

**THE GUARD-ROOM**  
**BY**  
**SIR WALTER SCOTT**

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### **I.**

The sun, awakening, through the smoky air  
Of the dark city casts a sullen glance,  
Rousing each caitiff to his task of care,  
Of sinful man the sad inheritance;  
Summoning revellers from the lagging dance,  
Scaring the prowling robber to his den;  
Gilding on battled tower the warder's lance,  
And warning student pale to leave his pen,  
And yield his drowsy eyes to the kind nurse of men.

What various scenes, and O, what scenes of woe,  
Are witnessed by that red and struggling beam!  
The fevered patient, from his pallet low,  
Through crowded hospital beholds it stream;  
The ruined maiden trembles at its gleam,  
The debtor wakes to thought of gyve and jail,  
'The love-lore wretch starts from tormenting dream:  
The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,  
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail.

## II.

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang  
With soldier-step and weapon-clang,  
While drums with rolling note foretell  
Relief to weary sentinel.

Through narrow loop and casement barred,  
The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,  
And, struggling with the smoky air,  
Deadened the torches' yellow glare.

In comfortless alliance shone  
The lights through arch of blackened stone,  
And showed wild shapes in garb of war,  
Faces deformed with beard and scar,  
All haggard from the midnight watch,  
And fevered with the stern debauch;  
For the oak table's massive board,  
Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,  
And beakers drained, and cups o'erthrown,  
Showed in what sport the night had flown.  
Some, weary, snored on floor and bench;  
Some labored still their thirst to quench;  
Some, chilled with watching, spread their hands  
O'er the huge chimney's dying brands,  
While round them, or beside them flung,  
At every step their harness rung.

### III.

These drew not for their fields the sword,  
Like tenants of a feudal lord,  
Nor owned the patriarchal claim  
Of Chieftain in their leader's name;  
Adventurers they, from far who roved,  
To live by battle which they loved.  
There the Italian's clouded face,  
The swarthy Spaniard's there you trace;  
The mountain-loving Switzer there  
More freely breathed in mountain-air;  
The Fleming there despised the soil  
That paid so ill the labourer's toil;  
Their rolls showed French and German name;  
And merry England's exiles came,  
To share, with ill-concealed disdain,  
Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.  
All brave in arms, well trained to wield  
The heavy halberd, brand, and shield;  
In camps licentious, wild, and bold;  
In pillage fierce and uncontrolled;  
And now, by holytide and feast,  
From rules of discipline released.

#### IV.

'They held debate of bloody fray,  
Fought 'twixt Loch Katrine and Achray.  
Fierce was their speech, and mid their words  
'Their hands oft grappled to their swords;  
Nor sunk their tone to spare the ear  
Of wounded comrades groaning near,  
Whose mangled limbs and bodies gored  
Bore token of the mountain sword,  
Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard,  
Their prayers and feverish wails were heard,—  
Sad burden to the ruffian joke,  
And savage oath by fury spoke!—  
At length up started John of Brent,  
A yeoman from the banks of Trent;  
A stranger to respect or fear,  
In peace a chaser of the deer,  
In host a hardy mutineer,  
But still the boldest of the crew  
When deed of danger was to do.  
He grieved that day their games cut short,  
And marred the dicer's brawling sport,  
And shouted loud, 'Renew the bowl!  
And, while a merry catch I troll,  
Let each the buxom chorus bear,

Like brethren of the brand and spear.'

V.

**Soldier's Song**

Our vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule  
Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,  
That there 's wrath and despair in the jolly black-jack,  
And the seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack;  
Yet whoop, Barnaby! off with thy liquor,  
Drink upseesout, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar he calls it damnation to sip  
The ripe ruddy dew of a woman's dear lip,  
Says that Beelzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,  
And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye;  
Yet whoop, Jack! kiss Gillian the quicker,  
Till she bloom like a rose, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar thus preaches,—and why should he not?  
For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot;  
And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch  
Who infringe the domains of our good Mother Church.  
Yet whoop, bully-boys! off with your liquor,  
Sweet Marjorie 's the word and a fig for the vicar!

