions Love !”—

XXXII.

Downward De Vaux through darksome ways
And ruin'd vaults has gone,
Till issue from their wilder'd maze,
Or safe retreat, seem'd none ;
And e'en the dismal path he strays
Grew worse as he went on.
For cheerful sun, for living air,
Foul vapours rise and mine-fires glare,
Whose fearful light the dangers show'd
That dogg'd him on that dreadful road.
Deep pits, and lakes of waters dun,
They shew'd, but shew'd not how to shun.
These scenes of desolate despair,
These smothering clouds of poison'd air,

How gladly had De Vaux exchanged,
Though 'twere to face yon tygers ranged !

Nay, soothful bards have said,
So perilous his state seem'd now,
He wish'd him under arbour bough
With Asia's willing maid.

When, joyful sound ! at distance near
A trumpet flourish'd loud and clear,
And, as it ceased, a lofty lay
Seem'd thus to chide his lagging way.

XXXIII.

“ Son of Honour, theme of story,
Think on the reward before ye !
Danger, darkness, toil despise ;
'Tis Ambition bids thee rise.

“ He that would her heights ascend,
Many a weary step must wend ;
Hand and foot and knee he tries :
Thus Ambition's minions rise.

“Lag not now, though rough the way,
Fortune’s mood brooks no delay ;
Grasp the boon that’s spread before ye,
Monarch’s power, and Conqueror’s glory !”—

It ceased. Advancing on the sound,
A steep ascent the Wanderer found,
And then a turret stair :
Nor climb’d he far its steepy round
Till fresher blew the air,
And next a welcome glimpse was given,
That cheer’d him with the light of heaven.

At length his toil had won
A lofty hall with trophies dress’d,
Where, as to greet imperial guest,
Four Maidens stood, whose crimson vest
Was bound with golden zone.

XXXIV

Of Europe seem’d the damsels all ;
The first a nymph of lively Gaul,

Whose easy step and laughing eye

Her borrow'd air of awe belie ;

 The next a maid of Spain,

Dark-eyed, dark-hair'd, sedate, yet bold ;

White ivory skin and tress of gold,

Her shy and bashful comrade told

 For daughter of Almaine.

These Maidens bore a royal robe,

With crown, with sceptre, and with globe,

 Emblems of empery ;

The fourth a space behind them stood,

And leant upon a harp, in mood

 Of minstrel ecstasy.

Of merry England she, in dress

Like ancient British druidess ;

Her hair an azure fillet bound,

Her graceful vesture swept the ground,

 And, in her hand display'd,

A crown did that fourth Maiden hold,

But unadorn'd with gems and gold,

 Of glossy laurel made.

XXXV.

At once to brave De Vaux knelt down

These foremost Maidens three,

And proffer'd sceptre, robe, and crown,

Liegedom and seignorie.

O'er many a region wide and fair,

Destined, they said, for Arthur's heir ;

But homage would he none :—

“ Rather,” he said, “ De Vaux would ride

A Warden of the Border-side,

In plate and mail, than, robed in pride,

A monarch's empire own ;

Rather, far rather, would he be

A free-born Knight of England free,

Than sit on Despot's throne.”—

So pass'd he on, when that fourth Maid,

As starting from a trance,

Upon the harp her finger laid ;

Her magic touch the chords obey'd,
Their soul awaked at once !

Song of the Fourth Maiden.

“ Quake to your foundations deep,
Stately Towers, and banner'd Keep !
Bid your vaulted echoes moan,
As the dreaded step they own.

“ Fiends, that wait on Merlin's spell,
Hear the foot-fall ! mark it well !
Spread your dusky wings abroad,
Boune ye for your homeward road.

“ It is HIS, the first who e'er
Dared the dismal Hall of Fear ;
HIS, who hath the snares defied
Spread by Pleasure, Wealth, and Pride.

“ Quake to your foundations deep,
Bastion huge, and Turret steep !
Tremble Keep, and totter Tower !
This is Gyneth’s waking hour.”——

XXXVII.

Thus while she sung, the venturous Knight
Has reach’d a bower, where milder light
Through crimson curtains fell ;
Such soften’d shade the hill receives,
Her purple veil when twilight leaves
Upon its western swell.
That bower, the gazer to bewitch,
Had wondrous store of rare and rich
As e’er was seen with eye ;
For there by magic skill, I wis,
Form of each thing that living is
Was limn’d in proper dye.
All seem’d to sleep—the timid hare
On form, the stag upon his lair,

The eagle in her eyrie fair
 Between the earth and sky.
But what of pictured rich and rare
Could win De Vaux's eye-glance, where,
Deep slumbering in the fatal chair,
 He saw King Arthur's child !
Doubt, and anger, and dismay,
From her brow had pass'd away,
Forgot was that fell tourney-day,
 For, as she slept, she smiled.
It seem'd that the repentant Seer
Her sleep of many a hundred year
 With gentle dreams beguiled,

XXXVIII.

That form of maiden loveliness,
 'Twixt childhood and 'twixt youth,
That ivory chair, that sylvan dress,
The arms and ancles bare, express
 Of Lyulph's tale the truth.

Still upon her garment's hem
Vanoc's blood made purple gem,
And the warder of command
Cumber'd still her sleeping hand ;
Still her dark locks dishevell'd flow
From net of pearl o'er breast of snow ;
And so fair the slumberer seems,
That De Vaux impeach'd his dreams,
Vapid all and void of might,
Hiding half her charms from sight.
Motionless a while he stands,
Folds his arms and clasps his hands,
Trembling in his fitful joy,
Doubtful how he shall destroy
 Long-enduring spell ;
Doubtful too, when slowly rise
Dark-fringed lids of Gyneth's eyes,
 What these eyes shall tell.
"St George ! St Mary ! can it be,
That they will kindly look on me !" —

XXXIX.

Gently, lo ! the Warrior kneels,

Soft that lovely hand he steals,

Soft to kiss, and soft to clasp—

But the warder leaves her grasp ;

Lightning flashes, rolls the thunder !

Gyneth startles from her sleep,

Totters tower, and trembles keep,

Burst the Castle walls asunder !

Fierce and frequent were the shocks,

Melt the magic halls away——

——But beneath their mystic rocks,

In the arms of bold De Vaux,

Safe the Princess lay !

Safe and free from magic power,

Blushing like the rose's flower

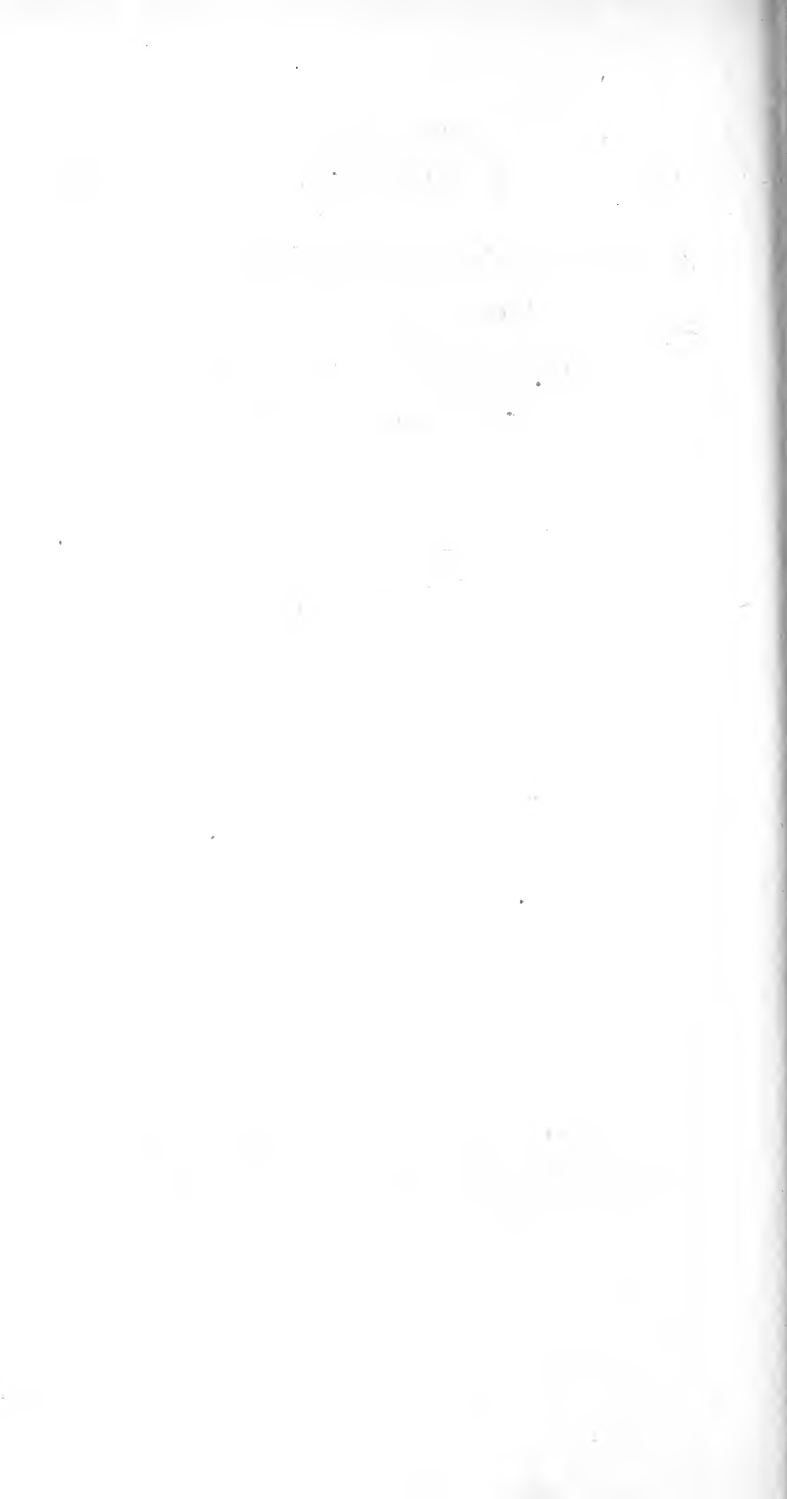
Opening to the day ;

And round the champion's brows were bound

The crown that Druidess had wound,

Of the green laurel-bay.

And this was what remain'd of all
The wealth of each enchanted hall,
 The Garland and the Dame :—
But where should Warrior seek the meed,
Due to high worth for daring deed,
 Except from LOVE and FAME !



CONCLUSION.

I.

MY Lucy, when the maid is won,
The Minstrel's task, thou know'st, is done ;
And to require of bard
That to the dregs his tale should run,
Were ordinance too hard.
Our lovers, briefly be it said,
Wedded as lovers wont to wed,
When tale or play is o'er ;
Lived long and blest, loved fond and true,
And saw a numerous race renew
The honours that they bore.

Know, too, that when a pilgrim strays,
In morning mist, or evening maze,

Along the mountain lone,
That fairy fortress often mocks
His gaze upon the castled rocks

Of the Valley of Saint John ;
But never man since brave De Vaux
The charmed portal won.

'Tis now a vain illusive show,
That melts whene'er the sunbeams glow,
Or the fresh breeze hath blown.

II.

But see, my love, where far below
Our lingering wheels are moving slow,
The whiles up-gazing still,
Our menials eye our steepy way,
Marvelling, perchance, what whim can stay
Our steps when eve is sinking grey
On this gigantic hill.

So think the vulgar—Life and time
Ring all their joys in one dull chime

Of luxury and ease ;

And O ! beside these simple knaves,
How many better born are slaves

To such coarse joys as these,
Dead to the nobler sense that glows
When nature's grander scenes unclose !
But, Lucy, we will love them yet,
The mountain's misty coronet,

The green wood and the wold ;
And love the more, that of their maze
Adventure high of other days

By ancient bards is told,
Bringing, perchance, like my poor tale,
Some moral truth in fiction's veil :
Nor love them less, that o'er the hill
The evening breeze, as now, comes chill ;—

My love shall wrap her warm,

And, fearless of the slippery way,
While safe she trips the heathy brae,
Shall hang on Arthur's arm.

THE END OF TRIERMAIN.

NOTES

TO

The Bridal of Triermain.



NOTES.

Like Collins, ill-starr'd name !—P. 88. l. 9.

COLLINS, according to Johnson, “ by indulging some peculiar habits of thought, was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters ; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the water-falls of Elysian gardens.”

The Baron of Triermain.—P. 91. l. 2.

Triermain was a fief of the Barony of Gilsland, in Cumberland ; it was possessed by a Saxon family at the time of the Conquest, but, “ after the death of Gilmore, Lord of Tryermaine and Torcrossock, Hubert Vaux gave Tryermaine and Torcrossock to his second son, Ranulph Vaux, which Ranulph afterwards became heir to his elder brother Robert, the founder

of Lanercost, who died without issue. Ranulph, being Lord of all Gilsland, gave Gilmore's lands to his own younger son, named Roland, and let the barony descend to his eldest son Robert, son of Ranulph. Roland had issue Alexander, and he Ranulph, after whom succeeded Robert, and they were named Rolands successively, that were lords thereof, until the reign of Edward the Fourth. That house gave for arms, Vert, a bend dexter, chequy, or and gules."—BURN'S *Antiquities of Westmoreland and Cumberland*, vol. II. p. 482.

This branch of Vaux, with its collateral alliances, is now represented by the family of Braddyl of Conishead Priory, in the county palatine of Lancaster; for it appears, that about the time above-mentioned, the house of Triermaine was united to its kindred family Vaux of Caterlen, and, by marriage with the heiress of Delamore and Leybourne, became the representative of those ancient and noble families. The male line failing in John de Vaux, about the year 1665, his daughter and heiress, Mabel, married Christopher Richmond, Esq. of Highhead Castle, in the county of Cumberland, descended from an ancient family of that name, lords of Corby Castle, in the same county, soon after the Conquest, and which they alienated about the 15th of Edward the Second, to Andrea de Harcla, Earl of Carlisle. Of this family was Sir Thomas de Raigemont, (miles auratus) in the reign of King Edward the First, who appears to have greatly distinguished himself at the siege of Kaerlaveroc, with William Baron of Leybourne. In an ancient heraldic poem now extant, and preserved in the British Museum, describing that siege, his arms are stated to be, Or, 2 Bars

Gemelles Gules, and a Chief Or, the same borne by his descendants at the present day. The Richmonds removed to their Castle of Highhead in the reign of Henry the Eighth, when the then representative of the family married Margaret, daughter of Sir Hugh Lowther, by the Lady Dorothy de Clifford, only child by a second marriage of Henry Lord Clifford, great grandson of John Lord Clifford, by Elizabeth Percy, daughter of Henry (surnamed Hotspur) by Elizabeth Mortimer, which said Elizabeth was daughter of Edward Mortimer, third Earl of Marche, by Phillippa, sole daughter and heiress of Lionel, Duke of Clarence.

The third in descent from the above-mentioned John Richmond, became the representative of the families of Vaux, of Triermaine, Caterlen, and Torcrossock, by his marriage with Mabel de Vaux, the heiress of them. His grandson Henry Richmond died without issue, leaving five sisters coheiresses, four of whom married; but Margaret, who married William Gale, Esq. of Whitehaven, was the only one who had male issue surviving. She had a son, and a daughter married to Henry Curwen of Workington, Esq., who represented the county of Cumberland for many years in parliament, and by her had a daughter, married to John Christian, Esq., (now Curwen.) John, son and heir of William Gale, married Sarah, daughter and heiress of Christopher Wilson of Bardsea Hall, in the county of Lancaster, by Margaret, aunt and coheiress of Thomas Braddyl, Esq. of Braddyl, and Conishead Priory, in the same county, and had issue four sons and two daughters. 1st, William Wilson, died an infant; 2d,

Wilson, who, upon the death of his cousin, Thomas Braddyl, without issue, succeeded to his estates, and took the name of Braddyl, in pursuance of his will, by the king's sign manual; 3d, William, died young; and 4th, Henry Richmond, a lieutenant-general of the army, married Sarah, daughter of the Rev. R. Baldwin; Margaret married Richard Greaves Townley, Esq. of Fulbourne, in the county of Cambridge, and of Bellfield, in the county of Lancaster; Sarah married to George Bigland of Bigland Hall, in the same county.

Wilson Braddyl, eldest son of John Gale, and grandson of Margaret Richmond, married Jane, daughter and heiress of Matthias Gale, Esq. of Catgill Hall, in the county of Cumberland, by Jane, daughter and heiress of the Rev. S. Bennet, D. D.; and, as the eldest surviving male branch of the families above-mentioned, he quarters, in addition to his own, their paternal coats in the following order, as appears by the records in the College of Arms.

