

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Joanna Baillie

Table of Contents

<u>Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters</u>	1
<u>Joanna Baillie</u>	2
<u>PREFACE</u>	3
<u>A METRICAL LEGEND OF WILLIAM WALLACE</u>	9
<u>WILLIAM WALLACE</u>	10
<u>THE LEGEND OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS</u>	42
<u>CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS</u>	43
<u>THE LEGEND OF LADY GRISELD BAILLIE</u>	66
<u>LORD JOHN OF THE EAST</u>	87
<u>MALCOM'S HEIR: A TALE OF WONDER</u>	91
<u>THE ELDEN TREE: AN ANCIENT BALLAD</u>	97
<u>THE GHOST OF FADON</u>	102

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Joanna Baillie

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.
<http://www.blackmask.com>

- PREFACE.
- A METRICAL LEGEND OF WILLIAM WALLACE.
- WILLIAM WALLACE.
- THE LEGEND OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.
- CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.
- THE LEGEND OF LADY GRISELD BAILLIE.
- LORD JOHN OF THE EAST.
- MALCOM'S HEIR: A TALE OF WONDER.
- THE ELDEN TREE: AN ANCIENT BALLAD.
- THE GHOST OF FADON.

PREFACE.

IN calling the following pieces Metrical Legends, I do not use the term as denoting fictitious stories, but as chronicles or memorials. The acts of great men, as related in history, are so blended with the events of the times in which they lived, and with the acts of their contemporaries, that it is difficult for a great proportion of readers to form, at the conclusion of the history, a distinct idea of all they have really performed: and even of those who might do so without difficulty, how few bestow their leisure in fairly considering those claims of the great and the good to their respect and admiration! Biography, where sources of information regarding the private character and habits of the individual remain, has made amends for this unavoidable defect in history, and is a most instructive and interesting study. Yet the minute detail of the character too often does the same injury to the departed Great, which a familiar acquaintance still oftener does to the living; for a lengthened, unrelieved account is very unfavourable to that rousing and generous admiration which the more simple and distant view of heroic worth is fitted to inspire;— an impulse most healthful and invigorating to the soul.

Romance, in verse and in prose, has, and often successfully, attempted to supply those deficiencies, by adding abundance of fictitious circumstances to the traces of history and biography—a task pleasing to the writer and the reader. But in her zeal to display the abstract perfections of a hero, she has not rested satisfied with additions; she has boldly and unwarrantably made use of absolute contradictions to those traces, even when generally known and well authenticated. This is the greatest injury to the Mighty Dead. It is throwing over the venerated form of a majestic man, a gauzy veil, on which is delineated the fanciful figure of an angel. If time has removed that form to such a distance, that a faint outline only can be perceived, let us still behold the outline unshaded and unchanged. "Disturb not the ashes of the dead," is a sentiment acknowledged and obeyed by every feeling mind; but to disturb those memorials of worth—those shadowings of the soul—what may be called their intellectual remains, is by far the greater sacrilege.

My reader must not, however, suppose that I would debar romance from the use of every real name, and oblige her to people her stories entirely with beings fictitious both in name and character. This would be too rigid. Where history is so obscure or remote, that we know little of a hero but his name, the romance writer may seize it as lawful spoil; for he cannot thereby confuse our ideas of truth and falsehood, or change and deform what has no form. It is only when a character known, though imperfectly, is wrested from the events with which it was really connected, and overlaid at the same time with fanciful attributes, that this can be justly complained of.

Having this view of the subject in my mind, and a great desire, notwithstanding, to pay some tribute to the memory of a few characters for whom I felt a peculiar admiration and respect, I have ventured upon what may be considered, in some degree, as a new attempt,—to give a short descriptive chronicle of those noble beings, whose existence has honoured human nature and benefited mankind.

In relating a true story, though we do not add any events or material circumstances to it, and abstain from attributing any motives for action, which have not been credibly reported, or may not be fairly inferred, yet, how often do we spontaneously, almost unwittingly, add description similar to what we know must have belonged to the actors and scenery of our story! Our story, for instance, says, "that a man, travelling at night through a wild forest, was attacked by a band of robbers." Our story-teller adds, "that the night was dark as pitch, scarcely a star to be seen twinkling between the drifted clouds; that the blast shook the trees, and howled dismally around him." Our story says, "that hearing the sound of approaching steps, he went behind a tree to wait till the robbers should pass, but unfortunately stumbling, the noise of his fall betrayed him, and he was seized upon, wounded, and stripped of every thing he possessed." Our story-teller adds, (particularly if the subject of the story is known to be of a timid spirit), "that their footsteps sounded along the hollow ground like the trampling of a host; that he stopped and listened with fearful anxiety; that, on their nearer approach, voices were mingled with the sound, like the hoarse deep accents of a murderer; that he trembled with fear; that, in quitting the path, every black stump or bush seemed to him a man in armour; that his limbs shook so violently, he could not raise his feet sufficiently to disentangle them from the fern and long grass which impeded him," &c. Or our story may say, "that the daughter of a proud chief stole from his castle on a summer morning, and joined her expecting lover in a neighbouring wood." The story-teller says, "she opened the door of her chamber with a beating heart, listened anxiously lest

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

any one should be a—stir in the family; that the sun shone softly through the ruddy air, on the fresh green boughs and dewy—webbed plants as she passed, and that she sighed to think she might never return to the haunts of her childhood any more." The story says, "she fled with him on horseback;" and the story—teller cannot well say less than, "that he set her on a beautiful steed, which stood ready caparisoned under the trees; that the voice of her lover gave her courage; that they passed over the silent country, in which not even a peasant was to be seen at his early labour, with the swiftness of an arrow, and every stream they crossed gave them confidence of escaping pursuit," &c. And thus our story—teller goes on, being present in imagination to every thing he relates, and describing the feelings, sounds, and appearances which he conceives must naturally have accompanied the different events of his story, almost, as I said before, without being aware that he is taking so much of what he relates entirely for granted.

In imitation then of this human propensity, from which we derive so much pleasure, though mischievous, when not indulged with charity and moderation, I have written the following Metrical Legends, describing such scenes as truly belong to my story, with occasionally the feelings, figures, and gestures of those whose actions they relate, and also assigning their motives of action, as they may naturally be supposed to have existed.

The events they record are taken from sources sufficiently authentic; and where any thing has been reasonably questioned, I give some notice of the doubt. I have endeavoured to give them with the brief simplicity of a chronicle, though frequently stopping in my course, where occasion for reflection or remark naturally offered itself, or proceeding more slowly, when objects, capable of interesting or pleasing description, tempted me to linger. Though my great desire has been to display such portraiture of real worth and noble heroism, as might awaken high and generous feelings in a youthful mind; yet I have not, as far as I know, imputed to my heroes motives or sentiments beyond what their noble deeds do fairly warrant. I have made each Legend short enough to be read in one moderate sitting, that the impression might be undivided, and that the weariness of a story, not varied or enriched by minuter circumstances, might be, if possible, avoided.—It has, in short, been my aim to produce sentimental and descriptive memorials of exalted worth.

The manner of the rhyme and versification I have in some degree, borrowed from my great contemporary Sir Walter Scott; following in this respect, the example of many of the most popular poets of the present day. Let it not, however, be supposed, that I presume to believe myself a successful borrower. We often stretch out our hand for one thing, and catch another; and if, instead of the easy, light, rich, and fanciful variety of his rhyme and measure, the reader should perceive that I have, unfortunately, found others of a far different character, I ought not to be greatly surprised or offended. But, indeed, I have been almost forced to be thus presumptuous; for blank verse, or heroic rhyme, being grave and uniform in themselves, require a story varied with many circumstances, and would only have added to the dryness of a chronicle, even though executed with a skill which I pretend not to possess. Yet when I say that I have borrowed, let it not be supposed I have attempted to imitate his particular expressions; I have only attempted to write in a certain free irregular measure, which, but for him, I should probably never have known or admired.

These days are rich in Poets, whose fertile imaginations have been chiefly employed in national or Eastern romance; the one abounding in variety of character, event, and description of familiar or grand objects, and enlivened with natural feelings and passions; the other, decorated with more artificial and luxurious description, and animated with exaggerated and morbid emotions, each in its own way continually exciting the interest and curiosity of the reader, and leading him on through a paradise of fairyland. In these days, therefore, legends of real events, and characters already known to the world, even though animated with a warmth of sentiment, and vividness of description far exceeding my ability to give, have not the same chance for popularity which they might formerly have had. I own this, and am willing unrepiningly to submit to disadvantages which arise from such a delightful cause. For who would wish, were it possible, to remove such an impediment for his own convenience! It is better to take a humble place with such contemporaries, than to stand distinguished in a desert place. I only mention this circumstance to bespeak some consideration and indulgence from readers accustomed to such intoxicating entertainment.

The hero of my first legend is one, at the sound of whose name some sensation of pride and of gratitude passes over every Scottish heart. He belongs indeed to the "land of the mountain and the flood," which, till of later years, was considered by her more fertile neighbour as a land of poverty and barrenness; but the generous devotedness of a true patriot connects him with the noblest feelings of all mankind; or if the contemplation of that excellence

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

be more circumscribed, the feeling in his countrymen which arises from it, is for that very reason the deeper and the dearer. The circumstances of the times which followed him,—the continuance of Edward's power in Scotland, destroyed, many years after, by the wisdom and perseverance of a most gallant and popular king, has made the name of Wallace occur but seldom in the regular histories of Scotland, while his great actions are mentioned so carelessly and briefly, that we read them with disappointment and regret. But when we remember, that, from being the younger son of a private gentleman of small consideration, he became the military leader and governor of the whole nation, whose hereditary chieftains, accustomed to lead their clans to battle, were both proud and numerous, we may well suppose that all related of him by his friend and contemporary, Blair, which makes the substance of the blind Minstrel's poem, is true; or, at least, if not entirely correct, does not exceed the truth.

The mixture of fiction which is found in it, forms no reasonable objection to receiving those details that are probable and coincide with general history and the character and circumstances of the times. To raise his country from the oppression which her nobles so long and so basely endured; to make head against such a powerful, warlike and artful enemy; to be raised by so many hereditary chiefs to be warden or protector of the realm, on whose behalf he, as a rival power, entered into compacts and treaties with the Monarch, who had England and some fair provinces of France under his dominion, presupposes a fortune and ability in war, joined with talents for governing, equal to all that his private historian or even tradition has ascribed to him. We may smile at the wonderful feats of strength related of him by Blind Harry, and traditionally received over the whole country; but when we consider that his **personal acts**, when still very young, are the only reason that can be given for attracting so many followers to his command, we must believe that his lofty soul and powerful intellect were united to a body of extraordinary strength and activity. Wallace Wight, or the Strong, is the appellation by which he is distinguished in his own country; and the romantic adventures of a Robin Hood are by tradition fondly joined to the mighty acts of Scotland's triumphant deliverer.

His character and story are in every point of view particularly fitted either for poetry or romance; yet, till very lately, he has not been the subject, as far as I know, of any modern pen. Wallace, or the Field of Falkirk, written in nervous and harmonious verse, by a genius particularly successful in describing the warlike manners and deeds of ancient times, and in mixing the rougher qualities of the veteran leader with the supposed tenderness of a lover, is a poem that does honour to its author and to the subject she has chosen. Wallace, or the Scottish Chief, which through a rich variety of interesting, imaginary adventures, conducts a character of most perfect virtue and heroism to an affecting and tragical end—is a romance deservedly popular. This tribute to the name of Wallace from two distinguished English women, I mention with pleasure, notwithstanding all I have said against mixing true with fictitious history.

Wallace, it must be owned, though several times the deliverer of his country from the immediate oppression of her formidable enemy, was cut off in the midst of his noble exertions and left her in the power of Edward; therefore he was not, in a full sense, the deliverer of Scotland, which was ultimately rescued from the yoke by Robert Bruce. But had there been no Wallace to precede him, in all human likelihood, there would have been no Bruce. Had it not been for the successful struggles of the first hero, the country, with her submissive nobles, would have been so completely subdued and permanently settled under the iron yoke of Edward, that the second would never have conceived the possibility of recovering its independence. The example set by Wallace, and the noble spirit he had breathed into his countrymen, were a preparation—one may almost say, the moral implements by which the valiant and persevering Bruce accomplished his glorious task.

The reader, perhaps, will smile at the earnestness with which I estimate the advantage of having been rescued from the domination of Edward, now, when England and Scotland are happily united; making one powerful and generous nation, which hath nobly maintained, for so many generations, a degree of rational liberty, under the form of a limited monarchy, hitherto enjoyed by no other people. But when we recollect the treatment which Ireland received as a conquered country, and of which she in some degree still feels the baleful effects, we shall acknowledge, with gratitude, the blessing of having been united to England under far different circumstances. Nay, it may not, perhaps, be estimating the noble acts of William Wallace at an extravagant rate to believe, that England as well as Scotland, under Divine Providence, may owe its liberty to him: for, had the English crown, at so early a period, acquired such an accession of power, it would probably, like the other great crowns of Europe, have established for itself a despotism which could not have been shaken.

In comparing the two great heroes of that period, it should always be remembered, that Bruce fought for

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Scotland and her crown conjoined; Wallace, for Scotland alone; no Chronicler or Historian, either English or Scotch, having ever imputed to him any but the purest and most disinterested motives for his unwearied and glorious exertions.

The hero of my second Legend is Columbus; who, to the unfettered reach of thought belonging to a Philosopher, the sagacious intrepidity of a chieftain or leader, and the adventurous boldness of a discoverer, added the gentleness and humanity of a Christian. For the first and last of these qualities he stands distinguished from all those enterprising chiefs who followed his steps. The greatest event in the history of Columbus takes place at the beginning, occasioning so strong an excitement that what follows after, as immediately connected with him, (his persecution and sufferings excepted,) are comparatively flat and uninteresting; and then it is our curiosity regarding the inhabitants and productions of the new world that chiefly occupy our attention. Landing on some new coast; receiving visits from the Indians and their Caziques; bartering beads and trinkets for gold or provisions, under circumstances similar to those attending his intercourse with so many other places; nautical observations, and continued mutinies and vexations arising from the avarice and ambition of his officers, are the changes continually recurring. His history, therefore, circumstantially, rather obscures than displays his greatness; the outline being so grand and simple, the detail so unvaried and minute. The bloody, nefarious, and successful adventures of Cortes and Pizarro, keep their heroes (great men of a more vulgar cast,) constantly in possession of the reader's attention, and have rendered them favourable subjects of history, tragedy, and romance. But the great consequences and change in human affairs which flowed from the astonishing enterprise of Columbus, have made his existence as one of the loftiest landmarks in the rout of time. And he is a hero who may be said to have belonged to no particular country; for every nation has felt the effects of his powerful mind; and every nation, in the days at least in which he lived, was unworthy of him. This, notwithstanding these poetical defects in his story, has prevented him from being neglected by poets. The first epic poem produced in the continent which he discovered, has, with great propriety, Columbus for its hero; and fragments of a poem on the same noble subject, published some years ago in this country, have given us cause to regret, that the too great fastidiousness of the author should have induced him to publish fragments only: a fastidiousness which, on this occasion, had been better employed, as such a disposition most commonly is, against others and not himself.

The subject of my third Legend is a woman, and one whose name is unknown in history. It was indeed unknown to myself till the publication of Mr. Rose's answer to Fox's History of James II., in the notes to which work a very interesting account of her will be found, given in extracts from Lady Murray's narrative, a MS. hitherto unpublished. My ignorance regarding her is the more extraordinary, as she married into a family of my own name, from which it is supposed, my forefathers took their descent; one of my ancestors also being the friend of that Baillie of Jerviswood, who suffered for the religion and independence of his country, and engaged in the same noble cause which obliged him, about the time of Jerviswood's death, to fly from Scotland and spend several years in a foreign land. Had her character, claiming even this very distant and slight connection with it, been known to me in my youthful days, I might have suspected that early association had something to do in the great admiration with which it has inspired me; but becoming first acquainted with it when the season of ardour and enthusiasm is past, I believe I may be acquitted from all charge of partiality. It appears to me that a more perfect female character could scarcely be imagined; for while she is daily exercised in all that is useful, enlivening and endearing, her wisdom and courage on every extraordinary and difficult occasion, give a full assurance to the mind, that the devoted daughter of Sir Patrick Hume, and, the tender help-mate of Baillie, would have made a most able and magnanimous queen.

The account we have of her is given by her own children; but there is a harmonious consistency, and an internal evidence of truth through the whole of it, which forbids us to doubt. At any rate, the leading and most singular events of her life, mentioned in the inscription on her tomb from the pen of Judge Burnet, must be true. But after having written the Legend from Mr. Rose's notes alone, I have been fortunate enough to see the original work from which they were taken; and, availing myself of this advantage, have added some passages to it which I thought would increase the interest of the whole, and set the character of the heroine in a still more favourable light. For this I am indebted to the kindness and liberality of Thomas Thomson, Esq. keeper of the Registers, Edinburgh, who will, I hope, be induced, ere long, to give such a curious and interesting manuscript to the public.

I might have selected for my heroine women who, in high situations of trust, as sovereigns, regents, and temporary governors of towns, castles, or provinces, and even at the head of armies, have behaved with a wisdom

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

and courage that would have been honourable for the noblest of the other sex. But to vindicate female courage and abilities has not been my aim. I wished to exhibit a perfection of character which is peculiar to woman, and makes her, in the family that is blessed with such an inmate, through every vicissitude of prosperity and distress, something which man can never be. He may indeed be, and often is, as tender and full of gentle offices as a woman; and she may be, and has often been found, on great occasions, as courageous, firm, and enterprising, as a man; but the character of both will be most admired when these qualities cross them but transiently, like passing gleams of sunshine in a stormy day, and do not make the prevailing attribute of either. A man seldom becomes a careful and gentle nurse, but when actuated by strong affection; a woman is seldom roused to great and courageous exertion but when something most dear to her is in immediate danger: reverse the matter, and you deform the fair seemliness of both. It is from this general impression of their respective natures that tenderness in man is so pathetic, and valour in woman so sublime. A wise and benevolent Providence hath made them partake of each other's more peculiar qualities, that they may be meet and rational companions to one another—that man may be beloved, and woman regarded with respect.

What has been considered as the jealousy of man lest woman should become his rival, is founded, I believe, on a very different principle. In regard to mental acquirements of an abstruse or difficult kind, though a pretty general disapprobation of them, when found in the possession of women, is felt, and too often expressed in illiberal and unworthy phrase, yet I apprehend, that had these been supposed to be cultivated without interfering with domestic duties, no prejudice would ever have been entertained against them. To neglect useful and appropriate occupations, for those which may be supposed to be connected with vanity, rather than with any other gratification, is always offensive. But if a woman possess that strong natural bent for learning which enables her to acquire it quickly, without prejudice to what is more necessary; or if her fortune be so ample that the greater part of her time reasonably remains at her own disposal, there are few men, I believe, who will be disposed to find fault with her for all that she may know, provided she make no vain display of her acquirements; and amongst those few, I will venture to say, there will not be one truly learned man to be found. Were learning chiefly confined to gownsmen, a country gentleman, who neglected his affairs and his husbandry to study the dead languages, would meet with as little quarter as she who is tauntingly called a learned lady. But as every one in the rank of a gentleman is obliged to spend so many years of his youth in learning Latin and Greek, whatever may be his natural bias or destined profession, he is never ridiculed, under any circumstances, for pursuing that which has already cost him so much labour. Women have this desirable privilege over the other sex, that they may be unlearned without any implied inferiority; and I hope our modern zeal for education will never proceed far enough to deprive them of this great advantage. At the same time they may avowedly and creditably possess as much learning, either in science or languages, as they can fairly and honestly attain, the neglect of more necessary occupations being here considered as approaching to a real breach of rectitude.

"My helpful child!" was the fond and grateful appellation bestowed upon our heroine, with her mother's dying blessing; and could the daughters of every family conceive the self-approration and happiness of cheerful and useful occupation, the love of God and favour of man which is earned by this blessed character of helpfulness, how much vanity and weariness, and disappointment, and discontent, would be banished from many a prosperous home! "It is more blessed to minister than be ministered unto," said the most perfect character that ever appeared in human form. Could any young person of ever such a listless or idle disposition, not entirely debased by selfishness, read, in the narrative alluded to, of the different occupations of Lady Griseld Baillie and a sister of hers, nearly of her own age, whose time was mostly spent in reading or playing on a musical instrument, and wish for one moment to have been the last-mentioned lady rather than the other?

But in preferring a heroine of this class for my Legend, I encountered a difficulty which, I fear, I have not been able to overcome; the want of events, and the most striking circumstance of the story belonging to the earlier part of it, while the familiar domestic details of her life, which so faithfully reveal the sweetest traits of her character, are associated in our imaginations with what is considered as vulgar and mean. I have endeavoured by the selection I have made of things to be noticed, and in the expressions which convey them to the fancy, to offend, as little as might be, the fastidious reader; and I beg that he will on his part receive it with indulgence.

Of the few shorter pieces, contained in this small volume, I have little to say. The two first were originally written very rapidly for the amusement of a young friend, who was fond of frightful stories; but I have since endeavoured to correct some of the defects arising from hasty composition. The third is taken from a true, or at

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

least traditional story. It was told to me by Sir George Beaumont, as one which he had heard from his mother, the late Lady Beaumont, who said it was a tradition belonging to the castle of some baron in the north of England, where it was believed to have happened. It was recommended by him as a good subject for a ballad, and, with such a recommendation, I was easily tempted to endeavour, at least, to preserve its simple and striking circumstances, in that popular form. I have altered nothing of the story; nor have I added anything but the founding of the abbey and the baron's becoming a monk, in imitation of the ending of that exquisite ballad, *The Eve of St. John*, where so much is implied in so few words; the force and simplicity of which I have always particularly admired, though I readily own (and the reader will have too much reason to agree with me) that it is more easily admired than imitated.