## VI.

The warder's challenge, heard without,  
Stayed in mid-roar the merry shout.

A soldier to the portal went,—

'Here is old Bertram, sirs, of Ghent;

And—beat for jubilee the drum!—

A maid and minstrel with him come.'

Bertram, a Fleming, gray and scarred,

Was entering now the Court of Guard,

A harper with him, and, in plaid

All muffled close, a mountain maid,

Who backward shrunk to 'scape the view

Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.

'What news?' they roared:—' I only know,

From noon till eve we fought with foe,

As wild and as untamable

As the rude mountains where they dwell;

On both sides store of blood is lost,

Nor much success can either boast.'—

'But whence thy captives, friend?such spoil

As theirs must needs reward thy toil.

Old dost thou wax, and wars grow sharp;

Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp!

Get thee an ape, and trudge the land,

The leader of a juggler band.'

## VII.

'No, comrade;—no such fortune mine.  
After the fight these sought our line,  
That aged harper and the girl,  
And, having audience of the Earl,  
Mar bade I should purvey them steed,  
And bring them hitherward with speed.  
Forbear your mirth and rude alarm,  
For none shall do them shame or harm.—  
'Hear ye his boast?' cried John of Brent,  
Ever to strife and jangling bent;  
'Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,  
And yet the jealous niggard grudge  
To pay the forester his fee?  
I'll have my share howe'er it be,  
Despite of Moray, Mar, or thee.'  
Bertram his forward step withstood;  
And, burning in his vengeful mood,  
Old Allan, though unfit for strife,  
Laid hand upon his dagger-knife;  
But Ellen boldly stepped between,  
And dropped at once the tartan screen:—  
So, from his morning cloud, appears  
The sun of May through summer tears.



The savage soldiery, amazed,  
As on descended angel gazed;  
Even hardy Brent, abashed and tamed,  
Stood half admiring, half ashamed.

### VIII.

Boldly she spoke: 'Soldiers, attend!  
My father was the soldier's friend,  
Cheered him in camps, in marches led,  
And with him in the battle bled.  
Not from the valiant or the strong  
Should exile's daughter suffer wrong.'  
Answered De Brent, most forward still  
In every feat or good or ill:  
'I shame me of the part I played;  
And thou an outlaw's child, poor maid!  
An outlaw I by forest laws,  
And merry Needwood knows the cause.  
Poor Rose,—if Rose be living now,—  
He wiped his iron eye and brow,—  
'Must bear such age, I think, as thou.—  
Hear ye, my mates! I go to call  
The Captain of our watch to hall:  
There lies my halberd on the floor;  
And he that steps my halberd o'er,

To do the maid injurious part,  
My shaft shall quiver in his heart!  
Beware loose speech, or jesting rough;  
Ye all know John de Brent. Enough.'

## IX.

Their Captain came, a gallant young,—  
Of Tullibardine's house he sprung,—  
Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight;  
Gay was his mien, his humor light  
And, though by courtesy controlled,  
Forward his speech, his bearing bold.  
The high-born maiden ill could brook  
The scanning of his curious look  
And dauntless eye:—and yet, in sooth  
Young Lewis was a generous youth;  
But Ellen's lovely face and mien  
Ill suited to the garb and scene,  
Might lightly bear construction strange,  
And give loose fancy scope to range.  
'Welcome to Stirling towers, fair maid!  
Come ye to seek a champion's aid,  
On palfrey white, with harper hoar,  
Like errant damosel of yore?  
Does thy high quest a knight require,

Or may the venture suit a squire?'  
Her dark eye flashed;—she paused and sighed:—  
'O what have I to do with pride!—  
Through scenes of sorrow, shame, and strife,  
A suppliant for a father's life,  
I crave an audience of the King.  
Behold, to back my suit, a ring,  
The royal pledge of grateful claims,  
Given by the Monarch to Fitz-James.'