1st, Argent, a fess azure, between 3 saltiers of the same, charged with an anchor between 2 lions heads erased, or,—Gale.

2d, Or, 2 bars gemelles gules, and a chief or,—Richmond.

3d, Or, a fess chequy, or and gules between 9 gerbes gules,—Vaux of Caterlen.

4th, Gules, a fess chequy, or and gules between 6 gerbes or,—Vaux of Torcrossock.

5th, *Argent, a bend chequy, or and gules, for Vaux of Triermain.

* Not vert, as stated by Burn.

6th, Gules, a cross patonce, or,—Delamore.

7th, Gules, 6 lions rampant argent, 3, 2, and 1,—Leybourne.*

And his who sleeps at Dunmailraise.—P. 96. l. 4.

Dunmailraise is one of the grand passes from Cumberland into Westmoreland. It takes its name from a cairn, or pile of stones, erected, it is said, to the memory of Dunmail, the last King of Cumberland.

———*Penrith's Table Round.*—P. 97. l. 7.

A circular entrenchment, about half a mile from Penrith, is thus popularly termed. The circle within the ditch is about one hundred and sixty paces in circumference, with openings, or approaches, directly opposite to each other. As the ditch is on the inner side, it could not be intended for the purpose of defence, and it has reasonably been conjectured, that the inclosure was designed for the solemn exercise of feats of chivalry ; and the embankment around for the convenience of the spectators.

Mayburgh's mound and stones of power.—P. 97. l. 9.

Higher up the river Eamont than Arthur's Round Table, is a prodigious inclosure of great antiquity, formed by a collection of stones upon the top of a gently sloping hill, called Mayburgh. In the plain which it incloses there stands erect an unhewn

* This more detailed genealogy of the family of Triermain, was obligingly sent to the author, by Major Braddyll of Conishead Priory.

stone of twelve feet in height. Two similar masses are said to have been destroyed during the memory of man. The whole appears to be a monument of druidical times.

Though never sunbeam could discern

The surface of that sable tarn.—P. 102. l. 3, 4.

The small lake called Scales-tarn lies so deeply embosomed in the recess of the huge mountain called Saddleback, more poetically Glaramara, is of such great depth, and so completely hidden from the sun, that it is said its beams never reach it, and that the reflection of the stars may be seen at mid-day.

—————*Tintadgel's spear.*—P. 108. l. 16.

Tintadgel Castle, in Cornwall, is reported to have been the birth-place of King Arthur.

—————*Caliburn in cumbrous length.*—P. 108. l. 18.

This was the name of King Arthur's well-known sword, sometimes also called Excalibar.

From Arthur's hand the goblet flew.—P. 127. l. 5.

The author has an indistinct recollection of an adventure somewhat similar to that which is here ascribed to King Arthur, having befallen one of the ancient kings of Denmark. The horn in which the burning liquor was presented to that monarch, is said still to be preserved in the Royal Museum at Copenhagen.

Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,

Darkening against the morning sky.—P. 127. l. 17, 18.

—“ We now gained a view of the Vale of St John’s, a very narrow dell, hemmed in by mountains, through which a small brook makes many meanderings, washing little inclosures of grass-ground, which stretch up the rising of the hills. In the widest part of the dale you are struck with the appearance of an ancient ruined castle, which seems to stand upon the summit of a little mount, the mountains around forming an amphitheatre. This massive bulwark shews a front of various towers, and makes an awful, rude, and Gothic appearance, with its lofty turrets and ragged battlements ; we traced the galleries, the bending arches, the buttresses. The greatest antiquity stands characterized in its architecture ; the inhabitants near it assert it is an antediluvian structure.

“ The traveller’s curiosity is roused, and he prepares to make a nearer approach, when that curiosity is put upon the rack by his being assured, that, if he advances, certain genii who govern the place, by virtue of their supernatural art and necromancy, will strip it of all its beauties, and, by enchantment, transform the magic walls. The vale seems adapted for the habitation of such beings ; its gloomy recesses and retirements look like haunts of evil spirits. There was no delusion in the report ; we were soon convinced of its truth ; for this piece of antiquity, so venerable and noble in its aspect, as we drew near changed its figure, and proved no other than a shaken massive pile of rocks, which stand in the midst of this

little vales disunited from the adjoining mountains, and have so much the real form and resemblance of a castle, that they bear the name of the Castle Rocks of St John."—HUTCHINSON'S *Excursion to the Lakes*, p. 121.

The Saxons to subjection brought.—P. 128. l. 10.

Arthur is said to have defeated the Saxons in twelve pitched battles, and to have achieved the other feats alluded to in the text.

There Morolt of the iron mace, &c.—P. 130. l. 17.

The characters named in the following stanza are all of them more or less distinguished in the romances which treat of King Arthur and his Round Table, and their names are strung together according to the established custom of minstrels upon such occasions ; for example, in the ballad of the marriage of Sir Gawaine :

Sir Lancelot, Sir Stephen bolde,
They rode with them that daye,
And, foremost of the companye,
There rode the stewarde Kaye.

Soe did Sir Banier, and Sir Bore,
And eke Sir Garratte keen,
Sir Tristram too, that gentle knight,
To the forest fresh and green.

And Lancelot, that evermore

Look'd stol'n-wise on the queen.—P. 131. l. 10, 11.

Upon this delicate subject hear Richard Robinson, citizen of London, in his *Assertion of King Arthur* :

“ But as it is a thing sufficiently apparent that she (Guen-ever, wife of King Arthur) was beautiful, so it is a thing doubted whether she was chaste, yea or no. Truly, so far as I can with honestie, I would spare the impayred honour and fame of noble women. But yet the truth of the historie pluckes me by the eere, and willeth me not onely, but commandeth me to declare what the ancients have deemed of her. To wrestle or contend with so great authoritie were indeed unto me a controversie, and that greate.”—*Assertion of King Arthure. Imprinted by John Wolfe, London, 1582.*

There were two who loved their neighbours' wives,

And one who loved his own.—P. 136. l. 9, 10.

“ In our forefathers' tyme, when papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all England, fewe books were read in our tongue, savyng certaine bookes of chevalrie, as they said, for pastime and pleasure ; which, as some say, were made in the monasteries, by idle monks or wanton chanons. As one for example, *La Morte d'Arthure* ; the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two speciall poynts, in open manslaughter and bold bawdrye ; in which booke they be counted the noblest knightes that do kill most men without any quarrel, and commit fowlest adoulteries by sutlest shiftes ; as Sir

Launcelot, with the wife of King Arthur, his master; Sir Tristram, with the wife of King Marke, his uncle; Sir Lamerocke, with the wife of King Lote, that was his own aunt. This is good stuffe for wise men to laugh at, or honest men to take pleasure at, yet I know when God's Bible was banished the court, and La Morte d'Arthure received into the prince's chamber."—ASCHAM'S *Schoolmaster*.

——— *valiant Carodac,*

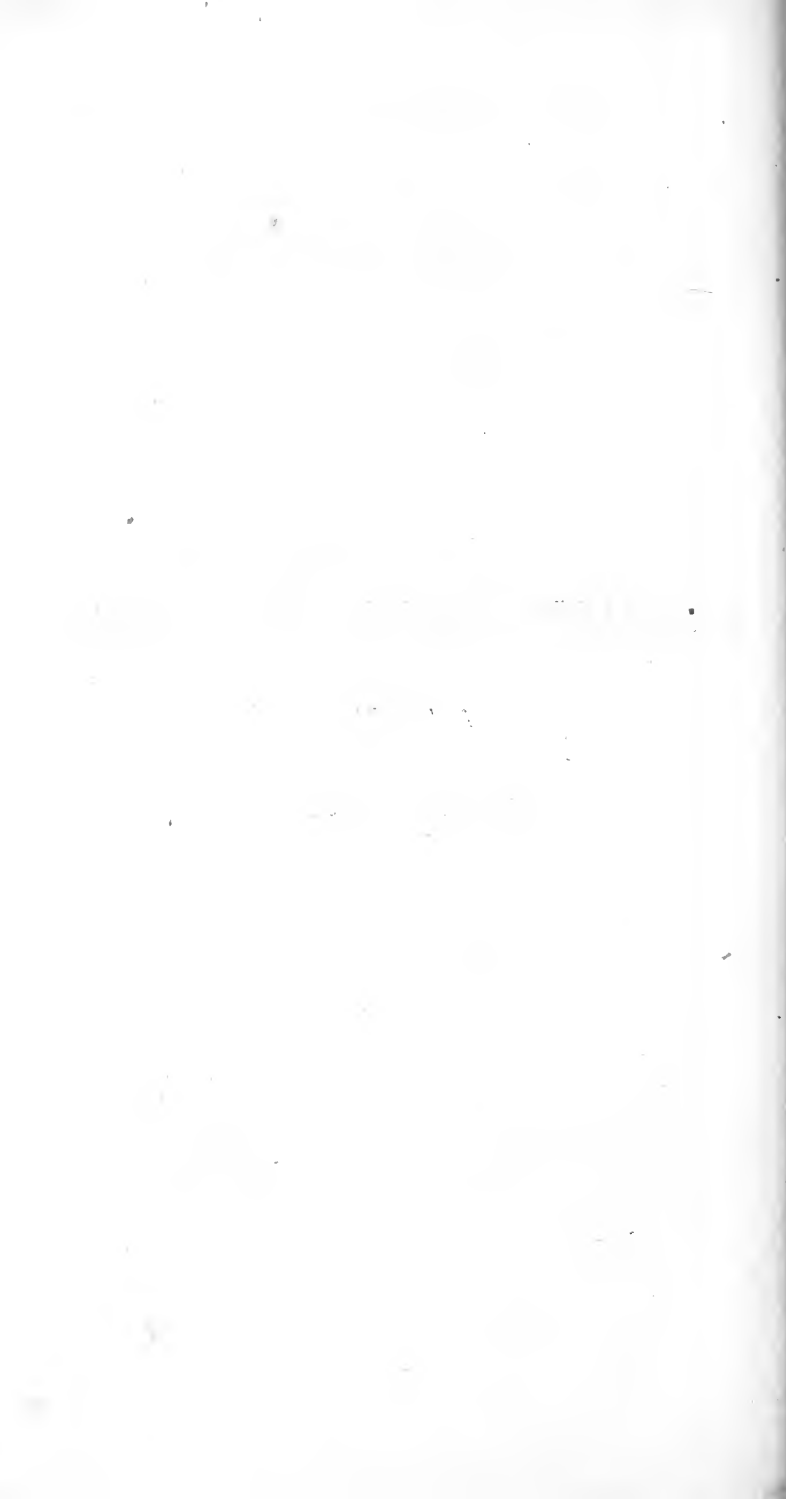
Who won the cup of gold.—P. 136. l. 13, 14.

See the comic tale of the Boy and the Mantle, in the third volume of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, from the Breton or Norman original of which Ariosto is supposed to have taken his *Tale of the Enchanted Cup*.

HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

A POEM,

IN SIX CANTOS.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a mood of mind we all have known,
On drowsy eve, or dark and low'ring day,
When the tired spirits lose their sprightly tone,
And nought can chase the lingering hours away.
Dull on our soul falls Fancy's dazzling ray,
And Wisdom holds his steadier torch in vain ;
Obscured the painting seems, mistuned the lay ;
Nor dare we of our listless load complain,
For who for sympathy may seek that cannot tell of
pain ?

The jolly sportsman knows such drearihood,
When bursts in deluge the autumnal rain,

Clouding that morn which threatens the heath-cock's
brood ;

Of such, in summer's drought the anglers plain,
Who hope the soft mild southern shower in vain ;
But, more than all, the discontented fair,
Whom father stern, and sterner aunt, restrain
From county-ball, or race occurring rare,
While all her friends around their vestments gay
prepare.

Ennui !—or, as our mothers call'd thee, Spleen !

To thee we owe full many a rare device ;—
Thine is the sheaf of painted cards, I ween,
The rolling billiard-ball, the rattling dice,
The turning lathe for framing gimcrack nice ;
The amateur's blotch'd pallet thou may'st claim,
Retort, and airpump, threatening frogs and mice,
(Murders disguised by philosophic name,)
And much of trifling grave, and much of buxom
game.

Then of the books, to catch thy drowsy glance
Compiled, what bard the catalogue may quote !
Plays, poems, novels, never read but once ;—

But not of such the tale fair Edgeworth wrote,
That bears thy name, and is thine antidote !

And not of such the strain my Thomson sung,
Delicious dreams inspiring by his note,

What time to Indolence his harp he strung.

Oh ! might my lay be rank'd that happier list among !

Each hath his refuge whom thy cares assail.

For me, I love my study-fire to trim,
And con right vacantly some idle tale,

Displaying on the couch each listless limb,
Till on the drowsy page the lights grow dim,

And doubtful slumber half-supplies the theme ;
While antique shapes of knight and giant grim,

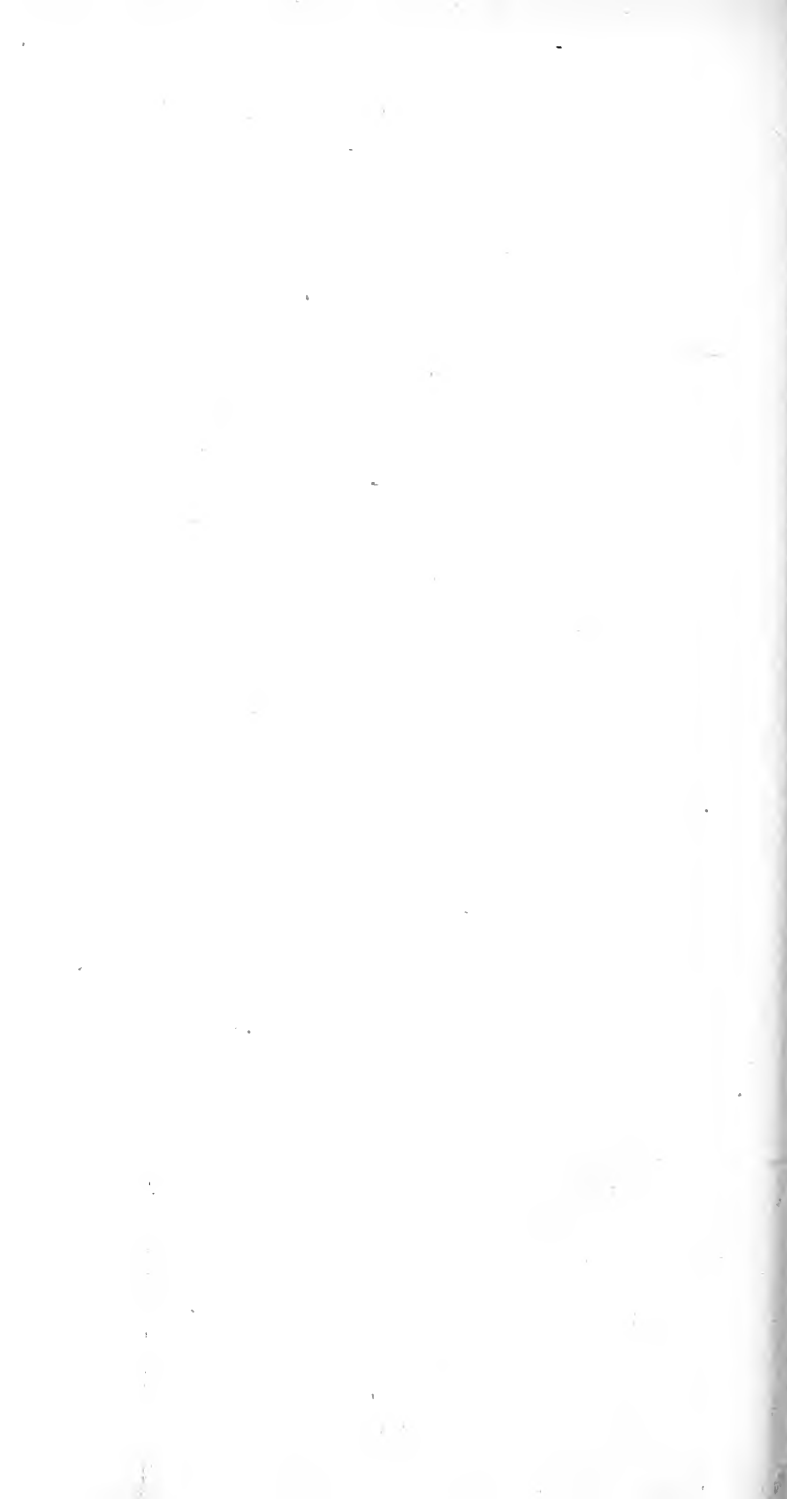
Damsel and dwarf, in long procession gleam,
And the Romancer's tale becomes the Reader's
dream.