"There is a nun in Dryburgh bower
Ne'er looks upon the sun;
There is a monk in Melrose tower,
He speaketh word to none.

That nun who ne'er beholds the day,
That monk who speaks to none,
That nun was Smaylho'mes lady gay,
That monk the bold baron."

The fourth is taken from the popular story of *Fadon*, in the *Blind Minstrel's Life of Wallace*. That the hero, in those days of superstition, and under the influence of compunction for a hasty deed, might not have had some strong vision or dream which, related to his followers, might give rise to such a story, I will not pretend to say. However, it could not with propriety find a place in a legend which rejects fiction. Yet, thinking it peculiarly fitted for the subject of a mysterious ballad, and being loth to lose it entirely, I have ventured to introduce it to the reader in its present form. Ballads of this character generally arrest the attention and excite some degree of interest. They must be very ill-written indeed if this fail to be the case; and if some modern ballads of extraordinary power, from a very witching pen, have not rendered the public less easy to please than they formerly were, I may hope that these productions, slight as they are, will at least be received with forbearance.

Having now said all which, I believe, I may reasonably say in explanation and behalf of the contents of my book, I leave my reader to peruse it, perhaps, in nearly the same disposition regarding it as if I had said nothing at all on the subject. But I have the satisfaction, at least, of having endeavoured to do justice to myself, and shall not be condemned unheard.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

**A
METRICAL LEGEND
OF
WILLIAM WALLACE.**

WILLIAM WALLACE.

I.

INSENSIBLE to high heroic deeds,
Is there a spirit clothed in mortal weeds,
Who at the Patriot's moving story,
Devoted to his country's good,
Devoted to his country's glory,
Shedding for freemen's rights his generous blood;—
List'neth not with breath heaved high,
Quiv'ring nerve, and glistening eye,
Feeling within a spark of heavenly flame,
That with the hero's worth may humble kindred claim?

If such there be, still let him plod
On the dull foggy paths of care,
Nor raise his eyes from the dank sod
To view creation fair:
What boots to him the wond'rous works of God?
His soul with brutal things hath ta'en its earthy lair.

II.

Come, youths, whose eyes are forward cast,
And in the future see the past,—
The past, as winnow'd in the early mind
With husk and prickle left behind!
Come; whether under lowland vest,
Or, by the mountain—tartan prest,
Your gen'rous bosoms heave;
Pausing a while in thoughtful rest,
My legend lay receive.
Come, aged sires, who love to tell
What fields were fought, what deeds were done;
What things in olden times befell,—
Those good old times, whose term is run!

Come ye, whose manly strength with pride
Is breasting now the present tide
Of worldly strife, and cast aside
A hasty glance at what hath been!
Come, courtly dames, in silken sheen,
And ye, who under thatched roofs abide;
Yea, ev'n the barefoot child by cottage fire,
Who doth some shreds of northern lore acquire,
By the stir'd embers' scanty light,—
List to my legend lay of Wallace wight.

III.

Scotland, with breast unmail'd, had sheath'd her sword,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Stifling each rising curse and hopeless prayer,
And sunk beneath the Southron's faithless lord
 In sullen, deep despair.

The holds and castles of the land
Were by her hateful foemen mann'd.
To revels in each stately hall,
Did tongues of foreign accent call,

Where her quell'd chiefs must tamely bear
From braggard pride the taunting jeer.
Her harvest-fields, by strangers reap'd,
Were in the stranger's garner heap'd
 The tenant of the poorest cot,
Seeing the spoiler from his door
Bear unreprieved his hard-earn'd store,
 Blush'd thus to be, and be a Scot.
The very infant, at his mother's beck,
 Tho' with writh'd lip and scowling eye,
Was taught to keep his lisp'ing tongue in check,
 Nor curse the Southron passing by.

IV.

Baron brave and girded knight,
The tyrant's hireling slaves could be;
Nor graced their state, nor held their right.
Alone upon his rocky height,
The eagle rear'd his unstain'd crest,
And soaring from his cloudy nest,
Turn'd to the sun his daring eye,
And wing'd at will the azure sky,
 For he alone was free.

V.

Oh! who so base as not to feel
 The pride of freedom once enjoy'd,
Tho' hostile gold or hostile steel
 Have long that bliss destroy'd!
The meanest drudge will sometimes vaunt
 Of independent sires, who bore
 Names known to fame in days of yore,
'Spite of the smiling stranger's taunt;
 But recent freedom lost—what heart
Can bear the humbling thought—the quick'ning, mad'ning smart!

VI.

Yes, Caledonian hearts did burn,
And their base chain in secret spurn;
And, bold upon some future day,
Swore to assert Old Scotland's native sway;
But 'twas in fitful thoughts that pass'd in thought away.
 Tho' musing in lone cave or forest deep,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Some generous youths might all indignant weep;
Or in the vision'd hours of sleep,
Gird on their swords for Scotland's right,
And from her soil the spoiler sweep,
Yet all this bold emprise pass'd with the passing night.

VII.

But in the woods of Allerslie,
Within the walls of good Dundee,
Or by the pleasant banks of Ayr,
Wand'ring o'er heath or upland fair,
Existed worth without alloy,
In form a man, in years a boy,
Whose nightly thoughts for Scotland's weal,
Which clothed his form in mimick steel,
Which helm'd his brow, and glav'd his hand,
To drive the tyrant from the land,
Pass'd not away with passing sleep;
But did, as danger nearer drew,
Their purpos'd bent the firmer keep,
And still the bolder grew.

VIII.

'Tis pleasant in his early frolick feats,
Which fond tradition long and oft repeats,
The op'ning of some dauntless soul to trace,
Whose bright career of fame, a country's annals grace;
Yet this brief legend must forbear to tell
The bold adventures that befell
The stripling Wallace, light and strong,
The shady woods of Clyde among,
Where, roaring o'er its rocky walls,
The water's headlong torrent falls,
Full, rapid, powerful, flashing to the light,
Till sunk the boiling gulf beneath,
It mounts again like snowy wreath,
Which, scatter'd by contending blasts,
Back to the clouds their treasure casts,
A ceaseless wild turmoil, a grand and wondrous sight!
Or, climbing Carthland's Craigs, that high
O'er their pent river strike the eye,
Wall above wall, half veil'd, half seen,
The pendant folds of wood between,
With jagged breach, and rift, and scar,
Like the scorch'd wreck of ancient war,
And seem, to musing fancy's gaze,
The ruin'd holds of other days.
His native scenes, sublime and wild,
Where oft the youth his hours beguil'd,
As forester with bugle horn;
As angler in the pooly wave;

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

As fugitive in lonely cave,
Forsaken and forlorn!
When still, as foeman cross'd his way,
Alone, defenceless, or at bay,
He raised his arm for freemen's right,
And on proud robbers fell the power of Wallace wight.

IX.

There is a melancholy pleasure
In tales of hapless love;—a treasure
From which the sadden'd bosom borrows
A short respite from present sorrows,
And ev'n the gay delight to feel,
As down young cheeks the soft tears steal;
Yet will I not that woeful tale renew,
And in light hasty words relate
How the base Southron's arm a woman slew,
And robb'd him of his wedded mate.
The name of her, who shar'd his noble breast,
Shall be remember'd and be blest.
A sweeter lay, a gentler song,
To those sad woes belong!

X.

As light'ning from some twilight cloud,
At first but like a streaky line
In the hush'd sky, with fitful shine
Its unregarded brightness pours,
Till from its spreading, darkly volumed shroud
The bursting tempest roars;
His countrymen with faithless gaze
Beheld his valour's early blaze.

XI.

But rose at length with swelling fame
The honours of his deathless name;
Till, to the country's farthest bound,
All gen'rous hearts stirr'd at the sound;
Then Scotland's youth with new-wak'd pride,
Flock'd gladly to the hero's side,
In harness braced, with burnish'd brand,
A brave and noble band!

XII.

Lenox, Douglas, Campbell, Hay,
Boyd, Scrimger, Ruthven, Haliday,
Gordon, Crawford, Keith, were there;
Lander, Lundy, Cleland, Kerr,
Steven, Ireland's vagrant lord;
Newbiggen, Fraser, Rutherford,
Dundas and Tinto, Currie, Scott;

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Nor be in this brave list forgot
A Wallace of the hero's blood,
With many patriots staunch and good;
 And first, though latest nam'd, there came,
Within his gen'rous breast to hold
A brother's place,—true war-mate bold!
 The good, the gallant Graham.

XIII.

 Thus grown to strength, on Biggar's well-fought field
He made on marshall'd host his first essay;
Where Edward's gather'd powers, in strong array,
Did to superior skill and valour yield,
 And gain'd the glorious day.

XIV.

 Then at the Forest kirk, that spot of ground
Long to be honour'd, flush'd with victory,
Crowded the Scottish worthies, bold and free,
 Their noble chieftain round;
Where many a generous heart beat high
With glowing cheek and flashing eye,
And many a portly figure trod
With stately steps the trampled sod.
Banners in the wind were streaming;
In the morning light were gleaming
Sword, and spear, and burnish'd mail
And crested helm, and avantail,
And tartan plaids, of many a hue,
In flickering sunbeams brighter grew,
While youthful warriors' weapons ring
With hopeful, wanton brandishing.

XV.

 There, midmost in the warlike throng,
Stood William Wallace, tall and strong;
Towering far above the rest,
With portly mien and ample breast,
Brow and eye of high command,
Visage fair, and figure grand:
Ev'n to the dullest peasant standing by,
Who fasten'd still on him a wondering eye,
 He seem'd the master-spirit of the land.

XVI.

 O for some magic power to give
In vision'd form what then did live!
That group of heroes to pourtray,
Who from their trammell'd country broke
The hateful tyrant's galling yoke
 On that eventful day!

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

XVII.

Behold! like changeful streamers of the North,
Which tinge at times the wintry night,
With many hues of glowing light,
Their momentary forms break forth
 To Fancy's gifted sight.
Each in his warlike panoply
With sable plumage waving high,
And burnish'd sword in sinewy hand,
Appears a chieftain of command,
Whose will, by look or sign to catch,
A thousand eager vassals watch.
What tho' those warriors, gleaming round,
On peaceful death-bed never lay,
But each, upon his fated day,
His end on field or scaffold found;
 Oh! start not at the vision bright,
 As if it were a ghastly sight!
For, 'midst their earthly coil, they knew
Feelings of joy so keen, so true,
As he who feels, with up-raised eye,
 Thanks Heaven for life, and cannot rue
The gift, be what it may the death that he shall die.

XVIII.

 Warden of Scotland, (not ashamed
A native right of rule to own
In worth and valour matchless shown)
 They William Wallace there proclaim'd;
And there, exultingly, each gallant soul,
Ev'n proudly yielded to such high controul.
Greater than aught a tyrant ere achieved,
Was power so given, and so receiv'd.

XIX.

 This truth full well King Edward knew,
And back his scatter'd host he drew,
Suing for peace with prudent guile;
And Wallace in his mind, the while,
Scanning with wary, wise debate
The various dangers of the state,
Desire of further high revenge foregoes
 To give the land repose.
But smother'd hatred, in the garb of peace,
Did not, mean time, from hostile cunning cease;
 But still more cruel deeds devis'd,
 In that deceitful seeming guised.

XX.

 The Southron rulers, phrasing fair

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Their notice, summon'd lord, and laird, and knight,
To hold with them an ancient court of right,
At the good town, so named, their court of Ayr.
And at this general summons came
The pride and hope of many a name,
The love and anxious care of many a gentle dame.

XXI.

Ent'ring the fatal Barns, fair sight!
Went one by one the manly train,
But neither baron, laird, nor knight,
Did e'er return again.
A heaven-commission'd friend that day
Stopp'd Wallace, hast'ning on his way,
(Who, by some seeming chance detain'd,
Had later at his home remain'd,)
The horse's bridle sternly grasp'd,
And then for rueful utterance gasp'd.
"Oh! go not to the Barns of Ayr!
"Kindred and friends are murder'd there.
"The faithless Southrons, one by one,
"On them the hangman's task hath done.
"Oh! turn thy steed, and fearful ruin shun!"
He, shudd'ring, heard, with visage pale,
Which quickly chang'd to wrath's terrific hue;
And then apace came sorrow's bursting wail;
The noble heart could weep that could not quail,
"My friends, my kinsmen, war-mates, bold and true!
"Met ye a villain's end! Oh is it so with you!"

XXII.

The hero turn'd his chafing steed,
And to the wild woods bent his speed.
But not to keep in hiding there,
Or give his sorrow to despair,
For the fierce tumult in his breast
To speedy, dreadful action press'd.
And there within a tangled glade,
List'ning the courser's coming tread,
With hearts that shar'd his ire and grief,
A faithful band receiv'd their chief.

XXIII.

In Ayr the guilty Southrons held a feast,
When that dire day its direful course had run,
And laid them down, their weary limbs to rest
Where the foul deed was done.
But ere beneath the cottage thatch
Cocks had crow'd the second watch;
When sleepers breathe in heavy plight,
Press'd with the visions of the night,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And spirits, from unhallow'd ground,
Ascend, to walk their silent round;
When trembles dell or desert heath,
The witches' orgy dance beneath,—
To the roused Warder's fearful gaze,
The Barns of Ayr were in a blaze.

XXIV.

The dense, dun smoke was mounting slow
And stately, from the flaming wreck below,
And mantling far aloft in many a volumed wreath;
Whilst town and woods, and ocean wide did lye,
Tinctur'd like glowing furnace-iron, beneath
Its awful canopy.
Red mazy sparks soon with the dense smoke blended,
And far around like fiery sleet descended.
From the scorch'd and crackling pile
Fierce burst the growing flames the while;
Thro' creviced wall and buttress strong,
Sweeping the rafter'd roofs along;
Which, as with sudden crash they fell,
Their raging fierceness seem'd to quell,
And for a passing instant spread
O'er land and sea a lurid shade;
Then with increasing brightness, high
In spiral form, shot to the sky
With momentary height so grand,
That chill'd beholders breathless stand.

XXV.

Thus rose and fell the flaming surgy flood,
'Till fencing round the gulphy light,
Black, jagg'd, and bare, a fearful sight!
Like ruin grim of former days,
Seen 'thwart the broad sun's setting rays,
The guilty fabric stood.

XXVI.

And dreadful are the deaths, I ween,
Which midst that fearful wreck have been.
The pike and sword, and smoke and fire,
Have minister'd to vengeful ire.
New-waked wretches stood aghast
To see the fire-flood in their rear,
Close to their breast the pointed spear,
And in wild horror yell'd their last.

XXVII.

But what dark figures now emerge
From the dread gulph and cross the light,
Appearing on its fearful verge,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Each like an armed sprite?
Whilst one above the rest doth tower,—
A form of stern gigantic power,
Whirling from his lofty stand
The smold'ring stone or burning brand?
Those are the leagued for Scotland's native right,
Whose clashing arms rang Southron's knell,
When to their fearful work they fell,—
That form is Wallace wight.

XXVIII.

And he like heaven's impetuous blast
Which stops not on its mission'd way,
By early morn, in strong array,
Onward to Glasgow past;
Where English Piercy held the rule;
Too noble and too brave to be a tyrant's tool.
A summon'd court should there have been,
But there far other coil was seen.
With fellest rage, in lane and street,
Did harness'd Scot and Southron meet;
Well fought and bloody was the fierce afray:
But Piercy was by Wallace slain,
Who put to rout his num'rous train,
And gain'd the town by noon of day.

XXIX.

Nor paused he there, for ev'ning tide
Saw him at Bothwel's hostile gate,
Which might not long assault abide,
But yielded to its fate.
And on from thence, with growing force,
He held his rapid, glorious course;
Whilst his roused clansmen, braced and bold,
As town and castle, tower and hold,
To the resistless victor fell,
His patriot numbers swell.
Thus when with current full and strong,
The wintry river bears along
Thro' mountain pass, and frith, and plain;—
Streams that from many sources pour,
Answer from far its kindred roar,
And deep'ning echoes roar again.
From its hill of heathy brown,
The muirland streamlet hastens down;
The mountain torrent from its rock,
Shoots to the glen with furious shock;
E'en runlet low, and sluggish burn,
Speed to their chief with many a mazy turn,
And in his mingled strength, roll proudly to the main.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

XXX.

O'er Stirling's towers his standard plays,
Lorn owns his rule, Argyle obeys.
In Angus, Merns, and Aberdeen,
Nor English Lord nor Cerf is seen;
Dundee alone averts King Edward's fate,
And Scotland's warden thunders at her gate.

XXXI.

But there his eager hopes are crost,
For news are brought of English host,
Which fast approaching thro' the land,
At Stirling mean to make their stand.
Faint speaks the haggard breathless scout,
Like one escaped from bloody rout,—
"On, Cressingham and Warren lead
"The martial'd host with stalwart speed,
"It numbers thirty thousand men,
"And thine, bold chieftain, only ten."

XXXII.

But higher tower'd the chieftain's head,
Broad grew his breast with ampler spread;
O'er cheek and brow the deep flush past,
And to high heaven his eyes he cast:
Right plainly spoke that silent prayer,
"My strength and aid are there!"
Then look'd he round with kindly cheer
On his brave war-mates standing near,
Who scann'd his face with eager eye
His secret feelings to descry.
"Come Hearts! who, on your native soil,
"For Scotland's cause have bravely stood,
"Come, brace ye for another broil,
"And prove your generous blood.
"Let us but front the tyrant's train,
"And he who lists may count their numbers then."

XXXIII.

Nor dull of heart, nor slow were they
Their noble Leader to obey.
Cheer'd with loud shouts he gave his prompt command,
Forthwith to bound them on their way.
And straight their eager march they take
O'er hill and heath, o'er burn and brake,
Till marshall'd soon in dark array,
Upon their destin'd field of war they stand.

XXXIV.

Behind them lay the hardy north;
Before, the slowly winding Forth

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Flow'd o'er the noiseless sand;
Its full broad tide with fussy sides,
Which east and west the land divides,
By wooden bridge was spann'd.
Beyond it, on a craggy slope,
Whose chimney'd roofs the steep ridge cope,
There smoked an ancient town;
While higher on the firm-based rock,
Which oft had braved war's thunder-shock,
Embattled turrets frown.
A frith, with fields and woods, and hamlets gay,
And mazy waters, slyly seen,
Glancing thro' shades of Alder green,
Wore eastward from the sight to distance grey;
While broomy knoll and rocky peak,
And heathy mountains, bare and bleak,
A lofty screen on either hand,
Majestic rose, and grand.

XXXV.

Such was the field on which with dauntless pride
They did their coming foe abide;
Nor waited long till from afar
Were spy'd their moving ranks of war,
Like rising storm, which, from the western main,
Bears on in seried length its cloudy train;—
Slowly approaching on the burthen'd wind,
Moves each dark mass, and still another lowers behind.
And soon upon the bridge appears,
Darkly rising on the light,
Nodding plumes and pointed spears,
And, crowding close, full many a warlike knight,
Who from its narrow gorge successive pour
To form their ranks upon the northern shore.

XXXVI.

Now, with notes of practis'd skill,
English trumpets, sounding shrill,
The battle's boastful prelude give
Which answer prompt and bold receive
From Scottish drum's long rowling bent,
And,—sound to valiant clansmen sweet!—
The highland pipe, whose lengthen'd swell
Of warlike pibroch, rose and fell,
Like wailings of the midnight wind,
With voice of distant streams combin'd,
While mountain, rock, and dell, the martial din repeat.

XXXVII.

Then many a high-plumed gallant rear'd his head,
And proudly smote the ground with firmer tread,

WILLIAM WALLACE.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Who did, ere close of ev'ning, lye
With ghastly face turn'd to the sky,
No more again the rouse of war to hear.
And many for the combat burn'd,
Who never from its broil return'd,
Kindred or home to cheer.
How short the term that shall divide
The firm—nerv'd youth's exerted force,—
The warrior, glowing in his pride,
From the cold stiffen'd corse!
A little term, pass'd with such speed,
As would in courtly revel scarce suffice,
Mated with lady fair, in silken guise,
The measur'd dance to lead.

XXXVIII.

His soldiers, firm as living rock,
Now braced them for the battle's shock;
And watch'd their chieftain's keen looks glancing
From marshall'd clans to foes advancing;
Smiled with the smile his eye that lighten'd,
Glow'd with the glow his brow that brighten'd:
But when his burnish'd brand he drew,
His towering form terrific grew,
And every Scotchman, at the sight,
Felt thro' his nerves a giant's might,
And drew his patriot sword with Wallace Wight.

XXXIX.

For what of thrilling sympathy,
Did e'er in human bosom vye
With that which stirs the soldier's breast,
When, high in god-like worth confest,
Some noble leader gives command,
To combat for his native land?
No; friendship's freely-flowing tide,
The soul expanding; filial pride,
That hears with craving, fond desire
The bearings of a gallant sire;
The yearnings of domestic bliss,
Ev'n love itself will yield to this.

XL.

Few words the lofty hero utter'd,
But deep response was widely mutter'd,
Like echo'd echoes, circling round
Some mountain lake's steep rocky bound.

XLI.

Then rush'd they fiercely on their foes,
And loud o'er drum and war-pipe rose

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

The battle's mingled roar.
The eager shout, the weapon's clash;
The adverse rank's first closing crash,
The sullen hum of striving life,
The busy beat of trampling strife,
From castle, rocks, and mountains round,
Down the long firth, a grand and awful sound,
A thousand echoes bore.

XLII.

Spears cross'd spears, a bending grove,
As front to front the warriors strove.
Thro' the dust—clouds, rising dun,
Their burnish'd brands flash'd to the sun
With quickly changing, shiv'ring light,
Like streamers on the northern night;
While arrow—showers came hurtling past,
Like splinter'd wreck driven by the blast,
What time fierce winter is contending,
With Norway's pines, their branches rending.