X.

The signet-ring young Lewis took  
With deep respect and altered look,  
And said: 'This ring our duties own;  
And pardon, if to worth unknown,  
In semblance mean obscurely veiled,  
Lady, in aught my folly failed.  
Soon as the day flings wide his gates,  
The King shall know what suitor waits.  
Please you meanwhile in fitting bower  
Repose you till his waking hour.  
Female attendance shall obey  
Your hest, for service or array.  
Permit I marshal you the way.'  
But, ere she followed, with the grace

And open bounty of her race,  
She bade her slender purse be shared  
Among the soldiers of the guard.  
The rest with thanks their guerdon took,  
But Brent, with shy and awkward look,  
On the reluctant maiden's hold  
Forced bluntly back the proffered gold:—  
'Forgive a haughty English heart,  
And O, forget its ruder part!

The vacant purse shall be my share,  
Which in my barrel-cap I'll bear,  
Perchance, in jeopardy of war,  
Where gayer crests may keep afar.'  
With thanks—'twas all she could—the maid  
His rugged courtesy repaid.

## **XI.**

When Ellen forth with Lewis went,  
Allan made suit to John of Brent:—  
'My lady safe, O let your grace  
Give me to see my master's face!  
His minstrel I,—to share his doom  
Bound from the cradle to the tomb.  
Tenth in descent, since first my sires

Waked for his noble house their Iyres,  
Nor one of all the race was known  
But prized its weal above their own.  
With the Chief's birth begins our care;  
Our harp must soothe the infant heir,  
Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace  
His earliest feat of field or chase;  
In peace, in war, our rank we keep,  
We cheer his board, we soothe his sleep,  
Nor leave him till we pour our verse—  
A doleful tribute!—o'er his hearse.  
Then let me share his captive lot;  
It is my right,—deny it not!  
'Little we reck,' said John of Brent,  
'We Southern men, of long descent;  
Nor wot we how a name—a word—  
Makes clansmen vassals to a lord:  
Yet kind my noble landlord's part,—  
God bless the house of Beaudesert!  
And, but I loved to drive the deer  
More than to guide the labouring steer,  
I had not dwelt an outcast here.  
Come, good old Minstrel, follow me;  
Thy Lord and Chieftain shalt thou see.'

## XII.

Then, from a rusted iron hook,  
A bunch of ponderous keys he took,  
Lighted a torch, and Allan led  
Through grated arch and passage dread.  
Portals they passed, where, deep within,  
Spoke prisoner's moan and fetters' din;  
Through rugged vaults, where, loosely stored,  
Lay wheel, and axe, and headsmen's sword,  
And many a hideous engine grim,  
For wrenching joint and crushing limb,  
By artists formed who deemed it shame  
And sin to give their work a name.  
They halted at a low-browed porch,  
And Brent to Allan gave the torch,  
While bolt and chain he backward rolled,  
And made the bar unhasp its hold.  
They entered:—'twas a prison-room  
Of stern security and gloom,  
Yet not a dungeon; for the day  
Through lofty gratings found its way,  
And rude and antique garniture  
Decked the sad walls and oaken floor,  
Such as the rugged days of old  
Deemed fit for captive noble's hold.

'Here,' said De Brent, 'thou mayst remain  
Till the Leech visit him again.  
Strict is his charge, the warders tell,  
To tend the noble prisoner well.'  
Retiring then the bolt he drew,  
And the lock's murmurs growled anew.  
Roused at the sound, from lowly bed  
A captive feebly raised his head.  
The wondering Minstrel looked, and knew—  
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu!  
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,  
They, erring, deemed the Chief he sought.

