

CANTO SECOND

I

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,  
 Go visit it by the pale moonlight;  
 For the gay beams of lightsome day  
 Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.  
 When the broken arches are black in night 5  
 And each shafted oriel glimmers white;  
 When the cold light's uncertain shower  
 Streams on the ruin'd central tower;  
 When buttress and buttress, alternately,  
 Seem framed of ebon and ivory; 10  
 When silver edges the imagery,  
 And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;  
 When distant Tweed is heard to rave,  
 And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,  
 Then go—but go alone the while— 15  
 Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;  
 And, home returning, soothly swear,  
 Was never scene so sad and fair!

II

Short halt did Deloraine make there;  
 Little reck'd he of the scene so fair:  
 With dagger's hilt, on the wicket strong,  
 He struck full loud, and struck full long.

CANTO SECOND

5 The porter hurried to the gate—  
 “Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late?”  
 “From Branksome I!” the warrior cried;  
 And straight the wicket open'd wide;  
 For Branksome's Chiefs had in battle stood,  
 10 To fence the rights of fair Melrose;  
 And lands and livings, many a rood,  
 Had gifted the shrine for their souls' repose.

III

Bold Deloraine his errand said;  
 The porter bent his humble head;  
 With torch in hand, and feet unshod,  
 And noiseless step, the path he trod;  
 5 The arched cloister, far and wide,  
 Rang to the Warrior's clanking stride;  
 Till, stooping low his lofty crest,  
 He enter'd the cell of the ancient priest,  
 And lifted his barred aventayle,  
 10 To hail the Monk of St. Mary's aisle.

IV

“The Ladye of Branksome greets thee by me;  
 Says, that the fated hour is come,  
 And that to-night I shall watch with thee,  
 To win the treasure of the tomb.”—  
 5 From sackcloth couch the monk arose,  
 With toil his stiffen'd limbs he rear'd;  
 A hundred years had flung their snows  
 On his thin locks and floating beard.

## V

And strangely on the Knight look'd he,  
 And his blue eyes gleam'd wild and wide;  
 "And, darest thou, Warrior! seek to see  
 What heaven and hell alike would hide?  
 My breast, in belt of iron pent, 5  
 With shirt of hair and scourge of thorn;  
 For threescore years, in penance spent,  
 My knees those flinty stones have worn;  
 Yet all too little to atone  
 For knowing what should ne'er be known. 10  
 Would'st thou thy every future year  
 In ceaseless prayer and penance drie,  
 Yet wait thy latter end with fear—  
 Then, daring Warrior, follow me!"—

## VI

"Penance, Father, will I none;  
 Prayer know I hardly one;  
 For mass or prayer can I rarely tarry,  
 Save to patter an Ave Mary,  
 When I ride on a Border foray. 5  
 Other prayer can I none;  
 So speed me my errand, and let me be gone."—

## VII

Again on the Knight look'd the Churchman old,  
 And again he sighed heavily;  
 For he had himself been a warrior bold,  
 And fought in Spain and Italy.

3 And he thought on the days that were long  
 since by,  
 When his limbs were strong, and his courage was  
 high:—  
 Now, slow and faint, he led the way,  
 Where cloister'd round, the garden lay;  
 The pillar'd arches were over their head,  
 10 And beneath their feet were the bones of the  
 dead.

## VIII

Spreading herbs, and flowerets bright,  
 Glisten'd with the dew of night;  
 Nor herb, nor floweret, glisten'd there,  
 But was carved in the cloister-arches as fair.  
 5 The Monk gazed long on the lovely moon,  
 Then into the night he looked forth;  
 And red and bright the streamers light  
 Were dancing in the glowing north.  
 So had he seen, in fair Castile,  
 10 The youth in glittering squadrons start;  
 Sudden the flying jennet wheel,  
 And hurl the unexpected dart.  
 He knew, by the streamers that shot so bright,  
 That spirits were riding the northern light.