XLIII.

Long penants, flags, and banners move
The fearful strife of arms above,
Not as display'd in colours fair,
They floated on the morning air;
But with a quick, ungentle motion,
As sheeted sails, torn by the blast,
Flap round some vessel's rocking mast
Upon a stormy ocean.

XLIV.

Opposing ranks, that onward bore,
In tumult mix'd, are ranks no more;
Nor aught discern'd of skill or form;—
All a wild, bick'ring, steely storm!
While oft around some fav'rite Chieftain's crest,
The turmoil thick'ning, darkly rose,
As on rough seas the billow grows,
O'er lesser waves high—heaved, but soon deprest.
So gallant Grame, thou noble Scot!
Around thee rose the fearful fray,
And other brave compeers of bold essay,
Who did not spare their mothers' sons that day,
And ne'er shall be forgot.

XLV.

But where the mighty Wallace fought,
Like spirit quick, like giant strong,
Plunging the foe's thick ranks among,
Wide room in little time was hew'd,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And grizly sights around were strew'd;
Recoil'd aghast the helmed throng,
And every hostile thing to earth was brought.
Full strong and hardy was the foe
To whom he gave a second blow.
Many a knight and lord
Fell victims to his sword,
And Cressingham's proud crest lay low.

XLVI.

And yet, all Southrons as they were,
Their ranks dispers'd, their leader slain,
Passing the bridge with dauntless air,
They still came pouring on the plain;
But weaken'd of its rafter'd strength,
'Tis said by warlike craft, and trod
By such successive crowds, at length
The fabrick fell with all its living load.
Loud was the shriek the sinking Southrons gave,
Thus dash'd into the deep and booming wave.
For there a fearful death had they,
Clutching each floating thing in vain,
And struggling rose and sunk again,
Who, 'midst the battle's loud affray,
Had the fair meed of honour sought,
And on the fieldlike lions fought.

XLVII.

And there, upon that field—a bloody field,
Where many a wounded youth was lying,
And many dead and many dying,
Did England's arms to Scotland's heroes yield.
The close confusion opening round,
The wild pursuit's receding sound,
Is ringing in their ears, who low
On cloated earth are laid, nor know,
When those who chase and those who fly,
With hasty feet come clatt'ring by,
Or who hath won or who hath lost;
Save when some dying Scotchman lifts his head,
And, asking faintly how the day hath sped,
At the glad news, half from the ground
Starts up, and gives a cheering sound
And waves his hand and yields the ghost.
A smile is on the corse's cheek,
Stretch'd by the heather bush, on death bed bare and bleak.

XLVIII.

With rueful eyes the wreck of that dire hour,
The Southron's yet unbroken power,
As on the river's adverse shore they stood,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Silent beheld, till, like a mountain flood,
Rush'd Stirling's castled warriors to the plain;
Attack'd their now desponding force,
And fiercely press'd their hasty course
Back to their boasted native soil again.

XLIX.

Of foes so long detested,—fear'd,
Were towns and castles quickly clear'd;
Thro' all the land at will might free men range:
Nor slave nor tyrant there appear'd;
It was a blessed change!

L.

The peasant's cot and homely farm,
Hall—house and tower, secure from harm
Or lawless spoil, again became
The cheerful charge of wife or dame.
'Neath humble roofs, from rafter slung
The harmless spear, on which was hung
The flaxen yarn in spindles coil'd,
And leathern pouch and hozen soil'd,
And rush or osier creel, that held
Both field and household geer; whilst swell'd
With store of Scotland's fav'rite food,
The seemly sack in corner stood;
Remains of what the foe had left;
Glad sight to folks so long bereft!
And look'd at oft and wisely spared,
Tho' still with poorer neighbours shared.
The wooden quaigh and trencher placed
On the shelv'd wall, its rudeness graced.
Beneath the pot red faggots glanced,
And on the hearth the spindle danced,
As housewife's slight, so finely true,
The lengthen'd thread from distaff drew,
While she, belike, sang ditty shrill
Of Southron louns with lengthen'd trill.

LI.

In castle hall with open gate,
The noble lady kept her state,
With girdle clasp'd by gem of price,
Buckle or hasp of rare device,
Which held, constrain'd o'er bodice tight,
Her woollen robe of colours bright;
And with bent head and tranquil eye,
And gesture of fair courtesy,
The stranger guest bade to her board
Tho' far a field her warlike lord.
A board where smoked on dishes clear

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Of massy pewter, sav'ry cheer,
And potent ale was foaming seen
O'er tankards bright of silver sheen,
Which erst, when foe men bore the sway,
Beneath the sod deep buried lay.
For household goods, from many a hoard,
Were now to household use restored.

LII.

Neighbours with neighbours join'd, begin
Their cheerful toil, whilst mingled din
Of saw or hammer cleave the air,
The roofless bigging to repair,
The woodman fells the gnarled tree,
The ploughman whistles on the lea;
The falkner keen his bird lets fly,
As lordlings gaze with upcast eye;
The arrow'd sportsman strays at will,
And fearless strays o'er moor and hill;
The traveller pricks along the plain;
The herdboys shout and children play;
Scotland is Scotland once again,
And all are boon and gay.

LIII.

Thus, freedom from a grievous yoke,
Like gleam of sunshine o'er them broke;
And souls, when joy and peace were new,
Of every nature, kindlier grew.
It was a term of liberal dealing,
And active hope and friendly feeling,
Thro' all the land might freemen range,
It was a blessed change!

LIV.

So, when thro' forest wild hath past
The mingled fray of shower and blast,
Tissue of threaded gems is worn
By flower and fern and briar and thorn,
While the scourged oak and shaken pine,
Aloft in brighten'd verdure shine.
Then Wallace to St. Johnston went,
And thro' the country quickly sent
Summons to burgher, knight, and lord,
Who, there convened, with one accord,
Took solemn oath with short debate,
Of fealty to the state,
Until a King's acknowledged, rightful sway,—
A native King, they should with loyal hearts obey.
And he with foresight wise, to spare
Poor Scotland, scourged, exhausted, bare,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Whose fields unplough'd, and pastures scant,
Had brought her hardy sons to want,
His conquering army southward led,
Which was on England's plenty fed:
And there, I trow, for many months they took
Spoil of the land which ill that hateful change could brook.

LV.

Edward, meantime, asham'd and wroth
At such unseemly foil, and loth
So to be bearded, sent defiance
To Scotland's chief, in sure reliance
That he, with all which he may southward bring,
Of warlike force, dare not encounter England's King.

LVI.

But Wallace, on the day appointed,
Before this scepter'd and anointed,
Who, strengthen'd with a num'rous host,
There halted, to maintain his boast,
On Stanmore's height, their battle ground,
With all his valiant Scots was found.
A narrow space of stony moor,
With heath and likens mottled o'er,
And cross'd with dew-webs wiry sheen,
The adverse armies lay between.
When upland mists had worn away,
And blue sky over-head was clearing,
And things of distant ken appearing
Fair on the vision burst, that martial grand array.
The force on haughty Edward's side,
Spearmen and archers were descry'd,
Line beyond line, spread far and wide,
Receding from the eye;
While bristling pikes distinct and dark,
As traced aloft with edgy mark,
Seem'd graven on the sky;
And armed Knights arm'd steeds bestriding,
Their morions glancing bright,
And to and fro their gay squires riding,
In warlike geer bedight.
O'er all the royal standard flew,
With crimson folds of gorgeous hue,
And near it, ranged, in colours gay,
Inferior flags and banners play,
As broad-wing'd hawk keeps soaring high,
Circled by lesser birds, that wheeling round him fly.
Huge waggon, sleaded car, and wain,
With dark, piled loads, a heavy train,
Store-place of arms and yeoman's cheer,
Frown'd in the further rear.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

LVII.

And martial'd on the northern side,
The northern ranks the charge abide,
In numbers few, but stout of heart,
Their nation's honour to assert.

LVIII.

Thus on the field with clans and liegemen good,
England's great King, and Scotland's Warden stood.
That Monarch proud, did rightly claim
'Mongst Europe's lords the fairest fame,
And had, in cause of Christentie,
Fought with bold Saracens right gallantly.
That Warden was the noblest man
That e'er grac'd nation, race, or clan,
And grasp'd within his brave right hand
A sword, which from the dust had rais'd his native land.

LIX.

Who had not cried, that look'd upon
So brave and grand a sight,
"What stalwart deeds shall here be done
"Before the close of night!"
But Edward mark'd with falt'ring will,
The Scottish battle ranged with skill,
Which spoke the Leader's powerful mind.
On England's host that number'd twice their foes,
But newly raised, nor yet enured to blows,
He rueful look'd, his purpose fail'd,
He look'd again, his spirit quail'd,
And battle gage declin'd.

LX.

And thus did he to Wallace yield,
The bloodless honours of the field.
But as the Southron ranks withdrew,
Scarcely believing what he saw,
The wary Chief might not expose
His soldiers to returning foes,
Or ambush'd snare, and gave the order,
With beat of drum and trumpet sounding,
The air with joyous shouts resounding,
To cross with homeward steps the English border.

LXI.

Scotland thus, from foes secure,
Her prudent Chieftain to enure
His nobles still to martial toil,
Sought contest on a distant soil;
And many a young and valiant knight,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

For foreign wars were with their leader dight.
And soon upon the seas careering
In gallant ship, whose penants play,
 Waving and curling in the air,
 With changeful hues of colour fair,
Themselves as gallant, boon, and gay,
 Their course with fav'ring breezes steering,
To friendly France they held their way.

LXII.

 And they upon the ocean met
With warlike fleet, and sails full set,
De Longoville, that bold outlaw,
Whose name kept mariners in awe.
This man, with all his desp'rate crew
Did Wallace on the waves subdue.
One Scottish ship the pirate thought
As on her boarded deck he fought,
Cheer'd by his sea-mates' warlike cries,
 A sure and easy prize.
But Wallace's mighty arm he felt;
Yea, at his conqueror's feet he knelt;
And there disdained not to crave
And take the mercy of the brave;
For still, as thing by nature fit,
The brave unto the brave are knit.
Thus natives of one parent land,
In crowded mart, on foreign strand,
With quick glance recognize each other;
"That mien! that step! it is a brother!
"Tho' mingled with a meaner race,
"In foreign garb, I know that face,
"His features beam like those I love,
"His limbs with mountain vigour move,
"And tho' so strange and alien grown,
"The kindred tie my soul will own."
De Longoville, ev'n from that hour, a knight,
True to his native King, true to the right,
Fought with the Scottish hero to the end,
In many a bloody field, his tried and valiant friend.

LXIII.

 And nobly in the lists of France,
Those noble Scots with brand and lance,
'Midst foreign knights and warriors blended,
In generous rivalry contended,
 Whilst their brave Chieftain taught them still,
The soldier's dext'rous art and leader's nobler skill.

LXIV.

 But English Edward, tired the while

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Of life inert and covert guile,
Most faithless to the peace so lately made,
Was northward bound again, poor Scotland to invade.
Then Wallace, with his valiant band,
By Scotland's faithful sons recall'd,
Whom foreign yoke full sorely gall'd,
Must raise again his glaved hand
To smite the shackles from his native land.

LXV.

Brave hearts, who had in secret burn'd,
To see their country bear the yoke,
Hearing their Warden was return'd,
Forth from their secret hidings broke,
Wood, cave, or mountain-cliff, and ran
To join the wond'rous man.

LXVI.

It was a sight to chase despair,
His standard floating on the air,
Which, curling oft with courteous wave,
Still seem'd to beckon to the brave.
And when approach'd within short space,
They saw his form and knew his face,—
That brow of hope, that step of power,
Which stateliest strode in danger's hour,—
How glow'd each heart!—"Himself we see!
"What, tho' but few and spent we be!
"The valiant heart despairerth never;
"The rightful cause is strongest ever;
"While Wallace lives, the land is free."

LXVII.

And he this flatt'ring hope pursued,
And war with England's King renew'd.
By martial stratagem he took
St. Johnston's stubborn town, a hold
So oft to faithless tyrants sold;
And cautious patriots then forsook
Ignoble shelter, kept so long,
And join'd in arms the ardent throng,
Who with the Warden southward past,
Like clouds increasing on the blast.

LXVIII.

Fife from the enemy he won,
And in his prosp'rous course held on,
Till Edward's strength, borne quickly down,
Held scarcely castle, tower, or town,
In all the southern shires; and then
He turn'd him to the north again;

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Where from each wall'd defence, the foe expell'd,
Fled fast, Dundee alone still for King Edward held.

LXIX.

But the oppressor, blushing on his throne
To see the Scotch his warriors homeward chase,
And those, so lately crush'd, so powerful grown,
But ill could brook this sudden foul disgrace.
And he a base, unprincely compact made
With the red Cumming, traitor, black of heart!
Who to their wicked plot, in secret laid,
Some other chieftains gain'd with wily art.
And he hath dared again to send
A noble army, all too brave
For such unmanly, hateful end,
A land of freedom to enslave.
At Falkirk soon was England's proudest boast
Marshall'd in grand array, a brave and powerful host.

LXX.

But there with valiant foe to cope,
Soon on the field stood Scotland's hope,
Ev'n thirty thousand warriors, led
By noble Wallace, each, that day,
Had cheerfully his heart's blood shed
The land to free from Southron's sway.
Alas! had all her high-born chieftains been
But as their leader and their clansmen true,
She on that field a glorious day had seen,
And made, tho' match'd with them, in number few,
King Edward's vaunted host that fatal day to rue.

LXXI.

But envy of a hero's fame,
Which so obscured each lofty name,
Was meanly harbour'd in the breast
Of those who bore an honour'd crest.
But most of all Red Cumming nursed
In his dark breast this bane accursed,
That, with the lust of power combin'd,
O'er-master'd all his wretched mind.
Then to Lord Stewart, secretly,
Spoke with smooth words the traitor sly,
Advising that, to grace his name,
Being by right confess'd the man,
Who ought to lead the Scottish van,
He should the proud distinction claim.
And thus, as one of low estate,
With lip of scorn, and brow elate,
Did he, by traitors back'd, the godlike Wallace bate.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

LXXII.

"Must noble chiefs of high degree,
"Scotland's best blood, be led by thee?
"Thou, who art great but as the owl,
"Who plumed her wing from every fowl,
"And, hooting on her blasted tree,
"Would greater than the eagle be."

LXXIII.

"I stood," said Wallace "for the right,
"When ye in holes shrunk from the light;
"My plumes spread to the blazing sun
"Which coweringly ye sought to shun.
"Ye are the owls, who from the gloom
"Of cleft and cranny boasting come;
"Yet, hoot and chatter as ye may,
"I'll not to living man this day
"Resign the baton of command,
"Which Scotland's will gave to my hand,
"When spoil'd, divided, conquer'd, maim'd,
"None the dangerous honour claim'd;
"Nor, till my head lie in the dust,
"Will it betray her sacred trust."

LXXIV.

With flashing eye, and dark red brow,
He utter'd then a hasty vow,
Seeing the snare by treason laid,
So strongly wove, so widely spread,
And slowly from the field withdrew;
While, slow and silent at his back,
March'd on his wayward, cheerless track,
Ten thousand Scotchmen staunch and true,
Who would, let good or ill betide,
By noble Wallace still abide.

LXXV.

To them it was a strange and irksome sight,
As on a gentle hill apart they stood,
To see arm'd squadrons closing in the fight,
And the fierce onset to their work of blood.
To see their well-known banners as they moved
When dark opposing ranks with ranks are blending,
To see the lofty plumes of those they loved
Wave to and fro, with the brave foe contending.

LXXVI.

It hath been said, that gifted seer,
On the dark mountain's cloudy screen,
Forms of departed chiefs hath seen,
In seeming armour braced with sword and spear,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

O'erlooking some dire field of death,
Where warriors, warm with vital breath,
Of kindred lineage, urge the glorious strife;
They grasp their shadowy spears, and forward bend
In eager sympathy, as if to lend
Their aid to those, with whom in mortal life,
They did such rousing, noble conflict share,—
As if their phantom forms of empty air,
Still own'd a kindred sense of what on earth they were.

LXXVII.

So Wallace and his faithful band survey'd
The fatal fight, when Scotland was betray'd
By the false Cumming, who most basely fled,
And from the field a thousand warriors led.
O how his noble spirit burn'd,
When from his post the traitor turn'd,
Leaving the Stuart sorely prest!
Who with his hardy Scots the wave
Of hostile strength did stoutly breast,
Like clansmen true and brave.
His visage flush'd with angry glow,
He clench'd his hand, and struck his brow.
His heart within his bosom beat
As it would break from mortal seat,
And when at last they yielded space,
And he beheld their piteous case,
Big scalding tears cours'd down his manly face.

LXXVIII.

But, ah! that fatal vow, that pride
Which doth in mortal breast reside,
Of noble minds the earthly bane,
His gen'rous impulse to restrain,
Had power in that dark moment! still
It struggled with his better will.
And who, superior to this tempter's power,
Hath ever braved it in the trying hour?
O! only he, who, strong in heavenly grace,
Taking from wretched thralls, of woman born,
Their wicked mockery, their stripes, their scorn,
Gave his devoted life for all the human race.
He viewed the dire disast'rous fight,
Like a fall'n cherubim of light,
Whose tossing form now tow'rs, now bends,
And with its darken'd self contends,
Till many a brave and honour'd head
Lay still'd upon a bloody bed,
And Stuart, midst his clans, was number'd with the dead.

LXXIX.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Then rose he, like a rushing wind,
Which strath or cavern hath confin'd,
And straight thro' England's dark array,
With his bold mates, hew'd out his bloody way.
A perilous daring way, and dear the cost!
For there the good, the gallant Grame he lost.
The gallant Grame, whose name shall long
Remember'd be in Scottish song.
And second still to Wallace wight
In lowland tale of winter's night,
Who loved him as he never loved another.
Low to the dust he bent his head,
Deep was his anguish o'er the dead.—
"That daring hand, that gentle heart!
"That lofty mind! and must we part?
"My brother, Oh, my brother!"

LXXX.

But how shall verse feign'd accents borrow,
To speak with words their speechless sorrow,
Who, on the trampled, blood-stain'd green
Of battle-field, must leave behind
What to their souls hath dearest been,
To stiffen in the wind?
The soldier there, or kern or chief,
Short parley holds with shrewdest grief;
Passing to noisy strife from what, alas!
Shall from his sadden'd fancy never pass,—
The look that ev'n thro' writhing pain,
Says, "shall we never meet again!"
The grasping hand or sign but known,
Of tenderness, to one alone:
The lip convulsed, the life's last shiver;
The new-closed eye, yet closed for ever,
The brave must quit;—but, from the ground,
They, like th' enchafed lion bound.
Rage is their sorrow, grimly fed,
And blood the tears they shed.

LXXXI.

Too bold it were for me to tell,
How Wallace fought; how on the brave
The ruin of his anguish fell,
Ere from the field, his bands to save,
He broke away, and sternly bore
Along the stony Carron's shore.
The dark brown water, hurrying past,
O'er stone and rocky fragment cast
The white churn'd foam with angry bray,
And wheel'd and bubbled on its way,
And lash'd the margin's flinty guard,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

By him unheeded and unheard;
Albeit, his mind, dark with despair,
And grief, and rage, was imaged there.

LXXXII.

And there, 'tis said, the Bruce descried
Him marching on the rival side.
The Bruce, whose right the country own'd,
(Had he possess'd a princely soul,
Disdaining Edward's base controul,
To be upon her chair of power enthron'd.

LXXXIII.

"Ho, chieftain!" said the princely slave,
"Thou who pretend'st the land to save
"With rebel sword, opposed to me,
"Who should of right thy sovereign be;
"Think'st thou the Scottish crown to wear,
"Opposed by foreign power so great,
"By those at home of high estate?
"Cast the vain thought to empty air,
"Thy fatal mad ambition to despair."

LXXXIV.

"No!" Wallace answer'd; "I have shewn
"This sword to gain or power or throne
"Was never drawn; no act of mine
"Did e'er with selfish thought combine.
"Courage to dare, when others lay
"In brutish sloth, beneath the sway
"Of foreign tyranny; to save
"From thralldom, hateful to the brave,
"My friends, my countrymen; to stand
"For right and honour of the land,
"When nobler arms shrunk from the task,
"In a vile tyrant's smiles to bask,
"Hath been my simple warrant of command.
"And Scotland hath confirm'd it.—No;
"Nor shall this hand her charge forego,
"While Southron in the land is found
"To lord it o'er one rood of Scottish ground,
"Or till my head be low."

LXXXV.

Deep blush'd the Bruce, shame's conscious glow
And own'd the hero's words were true;
And with his followers, sad and slow
To Edward's camp withdrew.

LXXXVI.

But fleeting was the mighty tyrant's boast,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

(So says the learned clerk of old,
Who first our hero's story told,
Fleeting the triumph of his numerous host.
For with the morning's early dawn
The Scottish soldiers, scatter'd wide,
Hath Wallace round his standard drawn,
Hath cheer'd their spirits, rous'd their pride,
And led them, where their foes they found,
All listless, scatter'd on the ground.
On whom with furious charge they set;
And many a valiant Southron met
A bloody death, waked from the gleam
And inward vision of a morning's dream;
Where Fancy in his native home
Led him through well-known fields to roam,
Where orchard, cot, and copse appear,
And moving forms of kindred dear;—
For in the rugged soldier's brain
She oft will fairy court maintain
Full gently, as beneath the dusk
Of hard-ribb'd shell, the pearl lies,
Or silken bud in prickly husk;—
He from her vision's sweet unseals his eyes
To see the stern foe o'er him darkly bending,
To feel the deep-thrust blade his bosom rending,

LXXXVII.

So many Southrons there were slain,
So fatal was the vengeance ta'en,
That Edward, with enfeebled force,
Check'd mad ambition's unblest course,
And to his own fair land return'd again.