### **XIII.**

As the tall ship, whose lofty prore  
Shall never stem the billows more,  
Deserted by her gallant band,  
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—  
So on his couch lay Roderick Dhu!  
And oft his fevered limbs he threw  
In toss abrupt, as when her sides  
Lie rocking in the advancing tides,  
That shake her frame with ceaseless beat,  
Yet cannot heave her from her seat;—  
O, how unlike her course at sea!

Or his free step on hill and lea!—  
Soon as the Minstrel he could scan,—  
    'What of thy lady?—of my clan?—  
My mother?—Douglas?—tell me all!  
    Have they been ruined in my fall?  
Ah, yes! or wherefore art thou here?  
Yet speak,—speak boldly,—do not fear.'—  
    For Allan, who his mood well knew,  
Was choked with grief and terror too.—  
'Who fought?—who fled?—Old man, be brief;—  
Some might,—for they had lost their Chief.  
    Who basely live?—who bravely died?'  
'O, calm thee, Chief!' the Minstrel cried,  
    'Ellen is safe!' 'For that thank Heaven!'  
'And hopes are for the Douglas given;—  
    The Lady Margaret, too, is well;  
And, for thy clan,—on field or fell,  
    Has never harp of minstrel told  
Of combat fought so true and bold.  
    Thy stately Pine is yet unbent,  
Though many a goodly bough is rent.'



#### XIV.

The Chieftain reared his form on high,  
And fever's fire was in his eye;  
But ghastly, pale, and livid streaks  
Checkered his swarthy brow and cheeks.  
'Hark, Minstrel! I have heard thee play,  
With measure bold on festal day,  
In yon lone isle,—again where ne'er  
Shall harper play or warrior hear!—  
That stirring air that peals on high,  
O'er Dermid's race our victory.—  
Strike it!—and then,—for well thou canst,—  
Free from thy minstrel-spirit glanced,  
Fling me the picture of the fight,  
When met my clan the Saxon might.  
I'll listen, till my fancy hears  
The clang of swords' the crash of spears!  
These grates, these walls, shall vanish then  
For the fair field of fighting men,  
And my free spirit burst away,  
As if it soared from battle fray.'  
The trembling Bard with awe obeyed,—  
Slow on the harp his hand he laid;  
But soon remembrance of the sight  
He witnessed from the mountain's height,

With what old Bertram told at night,  
Awakened the full power of song,  
And bore him in career along;—  
As shallop launched on river's tide,  
'That slow and fearful leaves the side,  
But, when it feels the middle stream,  
Drives downward swift as lightning's beam.

## **XV.**

### **Battle of Beal' AnDuine.**

'The Minstrel came once more to view  
The eastern ridge of Benvenue,  
For ere he parted he would say  
Farewell to lovely loch Achray  
Where shall he find, in foreign land,  
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!—  
There is no breeze upon the fern,  
No ripple on the lake,  
Upon her eyry nods the erne,  
The deer has sought the brake;  
The small birds will not sing aloud,  
The springing trout lies still,  
So darkly glooms yon thunder-cloud,

That swathes, as with a purple shroud,

Benledi's distant hill.

Is it the thunder's solemn sound

That mutters deep and dread,

Or echoes from the groaning ground

The warrior's measured tread?

Is it the lightning's quivering glance

That on the thicket streams,

Or do they flash on spear and lance

The sun's retiring beams?—

I see the dagger-crest of Mar,

I see the Moray's silver star,

Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,

That up the lake comes winding far!

To hero bounes for battle-strife,

Or bard of martial lay,

'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,

One glance at their array!

## XVI.

'Their light-armed archers far and near  
    Surveyed the tangled ground,  
Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,  
    A twilight forest frowned,  
Their barded horsemen in the rear  
    The stern battalia crowned.  
No cymbal clashed, no clarion rang,  
    Still were the pipe and drum;  
Save heavy tread, and armor's clang,  
    The sullen march was dumb.  
There breathed no wind their crests to shake,  
    Or wave their flags abroad;  
Scarce the frail aspen seemed to quake  
    That shadowed o'er their road.  
Their vaward scouts no tidings bring,  
    Can rouse no lurking foe,  
Nor spy a trace of living thing,  
    Save when they stirred the roe;  
The host moves like a deep-sea wave,  
Where rise no rocks its pride to brave  
    High-swelling, dark, and slow.  
The lake is passed, and now they gain  
    A narrow and a broken plain,  
Before the Trosachs' rugged jaws;

And here the horse and spearmen pause  
While, to explore the dangerous glen  
Dive through the pass the archer-men.