'Tis thus my malady I well may bear,
Albeit outstretch'd, like Pope's own Paridel,
Upon the rack of a too-easy chair ;
And find, to cheat the time, a powerful spell
In old romaunts, of errantry that tell,
Or later legends of the Fairy-folk,
Or oriental tale of Afrite fell,
Of Genii, Talisman, and broad-wing'd Roc,
Though taste may blush and frown, and sober reason
mock.

Oft at such season, too, will rhymes, unsought,
Arrange themselves in some romantic lay ;
The which, as things unfitting graver thought,
Are burnt or blotted on some wiser day.—
These few survive—and, proudly let me say,
Court not the critic's smile, nor dread his frown ;
They well may serve to while an hour away,
Nor does the volume ask for more renown,
Than Ennui's yawning smile, what time she drops it
down.

HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FIRST.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FIRST.

LIST to the valorous deeds that were done
By Harold the Dauntless, Count Witikind's son !

Count Witikind came of a regal strain,
And roved with his Norsemen the land and the main.
Woe to the realms which he coasted ! for there
Was shedding of blood, and rending of hair,
Rape of maiden, and slaughter of priest,
Gathering of ravens and wolves to the feast :
When he hoisted his standard black,
Before him was battle, behind him wrack,

And he burn'd the churches, that heathen Dane,
To light his band to their barks again.

II.

On Erin's shores was his outrage known,
The winds of France had his banners blown ;
Little was there to plunder, yet still
His pirates had foray'd on Scottish hill ;
But upon merry England's coast
More frequent he sail'd, for he won the most.
So wide and so far his ravage they knew,
If a sail but gleam'd white 'gainst the welkin blue,
Trumpet and bugle to arms did call,
Burghers hasten'd to man the wall,
Peasants fled inland his fury to 'scape,
Beacons were lighted on headland and cape,
Bells were toll'd out, and aye as they rung,
Fearful and faintly the grey brothers sung,
“ Bless us, St Mary, from flood and from fire,
From famine and pest, and Count Witikind's ire !”—

III.

He liked the wealth of fair England so well,
That he sought in her bosom as native to dwell.
He enter'd the Humber in fearful hour,
And disembark'd with his Danish power.
Three Earls came against him with all their train,—
Two hath he taken, and one hath he slain :
Count Witikind left the Humber's rich strand,
And he wasted and warr'd in Northumberland.
But the Saxon King was a sire in age,
Weak in battle, in council sage ;
Peace of that heathen leader he sought,
Gifts he gave, and quiet he bought ;
And the Count took upon him the peaceable stile,
Of a vassal and liegeman of Britain's broad isle.

IV.

Time will rust the sharpest sword,
Time will consume the strongest cord ;

That which moulders hemp and steel,
Mortal arm and nerve must feel.
Of the Danish band, whom Count Witikind led,
Many wax'd aged, and many were dead ;
Himself found his armour full weighty to bear,
Wrinkled his brows grew, and hoary his hair ;
He lean'd on a staff, when his step went abroad,
And patient his palfrey, when steed he bestrode ;
As he grew feebler his wildness ceased,
He made himself peace with prelate and priest,
Made his peace, and, stooping his head,
Patiently listed the counsel they said ;
Saint Cuthbert's Bishop was holy and grave,
Wise and good was the counsel he gave.

V.

“ Thou hast murder'd, robb'd, and spoil'd,
Time it is thy poor soul were assoil'd ;
Priest did'st thou slay, and churches burn,
Time is now to repentance to turn ;

Fiends hast thou worshipp'd, with fiendish rite,
Leave now the darkness, and wend into light :
O ! while life and space are given,
Turn thee yet, and think of Heaven !"—
That stern old heathen his head he raised,
And on the good prelate he stedfastly gazed ;
“ Give me broad lands on the Wear and the Tyne,
My faith I will leave, and I'll cleave unto thine.”—

VI.

Broad lands he gave him on Tyne and on Wear,
To be held of the church by bridle and spear ;
Part of Monkwearmouth, of Tynedale part,
To better his will, and to soften his heart :
Count Witikind was a joyful man,
Less for the faith than the lands that he wan.
The high church of Durham is dress'd for the day,
The clergy are rank'd in their solemn array ;
There came the Count, in a bear-skin warm,
Leaning on Hilda his concubine's arm ;

He kneel'd before Saint Cuthbert's shrine,
With patience unwonted at rites divine ;
He abjured the gods of heathen race,
And he bent his head at the font of grace ;
But such was the griesly old proselyte's look,
That the priest who baptized him grew pale and
shook ;
And the old monks mutter'd beneath their hood,
“ Of a stem so stubborn can never spring good !”—

VII.

Up then arose that grim convertite,
Homeward he hied him when ended the rite ;
The prelate in honour will with him ride,
And feast on his castle on Tyne's fair side.
Banners and banderols danced in the wind,
Monks rode before them, and spearmen behind ;
Onward they pass'd, till fairly did shine
Pennon and cross on the bosom of Tyne ;
And full in front did that fortress lour,
In darksome strength, with its buttress and tower ;

At the castle-gate was young Harold there,
Count Witikind's only offspring and heir.

VIII.

Young Harold was fear'd for his hardihood,
His strength of frame, and his fury of mood ;
Rude he was and wild to behold,
Wore neither collar nor bracelet of gold,
Cap of vair nor rich array,
Such as should grace that festal day :
His doublet of bull's hide was all unbraced,
Uncover'd his head, and his sandal unlaced :
His shaggy black locks on his brow hung low,
And his eyes glanced through them a swarthy glow ;
A Danish club in his hand he bore,
The spikes were clotted with recent gore ;
At his back a she-wolf, and her wolf-cubs twain,
In the dangerous chase that morning slain.
Rude was the greeting his father he made,
None to the Bishop, while thus he said :

IX.

“ What priest-led hypocrite art thou,
With thy humbled look and thy monkish brow,
Like a shaveling who studies to cheat his vow ?
Can'st thou be Witikind the Waster known,
Royal Eric's fearless son,
Haughty Gunhilda's haughtier lord,
Who won his bride by the axe and sword ;
From the shrine of St Peter the chalice who tore,
And melted to bracelets for Freya and Thor ;
With one blow of his gauntlet who burst the skull,
Before Odin's stone, of the Mountain Bull ?
Then, ye worshipp'd with rites that to war-gods be-
long,
With the deed of the brave, and the blow of the
strong ;
And now, in thine age to dotage sunk,
Wilt thou patter thy crimes to a shaven monk,
Lay down thy mail-shirt for clothing of hair,
Fasting and scourge, like a slave, wilt thou bear ?

Or, at best, be admitted in slothful bower
To batten with priest and with paramour ?
O ! out upon thine endless shame !
Each Scald's high harp shall blast thy fame,
And thy son will refuse thee a father's name !"—

X.

Ireful wax'd old Witikind's look,
His faltering voice with fury shook ;—
“ Hear me, Harold, of harden'd heart !
Stubborn and wilful ever thou wert.
Thine outrage insane I command thee to cease,
Fear my wrath and remain at peace :—
Just is the debt of repentance I've paid,
Richly the church has a recompence made,
And the truth of her doctrines I prove with my blade.
But reckoning to none of my actions I owe,
And least to my son such accounting will show.
Why speak I to thee of repentance or truth,
Who ne'er from thy childhood knew reason or ruth ?

Hence ! to the wolf and the bear in her den ;
These are thy mates, and not rational men.”—

XI.

Grimly smiled Harold, and coldly replied,
“ We must honour our sires, if we fear when they
chide.

For me, I am yet what thy lessons have made,
I was rock’d in a buckler and fed from a blade ;
An infant, was taught to clap hands and to shout,
From the roofs of the tower when the flame had
broke out ;

In the blood of slain foemen my finger to dip,
And tinge with its purple my cheek and my lip.—
’Tis thou know’st not truth, that has barter’d in eld,
For a price, the brave faith that thine ancestors held.
When this wolf,”—and the carcase he flung on the
plain,—

“ Shall awake and give food to her nurslings again,
The face of his father will Harold review ;
Till then, aged Heathen, young Christian, adieu !”—

XII.

Priest, monk, and prelate, stood aghast,
As through the pageant the heathen pass'd.
A cross-bearer out of his saddle he flung,
Laid his hand on the pummel and into it sprung;
Loud was the shriek, and deep the groan,
When the holy sign on the earth was thrown!
The fierce old Count unsheathed his brand,
But the calmer Prelate stay'd his hand;
“Let him pass free!—Heaven knows its hour.—
But he must own repentance's power,
Pray and weep, and penance bear,
Ere he hold land by the Tyne and the Wear.”—
Thus in scorn and in wrath from his father is gone
Young Harold the Dauntless, Count Witikind's son.

XIII.

High was the feasting in Witikind's hall,
Revell'd priests, soldiers, and pagans, and all;

And even the good Bishop was fain to endure
The scandal which time and instruction might cure :
It were dangerous, he deem'd, at the first to restrain,
In his wine and his wassail, a half-christen'd Dane.
The mead flow'd around, and the ale was drain'd dry,
Wild was the laughter, the song, and the cry ;
With Kyrie Eleisen came clamorously in
The war-songs of Danesman, Norwayan, and Finn,
Till man after man the contention gave o'er,
Outstretch'd on the rushes that strew'd the hall-floor ;
And the tempest within, having ceased its wild rout,
Gave place to the tempest that thunder'd without.

XIV.

Apart from the wassail, in turret alone,
Lay flaxen-hair'd Gunnar, old Ermengarde's son ;
In the train of Lord Harold the page was the first,
For Harold in childhood had Ermengarde nursed ;
And grieved was young Gunnar his master should
 roam,
Unhoused and unfriended, an exile from home.

He heard the deep thunder, the plashing of rain,
He saw the red lightning through shot-hole and pane;
“ And oh !” said the page, “ on the shelterless wold
Lord Harold is wandering in darkness and cold !
What though he was stubborn, and wayward, and wild,
He endured me because I was Ermengarde’s child,
And often from dawn till the set of the sun,
In the chase, by his stirrup, unchidden I run :
I would I were older and knighthood could bear,
I would soon quit the banks of the Tyne and the
Wear ;
For my mother’s command with her last parting
breath,
Bade me follow her nursling in life and to death.

XV.

“ It pours and it thunders, it lightens amain,
As if Lok, the Destroyer, had burst from his chain !
Accursed by the church, and expell’d by his sire,
Nor Christian nor Dane give him shelter or fire,

And this tempest what mortal may houseless endure ?
Unaided, unmantled, he dies on the moor !
Whate'er comes of Gunnar he tarries not here."—
He leapt from his couch and he grasp'd to his spear,
Sought the hall of the feast. Undisturb'd by his tread,
The wassailers slept fast as the sleep of the dead :
" Ungrateful and bestial !" his anger broke forth,
" To forget 'mid your goblets the pride of the North !
And you, ye cowl'd priests, who have plenty in store,
Must give Gunnar for ransom a palfrey and ore."—

XVI.

Then heeding full little of ban or of curse,
He has seiz'd on the Prior of Jorvaux's purse :
Saint Meneholt's Abbot next morning has miss'd
His mantle, deep furr'd from the cape to the wrist :
The seneschal's keys from his belt he has ta'en,
(Well drench'd on that eve was old Hildebrand's
brain.)

To the stable-yard he made his way,
And mounted the Bishop's palfrey gay,

Castle and hamlet behind him has cast,
And right on his way to the moorland has pass'd.
Sore snorted the palfrey, unused to face
A weather so wild at so rash a pace ;
So long he snorted, so loud he neigh'd,
There answer'd a steed that was bound beside,
And the red flash of lightning shew'd there where lay
His master, Lord Harold, outstretch'd on the clay.

XVII.

Up he started, and thunder'd out, " Stand !"
And raised the club in his deadly hand.
The flaxen-hair'd Gunnar his purpose told,
Shew'd the palfrey and proffer'd the gold.
" Back, back, and home, thou simple boy !
Thou can'st not share my grief or joy :
Have I not mark'd thee wail and cry
When thou hast seen a sparrow die ?
And can'st thou, as my follower should,
Wade ancle-deep through foemen's blood,

Dare mortal and immortal foe,
The gods above, the fiends below,
And man on earth, more hated still,
The very fountain-head of ill?
Desperate of life, and careless of death,
Lover of bloodshed, and slaughter, and scathe,
Such must thou be with me to roam,
And such thou can'st not be—back, and home!"—

XVIII.

Young Gunnar shook like an aspen bough,
As he heard the harsh voice and beheld the dark
brow,
And half he repented his purpose and vow.
But now to draw back were bootless shame,
And he loved his master, so urged his claim :
* Alas ! if my arm and my courage be weak,
Bear with me a while for old Ermengarde's sake ;
Nor deem so lightly of Gunnar's faith,
As to fear he would break it for peril of death.

Have I not risk'd it to fetch thee this gold,
This surcoat and mantle to fence thee from cold?
And, did I bear a baser mind,
What lot remains if I stay behind?
The priests' revenge, thy father's wrath,
A dungeon and a shameful death."—

XIX.

With gentler look Lord Harold eyed
The page, then turn'd his head aside ;
And either a tear did his eye-lash stain,
Or it caught a drop of the passing rain.
“ Art thou an outcast then ? ” quoth he,
“ The meeter page to follow me.”—
’Twere bootless to tell what climes they sought,
Ventures achieved, and battles fought ;
How oft with few, how oft alone,
Fierce Harold's arm the field hath won.
Men swore his eye, that flash'd so red
When each other glance was quench'd with dread,

Bore oft a light of deadly flame
That ne'er from mortal courage came.
Those limbs so strong, that mood so stern,
That loved the couch of heath and fern,
Afar from hamlet, tower, and town,
More than to rest on driven down ;
That stubborn frame, that sullen mood,
Men deem'd must come of aught but good ;
And they whisper'd, the great Master Fiend was at
one
With Harold the Dauntless, Count Witikind's son.

XX.

Years after years had gone and fled,
The good old Prelate lies lapp'd in lead ;
In the chapel still is shown
His sculptured form on a marble stone,
With staff and ring and scapulaire,
And folded hands in the act of prayer.
Saint Cuthbert's mitre is resting now
On the haughty Saxon, bold Aldingar's brow ;

The power of his crozier he loved to extend
O'er whatever would break or whatever would bend :
And now hath he clothed him in cope and in pall,
And the Chapter of Durham has met at his call.
“ And hear ye not, brethren,” the proud Bishop said,
“ That our vassal, the Danish Count Witikind, 's dead?
All his gold and his goods hath he given
To holy church for the love of heaven,
And hath founded a chantry with stipend and dole,
That priests and that beadsmen may pray for his soul:
Harold his son is wandering abroad,
Dreaded by man and abhorred by God ;
Meet it is not, that such should heir
The lands of the church on the Tyne and the Wear ;
And at her pleasure, her hallow'd hands
May now resume these wealthy lands.”—

XXI.

Answer'd good Eustace, a canon old,
“ Harold is tameless, and furious, and bold ;

Ever renown blows a note of fame,
And a note of fear, when she sounds his name ;
Much of bloodshed and much of scathe
Have been their lot who have waked his wrath.
Leave him these lands and lordships still,
Heaven in its hour may change his will ;
But if reft of gold, and of living bare,
An evil counsellor is despair."—
More had he said, but the Prelate frown'd,
And murmur'd his brethren who sate around,
And with one consent have they given their doom,
That the church should the lands of Saint Cuthbert
 resume.
So will'd the Prelate ; and canon and dean
Gave to his judgment their loud amen.

END OF CANTO FIRST.

HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO SECOND.

HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO SECOND.

'Tis merry in greenwood, thus runs the old lay,
In the gladsome month of lively May,
When the wild birds' song on stem and spray
 Invites to forest bower ;
Then rears the ash his airy crest,
Then shines the birch in silver vest,
And the beach in glistening leaves is dress'd,
And dark between shews the oak's proud breast,
 Like a chieftain's frowning tower ;
Though a thousand branches join their screen,
Yet the broken sun-beams glance between,
And tip the leaves with lighter green,
 With brighter tints the flower :

Dull is the heart that loves not then
The deep recess of the wild-wood glen,
Where roe and red-deer find sheltering den,
When the sun is in his power.

II.