LXXXVIII.

Then Wallace thought from tower and town
And castled hold, as heretofore,
To pull each English banner down
And free the land once more.
But ah! the generous hope he must forego!
Envy and pride have Scotland's cause betrayed;
All now are backward, listless, cold, and slow,
His patriot arm to aid.

LXXXIX.

Then to St. Johnston, at his call,
Met burghers, knights, and nobles all,
Who on the pressing summons wait,
A full assembly of the state.
There he resign'd his ensigns of command,
Which erst had kept the proudest Thanes in awe;
Retaining in that potent hand

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Which thrice redeem'd its native land,
His simple sword alone, with which he stood
Midst all her haughty peers of princely blood,
The noblest man e'er Scotland saw.

XC.

And thus did Scottish lords requite
Him, who, in many a bloody fight,
The country's champion stood; her people's Wallace wight.
O black ingratitude! thy seemly place
Is in the brutish, mean, and envious heart;
How is it then, thou dost so oft disgrace
The learn'd, the wise, the highly born, and art
Like cank'ring blights, the oak that scathe,
While fern and brushwood thrive beneath;
Like dank mould on the marble tomb,
While graves of turf with violets bloom.
Selfish ambition makes the lordliest Thane
A meaner man than him, who drives the loaded wain.

XCI.

And he with heavy heart his native shore
Forsook to join his old ally once more.
And in Guienne right valiant deeds he wrought;
Till under iron yoke opprest,
From north to south, from east to west,
His most unhappy groaning country sought
The generous aid she never sought in vain;
And with a son's unwearied love,
Which fortune, time, nor wrongs could move,
He to maintain her cause again repass'd the main.
The which right bravely he maintain'd;
And divers castles soon regain'd.
The sound ev'n of his whisper'd name
Revived in faithful hearts the smother'd flame,
And many secretly to join his standard came.
St. Johnston's leaguered walls at length
Were yielded to his growing strength;
And on, with still increasing force,
He southward held his glorious course.

XCII.

Then Edward thought the chief to gain,
And win him to his princely side
With treasur'd gold and honours vain,
And English manors fair and wide.
But with flush'd brow and angry eye
And words that shrewdly from him broke,
Stately and stern, he thus bespoke
The secret embassy.
"These kingly proffers made to me!

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Return and say it may not be.
"Lions shall troop with herdsmen's droves,
"And eagles roost with household doves,
"Ere William Wallace draw his blade
"With those who Scotland's rights invade.
"Yea, ev'n the touch of bondsman's chain,
 "Would in my thrilling members wake
"A loathful sense of rankling pain
 "Like coiling of a venom'd snake."
The King abash'd, in courtly hold,
Receiv'd this answer sooth and bold.

XCIII.

 But ah! the fated hour drew near
 That stopp'd him in his bold career.
Monterith, a name which from that day, I ween,
Hateful to every Scottish ear hath been,
 Which highland kern and lowland hind
 Have still with treacherous guile combin'd,—
 The false Monteith, who under show
 Of friendship, sold him to the foe,
 Stole on a weary secret hour,
 As sleeping and disarm'd he lay,
 And to King Edward's vengeful power
 Gave up the mighty prey.

XCIV.

 At sight of noble Wallace bound,
 The Southrons raised a vaunting sound,
As if the bands which round his limbs they drew,
 Had fetter'd Scotland too.
They gaz'd and wonder'd at their mighty thrall;
 Then nearer drew with movements slow,
 And spoke in whispers deep and low.—
 "This is the man to whom did yield
 "The doughtiest knight in banner'd field,
"Whose threat'ning frown the boldest did appal!"
 And, as his clanging fetters shook,
 Cast on him oft a fearful look,
 As doubting if in verity
 Such limbs with iron might holden be:
While boldest spearmen by the pris'ner's side
With beating heart and haggard visage ride.

XCV.

 Thus on to London they have past,
 And in the Tower's dark dungeons cast
 The hero; where, in silent gloom,
 He must abide his fatal doom.
 There pent, from earthly strife apart,
 Scotland still rested on his heart.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Aye; every son that breathed her air
On cultur'd plain or mountain bare,
From chief in princely castle bred
To herdsman in his sheeling shed,
From war-dight youth to barefoot child,
Who picks in brake the berry wild;—

Her gleamy lakes and torrents clear,
Her towns, her towers, her forests green,
Her fields where warlike coil hath been,
Are to his soul most dear.

XCVI.

His fetter'd hands support a head,
Whose nodding plume had terror spread
O'er many a face, ev'n seen from far,
When moving in the ranks of war.
Lonely and dark, unseen of man,
But in that Presence whose keen eye
Can darkest breast of mortal scan,
The bitter thought and heavy sigh
Have way uncheck'd, and utter'd grief
Gave to his burthen'd heart a soothing, sad relief.

XCVII.

"It hath not to this arm been given
"From the fell tyrant's grinding hand
"To set thee free, my native land!
"I bow me to the will of Heaven!
"But have I run my course in vain?
"Shall thou in bondage still remain?
"The spoiler o'er thee still have sway,
"Till virtue, strength, and pride decay?
"O no! still panting to be free,
"Thy noblest hearts will think of me.
"Some brave, devoted, happier son
"Will do the work I would have done;
"And blest be he, who nobly draws
"His sword in Scotland's cause!"

XCVIII.

Perhaps his vision'd eye might turn
To him who fought at Bannockburn.
Or is it wildness to believe
A dying patriot may receive,
(Who sees his mortal span diminish'd
To nought, his generous task unfinish'd,)
A seeming fruitless end to cheer,
Some glimpses of the gifted seer?
O no! 'tis to his closing sight
A beacon on a distant height,—
The moon's new crescent, seen in cloudy kirtled night.

XCIX.

And much he strove with Christian grace,
Of those who Scotland's foes had been,
His soul's strong hatred to efface,
A work of grace, I ween!
Meekly he bow'd o'er bead and book,
And every worldly thought forsook.

C.

But when he on the scaffold stood,
And cast aside his mantling hood,
He eyed the crowd, whose sullen hum,
Did from ten thousand upcast faces come,
And armed guardsmen standing round,
As he was wont on battle-ground,
Where still with calm and portly air,
He faced the foe with visage bare;
As if with baton of command
And vassal chiefs on either hand,
Towering her marshall'd files between,
He Scotland's warden still had been.
This flash of mortal feeling past,—
This gleam of pride, it was the last.
As on the cloud's dense skirt will play,
While the dark tempest rolls away,
One parting blaze; then thunders cease,
The sky is clear, and all is peace.
And he with ready will a nobler head
Than e'er was circled with a kingly crown,
Upon the block to headsman's stroke laid down,
And for his native land a generous victim bled.

CI.

What tho' that head o'er gate or tower,
Like felons on the cursed tree,
Visited by sun and shower,
A ghastly spectacle may be!
A fair renown, as years wear on,
Shall Scotland give her noblest son.
The course of ages shall not dim
The love that she shall bear to him.

CII.

In many a castle, town, and plain,
Mountain and forest, still remain
Fondly cherish'd spots, which claim
The proud distinction of his honour'd name.

CIII.

Swells the huge ruin's massy heap

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

In castled court, 'tis Wallace's keep.
What stateliest o'er the rest may lower
Of time-worn wall, where rook and daw,
With wheeling flight and ceaseless caw,
Keep busy stir, is Wallace's tower.
If thro' the green wood's hanging screen,
High o'er the deeply-bedded wave,
The mouth of arching cleft is seen
Yawning dark, 'tis Wallace's cave.
If o'er its jutting barrier grey,
Tinted by time, with furious din,
The rude crags silver'd with its spreys,
Shoot the wild flood, 'tis Wallace's lin.
And many a wood remains, and hill and glen
Haunted, 'tis said, of old by Wallace and his men.

CIV.

There schoolboy still doth haunt the sacred ground,
And musing oft its pleasing influence own,
As, starting at his footsteps echo'd sound,
He feels himself alone.

CV.

Yea, ev'n the cottage matron, at her wheel,
Altho' with daily care and labour crost,
Will o'er her heart the soothing magic feel,
And of her country's ancient prowess boast;
While on the little shelf of treasured books,
For what can most of all her soul delight,
Beyond or ballad, tale, or jest, she looks,—
The history renown'd of Wallace wight.

CVI.

But chiefly to the soldier's breast
A thought of him will kindling come,
As waving high his bonnet's crest,
He listens to the rolling drum,
And trumpet's call and thrilling fife,
And bagpipes' loud and stormy strain,
Meet prelude to tumultuous strife
On the embattled plain.

CVII.

Whether in highland garb array'd,
With kirtle short and highland plaid,
Or button'd close in lowland vest,
Within his doughty grasp, broad sword, or gun be prest,—
Rememb'ring him, he still maintains
His country's cause on foreign plains,
To grace her name and earn her praise,
Led by the brave of modern days.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

CVIII.

Such, Abercrombie, fought with thee
On Egypt's dark embattled shore,
And near Corunna's bark-clad sea
With great and gallant Moore.
Such fought with Ferguson and Graham,
A leader worthy of the name,
And fought in pride of Scotland's ancient fame
With firmer nerve and warmer will:
And wheresoe'er on hostile ground,
Or Scot or hardy Celt are found,
Thy spirit, noble Wallace, fighteth still.

CXIX.

O Scotland! proud may be thy boast!
Since Time his course thro' circling years hath run,
There hath not shone, in Fame's bright host,
A nobler hero than thy patriot son.

CX.

Manly and most devoted was the love
With which for thee unweariedly he strove;
No selfish lust of power, not ev'n of fame,
Gave ardour to the pure and generous flame.
Rapid in action, terrible in fight,
In counsel wise, inflexible in right,
Was he, who did so oft, in olden days,
Thy humbled head from base oppression raise.
Then be it by thy generous spirit known,
Ready in freedom's cause to bleed,
Spurning corruption's worthless meed,
That in thy heart thou feel'st this hero was thine own.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

**THE
LEGEND
OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.**

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Is there a man, that, from some lofty steep,
Views in his wide survey the boundless deep,
When its vast waters, lined with sun and shade,
Wave beyond wave, in seried distance, fade
To the pale sky;—or views it, dimly seen,
The shifting skreens of drifted mist between,
As the huge cloud dilates its sable form,
When grandly curtain'd by th' approaching storm,—
Who feels not his awed soul with wonder rise
To Him whose power created sea and skies,
Mountains and deserts, giving to the sight
The wonders of the day and of the night?

But let some fleet be seen in warlike pride,
Whose stately ships the restless billows ride,
While each, with lofty masts and bright'ning sheen
Of fair spread sails, moves like a vested Queen;—
Or rather, be some distant bark, astray,
Seen like a pilgrim on his lonely way,
Holding its steady course from port and shore,
A form distinct, a speck, and seen no more,—
How doth the pride, the sympathy, the flame,
Of human feeling stir his thrilling frame!
"O Thou! whose mandate dust inert obey'd!
"What is this creature man whom thou hast made!"

I.

On Palos' shore, whose crowded strand
Bore priests and nobles of the land,
And rustic hinds and townsmen trim,
And harness'd soldiers stern and grim,
And lowly maids and dames of pride,
And infants by their mother's side,—
The boldest seaman stood that e'er
Did bark or ship through tempest steer;
And wise as bold, and good as wise;
The magnet of a thousand eyes,
That on his form and features cast,
His noble mien and simple guise,
In wonder seem'd to look their last.
A form which conscious worth is gracing,
A face where hope, the lines effacing
Of thought and care, bestow'd, in truth,
To the quick eyes' imperfect tracing
The look and air of youth.

II.

Who, in his lofty gait, and high

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Expression of th' enlighten'd eye,
Had recognis'd in that bright hour
The disappointed suppliant of dull power,
Who had in vain of states and kings desired
The pittance for his vast emprise required?—
The patient sage, who, by his lamp's faint light,
O'er chart and map spent the long silent night?—
The man who meekly fortune's buffets bore,
Trusting in One alone, whom heaven and earth adore?

III.

Another world is in his mind,
Peopled with creatures of his kind,
With hearts to feel, with minds to soar,
Thoughts to consider and explore;
Souls, who might find, from trespass shriven,
Virtue on earth and joy in heaven.
"That Power divine, whom storms obey,"
(Whisper'd his heart,) a leading star,
Will guide him on his blessed way;
Brothers to join by fate divided far.
Vain thoughts! which heaven doth but ordain
In part to be, the rest, alas! how vain!

IV.

But hath there liv'd of mortal mould,
Whose fortunes with his thoughts could hold
An even race? Earth's greatest son
That e'er earn'd fame, or empire won,
Hath but fulfill'd, within a narrow scope,
A stinted portion of his ample hope.
With heavy sigh and look depress'd,
The greatest men will sometimes hear
The story of their acts address'd
To the young stranger's wond'ring ear,
And check the half-swoln tear.
Is it or modesty or pride
Which may not open praise abide?
No; read his inward thoughts: they tell,
His deeds of fame he prizes well.
But, ah! they in his fancy stand,
As relicks of a blighted band,
Who, lost to man's approving sight,
Have perish'd in the gloom of night,
Ere yet the glorious light of day
Had glitter'd on their bright array.
His mightiest feat had once another,
Of high Imagination born,—
A loftier and a nobler brother,
From dear existence torn;
And she for those, who are not, steeps

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Her soul in woe,—like Rachel, weeps.

V.

The signal given, with hasty strides,
The sailors climb'd their ships' dark sides;
Their anchors weigh'd; and from the shore
Each stately vessel slowly bore.
High o'er the deeply shadow'd flood,
Upon his deck their leader stood,
And turn'd him to the parted land,
And bow'd his head and waved his hand.
And then, along the crowded strand,
A sound of many sounds combin'd,
That wax'd and wan'd upon the wind,
Burst like heaven's thunder, deep and grand;
A lengthen'd peal, which paused, and then
Renew'd, like that which loathly parts,
Oft on the ear return'd again,
The impulse of a thousand hearts.
But as the lengthen'd shouts subside,
Distincter accents strike the ear,
Wafting across the current wide,
Heart-utter'd words of parting cheer:
"Oh! shall we ever see again
"Those gallant souls re-cross the main?
"God keep the brave! God be their guide!
"God bear them safe thro' storm and tide!
"Their sails with fav'ring breezes swell!
"O brave Columbus! fare thee well!"

VI.

From shore and strait, and gulph and bay,
The vessels held their daring way,
Left far behind, in distance thrown,
All land to Moor or Christian known,
Left far behind the misty isle,
Whose fitful shroud, withdrawn the while,
Shews wood and hill and headland bright
To later seamen's wond'ring sight,
And tide and sea left far behind
That e'er bore freight of human kind;
Where ship or bark to shifting gales
E'er tack'd their course or spread their sails.
Around them lay a boundless main
In which to hold their silent reign;
But for the passing current's flow,
And cleft waves, brawling round the prow,
They might have thought some magic spell
Had bound them, weary fate! for ever there to dwell.

VII.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

What did this trackless waste supply
To soothe the mind or please the eye?
The rising morn thro' dim mist breaking,
The flicker'd east with purple streaking;
The mid-day cloud thro' thin air flying,
With deeper blue the blue sea dying;
Long ridgy waves their white mains rearing,
And in the broad gleam disappearing;
The broaden'd blazing sun declining,
And western waves like fire-flood shining;
The sky's vast dome to darkness given,
And all the glorious host of heaven.

VIII.

Full oft upon the deck, while other's slept,
To mark the bearing of each well-known star
That shone aloft, or on th' horizon far,
The anxious Chief his lonely vigil kept;
The mournful wind, the hoarse wave breaking near,
The breathing groans of sleep, the plunging lead
The steer's man's call, and his own stilly tread,
Are all the sounds of night that reach his ear.
His darker form stalk'd through the sable gloom
With gestures discomposed and features keen,
That might not in the face of day be seen,
Like some unblessed spirit from the tomb.
Night after night, and day succeeding day,
So pass'd their dull, unvaried time away;
Till Hope, the seaman's worship'd queen, had flown
From every valiant heart but his alone;
Where still, by day, enthron'd, she held her state
With sunny look and brow elate.

IX.

But soon his dauntless soul, which nought could bend,
Nor hope delay'd, nor adverse fate subdue,
With more redoubled danger must contend
Than storm or wave—a fierce and angry crew.
"Dearly," say they, "may we those visions rue
"Which lured us from our native land,
"A wretched, lost, devoted band,
"Led on by hope's delusive gleam,
"The victims of a madman's dream!
"Nor gold shall e'er be ours, nor fame;
"Not ev'n the remnant of a name,
"On some rude-letter'd stone to tell
"On what strange coast our wreck befell.
"For us no requiem shall be sung,
"Nor prayer be said, nor passing knell
"In holy church be rung."

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

X.

To thoughts like these, all forms give way
Of duty to a leader's sway;
All habits of respect, that bind
With easy tie the human mind.
Ev'n love and admiration throw
Their nobler bands aside, nor show
A gentler mien; relations, friends,
Glare on him now like angry fiends;
And, as he moves, ah, wretched cheer!
Their mutter'd curses reach his ear,
But all undaunted, firm and sage,
He scorns their threats, yet thus he soothes their rage:
"I brought you from your native shore
"An unknown ocean to explore.
"I brought you, partners, by my side,
"Want, toil, and danger, to abide.
"Yet weary stillness hath so soon subdued
"The buoyant soul, the heart of pride,
"Men who in battle's brunt full oft have firmly stood.
"That to some nearing coast we bear,
"How many cheering signs declare!
"Way-faring birds the blue air ranging,
"Their shadowy line to blue air changing,
"Pass o'er our heads in frequent flocks;
"While sea-weed from the parent rocks
"With fibry roots, but newly torn,
"In tressy lengthen'd wreaths are on the clear wave borne.
"Nay, has not ev'n the drifting current brought
"Things of rude art,—of human cunning wrought?
"Be yet two days your patience tried,
"And if no shore is then descried,
"Ev'n turn your dastard prows again,
"And cast your leader to the main."

XI.

And thus awhile with steady hand
He kept in check a wayward band,
Who but with half-express'd disdain
Their rebel spirit could restrain
The vet'ran rough as war-worn steel,
Oft spurn'd the deck with grating heel;
The seaman, bending o'er the flood,
With stony gaze all listless stood;
The sturdy bandit, wildly rude,
Sung, as he strode, some garbled strain,
Expressive of each fitful mood,
Timed by his sabre's jangling chain
The proud Castilian, boasted name!
Child of an ancient race
Which proudly priz'd its spotless fame,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And deem'd all fear disgrace,
Felt quench'd within him honour's generous flame,
And in his gather'd mantle wrapp'd his face.

XII.

So pass'd the day, the night, the second day
With its red setting sun's extinguish'd ray.
Dark, solemn midnight coped the ocean wide,
When from his watchful stand Columbus cried,
"A light, a light!"—blest sounds that rung
In every ear.—At once they sprung
With haste aloft, and, peering bright,
Descried afar the blessed sight.
"It moves, it slowly moves like ray
"Of torch that guides some wand'rer's way!
"And other lights more distant, seeming
"As if from town or hamlet streaming!
" 'Tis land, 'tis peopled land; man dwelleth there,
"And thou, O God of Heaven! hast heard thy servant's prayer!"

XIII.

Returning day gave to their view
The distant shore and headlands blue
Of long-sought land. Then rose on air
Loud shouts of joy, mix'd wildly strange
With voice of weeping and of prayer,
Expressive of their blessed change
From death to life, from fierce to kind,
From all that sinks, to all that elevates the mind.
Those who, by faithless fear ensnared,
Had their brave chief so rudely dared,
Now, with keen self-upbraiding stung,
With every manly feeling wrung,
Repentant tears, looks that entreat,
Are kneeling at his worshipp'd feet.
"O pardon blinded, stubborn guilt!
"O henceforth make us what thou wilt!
"Our hands, our hearts, our lives, are thine,
"Thou wond'rous man! led on by power divine!"

XIV.

Ah! would some magic could arrest
The generous feelings of the breast,
Which thwart the common baser mass
Of sordid thoughts, so fleetly pass,—
A sun glimpse thro' the storm!
The rent cloud closes, tempests swell,
And its late path we cannot tell;
Lost is its trace and form.
No; not on earth such fugitives are bound;
In some veil'd future state will the bless'd charm be found.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

XV.

Columbus led them to the shore,
Which ship had never touch'd before;
And there he knelt upon the strand
To thank the God of sea and land;
And there, with mien and look elate,
Gave welcome to each toil-worn mate.
And lured with courteous signs of cheer,
The dusky natives gath'ring near;
Who on them gazed with wond'ring eyes,
As mission'd spirits from the skies.
And there did he possession claim,
In Isabella's royal name.

XVI.

It was a land, unmarr'd by art,
To please the eye and cheer the heart:
The natives' simple huts were seen
Peeping their palmy groves between,—
Groves, where each dome of sweepy leaves
In air of morning gently heaves,
And, as the deep vans fall and rise,
Changes its richly verdant dies;
A land whose simple sons till now
Had scarcely seen a careful brow;
They spent at will each passing day
In lightsome toil or active play.
Some their light canoes were guiding,
Along the shore's sweet margin gliding.
Some in the sunny sea were swimming,
The bright waves o'er their dark forms gleaming;
Some on the beach for shell-fish stooping,
Or on the smooth sand gaily trooping;
Or in link'd circles featly dancing
With golden braid and bracelet glancing.
By shelter'd door were infants creeping,
Or on the shaded herbage sleeping;
Gay feather'd birds the air were winging,
And parrots on their high perch swinging,
While humming-birds, like sparks of light,
Twinkled and vanish'd from the sight.

XVII.

They eyed the wond'rous strangers o'er and o'er,—
Those beings of the ocean and the air,
With humble, timid rev'rence; all their store
Of gather'd wealth inviting them to share;
To share whate'er their lowly cabins hold;
Their feather'd crowns, their fruits, their arms, their gold.
Their gold, that fatal gift!—O foul disgrace!

