

**WALTER
SCOTT**

SCOTT'S LADY
OF THE LAKE

Walter Scott

Scott's Lady of the Lake

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INTRODUCTION

Walter Scott, the ninth of a family of twelve children, was born at Edinburgh in August, 1771. His first consciousness of existence dated from the time when he was sent, a lame, delicate child, to Sandyknowe, the residence of his paternal grandfather. Here he “was often carried out and laid down beside the old shepherd among the crags or rocks round which he fed his sheep.” If Scott’s genius was late in flowering, who can say that the budding did not begin in that early, close companionship with the Highland country which he was to reproduce so vividly in his verse and fiction?

With strength increased by open-air life, although still slightly lame, we find him later a sturdy, active, not over-studious boy at school at Edinburgh and Kelso, and at fifteen beginning in his father’s office the legal studies which he continued at the university.

Referring to the time after leaving the high school, when he made the acquaintance of Tasso’s “Jerusalem Delivered,” Percy’s “Reliques,” and the best works of English fiction, Scott says, “To this period I can trace distinctly the awakening of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never deserted me. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins or remains of our fathers’ piety or splendor, became within me an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, I would willingly have gratified by traveling half over the globe.”

His gigantic memory had always appropriated most eagerly the heroic and romantic elements of verse, tale, and history, from the days when, a child, he read Pope’s translation of Homer aloud to his mother, to the time when he hunted ballads and chased traditions with the keen zest of a scholar and an antiquary.

The first notable outcome of these researches was his “Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,” published in 1802. To this collection of ancient Border ballads, which he had spent years in collecting, were added some spirited new ones which he had deftly shaped to the old models. This form of poetic expression was especially suited to the genius of Scott, and the class of subjects to which it was usually adapted had long been the object of his enthusiastic study.

The amplification, then, of the ballad to the proportions of the more pretentious metrical romance came by a natural process of crystallization of the elements of a rare power, profound research, and inspiring themes.

The first of the more ambitious efforts of Scott was the “Lay of the Last Minstrel,” which was published in 1805. This became immediately and generally popular, and paved the way for the favorable reception of later productions. In 1808 “Marmion,” the greatest poetical work of Scott, appeared. This was so enthusiastically received, that a certain friend urged him to be satisfied with such unexampled success, and refrain from publishing anything more, lest he impair his prestige. To this he replied, “If I fail, it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and I will write prose for life: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed,

“Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk, and the feather, and a’!”

In this confident, buoyant spirit he made another venture, “The Lady of the Lake,” published in 1810; and its extraordinary success justified his expectations. How sincere and widespread was

the enthusiastic appreciation of this poem may be judged from the following instance, mentioned in Lockhart's "Life of Scott:" "In the course of the day, when 'The Lady of the Lake' first reached Sir Adam Fergusson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery, somewhere, no doubt, on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground. While they kept that attitude, the captain, kneeling at the head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza when the French shot struck the bank close above them." We are not surprised at the soldierly tribute to the power of a poet "through whose head a regiment of horse had been exercising since he was five years old," whose sympathies had always been in touch with heroic achievement and chivalrous enterprise, and whose poems rang "with the quick, metrical tramp of his own moss-troopers;" but this was only a fractional though precious part of the applause that greeted him. "The whole country rang with the praises of the poet; crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and, as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighborhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors."

Scott, in speaking of this poem, says, "The ancient manners, the habits and customs, of the aboriginal race by whom the Highlands of Scotland were inhabited, had always appeared to me peculiarly adapted to poetry. The change in their manners, too, had taken place almost within my own time, or at least I had learned many particulars concerning the ancient state of the Highlands from the old men of the last generation. I had also read a great deal, seen much, and heard more, of the romantic country where I was in the habit of spending every autumn; and the scenery of Loch Katrine was connected with the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days. This poem, the action of which lay among scenes so beautiful, and so deeply imprinted upon my recollections, was a labor of love; and it was no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced. The frequent custom of James IV., and particularly of James V., of walking through the kingdom in disguise, afforded me the hint of an incident which never fails to be interesting if managed with the slightest address or dexterity."

The high-water mark of Scott's popularity as a poet was reached with "The Lady of the Lake." In 1813 he published "Rokeby," and in 1814 "The Lord of the Isles." In the latter year "Waverley" appeared anonymously; and with this prose romance began Scott's career as a novelist, which extended through fourteen years. In this period of time he wrote twenty-three novels, besides some other works of minor importance.

"The land of the lakes and the mountains, and of the brave men," as the old Scots called their country, included the two great divisions, the Highlands and the Borders, which were so much wilder and more barbarous than the others, that they might be said to be altogether without law. Although nominally subject to the King of Scotland, yet they were so untamable that the enforcement of justice was almost as difficult as the subjugation of a foreign people.

The Highlands, rocky and mountainous parts of the country, comprised a large share of the north of Scotland. It was into these pathless wilds that the Romans drove the ancient Britons, and it was from these retreats that the fugitives afterward sallied forth to harass their conquerors.

The language of the Highlands, the Gaelic, was totally different from that of the Lowlands, which resembled English. The dress of the mountaineers also differed from that of the Lowlanders. They wore a plaid or mantle of frieze, or of a striped stuff called tartan, one end of which, being wrapped around the waist, formed a short petticoat, which descended to the knee, while the rest they folded around them like a sort of cloak. Their feet were covered with buskins made of rawhide; and the usual head covering was a cap called a "bonnet." They went always armed. Their weapons were bows and arrows, large swords, poleaxes, and daggers for close fight. For defense they had a round wooden shield, or target, stuck full of nails, and their great men had shirts of mail composed of links of iron. The common men sometimes wore a jacket of leather, having plates of metal stitched into it, but usually had no armor.

