

The Hostel, Or Inn

By

Sir Walter Scott

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I.

*The livelong day Lord Marmion rode:
The mountain path the Palmer show'd
By glen and streamlet winded still,
Where stunted birches hid the rill.
They might not choose the lowland road,
For the Merse forayers were abroad,
Who, fired with hate and thirst of prey,
Had scarcely fail'd to bar their way.
Oft on the trampling band, from crown
Of some tall cliff, the deer look'd down;
On wing of jet, from his repose
In the deep heath, the black-cock rose;
Sprung from the gorse the timid roe,
Nor waited for the bending bow;
And when the stony path began,
By which the naked peak they wan,
Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.
The noon had long been pass'd before
They gain'd the height of Lammermoor;
Thence winding down the northern way,
Before them, at the close of day,
Old Gifford's towers and hamlet lay.*

II.

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

III

*Soon, by the chimney's merry blaze,
Through the rude hostel might you gaze;
Might see, where, in dark nook aloof,
The rafters of the sooty roof
Bore wealth of winter cheer;
Of sea-fowl dried, and solands store,
And gammons of the tusky boar,
And savoury haunch of deer.
The chimney arch projected wide;
Above, around it, and beside,
Were tools for housewives' hand;
Nor wanted, in that martial day,
The implements of Scottish fray,
The buckler, lance, and brand.
Beneath its shade, the place of state,
On oaken settle Marmion sate,
And view'd around the blazing hearth.
His followers mix in noisy mirth;
Whom with brown ale, in jolly tide,
From ancient vessels ranged aside,
Full actively their host supplied.*

IV.

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

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

Song

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

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

CHORUS

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

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

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never!

XI.

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

With groans of the dying.

CHORUS.

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

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

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never!

XII.

*It ceased, the melancholy sound;
And silence sunk on all around.
The air was sad; but sadder still
It fell on Marmion's ear,
And plain'd as if disgrace and ill,*

*And shameful death, were near.
He drew his mantle past his face,
Between it and the band,
And rested with his head a space,
Reclining on his hand.
His thoughts I scan not; but I ween,
That, could their import have been seen,
The meanest groom in all the hall,
That e'er tied courser to a stall,
Would scarce have wished to be their prey,
For Lutterward and Fontenaye.*

XIII.

*High minds, of native pride and force,
Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse!
Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have,
Thou art the torturer of the brave!
Yet fatal strength they boast to steel
Their minds to bear the wounds they feel,
Even while they writhe beneath the smart
Of civil conflict in the heart.
For soon Lord Marmion raised his head,
And, smiling, to Fitz-Eustace said,*

*'Is it not strange, that, as ye sung,
Seem'd in mine ear a death-peal rung,
Such as in nunneries they toll
For some departing sister's soul?
Say, what may this portend?'-
Then first the Palmer silence broke,
(The livelong day he had not spoke)
'The death of a dear friend.'*

XIV.

*Marmion, whose steady heart and eye
Ne'er changed in worst extremity;
Marmion, whose soul could scantly brook,
Even from his King, a haughty look;
Whose accents of command controll'd,
In camps, the boldest of the bold-
Thought, look, and utterance fail'd him now,
Fall'n was his glance, and flush'd his brow:
For either in the tone,
Or something in the Palmer's look,
So full upon his conscience strook,
That answer he found none.
Thus oft it haps, that when within*

*They shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave;
A fool's wild speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave.*

XV.

*Well might he falter!-By his aid
Was Constance Beverley betray'd.
Not that he augur'd of the doom,
Which on the living closed the tomb:
But, tired to hear the desperate maid
Threaten by turns, beseech, upbraid;
And wroth, because, in wild despair,
She practised on the life of Clare;
Its fugitive the Church he gave,
Though not a victim, but a slave;
And deem'd restraint in convent strange
Would hide her wrongs, and her revenge,
Himself, proud Henry's favourite peer,
Held Romish thunders idle fear,
Secure his pardon he might hold,
For some slight mulct of penance-gold.*

*Thus judging, he gave secret way,
When the stern priests surprised their prey.
His train but deem'd the favourite page
Was left behind, to spare his age;
Or other if they deem'd, none dared
To mutter what he thought and heard:
Woe to the vassal, who durst pry
Into Lord Marmion's privacy!*

XVI.

