

THE PROPHECY
BY
SIR WALTER SCOTT

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The Prophecy

I.

The rose is fairest when 't is budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.
O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
Emblem of hope and love through future years!
Thus spoke young Norman, heir of Armandave,
What time the sun arose on Vennachar's broad wave.

II.

Such fond conceit, half said, half sung,
Love prompted to the bridegroom's tongue.
All while he stripped the wild-rose spray,
His axe and bow beside him lay,
For on a pass 'twixt lake and wood
A wakeful sentinel he stood.
Hark!—on the rock a footstep rung,
And instant to his arms he sprung.
'Stand, or thou diest!—What, Malise?—soon

Art thou returned from Braes of Doune.

By thy keen step and glance I know,

Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe.'—

For while the Fiery Cross tried on,

On distant scout had Malise gone.—

'Where sleeps the Chief?' the henchman said.

'Apart, in yonder misty glade;

To his lone couch I'll be your guide.'—

Then called a slumberer by his side,

And stirred him with his slackened bow,—

'Up, up, Glentarkin! rouse thee, ho!

We seek the Chieftain; on the track

Keep eagle watch till I come back.'

III.

Together up the pass they sped:

'What of the foeman?' Norman said.—

'Varying reports from near and far;

This certain,—that a band of war

Has for two days been ready boune,

At prompt command to march from Doune;

King James the while, with princely powers,

Holds revelry in Stirling towers.

Soon will this dark and gathering cloud

Speak on our glens in thunder loud.

Inured to bide such bitter bout,
The warrior's plaid may bear it out;
But, Norman, how wilt thou provide
A shelter for thy bonny bride?"—
'What! know ye not that Roderick's care
To the lone isle hath caused repair
Each maid and matron of the clan,
And every child and aged man
Unfit for arms; and given his charge,
Nor skiff nor shallop, boat nor barge,
Upon these lakes shall float at large,
But all beside the islet moor,
That such dear pledge may rest secure?'—

IV.

"T is well advised,—the Chieftain's plan
Bespeaks the father of his clan.
But wherefore sleeps Sir Roderick Dhu
Apart from all his followers true?
'It is because last evening-tide
Brian an augury hath tried,
Of that dread kind which must not be
Unless in dread extremity,
The Taghairm called; by which, afar,
Our sires foresaw the events of war.

Duncraggan's milk-white bull they slew,'—

Malise.

'Ah! well the gallant brute I knew!
The choicest of the prey we had
When swept our merry-men Gallangad.
His hide was snow, his horns were dark,
His red eye glowed like fiery spark;
So fierce, so tameless, and so fleet,
Sore did he cumber our retreat,
And kept our stoutest kerns in awe,
Even at the pass of Beal 'maha.
But steep and flinty was the road,
And sharp the hurrying pikeman's goad,
And when we came to Dinnan's Row
A child might scathless stroke his brow.

V.

Norman.

'That bull was slain; his reeking hide
They stretched the cataract beside,
Whose waters their wild tumult toss
Adown the black and craggy boss
Of that huge cliff whose ample verge

Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.
Couched on a shelf beneath its brink,
Close where the thundering torrents sink,
Rocking beneath their headlong sway,
And drizzled by the ceaseless spray,
Midst groan of rock and roar of stream,
The wizard waits prophetic dream.
Nor distant rests the Chief;—but hush!
See, gliding slow through mist and bush,
The hermit gains yon rock, and stands
To gaze upon our slumbering bands.
Seems he not, Malise, dike a ghost,
That hovers o'er a slaughtered host?
Or raven on the blasted oak,
That, watching while the deer is broke,
His morsel claims with sullen croak?

Malise.

'Peace! peace! to other than to me
Thy words were evil augury;
But still I hold Sir Roderick's blade
Clan-Alpine's omen and her aid,
Not aught that, gleaned from heaven or hell,
Yon fiend-begotten Monk can tell.

The Chieftain joins him, see—and now
Together they descend the brow.'

VI.