The Highlanders were divided into clans or tribes. All members of a clan supposed themselves to be descended from the same common ancestor, whose name distinguished them from other clans. Thus, one tribe was called MacDonald, which signifies the sons of Donald; another MacGregor, the sons of Gregor; MacNeil, the sons of Neil; and so on. They yielded unquestioning obedience to their chief, even when their submission to his orders implied disloyalty to the King. Each tribe had its own special territory, any invasion of which was punished as severely as though the foe had been of another nationality. Macaulay says of the sentiment that actuated them, "Their intense attachment to their own tribe and to their own patriarch, though politically an evil, partook of the nature of virtue. The sentiment was misdirected and ill-regulated, but still it was heroic. There must be some elevation of soul in a man who loves the society of which he is a member, and the leader whom he follows, with a love stronger than the love of life. It was true that the Highlander had few scruples about shedding the blood of an enemy; but it was not less true that he had high notions of the duty of observing faith to allies, and hospitality to guests."

The Highlanders were continually at war with the Lowlanders. They did not regard their plundering raids upon the richer grounds of the Lowlands as robbery, but as rightful recovery of possessions which had been wrongfully wrested from their ancestors. The Lowlanders, equal in courage and superior in discipline, could not be easily overcome, and thus there was almost constant war or discord between them.

Some of the more powerful Highland chiefs set themselves up as independent sovereigns, and even made alliances with the English in their own name. Macaulay says that "national enmities have always been fiercest among Borderers; and the enmity between the Highland Borderer and the Lowland Borderer along the whole frontier was the growth of ages, and was kept fresh by constant injuries." The Borderers were also divided into clans, and their devotion to their chieftain was complete. From their proximity to England, and their frequent incursions into its territory, they added to the perplexities of Scottish rule, which were already great by reason of constant internal dissension.

The Highlanders fought always on foot: the Borderers were all horsemen. The Borderers spoke the same language as the Lowlanders, wore the same sort of dress, and carried the same arms. Being accustomed to fight against the English, they were also much better disciplined than the Highlanders; but, in point of obedience, they were not much different from the clans of the north.

Military officers, called "wardens," were appointed along the Borders to keep these unruly people in order; but, as these wardens were generally chiefs of clans, they did not do much to mend the evil. The good Lord James of Douglas was intrusted with a great part of the charge of the Borders by Robert the Bruce. He was faithful to his trust, but the clan thus acquired power which was afterward dangerous to the country.

The hostility between the Highlanders and the Lowlanders was only equalled by the hatred both felt toward their Saxon neighbors, and it was not till 1745 that Scotland was subjugated by England. The conquest was so complete that even the national dress was abolished. The old Gaelic institutions and manners were modified, and the power of the clan chieftain was broken. With the last struggle of the exiled Stuart party, which ended in defeat at Culloden, began a new era for Scotland. To the old reign of lawlessness and disorder succeeded measures that were wisely coercive, and which finally secured a unity of Scottish interests, and greatly augmented prosperity in the entire kingdom.

In August, 1502, James IV. of Scotland married Princess Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. of England. It was hoped that this alliance would be the means of ending the bitter hostility which had existed between Scotland and England since the time of Edward I. A temporary peace ensued, but it was not till a century later that a descendant of the Scottish James sat on the throne of England.

The only son of James IV. and Margaret who survived infancy was James V. (James Fitz-James of the poem). He was born in 1513, and crowned when less than ten years old, his father having been slain at the battle of Flodden Field, which had resulted so disastrously for Scotland.

By the will of James IV., Margaret was to be queen regent as long as she remained a widow. In 1514 she lost the regency and greatly impaired her influence by marrying Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus. Bitter enmity already existed between the head of the Douglas clan and other Scottish nobles; and, when Angus had the added dignity of being the husband of the queen regent, the jealousy and rivalry were greatly increased.

After losing the regency, Margaret was obliged to surrender the control of her son to Parliament. The Duke of Albany, the younger son of James III., was appointed regent during the minority of the King. Albany, who had spent many years at the luxurious court of France, returned to his native country with no appreciation of its real needs, and little sympathy with the Scotch. He failed to administer the government in a satisfactory manner. Angus plotted to secure control of affairs, and to gain custody of the young King. He assumed all the authority of a regent, without possessing any claim to the title, and kept James under close guard while pretending to govern the realm in his name.

The King was very restive under this irksome and unlawful restraint, and sympathized strongly with efforts which were made for his release. In 1526 two armed attempts were made to liberate him. Both resulted in failure. What could not be accomplished by force was finally secured by a cleverly planned stratagem of the royal captive; and he escaped to Stirling Castle, where devoted adherents awaited him. Two months later, Parliament declared the estates of the Douglasses forfeited to the Crown, and there was neither place nor grace left in Scotland for any bearing the obnoxious name.

James even extended his animosity to one Archibald Douglas of Kilspendie (the Douglas of the poem), to whom he had been greatly attached. A touching story is told of the return of the old man, who had grown weary of his exile in England, and longed for a sight of Scotland and the former friendly regard of the King, whom he had never personally offended. He was doomed to undeserved disappointment, however, as James was unrelenting in his resentment, and would not modify any of the harsh conditions of his oath against the hated Douglas clan.

Although one of the most formidable obstacles to the exercise of royal rule disappeared with the crushing of the power of the Douglasses, James still met much opposition from the nobility.

There were many abuses connected with the irregular rule exercised during his minority, and portions of the kingdom were in a condition of great lawlessness, which made it necessary for him to resort to severe measures. A five-years' truce was concluded with England in 1528, which allowed him to devote himself to the internal interests of Scotland. The following year he began to reduce the rebellious Borders to submission. By force and by craft he brought them into his power, putting to death many of the great nobles, and greatly limiting the privileges of those he allowed to live, until some degree of order was established.

After he had subdued the Borders, he proceeded against the Highland chieftains with equal rigor. The insubordination which had prevailed in that part of Scotland yielded to the unsparing severity of James, and life and property became measurably secure.

The King was greatly aided in the execution of his plans by the clergy, whom he favored in many ways, especially by countenancing the repression of heresy, – a course quite contrary to that pursued by his uncle, Henry VIII.