## **XVII.**

'At once there rose so wild a yell  
Within that dark and narrow dell,  
As all the fiends from heaven that fell  
Had pealed the banner-cry of hell!  
Forth from the pass in tumult driven,  
Like chaff before the wind of heaven,

The archery appear:

For life! for life! their flight they ply—  
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,  
And plaids and bonnets waving high,  
And broadswords flashing to the sky,  
Are maddening in the rear.

Onward they drive in dreadful race,

Pursuers and pursued;

Before that tide of flight and chase,

How shall it keep its rooted place,

The spearmen's twilight wood?—"

"Down, down," cried Mar, "your lances down'

Bear back both friend and foe! "—

Like reeds before the tempest's frown,

That serried grove of lances brown  
At once lay levelled low;  
And closely shouldering side to side,  
The bristling ranks the onset bide.—"  
"We'll quell the savage mountaineer,  
As their Tinchel crows the game!  
They come as fleet as forest deer,  
We'll drive them back as tame."

### **XVIII.**

'Bearing before them in their course  
The relics of the archer force,  
Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,  
Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.  
Above the tide, each broadsword bright  
Was brandishing like beam of light,  
Each targe was dark below;  
And with the ocean's mighty swing,  
When heaving to the tempest's wing,  
They hurled them on the foe.  
I heard the lance's shivering crash,  
As when the whirlwind rends the ash;  
I heard the broadsword's deadly clang,  
As if a hundred anvils rang!  
But Moray wheeled his rearward rank

Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,—

"My banner-man, advance!

I see," he cried, "their column shake.

Now, gallants! for your ladies' sake,

Upon them with the lance!"—

The horsemen dashed among the rout,

As deer break through the broom;

Their steeds are stout, their swords are out,

They soon make lightsome room.

Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne—

Where, where was Roderick then!

One blast upon his bugle-horn

Were worth a thousand men.

And reflux through the pass of fear

The battle's tide was poured;

Vanished the Saxon's struggling spear,

Vanished the mountain-sword.

As Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep,

Receives her roaring linn

As the dark caverns of the deep

Suck the wild whirlpool in,

So did the deep and darksome pass

Devour the battle's mingled mass;

None linger now upon the plain

Save those who ne'er shall fight again.

### XIX.

'Now westward rolls the battle's din,  
That deep and doubling pass within.—  
Minstrel, away! the work of fate  
Is bearing on; its issue wait,  
Where the rude Trosachs' dread defile  
Opens on Katrine's lake and isle.  
Gray Benvenue I soon repassed,  
Loch Katrine lay beneath me cast.  
The sun is set;—the clouds are met,  
The lowering scowl of heaven  
An inky hue of livid blue  
To the deep lake has given;  
Strange gusts of wind from mountain glen  
Swept o'er the lake, then sunk again.  
I heeded not the eddying surge,  
Mine eye but saw the Trosachs' gorge,  
Mine ear but heard that sullen sound,  
Which like an earthquake shook the ground,  
And spoke the stern and desperate strife  
That parts not but with parting life,  
Seeming, to minstrel ear, to toll  
The dirge of many a passing soul.



Nearer it comes—the dim-wood glen  
The martial flood disgorged again,  
But not in mingled tide;  
The plaided warriors of the North  
High on the mountain thunder forth  
And overhang its side,  
While by the lake below appears  
The darkening cloud of Saxon spears.  
At weary bay each shattered band,  
Eying their foemen, sternly stand;  
Their banners stream like tattered sail,  
That flings its fragments to the gale,  
And broken arms and disarray  
Marked the fell havoc of the day.