And, as they came, with Alpine's Lord
The Hermit Monk held solemn word:—
 'Roderick! it is a fearful strife,
 For man endowed with mortal life
Whose shroud of sentient clay can still
 Feel feverish pang and fainting chill,
 Whose eye can stare in stony trance
Whose hair can rouse like warrior's lance,
 'Tis hard for such to view, unfurled,
 The curtain of the future world.
 Yet, witness every quaking limb,
My sunken pulse, mine eyeballs dim,
My soul with harrowing anguish torn,
 This for my Chieftain have I borne!—
The shapes that sought my fearful couch
 A human tongue may ne'er avouch;
No mortal man—save he, who, bred
 Between the living and the dead,
 Is gifted beyond nature's law
 Had e'er survived to say he saw.
At length the fateful answer came

In characters of living flame!
Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul:—
WHICH SPILLS THE FOREMOST FOEMAN'S LIFE,
THAT PARTY CONQUERS IN THE STRIFE.'

VII.

'Thanks, Brian, for thy zeal and care!
Good is thine augury, and fair.
Clan-Alpine ne'er in battle stood
But first our broadswords tasted blood.
A surer victim still I know,
Self-offered to the auspicious blow:
A spy has sought my land this morn,—
No eve shall witness his return!
My followers guard each pass's mouth,
To east, to westward, and to south;
Red Murdoch, bribed to be his guide,
Has charge to lead his steps aside,
Till in deep path or dingle brown
He light on those shall bring him clown.
But see, who comes his news to show!
Malise! what tidings of the foe?'

VIII.

'At Doune, o'er many a spear and glaive
Two Barons proud their banners wave.

I saw the Moray's silver star,
And marked the sable pale of Mar.'

'By Alpine's soul, high tidings those!

I love to hear of worthy foes.

When move they on?' 'To-morrow's noon

Will see them here for battle boun.'

'Then shall it see a meeting stern!

But, for the place,—say, couldst thou learn

Nought of the friendly clans of Earn?

Strengthened by them, we well might bide

The battle on Benledi's side.

Thou couldst not?—well! Clan-Alpine's men

Shall man the Trosachs' shaggy glen;

Within Loch Katrine's gorge we'll fight,

All in our maids' and matrons' sight,

Each for his hearth and household fire,

Father for child, and son for sire Lover

for maid beloved!—But why

Is it the breeze affects mine eye?

Or dost thou come, ill-omened tear!

A messenger of doubt or fear?

No! sooner may the Saxon lance

Unfix Benledi from his stance,
Than doubt or terror can pierce through
The unyielding heart of Roderick Dhu!
'tis stubborn as his trusty targe.
Each to his post!—all know their charge.'
The pibroch sounds, the bands advance,
The broadswords gleam, the banners dance'
Obedient to the Chieftain's glance.—
I turn me from the martial roar
And seek Coir-Uriskin once more.

IX.

Where is the Douglas?—he is gone;
And Ellen sits on the gray stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan,
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are poured on her unheeding ear.
'He will return—dear lady, trust!—
With joy return;—he will—he must.
Well was it time to seek afar
Some refuge from impending war,
When e'en Clan-Alpine's rugged swarm
Are cowed by the approaching storm.
I saw their boats with many a light,
Floating the livelong yesternight,

Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north;
I marked at morn how close they ride,
Thick moored by the lone islet's side,
Like wild ducks couching in the fen
When stoops the hawk upon the glen.
Since this rude race dare not abide
The peril on the mainland side,
Shall not thy noble father's care
Some safe retreat for thee prepare?'

X.

Ellen.

'No, Allan, no' Pretext so kind
My wakeful terrors could not blind.
When in such tender tone, yet grave,
Douglas a parting blessing gave,
The tear that glistened in his eye
Drowned not his purpose fixed and high.
My soul, though feminine and weak,
Can image his; e'en as the lake,
Itself disturbed by slightest stroke.
Reflects the invulnerable rock.
He hears report of battle rife,
He deems himself the cause of strife.

I saw him redden when the theme
Turned, Allan, on thine idle dream
Of Malcolm Graeme in fetters bound,
Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
Think'st thou he bowed thine omen aught?

O no 't was apprehensive thought
For the kind youth,—for Roderick too—
Let me be just—that friend so true;
In danger both, and in our cause!
Minstrel, the Douglas dare not pause.
Why else that solemn warning given,
'If not on earth, we meet in heaven!'
Why else, to Cambus-kenneth's fane,
If e'er return him not again,
Am I to hie and make me known?
Alas! he goes to Scotland's throne,
Buys his friends' safety with his own;
He goes to do—what I had done,
Had Douglas' daughter been his son!

XI.

