

# SIR JAMES THE ROSE:

AN OLD

Scottish Tragic Ballad,

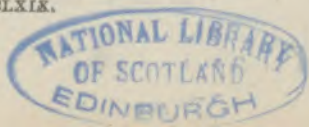
BY

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## Sir James the Rose.



Of all the Scottish northern chiefs  
Of high and warlike name,  
The bravest was Sir James the Rose,  
A knight of meikle fame.

His growth was like a youthfull oak,  
That crowns the mountain's brow ;  
And waving o'er his shoulders broad  
His locks of yellow flew.

Wide were his fields, his herds were large,  
And large his flocks of sheep,  
And numerous were his shaggy goats  
Upon the mountain steep.

The chieftain of the good clan Rose,  
A firm and warlike band,  
Five hundred warriors drew the sword  
Beneath his high command.

In bloody fight thrice had he stood  
Against the English keen,  
Ere two-and-twenty opening springs  
The blooming youth had seen.

The fair Matilda dear he loved,  
A maid of beauty rare ;  
Even Margaret on the Scottish throne,  
Was never half so fair.

Long had he woo'd, long she refused,  
 With seeming scorn and pride ;  
 Yet oft her eyes confess'd the love  
 Her fearful words denied.

At length she blessed his well-tried love,  
 Allowed his tender claim ;  
 She vowed to him her tender heart,  
 And owned an equal flame.

Her father, Buchan's cruel lord,  
 Their passion disapproved ;  
 He bade her wed Sir John the Græme,  
 And leave the youth she loved.

One night they met as they were wont,  
 Deep in a shady wood ;  
 Where on the bank, beside the burn,  
 A blooming saugh tree stood.

Concealed among the underwood  
 The crafty Donald lay—  
 The brother of Sir James the Græme—  
 To hear what they would say.

When thus the maid began—My sire,  
 Our passion disapproves ;  
 He bids me wed Sir John the Græme,  
 So here must end our loves.

My father's will must be obeyed,  
 Nought boots me to withstand !  
 Some fairer maid in beauty's bloom,  
 Must bless thee with her hand.

Soon will Matilda be forgot,  
 And from thy mind effaced ;  
 But may that happiness be thine,  
 Which I can never taste!

What do I hear? is this thy vow?  
 Sir James the Rose replied;  
 And will Matilda wed the Græme,  
 Though sworn to be my bride?

His sword shall sooner pierce my heart  
 Than 'reave me of thy charms;  
 Then clasped her to his throbbing breast,  
 Fast locked within his arms.

I spoke to try thy love she said,  
 I'll ne'er wed man but thee;  
 The grave shall be my bridal bed,  
 Ere 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 turned about the fearless Chief,  
 And soon his sword he drew;  
 For Donald's blade before his breast  
 Had pierced his tartans through.

This for my brother's slighted love,  
 His wrongs sit on my arm—  
 Three paces back the youth retired,  
 And saved himself from harm.

Returning swift, his sword he reared  
 Fierce Donald's head above!  
 And through the brain and crashing bone  
 The furious weapon drove.

Life issued at the wound—he fell  
 A lump of lifeless clay ;  
 So fall my foes, quoth valiant Rose,  
 And stately strode away.

Through the green wood in haste he passed  
 Unto Lord Buchan's hall—  
 Beneath Matilda's window stood,  
 And thus on her did call :

Art thou asleep, Matilda dear,  
 Awake, my love ! awake ;  
 Behold thy lover waits without,  
 A long farewell to take.

For I have slain fierce Donald Græme,  
 His blood is on my sword ;  
 And far, far distant are my men,  
 Nor can defend their lord.

To Skye I will direct my steps,  
 Where my brave brothers bide,  
 And raise the mighty of the Isles  
 To combat on my side.

O do not so, the maid replied,  
 With me to morning stay ;  
 For dark and dreary is the night,  
 And dang'rous is the way.

All night I'll watch you in the park,  
 My faithful page I'll send  
 In haste to raise the brave clan Rose,  
 Their master to defend.

He laid him down beneath a bush,  
 And wrapped 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 lonely glen,  
 He met the furious John the Græme,  
 With twenty of his men.

Where goest thou, little page, he said,  
 So late? who did thee send?—  
 I go to raise the brave clan Rose,  
 Their master to defend.

For he has slain fierce Donald Græme,  
 His blood is on his sword ;  
 And far, far distant are his men,  
 Nor can assist their lord.

Aud has he slain my brother dear?  
 The furious chief replies ;  
 Dishonour blast my name, but he  
 By me, ere morning dies !

Say, page, where is Sir James the Rose?  
 I will thee well reward :—  
 He sleeps into Lord Buchan's park,  
 Matilda is his guard.

They spurred their steeds and furious flew,  
 Like lightning o'er the lee ;  
 They reached Lord Buchan's lofty towers,  
 By dawning of the day.

Matilda stood without the gate,  
 Upon a rising ground—  
 And watched each object in the dawn,  
 All ear to every sound.

Where sleeps the Rose? began the Græme,  
 Or has the felon fled?  
 This hand shall lay the wretch on earth,  
 By whom my brother bled.

And now the valiant knight awoke,  
 The virgin shrieking heard ;  
 Straight up he rose and drew his sword,  
 When the fierce band appeared.

Your sword last night my brother slew,  
 His blood yet dims its shine ;  
 And e'er the sun shall gild the morn,  
 Your blood shall reek on mine.

Your words are brave, the chief returned,  
 But deeds approve the man ;  
 Set by your men, and hand to hand,  
 We'll try what valour can.

With dauntless step he forward strode,  
 And dared him to the fight ;  
 The Græme gave back : he feared his arm,  
 For well he knew his might.

Four of his men, the bravest four,  
 Sunk down beneath his sword ;  
 But still he scorned the poor revenge,  
 And sought their haughty lord.

Behind him basely came the Græme,  
 And pierced him in the side ;  
 Out spouting came the purple stream,  
 And all his tartans dyed.

But yet his hand dropt not the sword,  
 Nor sunk he to the ground—  
 Till through the enemy's heart the steel  
 Had forced a mortal wound,

Græme, like a tree by wind o'erthrown,  
 Fell breathless on the clay !  
 And down beside him sank the Rose,  
 And faint and dying lay.

Matilda saw and fast she ran—  
 O, spare his life, she cried—  
 Lord Buchan's daughter begs his life,  
 Let her not be denied.

Her well-known voice the hero heard,  
 He raised his death-closed eyes ;  
 He fixed them on the weeping maid,  
 And weakly thus replies :

In vain Matilda begs a life,  
 By death's arrest denied ;  
 My race is run—adieu my love—  
 Then closed his eyes, and died.

The sword yet warm from his left side,  
 With frantic hand she drew ;  
 I come, Sir James the Rose, she cried,  
 I come to follow you !

The hilt she leaned against the ground,  
 And bared her snowy breast ;  
 Then fell upon her lover's face,  
 And sunk to endless rest.

\* It is believed on good authority that Lady Matilda and Sir James were both interred in the same grave in the Burial-ground attached to the Abbey of Deer, and which now forms part of the estate of Pitfour, East Aberdeenshire.