## IX

By a steel-clenched postern door,  
 They enter'd now the chancel tall;  
 The darken'd roof rose high aloof  
 On pillars lofty and light and small:

The key-stone that lock'd each ribbed aisle, 5  
 Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille;  
 The corbels were carved grotesque and grim;  
 And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts so trim,  
 With base and with capital flourish'd around,  
 Seem'd bundles of lances which garlands had 10  
 bound.

## X

Full many a scutcheon and banner riven  
 Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven  
 Around the screened altar's pale;  
 And there the dying lamps did burn,  
 Before thy low and lonely urn, 5  
 O gallant Chief of Otterburne!  
 And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale!  
 O fading honours of the dead!  
 O high ambition, lowly laid!

## XI

The moon on the east oriel shone  
 Through slender shafts of shapely stone,  
 By foliaged tracery combined;  
 Thou would'st have thought some fairy's hand  
 'Twixt poplars straight the ozier wand, 5  
 In many a freakish knot had twined;  
 Then framed a spell when the work was done,  
 And changed the willow-wreaths to stone.  
 The silver light, so pale and faint,  
 Show'd many a prophet, and many a saint, 10  
 Whose image on the glass was dyed;

Full in the midst, his Cross of Red  
 Triumphant Michael brandished,  
 And trampled the Apostate's pride.  
 15 The moonbeam kiss'd the holy pane,  
 And threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

## XII

They sate them down on a marble stone,  
 (A Scottish monarch slept below);  
 Thus spoke the Monk, in solemn tone:—  
 "I was not always a man of woe;  
 5 For Paynim countries I have trod,  
 And fought beneath the Cross of God:  
 Now, strange to my eyes thine arms appear,  
 And their iron clang sounds strange to my ear.

## XIII

"In these far climes it was my lot  
 To meet the wondrous Michael Scott;  
 A wizard of such dreaded fame,  
 That when, in Salamanca's cave,  
 5 Him listed his magic wand to wave,  
 The bells would ring in Notre Dame!  
 Some of his skill he taught to me;  
 And, Warrior, I could say to thee  
 The words that cleft Eildon hills in three,  
 10 And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone:  
 But to speak them were a deadly sin;  
 And for having but thought them my heart  
 within,  
 A treble penance must be done.

## XIV

"When Michael lay on his dying bed,  
 His conscience was awakened:  
 He bethought him of his sinful deed,  
 And he gave me a sign to come with speed:  
 I was in Spain when the morning rose,  
 But I stood by his bed ere evening close.  
 The words may not again be said,  
 That he spoke to me, on death-bed laid;  
 They would rend this Abbaye's massy nave,  
 And pile it in heaps above his grave.

## XV

"I swore to bury his Mighty Book,  
 That never mortal might therein look;  
 And never to tell where it was hid,  
 Save at his Chief of Branksome's need:  
 And when that need was past and o'er,  
 Again the volume to restore.  
 I buried him on St. Michael's night,  
 When the bell toll'd one, and the moon was  
     bright,  
 And I dug his chamber among the dead,  
 When the floor of the chancel was stained red,  
 That his patron's cross might over him wave,  
 And scare the fiends from the Wizard's grave.

## XVI

"It was a night of woe and dread,  
 When Michael in the tomb I laid!

Strange sounds along the chancel pass'd,  
 The banners waved without a blast"—  
 Still spoke the Monk, when the bell toll'd one!—  
 I tell you that a braver man  
 Than William of Deloraine, good at need,  
 Against a foe ne'er spurr'd a steed;  
 Yet somewhat was he chill'd with dread,  
 And his hair did bristle upon his head.