## XX.

'Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,  
The Saxons stood in sullen trance,  
Till Moray pointed with his lance,  
And cried: "Behold yon isle!—  
See! none are left to guard its strand  
But women weak, that wring the hand:  
'Tis there of yore the robber band  
Their booty wont to pile;—

My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,  
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,  
And loose a shallop from the shore.  
Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,  
Lords of his mate, and brood, and den."  
Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,  
On earth his casque and corselet rung,  
He plunged him in the wave:—  
All saw the deed,—the purpose knew,  
And to their clamors Benvenue  
A mingled echo gave;  
The Saxons shout, their mate to cheer,  
The helpless females scream for fear  
And yells for rage the mountaineer.  
'T was then, as by the outcry riven,  
Poured down at once the lowering heaven:  
A whirlwind swept Loch Katrine's breast,  
Her billows reared their snowy crest.  
Well for the swimmer swelled they high,  
To mar the Highland marksman's eye;  
For round him showered, mid rain and hail,  
The vengeful arrows of the Gael.  
In vain.—He nears the isle—and lo!  
His hand is on a shallop's bow.  
Just then a flash of lightning came,

It tinged the waves and strand with flame;  
I marked Duncraggan's widowed dame,  
    Behind an oak I saw her stand,  
A naked dirk gleamed in her hand:—  
    It darkened,—but amid the moan  
    Of waves I heard a dying groan;—  
Another flash!—the spearman floats  
    A weltering corse beside the boats,  
And the stern matron o'er him stood,  
Her hand and dagger streaming blood.

## XXI.

"Revenge!revenge!" the Saxons cried,  
The Gaels' exulting shout replied.  
    Despite the elemental rage,  
    Again they hurried to engage;  
But, ere they closed in desperate fight,  
    Bloody with spurring came a knight,  
Sprung from his horse, and from a crag  
Waved 'twixt the hosts a milk-white flag.  
    Clarion and trumpet by his side  
Rung forth a truce-note high and wide,  
    While, in the Monarch's name, afar  
    A herald's voice forbade the war,  
For Bothwell's lord and Roderick bold

Were both, he said, in captive hold.'—  
But here the lay made sudden stand,  
The harp escaped the Minstrel's hand!  
Oft had he stolen a glance, to spy  
How Roderick brooked his minstrelsy:  
At first, the Chieftain, to the chime,  
With lifted hand kept feeble time;  
That motion ceased,—yet feeling strong  
Varied his look as changed the song;  
At length, no more his deafened ear  
The minstrel melody can hear;  
His face grows sharp,—his hands are clenched'  
As if some pang his heart-strings wrenched;  
Set are his teeth, his fading eye  
Is sternly fixed on vacancy;  
Thus, motionless and moanless, drew  
His parting breath stout Roderick Dhu!—  
Old Allan-bane looked on aghast,  
While grim and still his spirit passed;  
But when he saw that life was fled,  
He poured his wailing o'er the dead.

XXII.

**Lament.**

'And art thou cold and lowly laid,  
Thy foeman's dread, thy people's aid,  
Breadalbane's boast, Clan-Alpine's shade!  
For thee shall none a requiem say?—  
For thee, who loved the minstrel's lay,  
For thee, of Bothwell's house the stay,  
The shelter of her exiled line,  
E'en in this prison-house of thine,  
I'll wail for Alpine's honored Pine!

'What groans shall yonder valleys fill!  
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill!  
What tears of burning rage shall thrill,  
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,  
Thy fall before the race was won,  
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!  
There breathes not clansman of thy line,  
But would have given his life for thine.  
O, woe for Alpine's honoured Pine!

'Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—  
The captive thrush may brook the cage,

The prisoned eagle dies for rage.  
Brave spirit, do Dot scorn my strain!  
And, when its notes awake again,  
Even she, so long beloved in vain,  
Shall with my harp her voice combine,  
And mix her woe and tears with mine,  
To wail Clan-Alpine's honoured Pine.'

### **XXIII.**

Ellen the while, with bursting heart,  
Remained in lordly bower apart,  
Where played, with many-coloured gleams,  
Through storied pane the rising beams.  
In vain on gilded roof they fall,  
And lightened up a tapestried wall,  
And for her use a menial train  
A rich collation spread in vain.  
The banquet proud, the chamber gay,  
Scarce drew one curious glance astray;  
Or if she looked, 't was but to say,  
With better omen dawned the day  
In that lone isle, where waved on high  
The dun-deer's hide for canopy;  
Where oft her noble father shared  
The simple meal her care prepared,

While Lufra, crouching by her side,  
Her station claimed with jealous pride,  
And Douglas, bent on woodland game,  
Spoke of the chase to Malcolm Graeme,  
Whose answer, oft at random made,  
The wandering of his thoughts betrayed.  
Those who such simple joys have known  
Are taught to prize them when they 're gone.

But sudden, see, she lifts her head;  
The window seeks with cautious tread.  
What distant music has the power  
To win her in this woful hour?  
'T was from a turret that o'erhung  
Her latticed bower, the strain was sung.

#### **XXIV.**

Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman.

'My hawk is tired of perch and hood,  
My idle greyhound loathes his food,  
My horse is weary of his stall,  
And I am sick of captive thrall.  
I wish I were as I have been,  
Hunting the hart in forest green,  
With bended bow and bloodhound free,

For that's the life is meet for me.

I hate to learn the ebb of time  
From yon dull steeple's drowsy chime,  
Or mark it as the sunbeams crawl,  
Inch after inch, along the wall.  
The lark was wont my matins ring,  
The sable rook my vespers sing;  
These towers, although a king's they be,  
Have not a hall of joy for me.

No more at dawning morn I rise,  
And sun myself in Ellen's eyes,  
Drive the fleet deer the forest through,  
And homeward wend with evening dew;  
A blithesome welcome blithely meet,  
And lay my trophies at her feet,  
While fled the eve on wing of glee,—  
That life is lost to love and me!

## **XXV.**

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,  
The listener had not turned her head,  
It trickled still, the starting tear,  
When light a footstep struck her ear,



And Snowdown's graceful Knight was near.

She turned the hastier, lest again

The prisoner should renew his strain.

'O welcome, brave Fitz-James!' she said;

'How may an almost orphan maid

Pay the deep debt—' 'O say not so!

To me no gratitude you owe.

Not mine, alas! the boon to give,

And bid thy noble father live;

I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,

With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.

No tyrant he, though ire and pride

May lay his better mood aside.

Come, Ellen, come! 'tis more than time,

He holds his court at morning prime.'

With heating heart, and bosom wrung,

As to a brother's arm she clung.

Gently he dried the falling tear,

And gently whispered hope and cheer;

Her faltering steps half led, half stayed,

Through gallery fair and high arcade,

Till at his touch its wings of pride

A portal arch unfolded wide.

XXVI.

Within 't was brilliant all and light,  
A thronging scene of figures bright;  
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,  
As when the setting sun has given  
Ten thousand hues to summer even,  
And from their tissue fancy frames  
Aerial knights and fairy dames.  
Still by Fitz-James her footing staid;  
A few faint steps she forward made,  
Then slow her drooping head she raised,  
And fearful round the presence gazed;  
For him she sought who owned this state,  
The dreaded Prince whose will was fate!—  
She gazed on many a princely port  
Might well have ruled a royal court;  
On many a splendid garb she gazed,—  
Then turned bewildered and amazed,  
For all stood bare; and in the room  
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.  
To him each lady's look was lent,  
On him each courtier's eye was bent;  
Midst furs and silks and jewels sheen,  
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,

The centre of the glittering ring,—  
And Snowdoun's Knight is Scotland's King!