Popular sentiment also supported this “King of the Commons,” as he was called from his habit of mingling with the common people, and taking a practical interest in their welfare. He was accustomed to travel over the kingdom in disguise, that he might learn the true condition of his subjects, and investigate the administration of justice. This custom, added to his fondness for hunting, gave him an intimate acquaintance with his kingdom and his people.

Scott says of him, "He was handsome in his person, and resembled his father in the fondness for military exercises and the spirit of chivalrous honor which James IV. loved to display. He also inherited his father's love of justice, and his desire to establish and enforce wise and equal laws... He was a well-educated and accomplished man, and, like his ancestor James I., was a poet and a musician. He had, however, his defects. He avoided his father's failing of profusion, having no hoarded treasures to employ on pomp and show, but he rather fell into the opposite fault, being of a temper too parsimonious; and, though he loved state and display, he endeavored to gratify that taste as economically as possible, so that he has been censured as rather close and covetous... It must be added, that, when provoked, he was unrelenting even to cruelty; for which he had some apology, considering the ferocity of the subjects over whom he reigned. But, on the whole, James V. was an amiable man and a good sovereign."

Henry VIII. endeavored to enlist the aid of James in an organized resistance to the authority of the Church. The Scottish King apparently favored, in a measure, his uncle's policy; but his alliance with France restored and increased his adherence to papal rule.

The failure of James to keep an appointment made for meeting King Henry at York offended the latter, who accused him of dealing treacherously, and declared war against Scotland. Many of the Scottish nobles were disaffected, and the army was disorganized. At Solway Moss, James was openly defied by his nobility. Scott says regarding this bitter humiliation, "He shut himself up in the palace of Falkland, and refused to listen to any consolation. A burning fever, the consequence of his grief and shame, seized on the unfortunate monarch. They brought him tidings that his wife had given birth to a daughter; but he only replied, 'Is it so?' reflecting on the alliance which had placed the Stuart family on the throne. 'Then God's will be done. It came with a lass, and it will go with a lass.' With these words, presaging the extinction of his house, he made a signal of adieu to his courtiers, spoke little more, but turned his face to the wall, and died [1542] of the most melancholy of all diseases, a broken heart."

The story of "The Lady of the Lake" is briefly as follows: —

Canto First.— A huntsman who has distanced his companions and lost his steed, which, urged beyond endurance, has fallen dead in the Trosachs, has finally wandered over rocky ways to the shore of Loch Katrine. Here he winds his horn, hoping the sounds may reach his comrades. In response, a skiff appears rowed by a maiden, who thinks the blast was from her father's horn. Although at first startled, she is reassured by the "wilderer wanderer's" explanation, and proffers the hospitality of her father's dwelling. They row across the lake to the island home, where, in the absence of the chieftain, Ellen, and the mistress of the mansion, the graceful Dame Margaret, dispense true Highland hospitality. He styles himself Knight of Snowdown, James Fitz-James, but fails to learn the names of his hosts. "The stranger's bed of heather" was spread for the tired huntsman; but his rest was disturbed by "broken dreams," in which the exiled Douglasses played a prominent part.

Canto Second.— The stranger takes his leave in the early morning. Allan, the old minstrel, tunes his harp to a parting song, and Ellen watches the knight "wind slowly round the hill." Then, chiding herself for a momentary interest in him, she bids Allan sing in praise of the Græmes, one of whom is her lover. The old man is brooding over the ominous fallen sword, and cannot respond. He foresees the demand of Roderick Dhu, and distrusts the parting guest. Their conversation is interrupted by the music of the pibroch and the boat-song, which precede the landing of her cousin Roderick Dhu and his rough followers. Lady Margaret and her maids come to meet him. Ellen, quite willing to avoid her cousin, eagerly responds to her father's bugle horn, and hastens to meet him in her skiff. Malcolm Græme accompanies him. Roderick is informed that the King is preparing to deal with the Highland freebooters as severely as he has already done with the Border chieftains, and that the retreat of the outlawed Douglas has been discovered. Douglas is ready to withdraw with his daughter, thus lessening the danger of Roderick. The latter demands his alliance and the

hand of his daughter. Both are refused by Douglas. A contest arises between Roderick and Græme, which results in the departure of the latter for the mainland, which he reaches by swimming from the island.

Canto Third.— On the following morning occurs the consecration, with weird ritual, of the Fiery Cross. Roderick sends it forth by his henchman Malise to summon his followers to a gathering in Lanrick mead. It is borne eastward, passing from band to band, stopping for neither bridal nor burial, till the entire clan is summoned to the appointed place. The same morning Douglas departs with his daughter and Allan-Bane to seek refuge in the Goblin-cave on the side of Benvenue. Roderick passes the cavern on his way to the rally in Lanrick mead, and listens, as he lingers, to the sound of Ellen's voice in a hymn to the Virgin.

Canto Fourth.— The Highland clans have responded to the summons of the Fiery Cross. The Lowlanders are at Doune, ready to advance. Brian, the hermit monk, has tried a strange augury to determine on which side success shall be. He prophesies that that party shall be victorious which first sheds blood. Meantime Douglas has left his cavern retreat on some mission not made known to Ellen and Allan-Bane. They are instructed, however, to meet him at Cambus-kenneth if he does not return by nightfall. Ellen is anxious for her father's safety, believing he has gone to secure the release of Malcolm Græme. She scarcely heeds the song of Allan-Bane, who endeavors to cheer her. While they are speaking, Fitz-James appears. He declares his love for Ellen, and urges her to escape with him to Stirling. She replies by a frank avowal of her love for Malcolm Græme. The knight's sympathy is enlisted, and he leaves with her a ring, given him by the King for saving his life. This, he says, if presented to the King, will secure his protection for her and hers. Ellen and Allan-Bane endeavor to warn Fitz-James against the guide who departs with him. Their suspicions are confirmed by Blanche of Devan, a woman who has been half crazed since Roderick Dhu murdered her bridegroom in a wild Lowland raid. Her incoherent song is meant as a warning to the wandering knight in the Lowland dress. He charges Murdoch with treacherous intent. The guide seeks to escape, but not without aiming an arrow at Fitz-James. It grazes his crest, and lodges in the heart of Blanche of Devan. Fitz-James slays Murdoch, and returns to soothe the dying maniac. He promises to avenge her, and fastens to his bonnet a braid of her own and her bridegroom's hair, which he has dipped in her blood. Continuing his way alone after nightfall, he comes upon the camp fire of a stranger, who gives him shelter till morning, when he promises to lead him on his journey.