## XVII

"Lo, Warrior! now, the Cross of Red  
 Points to the grave of the mighty dead;  
 Within it burns a wondrous light,  
 To chase the spirits that love the night:  
 That lamp shall burn unquenchably,  
 Until the eternal dooms shall be."—  
 Slow moved the Monk to the broad flag-stone,  
 Which the bloody Cross was traced upon:  
 He pointed to a secret nook;  
 An iron bar the Warrior took  
 And the Monk made a sign with his wither'd  
     hand,  
 The grave's huge portal to expand.

## XVIII

With beating heart to the task he went;  
 His sinewy frame o'er the grave-stone bent;  
 With bar of iron heaved amain,  
 Till the toil-drops fell from his brows, like rain.  
 It was by dint of passing strength,

That he moved the massy stone at length.  
 I would you had been there to see  
 How the light broke forth so gloriously,  
 Stream'd upward to the chancel roof,  
 And through the galleries far aloof! 10  
 No earthly flame blazed e'er so bright:  
 It shone like heaven's own blessed light,  
 And, issuing from the tomb,  
 Shew'd the Monk's cowl, and visage pale,  
 Danced on the dark-brow'd Warrior's mail, 15  
 And kiss'd his waving plume.

## XIX

Before their eyes the Wizard lay,  
 As if he had not been dead a day.  
 His hoary beard in silver roll'd,  
 He seem'd some seventy winters old;  
 A palmer's amice wrapp'd him round, 5  
 With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,  
 Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:  
 His left hand held his Book of Might;  
 A silver cross was in his right;  
 The lamp was placed beside his knee: 10  
 High and majestic was his look,  
 At which the fellest fiends had shook,  
 And all unruffled was his face:  
 They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

## XX

Often had William of Deloraine  
 Rode through the battle's bloody plain,

And trampled down the warriors slain,  
 And neither known remorse nor awe:  
 5 Yet now remorse and awe he own'd;  
 His breath came thick, his head swam round,  
 When this strange scene of death he saw.  
 Bewilder'd and unnerved he stood,  
 And the priest pray'd fervently and loud:  
 10 With eyes averted prayed he;  
 He might not endure the sight to see,  
 Of the man he had loved so brotherly.

## XXI

And when the priest his death-prayer had  
 pray'd,  
 Thus unto Deloraine he said:—  
 "Now speed thee what thou hast to do,  
 Or, Warrior, we may dearly rue;  
 5 For those, thou may'st not look upon,  
 Are gathering fast round the yawning stone!"—  
 Then Deloraine, in terror, took  
 From the cold hand the Mighty Book,  
 With iron clasp'd, and with iron bound:  
 10 He thought, as he took it, the dead man  
 frown'd;  
 But the glare of the sepulchral light,  
 Perchance, had dazzled the Warrior's sight.

## XXII

When the huge stone sunk o'er the tomb,  
 The night return'd in double gloom;

*Michael's grave*

For the moon had gone down, and the stars were  
 few;  
 And, as the Knight and Priest withdrew,  
 With wavering steps and dizzy brain, 5  
 They hardly might the postern gain.  
 'Tis said, as through the aisles they pass'd,  
 They heard strange noises on the blast;  
 And through the cloister-galleries small,  
 Which at mid-height thread the chancel wall, 10  
 Loud sobs, and laughter louder, ran,  
 And voices unlike the voice of man;  
 As if the fiends kept holiday,  
 Because these spells were brought to day.  
 I cannot tell how the truth may be; 15  
 I say the tale as 'twas said to me.

## XXIII

"Now, hie thee hence," the Father said,  
 "And when we are on death-bed laid,  
 O may our dear Ladye, and sweet St. John,  
 Forgive our souls for the deed we have done!"—  
 The Monk return'd him to his cell, 5  
 And many a prayer and penance sped;  
 When the convent met at the noontide bell—  
 The Monk of St. Mary's aisle was dead!  
 Before the cross was the body laid,  
 With hands clasp'd fast, as if still he pray'd. 10

## XXIV

The Knight breathed free in the morning wind,  
 And strove his hardihood to find:

He was glad when he pass'd the tombstones grey,  
 Which girdle round the fair Abbaye;  
 5 For the mystic Book, to his bosom prest,  
 Felt like a load upon his breast;  
 And his joints, with nerves of iron twined,  
 Shook, like the aspen leaves in wind.  
 Full fain was he when the dawn of day  
 10 Began to brighten Cheviot grey;  
 He joy'd to see the cheerful light,  
 And he said Ave Mary, as well as he might.