'Nay, lovely Ellen!—dearest, nay!
If aught should his return delay,
He only named yon holy fane
As fitting place to meet again.
Be sure he's safe; and for the Graeme,—
Heaven's blessing on his gallant name!—
My visioned sight may yet prove true,
Nor bode of ill to him or you.
When did my gifted dream beguile?
Think of the stranger at the isle,
And think upon the harpings slow
That presaged this approaching woe!
Sooth was my prophecy of fear;
Believe it when it augurs cheer.
Would we had left this dismal spot!
Ill luck still haunts a fairy spot!
Of such a wondrous tale I know—
Dear lady, change that look of woe,
My harp was wont thy grief to cheer.'

Ellen.

'Well, be it as thou wilt;
I hear, But cannot stop the bursting tear.'

The Minstrel tried his simple art,
Rut distant far was Ellen's heart.

XII.

Ballad.

Alice Brand.

Merry it is in the good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

'O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and word,
As outlaws wont to do.

'O Alice, 't was all for thy locks so bright,
And 't was all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight
Thy brother bold I slew.

'Now must I teach to hew the beech
The hand that held the glaive,
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

'And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must shear from the slaughtered deer,
To keep the cold away.'

'O Richard! if my brother died,
'T was but a fatal chance;
For darkling was the battle tried,
And fortune sped the lance.

'If pall and vair no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen
As warm, we'll say, is the russet gray,
As gay the forest-green.

'And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand.'

XIII.

Ballad Continued.

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

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,
Who woned within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruined church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

'Why sounds yon stroke on beech and oak,
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer,
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairies' fatal green?

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

'Lay on him the curse of the withered heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye;
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die.'

XIV.

Ballad Continued

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
Though the birds have stilled their singing;
The evening blaze cloth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf,
Before Lord Richard stands,
And, as he crossed and blessed himself,
'I fear not sign,' quoth the grisly elf,
'That is made with bloody hands.'

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
'And if there 's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer.'

'Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!

It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,
The blood of Ethert Brand.'

Then forward stepped she, Alice Brand,
And made the holy sign,—
'And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
A spotless hand is mine.

'And I conjure thee, demon elf,
By Him whom demons fear,
To show us whence thou art thyself,
And what thine errand here?'

XV.

Ballad Continued.

"Tis merry, 'tis merry, in Fairy-land,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court cloth ride by their monarch's side,
With bit and bridle ringing:

'And gayly shines the Fairy-land—
But all is glistening show,
Like the idle gleam that December's beam

Can dart on ice and snow.

'And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

'It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And 'twixt life and death was snatched away
To the joyless Elfin bower.

'But wist I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,
I might regain my mortal mould,
As fair a form as thine.'

She crossed him once—she crossed him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She crossed him thrice, that lady bold;
He rose beneath her hand

The fairest knight on Scottish mould,
Her brother, Ethert Brand!

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

XVI.

Just as the minstrel sounds were stayed,
A stranger climbed the steepy glade;
His martial step, his stately mien,
His hunting-suit of Lincoln green,
His eagle glance, remembrance claims—
'Tis Snowdown's Knight, 'tis James Fitz-James.

Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then, starting, scarce suppressed a scream:
'O stranger! in such hour of fear
What evil hap has brought thee here?'
'An evil hap how can it be
That bids me look again on thee?
By promise bound, my former guide
Met me betimes this morning-tide,
And marshalled over bank and bourne
The happy path of my return.'

'The happy path!—what! said he naught
Of war, of battle to be fought,
Of guarded pass?' 'No, by my faith!
Nor saw I aught could augur scathe.'
'O haste thee, Allan, to the kern:
Yonder his tartars I discern;
Learn thou his purpose, and conjure
That he will guide the stranger sure!—
What prompted thee, unhappy man?
The meanest serf in Roderick's clan
Had not been bribed, by love or fear,
Unknown to him to guide thee here.'

XVII.

'Sweet Ellen, dear my life must be,
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath
When love or honor's weighed with death.
Then let me profit by my chance,
And speak my purpose bold at once.
I come to bear thee from a wild
Where ne'er before such blossom smiled,
By this soft hand to lead thee far
From frantic scenes of feud and war.
Near Bochastle my horses wait;

They bear us soon to Stirling gate.
I'll place thee in a lovely bower,
I'll guard thee like a tender flower—'
'O hush, Sir Knight! 't were female art,
To say I do not read thy heart;
Too much, before, my selfish ear
Was idly soothed my praise to hear.
That fatal bait hath lured thee back,
In deathful hour, o'er dangerous track;
And how, O how, can I atone
The wreck my vanity brought on!—
One way remains—I'll tell him all—
Yes! struggling bosom, forth it shall!
Thou, whose light folly bears the blame,
Buy thine own pardon with thy shame!
But first—my father is a man
Outlawed and exiled, under ban;
The price of blood is on his head,
With me 't were infamy to wed.
Still wouldst thou speak?—then hear the truth!
Fitz-James, there is a noble youth—
If yet he is!—exposed for me
And mine to dread extremity—
Thou hast the secret of my bears;
Forgive, be generous, and depart!'