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Repaid with cruel wreck of all their harmless race.

XVIII.

There some short, pleasing days with them he dwelt,
And all their simple kindness dearly felt.

But they of other countries told,
Not distant, where the sun declines,
Where reign Caziues o'er warriors bold,
Rich with the gold of countless mines.

And he to other islands sail'd,
And was by other natives hail'd.
Then on Hispaniola's shore,
Where bays and harbours to explore
Much time he spent, a simple tower
Of wood he built, the seat to be
And shelter of Spain's infant power;
Hoping the nurseling fair to see,
Amidst those harmless people shoot
Its stately stem from slender root.

There nine and thirty chosen men he placed,
Gave parting words of counsel and of cheer;
One after one his nobler friends embraced,
And to the Indian chieftain, standing near,
"Befriend, my friends, and give them aid,
"When I am gone," he kindly said,
Blest them, and left them there his homeward course to steer.

XIX.

His prayer to Heaven for them preferr'd
Was not, alas! with favour heard.
Oft, as his ship the land forsook,
He landward turned his farewell look,
And cheer'd his Spaniards cross the wave,
Who distant answer faintly gave;
Distant but cheerful. On the strand
He saw their clothed figures stand
With naked forms link'd hand in hand;—
Saw thus caress'd, assured, and bold,
Those he should never more behold.
Some simple Indians, gently won,
To visit land, where sets the sun
In clouds of amber, and behold,
The wonders oft by Spaniards told;
Stood silent by themselves apart,
With nature's yearnings at their heart,
And saw the coast of fading blue
Wear soft and sadly from their view.
But soon by their new comrades cheer'd,
As o'er the waves the ship career'd,
Their wond'ring eyes aloft were cast
On white swoln sails and stately mast,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And check'ring shrouds, depicted fair,
On azure sea and azure air;
And felt, as feels the truant boy,
Who, having climb'd some crumbling mound
Or ruin'd tower, looks wildly round,—
A thrilling, fearful joy.

XX.

Then with his two small barks again
The dauntless Chief travers'd the main;
But not with fair and fav'ring gales
That erst had fill'd his western sails:
Fierce winds with adverse winds contended;
Rose the dark deep,—dark heaven descended,
And threaten'd, in the furious strife,
The ships to sink with all their freight of precious life.

XXI.

In this dread case, well may be guess'd
What dismal thoughts his soul depress'd:
"And must I in th' o'erwhelming deep,
"Our bold achievement all unknown,
"With these my brave advent'urers sleep,—
"What we have done to dark oblivion thrown?
"Sink, body! to thy wat'ry grave,
"If so God will; but let me save
"This noble fruitage of my mind,
"And leave my name and deeds behind!"

XXII.

Upon a scroll, with hasty pen,
His wond'rous tale he traced,
View'd it with tearful eyes, and then
Within a casket placed.
"Perhaps," said he, "by vessel bound
"On western cruize, thou wilt be found;
"Or make, sped by the current swift,
"To Christian shore thy happy drift.
"Thy story may by friendly eyes be read;
"O'er our untimely fate warm tears be shed;
"Our deeds rehears'd by many an eager tongue,
"And requiems for our parted souls be sung."
This casket to the sea he gave;
Quick sunk and rose the freightage light,—
Appear'd on many a booming wave,
Then floated far away from his still gazing sight.
Yet, after many a peril braved,—
Of many an adverse wind the sport,
He, by his Great Preserver saved,
Anchor'd again in Palos' port.

XXIII.

O, who can tell the acclamation loud
That, bursting, rose from the assembled crowd,
To hail the Hero and his gallant train,
From such adventure bold return'd again!—
The warm embrace, the oft-repeated cheer,
And many a wistful smile and many a tear!—

How, pressing close, they stood;
Look'd on Columbus with amaze,—
"Is he," so spake their wond'ring gaze,
"A man of flesh and blood?"
While cannon far along the shore
His welcome gave with deaf'ning roar.

XXIV.

And then with measur'd steps, sedate and slow,
They to the Christian's sacred temple go.
Soon as the chief within the house of God

Upon the hallow'd pavement trod,
He bowed with holy fear:—
"The God of wisdom, mercy, might,
"Creator of the day and night,
"This sea-girt globe, and every star of light
"Is worship'd here."

Then on the altar's steps he knelt,
And what his inward spirit felt,
Was said unheard within that cell
Where saintly thoughts and feelings dwell;
But as the choral chaunters raise
Thro' dome and aisle the hymn of praise,
To heaven his glist'ning eyes were turn'd,
With sacred love his bosom burn'd.

On all the motley crowd
The gen'rous impulse seized; high Dons of pride
Wept like the meekest beedsman by their side,
And women sobb'd aloud.

XXV.

Nor statesmen met in high debate
Deciding on a country's fate,
Nor saintly chiefs with fearless zeal
Contending for their churches' weal,
Nor warriors, midst the battle's roar,
Who fiercely guard their native shore;
No power by earthly coil possess
To agitate the human breast,
Shows, from its native source diverted,
Man's nature noble, tho' perverted,
So strongly as the transient power
Of link'd devotion's sympathetic hour.
It clothes with soft unwonted grace

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

The traits of many a rugged face,
As bend the knees unused to kneel,
And glow the hearts unused to feel;
While every soul, with holy passion moved,
Claims one Almighty Sire, fear'd, and adored, and loved.

XXVI.

With western treasures, borne in fair display,
To Barcelona's walls, in grand array,
Columbus slowly held his inland way.
And still where'er he pass'd along,
In eager crowds the people throng.
The wildest way o'er desert drear,
Did like a city's mart appear.
The shepherd swain forsook his sheep;
The goat-herd from his craggy steep
Shot like an arrow to the plain;
Mechanics, housewives, left amain
Their broken, tasks, and press'd beside
The truant youth they meant to chide:
The dull Hidalgo left his tower,
The Donna fair her latticed bower;
Together press'd, fair and uncouth,
All motley forms of age and youth.
And, still along the dark-ranged pile
Of clust'ring life, was heard the while
Mix'd brawling joy, and shouts that rung
From many a loud and deaf'ning tongue.
Ah! little thought the gazing throng,
As pass'd that pageant show along,
How Spain should rue, in future times,
 With desert plains and fields untill'd,
 And towns with listless loit'ers fill'd,
The with'ring spoil receiv'd from foreign climes!
Columbus gave thee, thankless Spain!
A new-found world o'er which to reign:
But could not with the gift impart
A portion of his liberal heart
And manly mind, to bid thee soar
Above a robber's lust of ore,
Which hath a curse entail'd on all thy countless store.

XXVII.

To Barcelona come, with honours meet
Such glorious deeds to grace, his sov'reigns greet
Their mariner's return. Or hall,
Or room of state was deem'd too small
For such reception. Pageant rare!
Beneath heaven's dome, in open square,
 Their gorgeous thrones were placed;
And near them on a humbler seat,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

While on each hand the titled great,
Standing in dizen'd rows, were seen,
Priests, guards, and crowds, a living screen,—
Columbus sat, with noble mien,

With princely honours graced.

There to the royal pair his tale he told:

A wond'rous tale, that did not want
Or studied words or braggart's vaunt;
When at their royal feet were laid
Gems, pearls, and plumes of many a shade,
And stores of virgin gold,

Whilst, in their feathered guise arrayed,
The Indians low obeisance paid.

And at that wond'rous story's close
The royal pair with rev'ence rose,
And kneeling on the ground, aloud
Gave thanks to Heaven. Then all the crowd,
Joining, from impulse of the heart,
The banded priest's extatic art,

With mingled voice *Te Deum* sang;

With the grand choral burst, walls; towers, and welkin rang.

XXVIII.

This was his brightest hour, too bright
For human weal;—a glaring light,
Like sunbeam thro' the rent cloud pouring
On the broad lake, when storms are roaring;

Bright centre of a wild and sombre scene;
More keenly bright than Summer's settled sheen.

XXIX.

With kingly favour brighten'd, all
His favour court, obey his call.
At princely boards, above the rest,
He took his place, admir'd, caress'd:
Proud was the Don of high degree,
Whose honour'd guest he deign'd to be.
Whate'er his purpos'd service wanted,
With ready courtesy was granted:
No envious foe durst cross his will.
While eager ship-wrights ply their skill,
To busy dock-yard, quay, or port,
Priests, lords, and citizens resort:
There wains the heavy planks are bringing,
And hammers on the anvil ringing;
The far-toss'd boards on boards are falling,
And brawny mate to work-mate calling:
The cable strong on windlass winding;
On wheel of stone the edge-tool grinding;
Red fire beneath the caldron gleaming,
And pitchy fumes from caldron steaming.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

To sea and land's men too, I ween,
It was a gay, attractive scene;
Beheld, enjoyed, day after day,
Till all his ships, in fair array,
 Were bounden for their course at last,
And amply stored and bravely mann'd,
Bore far from blue, receding land.
Thus soon again, th' Atlantic vast
 With gallant fleet he past.

XXX.

By peaceful natives hail'd with kindly smiles,
He shortly touch'd at various pleasant isles;
And when at length her well-known shore appear'd,
And he to fair Hispaniola near'd,
 Upon the deck, with eager eye,
 Some friendly signal to descry,
 He stood; then fir'd his signal shot,
 But answ'ring fire received not.
 "What may this dismal silence mean?
 "No floating flag in air is seen,
 "Nor ev'n the Tower itself, tho' well
 "Its lofty scite those landmarks tell.
 "Ha! have they so regardless proved
 "Of my command?— their station moved!"
As closer to the shore they drew,
To hail them came no light canoe;
The beach was silent and forsaken:
 Nor cloth'd nor naked forms appear'd,
 Nor sound of human voice was heard;
 Naught but the sea-birds from the rock,
 With busy stir that flutt'ring broke;
Sad signs, which in his mind portentous fears awaken.

XXXI.

Then eagerly on shore he went,
His scouts abroad for tidings sent;
But to his own loud echo'd cry
An Indian came with fearful eye,
Who guess'd his questions' hurried sound,
And pointed to a little mound,
Not distant far. With eager haste
The loosen'd mould aside was cast.
Bodies, alas! within that grave were found,
 Which had not long been laid to rest,
 Tho' so by changeful death defaced,
 Nor form, nor visage could be traced,—
 In Spanish garments dress'd.
Back from each living Spaniard's cheek the blood
Ran chill, as round their noble chief they stood,
Who sternly spoke to check the rising tear.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Eight of my valiant men are buried here;
"Where are the rest?" the timid Indian shook
In every limb, and slow and faintly spoke.
"Some are dead, some sick, some flown;
"The rest are up the country gone,
"Far, far away." A heavy groan
Utters the Chief; his blanch'd lips quiver;
He knows that they are gone for ever.

XXXII.

But here 'twere tedious and unmeet
A dismal story to repeat,
Which was from mild Cazique received,
Their former friend, and half believed.
Him, in his cabin far apart,
Wounded they found, by Carib dart;
Receiv'd, said he, from savage foe
Spaniards defending. Then with accents low
He spoke, and ruefully began to tell,
What to those hapless mariners befell.
How that from lust of pleasure and of gold,
And mutual strife and war on Caribs made,
Their strength divided was, and burnt their hold,
And their unhappy heads beneath the still earth laid.

XXXIII.

Yet, spite of adverse fate, he in those climes
Spain's infant power establish'd; after-times
Have seen it flourish, and her sway maintain
In either world, o'er many a fair domain.
But wayward was his irksome lot the while,
Striving with malice, mutiny, and guile;
Yet vainly striving: that which most
His generous bosom sought to shun,
Each wise and lib'ral purpose crost,
Must now at Mammon's ruthless call be done.
Upon their native soil,
They who were wont in harmless play
To frolic out the passing day,
Must pine with hateful toil.

XXXIV.

Yea; this he did against his better will;
For who may stern ambition serve, and still
His nobler nature trust?
May on unshaken strength relic,
Cast Fortune as she will her dye,
And say "I will be just?"

XXXV.

Envy mean, that in the dark

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Strikes surely at its noble mark,
Against him rose with hatred fell,
Which he could brave, but could not quell.
Then he to Spain indignant went,
And to his sov'reigns made complaint,
With manly freedom, of their trust,
Put, to his cost, in men unjust,
And turbulent. They graciously
His plaint and plea receiv'd; and hoisting high
His famed and gallant flag upon the main,
He to his western world return'd again.
Where he, the sea's unwearied, dauntless rover,
Thro' many a gulph and straight, did first discover
That continent, whose mighty reach
From th' utmost frozen north doth stretch
Ev'n to the frozen south; a land
Of surface fair and structure grand.

XXXVI.

There, thro' vast regions rivers pour,
Whose mid-way skiff scarce sees the shore;
Which, rolling on in lordly pride,
Give to the main their ample tide;
And dauntless then, with current strong,
Impetuous, roaring, bear along,
And still their sep'rate honours keep,
In bold contention with the mighty deep.

XXXVII.

There broad-based mountains from the sight
Conceal in clouds their vasty height,
Whose frozen peaks, a vision rare,
Above the girdling clouds rear'd far in upper air,
At times appear, and soothly seem
To the far distant, up-cast eye,
Like snowy watch-towers of the sky,—
Like passing visions of a dream.

XXXVIII.

There forests grand of olden birth,
O'er-canopy the darken'd earth,
Whose trees, growth of unreckon'd time,
Rear o'er whole regions far and wide
A checker'd dome of lofty pride
Silent, solemn, and sublime.—
A pillar'd lab'rinth, in whose trackless gloom,
Unguided feet might stray till close of mortal doom.

XXXIX.

There grassy plains of verdant green
Spread far beyond man's ken are seen,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Whose darker bushy spots that lye
Strew'd o'er the level vast, descry
Admiring strangers, from the brow
Of hill or upland steep, and show,
Like a calm ocean's peaceful isles,
When morning light thro' rising vapours smiles.

XL.

O'er this, his last—his proudest fame,
He did assert his mission'd claim.
Yet dark ambitious envy, more
Incens'd and violent than before,
With crafty machinations gain'd
His royal master's ear, who stain'd
His princely faith, and gave it power
To triumph, in a shameful hour.
A mission'd gownsman o'er the sea
Was sent his rights to supersede
And all his noble schemes impede,—
His tyrant, spy, and judge to be.
With parchment scrolls and deeds he came
To kindle fierce and wasteful flame.
Columbus' firm and dauntless soul
Submitted not to base controul.
For who that hath high deeds achieved,
Whose mind hath mighty plans conceived,
Can of learn'd ignorance and pride
The petty vexing rule abide?
The lion trampled by an ass!—
No; this all-school'd forbearance would surpass.
Insulted with a felon's chain,
This noble man must cross the main,
And answer his foul charge to cold, ungrateful Spain.

XLI.

By India's gentle race alone
Was pity to his suff'rings shown.
They on his parting wait.
And looks of kindness on him cast,
Or touch'd his mantle as he past,
And mourn'd his alter'd state.
"May the Great Spirit smooth the tide
"With gentle gales, and be thy guide!"
And when his vessel wore from land,
With meaning nods and gestures kind,
He saw them still upon the strand
Tossing their dark arms on the wind.
He saw them like a helpless flock
Who soon must bear the cruel shock
Of savage wolves, yet reckless still,
Feel but the pain of present ill.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

He saw the fate he could not now controul,
And groan'd in bitter agony of soul.

XLII.

He trode the narrow deck with pain,
And oft survey'd his rankling chain.
The ship's brave captain grieved to see
Base irons his noble pris'ner gall,
And kindly sued to set him free;
But proudly spoke the lofty thrall,
"Until the King whom I have served,
"Who thinks this recompense deserved,
"Himself command th' unclasping stroke,
"These gyved limbs will wear their yoke.
"Yea, when my head lies in the dust,
"These chains shall in my coffin rust.
"Better than lesson'd saw, tho' rude,
"As token, long preserv'd, of black ingratitude!"

XLIII.

Thus pent, his manly fortitude gave way
To brooding passion's dark tumultuous sway.
Dark was the gloom within, and darker grew
Th' impending gloom without, as onward drew
Th' embattled storm that, deep'ning on its way,
With all its marshal'd host obscured the day.
Volume o'er volume, roll'd the heavy clouds,
And oft in dark dim masses, sinking slow,
Hung in the nether air, like misty shrouds,
Veiling the sombre, silent deep below.
Like eddying snow-flakes from a lowering sky,
Athwart the dismal gloom the frighten'd sea-fowl fly.
Then from the solemn stillness round,
Utters the storm its awful sound.
It groans upon the distant waves;
O'er the mid-ocean wildly raves;
Recedes afar with dying strain,
That sadly thro' the troubled air
Comes like the wailings of despair,
And with redoubled strength returns again:
Through shrouds and rigging, boards and mast,
Whistles, and howls, and roars th' outrageous blast.

XLIV.

From its vast bed profound with heaving throws
The mighty waste of welt'ring waters rose.
O'er countless waves, now mounting, now deprest,
The ridgy surges swell with foaming crest,
Like Alpine barriers of some distant shore,
Now seen, now lost amidst the deaf'ning roar;
While, higher still, on broad and sweepy base,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Their growing bulk the mountain billows raise,
Each far aloft in lordly grandeur rides,
With many a vassal wave rough'ning his furrow'd sides.
Heav'd to its height, the dizzy skiff
Shoots like an eagle from his cliff
Down to the fearful gulf, and then
On the swoln waters mounts again,—
A fearful way! a fearful state
For vessel charged with living freight!

XLV.

Within, without the tossing tempests rage:
This was, of all his earthly pilgrimage,
The injur'd Hero's fellest, darkest hour.
Yet swiftly pass'd its gloomy power;
For as the wild winds louder blew,
His troubled breast the calmer grew;
And, long before the mighty hand,
That rules the ocean and the land,
Had calm'd the sea, with pious rev'rence fill'd,
The warring passions of his soul were still'd.
Through softly parting clouds the blue sky peer'd,
And heaven-ward turn'd his eye with better feelings cheer'd.
Meek are the wise, the great, the good;—
He sighed, and thought of Him, who died on holy rood.

XLVI.

No more the angry tempest's sport,
The vessel reach'd its destined port.
A town of Christendom he greets,
And treads again its well-known streets;
A sight of wonder, grief, and shame
To those who on his landing came,
And on his state in silence gaz'd.
"This is the man whose dauntless soul"—
So spoke their looks—"Spain's power hath rais'd
"To hold o'er worlds her proud controul!
"His honour'd brows with laurel crown'd,
"His hands with felon fetters bound!"

XLVII.

And he before his Sov'reign Dame
And her stern Lord, indignant came;
And bold in conscious honour, broke
The silence of his smother'd flame,
In words that all his inward anguish spoke.
The gentle Queen's more noble breast
Its generous sympathy exprest;
And as his varied story show'd
What wrongs from guileful malice flow'd,
Th' indignant eye and flushing cheek

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Did oft her mind's emotion speak.
The sordid King, with brow severe,
Could, all unmov'd, his pleadings hear;
Save, that, in spite of royal pride,
Which self-reproach can ill abide,
His crimson'd face did meanly show
Of conscious shame th' unworthy glow.
Baffled, disgraced, his enemies remain'd,
And base ambition for a time restrain'd.

XLVIII.

With four small vessels, small supply
I trow! yet granted tardily,
For such high service, he once more
The western ocean to explore
Directs his course. On many an isle
He touch'd, where cheerly, for a while,
His mariners their cares beguile
Upon the busy shore.
And there what wiles of barter keen
Spaniard and native pass between;
As feather'd crowns, whose colours change
To every hue, with vizards strange,
And gold and pearls are giv'n away,
For bead or bell, or bauble gay!
Full oft the mutt'ring Indian eyes
With conscious smile his wond'rous prize,
Beneath the shady plantain seated,
And thinks he hath the stranger cheated;
Or foots the ground like vaunting child,
Snapping his thumbs with anticks wild.

XLIX.

But if, at length, tired of their guests,
Consuming like those hateful pests,
Locusts or ants, provisions stored
For many days, they will afford
No more, withholding fresh supplies,
And strife and threat'ning clamours rise,—
Columbus gentle craft pursues,
And soon their noisy wrath subdues.
Thus speaks the chief,—"Refuse us aid
"From stores which Heaven for all hath made!
"The moon, your mistress, will this night
"From you withhold her blessed light,
"Her ire to show; take ye the risk."
Then, as half-frighten'd, half in jest,
They turn'd their faces to the east,
From ocean rose her broaden'd disk;
But when the deep eclipse came on,
By science sure to him foreknown,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

How cower'd each savage at his feet,
Like spaniel couching to his lord,
Awed by the whip or angry word,
 His pardon to entreat!
"Take all we have, thou heavenly man!
"And let our mistress smile again!"

L.

Or, should the ship, above, below,
Be fill'd with crowds, who will not go;
Again, to spare more hurtful force,
To harmless guile he has recourse.
"Ho! Gunner! let these scramblers know
"The power we do not use:" when, lo!
 From cannon's mouth the silv'ry cloud
Breaks forth, soft curling on the air,
Thro' which appears the light'ning's glare,
 And bellowing roars the thunder loud.
Quickly from bowsprit, shroud, or mast,
Or vessel's side the Indians cast
Their naked forms, the water dashing
O'er their dark heads, as stoutly lashing
The briny waves with arms out-spread,
They gain the shore with terror's speed.

LI.

Thus checker'd still with shade and sheen
Pass'd in the West his latter scene,
As thro' the oak's toss'd branches pass
Soft moon-beams, flickering on the grass;
As on the lake's dark surface pour
Broad flashing drops of summer-shower;—
As the rude cavern's sparry sides
When past the miner's taper glides.
So roam'd the Chief, and many a sea
Fathom'd and search'd unweariedly,
Hoping a western way to gain
To eastern climes,—an effort vain;
For mighty thoughts, with error uncombin'd,
Were never yet the meed of mortal mind.