## XXV

The sun had brighten'd Cheviot grey,  
 The sun had brighten'd the Carter's side;  
 And soon beneath the rising day  
 Smiled Branksome towers and Teviot's tide.  
 5 The wild birds told their warbling tale,  
 And waken'd every flower that blows;  
 And peeped forth the violet pale,  
 And spread her breast the mountain rose.  
 And lovelier than the rose so red,  
 10 Yet paler than the violet pale,  
 She early left her sleepless bed,  
 The fairest maid of Teviotdale.

## XXVI

Why does fair Margaret so early awake,  
 And don her kirtle so hastilie;  
 And the silken knots, which in hurry she would  
 make,

Why tremble her slender fingers to tie;  
 Why does she stop, and look often around, 5  
 As she glides down the secret stair;  
 And why does she pat the shaggy blood-hound,  
 As she rouses him up from his lair;  
 And, though she passes the postern alone,  
 Why is not the watchman's bugle blown? 10

## XXVII

The Ladye steps in doubt and dread,  
 Lest her watchful mother hear her tread;  
 The Ladye caresses the rough blood-hound,  
 Lest his voice should waken the castle round;  
 The watchman's bugle is not blown, 5  
 For he was her foster-father's son;  
 And she glides through the greenwood at dawn  
 of light,  
 To meet Baron Henry, her own true knight.

## XXVIII

The Knight and Ladye fair are met,  
 And under the hawthorn's boughs are set.  
 A fairer pair were never seen  
 To meet beneath the hawthorn green.  
 He was stately, and young, and tall; 5  
 Dreaded in battle, and loved in hall:  
 And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,  
 Lent to her cheek a livelier red;  
 When the half sigh her swelling breast  
 Against the silken ribbon prest; 10

When her blue eyes their secret told,  
 Though shaded by her locks of gold—  
 Where would you find the peerless fair,  
 With Margaret of Branksome might compare!

## XXIX

And now, fair dames, methinks I see  
 You listen to my minstrelsy;  
 Your waving locks ye backward throw,  
 And sidelong bend your necks of snow;—  
 5 Ye ween to hear a melting tale,  
 Of two true lovers in a dale;  
 And how the Knight, with tender fire,  
 To paint his faithful passion strove;  
 Swore, he might at her feet expire,  
 10 But never, never cease to love;  
 And how she blush'd, and how she sigh'd,  
 And, half consenting, half denied,  
 And said that she would die a maid;—  
 Yet, might the bloody feud be stay'd,  
 15 Henry of Cranstoun, and only he,  
 Margaret of Branksome's choice should be.

## XXX

Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!  
 My harp has lost the enchanting strain;  
 Its lightness would my age reprove:  
 My hairs are grey, my limbs are old,  
 5 My heart is dead, my veins are cold;  
 I may not, must not, sing of love.

Margaret  
 Waken early

The meet King

## XXXI

Beneath an oak, moss'd o'er by eld,  
 The Baron's Dwarf his courser held,  
 And held his crested helm and spear:  
 That Dwarf was scarce an earthly man,  
 If the tales were true that of him ran 5  
 Through all the Border, far and near.  
 'Twas said, when the Baron a-hunting rode  
 Through Reedsdale's glens, but rarely trode,  
 He heard a voice cry, "Lost! lost! lost!"  
 And, like tennis-ball by racquet toss'd, 10  
 A leap of thirty feet and three  
 Made from the gorse this elfin shape,  
 Distorted like some dwarfish ape,  
 And lighted at Lord Cranstoun's knee.  
 Lord Cranstoun was some whit dismay'd; 15  
 'Tis said that five good miles he rade,  
 To rid him of his company;  
 But where he rode one mile, the Dwarf ran four,  
 And the Dwarf was first at the castle door.

