

Start

CANTO FIFTH

I

Call it not vain:—they do not err,
Who say, that when the Poet dies,
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies:
Who say, tall cliff, and cavern lone, 5
For the departed Bard make moan;
That mountains weep in crystal rill;
That flowers in tears of balm distil;
Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks, in deeper groan, reply; 10
And rivers teach their rushing wave
To murmur dirges round his grave.

II

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn
Those things inanimate can mourn;
But that the stream, the wood, the gale
Is vocal with the plaintive wail
Of those, who, else forgotten long, 5
Lived in the poet's faithful song,
And, with the poet's parting breath,
Whose memory feels a second death.
The Maid's pale shade, who wails her lot,

CANTO FIFTH

10 That love, true love, should be forgot,
From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear
Upon the gentle Minstrel's bier:
The phantom Knight, his glory fled,
Mourns o'er the field he heap'd with dead;
15 Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
And shrieks along the battle-plain.
The Chief, whose antique crownlet long
Still sparkled in the feudal song,
Now, from the mountain's misty throne,
20 Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
His ashes undistinguish'd lie,
His place, his power, his memory die:
His groans the lonely caverns fill,
His tears of rage impel the rill:
25 All mourn the Minstrel's harp unstrung,
Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

III

Troops coming

Scarcely the hot assault was staid,
The terms of truce were scarcely made,
When they could spy, from Branksome's
towers,
The advancing march of martial powers,
5 Thick clouds of dust afar appear'd,
And trampling steeds were faintly heard;
Bright spears, above the columns dun,
Glanced momentary to the sun;
And feudal banners fair display'd
10 The bands that moved to Branksome's aid.

IV

Vails not to tell each hardy clan,
 From the fair Middle Marches came;
 The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
 Announcing Douglas, dreaded name!
 Vails not to tell what steeds did spurn,
 Where the Seven Spears of Wedderburne
 Their men in battle-order set;
 And Swinton laid the lance in rest,
 That tamed of yore the sparkling crest
 Of Clarence's Plantagenet.
 Nor list I say what hundreds more,
 From the rich Merse and Lammermore,
 And Tweed's fair borders, to the war,
 Beneath the crest of Old Dunbar,
 And Hepburn's mingled banners come,
 Down the steep mountain glittering far,
 And shouting still, "A Home! a Home!"

V

Now squire and knight, from Branksome sent,
 On many a courteous message went;
 To every chief and lord they paid
 Meet thanks for prompt and powerful aid;
 And told them,—how a truce was made,
 And how a day of fight was ta'en
 'Twixt Musgrave and stout Deloraine;
 And how the Ladye pray'd them dear,
 That all would stay the fight to see,
 And deign, in love and courtesy,

To taste of Branksome cheer.
 Nor, while they bade to feast each Scot,
 Were England's noble Lords forgot.
 Himself, the hoary Seneschal
 Rode forth in seemly terms to call
 Those gallant foes to Branksome Hall.
 Accepted Howard, than whom knight
 Was never dubb'd, more bold in fight;
 Nor, when from war and armour free,
 More famed for stately courtesy:
 But angry Dacre rather chose
 In his pavilion to repose.

VI

Now, noble Dame, perchance you ask,
 How these two hostile armies met?
 Deeming it were no easy task
 To keep the truce which here was set;
 Where martial spirits, all on fire,
 Breathed only blood and mortal ire.—
 By mutual inroads, mutual blows,
 By habit, and by nation, foes,
 They met on Teviot's strand;
 They met and sate them mingled down,
 Without a threat, without a frown,
 As brothers meet in foreign land:
 The hands, the spear that lately grasp'd,
 Still in the mailèd gauntlet clasp'd,
 Were interchanged in greeting dear;
 Visors were raised, and faces shown,

Tell of the Fatal day

And many a friend, to friend made known,
 Partook of social cheer.
 Some drove the jolly bowl about;
 With dice and draughts some chased the day; 20
 And some, with many a merry shout,
 In riot, revelry, and rout,
 Pursued the foot-ball play.

VII

Yet, be it known, had bugles blown,
 Or sign of war been seen,
 Those bands so fair together ranged,
 Those hands, so frankly interchanged,
 Had dyed with gore the green: 5
 The merry shout by Teviot side
 Had sunk in war cries wild and wide,
 And in the groan of death;
 And whingers, now in friendship bare,
 The social meal to part and share, 10
 Had found a bloody sheath.
 'Twixt truce and war, such sudden change
 Was not infrequent, nor held strange,
 In the old Border-day:
 But yet on Branksome's towers and town, 15
 In peaceful merriment, sunk down
 The sun's declining ray.