LII.

At length, by wayward fortune crost,
And oft-renew'd and irksome strife
Of sordid men,— by tempests tost,
And tir'd with turmoil of a wand'rer's life,
He sail'd again for Europe's ancient shore,
So will'd High Heav'n! to cross the seas no more.
His anchor fix'd, his sails for ever furl'd,—
A toil-worn pilgrim in a weary world.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

LIII.

And thus the Hero's sun went down,
Closing his day of bright renown.
Eight times thro' breeze and storm he past
O'er surge and wave th' Atlantic vast;
And left on many an island fair
Foundations which the after-care
Of meaner chieftains shortly rear'd
To seats of power, serv'd, envy'd, fear'd.
No kingly conqueror, since time began
The long career of ages, hath to man
A scope so ample given for trade's bold range,
Or caus'd on earth's wide stage such rapid mighty change.

LIV.

He, on the bed of sickness laid,
Saw, unappall'd, death's closing shade;
And there, in charity and love
To man on earth and God above,
Meekly to heaven his soul resign'd,
His body to the earth consign'd.
'Twas in Valladolid he breathed his last,
And to a better, heavenly city past;
But St. Dominga, in her sacred fane
Doth his blest spot of rest and sculptur'd tomb contain.

LV.

There burghers, knights, advent'ers brave
Stood round in fun'ral weeds bedight;
And bow'd them to the closing grave,
And wish'd his soul good night.

LVI.

Now all the bold companions of his toil
Tenants of many a clime, who wont to come,
(So fancy trows) when vex'd with worldly coil
And linger sadly by his narrow home;—
Repentant enemies, and friends that grieve
In self-upbraiding tenderness, and say,
"Cold was the love he did from us receive,"—
The fleeting restless spirits of a day,
All to their dread account are pass'd away.

LVII.

Silence, solemn, awful, deep,
Doth in that hall of death her empire keep;
Save when at times the hollow pavement, smote
By solitary wand'rer's foot, amain
From lofty dome and arch and aisle remote
A circling loud response receives again.
The stranger starts to hear the growing sound,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And sees the blazon'd trophies waving near;—
"Ha! tread my feet so near that sacred ground!"
He stops and bows his head:—"Columbus resteth here!"

LVIII.

Some ardent youth, perhaps, ere from his home
He launch his vent'rous bark, will hither come,
Read fondly o'er and o'er his graven name
With feelings keenly touch'd,—with heart of flame;
Till wrapp'd in fancy's wild delusive dream,
Times past and long forgotten, present seem.
To his charm'd ear, the east wind rising shrill,
Seems thro' the Hero's shroud to whistle still.
The clock's deep pendulum swinging, thro' the blast
Sounds like the rocking of his lofty mast;
While fitful gusts rave like his clam'rous band,
Mix'd with the accents of his high command.
Slowly the stripling quits the pensive scene,
And burns, and sighs, and weeps to be what he has been.

LIX.

O! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name!
Whilst in that sound there is a charm
The nerves to brace, the heart to warm,
As, thinking of the mighty dead,
The young, from slothful couch will start,
And vow, with lifted hands outspread,
Like them to act a noble part?

LX.

O! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name!
When, but for those, our mighty dead,
All ages past, a blank would be,
Sunk in oblivion's murky bed,—
A desert bare, a shipless sea?
They are the distant objects seen,—
The lofty marks of what hath been.

LXI.

O! who shall lightly say that fame
Is nothing but an empty name!
When mem'ry of the mighty dead
To earth-worn pilgrim's wistful eye
The brightest rays of cheering shed,
That point to immortality?

LXII.

A twinkling speck, but fix'd and bright,
To guide us thro' the dreary night,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Each hero shines, and lures the soul
To gain the distant happy goal.
For is there one who, musing o'er the grave
Where lies interr'd the good, the wise, the brave,
Can poorly think, beneath the mould'ring heap,
That noble being shall for ever sleep?
No; saith the gen'rous heart, and proudly swells,—
"Tho' his cered corse lies here, with God his spirit dwells."

**THE
LEGEND
OF
LADY GRISELD BAILLIE.**

LADY GRISELD BAILLIE.

WHEN, sapient, dauntless, strong, heroic man!
Our busy thoughts thy noble nature scan,
Whose active mind, its hidden cell within,
Frames that from which the mightiest works begin;
Whose secret thoughts are light to ages lending,
Whose potent arm is right and life defending,
For helpless thousands, all on one high soul depending:—
We pause, delighted with the fair survey,
And haply in our wistful musings say,
What mate, to match this noble work of heaven,
Hath the all-wise and mighty master given?
One gifted like himself, whose head devises
High things, whose soul at sound of battle rises,
Who with glav'd hand will thro' arm'd squadrons ride,
And, death confronting, combat by his side;
Will share with equal wisdom grave debate,
And all the cares of chieftain, kingly state?
Aye, such, I trow, in female form hath been
Of olden times, and may again be seen,
When cares of empire or strong impulse swell
The generous breast, and to high deeds impel;
For who can these as meaner times upbraid,
Who think of Saragossa's valiant maid?

But she of gentler nature, softer, dearer,
Of daily life the active, kindly cheerer;
With generous bosom, age, or childhood shielding,
And in the storms of life, tho' mov'd, unyielding;
Strength in her gentleness, hope in her sorrow,
Whose darkest hours some ray of brightness borrow
From better days to come, whose meek devotion
Calms every wayward passion's wild commotion;
In want and suff'ring, soothing, useful, sprightly,
Bearing the press of evil hap so lightly,
Till evil's self seems its strong hold betraying
To the sweet witch'ry of such winsome playing;
Bold from affection, if by nature fearful,
With varying brow, sad, tender, anxious, cheerful,—
This is meet partner for the loftiest mind,
With crown or helmet graced,—yea, this is womankind!
Come ye, whose grateful memory retains
Dear recollection of *her* tender pains
To whom your oft-conn'd lesson, daily said,

THE LEGEND OF LADY GRISELD BAILLIE.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

With kiss and cheering praises was repaid;
To gain whose smile, to shun whose mild rebuke,
Your irksome task was learnt in silent nook,
Tho' truant thoughts the while, your lot exchanging
With freer elves, were wood and meadow ranging;—
And ye, who best the faithful virtues know
Of a link'd partner, tried in weal and woe,
Like the sight willow, now aloft, now bending,
But, still unbroken, with the blast contending,
Whose very look call'd virtuous vigour forth,
Compelling you to match her noble worth;—
And ye, who in a sister's modest praise
Feel manly pride, and think of other days,
Pleased that the play-mate of your native home
Hath in her prime an honour'd name become;—
And ye, who in a duteous child have known
A daughter, help-mate, sister, blent in one,
From whose dear hand which, to no hireling leaves
Its task of love, your age sweet aid receives,
Who reckless marks youth's waning faded hue,
And thinks her bloom well spent, when spent for you;—
Come all, whose thoughts such dear remembrance bear,
And to my short and faithful lay give ear.

I.

 Within a prison's hateful cell,
 Where, from the lofty window fell,
 Thro' grated bars, the sloping beam,
 Defin'd, but faint, on couch of stone,
 There sat a pris'ner sad and lone,
Like the dim tenant of a dismal dream.
 Deep in the shade, by low-arch'd door,
 With iron nails thick studded o'er,
 Whose threshold black is cross'd by those
 Who here their earthly being close,
 Or issue to the light again
 A scaffold with their blood to stain,—
 Moved something softly. Wistful ears
 Are quick of sense, and from his book
The pris'ner rais'd his eyes with eager look,—
"Is it a real form that thro' the gloom appears?"

II.

 It was indeed of flesh and blood,
 The form that quickly by him stood;
 Of stature low, of figure light,
 In motion like some happy sprite;
 Yet meaning eyes and varying cheek,
 Now red, now pale, seem'd to bespeak
 Of riper years the cares and feeling
 Which with a gentle heart were dealing.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Such sense in eyes so simply mild!
"Is it a woman or a child?
"Who art thou, damsel sweet? are not mine eyes beguiled?"

III.

"No; from the Redbraes' tower I come;
"My father is Sir Patrick Hume;
"And he has sent me for thy good,
"His dearly honour'd Jerviswood.
"Long have I round these walls been straying,
"As if with other children playing;
"Long near the gate have kept my watch
"The sentry's changing-time to catch.
"With stealthy steps I gain'd the shade
"By the close-winding staircase made,
"And when the surly turnkey enter'd,
"But little dreaming in his mind
"Who follow'd him so close behind,
"Into this darken'd cell, with beating heart, I ventured."

IV.

Then from the simple vest that braced
Her gentle breast, a letter traced
With well-known characters, she took,
And with an eager, joyful look,
Her eyes up to his visage cast,
His changing countenance to scan,
As o'er the lines his keen glance past.
She saw a faint glow tinge the sickly wan;
She saw his eyes thro' tear-drops raise
To heaven their look of silent praise,
And hope's fresh touch undoing lines of care
Which stress of evil times had deeply graven there.
Meanwhile, the joy of sympathy to trace
Upon her innocent and lovely face
Had to the sternest, darkest sceptic given
Some love of human kind, some faith in righteous Heaven

V.

What blessings on her youthful head
Were by the grateful patriot shed,
(For such he was, good and devoted,
And had at risk of life promoted
His country's freedom and her faith,
Nor reck'ning made of worldly skathe)
How warm, confiding, and sincere,
He gave to her attentive ear
The answer which her cautious sire
Did to his secret note require;—
How after this with 'quiries kind,
He ask'd for all she left behind

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

In Redbraes' tower, her native dwelling,
And set her artless tongue a-telling,
Which urchin dear had tallest grown,
And which the greatest learning shown,
Of lesson, sermon, psalm, and note,
And Sabbath questions learnt by rote,
And merry tricks and gambols play'd
By ev'ning fire, and forfeits paid,—
I will not here rehearse, nor will I say,
How, on that bless'd and long-remember'd day,
The pris'ner's son, deserving such a sire,
First saw the tiny maid, and did admire,
That one so young and wise and good and fair
Should be an earthly thing that breath'd this nether air.

VI.

E'en let my reader courteously suppose,
That from this visit happier days arose;
Suppose the pris'ner from his thralldom freed,
And with our lay proceed.

VII.

The damsel, glad her mission'd task was done,
Back to her home long since had blithely gone;
And there remain'd, a meek and duteous child
Where useful toil, with play between,
And pastime on the sunny green,
The weeks and months of passing years beguiled.

VIII.

Scotland the while convulsive lay
Beneath a hateful tyrant's sway;
For James's bigot mind th' ascendant gain'd,
And fiercely raged blind ruthless power;
While men, who true to conscience' voice remain'd,
Were forced in caves and dens to cower;
Bereft of home or hold or worldly wealth,
Upon the bleak and blasted heath,
They sang their glorious Maker's praise by stealth,
Th' inclement sky beneath.
And some were forced to flee their native land,
Or in the grated prison's gloom,
Dealt to them by corruption's hateful hand,
Abide their fatal doom.

IX.

And there our former thrall, the good,
The firm, the gentle Jerviswood
Again was pent, with sickness worn,
Watching each pulse's feebler beat
Which promised, ere the fated morn,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

The scaffold of its prey to cheat.

X.

And now that patriot's ancient, faithful friend,
Our maiden's sire, must to the tempest bend.

He too must quit his social hearth,
The place where cheerful friends resort,
And trav'lers rest and children sport,
To lay him on the mould'ring earth;
Thro' days of lonely gloom to rest his head
With them, who, in those times unblest,
Alone had sure and fearless rest,
The still, the envied dead.

XI.

Sad was his hiding-place, I ween,
A fearful place, where sights had been,
Full oft, by the benighted rustic seen;
Aye, elrich forms in sheeted white,
Which, in the waning moonlight blast,
Pass by, nor shadow onward cast,
Like any earthly wight;
A place, where midnight lights had shone
Thro' charnel windows, and the glancing
Of wand'ring flame, on church-path lone,
Betray'd the hour when fiends and hags were dancing,
Or to their vigil foul with trooping haste advancing.
A place, whose gate with weeds o'ergrown,
Hemlock and dock of deep dull green,
That climbing rank the lintals screen,
What time the moon is riding high
The very hounds went cowering by,
Or watch'd afar with howling moan;
For brutes 'tis said, will see what meets no human eye.

XII.

You well may guess his faithful wife
A heart of heavy cheer had then,
List'ning her household's hum of life,
And thinking of his silent den.
"Oh! who will to that vault of death,
"At night's still watch repair,
"The dark and chilly sky beneath,
"And needful succour bear?
"Many his wants, who bideth lonely there!"

XIII.

Pleased had you been to have beheld,
Like fire-sparks from the stricken stone,
Like sun-beams on the rain-drop thrown,
The kindling eye of sweet Griseld,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

When thus her mother spoke, for known
Was his retreat to her alone.
The wary dame to none beside
The dangerous secret might confide.
"O fear not, mother! I will go,
"Betide me good or ill:
"Nor quick nor dead shall daunt me; no;
"Nor witch-fires, dancing in the dark,
"Nor owl's shriek, nor watch-dog's bark,
"For I shall think, the while, I do God's blessed will.
"I'll be his active Brownie sprite,
"To bring him needful food, and share his lonely night."

XIV.

And she, ere stroke of midnight bell,
Did bound her for that dismal cell;
And took that haunted, fearful way
Which, till that hour, in twilight grey
She never by herself had past,
Or ev'n athwart its copse-wood cast
A hasty glance, for dread of seeing
The form of some unearthly being.
But now, far other forms of fear
To her scared sight appear,
And, like a sudden fit of ague, move her;
The stump of some old, blasted tree,
Or upright stone, or colt broke free
To range at will the dewy lea,
Seem lurking spy or rustic lover,
Who may, ev'n thro' the dark, her secret drift discover.

XV.

She pauses oft.—"What whispers near?—
"The babbling burn sounds in mine ear.
"Some hasty form the pathway crosses:—
" 'Tis but a branch the light wind tosses.
"What thing is that by church-yard gate,
"That seems like spearman tall to wait?
" 'Tis but the martyr's slender stone
"Which stands so stately and alone:
"Why should I shrink? why should I fear?
"The vault's black door is near."
And she with icy fingers knock'd,
And heard with joy the door unlock'd,
And felt the yawning fence give way
As deep and harsh the sounding hinges bray.

XVI.

But to describe their tender meeting,
Tears shed unseen, affection utter'd
In broken words, and blessings mutter'd,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

With many a kiss and kindly greeting,
I know not; would my feeble skill
Were meeter yoke-mate to my will!

XVII.

Then from the struck flint flew the spark,
And lighted taper, faint and small,
Gave out its dun-rays thro' the dark,
On vaulted roof and crusted wall;
On stones reversed in crumbling mould,
And blacken'd poles of bier decay'd
That lumb'ring on the ground were laid;
On sculptured wrecks, defaced and old,
And shreds of painted 'scutcheons torn
Which once, in pointed lozenge spread,
The pillar'd church aloft had worn;
While new-swept nook and lowly bed,
Strange sight in such a place!
Betray'd a piteous case,—
Man from man's converse torn, the living with the dead.

XVIII.

The basket's store of viands and bread,
Produced with looks of kind inviting,
Her hands with busy kindness spread;
And he her kindly care requiting,
Fell to with thanks and relish keen,
Nodded and quaff'd her health between,
While she his glee return'd, her smiles with tears uniting.
No lordling at his banquet rare
E'er tasted such delicious fare;
No beauty on her silken seat,
With lover kneeling at her feet,
E'er wept and smiled by turns with smiles so fondly sweet

XIX.

But soon youth's buoyant gladsome nature
Spreads joy unmix'd o'er every feature,
As she her tale is archly telling
Of feuds within their busy dwelling,
While, round the sav'ry table sitting,
She gleans his meal, the rest unwitting,
How she, their open eyes deceiving,
So dext'rous has become in thieving.
She tells, how, of some trifle prating,
She stirs them all to keen debating,
While into napkin'd lap she's sliding
Her portion, oft renew'd, and hiding,
Beneath the board, her store; amazing
Her jealous Frere, oft on her gazing.
Then with his voice and eager eye,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

She speaks in harmless mimickry.
"Mother! was e'er the like beheld?
"Some wolf possesses our Griseld;
"She clears her dish, as I'm a sinner!
"Like plowman at his new-year's dinner."

XX.

And what each urchin, one by one,
Had best in sport or lesson done,
She fail'd not to repeat:
Tho' sorry tales they might appear
To a fastidious critic's ear,
They were to him most sweet.

XXI.

But they must part till o'er the sky
Night cast again her sable dye
For ah! her term is almost over
How fleetly hath it flown!
As fleetly as with tristed lover
The stealthy hour is gone.
And could there be in lovers' meeting
More powerful chords to move the mind,
Fond heart to heart responsive beating,
Than in that tender hour, pure, pious love entwined?

XXII.

Thus, night succeeding night, her love
Did its unwearied nature prove,
Tender and fearless; till, obscured by crimes,
Again so darkly lower'd the changeful times,
That her good sire, tho' shut from light of day,
Might in that lowly den no longer stay.

XXIII.

From Edinbrough town a courier came,
And round him flock'd the castle's dame,
Children and servants, young and old.
"What news? what news? thy visage sad
"Betrays too plainly tidings bad."
And so it did; alas! sad was the tale he told.
"From the oppressor's deadly hate
"Good Jerviswood has met his fate
"Upon the lofty scaffold, where
"He bore himself with dauntless air;
"Albeit, with mortal sickness spent,
"Upon a woman's arm he leant.
"From earth to heaven at yestere'en he went."

XXIV.

In silence deep the list'ners stood,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

An instant horror chill'd their blood.
The lady groan'd, and turn'd aside
Her fears and troubled thoughts to hide.
The children wept, then went to play;
The servants cried "Awaladay!"
But oh! what inward sights, which borrow
The forms that are not, changing still,
Like shadows on a broken rill,
Were blended with our damsel's sorrow!
Those lips, those eyes so sweetly mild,
That bless'd her as a humble child;
The block in sable, deadly trim,
The kneeling form, the headsman grim,
The sever'd head with life-blood streaming,—
Were ever 'thwart her fancy gleaming.
Her father, too, in perilous state,
He may be seiz'd, and like his friend
Upon the fatal scaffold bend.
May Heaven preserve him still from such a dreadful end!
And then she thought, if this must be,
Who, honour'd sire, will wait on thee,
And serve thy wants with decent pride,
Like Baillie's kinswoman, subduing fear
With fearless love, thy last sad scene to cheer,
Ev'n on the scaffold standing by thy side?
A friend like his, dear father, thou shalt have,
To serve thee to the last, and linger round thy grave.

XXV.

Her father then, who narrowly
With life escaped, was forced to fly
His dangerous home, a home no more,
And cross the sea. A friendly shore
Receiv'd the fugitive, and there,
Like prey broke from the spoiler's snare,
To join her hapless lord, the dame
With all her num'rous fam'ly came;
And found asylum, where th' opprest
Of Scotland's patriot sons had rest,
Like sea-fowl clust'ring in the rock
To shun some rising tempest's shock.

XXVI.

But said I all the fam'ly? no:
Word incorrect! it was not so:
For one, the youngest child, confin'd
With fell disease, was left behind;
While certain things, as thus by stealth
They fled, regarding worldly wealth
Of much import, were left undone;
And who will now that peril run,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Again to visit Scotland's shore,
From whence they did in fear depart,
And to each parent's yearning heart
The darling child restore?

XXVII.

And who did for affection's sake
This task of peril undertake?
O! who but she, whose bosom swell'd
With feelings high, whose self-devotion
Follow'd each gen'rous, strong emotion,
The young, the sweet, the good, the brave Griseld.

XXVIII.

Yes; she again cross'd o'er the main,
And things of moment left undone,
Tho' o'er her head had scarcely run
Her nineteenth year, no whit deluded
By wily fraud, she there concluded,
And bore the youngling to its own again.

XXIX.

But when she reach'd the Belgian strand,
Hard was her lot. Fast fell the rain,
And there lay many miles of land,
A stranger's land, ere she might gain
The nearest town. With hardship crost,
The wayward child its shoes had lost;
Their coin was spent, their garments light,
And dark and dreary was the night.
Then like some gypsie girl on desert moor,
Her helpless charge upon her back she bore.
Who then had guess'd that figure slight,
So bending in such humble plight,
Was one of proud and gentle race,
Possessing all that well became
Th' accomplish'd maid or high-born dame,
Befitting princely hall or monarch's court to grace?

XXX.

Their minds from many racking cares reliev'd,
The gladsome parents to their arms receiv'd
Her and the infant dear, caressing
The twain by turns; while many a blessing,
Which sweetly all her toil repaid,
Was shed upon their gen'rous maid:
And tho' the inmates of a humble home,
To which they had as wretched outlaws come,
Tho' hard their alter'd lot might be,
In crowded city pent,
They lived with mind and body free

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

In grateful, quiet content.

XXXI.

And well, with ready hand and heart,
Each task of toilsome duty taking,
Did one dear inmate play her part,
The last asleep, the earliest waking.
Her hands each nightly couch prepared,
And frugal meal on which they fared;
Unfolding spread the servet white,
And deck'd the board with tankard bright.
Thro' fretted hose and garment rent,
Her tiny needle deftly went,
Till hateful penury, so graced,
Was scarcely in their dwelling traced.
With rev'ence to the old she clung,
With sweet affection to the young.
To her was crabbed lesson said,
To her the sly petition made.
To her was told each petty care;
By her was lisp'd the tardy prayer,
What time the urchin, half undrest
And half asleep, was put to rest.

XXXII.