## XXXII

Use lessens marvel, it is said:  
 This elvish Dwarf with the Baron stay'd;  
 Little he ate, and less he spoke  
 Nor mingled with the menial flock:  
 And oft apart his arms he toss'd, 5  
 And often mutter'd, "Lost! lost! lost!"  
 He was waspish, arch, and litherlie,  
 But well Lord Cranstoun served he:

And he of his service was full fain;  
 10 For once he had been ta'en or slain,  
 An' it had not been for his ministry.  
 All between Home and Hermitage,  
 Talk'd of Lord Cranstoun's Goblin-Page.

## XXXIII

For the Baron went on pilgrimage,  
 And took with him this elvish Page,  
 To Mary's Chapel of the Lowes:  
 For there, beside our Ladye's lake,  
 5 An offering he had sworn to make,  
 And he would pay his vows.  
 But the Ladye of Branksome gather'd a band  
 Of the best that would ride at her command:  
 The trysting-place was Newark Lee.  
 10 Wat of Harden came thither amain,  
 And thither came John of Thirlestane,  
 And thither came William of Deloraine;  
 They were three hundred spears and three.  
 Through Douglas-burn, up Yarrow stream,  
 15 Their horses prance, their lances gleam.  
 They came to St. Mary's lake ere day;  
 But the chapel was void, and the Baron away.  
 They burn'd the chapel for very rage,  
 And cursed Lord Cranstoun's Goblin-Page.

## XXXIV

And now, in Branksome's good green wood,  
 As under the aged oak he stood,  
 The Baron's courser pricks his ears,

As if a distant noise he hears.  
 The Dwarf waves his long lean arm on high, 5  
 And signs to the lovers to part and fly;  
 No time was then to vow or sigh.  
 Fair Margaret, through the hazel grove,  
 Flew like the startled cushat-dove:  
 The Dwarf the stirrup held and rein; 10  
 Vaulted the Knight on his steed amain,  
 And, pondering deep that morning's scene,  
 Rode eastward through the hawthorns green.

*(Interlude)*

While thus he pour'd the lengthen'd tale,  
 The Minstrel's voice began to fail:  
 Full slyly smiled the observant page,  
 And gave the wither'd hand of age  
 A goblet, crown'd with mighty wine, 5  
 The blood of Velez' scorched vine.  
 He raised the silver cup on high,  
 And, while the big drop fill'd his eye,  
 Pray'd God to bless the Duchess long,  
 And all who cheer'd a son of song. 10  
 The attending maidens smiled to see  
 How long, how deep, how zealously,  
 The precious juice the Minstrel quaff'd;  
 And he, embolden'd by the draught,  
 Look'd gaily back to them, and laugh'd. 15  
 The cordial nectar of the bowl  
 Swell'd his old veins, and cheer'd his soul;  
 A lighter, livelier prelude ran,  
 Ere thus his tale again began.

## CANTO THIRD

## I

And said I that my limbs were old,  
 And said I that my blood was cold,  
 And that my kindly fire was fled,  
 And my poor wither'd heart was dead,  
 5 And that I might not sing of love?—  
 How could I to the dearest theme,  
 That ever warm'd a minstrel's dream,  
 So foul, so false a recreant prove!  
 How could I name Love's very name,  
 10 Nor wake my heart to notes of flame!

## II

In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed;  
 In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;  
 In halls, in gay attire is seen;  
 In hamlets, dances on the green.  
 5 Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,  
 And men below, and saints above;  
 For love is heaven, and heaven is love.

## III

So thought Lord Cranstoun, as I ween,  
 While, pondering deep the tender scene,  
 He rode through Branksome's hawthorn green.