Less merry, perchance, is the fading leaf
That follows so soon on the gather'd sheaf,
When the green-wood loses the name ;
Silent is then the forest bound,
Save the red-breast's note, and the rustling sound
Of frost-nipt leaves that are dropping round,
Or the deep-mouth'd cry of the distant hound
That opens on his game ;
Yet then, too, I love the forest wide,
Whether the sun in splendour ride
And gild its many-colour'd side ;
Or whether the soft and silvery haze,
In vapoury folds, o'er the landscape strays,
And half involves the woodland maze,
Like an early widow's veil,

Where wimpling tissue from the gaze
The form half hides and half betrays,
Of beauty wan and pale.

III.

Fair Metelill was a woodland maid,
Her father a rover of green-wood shade,
By forest statutes undismay'd,
Who lived by bow and quiver.

Well known was Wulfstane's archery,
By merry Tyne both on moor and lea,
Through wooded Weardale's glens so free,
Well beside Stanhope's wild-wood tree,
And well on Ganlesse river.

Yet free though he trespass'd on woodland game,
More known and more fear'd was the wizard fame
Of Jutta of Rookhope, the Outlaw's dame ;
Fear'd when she frown'd was her eye of flame,
More fear'd when in wrath she laugh'd ;

For then, 'twas said, more fatal true
To its dread aim her spell-glance flew,
Than when from Wulfstane's bended yew
Sprung forth the grey-goose shaft.

IV.

Yet had this fierce and dreaded pair,
So Heaven decreed, a daughter fair ;
None brighter crown'd the bed,
In Britain's bounds, of peer or prince,
Nor hath, perchance, a lovelier since
In this fair isle been bred.

And nought of fraud, or ire, or ill,
Was known to gentle Metelill,
A simple maiden she ;
The spells in dimpled smiles that lie,
And a downcast blush, and the darts that fly
With the sidelong glance of a hazel eye,
Were her arms and witchery

So young, so simple was she yet,
She scarce could childhood's joys forget,
And still she loved, in secret set

Beneath the green-wood tree,
To plait the rushy coronet,
And braid with flowers her locks of jet,
As when in infancy ;—

Yet could that heart, so simple, prove
The early dawn of stealing love :

Ah ! gentle maid, beware !
The power who, now so mild a guest,
Gives dangerous yet delicious zest
To the calm pleasures of thy breast,
Will soon, a tyrant o'er the rest,
Let none his empire share.

V.

One morn in kirtle green array'd,
Deep in the wood the maiden stray'd;
And, where a fountain sprung,

She sate her down, unseen, to thread
The scarlet berry's mimic braid ;
 And while her beads she strung,
Like the blithe lark, whose carol gay
Gives a good-morrow to the day,
 So lightsomely she sung.

VI.

Song.

“ LORD WILLIAM was born in gilded bower,
The heir of Wilton's lofty tower ;
Yet better loves Lord William now
To roam beneath wild Rookhope's brow ;
And William has lived where ladies fair
With gawds and jewels deck their hair,
Yet better loves the dew-drops still
That pearl the locks of Metelill.

“ The pious Palmer loves, I wis,
Saint Cuthbert's hallow'd beads to kiss ;

But I, though simple girl I be,
Might have such homage paid to me ;
For did Lord William see me suit
This necklace of the bramble's fruit,
He fain—but must not have his will,—
Would kiss the beads of Metelill.

“ My nurse has told me many a tale,
How vows of love are weak and frail ;
My mother says that courtly youth
By rustic maid means seldom sooth.
What should they mean ? it cannot be,
That such a warning's meant for me,
For nought—oh ! nought of fraud or ill
Can William mean to Metelill !”—

VII.

Sudden she stops—and starts to feel
A weighty hand, a glove of steel,
Upon her shrinking shoulders laid ;
Fearful she turn'd, and saw, dismay'd,

A Knight in plate and mail array'd,
His crest and bearing worn and fray'd,
His surcoat soil'd and riven,
Form'd like that giant race of yore,
Whose long-continued crimes out-wore
The sufferance of heaven.

Stern accents made his pleasure known,
Though then he used his gentlest tone :
“ Maiden,” he said, “ sing forth thy glee,
Start not—sing on—it pleases me.”

VIII.

Secured within his powerful hold,
To bend her knee, her hands to fold,
Was all the maiden might ;
And “ Oh ! forgive,” she faintly said,
“ The terrors of a simple maid,
If thou art mortal wight !
But if—of such strange tales are told,—
Unearthly warrior of the wold,
Thou com'st to chide mine accents bold,

My mother, Jutta, knows the spell,
At noon and midnight pleasing well

The disembodied ear;

Oh ! let her powerful charms atone

For aught my rashness may have done,

And cease thy grasp of fear."

Then laugh'd the Knight—his laughter's sound

Half in the hollow helmet drown'd ;

His barred vizor then he raised,

And steady on the maiden gazed.

He smooth'd his brows, as best he might,

To the dread calm of autumn night,

When sinks the tempest's roar ;

Yet still the cautious fishers eye

The clouds, and fear the gloomy sky,

And haul their barks on shore.

IX.

" Damsel," he said, " be wise, and learn
Matters of weight and deep concern :

From distant realms I come,
And, wanderer long, at length have plann'd
In this my native Northern land

To seek myself a home.

Nor that alone—a mate I seek ;
She must be gentle, soft, and meek,—

No lordly dame for me ;
Myself am something rough of mood,
And feel the fire of royal blood,
And therefore do not hold it good

To match in my degree.

Then, since coy maidens say my face
Is harsh, my form devoid of grace,
For a fair lineage to provide,
Tis meet that my selected bride

In lineaments be fair ;
I love thine well—till now I ne'er
Look'd patient on a face of fear,
But now that tremulous sob and tear
Become thy beauty rare.

One kiss—nay, damsel, coy it not :
And now go seek thy parents' cot,
And say, a bridegroom soon I come,
To woo my love and bear her home."

X.

Home sprung the maid without a pause,
As leveret 'scaped from greyhound's jaws ;
But still she lock'd, howe'er distress'd,
The secret in her boding breast ;
Dreading her sire, who oft forbade
Her steps should stray to distant glade.
Night came—to her accustom'd nook
Her distaff aged Jutta took,
And by the lamp's imperfect glow,
Rough Wulfstane trimm'd his shafts and bow.
Sudden and clamorous, from the ground
Upstartd slumbering brach and hound ;
Loud knocking next the lodge alarms,
And Wulfstane snatches at his arms,

When opening flew the yielding door,
And that grim Warrior press'd the floor.

XI.

“ All peace be here—What ! none replies ?
Dismiss your fears and your surprise.
'Tis I—that maid hath told my tale,—
Or, trembler, did thy courage fail ?
It recks not—it is I demand
Fair Metelill in marriage band ;
Harold the Dauntless I, whose name
Is brave men's boast and caitiffs' shame.”—
The parents sought each other's eyes,
With awe, resentment, and surprise :
Wulfstane, to quarrel prompt, began
The stranger's size and thewes to scan ;
But as he scann'd, his courage sunk,
And from unequal strife he shrunk.
Then forth, to blight and blemish, flies
The harmful curse from Jutta's eyes ;

Yet fatal howsoe'er, the spell
On Harold innocently fell !
And disappointment and amaze
Were in the witch's wilder'd gaze.

XII.

But soon the wit of woman woke,
And to the Warrior mild she spoke :
“ Her child was all too young.”—“ A toy,
The refuge of a maiden coy.”—
Again, “ A powerful baron's heir
Claims in her heart an interest fair.”—
“ A trifle—whisper in his ear,
That Harold is a suitor here !”
Baffled at length she sought delay :
“ Would not the Knight till morning stay ?
Late was the hour—he there might rest
Till morn, their lodge's honour'd guest.”
Such were her words,—her craft might cast,
Her honour'd guest should sleep his last :

“ No, not to-night—but soon,” he swore,
“ He would return, nor leave them more.”—
The threshold then his huge stride crost,
And soon he was in darkness lost.

XIII.

Appall'd awhile the parents stood,
Then changed their fear to angry mood,
And foremost fell their words of ill
On unresisting Metelill :
Was she not caution'd and forbid,
Forewarn'd, implored, accused, and chid,
And must she still to greenwood roam,
To marshal such misfortune home ?
“ Hence, minion—to thy chamber hence,
There prudence learn and penitence.”
She went—her lonely couch to steep
In tears which absent lovers weep ;
Or if she gain'd a troubled sleep,

Fierce Harold's suit was still the theme
And terror of her feverish dream.

XIV.

Scarce was she gone, her dame and sire
Upon each other bent their ire ;
“ A woodsman thou, and hast a spear,
And couldst thou such an insult bear ?”
Sullen he said, “ A man contends
With men, a witch with sprites and fiends ;
Not to mere mortal wight belong
Yon gloomy brow and frame so strong.
But thou—is this thy promise fair,
That your Lord William, wealthy heir
To Ulrick, Baron of Witton-le-wear,
Should Metelill to altar bear ?
Do all the spells thou boast'st as thine
Serve but to slay some peasant's kine,
His grain in autumn-storms to steep,
Or thorough fog and fen to sweep,
And hag-ride some poor rustic's sleep ?

Is such mean mischief worth the fame
Of sorceress and witch's name ?
Fame, which with all men's wish conspires,
With thy deserts and my desires,
To damn thy corpse to penal fires ?
Out on thee, witch ! aroint ! aroint !
What now shall put thy schemes in joint ?
What save this trusty arrow's point,
From the dark dingle when it flies,
And he who meets it gasps and dies."—

XV.

Stern she replied, " I will not wage
War with thy folly or thy rage ;
But ere the morrow's sun be low,
Wulfstane of Rookhope, thou shalt know,
If I can venge me on a foe.
Believe the while, that whatsoe'er
I spoke, in ire, of bow and spear,
It is not Harold's destiny
The death of pilfer'd deer to die.

But he, and thou, and yon pale moon,
That shall be yet more pallid soon,
Before she sink behind the dell,
Thou, she, and Harold too, shall tell
What Jutta knows of charm or spell."—
Thus muttering, to the door she bent
Her wayward steps, and forth she went,
And left alone the moody sire,
To cherish or to slake his ire.

XVI.

Far faster than belong'd to age,
Has Jutta made her pilgrimage.
A priest has met her as she pass'd,
And cross'd himself and stood aghast :
She traced a hamlet—not a cur
His throat would ope, his foot would stir ;
By crouch, by trembling, and by groan,
They made her hated presence known !
But when she trode the sable fell,

Were wilder sounds her way to tell,—
For far was heard the fox's yell,
The black-cock waked and faintly crew,
Scream'd o'er the moss the scared curlew ;
Where o'er the cataract the oak
Lay slant, was heard the raven's croak ;
The mountain-cat which sought his prey,
Glared, scream'd, and started from her way.
Such music cheer'd her journey lone
To the deep dell and rocking stone :
There, with unhallow'd hymn of praise,
She called a God of heathen days.

XVII.

Invocation.

From thy Pomeranian throne,
Hewn in rock of living stone,
Where, to thy godhead faithful yet,
Bend Esthonian, Finn, and Lett,
And their swords in vengeance whet,

That shall make thine altars wet,
Wet and red for ages more
With the Christians' hated gore,—
Hear me! Sovereign of the Rock,
Hear me, mighty Zernebock.

Mightiest of the mighty known,
Here thy wonders have been shown;
Hundred tribes in various tongue
Oft have here thy praises sung;
Down that stone with runick seam'd
Hundred victims' blood hath stream'd!
Now one woman comes alone,
And but wets it with her own,
The last, the feeblest of thy flock,—
Hear—and be present, Zernebock!

Hark! he comes; the night-blast cold
Wilder sweeps along the wold;

The cloudless moon grows dark and dim,
And bristling hair and quaking limb
Proclaim the Master Demon nigh,—
Those who view his form shall die !
Lo ! I stoop and veil my head.—
Thou who ridest the tempest dread,
Shaking hill and rending oak—
Spare me ! spare me ! Zernebock.

He comes not yet ! Shall cold delay
Thy votaress at her need repay ?
Thou—shall I call thee god or fiend ?—
Let others on thy mood attend
With prayer and ritual—Jutta's arms
Are necromantic words and charms :
Mine is the spell, that, utter'd once,
Shall wake Thy Master from his trance,
Shake his red mansion-house of pain,
And burst his seven-times twisted chain.

So ! com'st thou ere the spell is spoke ?

I own thy presence, Zernebock.

XVIII.

“ Daughter of dust,” the Deep Voice said,

—Shook while it spoke the vale for dread,

Rock'd on the base that massive stone,

The Evil Deity to own,—

“ Daughter of dust ! not mine the power

Thou seek'st on Harold's fatal hour.

'Twixt heaven and hell there is a strife

Waged for his soul and for his life,

And fain would we the combat win,

And snatch him in his hour of sin.

There is a star now rising red,

That threatens him with an influence dread :

Woman, thine arts of malice whet,

To use the space before it set.

Involve him with the church in strife,

Push on adventurous chance his life ;

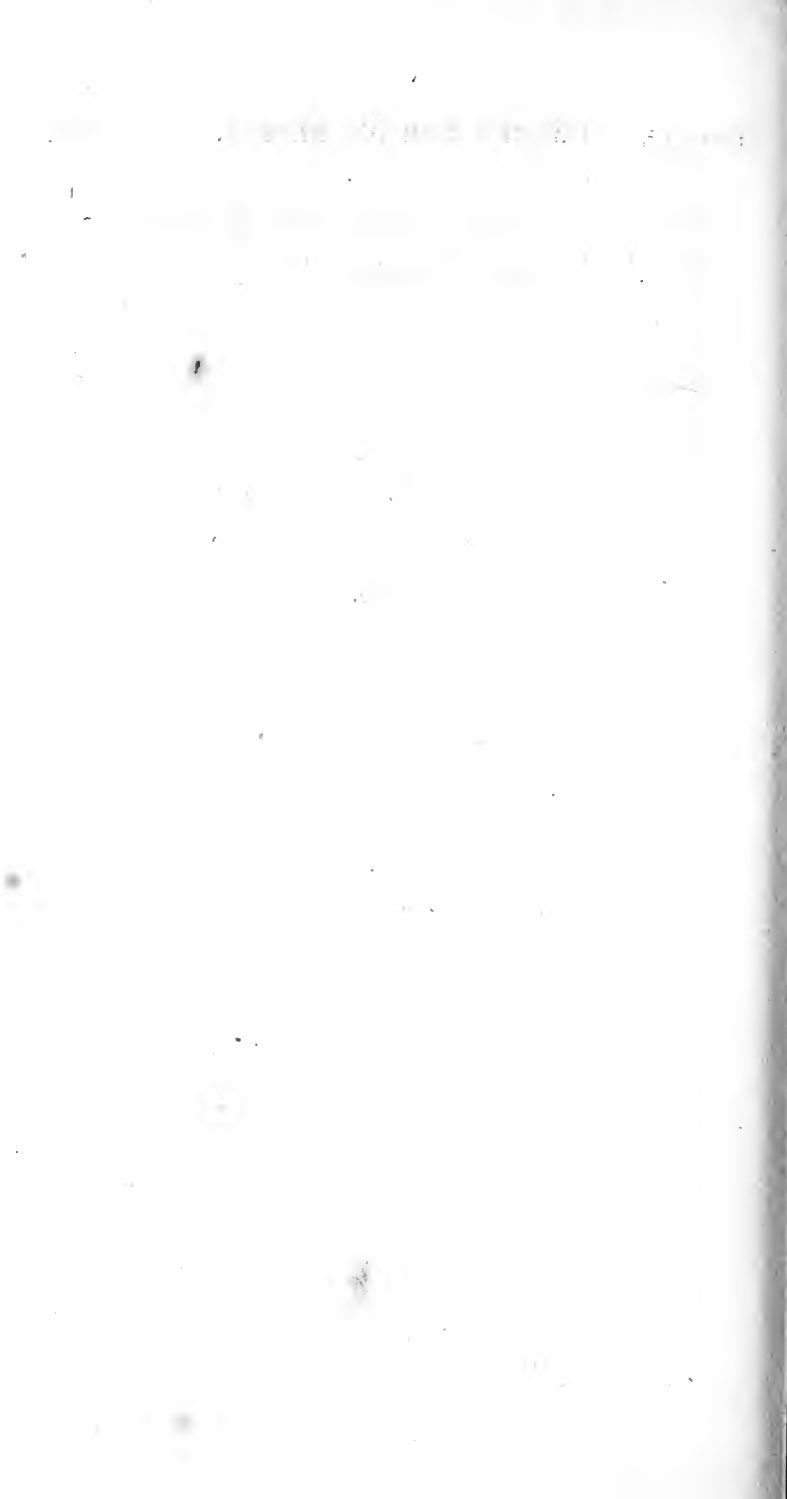
Ourself will in the hour of need,
As best we may, thy counsels speed."—
So ceased the Voice ; for seven leagues round
Each hamlet started at the sound ;
But slept again, as slowly died
Its thunders on the hill's brown side.