**XXVII.**

As wreath of snow on mountain-breast  
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,  
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,  
And at the Monarch's feet she lay;  
No word her choking voice commands,—  
She showed the ring,—she clasped her hands.

O, not a moment could he brook,  
The generous Prince, that suppliant look!  
Gently he raised her,—and, the while,  
Checked with a glance the circle's smile;  
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kissed,  
And bade her terrors be dismissed:—

'Yes, fair; the wandering poor  
Fitz-James The fealty of Scotland claims.

To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring;  
He will redeem his signet ring.  
Ask naught for Douglas;—yester even,  
His Prince and he have much forgiven;  
Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue,  
I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.  
We would not, to the vulgar crowd,

Yield what they craved with clamor loud;

Calmly we heard and judged his cause,

Our council aided and our laws.

I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern

With stout De Vaux and gray Glencairn;

And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own

The friend and bulwark of our throne.—

But, lovely infidel, how now?

What clouds thy misbelieving brow?

Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid;

Thou must confirm this doubting maid.'

### **XXVIII.**

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,

And on his neck his daughter hung.

The Monarch drank, that happy hour,

The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—

When it can say with godlike voice,

Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice!

Yet would not James the general eye

On nature's raptures long should pry;

He stepped between—'Nay, Douglas, nay,

Steal not my proselyte away!

The riddle 'tis my right to read,

That brought this happy chance to speed.

Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray  
In life's more low but happier way,  
'Tis under name which veils my power  
Nor falsely veils,—for Stirling's tower  
Of yore the name of Snowdoun claims,  
And Normans call me James Fitz-James.

Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,  
Thus learn to right the injured cause.'

Then, in a tone apart and low,—  
'Ah, little traitress! none must know  
What idle dream, what lighter thought  
What vanity full dearly bought,  
Joined to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew  
My spell-bound steps to Benvenue  
In dangerous hour, and all but gave  
Thy Monarch's life to mountain glaive!'  
Aloud he spoke: 'Thou still dost hold  
That little talisman of gold,  
Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James's ring,—  
What seeks fair Ellen of the King?'

## XXIX.

Full well the conscious maiden guessed  
He probed the weakness of her breast;  
But with that consciousness there came  
A lightening of her fears for Graeme,  
And more she deemed the Monarch's ire  
Kindled 'gainst him who for her sire  
Rebellious broadsword boldly drew;  
And, to her generous feeling true,  
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.  
'Forbear thy suit;—the King of kings  
Alone can stay life's parting wings.  
I know his heart, I know his hand,  
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand;  
My fairest earldom would I give  
To bid Clan-Alpine's Chieftain live!—  
Hast thou no other boon to crave?  
No other captive friend to save?'  
Blushing, she turned her from the King,  
And to the Douglas gave the ring,  
As if she wished her sire to speak  
The suit that stained her glowing cheek.  
'Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,  
And stubborn justice holds her course.  
Malcolm, come forth!'—and, at the word,

Down kneeled the Graeme to Scotland's Lord.

'For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,  
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,  
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,  
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,  
And sought amid thy faithful clan  
A refuge for an outlawed man,  
Dishonoring thus thy loyal name.—  
Fetters and warder for the Graeme!  
His chain of gold the King unstrung,  
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,  
Then gently drew the glittering band,  
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

Harp of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,  
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;  
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,  
The deer, half seen, are to the covert wending.  
Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,  
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy;  
Thy numbers sweet with nature's vespers blending,  
With distant echo from the fold and lea,  
And herd-boy's evening pipe, and hum of housing bee.

Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel Harp!

Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,  
And little reck I of the censure sharp  
May idly cavil at an idle lay.  
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,  
Through secret woes the world has never known,  
When on the weary night dawned wearier day,  
And bitterer was the grief devoured alone.—  
That I o'erlive such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

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



***Free***editorial 