XVIII.

Fitz-James knew every wily train
A lady's fickle heart to gain,
But here he knew and felt them vain.
There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
To give her steadfast speech the lie;
In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled in her cheek the blood
And told her love with such a sigh
Of deep and hopeless agony,
As death had sealed her Malcolm's doom
And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.
Hope vanished from Fitz-James's eye,
But not with hope fled sympathy.
He proffered to attend her side,
As brother would a sister guide.
'O little know'st thou Roderick's heart!
Safer for both we go apart.
O haste thee, and from Allan learn
If thou mayst trust yon wily kern.'
With hand upon his forehead laid,
The conflict of his mind to shade,
A parting step or two he made;
Then, as some thought had crossed his brain
He paused, and turned, and came again.

XIX.

'Hear, lady, yet a parting word!—

It chanced in fight that my poor sword

Preserved the life of Scotland's lord.

This ring the grateful Monarch gave,

And bade, when I had boon to crave,

To bring it back, and boldly claim

The recompense that I would name.

Ellen, I am no courtly lord,

But one who lives by lance and sword,

Whose castle is his helm and shield,

His lordship the embattled field.

What from a prince can I demand,

Who neither reck of state nor land?

Ellen, thy hand—the ring is thine;

Each guard and usher knows the sign.

Seek thou the King without delay;

This signet shall secure thy way:

And claim thy suit, whate'er it be,

As ransom of his pledge to me.'

He placed the golden circlet on,

Paused—kissed her hand—and then was gone.

The aged Minstrel stood aghast,

So hastily Fitz-James shot past.

He joined his guide, and wending down
The ridges of the mountain brown,
Across the stream they took their way
That joins Loch Katrine to Achray.

XX

All in the Trosachs' glen was still,
Noontide was sleeping on the hill:
Sudden his guide whooped loud and high—
'Murdoch! was that a signal cry?'—
He stammered forth, 'I shout to scare
Yon raven from his dainty fare.'
He looked—he knew the raven's prey,
His own brave steed: 'Ah! gallant gray!
For thee—for me, perchance—'t were well
We ne'er had seen the Trosachs' dell.—
Murdoch, move first—but silently;
Whistle or whoop, and thou shalt die!
Jealous and sullen on they fared,
Each silent, each upon his guard.

XXI.

Now wound the path its dizzy ledge
 Around a precipice's edge,
 When lo! a wasted female form,
Blighted by wrath of sun and storm,
 In tattered weeds and wild array,
 Stood on a cliff beside the way,
And glancing round her restless eye,
 Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
Seemed naught to mark, yet all to spy.
Her brow was wreathed with gaudy broom;
 With gesture wild she waved a plume
 Of feathers, which the eagles fling
 To crag and cliff from dusky wing;
Such spoils her desperate step had sought,
 Where scarce was footing for the goat.
 The tartan plaid she first descried,
 And shrieked till all the rocks replied;
As loud she laughed when near they drew,
 For then the Lowland garb she knew;
 And then her hands she wildly wrung,
And then she wept, and then she sung—
 She sung!—the voice, in better time,
Perchance to harp or lute might chime;

And now, though strained and roughened, still
Rung wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII.

Song.

They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
They say my brain is warped and wrung—
I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
I cannot pray in Highland tongue.
But were I now where Allan glides,
Or heard my native Devan's tides,
So sweetly would I rest, and pray
That Heaven would close my wintry day!

'Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
They made me to the church repair;
It was my bridal morn they said,
And my true love would meet me there.
But woe betide the cruel guile
That drowned in blood the morning smile!
And woe betide the fairy dream!
I only waked to sob and scream.

XXIII.

'Who is this maid? what means her lay?

She hovers o'er the hollow way,

And flutters wide her mantle gray,

As the lone heron spreads his wing,

By twilight, o'er a haunted spring.'

