

THE

27.

BUCHANSHIRE

TRAGEDY,

OR,

SIR JAMES THE ROSS.



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SIR JAMES THE ROSS,

OF all the Scottish northern chiefs,
 of high and warlike name,
 The bravest was sir James the Ross,
 a knight of meikle fame:
 His growth was like the tufted fir,
 that crowns the mountain's brow,
 And waving o'er his shoulders broad,
 his locks of yellow flew.

The chieftan of the brave clan Ross,
 a firm undaunted band,
 Five hundred warriors drew the sword,
 beneath his high command.
 In bloody fight thrice had he stood,
 against the English keen,
 E'er two and twenty opening springs,
 his blooming youth had seen.

The fair Matilda dear he lov'd,
 a maid of Beauty rare;
 Even Marg'ret on the Scottish throne,
 was never half so fair.
 Lang had he woo'd lang she refus'd,
 with seeming scorn and pride;
 Yet oft her eyes confess'd the love,
 her faithful tongue deny'd.

At last pleas'd with his well try'd faith,
 a'low'd his tender claim;
 She vow'd to him her virgin heart,
 and giv'd an equal flame,

Her father, Buchan's cruel lord,
 her passion disaprov'd,
 And bade her wed Sir John the Græme,
 and leave the youth she lov'd.

At night they met as they were wont,
 within a shady wood,
 Where on a bank beside a burn,
 a blooming saugh tree stood.
 Conceal'd among the under-wood,
 the crafty Donald lay,
 (The brother of Sir John the Græme)
 to hear what they might say.

When thus the maid began, My sire
 your passion disaproves,
 And bids me wed Sir John the Græme,
 so here must end our loves.
 My father's will must be obey'd,
 nought boots me to withstand,
 Some fairer maid in beauty's bloom,
 must bless thee with her hand.

Matilda soon shall be forgot,
 and from thy mind defac'd;
 But may that happiness be thine,
 which I can never taste.
 What do I hear! Is this thy vow?
 Sir James the Ross reply'd;
 And will Matilda wed the Græme,
 ho' sworn to be my bride?

His sword shall sooner pierce my heart,
 than reave me of thy charms:
 Then clasp'd her to his beating breast,
 fast lock'd into his arms:

I spoke to try thy love she said,
 I'll ne'er wed man but thee,
 My grave shall be my bridal bed,
 e'er Græme my husband be,

Take then dear youth, this faithful kiss,
 in witness of my troth,
 And every plague become my lot,
 That day I break my oath,
 They parted thus the sun was set,
 up hasty Donald flies,
 And turn thee turn thee, beardless youth,
 he loud insulting cries.

Soon turn'd about the fearless chief,
 and soon his sword he drew,
 For Donald's blade before his breast,
 had pierc'd his tattans through.
 This for my brother's slighted love,
 his wrongs sit on me arn :
 Three paces back the youth retir'd,
 to save himself from harm.

Returning swift, his hand he rear'd,
 from Donald's head above,
 And thro' the brains and crâsling bones,
 his sharp edg'd weapon drove.
 stagger'd, reel'd, then tumbled down,
 a lump of breathless clay
 So fall my foes, quoth valiant Ross,
 and stately strode away.

Through the green wood he quickly by'd,
 unto Lord Buchan's hall,
 And at Matilda's window stood,
 and thus began to call ;

Art thou asleep Matilda dear?
 awake, my love, awake!
 Thy luckless lover calls to thee,
 a long farewell to take.

For I have slain fierce Donald Græme,
 his blood is on my sword,
 And distant are my faithful men,
 nor can assist their lord,
 To Sky I'll now erect my way,
 where my two brothers bide,
 And raise the valiant of the isles,
 to combat on my side.

O do not so, the maid replies,
 with me till morning stay.
 For dark and dreary is the night,
 and dangerous is the way,
 All night I'll watch you in the park,
 my faithful page I'll send,
 To run and raise the Ross's clan,
 their master to defend,

Beneath a bush he laid him down,
 and wrapt him in his plaid,
 While trembling for her lover's fate,
 at distance stood the maid.
 Swift ran the page o'er hill and dale,
 till in a lowly vale,
 He met the furious sir John Græme,
 with twenty of his men.

Where goest thou little page, he said,
 so late who didst he send?
 I go to raise the Ross's clan,
 their master to defend:

For he has slain fierce Donald Græme,
 his blood is on his sword,
 And far, far distant are his men,
 for to assist their lord.

And has he slain my brother dear?
 the furious Græme replies:
 Dishonour blast my name but he
 by me ere morning dies.

Tell me where is Sir James the Ross,
 I will thee well reward;
 He sleeps into Lord Buchan's park,
 Matilda is his guard.

They spurr'd their steeds in furious mood,
 and scour'd along the ley,
 They reach'd Lord Buchan's lofty tow'rs,
 by dawning of the day.

Matilda stood without the gate,
 to whom thus Græme did say,
 Saw ye Sir James the Ross last night,
 or did he pass this way?

Last day at noon, Matilda said,
 Sir James the Ross pass'd by,
 He furiously prick'd his swift steed,
 and onward fast did lie:

By this time he's at Edinburgh,
 if horse and man hold good,
 Your page then lied, who said he was,
 now sleeping in the wood.

She wrung her hands, and tore her hair,
 brave Ross thou art betray'd,
 And ruin'd by the means she cried,
 from whence I hop'd thine aid.

By this the the valiant Knight awoke,
 the virgin's shrieks he heard,
 And up he rose and drew his sword,
 when the fierce band appear'd.

Your sword last night my brother slew,
 his blood yet dims its shine,
 But ere the rising of the sun,
 your blood shall reek on mine.

You word it well the chief reply'd,
 but deeds approve the man;
 Set by your men, and hand to hand,
 we'll try what valour can.

Oft boasting hides a coward's heart,
 my weighty sword you tear,
 Which shone in front in Flodden field,
 when yours kept in the rear.
 With dauntless steps he forward strode,
 and dar'd him to the fight
 The Graeme gave back, he fear'd his arm,
 for well he knew it's might.

Four of his men' the bravest fear,
 sunk down beneath his sword,
 But still he scorn'd this base revenge,
 and fought their haughty lord.
 Behind him basely came the Graeme,
 and wound him in the side;
 Out spouting came the purple tide,
 and all his tartans dy'd.

But of his sword ne'er quite the grip,
 Nor dropt he to the ground,
 Till through his enemy's heart his steel
 had forc'd a mortal wound:

Grave like a tree, by wind o'erthrown,
 fell breathless on the clay,
 And down beside him sunk the Rofs,
 who faint and dying lay.

The sad Matilda saw him fall ;
 O spare his life she cried ;
 Lord Buchan's daughter craves his life,
 let her not be deny'd.

Her well known voice the hero heard,
 and rais'd his death clos'd eyes,
 Then fix'd them on the weeping maid,
 and weakly thus replies :

In vain Matilda begs a life,
 by death's arrest deny'd,
 My race is run. Adieu my love,
 then clos'd his eyes, and d. 'd.
 The sword yet warm from his left side,
 with frantic hand she drew,
 I come, sir James the Rofs, she cries,
 I come to follow you.

She lean'd the hilt against the ground,
 and bar'd her snowy breast,
 Then fell upon her lover's face,
 and sunk to endless rest.
 Thus be this fatal tragedy,
 let parent warning take
 And sever ensue their children dear
 their sacred vows to break.