*His conscience slept-he deem'd her well,
And safe secured in yonder cell;
But, waken'd by her favourite lay,
And that strange Palmer's boding say,
That fell so ominous and drear,
Full on the object of his fear,
To aid remorse's venom'd throes,
Dark tales of convent-vengeance rose;
And Constance, late betray'd and scorn'd,
All lovely on his soul return'd;
Lovely as when, at treacherous call,
She left her convent's peaceful wall,
Crimson'd with shame, with terror mute,*

*Dreading alike escape, pursuit,
Till love, victorious o'er alarms,
Hid fears and blushes in his arms.*

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

*And twice he rose to cry, 'To horse!'
And twice his Sovereign's mandate came,
Like damp upon a kindling flame;
And twice he thought, 'Gave I not charge
She should be safe, though not at large?
They durst not, for their island, shred
One golden ringlet from her head.'*

XVIII.

*While thus in Marmion's bosom strove
Repentance and reviving love,
Like whirlwinds, whose contending sway
I've seen Loch Vennachar obey,
Their Host the Palmer's speech had heard,
And, talkative, took up the word:
'Ay, reverend Pilgrim, you, who stray
From Scotland's simple land away,
To visit realms afar,
Full often learn the art to know
Of future weal, or future woe,
By word, or sign, or star;
Yet might a knight his fortune hear,
If, knight-like, he despises fear,*

*Not far from hence;-if fathers old
Aright our hamlet legend told.'-
These broken words the menials move,
(For marvels still the vulgar love,)
And, Marmion giving license cold,
His tale the host thus gladly told:-*

XIX.

The Host's Tale

*'A Clerk could tell what years have flown
Since Alexander fill'd our throne,
(Third monarch of that warlike name,)
And eke the time when here he came
To seek Sir Hugo, then our lord:
A braver never drew a sword;
A wiser never, at the hour
Of midnight, spoke the word of power:
The same, whom ancient records call
The founder of the Goblin-Hall.
I would, Sir Knight, your longer stay
Gave you that cavern to survey.
Of lofty roof, and ample size,
Beneath the castle deep it lies:*

*To hew the living rock profound,
The floor to pave, the arch to round,
There never toil'd a mortal arm,
It all was wrought by word and charm;
And I have heard my grandsire say,
That the wild clamour and affray
Of those dread artisans of hell,
Who labour'd under Hugo's spell,
Sounded as loud as ocean's war,
Among the caverns of Dunbar.*

XX.

*'The King Lord Gifford's castle sought,
Deep labouring with uncertain thought;
Even then he mustered all his host,
To meet upon the western coast;
For Norse and Danish galleys plied
Their oars within the Frith of Clyde.
There floated Haco's banner trim,
Above Norwegian warriors grim,
Savage of heart, and large of limb;
Threatening both continent and isle,
Bute, Arran, Cunninghame, and Kyle.
Lord Gifford, deep beneath the ground,
Heard Alexander's bugle sound,
And tarried not his garb to change,
But, in his wizard habit strange,
Came forth,-a quaint and fearful sight;
His mantle lined with fox-skins white;
His high and wrinkled forehead bore
A pointed cap, such as of yore
Clerks say that Pharaoh's Magi wore:
His shoes were mark'd with cross and spell,
Upon his breast a pentacle;
His zone, of virgin parchment thin,*

*Or, as some tell, of dead man's skin,
Bore many a planetary sign,
Combust, and retrograde, and trine;
And in his hand he held prepared,
A naked sword without a guard.*

XXI.

*'Dire dealings with the fiendish race
Had mark'd strange lines upon his face;
Vigil and fast had worn him grim,
His eyesight dazzled seem'd and dim,
As one unused to upper day;
Even his own menials with dismay
Beheld, Sir Knight, the grisly Sire,
In his unwonted wild attire;
Unwonted, for traditions run,
He seldom thus beheld the sun.-
"I know," he said,-his voice was hoarse,
And broken seem'd its hollow force,-
"I know the cause, although untold,
Why the King seeks his vassal's hold:
Vainly from me my liege would know
His kingdom's future weal or woe;*

*But yet, if strong his arm and heart,
His courage may do more than art.*

XXII.