Canto Fifth.— After a night's rest and a hasty "soldier meal" in the morning, the Gael conducts his guest on his way, in accordance with his promise and Highland custom. Fitz-James allays the mountaineer's apprehension of an attack by the King, but declares his hostility to Roderick Dhu, and avows his eagerness to meet him in combat. The guide is incensed at this, and sounds a signal which brings to sight armed men on every side. He then reveals himself as Roderick Dhu. He is bound by his word to conduct his guest to Coilantogle ford, and therefore dismisses his followers. When this place is reached, Roderick challenges Fitz-James, and a deadly combat ensues. Throwing away his shield, that his arms may not exceed those of his adversary, he trusts to his sword alone. Fitz-James is superior to his enemy through his knowledge of fencing, and finally overpowers him.

Fitz-James winds his horn, which is answered by four mounted attendants. He leaves the wounded man with two of them, with orders to bring him to Stirling, and hastens towards the Castle with the others. As they approach it, they perceive Douglas, who comes to surrender himself to the King, hoping thereby to secure the release of Malcolm Græme and avert the danger that threatens Roderick Dhu. The town is preparing for the burghers' sports, in which Douglas decides to join in order that he may attract the attention of the King. He surpasses all other competitors, and receives the prize from the King, who does not recognize him. Douglas endures this in silence, but he cannot refrain from resenting a huntsman's cruelty to Lufra, the hound, Ellen's companion. This results in his being seized and taken as a prisoner to the Castle. Meantime a messenger brings to the King

tidings of the rising of Clan-Alpine. He sends a hasty message to avert an encounter, as Roderick is already his prisoner in Stirling stronghold.

Canto Sixth.— “This canto introduces us to the guard room in Stirling Castle, amid the remains of the debauch which has followed the games of the previous day. While the few soldiers who remain awake are finishing their carouse, and talking over the rumors of yesterday’s battle, they are joined by one of their mates, who has been in the field, and brings with him a maiden and a minstrel (Ellen and Allan-Bane). They are at first disposed to treat the maiden roughly; but the sight of her innocent beauty, and her story of misfortune, touch the heart of one of the roughest in the company, who becomes her champion. Presently they are joined by the officer of the guard, who, at first sight of Fitz-James’s ring, commits the lady to proper care, while John of Brent, the guardsman who had interfered, grants Allan’s request to see his master; but, fancying that the minstrel is one of Roderick’s clansmen, he shows him into the wrong cell, where he finds the wounded chief. After anxious inquiries as to the safety of his kindred, Roderick asks anew of the fight; and the minstrel, in spirited verse, sings of the battle of Beal’ an Duine, whose issue was left doubtful by the arrival of a messenger from the King with orders to stay the fight. But before he had finished his song the stern spirit had fled, and the minstrel’s harp changes its tune from battle song to death dirge.

“Meanwhile Ellen waits anxiously and impatiently for her audience with the King. At last Fitz-James appears to escort her to the audience chamber. Faltering, she looks round to find the King, and sees, to her surprise, that her companion alone remains covered, and ‘Snowdown’s Knight is Scotland’s King.’ He tells her how the feud with Douglas is at an end, and that her father is now to be ‘the friend and bulwark of his throne.’ But she still has the ring, still some boon to ask. She begs for Roderick’s life, but that is past giving; and when she shrinks from further request, the King calls forth Malcolm, and throws over him a golden chain, which he gives to Ellen to keep.”
—*R. W. Taylor.*

CANTO FIRST THE CHASE

Harp of the North!¹ that moldering long hast hung
On the witch-elm² that shades St. Fillan's³ spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,
Muffling with verdant ringlet every string, —
O minstrel Harp! still must thine accents sleep?
Mid rustling leaves and fountain's murmuring,
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,⁴
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the proud.
At each according pause, was heard aloud
Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bow'd;
For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's matchless eye.

Oh, wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
Oh, wake once more! though scarce my skill command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touch'd in vain.

Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

I

The stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's⁵ rill,

¹ The poet invokes the spirit that animated the ancient Scottish minstrels, whose songs were usually accompanied by the music of the harp.

² Called also the "wizard elm," because forked twigs from the tree were used as divining rods.

³ A Scotch abbot of the seventh century.

⁴ The Romans gave the name Caledonia to that part of Scotland north of the Clyde and Forth.

⁵ St. Monan was a Scotch monk of the fourth century. The rill cannot be identified.

And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade;
But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouth'd bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II

As Chief, who hears his warder⁷ call,
"To arms! the foemen storm the wall,"
The antler'd monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery⁸ couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dewdrops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Toss'd his beam'd⁹ frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,¹⁰
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III

Yell'd on the view the opening¹² pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd the shout;

⁷ For the meaning of technical terms, colloquialisms, and unusual words not to be found in a school dictionary, [see Glossary](#) at the end of volume.

⁸ The heath or heather is a small ever-green shrub very common in the Scottish Highlands.

⁹ The head of a stag is said to be beamed after its fourth-year horns appear.

¹⁰ "Tainted gale," i.e., the wind scented with the odor of the pursuers.

¹² A pack of hounds is said to "open" when the dogs begin to bark, upon recovering the scent or catching sight of the game.