XIX.

" And is this all," said Jutta stern,
" That thou canst teach and I can learn ?
Hence ! to the land of fog and waste !
There fittest is thine influence placed,
Thou powerless sluggish Deity !
But ne'er shall Briton bend the knee
Again before so poor a god."—
She struck the altar with her rod ;
Slight was the touch, as when at need
A damsel stirs her tardy steed ;
But to the blow the stone gave place,
And, starting from its balanced base,

Roll'd thundering down the moon-light dell,—
Re-echo'd moorland, rock, and fell ;
Into the moon-light tarn it dash'd,
Their shores the sounding surges lash'd,
And there was ripple, rage, and foam ;
But on that lake, so dark and lone,
Placid and pale the moon-beam shone
As Jutta hied her home.

END OF CANTO SECOND.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO THIRD.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

GREY towers of Durham ! there was once a time

I view'd your battlements with such vague hope
As brightens life in its first dawning prime ;

Not that e'en then came within fancy's scope
A vision vain of mitre, throne, or cope ;

Yet, gazing on the venerable hall,
Her flattering dreams would in perspective ope

Some reverend room, some prebendary's stall,—
And thus Hope me deceived, as she deceiveth all.

Well yet I love thy mix'd and massive piles,
Half church of God, half castle 'gainst the Scot,
And long to roam these venerable aisles,
With records stored of deeds long since forgot !
There might I share my Surtees' happier lot,
Who leaves at will his patrimonial field
To ransack every crypt and hallow'd spot,
And from oblivion rend the spoils they yield,
Restoring priestly chaunt and clang of knightly shield.

Vain is the wish—since other cares demand
Each vacant hour, and in another clime ;
But still that northern harp invites my hand,
Which tells the wonder of thine earlier time ;
And fain its numbers would I now command,
To paint the beauties of thy dawning fair,
When Harold, gazing from its lofty stand
Upon the western heights of Beaurepaire,
Saw Saxon Eadmer's towers begirt by winding Wear.

II.

Fair on the half-seen streams the sunbeams danced,
 Betraying it beneath the woodland bank,
And fair between the Gothic turrets glanced
 Broad lights, and shadows fell on front and flank,
Where tower and buttress rose in martial rank,
 And girdled in the massive donjon Keep,
And from their circuit peal'd o'er bush and bank
 The mattin bell with summons long and deep,
And echo answer'd still with long-resounding sweep.

III.

The morning mists rose from the ground,
Each merry bird awaken'd round,
 As if in revelry ;
Afar the bugles' clanging sound
Call'd to the chase the lagging hound ;
 The gale breath'd soft and free,
And seem'd to linger on its way
To catch fresh odours from the spray,

And waved it in its wanton play

So light and gamesomely.

The scenes which morning beams reveal,

Its sounds to hear, its gales to feel

In all their fragrance round him steal,

It melted Harold's heart of steel,

And, hardly wotting why,

He doff'd his helmet's gloomy pride,

And hung it on a tree beside,

Laid mace and falchion by,

And on the green sward sate him down,

And from his dark habitual frown

Relax'd his rugged brow—

Whoever hath the doubtful task

From that stern Dane a boon to ask,

Were wise to ask it now.

IV.

His place beside young Gunnar took,

And mark'd his master's softening look,

And in his eye's dark mirror spied
The gloom of stormy thought subside,
And cautious watch'd the fittest tide

To speak a warning word.
So when the torrent's billows shrink,
The timid pilgrim on the brink
Waits long to see them wave and sink,

Ere he dare brave the ford,
And often, after doubtful pause,
His step advances or withdraws :
Fearful to move the slumbering ire
Of his stern lord, thus stood the squire,

Till Harold raised his eye,
That glanced as when athwart the shroud
Of the dispersing tempest-cloud

The bursting sunbeams fly.

V.
“ Arouse thee, son of Ermengarde,
Offspring of prophétess and bard !

Take harp, and greet this lovely prime
With some high strain of Runic rhyme,
Strong, deep, and powerful ! Peal it round
Like that loud bell's sonorous sound,
Yet wild by fits, as when the lay
Of bird and bugle hail the day.
Such was my grandsire Erick's sport,
When dawn gleam'd on his martial court.
Heymar the Scald, with harp's high sound,
Summon'd the chiefs who slept around ;
Couch'd on the spoils of wolf and bear,
They roused like lions from their lair,
Then rush'd in emulation forth
To enhance the glories of the north.—
Proud Erick, mightiest of thy race,
Where is thy shadowy resting-place ?
In wild Valhalla hast thou quaff'd
From foeman's skull metheglin draught,
Or wander'st where thy cairn was piled,
To frown o'er oceans wide and wild ?

Or have the milder Christians given
Thy refuge in their peaceful heaven ?
Where'er thou art, to thee are known
Our toils endured, our trophies won,
Our wars, our wanderings, and our woes."—
He ceased, and Gunnar's song arose.

VI.

Song.

"HAWK and osprey scream'd for joy
O'er the beetling cliffs of Hoy,
Crimson foam the beach o'erspread,
The heath was dyed with darker red,
When o'er Erick, Inguar's son,
Dane and Northman piled the stone ;
Singing wild the war-song stern,
Rest thee, Dweller of the Cairn !

"Where eddying currents foam and boil
By Bersa's burgh and Græmsay's isle,

The seaman sees a martial form
Half-mingled with the mist and storm.
In anxious awe he bears away
To moor his bark in Stromna's bay,
And murmurs from the bounding stern,
' Rest thee, Dweller of the Cairn !'

" What cares disturb the mighty dead ?
Each honour'd rite was duly paid ;
No daring hand thy helm unlaced,
Thy sword, thy shield, were near thee placed,
Thy flinty couch no tear profaned,
Without, with hostile blood 'twas stain'd ;
Within, 'twas lined with moss and fern,—
Then rest thee, Dweller of the Cairn !

" He may not rest : from realms afar
Comes voice of battle and of war,
Of conquest wrought with bloody hand
On Carmel's cliffs and Jordan's strand,

When Odin's warlike son could daunt
The turban'd race of Termagaunt——”

VII.

“Peace,” said the Knight, “the noble Scald
Our warlike fathers’ deeds recall’d,
But never strove to sooth the son
With tales of what himself had done.
At Odin’s board the bard sits high
Whose harp ne’er stoop’d to flattery;
But highest he whose daring lay
Hath dared unwelcome truths to say.”—
With doubtful smile young Gunnar eyed
His master’s looks, and nought replied—
But well that smile his master led
To construe what he left unsaid.
“Is it to me, thou timid youth,
Thou fear’st to speak unwelcome truth?
My soul no more thy censure grieves
Than frosts rob laurels of their leaves.

Say on—and yet—beware the rude
And wild distemper of my blood ;
Loth were I that mine ire should wrong
The youth that bore my shield so long,
And who, in service constant still,
Though weak in frame, art strong in will.”—
“ Oh !” quoth the page, “ even there depends
My counsel—there my warning tends.
Oft seems as of my master’s breast
Some demon were the sudden guest ;
Then at the first misconstrued word
His hand is on the mace and sword,
From her firm seat his wisdom driven,
His life to countless dangers given.—
O ! would that Gunnar could suffice
To be the fiend’s last sacrifice,
So that, when glutted with my gore,
He fled and tempted thee no more !”

VIII.

Then waved his hand, and shook his head,
The impatient Dane, while thus he said :
“ Profane not, youth—it is not thine
To judge the spirit of our line—
The bold Berserker’s rage divine,
Through whose inspiring, deeds are wrought
Past human strength and human thought.
When full upon his gloomy soul
The champion feels the influence roll,
He swims the lake, he leaps the wall—
Heeds not the depth, nor plumbs the fall—
Unshielded, mail-less, on he goes
Singly against a host of foes ;
Their spears he holds like wither’d reeds,
Their mail like maiden’s silken weeds ;
One ’gainst a hundred will he strive,
Take countless wounds, and yet survive.

Then rush the eagles to his cry
Of slaughter and of victory,—
And blood he quaffs like Odin's bowl,
Deep drinks his sword,—deep drinks his soul ;
And all that meet him in his ire
He gives to ruin, rout, and fire,
Then, like gorged lion, seeks some den,
And couches till he's man agen.—
Thou know'st the signs of look and limb,
When 'gins that rage to over-brim—
Thou know'st when I am moved, and why ;
And when thou seest me roll mine eye,
Set my teeth thus and stamp my foot,
Regard thy safety and be mute ;
But else, speak boldly out whate'er
Is fitting that a knight should hear.
I love thee, youth. Thy lay has power
Upon my dark and sullen hour ;—
So, Christian monks are wont to say,
Demons of old were charm'd away ;—

Then fear not I will rashly deem
Ill of thy speech, whate'er the theme."—

IX.

As down some strait in doubt and dread
The watchful pilot drops the lead,
And, cautious in the midst to steer,
The shoaling channel sounds with fear;
So, lest on dangerous ground he swerved,
The page his master's brow observed,
Pausing at intervals to fling
His hand on the melodious string,
And to his moody breast apply
The soothing charm of harmony,
While hinted half, and half exprest,
This warning song convey'd the rest.

I.

"Ill fares the bark with tackle riven,
And ill when on the breakers driven,—

Ill when the storm-sprite shrieks in air,
And the scared mermaid tears her hair ;
But worse when on her helm the hand
Of some false traitor holds command.

2.

“ Ill fares the fainting Palmer, placed
’Mid Hebron’s rocks or Rama’s waste,—
Ill when the scorching sun is high,
And the expected font is dry,—
Worse when his guide o’er sand and heath,
The barbarous Copt, has plann’d his death.

3.

“ Ill fares the knight with buckler cleft,
And ill when of his helm bereft,—
Ill when his steed to earth is flung,
Or from his grasp his falchion wrung ;
But worse, of instant ruin token,
When he lists rede by woman spoken.”—

X.

"How now, fond boy?—Canst thou think ill,"
Said Harold, "of fair Metelill?"—

"She may be fair," the page replied,

As through the strings he ranged,—

"She may be fair; but yet,"—he cried,

And then the strain he changed:—

1.

"She may be fair," he sang, "but yet

Far fairer have I seen

Than she, for all her locks of jet,

And eyes so dark and sheen.

Were I a Danish knight in arms,

As one day I may be,

My heart should own no foreign charms,—

A Danish maid for me.

2.

“ I love my father’s northern land,
Where the dark pine-trees grow,
And the bold Baltic’s echoing strand
Looks o’er each grassy oe.*
I love to mark the lingering sun,
From Denmark loth to go,
And leaving on the billows bright,
To cheer the short-lived summer night,
A path of ruddy glow.

3.

“ But most the northern maid I love,
With breast like Denmark’s snow,
And form as fair as Denmark’s pine,
Who loves with purple heath to twine
Her locks of sunny glow ;

* *Oe.* Island.

And sweetly blends that shade of gold
 With the cheek's rosy hue,
And Faith might for her mirror hold
 That eye of matchless blue.

4.

“ 'Tis her's the manly sports to love
 That southern maidens fear,
To bend the bow by stream and grove,
 And lift the hunter's spear.
She can her chosen champion's fight
 With eye undazzled see,
Clasp him victorious from the strife,
Or on his corpse yield up her life,—
 A Danish maid for me !”

X.

Then smiled the Dane—“ Thou canst so well
The virtues of our maidens tell,

Half could I wish my choice had been
Blue eyes, and hair of golden sheen,
And lofty soul ;—yet what of ill
Hast thou to charge on Metelill ?”—
“ On her nought,” young Gunnar said,
“ But her base sire’s ignoble trade.
Her mother, too—the general fame
Hath given to Jutta evil name,
And in her grey eye is a flame
Art cannot hide, nor fear can tame.—
That sordid woodman’s peasant cot
Twice have thine honour’d footsteps sought,
And twice return’d with such ill rede
As sent thee on some desperate deed.”—

XI.

“ Thou errest ; Jutta wisely said,
He that comes suitor to a maid,
Ere link’d in marriage, should provide
Lands and a dwelling for his bride—

My father's by the Tyne and Wear
I have reclaim'd."—"O, all too dear,
And all too dangerous the prize,
E'en were it won,"—young Gunnar cries.
"And then this Jutta's fresh device,
That thou should'st seek, a heathen Dane,
From Durham's priests a boon to gain,
When thou hast left their vassals slain
In their own halls!"—Flash'd Harold's eye,
Thunder'd his voice—"False page, you lie!
The castle, hall and tower, is mine,
Built by old Witikind on Tyne.
The wild-cat will defend his den,
Fights for her nest the timid wren;
And think'st thou I'll forego my right
For dread of monk or monkish knight?—
Up and away, that deepening bell
Doth of the Bishop's conclave tell.
Thither will I, in manner due,
As Jutta bade, my claim to sue;

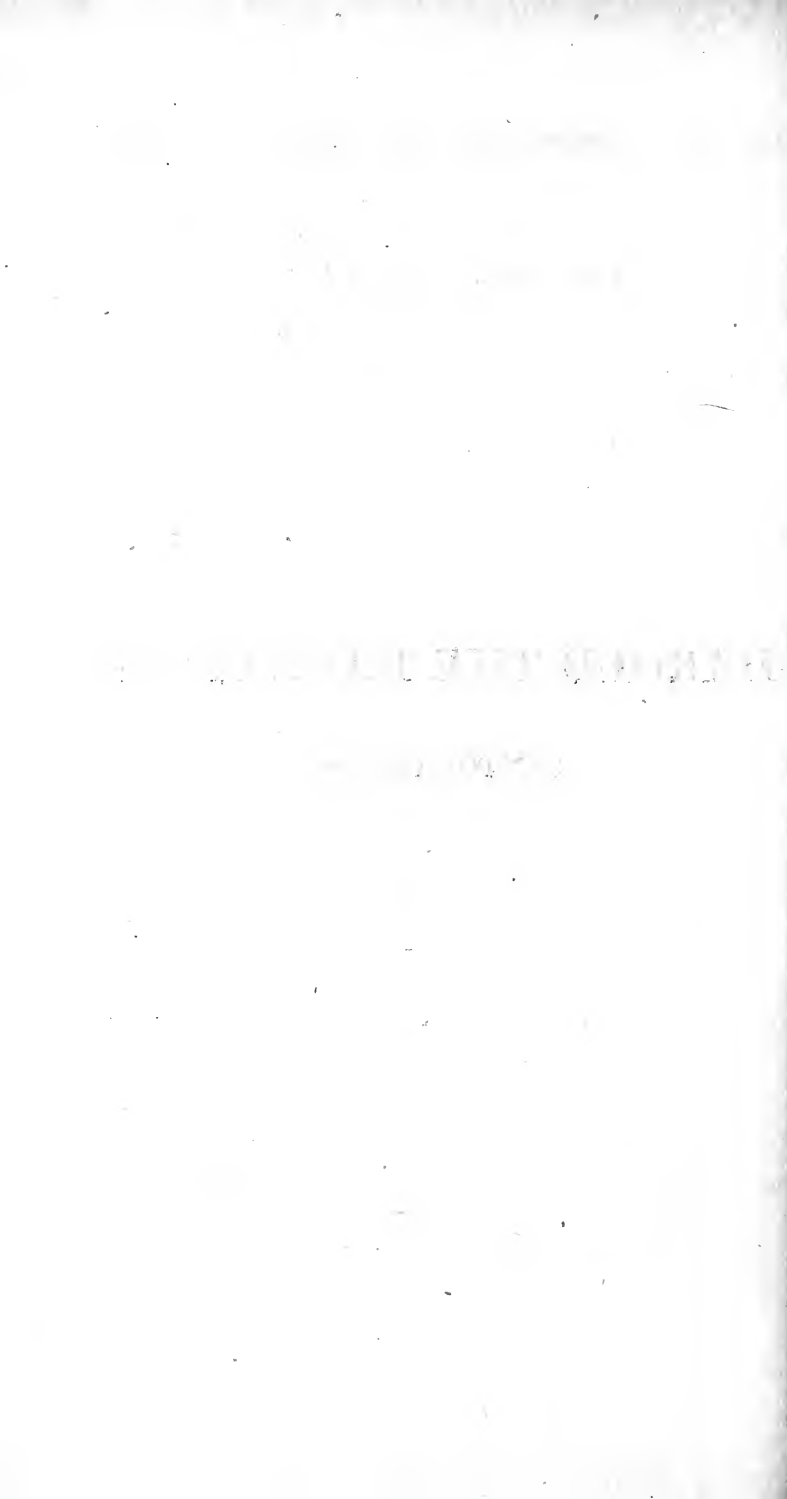
And if to right me they are loth,
Then woe to church and chapter both !”