There is a sight all hearts beguiling,—
A youthful mother to her infant smiling,
Who, with spread arms and dancing feet,
And cooing voice, returns its answer sweet.
Who does not love to see the grandame mild,
Lesson with yearning looks the list'ning child?
But 'tis a thing of saintlier nature,
Amidst her friends of pigmy stature,
To see the maid in youth's fair bloom,
A guardian sister's charge assume,
And, like a touch of angel's bliss,
Receive from each its grateful kiss.—
To see them, when their hour of love is past,
Aside their grave demeanour cast.
With her in mimick war they wrestle;
Beneath her twisted robe they nestle;
Upon her glowing cheek they revel,
Low bended to their tiny level;
While off, her lovely neck bestriding
Crows some arch imp, like huntsman riding.
This is a sight the coldest heart may feel;—
To make down rugged cheeks the kindly tear to steal.

XXXIII.

But when the toilsome sun was set,
And ev'ning groups together met,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

(For other strangers shelter'd there
Would seek with them to lighten care,)
Her feet still in the dance mov'd lightest,
Her eye with merry glance beam'd brightest,
Her braided locks, were coil'd the neatest,
Her carol song was trill'd the sweetest;
And round the fire, in winter cold,
No archer tale than hers was told.

XXXIV.

O! spirits gay, and kindly heart!
Precious the blessings ye impart!
Tho' all unwittingly the while,
Ye make the pining exile smile,
And transient gladness charm his pain,
Who ne'er shall see his home again.
Ye make the stern misanthrope's brow
With tint of passing kindness glow,
And age spring from his elbow-chair
The sport of lightsome glee to share.
Thus did our joyous maid bestow
Her beamy soul on want and woe;
While proud, poor men, in thread-bare suit,
Frisk'd on the floor with lightsome foot,
And from her magic circle chace
The fiends that vex the human race.

XXXV.

And do not, gentle reader, chide,
If I record her harmless pride,
Who sacrificed the hours of sleep,
Some show of better times to keep;
That, tho' as humble soldier dight,
A stripling brother might more trimly stand
With pointed cuff and collar white,
Like one of gentle race mix'd with a homelier band.
And in that band of low degree
Another youth of gentle blood
Was found, who late had cross'd the sea,
The son of virtuous Jerviswood,
Who did as common sentry wait
Before a foreign prince's gate.
And if his eye, oft on the watch,
One look of sweet Griseld might catch,
It was to him no dull nor irksome state.

XXXVI.

And thus some happy years stole by;
Adversity with Virtue mated,
Her state of low obscurity,
Set forth but as deep shadows, fated

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

By Heaven's high will to make the light
Of future skies appear more bright.
And thus, at lowest ebb, man's thoughts are oft elated.
He deems not that the very struggle
Of active virtue, and the war
She bravely holds with present ill,
Sustain'd by hope, does by the skill
Of some conceal'd and happy juggle,
Become itself the good which yet seems distant far.
So, when their lamp of fortune burn'd
With brightest ray, our worthies turn'd,
A recollection, fondly bent,
On these, their happiest years, in humble dwelling spent.

XXXVII.

At length the sky, so long with clouds o'ercast,
Unveil'd its cope of azure hue,
And gave its fair expanse to view;—
The pelting storm of tyranny was past.

XXXVIII.

For he, the Prince of glorious memory,
The Prince, who shall, as passing ages fly,
Be blest; whose wise, enlighten'd, manly mind,
Ev'n when but with a stripling's years combin'd,
Had with unyielding courage oft contended
For Europe's freedom,—for religion, blended
With just, forbearing charity, and all
To man most dear;—now, at the honour'd call
Of Britain's patriot sons, the ocean plow'd
With gallant fleet, encompassed by a crowd
Of soldiers, statesmen, souls of proof, who vow'd
Firm by his side to stand, let good or ill befall.
And with those worthies, 'twas a happy doom,
Right fairly earn'd, embark'd Sir Patrick Hume.
Their fleet, tho' long at sea, and tempest-tost,
In happy hour at last arrived on England's coast.

XXXIX.

Meantime his Dame and our fair Maid
Still on the coast of Holland stay'd,
With anxious and misgiving minds,
List'ning the sound of warring winds:
The ocean rose with deaf'ning roar,
And beat upon the trembling shore,
Whilst breakers dash'd their whit'ning spray
O'er mound and dyke with angry bray,
As if it would engulf again
The land once rescued from its wild domain.

XL.

THE LEGEND OF LADY GRISELD BAILLIE.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Oft on the beach our Damsel stood
Midst groups of many a fearful Wight,
Who viewed, like her, the billowy flood,
Silent and sad, with visage shrunk and white,
While bloated corse and splinter'd mast,
And bale and cask on shore were cast,—
A sad and rueful sight!
But when, at the Almighty will,
The tempest ceas'd, and sea was still,
From Britain's isle glad tidings came,
Received with loud and long acclaim.

XXI.

But joy appears with shrouded head
To those who sorrow o'er the dead;
For, struck with sore disease, while there
They tarried pent in noisome air,
The sister of her heart, whom she
Had watch'd and tended lovingly,
Like blighted branch whose blossoms fade,
That day was in her coffin laid.
She heard the chimed bells loudly ringing,
She heard the carol'd triumph singing,
And clam'rous throng, and shouting boys,
And thought how vain are human joys!

XXII.

Howbeit, her grief at length gives way
To happier thoughts, as dawns the day
When her kind parent and herself depart,
In royal Mary's gentle train,
To join, ere long, the dearest to her heart,
In their own native land again.
They soon their own fair island hail'd,
As on the rippling sea they sail'd.
Ye well may guess their joyful cry,
With up-raised hands and glist'ning eye,
When, rising from the ocean blue,
Her chalky cliffs first met their view,
Whose white verge on th' horizon rear'd,
Like wall of noon-day clouds appear'd.

XXIII.

These ye may guess, for well the show
And outward signs of joy we know.
But cease we on this theme to dwell,
For pen or pencil cannot tell
The thrill of keen delight from which they flow.
Such moments of extatic pleasure
Are fancy's fairest, brightest treasure,
Gilding the scope of duller days

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

With oft-recurring retrospect,
With which right happily she plays.
Ev'n as a moving mirror will reflect
Its glancing rays on shady side
Of holme or glen, when school-boys guide
With skilful hands their mimick sun
To heaven's bright sun opposed; we see
Its borrow'd sheen on fallow dun,
On meadow green, on rock and tree,
On broomy steep, on rippling spring,
On cottage thatch, and every thing.

XLIV.

And Britain's virtuous Queen admired
Our gentle Maid, and in her train
Of ladies will'd her to remain:
What more could young ambition have desired?
But, like the blossom to the bough,
Or wall-flower to the ruin's brow,
Or tendril to the fost'ring stock,
Or sea-weed to the briny rock,
Or misletoe to sacred tree,
Or daisy to the swarded lea,
So truly to her own she clung;—
Nor cared for honours vain, from courtly favour sprung.

XLV.

Nor would she in her native North,
When woo'd by one of wealth and worth,
The neighbour of her happy home,
Tho' by her gentle parents press'd,
And flatter'd, courted and caress'd,
A splendid bride become.
"I may not," said her gentle heart,
"The very thought endure,
"That those so kind should feel the smart
"A daughter's wants might oft impart,
"For Jerviswood is poor.
"But yet, tho' poor, why should I smother
"This dear regard? he'll be my brother,
"And thus thro' life we'll love each other,
"What tho', as changing years flit by,
"Grey grow my head, and dim his eye!
"We'll meekly bear our wayward fate,
"And scorn their petty spite who rate,
"With senseless gibes, the single state,
"Till we are join'd, at last, in heavenly bliss on high."

XLVI.

But Heaven for them decreed a happier lot:
The father of the virtuous youth,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Who died devoted for the truth,
Was not, when better times return'd, forgot:
To the right heir was given his father's land,
And with his lady's love, he won her hand.

XLVII.

Their long-tried faith in honour plighted,
They were a pair by Heaven united,
Whose wedded love, thro' lengthen'd years,
The trace of early fondness wears.
Her heart first guess'd his doubtful choice,
Her ear first caught his distant voice,
And from afar, her wistful eye
Would first his graceful form descry.
Ev'n when he hied him forth to meet
The open air in lawn or street,
She to her casement went,
And after him, with smile so sweet,
Her look of blessing sent.
The heart's affection,—secret thing!
Is like the cleft rock's ceaseless spring,
Which free and independent flows
Of summer rains or winter snows.
The fox-glove from its side may fall,
The heath-bloom fade or moss-flower white,
But still its runlet, bright tho' small,
Will issue sweetly to the light.

XLVIII.

How long an honour'd and a happy pair,
They held their seemly state in mansion fair,
I will not here in chiming verses say,
To tire my reader with a lengthen'd lay;
For tranquil bliss is as a summer day
O'er broad Savanna shining; fair it lies,
And rich the trackless scene, but soon our eyes,
In search of meaner things, turn heavily away.

XLIX.

But no new ties of wedded life,
That bind the mother and the wife,
Her tender, filial heart could change,
Or from its earliest friends estrange.
The child, by strong affection led,
Who brav'd her terror of the dead
To save an outlaw'd parent, still
In age was subject to his will.
She then was seen with matron air,
A Dame of years, with count'nance fair,
Tho' faded, sitting by his easy chair.
A sight that might the heart's best feelings move!

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Behold her seated at her task of love!
Books, papers, pencil, pen, and slate,
And column'd scrolls of ancient date,
Before her lie, on which she looks
With searching glance, and gladly brooks
An irksome task, that else might vex
His temper, or his brain perplex;
While, haply, on the matted floor,
Close nestling at her kirtled feet,
Its lap enrich'd with childish store,
Sits, hush'd and still, a grandchild sweet,
Who looks at times with eye intent,
Full on its grandame's parent bent,
Viewing his deeply-furrowed brow,
And sunken lip and locks of snow,
In serious wonderment.
Well said that grateful sire, I ween!
Still thro' life's many a varied scene,
Griseld our dear and helpful child hath been.

L.

Tho' ever cheerfully possessing
In its full zest the present blessing,
Her grateful heart remembrance cherish'd
Of all to former happiness allied,
Nor in her fost'ring fancy perish'd
Ev'n things inanimate that had supplied
Means of enjoyment once. Maternal love,
Active and warm, which nothing might restrain,
Led her once more, in years advanced, to rove
To distant southern climes, and once again
Her footsteps press'd the Belgian shore,
The town, the very street that was her home of yore.

LI.

Fondly that homely house she eyed,
The door, the windows, every thing
Which to her back-cast thoughts could bring
The scenes of other days.—Then she applied
To knocker bright her thrilling hand,
And begg'd, as strangers in the land,
Admittance from the household Dame,
And thus preferr'd her gentle claim:
"This house was once my happy home,
"Its rooms, its stair, I fain would see;
"Its meanest nook is dear to me,
"Let me and mine within its threshold come."
But no; this might not be!
Their feet might soil her polish'd floor,
The Dame held fast the hostile door,
A Belgian housewife she.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Fear not such harm! we'll doff our shoes:
"Do not our earnest suit refuse!
"We'll give thee thanks, we'll give thee gold;
"Do not kind courtesy with-hold!"

But still it might not be;
The dull unpliant Dame refus'd her gentle plea.

LII.

With her and her good lord, who still
Sweet union held of mated will,
Years pass'd away with lightsome speed;
But ah! their bands of bliss at length were riven;
And she was cloth'd in widow's sable weed,
Submitting to the will of Heaven.
And then a prosp'rous race of children good
And tender, round their noble mother stood.
And she the while, cheer'd with their pious love,
Waited her welcome summons from above.

LIII.

But whatsoe'er the weal or woe
That Heaven across her lot might throw,
Full well her Christian spirit knew
Its path of virtue, straight and true.
When came the shock of evil times, menacing
The peaceful land—when blood and lineage tracing
As the sole claim to Britain's throne, in spite
Of Britain's weal or will, Chiefs of the North,
In warlike muster, led their clansmen forth,
Brave, faithful, strong and toughly nerved,
Would they a better cause had served!
For Stuart's dynasty to fight,
Distress to many a family came,
Who dreaded more th' approaching shame
Of penury's ill-favour'd mien,
Than ev'n the pang of hunger keen.
How softly then her pity flow'd!
How freely then her hand bestow'd!
She did not question their opinion
Of party, kingship, or dominion:
She would not ev'n their folly chide,
But like the sun and showers of heaven,
Which to the false and true are given,
Want and distress reliev'd on either side.

LIV.

But soon, from fear of future change,
The evil took a wider range.
The Northern farmers, spoil'd and bare,
No more could rent or produce spare
To the soil's lords. All were distress'd,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And on our Noble Dame this evil sorely press'd.
Her household numerous, her means with-held;
Shall she her helpless servants now dismiss
To rob or starve, in such a time as this,
Or wrong to others do? But nothing quell'd
Her calm and upright mind.—"Go, summon here
"Those who have serv'd me many a year."
The summons went; each lowly name
Full swiftly to her presence came,
And thus she spoke: "Ye've served me long,
"Pure, as I think, from fraud or wrong,
"And now, my friendly neighbours, true
"And simply I will deal with you.
"The times are shrew'd, my treasures spent,
"My farms have ceas'd to yield me rent;
"And it may chance that rent or grain
"I never shall receive again.
"The dainties which my table fed,
"Will now be changed for daily bread,
"Dealt sparely, and for this I must
"Be debtor to your patient trust,
"If ye consent."—Swift thro' the hall,
With eager haste, spoke one and all.
"No, noble Dame! this must not be!
"With heart as warm and hand as free,
"Still thee and thine we'll serve with pride,
"As when fair fortune graced your side.
"The best of all our stores afford
"Shall daily smoke upon thy board;
"And, should'st thou never clear the score,
"Heaven for thy sake will bless our store."
She bent her head with courtesy,
The big tear swelling in her eye,
And thank'd them all. Yet plain and spare,
She order'd still her household fare,
Till fortune's better dye was cast,
And adverse times were past.

LV.

Good, tender, gen'rous, firm and sage,
Thro' grief and gladness, shade and sheen,
As fortune changed life's motley scene,
Thus pass'd she on to rev'rend age.
And when the heavenly summons came,
Her spirit from its mortal frame
And weight of mortal cares to free,
It was a blessed sight to see,
The parting saint her state of honour keeping
In gifted dauntless faith, whilst round her, weeping,
Her children's children mourn'd on bended knee.

LVI.

In London's fair imperial town
 She laid her earthly burthen down.
 In Mellerstain, her northern home,
 Was rais'd for her a graven tomb
 Which gives to other days her modest, just renown.

And now, ye polish'd fair of modern times,
 If such indeed will listen to my rhymes,
 What think ye of her simple, modest worth,
 Whom I have faintly tried to shadow forth?
 How vain the thought! as if ye stood in need
 For pattern ladies in dull books to read.
 Will she such antiquated virtues prize,
 Who with superb Signoras proudly vies,
 Trilling before the dear admiring crowd
 With out—stretch'd straining throat, bravuras loud,
 Her high—heav'd breast press'd hard, as if to boast
 The inward pain such mighty efforts cost:
 Or on the white—chalk'd floor, at midnight hour,
 Her head with many a flaunting full—blown flower
 And bartisan of braided locks enlarged,
 Her flimsy gown with twenty flounces charged,
 Wheels gaily round the room on pointed toe,
 Softly supported by some *dandy* beau:—
 Will she, forsooth! or any belle of spirit,
 Regard such old, forgotten, homely merit?
 Or she, whose cultur'd, high—strain'd talents soar
 Thro' all th' ambitious range of letter'd lore
 With soul enthusiastic, fondly smitten
 With all that e'er in classic page was written,
 And whilst her wit in critic task engages,
 The technic praise of all prais'd things outrages;
 Whose finger, white and small, with ink—stain tipt,
 Still scorns with vulgar thimble to be clipt;
 Who doth with proud pretence her claims advance
 To philosophic, honour'd ignorance
 Of all, that, in divided occupation,
 Gives the base stamp of female degradation;
 Protests she knows not colour, stripe nor shade,
 Nor of what stuff her flowing robe is made,
 But wears, from petty, friv'lous fancies free,
 Whatever careful Betty may decree;
 As certes, well she may, for Betty's skill
 Leaves her in purple, furbelow, or frill,
 No whit behind the very costliest fair
 That woos with daily pains the public stare;
 Who seems almost asham'd to be a woman,
 And yet the palm of parts will yield to no man,
 But holds on battle—ground eternal wrangling,
 The plainest case in mazy words entangling:—

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Will she, I trow, or any kirtled sage,
Admire the subject of my artless page?
And yet there be of British fair, I know,
Who to this legend will some favour show
From kindred sympathy; whose life proceeds
In one unwearied course of gentle deeds,
And pass untainted thro' the earthly throng,
Like souls that to some better world belong.
Nor will I think, as sullen cynics do,
Still lib'ling present times, their number few.
Yea, leagued for good they act, a virtuous band,
The young, the rich, the loveliest of the land,
Who clothe the naked, and each passing week,
The wretched poor in their sad dwellings seek,
Who, cheer'd and grateful, feebly press and bless
The hands which princes might be proud to kiss:—
Such will regard my tale, and give to fame
A generous helpful Maid,—a good and noble Dame.

LORD JOHN OF THE EAST.

THE fires blazed bright till deep midnight,
And the guests sat in the hall,
And the Lord of the feast, Lord John of the East,
Was the merriest of them all.

His dark–grey eye, that wont so sly
Beneath his helm to scowl,
Flash'd keenly bright, like a new–wak'd sprite,
As pass'd the circling bowl.

In laughter light, or jocund lay,
That voice was heard, whose sound,
Stern, loud, and deep, in battle–fray
Did foe–men fierce astound;

And stretch'd so balm, like lady's palm,
To every jester near,
That hand which thro' a prostrate foe
Oft thrust the ruthless spear.

The gallants sang, and the goblets rang,
And they revel'd in careless state,
Till a thund'ring sound, that shook the ground,
Was heard at the castle gate.

"Who knocks without, so loud and stout?
"Some wand'ring knight, I ween,
"Who from afar, like a guiding star,
"Our blazing hall hath seen.

"If a stranger it be of high degree,
"(No churl durst make such din,)
"Step forth amain, my pages twain,
"And soothly ask him in.

"Tell him our cheer is the forest deer,
"Our bowl is mantling high,
"And the Lord of the feast is John of the East,
"Who welcomes him courteously."

The pages twain return'd again,
And a wild, scared look had they;
"Why look ye so?—is it friend or foe?"
Did the angry Baron say.

"A stately knight without doth wait,
"But further he will not hie,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Till the Baron himself shall come to the gate,
"And ask him courteously."—

"By my mother's shroud, he is full proud!
"What earthly man is he?"
"I know not, in truth," quoth the trembling youth,
"If earthly man it be.

"In Raveller's plight, he is bedight,
"With a vest of the crim'sy meet;
"But his mantle behind, that streams on the wind,
"Is a corse's bloody sheet."

"Out, paltry child! thy wits are wild,
"Thy comrade will tell me true:
"Say plainly, then, what hast thou seen
"Or dearly shalt thou rue."

Faint spoke the second page with fear,
And bent him on his knee,
"Were I on your father's sword to swear,
"The same it appear'd to me."

Then dark, dark lower'd the Baron's eye,
And his red cheek changed to wan;
For again at the gate more furiously,
The thund'ring din began.

"And is there ne'er of my vassals here,
"Of high or low degree,
"That will unto this stranger go,—
"Will go for the love of me?"

Then spoke and said, fierce Donald the Red,—
(A fearless man was he,)
"Yes; I will straight to the castle gate,
"Lord John, for the love of thee."

With heart full stout, he hied him out,
Whilst silent all remain:
Nor moved a tongue those gallants among,
Till Donald return'd again.

"O speak," said his Lord, "by thy hopes of grace,
"What stranger must we hail?"
But the haggard look of Donald's face
Made his falt'ring words to fail.

"It is a knight in some foreign guise,
"His like did I never behold;
"For the stony look of his beamless eyes

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Made my very life—blood cold.

"I did him greet in fashion meet,
"And bade him your feast partake,
"But the voice that spoke, when he silence broke,
"Made the earth beneath me quake.

"O such a tone did tongue ne'er own
"That dwelt in mortal head;—
"It is like a sound from the hollow ground,—
"Like the voice of the coffin'd dead.

"I bade him to your social board,
"But in he will not hie,
"Until at the gate this castle's Lord
"Shall entreat him courteously.

"And he stretch'd him the while with a ghastly smile,
"And sternly bade me say,
" 'Twas no depute's task your guest to ask
"To the feast of the woody bay."

Pale grew the Baron, and faintly said,
As he heaved his breath with pain,
"From such a feast as there was spread,
"Do any return again?"

"I bade my guest to a bloody feast,
"Where the death's wound was his fare,
"And the isle's bright maid, who my love betray'd,
"She tore her raven hair.

"The sea—fowl screams, and the watch—tower gleams,
"And the deaf'ning billows roar,
"Where he unblest was put to rest,
"On a wild and distant shore.

"Do the hollow grave and the whelming wave
"Give up their dead again?
"Doth the surgy waste waft o'er its breast
"The spirits of the slain?"

But his loosen'd limbs shook fast, and pour'd
The big drops from his brow,
As louder still the third time roar'd
The thund'ring gate below.

"O rouse thee, Baron, for manhood's worth!
"Let good or ill befall,
"Thou must to the stranger knight go forth,
"And ask him to your hall."

LORD JOHN OF THE EAST.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Rouse thy bold breast," said each eager guest,
"What boots it shrinking so?
"Be it fiend or sprite, or murder'd knight,
"In God's name thou must go.

"Why should'st thou fear? dost thou not wear
"A gift from the great Glendower,
"Sandals blest by a holy priest,
"O'er which nought ill hath power."

All ghastly pale did the Baron quail,
As he turn'd him to the door,
And his sandals blest, by a holy priests
Sound feebly on the floor.