With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cower'd the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout¹³ a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken¹⁴
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,¹⁵
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

IV

Less loud the sounds of silvan war
Disturb'd the heights of Uam-Var,
And roused the cavern, where, 'tis told,
A giant made his den of old;
For ere that steep ascent was won,
High in his pathway hung the sun,
And many a gallant, stay'd perforce,
Was fain to breathe his faltering horse,
And of the trackers of the deer,
Scarce half the lessening pack was near;
So shrewdly¹⁶ on the mountain side
Had the bold burst their mettle tried.

V

The noble stag was pausing now
Upon the mountain's southern brow,
Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith.¹⁷
With anxious eye he wander'd o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And ponder'd refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copsewood gray,

¹³ A confused or boisterous gathering.

¹⁴ Sight.

¹⁵ A deep pool.

¹⁶ Severely.

¹⁷ Or Monteith, a picturesque district of Scotland watered by the river Teith.

That waved and wept on Loch Achray,
And mingled with the pine trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Benvenue.
Fresh vigor with the hope return'd,
With flying foot the heath he spurn'd,
Held westward with unwearied race,
And left behind the panting chase.

VI

'Twere long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambus-more;¹⁸
What reins were tighten'd in despair,
When rose Benledi's ridge in air;
Who flagg'd upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunn'd to stem the flooded Teith, —
For twice that day, from shore to shore,
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er.
Few were the stragglers, following far,
That reach'd the lake of Vennachar;
And when the Brigg¹⁹ of Turk was won,
The headmost horseman rode alone.

VII

Alone, but with unbated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel;²⁰
For jaded now, and spent with toil,
Emboss'd with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The laboring stag strain'd full in view.
Two dogs of black St. Hubert's breed,
Unmatch'd for courage, breath, and speed,
Fast on his flying traces came,
And all but won that desperate game;
For, scarce a spear's length from his haunch,
Vindictive toil'd the bloodhounds stanch,
Nor nearer might the dogs attain,
Nor farther might the quarry strain.
Thus up the margin of the lake,

¹⁸ An estate about two miles from Callander on the wooded banks of the Keltie.

¹⁹ Bridge.

²⁰ Spur.

Between the precipice and brake,²¹
O'er stock²² and rock their race they take.

VIII

The Hunter mark'd that mountain²³ high,
The lone lake's western boundary,
And deem'd the stag must turn to bay,²⁴
Where that huge rampart barr'd the way;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes;
For the death wound and death halloo,
Muster'd his breath, his whinyard drew; —
But thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunn'd the shock,
And turn'd him from the opposing rock;
Then, dashing down a darksome glen,
Soon lost to hound and Hunter's ken,
In the deep Trosachs²⁵ wildest nook
His solitary refuge took.
There, while close couch'd, the thicket shed
Cold dews and wild flowers on his head,
He heard the baffled dogs in vain
Rave through the hollow pass amain,
Chiding the rocks that yell'd²⁶ again.

IX

Close on the hounds the Hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanish'd game;
But, stumbling on²⁷ the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labors o'er,
Stretch'd his stiff limbs, to rise no more;

²¹ Thicket; underbrush.

²² The trunk of a tree.

²³ Ben Venue.

²⁴ "Turn to bay," i.e., to face an antagonist, when escape is no longer possible.

²⁵ "The Trosachs" is the name now applied to the valley between Lochs Katrine and Achray.

²⁶ Echoed back their barks or chidings.

²⁷ In.

Then, touch'd with pity and remorse,
He sorrow'd o'er the expiring horse.
"I little thought, when first thy rein
I slack'd upon the banks of Seine,²⁸
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed!
Woe worth²⁹ the chase, woe worth the day,
That costs thy life, my gallant gray!"

X

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.
Back limp'd, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they press'd,
With drooping tail and humbled crest;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolong'd the swelling bugle note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answer'd with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast
Till echo seem'd an answering blast;
And on the Hunter hied his way,³⁰
To join some comrades of the day;
Yet often paused, so strange the road,
And wondrous were the scenes it show'd.

XI

The western waves of ebbing day
Roll'd o'er the glen their level way;³¹
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle;

²⁸ The river which flows through Paris, France.

²⁹ Be to (from the old verb *worthen*, "to become").

³⁰ "Hied his way," i.e., hastened.

³¹ "The western waves," etc., i.e., the horizontal rays of the setting sun.

Round many an insulated³² mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower³³ which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seem'd fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod³⁴ ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lack'd they many a banner fair;
For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dewdrop sheen,³⁵
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.

XII

Boon³⁶ nature scatter'd, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cleft a narrow bower;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Gray birch and aspen³⁷ wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And, higher yet, the pine tree hung
His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrow'd sky.

³² Isolated.

³³ The Tower of Babel (see Gen. xi. 1-9).

³⁴ The many-storied tower-like temples of the Chinese and Hindoos are called "pagodas." About each story there is a balcony decorated with pendants or numerous projecting points or crests.

³⁵ Bright.

³⁶ Kind; bountiful.

³⁷ The trembling poplar, so called from the trembling of its leaves, which move with the slightest impulse of the air.

Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glist'ning streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

XIII

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

XIV

And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,³⁸
A far projecting precipice.
The broom's³⁹ tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,
In all her length far winding lay,

³⁸ Careful.

³⁹ A bushy shrub common in western Europe.

With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,⁴⁰
Floated amid the livelier light,
And mountains, that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw
Craggs, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
The fragments of an earlier world;
A wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an⁴¹ heaved high his forehead bare.

XV

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed,
And, "What a scene were here," he cried,
"For princely pomp, or churchman's pride!
On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
On yonder meadow, far away,
The turrets of a cloister gray;
How blithely might the bugle horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
Chime, when the groves were still and mute!
And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matins⁴² distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead⁴³ with every knell —
And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
Should each bewilder'd stranger call
To friendly feast, and lighted hall.

⁴⁰ Used adverbially.

⁴¹ "Little Mountain," east of Loch Katrine.

⁴² The first canonical hour of the day in the Catholic Church, beginning properly at midnight. Here referring to the striking of the hour by the "cloister" bell.