Now shift the scene and let the curtain fall,
And our next entry be Saint Cuthbert’s hall.

END OF CANTO THIRD.

HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FOURTH.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

FULL many a bard hath sung the solemn gloom
Of the long Gothic aisle and stone-ribb'd roof,
O'er-canopying shrine, and gorgeous tomb,
Carved screen, and altar glimmering far aloof,
And blending with the shade—a matchless proof
Of high devotion, which hath now wax'd cold ;
Yet legends say, that Luxury's brute hoof
Intruded oft within such sacred fold,
Like step of Bel's false priest, track'd in his fane of
old.

Well pleased am I, howe'er, that when the route
Of our rude neighbours whilome deign'd to come,

Uncall'd, and eke unwelcome, to sweep out
And cleanse our chancel from the rags of Rome,
They spoke not on our ancient fane the doom
To which their bigot zeal gave o'er their own,
But spared the martyr'd saint and storied tomb,
Though papal miracles had graced the stone,
And though the aisles still loved the organ's swelling
tone.

And deem not, though 'tis now my part to paint
A prelate sway'd by love of power and gold,
That all who wore the mitre of our Saint
Like to ambitious Aldingar I hold ;
Since both in modern times and days of old
It sate on those whose virtues might atone
Their predecessors' frailties trebly told :
Matthew and Morton we as such may own—
And such (if fame speak truth) the honoured Bar-
rington.

II.

But now to earlier and to ruder times,
As subject meet, I tune my rugged rhymes,
Telling how fairly the Chapter was met,
And rood and books in seemly order set ;
Huge brass-clasp'd volumes, which the hand
Of studious priest but rarely scann'd,
Now on fair carved desk display'd,
'Twas theirs the solemn scene to aid.
O'er-head with many a scutcheon graced,
And quaint devices interlaced,
A labyrinth of crossing rows,
The roof in lessening arches shows ;
Beneath its shade placed proud and high,
With footstool and with canopy,
Sate Aldingar, and prelate ne'er
More haughty graced Saint Cuthbert's chair.
Canons and deacons were placed below,
In due degree and lengthen'd row.

Unmoved and silent each sate there,
Like image in his oaken chair ;
Nor head, nor hand, nor foot they stirr'd,
Nor lock of hair, nor tress of beard,
And of their eyes severe alone
The twinkle shew'd they were not stone.

III.

The Prelate was to speech address'd,
Each head sunk reverent on each breast ;
But ere his voice was heard—without
Arose a wild, tumultuous shout,
Offspring of wonder mix'd with fear,
Such as in crowded streets we hear
Hailing the flames, that, bursting out,
Attract, yet scare, the rabble rout.
Ere it had ceased, a giant hand
Shook oaken door and iron band,
Till oak and iron both gave way,
Clash'd the long bolts, the hinges bray,

And ere upon angel or saint they can call,
Stands Harold the Dauntless in midst of the hall.

IV.

“ Now save ye, my masters, both rocket and rood,
From Bishop with mitre to Deacon with hood !
For here stands Count Harold, old Witikind’s son,
Come to sue for the lands which his ancestors won.”—
The Prelate look’d round him with sore troubled eye,
Unwilling to grant, yet afraid to deny,
While each Canon and Deacon who heard the Dane
 speak,
To be safely at home would have fasted a week :—
Then Aldingar roused him and answer’d again,
“ Thou suest for a boon which thou canst not obtain ;
The church hath no fiefs for an unchristen’d Dane.
Thy father was wise, and his treasure hath given
That the priests of a chantry might hymn him to
 heaven ;

And the fiefs which whilome he possess'd as his due,
Have lapsed to the church, and been granted anew
To Anthony Conyers and Alberic Vere,
For the service St Cuthbert's bless'd banner to bear,
When the bands of the North come to foray the Wear.
Then disturb not our conclave with wrangling or
 blame,
But in peace and in patience pass hence as ye came."—

V.

Loud laugh'd the stern Pagan—"They're free from
 the care
Of fief and of service, both Conyers and Vere,—
Six feet of your chancel is all they will need,
A buckler of stone and a corslet of lead.—
Ho, Gunnar!—the tokens!"—and, sever'd anew,
A head and a hand on the altar he threw.
Then shudder'd with terror both Canon and Monk,
They knew the glazed eye and the countenance shrunk,

And of Anthony Conyers the half-grizzled hair,
And the scar on the hand of Sir Alberic Vere.
There was not a churchman or priest that was there,
But grew pale at the sight, and betook him to prayer.

VI.

Count Harold laugh'd at their looks of fear :
“ Was this the hand should your banner bear ?
Was that the head should wear the casque
In battle at the church's task ?
Was it to such you gave the place
Of Harold with the heavy mace ?
Find me between the Wear and Tyne
A knight will wield this club of mine,—
Give me my fiefs, and I will say
There's wit beneath the cowl of gray.”—
He raised it, rough with many a stain,
Caught from crush'd scull and spouting brain ;
He wheel'd it that it shrilly sung,
And the aisles echoed as it swung,

Then dash'd it down with sheer descent,
And split King Osrick's monument.—

“ How like ye this music ? How trow ye the hand
That can wield such a mace may be reft of its land ?
No answer ?—I spare ye a space to agree,
And Saint Cuthbert inspire you, a saint if he be.
Ten strides through your chancel, ten strokes on your
bell,
And again I am with you,—grave fathers, farewell.”—

VII

He turn'd from their presence, he clash'd the oak door,
And the clang of his stride died away on the floor ;
And his head from his bosom the Prelate uprears
With a ghost-seer's look when the ghost disappears.
“ Ye priests of St Cuthbert, now give me your rede,
For never of counsel had Bishop more need !
Were the arch-fiend incarnate in flesh and in bone,
The language, the look, and the laugh were his own.

In the bounds of Saint Cuthbert there is not a knight
Dare confront in our quarrel yon goblin in fight ;
Then rede me aright to his claim to reply,
'Tis unlawful to grant, and 'tis death to deny."—

VIII.

On ven'son and malmsie that morning had fed
The Cellarer Vinsauf, 'twas thus that he said :
" Delay till to-morrow the Chapter's reply ;
Let the feast be spread fair, and the wine be pour'd
 high :
If he's mortal, he drinks—if he drinks, he is ours—
His bracelets of iron,—his bed in our towers."—
This man had a laughing eye,
Trust not, friends, when such you spy ;
A beaker's depth he well could drain,
Revel, sport, and jest amain—
The haunch of the deer and the grape's bright dye
Never bard loved them better than I ;

But sooner than Vinsauf fill'd me my wine,
Pass'd me his jest, and laughed at mine,
Though the buck were of Bearpark, of Bourdeaux
the vine,
With the dullest hermit I'd rather dine
On an oaten cake and a draught of the Tyne.

IX.

Walwayn the Leech spoke next—he knew
Each plant that loves the sun and dew,
But special those whose juice can gain
Dominion o'er the blood and brain ;
The peasant who saw him by pale moonbeam
Gathering such herbs by bank and stream,
Deem'd his thin form and soundless tread
Were those of wanderer from the dead.—
“ Vinsauf, thy wine,” he said, “ hath power,
Our gyves are heavy, strong our tower ;
Yet three drops from this flask of mine,
More strong than dungeons, gyves, or wine,

Shall give him prison under ground
More dark, more narrow, more profound.
Short rede, good rede, let Harold have—
A dog's death and a heathen's grave.”—
I have lain on a sick man's bed,
Watching for hours for the leech's tread,
As if I deem'd that his presence alone
Were of power to bid my pain begone ;
I have listed his words of comfort given,
As if to oracles from heaven ;
I have counted his steps from my chamber door,
And bless'd them when they were heard no more ;—
But sooner than Walwayn my sick couch should nigh,
My choice were by leech-craft unaided to die.

X.

“ Such service done in fervent zeal
The Church may pardon and conceal,”
The doubtful Prelate said, “ but ne'er
The counsel ere the act should hear.—

Anselm of Jarrow, advise us now,
The stamp of wisdom is on thy brow ;
Thy days, thy nights in cloister pent,
Are still to mystic learning lent ;—
Anselm of Jarrow, in thee is my hope,
Thou well canst give counsel to Prelate or Pope.”—

XI.

Answer'd the Prior—“ 'Tis wisdom's use
Still to delay what we dare not refuse ;
Ere granting the boon he comes hither to ask,
Shape for the giant gigantic task ;
Let us see how a step so sounding can tread
In paths of darkness, danger, and dread ;
He may not, he will not, impugn our decree,
That calls but for proof of his chivalry,
And were Guy to return, or Sir Bevis the Strong,
Our wilds have adventure might cumber them long—
The castle of Seven Shields——” “ Kind Anselm, no
more !

The step of the Pagan approaches the door.”—

The churchmen were hush'd—In his mantle of skin,
With his mace on his shoulder, Count Harold strode in.
There was foam on his lip, there was fire in his eye,
For, chafed by attendance, his fury was nigh.

“Ho! Bishop,” he said, “dost thou grant me my
claim?

Or must I assert it by falchion and flame?”

XII.

“On thy suit, gallant Harold,” the Bishop replied
In accents which trembled, “we might not decide,
Until proof of your strength and your valour we saw—
'Tis not that we doubt them, but such is the law.”—
“And would you, Sir Prelate, have Harold make sport
For the cowls and the shavelings that herd in thy
court?

Say what shall he do?—From the shrine shall he tear
The lead bier of thy patron and heave it in air,
And through the long chancel make Cuthbert take
wing,

With the speed of a bullet dismiss'd from the sling?”

“Nay, spare such probation,” the Cellarer said,
“From the mouth of our minstrels thy task shall be
read.

While the wine sparkles high in the goblet of gold,
And the revel is loudest, thy task shall be told ;
And thyself, gallant Harold, shall, hearing it, tell
That the Bishop, his cowls, and his shavelings, meant
well.”

XIII.

Loud revell'd the guests, and the goblets loud rang,
But louder the minstrel, Hugh Meneville, sang ;
And Harold, the hurry and pride of whose soul,
E en when verging to fury, own'd music's controul,
Still bent on the harper his broad sable eye,
And often untasted the goblet pass'd by ;
Than wine, or than wassail, to him was more dear
The minstrel's high tale of enchantment to hear ;
And the Bishop that day might of Vinsauf complain
That his art had but wasted his wine-casks in vain.

XIV.

The Castle of the Seven Shields.

A BALLAD.

THE Druid Urien had daughters seven,
Their skill could call the moon from heaven ;
So fair their forms and so high their fame,
That seven proud kings for their suitors came.

King Mador and Rhys came from Powis and Wales,
Unshorn was their hair, and unpruned were their
 nails ;

From Strath Clwyde came Ewain, and Ewain was
 lame,

And the red-bearded Donald from Galloway came.

Lot, King of Lodon, was hunch-back'd from youth ;
Dunmail of Cumbria had never a tooth ;
But Adolf of Bambrough, Northumberland's heir,
Was gay and was gallant, was young and was fair.

There was strife 'mongst the sisters, for each one
would have

For husband King Adolf, the gallant and brave,
And envy bred hate, and hate urged them to blows,
When the firm earth was cleft, and the Arch-fiend
arose !

He swore to the maidens their wish to fulfil—
They swore to the foe they would work by his will.
A spindle and distaff to each hath he given,
“ Now hearken my spell,” said the Outcast of heaven.

“ Ye shall ply these spindles at midnight hour,
And for every spindle shall rise a tower,
Where the right shall be feeble, the wrong shall
have power,
And there shall ye dwell with your paramour.”

Beneath the pale moonlight they sate on the wold,
And the rhymes which they chaunted must never be
told ;

And as the black wool from the distaff they sped,
With blood from their bosom they moisten'd the
thread.

As light danced the spindles beneath the cold gleam,
The castle arose like the birth of a dream—
The seven towers ascended like mist from the ground,
Seven portals defend them, seven ditches surround.

Within that dread castle seven monarchs were wed,
But six of the seven ere the morning lay dead ;
With their eyes all on fire, and their daggers all red,
Seven damsels surround the Northumbrian's bed.

“ Six kingly bridegrooms to death we have done,
Six gallant kingdoms King Adolf hath won,
Six lovely brides all his pleasure to do,
Or the bed of the seventh shall be husbandless too.”

Well chanced it that Adolf the night when he wed
Had confess'd and had sain'd him ere boune to his
bed ;

He sprung from the couch and his broad sword he
drew,

And there the seven daughters of Urien he slew.

The gate of the castle he bolted and seal'd,
And hung o'er each arch-stone a crown and a shield ;
To the cells of St Dunstan then wended his way,
And died in his cloister an anchorite grey.

Seven monarchs' wealth in that castle lies stow'd,
The foul fiends brood o'er them like raven and toad.
Whoever shall guesten these chambers within,
From curfew till matins, that treasure shall win.

But manhood grows faint as the world waxes old !
There lives not in Britain a champion so bold,
So dauntless of heart, and so prudent of brain,
As to dare the adventure that treasure to gain.

The waste ridge of Cheviot shall wave with the rye,
Before the rude Scots shall Northumberland fly,

And the flint cliffs of Bambro' shall melt in the sun,
Before that adventure be peril'd and won.

XV.

“ And is this my probation ?” wild Harold he said,
“ Within a lone castle to press a lone bed ?—
Good even, my Lord Bishop,—Saint Cuthbert to
 borrow,
The Castle of Seven Shields receives me to-morrow.”—

END OF CANTO FOURTH.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FIFTH.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

DENMARK'S sage courtier to her princely youth,
Granting his cloud an ouzel or a whale,
Spoke, though unwittingly, a partial truth ;
For Phantasy embroiders Nature's veil.
The tints of ruddy eve, or dawning pale,
Of the swart thunder-cloud, or silver haze,
Are but the ground-work of the rich detail
Which Phantasy with pencil wild pourtrays,
Blending what seems and is, in the rapt muser's gaze

Nor are the stubborn forms of earth and stone
Less to the Sorceress's empire given :
For not with unsubstantial hues alone,
Caught from the varying surge, or vacant heaven,
From bursting sunbeam, or from flashing levin,
She limns her pictures—on the earth, as air,
Arise her castles, and her car is driven ;
And never gazed the eye on scene so fair,
But of its boasted charms fancy gave half the share.

II.

Up a wild pass went Harold, bent to prove,
Hugh Meneville, the adventure of thy lay ;
Gunnar pursued his steps in faith and love,
Ever companion of his master's way.
Midward their path, a rock of granite grey
From the adjoining cliff had made descent,—
A barren mass—yet with her drooping spray
Had a young birch-tree crown'd its battlement,
Twisting her fibrous roots through cranny, flaw, and
rent.

This rock and tree could Gunnar's thought engage
Till Fancy brought the tear-drop to his eye,
And at his master ask'd the timid page,

“What is the emblem that a bard should spy
In that rude rock and its green canopy?”

And Harold said, “Like to the helmet brave
Of warrior slain in fight it seems to lie,

And these same drooping boughs do o'er it wave
Not all unlike the plume his lady's favour gave.”—

“Ah, no!” replied the page; “the ill-starr'd love
Of some poor maid is in the emblem shown,
Whose fates are with some hero's interwove,

And rooted on a heart to love unknown:
And as the gentle dews of heaven alone

Nourish those drooping boughs, and as the scathe
Of the red lightning rends both tree and stone,

So fares it with her unrequited faith,—
Her sole relief is tears—her only refuge death.”—

III.

“Thou art a fond fantastic boy,”

Harold replied, “to females coy,

Yet prating still of love ;

Even so amid the clash of war

I know thou lovest to keep afar,

Though destined by thy evil star

With one like me to rove,

Whose business and whose joys are found

Upon the bloody battle-ground.

Yet, foolish trembler as thou art,

Thou hast a nook of my rude heart,

And thou and I will never part ;—

Harold would wrap the world in flame

Ere injury on Gunnar came.”

IV.

The grateful page made no reply,

But turn'd to heaven his gentle eye,

And clasp'd his hands, as one who said,
“ My toils—my wanderings are o'erpaid !’
Then in a gayer, lighter strain,
Compell'd himself to speech again ;
 And, as they flow'd along,
His words took cadence soft and slow,
And liquid, like dissolving snow,
 They melted into song.