Then back to the hall and his merry mates all,
He cast his parting eye.
"God send thee amain, safe back again!"
He heav'd a heavy sigh.

Then listen'd they, on the lengthen'd way,
To his faint and less'ning tread,
And, when that was past, to the wailing blast,
That wail'd as for the dead.

But wilder it grew, and stronger it blew,
And it rose with an elrich sound,
Till the lofty keep on its rocky steep,
Fell hurling to the ground.

Each fearful eye then glanced on high,
To the lofty-window'd wall,
When a fiery trace of the Baron's face
Thro' the casements shone on all.

But the vision'd glare pass'd thro' the air,
And the raging tempest ceast,
And never more, on sea or shore,
Was seen Lord John of the East.

The sandals, blest by a holy priest,
Lay unscath'd on the swarded green,
But never again, on land or main,
Lord John of the East was seen.

**MALCOM'S HEIR:
A TALE OF WONDER.**

O **GO** not by Duntorloch's Walls
When the moon is in the wane,
And cross not o'er Duntorloch's Bridge,
The farther bank to gain.

For there the Lady of the Stream
In dripping robes you'll spy,
A-singing to her pale wan babe,
An elrich lullaby.

And stop not at the house of Merne,
On the eve of good Saint John,
For then the Swath'd Knight walks his rounds
With many a heavy moan.

All swath'd is he in coffin weeds,
And a wound is in his breast,
And he points still to the gloomy vault,
Where they say his corse doth rest.

But pass not near Glencromar's Tower,
Tho' the sun shine e'er so bright;
More dreaded is that in the noon of day,
Than these in the noon of night.

The night-shade rank grows in the court,
And snakes coil in the wall,
And bats lodge in the rifted spire,
And owls in the murky hall.

On it there shines no cheerful light,
But the deep-red setting sun
Gleams bloody red on its battlements
When day's fair course is run.

And fearfully in night's pale beams,
When the moon peers o'er the wood,
Its shadow grim stretch'd o'er the ground
Lies blackening many a rood.

No sweet bird's chirping there is heard,
No herd-boy's horn doth blow;
But the owlet hoots and the pent blast sobs,
And loud croaks the carrion-crow.

No marvel! for within its walls

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Was done the deed unblest,
And in its noisome vaults the bones
Of a father's murderer rest.

He laid his father in the tomb
With deep and solemn woe,
As rumour tells, but righteous Heaven
Would not be mocked so.

There rest his bones in the mouldering earth,
By lord and by carle forgot;
But the foul, fell spirit that in them dwelt,
Rest hath it none, I wot!

"Another night," quoth Malcom's heir,
As he turn'd him fiercely round,
And closely clench'd his ireful hand,
And stamp'd upon the ground:

"Another night within your walls
"I will not lay my head,
"Tho' the clouds of heaven my roof should be,
"And the cold dank earth my bed."

"Your younger son has now your love,
"And my stepdame false your ear;
"And his are your hawks, and his are your hounds,
"And his your dark-brown deer.

"To him you have given your noble steed,
"As fleet as the passing wind;
"But me have you shamed before my friends,
"Like the son of a base-born hind:"

Then answer'd him the white-hair'd chief,
Dim was his tearful eye,
"Proud son, thy anger is all too keen,
"Thy spirit is all too high.

"Yet rest this night beneath my roof,
"The wind blows cold and shrill,
"With to-morrow's dawn, if it so must be,
"E'en follow thy wayward will."

But nothing moved was Malcom's heir,
And never a word did he say,
But cursed his father in his heart,
And sternly strode away.

And his coal-black steed he mounted straight,
As twilight gather'd round,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

And at his feet with eager speed
Ran Swain, his faithful hound.

Loud rose the blast, yet ne'ertheless
With furious speed rode he,
Till night, like the gloom of a cavern'd mine,
Had closed o'er tower and tree.

Loud rose the blast, thick fell the rain,
Keen flash'd the light'ning red,
And loud the awful thunder roar'd
O'er his unshelter'd head.

At length full close before him shot
A flash of sheeted light,
And the high-arch'd gate of Glencromar's tower,
Glared on his dazzled sight.

His steed stood still, nor step would move,
Up look'd his wistful Swain,
And wagg'd his tail, and feebly whined;
He lighted down amain.

Thro' porch and court he pass'd, and still
His list'ning ear he bow'd,
Till beneath the hoofs of his trampling steed
The paved hall echoed loud.

And other echoes answer gave
From arches far and grand;
Close to his horse and his faithful dog
He took his fearful stand.

The night-birds shriek'd from the creviced roof,
And the fitful blast sung shrill,
But ere the mid-watch of the night,
Were all things hush'd and still.

But in the mid-watch of the night,
When hush'd was every sound,
Faint, doleful music struck his ear,
As if waked from the hollow ground.

And loud and louder still it grew,
And upward still it wore,
Till it seem'd at the end of the farthest aisle
To enter the eastern door.

O! never did music of mortal make
Such dismal sounds contain;
A horrid elrich dirge it seem'd,—

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

A wild unearthly strain.

The yell of pain, and the wail of woe,
And the short shrill shriek of fear,
Thro' the winnowing sound of a furnace flame,
Confusedly struck his ear.

And the serpent's hiss, and the tyger's growl,
And the famish'd vulture's cry,
Were mix'd at times, as with measured skill,
In this horrid harmony.

Up brizzled the locks of Malcom's heir,
And his heart it quickly beat,
And his trembling steed shook under his hand,
And Swain cower'd close to his feet.

When, lo! a faint light thro' the porch
Still strong and stronger grew,
And shed o'er the walls and the lofty roof
Its wan and dismal hue.

And slowly ent'ring then appear'd,
Approaching with soundless tread,
A funeral band in dark array,
As in honour of the dead.

The first that walk'd were torchmen ten,
To lighten their gloomy road,
And each wore the face of an angry fiend,
And on cloven goats' feet trod.

And the next that walk'd as mourners meet,
Were murderers twain and twain,
With bloody hands and surtout red,
Befoul'd with many a stain.

Each with a cut-cord round his neck,
And red-strain'd, starting eyen,
Show'd that upon the gibbet tree,
His earthly end had been.

And after these, in solemn state,
There came an open bier,
Borne on black, shapeless, rampant forms,
That did but half appear.

And on that bier a corse was laid,
As corse could never lie,
That did by decent hands composed
In nature's struggles die,

MALCOM'S HEIR: A TALE OF WONDER.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Nor stretch'd, nor swath'd, but every limb
In strong distortion lay,
As in the throes of a violent death
Is fix'd the lifeless clay.

And in its breast was a broken knife,
With the black blood bolter'd round;
And its face was the face of an aged man,
With the filleted locks unbound.

Its features were fixed in horrid strength,
And the glaze of its half-closed eye,
A last dread parting look express'd,
Of woe and agony.

But, oh! the horrid form to trace,
That followed it close behind,
In fashion of the chief-mourner,
What words shall minstrel find?

In his lifted hand, with straining grasp,
A broken knife he press'd,
The other half of the cursed blade
Was that in the corse's breast.

And in his blasted, horrid face,
Full strongly mark'd, I ween,
The features of the aged corse
In life's full prime were seen.

Aye, gnash thy teeth and tear thy hair,
And roll thine eye-balls wild,
Thou horrible accursed son,
With a father's blood defiled!

Back from the bier with strong recoil,
Still onward as they go,
Doth he in vain his harrow'd head,
And writhing body throw.

For, closing round, a band of fiends
Full fiercely with him deal,
And force him o'er the bier to bend,
With their fangs of red-hot steel.

Still on they moved, and stopp'd at length,
In the midst of the trembling hall,
When the dismal dirge, from its loudest pitch,
Sunk to a dying fall.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

But what of horror next ensued,
No mortal tongue can tell,
For the thrill'd life paus'd in Malcom's heir,
In a death-like trance he fell.

The morning rose with cheerful light,
On the country far and near,
But neither in country, tower, nor town,
Could they find Sir Malcom's heir.

They sought him east, they sought him west,
O'er hill and vale they ran,
And met him at last on the blasted heath,
A crazed and wretched man.

He will to no one utter his tale,
But the priest of St. Cuthbert's cell
And aye, when the midnight warning sounds,
He hastens his beads to tell.

**THE ELDEN TREE:
AN ANCIENT BALLAD.**

A **FEAST** was spread in the Baron's hall,
And loud was the merry sound,
As minstrels played at lady's call,
And the cup went sparkling round.

For gentle dames sat there, I trow,
By men of mickle might,
And many a chief with dark-red brow,
And many a burly knight.

Each had fought in war's grim ranks,
And some on the surgy sea,
And some on Jordan's sacred banks,
For the cause of Christentie.

But who thinks now of blood or strife,
Or Moorish or Paynim foe?
Their eyes beam bright with social life,
And their hearts with kindness glow.

"Gramercie Chieftain, on thy tale!
"It smacks of thy merry mood."—
"Aye, Monks are sly, and women frail,
"Since rock and mountain stood."

"Fye, fye! sir knight, thy tongue is keen,
" 'Tis sharper than thy steel."—
"So, gentle lady, are thine eyen,
"As we poor lovers feel."

"Come, pledge me well, my lady gay,
"Come, pledge me, noble frere;
"Each cheerful mate on such a day,
"Is friend or mistress dear."

And louder still comes jeer and boast,
As the flaggons faster pour,
Till song, and tale, and laugh are lost,
In a wildly mingled roar.

Aye, certes, 'tis an hour of glee,
For the Baron himself doth smile,
And nods his head right cheerily,
And quaffs his cup the while.

What recks he now of midnight fear,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

Or the night wind's dismal moan?
As it tosses the boughs of that Elden Tree,
Which he thinketh so oft upon?

Long years have past since a deed was done,
By its doer only seen,
And there lives not a man beneath the sun,
Who wotteth that deed hath been.

So gay was he, so gay were all,
They mark'd not the growing gloom;
Nor wist they how the dark'ning hall,
Lower'd like the close of doom.

Dull grew the goblet's sheen, and grim
The features of every guest,
And colourless banners aloft hung dim,
Like the clouds of the drizzly west.

Hath time pass'd then so swift of pace?
Is this the twilight grey?
A flash of light pass'd thro' the place,
Like the glaring noon of day.

Fierce glanced the momentary blaze
O'er all the gallant train,
And each visage pale, with dazzled gaze,
Was seen and lost again.

And the thunder's rolling peal, from far,
Then on and onward drew,
And varied its sound like the broil of war,
And loud and louder grew.

Still glares the lightning blue and pale,
And roars th' astounding din;
And rattle the windows with bickering hail,
And the rafters ring within.

And cowering hounds the board beneath
Are howling with piteous moan,
While lords and dames sit still as death,
And words are utter'd none.

At length in the waning tempest's fall,
As light from the welkin broke,
A frighten'd man rush'd thro' the hall,
And words to the Baron spoke,

"The thunder hath stricken your tree so fair,
"Its roots on green-sward lie,"—

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"What tree?"—"The Elden planted there
"Some thirty years gone by."

"And wherefore starest thou on me so,
"With a face so ghastly wild?"—
"White bones are found in the mould below,
"Like the bones of a stripling child."

Pale he became as the shrouded dead,
And his eye-balls fix'd as stone;
And down on his bosom dropp'd his head,
And he utter'd a stifled groan.

Then from the board, each guest amazed,
Sprang up, and curiously
Upon his sudden misery gazed,
And wonder'd what might be.

Out spoke the ancient seneschal,
"I pray ye stand apart,
"Both gentle dames and nobles all,
"This grief is at his heart.

"Go, call St. Cuthbert's monk with speed,
"And let him be quickly shriven,
"And fetch ye a leech for his body's need,
"To dight him for earth or heaven."

"No, fetch me a priest," the Baron said,
In a voice that seem'd utter'd with pain;
And he shudder'd and shrunk, as he faintly bade
His noble guests remain.

"Heaven's eye each secret deed doth scan,
"Heaven's justice all should fear:
"What I confess to the holy man,
"Both Heaven and you shall hear."

And soon St. Cuthbert's monk stood by
With visage sad but sweet,
And cast on the Baron a piteous eye,
And the Baron knelt low at his feet.

"O Father! I have done a deed
"Which God alone did know;
"A brother's blood these hands have shed,
"With many a fiend-like blow:

"For fiends lent strength like a powerful charm,
"And my youthful breast impell'd,
"And I laugh'd to see beneath my arm

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"The sickly stripling quell'd.

"A mattock from its pit I took,
"Dug deep for the Elden Tree,
"And I tempted the youth therein to look
"Some curious sight to see.

"The woodmen to their meal were gone,
"And ere they return'd again,
"I had planted that tree with my strength alone,
"O'er the body of the slain.

"Ah! gladly smiled my Father then,
"And seldom he smiled on me,
"When he heard that my skill, like the skill of men,
"Had planted the Elden Tree.

"But where was his eldest son so dear,
"Who nearest his heart had been?
"They sought him far, they sought him near,
"But the boy no more was seen.

"And thus his life and lands he lost,
"And his Father's love beside;
"The thought that ever rankled most
"In this heart of secret pride.

"Ah! could the partial parent wot
"The cruel pang he gives,
"To the child neglected and forgot,
"Who under his cold eye lives!

"His elder rights did my envy move,
"These lands and their princely hall;
"But it was our Father's partial love,
"I envy'd him most of all.

"Now thirty years have o'er me past,
"And, to the eye of man,
"My lot was with the happy cast,
"My heart it could not scan.

"Oh! I have heard in the dead of night,
"My murther'd brother's groan,
"And shudder'd, as the pale moon-light
"On the mangled body shone.

"My very miners, pent in gloom,
"Whose toil my coffers stored,
"And cursed belike their cheerless doom,
"Were happier than their lord.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"O holy man! my tale is told
"With pain, with tears, with shame;
"May penance hard, may alms of gold,
"Some ghostly favour claim?

"The knotted scourge shall drink my blood,
"The earth my bed shall be,
"And bitter tears my daily food,
"To earn Heaven's grace for me."

Now, where that rueful deed was done,
Endow'd with rights and lands,
Its sharp spires bright'ning in the sun,
A stately Abbey stands.

And the meekest monk, whose life is there
Still spent on bended knee,
Is he who built that Abbey fair,
And planted the Elden Tree.

THE GHOST OF FADON.

ON Gask's deserted ancient hall
Was twilight closing fast,
And, in its dismal shadows, all
Seem'd lofty, void, and vast.

All sounds of life, now reft and bare,
From its walls had pass'd away,
But the stir of small birds shelter'd there,
Dull owl, or clatt'ring jay.

Loop-hole and window, dimly seen,
With faint light passing through,
Grew dimmer still, and the dreary scene
Was fading from the view:

When the trampling sound of banded men
Came from the court without;
Words of debate and call, and then
A loud and angry shout.

But mingled echoes from within
A mimick mock'ry made,
And the bursting door, with furious din,
On jarring hinges bray'd

An eager band, press'd rear on van,
Rush'd in with clam'rous sound,
And their chief, the goodliest, bravest man,
That e'er trode Scottish ground.

Then spoke forthwith that leader bold,
"We war with wayward fate:
"These walls are bare, the hearth is cold,
"And all is desolate.

"With fast unbroke and thirst unslaked,
"Must we on the hard ground sleep?
"Or, like ghosts from vaulted charnel waked
"Our cheerless vigil keep?"

"Hard hap this day in bloody field,
"Ye bravely have sustain'd,
"And for your pains this dismal bield,
"And empty board have gain'd.

"Hie, Malcom, to that varlet's steed,
"And search if yet remain

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"Some homely store, but good at need,
"Spent nature to sustain.

"Cheer up, my friends! still, heart in hand,
"Tho' few and spent we be,
"We are the pith of our native land,
"And she shall still be free.

"Cheer up! tho' scant and coarse our meal,
"In this our sad retreat,
"We'll fill our horn to Scotland's weal,
"And that will make it sweet."

Then all, full cheerly, as they could,
Their willing service lent,
Some broke the boughs, some heap'd the wood,
Some struck the sparkling flint.

And a fire they kindled speedily,
Where the hall's last fire had been,
And pavement, walls, and rafters high,
In the rising blaze were seen.

Red gleam on each tall buttress pour'd,
The lengthen'd hall along,
And tall and black behind them lower'd
Their shadows deep and strong.

The ceiling, ribb'd with massy oak,
From bick'ring flames below,
As light and shadow o'er it broke,
Seem'd wav'ring to and fro.

Their scanty meal was on the ground,
Spread by the friendly light,
And they made the brown-horn circle round,
As cheerly as they might.

Some talk of horses, weapons, mail,
Some of their late defeat,
By treach'ry caused, and many a tale
Of Southron spy's retreat.

"Aye, well," says one, "my sinking heart
"Did some disaster bode,
"When faithless Fadon's wily art
"Beguiled us from the road."

"But well repaid by Providence
"Are such false deeds we see;
"He's had his rightful recompence,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

"And cursed let him be."

"Oh! curse him not! I needs must rue
"That stroke so rashly given:
"If he to us were false or true,
"Is known to righteous Heaven."

So spoke their chief, then silent all
Remain'd in sombre mood,
Till they heard a bugle's larum call
Sound distant thro' the wood.

"Rouse ye, my friends!" the chieftain said,
"That blast, from friend or foe,
"Comes from the west; thro' forest shade
"With wary caution go.

"And bring me tidings. Speed ye well!"
Forth three bold warriors past.
Then from the east with fuller swell
Was heard the bugle blast.

Out past three warriors more; then shrill,
The horn blew from the north,
And other eager warriors still,
As banded scouts, went forth.

Till from their chief each war-mate good
Had to the forest gone,
And he, who fear'd not flesh and blood,
Stood by the fire alone.

He stood, wrapp'd in a musing dream,
Nor rais'd his drooping head,
Till a sudden, alter'd, paly gleam
On all around was spread.

Such dull, diminish'd, sombre sheen
From moon eclips'd, by swain
Belated, or lone herd is seen
O'er-mantling hill and plain.

Then to the fitful fire he turn'd,
Which higher and brighter grew,
Till the flame like a baleful meteor burn'd
Of clear sulphureous blue.

Then wist the chief, some soul unblest,
Or spirit of power was near;
And his eyes adown the hall he cast,
Yet naught did there appear.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

But he felt a strange unearthly breath
Upon the chill air borne,
And he heard at the gate, like a blast of wrath,
The sound of Fadon's horn.

Owls, bats, and swallows, flutt'ring, out
From hole and crevice flew,
Circling the lofty roof about,
As loud and long it blew.

His noble hound sprang from his lair,
The midnight rouse to greet,
Then, like a timid trembling hare,
Couch'd at his master's feet.

Between his legs his drooping tail,
Like dog of vulgar race,
He hid, and with strange piteous wail,
Look'd in his master's face.

The porch seem'd void, but vapour dim
Soon fill'd the lowering room,
Then was he aware of a figure grim,
Approaching thro' the gloom.

And striding as it onward came,
The vapour wore away;
Till it stood distinctly by the flame,
Like a form in the noon of day.

Well Wallace knew that form, that head,
That throat unbraced and bare,
Mark'd deep with streaming circlet red,
And he utter'd a rapid prayer.

But when the spectre rais'd its arm,
And brandish'd its glitt'ring blade,
That moment broke fear's chilly charm
On noble Wallace laid.

The threaten'd combat was to him
Relief; with weapon bare,
He rush'd upon the warrior grim,
But his sword shore empty air.

Then the spectre smiled with a ghastly grin,
And its warrior-semblance fled,
And its' features grew stony, fix'd, and thin,
Like the face of the stiffen'd dead.

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

The head a further moment crown'd
The body's stately wreck,
Shook hideously, and to the ground
Dropt from the bolter'd neck.

Back shrunk the noble chief aghast,
And longer tarried not,
But quickly to the portal past,
To shun the horrid spot.

But in the portal, stiff and tall,
The apparition stood,
And Wallace turn'd and cross'd the hall,
Where entrance to the wood.

By other door he hoped to snatch,
Whose pent arch darkly lower'd,
But there, like sentry on his watch,
The dreadful phantom tower'd.

Then up the ruin'd stairs so steep,
He ran with panting breath,
And from a window—desp'rate leap!
Sprang to the court beneath.

O'er wall and ditch he quickly got,
Thro' brake and bushy stream,
When suddenly thro' darkness shot
A red and lurid gleam.

He look'd behind, and that lurid light
Forth from the castle came;
Within its circuit thro' the night
Appear'd an elrich flame.

Red glow'd each window, slit, and door,
Like mouths of furnace hot,
And tint of deepest blackness wore
The walls and steepy moat.

But soon it rose with bright'ning power,
Till bush and ivy green,
And wall-flower, fringing breach and tower,
Distinctly might be seen.

Then a spreading blaze with eddying sweep,
Its spiral surges rear'd,
And then aloft on the stately keep,
Fadon's Ghost appear'd.

A burning rafter, blazing bright,

Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters

It wielded in its hand;
And its warrior-form, of human height,
Dilated grew, and grand.

Coped by a curling tawny cloud,
With tints sulphureous blent,
It rose with burst of thunder loud,
And up the welkin went.

High, high it rose with wid'ning glare,
Sent far o'er land and main,
And shot into the lofty air,
And all was dark again.

A spell of horror lapt him round,
Chill'd, motionless, amazed,
His very pulse of life was bound
As on black night he gazed.

Till harness'd warriors' heavy tread,
From echoing dell arose;
"Thank God!" with utter'd voice, he said,
"For here come living foes."

With kindling soul that brand he drew
Which boldest Southron fears,
But soon the friendly call he knew,
Of his gallant brave compeers.

With haste each wond'rous tale was told,
How still, in vain pursuit,
They follow'd the horn thro' wood and wold,
And Wallace alone was mute.

Day rose; but silent, sad, and pale,
Stood the bravest of Scottish race;
And each warrior's heart began to quail,
When he look'd in his leader's face.