⁴³ "Drop a bead," i.e., say a prayer. The rosary used by Catholics is a string of beads by which count may be kept of the prayers recited.

XVI

“Blithe were it then to wander here!
But now, – beshrew yon nimble deer, —
Like that same hermit’s, thin and spare,
The copse must give my evening fare;
Some mossy bank my couch must be,
Some rustling oak my canopy.
Yet pass we that; the war and chase
Give little choice of resting place; —
A summer night, in greenwood spent,
Were but to-morrow’s merriment:
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better miss’d than found;
To meet with Highland plunderers here
Were worse than loss of steed or deer. —
I am alone; – my bugle strain
May call some straggler of the train;
Or, fall⁴⁴ the worst that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried.”

XVII

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

⁴⁴ Happen; befall.

And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art,
In listening mood, she seem'd to stand,
The guardian Naiad⁴⁵ of the strand.

XVIII

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,⁴⁶
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown, —
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow:
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had train'd her pace, —
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath flower dash'd the dew,
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread:
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue, —
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The list'ner held his breath to hear!

XIX

A chieftain's daughter seem'd the maid;
Her satin snood,⁴⁷ her silken plaid,⁴⁸
Her golden brooch such birth betray'd.
And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing;
And seldom o'er a breast so fair

⁴⁵ (*Nā'yād.*) In classic mythology, one of the lower female deities who presided over lakes, streams, and fountains, as the Nymphs presided over mountains, forests, and meadows.

⁴⁶ The Graces were in classic mythology three lovely sisters who attended Apollo and Venus.

⁴⁷ A band used by Scottish maidens to bind the hair.

⁴⁸ (*Plāyed.*) Several yards' length of usually checkered woolen cloth called "tartan," which the Scottish Highlanders of both sexes wound about their bodies, and which formed a characteristic feature of their national costume.

Mantled a plaid with modest care,
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.
Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true,
Than every freeborn glance confess'd
The guileless movements of her breast;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claim'd a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion pour'd a prayer,
Or tale of injury call'd forth
The indignant spirit of the North.
One only passion unreveal'd,
With maiden pride the maid conceal'd,
Yet not less purely felt the flame; —
Oh! need I tell that passion's name?

XX

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne: —
“Father!” she cried; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
A while she paused, no answer came, —
“Malcolm, was thine the blast?” the name
Less resolutely utter'd fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
“A stranger I,” the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid, alarm'd, with hasty oar,
Push'd her light shallop⁴⁹ from the shore,
And when a space was gain'd between,
Closer she drew her bosom's screen;
(So forth the startled swan would swing,
So turn to prune⁵⁰ his ruffled wing.)
Then safe, though flutter'd and amazed,
She paused, and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

⁴⁹ Boat.

⁵⁰ Trim or arrange.

XXI

On his bold visage middle age
Had slightly press'd its signet sage,⁵¹
Yet had not quench'd the open truth
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
Of hasty love, or headlong ire.
His limbs were cast in manly mold,
For hardy sports or contest bold;
And though in peaceful garb array'd,
And weaponless, except his blade,
His stately mien as well implied
A high-born heart, a martial pride,
As if a baron's crest he wore,
And sheathed in armor trode the shore.
Slighting the petty need⁵² he show'd,
He told of his benighted road;
His ready speech flow'd fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy;
Yet seem'd that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII

A while the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at length replied,
That Highland halls were open still
To wilder'd⁵³ wanderers of the hill.
"Nor think you unexpected come
To yon lone isle, our desert home;
Before the heath had lost the dew,
This morn, a couch⁵⁴ was pull'd for you;
On yonder mountain's purple head
Have ptarmigan⁵⁵ and heath cock bled,
And our broad nets have swept the mere,⁵⁶

⁵¹ Of wisdom.

⁵² Need of food.

⁵³ Bewildered.

⁵⁴ Heather, of which the Highlanders' rude couches were made.

⁵⁵ (*Tār'mī-gan.*) The white grouse.

⁵⁶ Lake.

To furnish forth your evening cheer.” —
“Now, by the rood,⁵⁷ my lovely maid,
Your courtesy has err’d,” he said;
“No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer, here by fortune tost,
My way, my friends, my courser lost,
I ne’er before, believe me, fair,
Have ever drawn your mountain air,
Till on this lake’s romantic strand
I found a fay in fairyland!”

XXIII

“I well believe,” the maid replied,
As her light skiff approach’d the side, —
“I well believe, that ne’er before
Your foot has trod Loch Katrine’s shore;
But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-Bane foretold your plight, —
A gray-hair’d sire, whose eye intent
Was on the vision’d future⁵⁸ bent.
He saw your steed, a dappled gray,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
Painted exact your form and mien,
Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,⁵⁹
That tassel’d horn so gayly gilt,
That falchion’s crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be
To grace a guest of fair degree;⁶⁰
But light I held his prophecy,
And deem’d it was my father’s horn
Whose echoes o’er the lake were borne.”

XXIV

The stranger smiled: — “Since to your home

⁵⁷ Crucifix or cross of Christ.

⁵⁸ “Vision’d future,” i.e., visions of the future.

⁵⁹ Lincoln green is a kind of cloth made in Lincoln.

⁶⁰ “Fair degree,” i.e., high rank.

A destined errant⁶¹ knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth⁶² and old,
Doom'd, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I'll lightly front each high emprise⁶³
For one kind glance of those bright eyes.
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid, with smile suppress'd and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try;
For seldom sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasp'd an oar:
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.
Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The dark'ning mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV

The stranger view'd the shore around;
'Twas all so close with copsewood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain maiden show'd
A clambering unsuspected road
That winded through the tangled screen,
And open'd on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibers swept the ground.
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower.

XXVI

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials, as around

⁶¹ Wandering.

⁶² True.

⁶³ "High emprise," i.e., dangerous adventures.