*“Of middle air the demons proud,
Who ride upon the racking cloud,
Can read, in fix’d or wandering star,
The issue of events afar;
But still their sullen aid withhold,
Save when by mightier force controll’d.
Such late I summon’d to my hall;
And though so potent was the call,
That scarce the deepest nook of hell
I deem’d a refuge from the spell,
Yet, obstinate in silence still,
The haughty demon mocks my skill.
But thou,-who little know’st thy might,
As born upon that blessed night
When yawning graves, and dying groan,
Proclaim’d hell’s empire overthrown,-
With untaught valour shalt compel
Response denied to magic spell.”-
“Gramercy,” quoth our Monarch free,*

*“Place him but front to front with me,
And, by this good and honour’d brand,
The gift of Coeur-de-Lion’s hand,
Soothly I swear, that, tide what tide,
The demon shall a buffet bide.”-*

*His bearing bold the wizard view’d,
And thus, well pleased, his speech renew’d:-*

*“There spoke the blood of Malcolm!-mark:
Forth pacing hence, at midnight dark,
The rampart seek, whose circling crown
Crests the ascent of yonder down:
A southern entrance shalt thou find;
There halt, and there thy bugle wind,
And trust thine elfin foe to see,
In guise of thy worst enemy:*

*Couch then thy lance, and spur thy steed-
Upon him! and Saint George to speed!
If he go down, thou soon shalt know
Whate’er these airy sprites can show:-
If thy heart fail thee in the strife,
I am no warrant for thy life.”*

XXIII.

*'Soon as the midnight bell did ring,
Alone, and arm'd, forth rode the King
To that old camp's deserted round:
Sir Knight, you well might mark the mound,
Left hand the town,-the Pictish race,
The trench, long since, in blood did trace;
The moor around is brown and bare,
The space within is green and fair.
The spot our village children know,
For there the earliest wild-flowers grow;
But woe betide the wandering wight,
That treads its circle in the night!
The breadth across, a bowshot clear,
Gives ample space for full career;
Opposed to the four points of heaven,
By four deep gaps are entrance given.
The southernmost our Monarch past,
Halted, and blew a gallant blast;
And on the north, within the ring,
Appeared the form of England's King,
Who then a thousand leagues afar,
In Palestine waged holy war:
Yet arms like England's did he wield,*

*Alike the leopards in the shield,
Alike his Syrian courser's frame,
The rider's length of limb the same:
Long afterwards did Scotland know,
Fell Edward was her deadliest foe.*

XXIV

*'The vision made our Monarch start,
But soon he mann'd his noble heart,
And in the first career they ran,
The Elfin Knight fell, horse and man;
Yet did a splinter of his lance
Through Alexander's visor glance,
And razed the skin-a puny wound.
The King, light leaping to the ground,
With naked blade his phantom foe
Compell'd the future war to show.
Of Largs he saw the glorious plain,
Where still gigantic bones remain,
Memorial of the Danish war;
Himself he saw, amid the field,
On high his brandish'd war-axe wield,
And strike proud Haco from his car,*

*While all around the shadowy Kings
Denmark's grim ravens cower'd their wings.
'Tis said, that, in that awful night,
Remoter visions met his sight,
Foreshowing future conquest far,
When our sons' sons wage northern war;
A royal city, tower and spire,
Redden'd the midnight sky with fire,
And shouting crews her navy bore,
Triumphant, to the victor shore.
Such signs may learned clerks explain,
They pass the wit of simple swain.*

XXV.

*'The joyful King turn'd home again,
Headed his host, and quell'd the Dane;
But yearly, when return'd the night
Of his strange combat with the sprite,
His wound must bleed and smart;
Lord Gifford then would gibing say,
"Bold as ye were, my liege, ye pay
The penance of your start."
Long since, beneath Dunfermline's nave,*

*King Alexander fills his grave,
Our Lady give him rest!
Yet still the knightly spear and shield
The Elfin Warrior doth wield,
Upon the brown hill's breast;
And many a knight hath proved his chance,
In the charm'd ring to break a lance,
But all have foully sped;
Save two, as legends tell, and they
Were Wallace wight, and Gilbert Hay.-
Gentles, my tale is said.'*

XXVI.

