

# **The Demon of the Gibbet**

Fitz-James O'Brien

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# The Demon of the Gibbet

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There was no west, there was no east,  
No star abroad for eyes to see;  
And Norman spurred his jaded beast  
Hard by the terrible gallows-tree.

"O, Norman, haste across this waste,—  
For something seems to follow me!"  
"Cheer up, dear Maud, for, thanked be God,  
We nigh have passed the gallows tree!"

He kissed her lip: then—spur and whip!  
And fast they fled across the lea.  
But vain the heel, the rowel steel,—  
For something leaped from the gallows-tree!

*"Give me your cloak, your knightly cloak,  
That wrapped you oft beyond the sea!  
The wind is bold, my bones are old,  
And I am cold on the gallows-tree!"*

"O holy God! O dearest Maud,  
Quick, quick, some prayers—the best that be!  
A bony hand my neck has spanned,  
And tears my knightly cloak from me!"

## The Demon of the Gibbet

*"Give me your wine,—the red, red wine,  
That in a flask hangs by your knee!  
Ten summers burst on me accurst,  
And I am athirst on the gallows—tree!"*

"O Maud, my life, my loving wife!  
Have you no prayer to set us free?  
My belt unclasps,—a demon grasps,  
And drags my wine—flask from my knee!"

*"Give me your bride, your bonnie bride,  
That left her nest with you to flee!  
O she hath flown to be my own,  
For I'm alone on the gallows—tree!"*

"Cling closer, Maud, and trust in God!  
Cling close!—Ah, heaven, she slips from me!"  
A prayer, a groan, and he alone  
Rode on that night from the gallows—tree.