V.

“ What though through fields of carnage wide
I may not follow Harold's stride,
Yet who with faithful Gunnar's pride
 Lord Harold's feats can see ?
And dearer than the couch of pride
He loves the bed of grey wolf's hide,
When slumbering by Lord Harold's side
 In forest, field, or lea.”—

VI.

“ Break off !” said Harold, in a tone
Where hurry and surprise were shown,

With some slight touch of fear,—

“ Break off, we are not here alone ;

A palmer form comes slowly on !

By cowl, and staff, and mantle known,

My monitor is near.

Now mark him, Gunnar, heedfully ;

He pauses by the blighted tree—

Dost see him, youth ?—Thou could’st not see

When in the vale of Galilee

I first beheld his form ;

Nor when we met that other while

In Cephalonia’s rocky isle,

Before the fearful storm,—

Dost see him now ?”—The page, distraught

With terror, answer’d, “ I see nought,

And there is nought to see,

Save that the oak's scathed boughs fling down
Upon the path a shadow brown,
That, like a pilgrim's dusky gown,
Waves with the waving tree."

VII.

Count Harold gazed upon the oak
As if his eye-strings would have broke,
And then resolvedly said,—
"Be what it will, yon phantom grey,
Nor heaven, nor hell, shall ever say
That for their shadows from his way
Count Harold turn'd dismay'd :
I'll speak him, though his accents fill
My heart with that unwonted thrill
Which vulgar minds call fear.
I will subdue it !" —Forth he strode,
Paused where the blighted oak-tree show'd
Its sable shadow on the road,
And, folding on his bosom broad
His arms, said, "Speak—I hear."

VIII.

The Deep Voice said, "O wild of will,
Furious thy purpose to fulfil—
Heart-sear'd and unrepentant still,
How long, O Harold, shall thy tread
Disturb the slumbers of the dead?
Each step in thy wild way thou makest
The ashes of the dead thou wakest;
And shout in triumph o'er thy path
The fiends of bloodshed and of wrath.
In this thine hour, yet turn and hear!
For life is brief, and judgment near."

IX.

Then ceased The Voice.—The Dane replied
In tones where awe and inborn pride
For mastery strove,—“In vain ye chide
The wolf for ravaging the flock,
Or with its hardness taunt the rock,—
I am as they—my Danish strain
Sends streams of fire through every vein.

Amid thy realms of goule and ghost,
Say, is the fame of Erick lost ?
Or Witikind's the Waster, known
Where fame or spoil was to be won ;
Whose galleys ne'er bore off a shore
They left not black with flame ?—
He was my sire,—and, sprung of him,
That rover merciless and grim,
Can I be soft and tame ?
Part hence, and with my crimes no more upbraid me,
I am that Waster's son, and am but what he made me."

X.

The Phantom groan'd ;—the mountain shook around,
The fawn and wild-doe started at the sound,
The gorse and fern did wildly round them wave,
As if some sudden storm the impulse gave.
" All thou hast said is truth—Yet on the head
Of that bad sire let not the charge be laid,
That he, like thee, with unrelenting pace,
From grave to cradle ran the evil race :—

Relentless in his avarice and re,
Churches and towns he gave to sword and fire ;
Shed blood like water, wasted every land,
Like the destroying angel's burning brand ;
Fulfill'd whate'er of ill might be invented.
Yes—all these things he did—he did, but he RE-
PENTED !

Perchance it is part of his punishment still,
That his offspring pursues his example of ill.
But thou, when thy tempest of wrath shall next
shake thee,
Gird thy loins for resistance, my son, and awake thee ;
If thou yield'st to thy fury, how tempted soever,
The gate of repentance shall ope for thee NEVER !"—

XI.

"He is gone," said Lord Harold, and gazed as he spoke ;
"There is nought on the path but the shade of the oak,—
He is gone, whose strange presence my feeling op-
press'd,
Like the night-hag that sits on the slumberer's breast.

My heart beats as thick as a fugitive's tread,
And cold dew drops from my brow and my head.—
Ho ! Gunnar, the flasket yon almoner gave ;
He said that three drops would recall from the grave.
For the first time Count Harold owns leech-craft has
power,

Or, his courage to aid, lacks the juice of a flower !”—
The page gave the flasket, which Walwayn had fill'd
With the juice of wild roots that his art had distill'd—
So baneful their influence on all that had breath,
One drop had been frenzy, and two had been death.
Harold took it, but drank not ; for jubilee shrill,
And music and clamour, were heard on the hill,
And down the steep pathway, o'er stock and o'er stone,
The train of a bridal came blithesomely on ;
There was song, there was pipe, there was timbrel,
and still

The burden was, “ Joy to the fair Metelill !”

XII.

Harold might see from his high stance,
Himself unseen, that train advance

With mirth and melody ;—

On horse and foot a mingled throng,
Measuring their steps to bridal song

And bridal minstrelsy ;

And ever when the blithesome rout

Lent to the song their choral shout,

Redoubling echoes roll'd about,

While echoing cave and cliff sent out

The answering symphony,

Of all those mimic notes which dwell

In hollow rock and sounding dell.

XIII.

Joy shook his torch above the band,

By many a various passion fann'd ;—

As elemental sparks can feed
On essence pure and coarsest weed,
Gentle, or stormy, or refined,
Joy takes the colours of the mind.
Lightsome and pure, but unrepress'd,
He fired the bridegroom's gallant breast ;
More feebly strove with maiden fear,
Yet still joy glimmer'd through the tear
On the bride's blushing cheek, that shows
Like dew-drop on the budding rose ;
While Wulfstane's gloomy smile declared
The joy that selfish avarice shared,
And pleased revenge and malice high
Its semblance took in Jutta's eye.
On dangerous adventure sped,
The witch deem'd Harold with the dead,
For thus that morn her Demon said :—
“ If, ere the set of sun, be tied
The knot 'twixt bridegroom and his bride,

The Dane shall have no power of ill
O'er William and o'er Metelill."

And the pleased witch made answer, " Then
Must Harold have pass'd from the paths of men !
Evil repose may his spirit have,—
May hemlock and mandrake find root in his grave,—
May his death-sleep be dogg'd by dreams of dismay,
And his waking be worse at the answering day !"—

XIV.

Such was their various mood of glee
Blent in one shout of ecstasy.
But still when joy is brimming highest,
Of sorrow and misfortune nighest,
Of Terror with her ague cheek,
And lurking Danger, sages speak :—
These haunt each path; but chief they lay
Their snares beside the primrose way.—
Thus found that bridal band their path
Beset by Harold in his wrath.

Trembling beneath his maddening mood,
High on a rock the giant stood ;
His shout was like the doom of death
Spoke o'er their heads that pass'd beneath.
His destined victims might not spy
The reddening terrors of his eye,—
The frown of rage that writhed his face,
The lip that foam'd like boar's in chase ;
But all could see—and, seeing, all
Bore back to shun the threaten'd fall,—
The fragment which their giant foe
Rent from the cliff and heaved to throw.

XV.

Backward they bore ;—yet are there two
For battle who prepare :
No pause of dread Lord William knew
Ere his good blade was bare ;
And Wulfstane bent his fatal yew,
But ere the silken cord he drew,

As hûrl'd from Hecla's thunder, flew
That ruin through the air !—
Full on the outlaw's front it came,
And all that late had human name,
And human face, and human frame,
That lived, and moved, and had free will
To chuse the path of good or ill,
Is to its reckoning gone ;
And nought of Wulfstane rests behind,
Save that beneath that stone,
Half-buried in the dinted clay,
A red and shapeless mass there lay,
Of mingled flesh and bone !

XVI.

As from the bosom of the sky
The eagle darts amain,
Three bounds from yonder summit high
Placed Harold on the plain.

As the scared wild-fowl scream and fly,
 So fled the bridal train ;
As 'gainst the eagle's peerless might
The noble falcon dares the fight,
 But dares the fight in vain,
So fought the bridegroom ; from his hand
The Dane's rude mace has struck his brand,
Its glittering fragments strew the sand,
 Its lord lies on the plain.
Now, Heaven ! take noble William's part,
And melt that yet unmelted heart,
Or, ere his bridal hour depart,
 The hapless bridegroom's slain !

XVII.

Count Harold's frenzied rage is high,
There is a death-fire in his eye,
Deep furrows on his brow are trench'd,
His teeth are set, his hand is clench'd,

The foam upon his lip is white,
His deadly arm is up to smite !
But, as the mace aloft he swung,
To stop the blow young Gunnar sprung,
Around his master's knees he clung,

And cried, " In mercy spare !
O, think upon the words of fear
Spoke by that visionary Seer,
The crisis he foretold is here,—

Grant mercy,—or despair !"—
This word suspended Harold's mood,
Yet still with arm upraised he stood,
And visage like the headsman's rude

That pauses for the sign.
" O mark thee with the blessed rood,"
The page implored ; " Speak word of good,
Resist the fiend, or be subdued !"—

He sign'd the cross divine—
Instant his eye hath human light,
Less red, less keen, less fiercely bright ;

His brow relax'd the obdurate frown,

The fatal mace sinks gently down,

He turns and strides away ;

Yet oft, like revellers who leave

Unfinish'd feast, looks back to grieve,

As if repenting the reprieve

He granted to his prey.

Yet still of forbearance one sign hath he given,

And fierce Witikind's son made one step towards
heaven.

XVIII.

But though his dreaded footsteps part,

Death is behind and shakes his dart ;

Lord William on the plain is lying,

Beside him Metelill seems dying !—

Bring odours—essences in haste—

And lo ! a flasket richly chased,—

But Jutta the elixir proves

Ere pouring it for those she loves—

Then Walwayn's potion was not wasted,
For when three drops the hag had tasted,
 So dismal was her yell,
Each bird of evil omen woke,
The raven gave his fatal croak,
And shriek'd the night-crow from the oak,
The screech-owl from the thicket broke,
 And flutter'd down the dell !

So fearful was the sound and stern,
The slumbers of the full-gorged erne
Were startled, and from furze and fern
 Of forest and of fell,
The fox and famish'd wolf replied,
(For wolves then prowl'd the Cheviot side,)
From mountain head to mountain head
The unhallow'd sounds around were sped ;
But when their latest echo fled,
The sorceress on the ground lay dead.

XIX.

Such was the scene of blood and woes,
With which the bridal morn arose
 Of William and of Metelill ;
But oft, when dawning 'gins to spread,
The summer-morn peeps dim and red
 Above the eastern hill,
Ere, bright and fair, upon his road
The King of Splendour walks abroad ;
So, when this cloud had pass'd away,
Bright was the noon-tide of their day,
And all serene its setting ray.

END OF CANTO FIFTH.

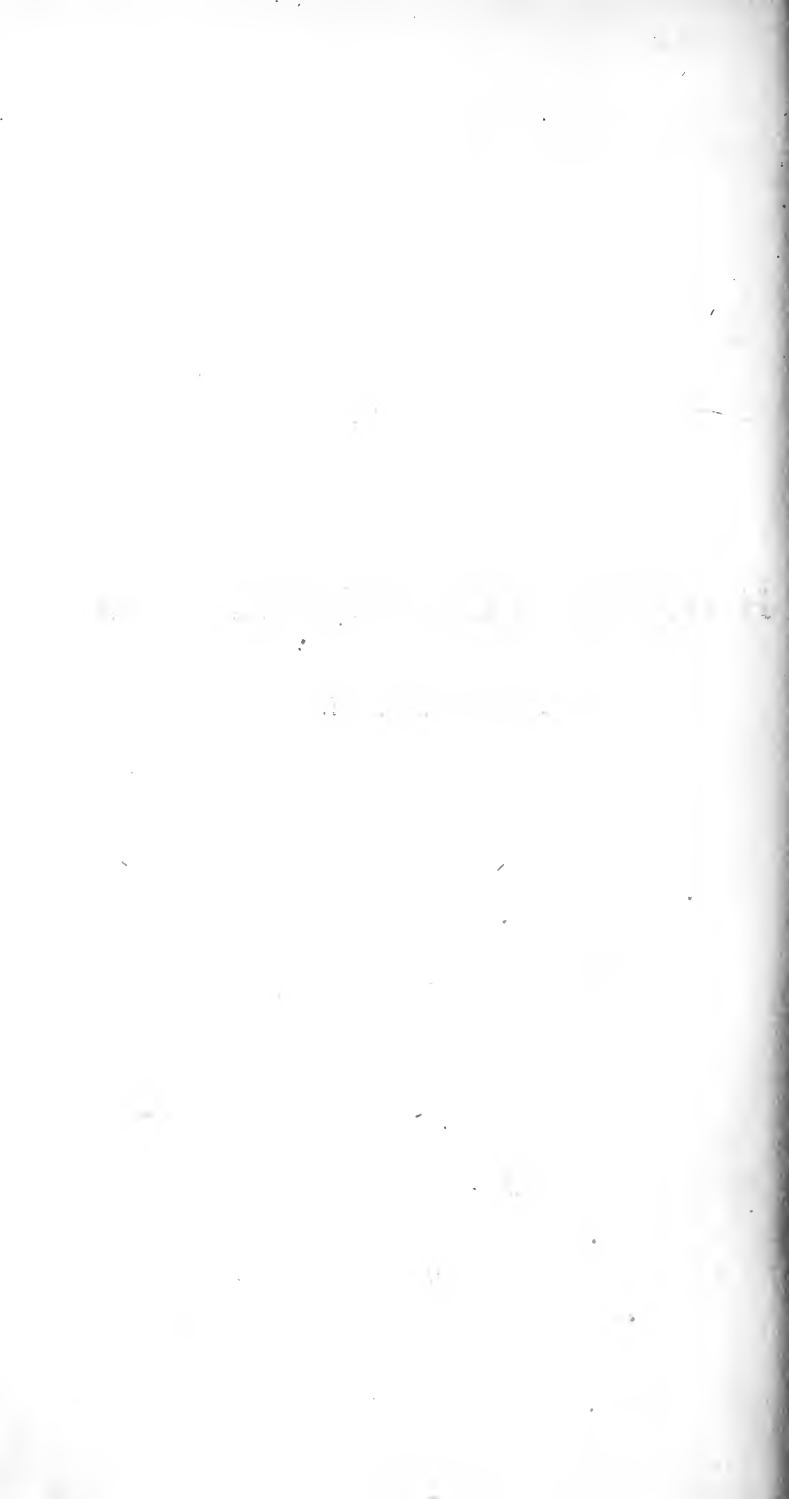
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HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO SIXTH.



HAROLD THE DAUNTLESS.

CANTO SIXTH.

WELL do I hope that this my minstrel tale
Will tempt no traveller from southern fields,
Whether in tilbury, barouche, or mail,
To view the Castle of these Seven proud Shields.
Small confirmation its condition yields
To Meneville's high lay,—No towers are seen
On the wild heath, but those that Fancy builds,
And, save a fosse which tracks the moor with green,
Is nought remains to tell of what may there have been.
And yet grave authors, with the no small waste
Of their grave time, have dignified the spot

By theories, to prove the fortress placed

By Roman bands, to curb the invading Scot.

Hutchinson, Horsley, Camden, I might quote,

But rather chuse the theory less civil

Of boors, who, origin of things forgot,

Refer still to the origin of evil,

And for their master-mason chuse that master-fiend
the Devil.

II.

Therefore, I say, it was on fiend-built towers

That stout Count Harold bent his wondering gaze,

When evening dew was on the heather flowers,

And the last sunbeams badè the mountain blaze,

And tinged the battlements of other days

With a bright level light ere sinking down.—

Illumined thus, the dauntless Dane surveys

The Seven proud Shields that o'er the portal frown,

And on their blazons traced high marks of old renown.

A wolf North Wales had on his armour-coat,
And Rhys of Powis-land a couchant stag ;
Strath-Clwyd's strange emblem was a stranded boat,
Donald of Galloway a trotting nag :
A corn-sheaf gilt was fertile Lodon's brag ;
A dudgeon-dagger was by Dunmail worn ;
Northumbrian Adolf gave a sea-beat crag
Surmounted by a cross—such signs were borne
Upon these antique shields, all wasted now and worn.

III.

These scann'd, Count Harold sought the castle-door,
Whose ponderous bolts were rusted to decay ;
Yet till that hour adventurous knight forbore
The unobstructed passage to essay.
More strong than armed warders in array,
And obstacle more sure than bolt or bar,
Sate in the portal Terror and Dismay,
While Superstition, who forbade to war

With foes of other mould than mortal clay,
Cast spells across the gate, and barr'd the onward way.