*The quaighs were deep, the liquor strong,
And on the tale the yeoman-throng
Had made a comment sage and long,
But Marmion gave a sign:
And, with their lord, the squires retire;
The rest around the hostel fire,
Their drowsy limbs recline:
For pillow, underneath each head,
The quiver and the targe were laid.
Deep slumbering on the hostel floor,*

*Oppress'd with toil and ale, they snore:
The dying flame, in fitful change,
Threw on the group its shadows strange.*

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

*-Fitz-Eustace! rise,-I cannot rest;
Yon churl's wild legend haunts my breast,
And graver thoughts have chafed my mood:
The air must cool my feverish blood;
And fain would I ride forth, to see
The scene of elfin chivalry.
Arise, and saddle me my steed;
And, gentle Eustace, take good heed
Thou dost not rouse these drowsy slaves;
I would not, that the prating knaves
Had cause for saying, o'er their ale,
That I could credit such a tale.'-
Then softly down the steps they slid,
Eustace the stable door undid,
And, darkling, Marmion's steed array'd,
While, whispering, thus the Baron said:-*

XXIX

*'Did'st never, good my youth, hear tell,
That on the hour when I was born,
Saint George, who graced my sire's chapelle,
Down from his steed of marble fell,
A weary wight forlorn?
The flattering chaplains all agree,
The champion left his steed to me.
I would, the omen's truth to show,
That I could meet this Elfin Foe!
Blithe would I battle, for the right
To ask one question at the sprite:
Vain thought! for elves, if elves there be,
An empty race, by fount or sea,
To dashing waters dance and sing,
Or round the green oak wheel their ring.'*

*Thus speaking, he his steed bestrode,
And from the hostel slowly rode.*

XXX.

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

XXXI.

*Little for this Fitz-Eustace cared,
But, patient, waited till he heard,
At distance, prick'd to utmost speed,
The foot-tramp of a flying steed,
Come town-ward rushing on;
First, dead, as if on turf it trode,
Then, clattering on the village road,-
In other pace than forth he yode,
Return'd Lord Marmion.
Down hastily he sprung from selle,
And, in his haste, wellnigh he fell;
To the squire's hand the rein he threw,
And spoke no word as he withdrew:
But yet the moonlight did betray,
The falcon-crest was soil'd with clay;
And plainly might Fitz-Eustace see,
By stains upon the charger's knee,
And his left side, that on the moor
He had not kept his footing sure.
Long musing on these wondrous signs,
At length to rest the squire reclines,
Broken and short; for still, between,
Would dreams of terror intervene:*

*Eustace did ne'er so blithely mark
The first notes of the morning lark.*

Ashestiel, Ettrick Forest.

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

*The recollection of a dream,
So still we glide down to the sea
Of fathomless eternity.*

*Even now it scarcely seems a day,
Since first I tuned this idle lay;
A task so often' thrown aside,
When leisure graver cares denied,
That now, November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore.
Their vex'd boughs streaming to the sky,
Once more our naked birches sigh,
And Blackhouse heights, and Ettrick Pen,
Have donn'd their wintry shrouds again:
And mountain dark, and flooded mead,
Bid us forsake the banks of Tweed.
Earlier than wont along the sky,
Mix'd with the rack, the snow mists fly;
The shepherd who, in summer sun,
Had something of our envy won,
As thou with pencil, I with pen,
The features traced of hill and glen;-
He who, outstretch'd the livelong day,*

*At ease among the heath-flowers lay,
View'd the light clouds with vacant look,
Or slumber'd o'er his tatter'd book,
Or idly busied him to guide
His angle o'er the lessen'd tide;-
At midnight now, the snowy plain
Finds sterner labour for the swain.*

*When red hath set the beamless sun,
Through heavy vapours dark and dun;
When the tired ploughman, dry and warm,
Hears, half asleep, the rising storm
Hurling the hail, and sleeted rain,
Against the casement's tinkling pane;
The sounds that drive wild deer, and fox,
To shelter in the brake and rocks,
Are warnings which the shepherd ask
To dismal and to dangerous task.
Oft he looks forth, and hopes, in vain,
The blast may sink in mellowing rain;
Till, dark above, and white below,
Decided drives the flaky snow,
And forth the hardy swain must go.
Long, with dejected look and whine,
To leave the hearth his dogs repine;*

*Whistling and cheering them to aid,
Around his back he wreathes the plaid:
His flock he gathers, and he guides,
To open downs, and mountain-sides,
Where fiercest though the tempest blow,
Least deeply lies the drift below.
The blast, that whistles o'er the fells,
Stiffens his locks to icicles;
Oft he looks back, while streaming far,
His cottage window seems a star,-
Loses its feeble gleam,-and then
Turns patient to the blast again,
And, facing to the tempest's sweep,
Drives through the gloom his lagging sheep.
If fails his heart, if his limbs fail,
Benumbing death is in the gale;
His paths, his landmarks, all unknown,
Close to the hut, no more his own,
Close to the aid he sought in vain,
The morn may find the stiffen'd swain:
The widow sees, at dawning pale,
His orphans raise their feeble wail;
And, close beside him, in the snow,
Poor Yarrow, partner of their woe,
Couches upon his master's breast,*

And licks his cheek to break his rest.