"Tis Blanche of Devan,' Murdoch said,

'A crazed and captive Lowland maid,

Ta'en on the morn she was a bride,

When Roderick forayed Devan-side.

The gay bridegroom resistance made,

And felt our Chief's unconquered blade.

I marvel she is now at large,

But oft she 'scapes from Maudlin's charge.—

Hence, brain-sick fool!'—He raised his bow:—

'Now, if thou strik'st her but one blow,

I'll pitch thee from the cliff as far

As ever peasant pitched a bar!'

'Thanks, champion, thanks' the Maniac cried,

And pressed her to Fitz-James's side.

'See the gray pennons I prepare,

To seek my true love through the air!

I will not lend that savage groom,

To break his fall, one downy plume!

No!—deep amid disjointed stones,
The wolves shall batten on his bones,
And then shall his detested plaid,
By bush and brier in mid-air stayed,
Wave forth a banner fail and free,
Meet signal for their revelry.'

XXIV

'Hush thee, poor maiden, and be still!'
'O! thou look'st kindly, and I will.
Mine eye has dried and wasted been,
But still it loves the Lincoln green;
And, though mine ear is all unstrung,
Still, still it loves the Lowland tongue.

'For O my sweet William was forester true,
He stole poor Blanche's heart away!
His coat it was all of the greenwood hue,
And so blithely he trilled the Lowland lay!

'It was not that I meant to tell...
But thou art wise and guessest well.'
Then, in a low and broken tone,
And hurried note, the song went on.
Still on the Clansman fearfully

She fixed her apprehensive eye,
Then turned it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV.

'The toils are pitched, and the stakes are set,—
Ever sing merrily, merrily;
The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.

It was a stag, a stag of ten,
Bearing its branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,—
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

'It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warned him of the toils below,
O. so faithfully, faithfully!

'He had an eye, and he could heed,—
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed,—
Hunters watch so narrowly.'

XXVI.

Fitz-James's mind was passion-tossed,
When Ellen's hints and fears were lost;
But Murdoch's shout suspicion wrought,
And Blanche's song conviction brought.

Not like a stag that spies the snare,

But lion of the hunt aware,

He waved at once his blade on high,

'Disclose thy treachery, or die!'

Forth at hell speed the Clansman flew,

But in his race his bow he drew.

The shaft just grazed Fitz-James's crest,

And thrilled in Blanche's faded breast.—

Murdoch of Alpine! prove thy speed,

For ne'er had Alpine's son such need;

With heart of fire, and foot of wind,

The fierce avenger is behind!

Fate judges of the rapid strife—

The forfeit death—the prize is life;

Thy kindred ambush lies before,

Close couched upon the heathery moor;

Them couldst thou reach!—it may not be

Thine ambushed kin thou ne'er shalt see,

The fiery Saxon gains on thee!—

Resistless speeds the deadly thrust,
As lightning strikes the pine to dust;
With foot and hand Fitz-James must strain
Ere he can win his blade again.
Bent o'er the fallen with falcon eye,
He grimly smiled to see him die,
Then slower wended back his way,
Where the poor maiden bleeding lay.

XXVII.

She sat beneath the birchen tree,
Her elbow resting on her knee;
She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,
And gazed on it, and feebly laughed;
Her wreath of broom and feathers gray,
Daggled with blood, beside her lay.
The Knight to stanch the life-stream tried,—
'Stranger, it is in vain!' she cried.
'This hour of death has given me more
Of reason's power than years before;
For, as these ebbing veins decay,
My frenzied visions fade away.
A helpless injured wretch I die,
And something tells me in thine eye
That thou wert mine avenger born.

Seest thou this tress?—O. still I 've worn
This little tress of yellow hair,
Through danger, frenzy, and despair!
It once was bright and clear as thine,
But blood and tears have dimmed its shine.
I will not tell thee when 't was shred,
Nor from what guiltless victim's head,—
My brain would turn!—but it shall wave
Like plumage on thy helmet brave,
Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain,
And thou wilt bring it me again.
I waver still.—O God! more bright
Let reason beam her parting light!—
O. by thy knighthood's honored sign,
And for thy life preserved by mine,
When thou shalt see a darksome man,
Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's Clan,
With tartars broad and shadowy plume,
And hand of blood, and brow of gloom
Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!—
They watch for thee by pass and fell...
Avoid the path... O God!... farewell.'

XXVIII.