Vain now those spells—for soon with heavy clank
The feebly-fasten'd gate was inward push'd,
And, as it oped, through that emblazon'd rank
Of antique shields the wind of evening rush'd
With sound most like a groan, and then was hush'd.
Is none who on such spot such sounds could hear
But to his heart the blood had faster rush'd ;
Yet to bold Harold's breast that throb was dear—
It spoke of danger nigh, but had no touch of fear.

IV.

Yet Harold and his page no signs have traced
Within the castle that of danger show'd ;
For still the halls and courts were wild and waste,
As through their precincts the adventurers trode.
The seven huge towers rose stately, tall, and broad,
Each tower presenting to their scrutiny

A hall in which a king might make abode,
And fast beside, garnish'd both proud and high,
Was placed a bower for rest in which a king might lie.

As if a bridal there of late had been,
Deck'd stood the table in each gorgeous hall ;
And yet it was two hundred years, I ween,
Since date of that unhallow'd festival.

Flagons, and ewers, and standing cups, were all
Of tarnish'd gold, or silver nothing clear,
With throne begilt, and canopy of pall,
And tapestry clothed the walls with fragments
sear,—

Frail as the spider's mesh did that rich woof appear.

V.

In every bower, as round a hearse, was hung
A dusky crimson curtain o'er the bed,
And on each couch in ghastly wise were flung
The wasted reliques of a monarch dead ;

Barbaric ornaments around were spread,
Vests twined with gold, and chains of precious
stone,
And golden circlets, meet for monarch's head ;
While grinn'd, as if in scorn amongst them thrown,
The wearer's fleshless scull, alike with dust bestrown.

For these were they who, drunken with delight,
On pleasure's opiate pillow laid their head,
For whom the bride's shy footstep, slow and light,
Was changed ere morning to the murderer's tread.
For human bliss and woe in the frail thread
Of human life are all so closely twined,
That till the shears of fate the texture shred,
The close succession cannot be disjoin'd,
Nor dare we from one hour judge that which comes
behind.

VI.

But where the work of vengeance had been done,
In that seventh chamber, was a sterner sight ;

There of the witch-brides lay each skeleton,
Still in the posture, as to death when dight.
For this lay prone, by one blow slain outright ;
And that, as one who struggled long in dying ;
One bony hand held knife as if to smite ;
One bent on fleshless knees as mercy crying ;
One lay across the door, as kill'd in act of flying.

The stern Dane smiled this charnel-house to see,
For his chafed thought return'd to Metelill ;—
And “ Well,” he said, “ hath woman's perfidy,
Empty as air, as water volatile,
Been here avenged.—The origin of ill
Through woman rose, the Christian doctrine saith ;
Nor deem I, Gunnar, that thy minstrel skill
Can shew example where a woman's breath
Had made a true-love vow, and, tempted, kept her
faith.”—

VII.

The minstrel boy half smiled, half sigh'd,
And his half-filling eyes he dried,
And said, " The theme I should but wrong,
Unless it were my dying song,
(Our Scalds have said in dying hour
The Northern harp has treble power,)
Else could I tell of woman's faith
Defying danger, scorn, and death.
Firm was that faith,—as diamond stone
Pure and unflaw'd,—her love unknown,
And unrequited ;—firm and pure,
Her stainless faith could all endure ;
From clime to clime,—from place to place,—
Through want, and danger, and disgrace,
A wanderer's wayward steps could trace.—
All this she did, and guerdon none
Required, save that her burial-stone

Should make at length the secret known,
' Thus hath a faithful woman done.'
Not in each breast such truth is laid,
But Eivir was a Danish maid."—

VIII.

" Thou art a wild enthusiast," said
Count Harold, " for thy Danish maid ;
And yet, young Gunnar, I will own
Her's were a faith to rest upon.
But Eivir sleeps beneath her stone,
And all resembling her are gone.
What maid e'er shew'd such constancy
In plighted faith, like thine to me ?
But couch thee, boy ; the darksome shade
Falls thickly round, nor be dismay'd
Because the dead are by.
They were as we ; our little day
O'erspent, and we shall be as they."

Yet near me, Gunnar, be thou laid,
Thy couch upon my mantle made,
That thou may'st think, should fear invade,
Thy master slumbers nigh."—
Thus couch'd they in that dread abode,
Until the beams of dawning glow'd.

IX.

An alter'd man Lord Harold rose,
When he beheld that dawn uncloset—
There's trouble in his eyes,
And traces on his brow and cheek
Of mingled awe and wonder speak :
“ My page,” he said, “ arise ;—
Leave we this place, my page.”—Nor more
He utter'd till the castle-door
They cross'd—but there he paused and said,
“ My wildness hath awaked the dead—
Disturb'd the sacred tomb !—

Methought this night I stood on high,
Where Hecla roars in middle sky,
And in her cavern'd gulphs could spy:

 The central place of doom !

And there before my mortal eye
Souls of the dead came flitting by,
Whom fiends, with many a fiendish cry,

 Bore to that evil den !

My eyes grew dizzy, and my brain,
Was wilder'd, as the elvish train,
With shriek and howl, dragg'd on amain.

 Those who had late been men.

X.

“ With haggard eyes and streaming hair,
Jutta, the Sorceress, was there,
And there pass'd Wulfstane, lately slain,
All crush'd and foul with bloody stain.—
More had I seen, but that uprose
A whirlwind wild, and swept the snows ;

And with such sound as when at need
A champion spurs his horse to speed,
Three armed knights rush on, who lead
Caparison'd a sable steed.
Sable their harness, and there came
Through their closed visors sparks of flame.
The first proclaim'd in sounds of fear,
' Harold the Dauntless, welcome here !'
The next cried ' Jubilee ! we've won
Count Witikind the Waster's son !'
And the third rider sternly spoke,
' Mount, in the name of Zernebock !—
From us, O Harold, were thy powers,—
Thy strength, thy dauntlessness, are ours ;
Nor think, a vassal thou of hell,
With hell canst strive.' The fiend spoke true !
My inmost soul the summons knew,
As captives know the knell,
That says the headsman's sword is bare,
And with an accent of despair
Commands them quit their cell.

I felt resistance was in vain,
My foot had that fell stirrup ta'en,
My hand was on the fatal mane,
 When to my rescue sped
That Palmer's visionary form,
And—like the passing of a storm—
 The demons yell'd and fled!

XI.

“ His sable cowl, flung back, reveal'd
The features it before conceal'd ;
 And, Gunnar, I could find
In him whose counsels strove to stay
So oft my course on wilful way,
 My father Witikind !
Doom'd for his sins, and doom'd for mine,
A wanderer upon earth to pine
Until his son shall turn to grace,
And smooth for him a resting-place !—

Gunnar, he must not haunt in vain
This world of wretchedness and pain :
I'll tame my wilful heart to live
In peace—to pity and forgive—
And thou, for so the vision said,
Must in thy Lord's repentance aid.
Thy mother was a prophetess,
He said, who by her skill could guess
How close the fatal textures join
Which knit thy thread of life with mine ;
Then, dark, he hinted of disguise
She framed to cheat too curious eyes,
That not a moment might divide
Thy fated footsteps from my side.
Methought, while thus my sire did teach,
I caught the meaning of his speech,
Yet seems its purport doubtful now.”—
His hand then sought his thoughtful brow.—
Then first he mark'd, that in the tower
His glove was left at waking hour.

XII.

Trembling at first, and deadly pale,
Had Gunnar heard the vision'd tale ;
But when he learn'd the dubious close,
He blush'd like any opening rose,
And, glad to hide his tell-tale cheek,
Hied back that glove of mail to seek ;
When soon a shriek of deadly dread
Summon'd his master to his aid.

XIII.

What sees Count Harold in that bower,
So late his resting-place ?—
The semblance of the Evil Power,
Adored by all his race !
Odinn in living form stood there,
His cloak the spoils of Polar bear ;
For plummy crest, a meteor shed
Its gloomy radiance o'er his head,

Yet veil'd its hagard majesty
To the wild lightnings of his eye.
Such height was his, as when in stone
O'er Upsal's giant altar shown ;
 So flow'd his hoary beard ;
Such was his lance of mountain-pine,
So did his sevenfold buckler shine ;
 But when his voice he rear'd,
Deep, without harshness, slow and strong,
The powerful accents roll'd along,
And, while he spoke, his hand was laid
On captive Gunnar's shrinking head.

XIV.

“ Harold,” he said, “ what rage is thine
To quit the worship of thy line,
 To leave thy Warrior God ?—
With me is glory or disgrace,
Mine are the onset and the chase,

Embattled hosts before my face
Are wither'd by a nod.
Wilt thou then forfeit that high seat,
Deserved by many a dauntless feat
Among the heroes of thy line,
Eric and fiery Thorarine?—
Thou wilt not. Only I can give
The joys for which the valiant live,
Victory and vengeance—only I
Can give the joys for which they die,—
The immortal tilt—the banquet full,
The brimming draught from foeman's scull.
Mine art thou, witness this thy glove,
The faithful pledge of vassal's love.”—

XV.

“ Tempter,” said Harold, firm of heart,
“ I charge thee hence ! whate'er thou art,
I do defy thee—and resist
The kindling frenzy of my breast,

Waked by thy words ; and of my mail
Nor glove, nor buckler, splent, nor nail,
Shall rest with thee—that youth release,
And God, or Demon, part in peace.”—
“ Eivir,” the Shape replied, “ is mine,
Mark’d in the birth-hour with my sign.
Think’st thou that priest with drops of spray
Could wash that blood-red mark away ?
Or that a borrow’d sex and name
Can abrogate a Godhead’s claim ?”—
Thrill’d this strange speech through Harold’s brain,
He clench’d his teeth in high disdain,
For not his new-born faith subdued
Some tokens of his ancient mood.—
“ Now, by the hope so lately given
Of better trust and purer heaven,
I will assail thee, fiend !”—Then rose
His mace, and with a storm of blows
The mortal and the demon close.

XVI.

Smoke roll'd above, fire flash'd around,
Darken'd the sky and shook the ground ;

 But not the artillery of hell,
The bickering lightning, nor the rock
Of turrets to the earthquake's shock,

 Could Harold's courage quell.

Sternly the Dane his purpose kept,
And blows on blows resistless heap'd,

 Till quail'd that demon form,
And—for his power to hurt or kill
Was bounded by a higher will—

 Evanish'd in the storm !
Nor paused the Champion of the North,
But raised, and bore his Eivir forth
From that wild scene of fiendish strife,
To light, to liberty, and life !

XVII.

He placed her on a bank of moss,

 A silver runnel bubbled by,

And new-born thoughts his soul engross,

And tremors, yet unknown, across

 His stubborn sinews fly,

The while with timid hand the dew

Upon her brow and neck he threw,

And mark'd how life with rosy hue

On her pale cheek revived anew,

 And glimmer'd in her eye.

Inly he said, " That silken tress,

What blindness mine that could not guess,

Or how could page's rugged dress

 That bosom's pride belie ?

O, dull of heart, through wild and wave

In search of blood and death to rave,

 With such a partner nigh !"—

XVIII.

Then in the mirror'd pool he peer'd,
Blamed his rough locks and shaggy beard,
The stains of recent conflict clear'd,—
 And thus the Champion proved,
That he fears now who never fear'd,
 And loves who never loved.
And Eivir—life is on her cheek,
And yet she will not move or speak,
 Nor will her eye-lid fully ope ;
Perchance it loves, that half-shut eye,
Through its long fringe, reserved and shy,
Affection's opening dawn to spy ;
And the deep blush, which bids its dye
O'er cheek, and brow, and bosom fly,
 Speaks shame-facedness and hope.

XIX.

But vainly seems the Dane to seek
For terms his new-born love to speak,—

For words, save those of wrath and wrong,
Till now were strangers to his tongue ;
So, when he raised the blushing maid,
In blunt and honest terms he said,—
(’Twere well that maids, when lovers woo,
Heard none more soft, were all as true,)
“ Eivir ! since thou for many a day
Hast follow’d Harold’s wayward way,
It is but meet that in the line
Of after-life I follow thine.
To-morrow is Saint Cuthbert’s tide,
And we will grace his altar’s side,
A Christian knight and Christian bride ;
And of Witikind’s son shall the marvel be said,
That on the same morn he was christen’d and wed.”

END OF CANTO SIXTH.

CONCLUSION.

AND now, Ennui, what ails thee, weary maid ?

And why these listless looks of yawning sorrow ?

No need to turn the page, as if 'twere lead,

Or fling aside the volume till to-morrow.—

Be cheer'd—'tis ended—and I will not borrow,

To try thy patience more, one anecdote

From Bartholine, or Perinskiold, or Snorro.

Then pardon thou thy minstrel, who hath wrote

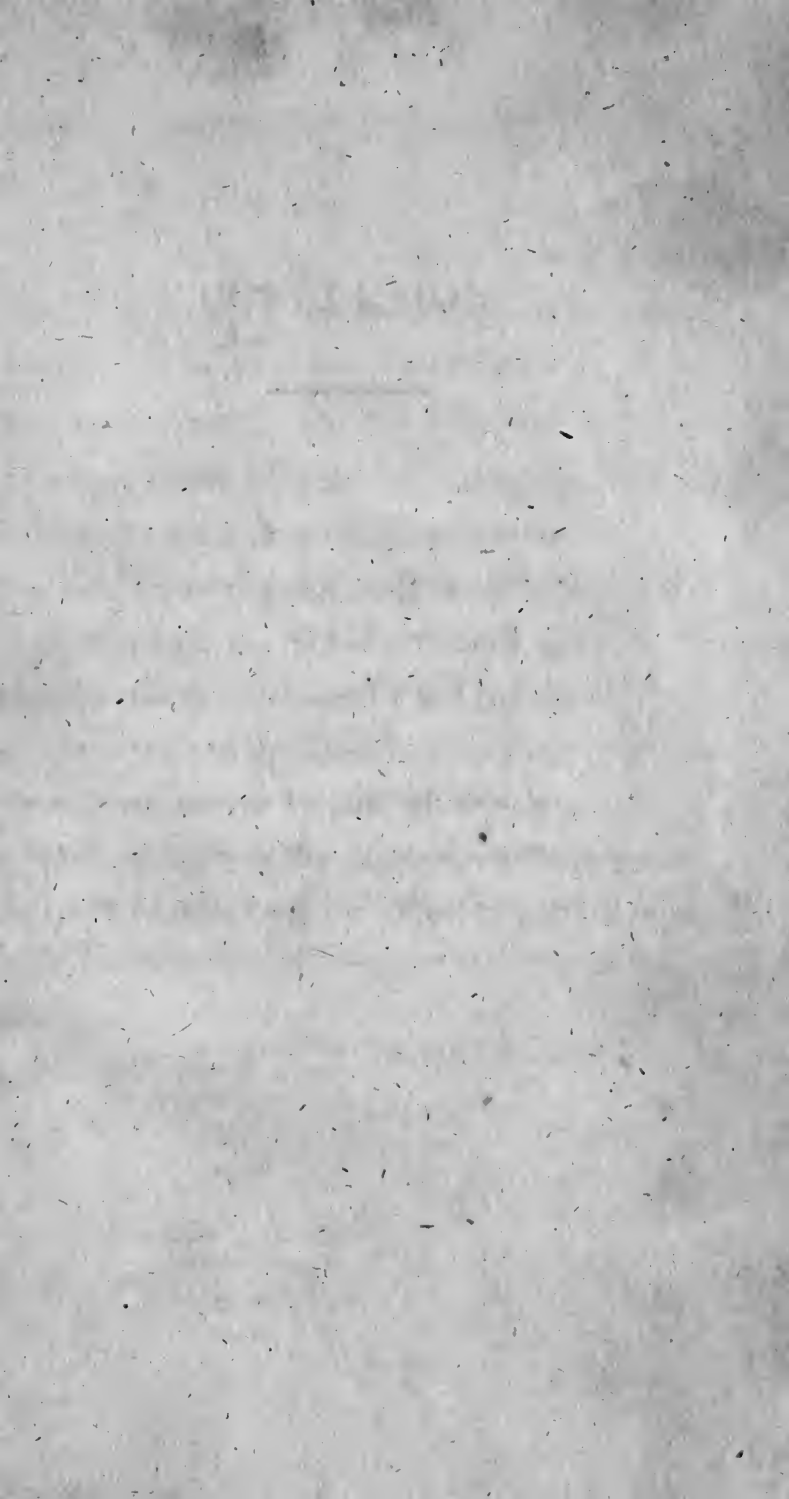
A Tale six cantos long, yet scorn'd to add a note.

END OF VOLUME FIFTH.

EDINBURGH :

Printed by James Ballantyne & Co.



















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