The workman's hand had readiest found;
Lopp'd off their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared.
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine trees, overhead,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And wither'd heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne,
Of mountain fir, with bark unshorn,
Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
The ivy and Idæan vine,⁶⁴
The clematis, the favor'd flower
Which boasts the name of virgin bower,
And every hardy plant could⁶⁵ bear
Loch Katrine's keen and searching air.
An instant in this porch she staid,
And gayly to the stranger said,
"On Heaven and on thy Lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII

"My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
My gentle guide, in following thee."
He cross'd the threshold – and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.
To his bold brow his spirit rush'd,
But soon for vain alarm he blush'd,
When on the floor he saw display'd,
Cause of the din, a naked blade
Dropp'd from the sheath, that careless flung,
Upon a stag's huge antlers swung;
For all around, the walls to grace,
Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
A target⁶⁶ there, a bugle here,
A battle-ax, a hunting spear,

⁶⁴ "Idæan vine," i.e., a translation of the Latin name of the red whortleberry, *Vitis Idæa*; but this is a shrub, and could not be "taught to twine."

⁶⁵ Which could.

⁶⁶ Small shield.

And broadswords, bows, and arrows store,
With the tusk'd trophies of the boar.
Here grins the wolf as when he died,
And there the wild cat's brindled hide
The frontlet of the elk adorns,
Or mantles o'er the bison's horns;
Pennons and flags defaced and stain'd,
That blackening streaks of blood retain'd,
And deerskins, dappled, dun, and white,
With otter's fur and seal's unite,
In rude and uncouth tapestry⁶⁷ all,
To garnish forth the silvan hall.

XXVIII

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
And next the fallen weapon raised: —
Few were the arms whose sinewy strength
Sufficed to stretch it forth at length:
And as the brand he poised and sway'd,
“I never knew but one,” he said,
“Whose stalwart arm might brook⁶⁸ to wield
A blade like this in battlefield.”
She sighed, then smiled and took the word:
“You see the guardian champion's sword;
As light it trembles in his hand,
As in my grasp a hazel wand;
My sire's tall form might grace the part
Of Ferragus, or Ascabart;⁶⁹
But in the absent giant's hold
Are women now, and menials old.”

XXIX

The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court;
To whom, though more than kindred knew,⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Hangings used to decorate the walls of a room.

⁶⁸ Endure.

⁶⁹ Ferragus and Ascabart were two giants of romantic fable. The former appears in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*; the latter in the *History of Bevis of Hampton*. His effigy may be seen guarding the gate at Southampton.

⁷⁰ Dame Margaret was Roderick Dhu's mother, but had acted as mother to Ellen, and held a higher place in her affections than

Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid
That hospitality could claim,
Though all unask'd his birth and name.
Such then the reverence to a guest,
That fellest⁷¹ foe might join the feast,
And from his deadliest foeman's door
Unquestion'd turn, the banquet o'er.
At length his rank the stranger names,
"The Knight of Snowdown,⁷² James Fitz-James;⁷³
Lord of a barren heritage,⁷⁴
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords had held with toil;
His sire had fall'n in such turmoil,
And he, God wot,⁷⁵ was forced to stand
Oft for his right with blade in hand.
This morning with Lord Moray's⁷⁶ train
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here."

XXX

Fain would the Knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire.
Well show'd the elder lady's mien
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks display'd
The simple grace of silvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Show'd she was come of gentle race.
'Twere strange in ruder rank to find
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.
Each hint the Knight of Snowdown gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;
Or Ellen, innocently gay,
Turn'd all inquiry light away: —

the ties of blood would warrant.

⁷¹ Bitterest.

⁷² An old name of Stirling Castle.

⁷³ Fitz means "son" in Norman French.

⁷⁴ "By the misfortunes of the earlier Jameses and the internal feuds of the Scottish chiefs, the kingly power had become little more than a name."

⁷⁵ Knows.

⁷⁶ A half-brother of James V. (James Fitz-James).

“Weird women we! by dale and down⁷⁷
We dwell, afar from tower and town.
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
On wandering knights our spells we cast;
While viewless minstrels touch the string,
'Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing.”
She sung, and still a harp unseen
Fill'd up the symphony between.

XXXI

SONG

“Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking:
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.⁷⁸
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more:
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.
“No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armor's clang, or war steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch⁷⁹ summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
At the daybreak from the fallow,⁸⁰
And the bittern⁸¹ sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans, or squadrons stamping.”

⁷⁷ Hilly or undulating land.

⁷⁸ Refreshing.

⁷⁹ The Highlanders' battle air, played upon the bagpipes.

⁸⁰ Untilled land.

⁸¹ A kind of heron said to utter a loud and peculiar booming note.

XXXII

She paused – then, blushing, led the lay
To grace the stranger of the day.
Her mellow notes awhile prolong
The cadence of the flowing song,
Till to her lips in measured frame
The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

SONG CONTINUED

“Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
Bugles here shall sound reveille.⁸²
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen,
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveille.”

XXXIII

The hall was clear'd – the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread,
Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
And dream'd their forest sports again.
But vainly did the heath flower shed
Its moorland fragrance round his head;
Not Ellen's spell had lull'd to rest
The fever of his troubled breast.
In broken dreams the image rose
Of varied perils, pains, and woes:
His steed now flounders in the brake,
Now sinks his barge upon the lake;
Now leader of a broken host,
His standard falls, his honor's lost.

⁸² (*Rē-vāl'yě.*) The morning call to soldiers to arise.

Then, – from my couch may heavenly might
Chase that worse phantom of the night! —
Again return'd the scenes of youth,
Of confident undoubting truth;
Again his soul he interchanged
With friends whose hearts were long estranged.
They come, in dim procession led,
The cold, the faithless, and the dead;
As warm each hand, each brow as gay,
As if they parted yesterday.
And doubt distracts him at the view —
Oh, were his senses false or true?
Dream'd he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now?