A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James;
Fast poured his eyes at pity's claims;
And now, with mingled grief and ire,
He saw the murdered maid expire.
 'God, in my need, be my relief,
 As I wreak this on yonder Chief!'
A lock from Blanche's tresses fair
He blended with her bridegroom's hair;
The mingled braid in blood he dyed,
And placed it on his bonnet-side:
'By Him whose word is truth, I swear,
 No other favour will I wear,
 Till this sad token I imbrue
In the best blood of Roderick Dhu!—
But hark! what means yon faint halloo?
The chase is up,—but they shall know,
 The stag at bay 's a dangerous foe.'
Barred from the known but guarded way,
Through copse and cliffs Fitz-James must stray,
And oft must change his desperate track,
 By stream and precipice turned back.
Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
From lack of food and loss of strength

He couched him in a thicket hoar
And thought his toils and perils o'er:—
 'Of all my rash adventures past,
 This frantic feat must prove the last!
Who e'er so mad but might have guessed
 That all this Highland hornet's nest
 Would muster up in swarms so soon
As e'er they heard of bands at Doune?—
Like bloodhounds now they search me out,—
 Hark, to the whistle and the shout!—
 If farther through the wilds I go,
 I only fall upon the foe:
 I'll couch me here till evening gray,
Then darkling try my dangerous way.'

XXIX.

The shades of eve come slowly down,
The woods are wrapt in deeper brown,
 The owl awakens from her dell,
 The fox is heard upon the fell;
Enough remains of glimmering light
To guide the wanderer's steps aright,
 Yet not enough from far to show
 His figure to the watchful foe.

With cautious step and ear awake,
He climbs the crag and threads the brake;
And not the summer solstice there
Tempered the midnight mountain air,
But every breeze that swept the wold
Benumbed his drenched limbs with cold.
In dread, in danger, and alone,
Famished and chilled, through ways unknown,
Tangled and steep, he journeyed on;
Till, as a rock's huge point he turned,
A watch-fire close before him burned.

XXX.

Beside its embers red and clear
Basked in his plaid a mountaineer;
And up he sprung with sword in hand,—
'Thy name and purpose! Saxon, stand!'
'A stranger.' 'What dost thou require?'
'Rest and a guide, and food and fire
My life's beset, my path is lost,
The gale has chilled my limbs with frost.'
'Art thou a friend to Roderick?' 'No.'
'Thou dar'st not call thyself a foe?'
'I dare! to him and all the band
He brings to aid his murderous hand.'

'Bold words!—but, though the beast of game
The privilege of chase may claim,
Though space and law the stag we lend
Ere hound we slip or bow we bend
Who ever recked, where, how, or when,
The prowling fox was trapped or slain?
Thus treacherous scouts,—yet sure they lie
Who say thou cam'st a secret spy!'—
'They do, by heaven!—come Roderick Dhu
And of his clan the boldest two
And let me but till morning rest,
I write the falsehood on their crest.'
If by the blaze I mark aright
Thou bear'st the belt and spur of Knight.'
'Then by these tokens mayst thou know
Each proud oppressor's mortal foe.'
'Enough, enough; sit down and share
A soldier's couch, a soldier's fare.'

XXXI..

He gave him of his Highland cheer,
The hardened flesh of mountain deer;
Dry fuel on the fire he laid,

And bade the Saxon share his plaid.
He tended him like welcome guest,
Then thus his further speech addressed:—
 'Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
 A clansman born, a kinsman true;
Each word against his honour spoke
 Demands of me avenging stroke;
Yet more,—upon thy fate, 'tis said,
 A mighty augury is laid.
It rests with me to wind my horn,—
 Thou art with numbers overborne;
It rests with me, here, brand to brand,
 Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
But, not for clan, nor kindred's cause,
 Will I depart from honour's laws;
To assail a wearied man were shame,
 And stranger is a holy name;
Guidance and rest, and food and fire,
 In vain he never must require.
Then rest thee here till dawn of day;
 Myself will guide thee on the way,
O'er stock and stone, through watch and ward,
 Till past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard,
 As far as Coilantogle's ford;
From thence thy warrant is thy sword.'

'I take thy courtesy, by heaven,
As freely as 'tis nobly given!'
Well, rest thee; for the bittern's cry
Sings us the lake's wild lullaby.'
With that he shook the gathered heath,
And spread his plaid upon the wreath;
And the brave foemen, side by side,
Lay peaceful down like brothers tried,
And slept until the dawning beam
Purpled the mountain and the stream.

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