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

*Changes not so with us, my Skene,
Of human life the varying scene?
Our youthful summer oft we see
Dance by on wings of game and glee,
While the dark storm reserves its rage,
Against the winter of our age:
As he, the ancient Chief of Troy,
His manhood spent in peace and joy;
But Grecian fires, and loud alarms,
Call'd ancient Priam forth to arms.
Then happy those, since each must drain
His share of pleasure, share of pain,-
Then happy those, beloved of Heaven,
To whom the mingled cup is given;*

*Whose lenient sorrows find relief,
Whose joys are chasten'd by their grief.
And such a lot, my Skene, was thine,
When thou, of late, wert doom'd to twine,--
Just when thy bridal hour was by,-
The cypress with the myrtle tie.
Just on thy bride her Sire had smiled,
And bless'd the union of his child,
When love must change its joyous cheer,
And wipe affection's filial tear.
Nor did the actions next his end,
Speak more the father than the friend:
Scarce had lamented Forbes paid
The tribute to his Minstrel's shade;
The tale of friendship scarce was told,
Ere the narrator's heart was cold-
Far may we search before we find
A heart so manly and so kind!
But not around his honour'd urn,
Shall friends alone and kindred mourn;
The thousand eyes his care had dried,
Pour at his name a bitter tide;
And frequent falls the grateful dew,
For benefits the world ne'er knew.
If mortal charity dare claim*

*The Almighty's attributed name,
Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
'The widow's shield, the orphan's stay.'
Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
My verse intrudes on this sad theme;
for sacred was the pen that wrote,
'Thy father's friend forget thou not:'
And grateful title may I plead,
For many a kindly word and deed,
To bring my tribute to his grave:-
'Tis little-but 'tis all I have.*

*To thee, perchance, this rambling strain
Recalls our summer walks again;
When, doing nought,-and, to speak true,
Not anxious to find aught to do,-
The wild unbounded hills we ranged,
While oft our talk its topic changed,
And, desultory as our way,
Ranged, unconfined, from grave to gay.
Even when it flagged, as oft will chance,
No effort made to break its trance,
We could right pleasantly pursue
Our sports in social silence too;
Thou gravely labouring to pourtray*

*The blighted oak's fantastic spray;
I spelling o'er, with much delight,
The legend of that antique knight,
Tirante by name, yclep'd the White.*

*At either's feet a trusty squire,
Pandour and Camp, with eyes of fire,
Jealous, each other's motions view'd,
And scarce suppress'd their ancient feud.*

*The laverock whistled from the cloud;
The stream was lively, but not loud;
From the white thorn the May-flower shed*

Its dewy fragrance round our head:

*Not Ariel lived more merrily
Under the blossom'd bough, than we.*

*And blithesome nights, too, have been ours,
When Winter stript the summer's bowers.
Careless we heard, what now I hear,
The wild blast sighing deep and drear,
When fires were bright, and lamps beam'd gay,
And ladies tuned the lovely lay;
And he was held a laggard soul,
Who shunn'd to quaff the sparkling bowl.
Then he, whose absence we deplore,
Who breathes the gales of Devon's shore,*

*The longer miss'd, bewail'd the more;
And thou, and I, and dear-loved R-,
And one whose name I may not say,-
For not Mimosa's tender tree
Shrinks sooner from the touch than he,-
In merry chorus well combined,
With laughter drown'd the whistling wind.
Mirth was within; and care without
Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout.
Not but amid the buxom scene
Some grave discourse might intervene-
Of the good horse that bore him best,
His shoulder, hoof, and arching crest:
For, like mad Tom's, our chiefest care,
Was horse to ride, and weapon wear.
Such nights we've had; and, though the game
Of manhood be more sober tame,
And though the field-day, or the drill,
Seem less important now-yet still
Such may we hope to share again.
The sprightly thought inspires my strain!
And mark, how, like a horseman true,
Lord Marmion's march I thus renew.*

Freeeditorial 