XXXIV

At length, with Ellen in a grove
He seem'd to walk, and speak of love;
She listen'd with a blush and sigh,
His suit was warm, his hopes were high.
He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet⁸³ met his grasp:
The phantom's sex was changed and gone,
Upon its head a helmet shone;
Slowly enlarged to giant size,
With darken'd cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore. —
He woke, and, panting with affright,
Recall'd the vision of the night.
The hearth's decaying brands were red,
And deep and dusky luster shed,
Half showing, half concealing, all
The uncouth trophies of the hall.
'Mid those the stranger fix'd his eye
Where that huge falchion hung on high,
And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rush'd, chasing countless thoughts along,
Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

⁸³ A mailed glove used by warriors in the middle ages to protect their hands from wounds.

XXXV

The wild rose, eglantine, and broom
Wasted around their rich perfume:
The birch trees wept in fragrant balm,
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Play'd on the water's still expanse, —
Wild were the heart whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!
He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
While thus he communed with his breast: —
“Why is it at each turn I trace
Some memory of that exiled race?
Can I not mountain maiden spy,
But she must bear the Douglas eye?
Can I not view a Highland brand,
But it must match the Douglas hand?
Can I not frame a fever'd dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme?
I'll dream no more – by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resign'd.
My midnight orisons said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more.”
His midnight orisons he told,⁸⁴
A prayer with every bead of gold,
Consign'd to Heaven his cares and woes,
And sunk in undisturb'd repose;
Until the heath cock shrilly crew,
And morning dawn'd on Benvenue.

⁸⁴ Repeated.

CANTO SECOND THE ISLAND

I

At morn the blackcock trims his jetty wing,
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's⁸⁵ blithest lay,
All Nature's children feel the matin⁸⁶ spring
Of life reviving, with reviving day;
And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
Wafting the stranger on his way again,
Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel gray,
And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
Mix'd with the sounding harp, O white-hair'd Allan-Bane!⁸⁷

II

SONG

“Not faster yonder rowers' might
Flings from their oars the spray,
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light,
Melts in the lake away,
Than men from memory erase
The benefits of former days;
Then, stranger, go! good speed the while,
Nor think again of the lonely isle.

“High place to thee in royal court,
High place in battled⁸⁸ line,
Good hawk and hound for silvan sport,
Where beauty sees the brave resort,
The honor'd meed⁸⁹ be thine!
True be thy sword, thy friend sincere,

⁸⁵ A small European song bird.

⁸⁶ (*Māt'in.*) Pertaining to the morning.

⁸⁷ Highland chieftains often retained in their service a bard or minstrel, who was well versed not only in the genealogy and achievements of the particular clan or family to which he was attached, but in the more general history of Scotland as well.

⁸⁸ Ranged in order of battle.

⁸⁹ Recompense.

Thy lady constant, kind, and dear,
And lost in love's and friendship's smile
Be memory of the lonely isle.

III

SONG CONTINUED

“But if beneath yon southern sky
A plaided stranger roam,
Whose drooping crest and stifled sigh,
And sunken cheek and heavy eye,
Pine for his Highland home;
Then, warrior, then be thine to show
The care that soothes a wanderer's woe;
Remember then thy hap erewhile,
A stranger in the lonely isle.

“Or if on life's uncertain main
Mishap shall mar thy sail;
If faithful, wise, and brave in vain,
Woe, want, and exile thou sustain
Beneath the fickle gale;
Waste not a sigh on fortune changed,
On thankless courts, or friends estranged,
But come where kindred worth shall smile,
To greet thee in the lonely isle.”

IV

As died the sounds upon the tide,
The shallop reach'd the mainland side,
And ere his onward way he took,
The stranger cast a lingering look,
Where easily his eye might reach
The Harper on the islet beach,
Reclined against a blighted tree,
As wasted, gray, and worn as he.
To minstrel meditation given,
His reverend brow was raised to heaven,
As from the rising sun to claim
A sparkle of inspiring flame.
His hand, reclined upon the wire,

Seem'd watching the awakening fire;
So still he sate, as those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate;
So still, as if no breeze might dare
To lift one lock of hoary hair;
So still, as life itself were fled,
In the last sound his harp had sped.

V

Upon a rock with lichens wild,
Beside him Ellen sate and smiled. —
Smiled she to see the stately drake
Lead forth his fleet⁹⁰ upon the lake,
While her vex'd spaniel, from the beach,
Bay'd at the prize beyond his reach?
Yet tell me, then, the maid who knows,
Why deepen'd on her cheek the rose? —
Forgive, forgive, Fidelity!
Perchance the maiden smiled to see
Yon parting lingerer wave adieu,
And stop and turn to wave anew;
And, lovely ladies, ere your ire
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Show me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquest of her eye!

VI

While yet he loiter'd on the spot,
It seem'd as Ellen mark'd him not;
But when he turn'd him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made;
And after, oft the Knight would say,
That not, when prize of festal day
Was dealt him by the brightest fair
Who e'er wore jewel in her hair,
So highly did his bosom swell,
As at that simple mute farewell.
Now with a trusty mountain guide,
And his dark staghounds by his side,
He parts — the maid, unconscious still,

⁹⁰ Of ducks.

Watch'd him wind slowly round the hill;
But when his stately form was hid,
The guardian in her bosom chid —
“Thy Malcolm! vain and selfish maid!”
'Twas thus upbraiding conscience said, —
“Not so had Malcolm idly hung
On the smooth phrase of southern tongue;
Not so had Malcolm strain'd his eye,
Another step than thine to spy. —
Wake, Allan-Bane," aloud she cried,
To the old Minstrel by her side, —
“Arouse thee from thy moody dream!
I'll give thy harp heroic theme,
And warm thee with a noble name;
Pour forth the glory of the Græme!”⁹¹
Scarce from her lip the word had rush'd,
When deep the conscious maiden blush'd;
For of his clan, in hall and bower,
Young Malcolm Græme was held the flower.

VII

The Minstrel waked his harp – three times
Arose the well-known martial chimes,

⁹¹ The ancient and powerful family of Graham of Dumbarton and Stirling supplied some of the most remarkable characters in Scottish annals.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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