VIII

The blithesome signs of wassel gay,
 Decay'd not with the dying day;
 Soon through the latticed windows tall

Of lofty Branksome's lordly hall,
 5 Divided square by shafts of stone,
 Huge flakes of ruddy lustre shone;
 Nor less the gilded rafters rang
 With merry harp and beakers' clang:
 And frequent, on the darkening plain,
 10 Loud hollo, whoop, or whistle ran,
 As bands, their stragglers to regain,
 Give the shrill watchword of their clan;
 And revellers, o'er their bowls proclaim
 Douglas' or Dacre's conquering name.

IX

Less frequent heard, and fainter still,
 At length the various clamours died:
 And you might hear, from Branksome hill,
 No sound but Teviot's rushing tide;
 5 Save when the changing sentinel
 The challenge of his watch could tell;
 And save, where, through the dark profound,
 The clanging axe and hammers sound
 Rung from the nether lawn;
 10 For many a busy hand toil'd there,
 Strong pales to shape, and beams to square,
 The lists' dread barriers to prepare
 Against the morrow's dawn.

X

Margaret from hall did soon retreat,
 Despite the Dame's reproving eye;
 Nor mark'd she, as she left her seat,

Full many a stifled sigh;
 For many a noble warrior strove
 To win the flower of Teviot's love,
 And many a bold ally.—
 With throbbing head and anxious heart,
 All in her lonely bower apart,
 In broken sleep she lay:
 By times, from silken couch she rose;
 While yet the banner'd hosts repose,
 She view'd the dawning day:
 Of all the hundreds sunk to rest,
 First woke the loveliest and the best.

XI

She gazed upon the inner court,
 Which in the tower's tall shadow lay;
 Where coursers' clang, and stamp, and snort,
 Had rung the livelong yesterday;
 Now still as death; till stalking slow,—
 The jingling spurs announced his tread,—
 A stately warrior pass'd below;
 But when he raised his plumed head—
 Blessed Mary! can it be?—
 Secure, as if in Ousenam bowers,
 He walks through Branksome's hostile towers,
 With fearless step and free.
 She dared not sign, she dared not speak—
 Oh! if one page's slumbers break,
 His blood the price must pay!
 Not all the pearls Queen Mary wears,

Not Margaret's yet more precious tears,
 Shall buy his life a day.

XII

Yet was his hazard small; for well
 You may bethink you of the spell
 Of that sly urchin page;
 This to his lord he did impart,
 And made him seem, by glamour art,
 A knight from Hermitage.
 Unchallenged thus, the warder's post,
 The court, unchallenged, thus he cross'd,
 For all the vassalage:
 But O! what magic's quaint disguise
 Could blind fair Margaret's azure eyes!
 She started from her seat;
 While with surprise and fear she strove,
 And both could scarcely master love—
 Lord Henry's at her feet.

XIII

Oft have I mused, what purpose bad
 That foul malicious urchin had
 To bring this meeting round;
 For happy love's a heavenly sight,
 And by a vile malignant sprite
 In such no joy is found;
 And oft I've deem'd, perchance he thought
 Their erring passion might have wrought
 Sorrow, and sin, and shame;

Margaret
 stays in window
 she sees lord
 Branksome from window

And death to Cranstoun's gallant Knight, 10
 And to the gentle ladye bright,
 Disgrace and loss of fame.
 But earthly spirit could not tell
 The heart of them that loved so well.
 True love's the gift that God has given 15
 To man alone beneath the heaven:
 It is not fantasy's hot fire,
 Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
 It liveth not in fierce desire,
 With dead desire it doth not die; 20
 It is the secret sympathy,
 The silver link, the silken tie,
 Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
 In body and in soul can bind.—
 Now leave we Margaret and her Knight, 25
 To tell you of the approaching fight.

XIV

Their warning blasts the bugles blew,
 The pipe's shrill port aroused each clan;
 In haste, the deadly strife to view,
 The trooping warriors eager ran:
 Thick round the lists their lances stood, 5
 Like blasted pines in Ettrick wood;
 To Branksome many a look they threw,
 The combatants' approach to view,
 And bandied many a word of boast,
 About the knight each favour'd most. 10

XV

Meantime full anxious was the Dame;
 For now arose disputed claim,
 Of who should fight for Deloraine,
 'Twixt Harden and 'twixt Thirlestane:
 They 'gan to reckon kin and rent, 5
 And frowning brow on brow was bent;
 But yet not long the strife—for, lo!
 Himself, the Knight of Deloraine,
 Strong as it seem'd, and free from pain,
 In armour sheathed from top to toe, 10
 Appear'd and craved the combat due.
 The Dame her charm successful knew,
 And the fierce chiefs their claims withdrew.

XVI

When for the lists they sought the plain,
 The stately Ladye's silken rein
 Did noble Howard hold;
 Unarmed by her side he walk'd,
 And much, in courteous phrase, they talk'd 5
 Of feats of arms of old.
 Costly his garb—his Flemish ruff
 Fell o'er his doublet, shaped of buff,
 With satin slash'd and lined;
 Tawny his boot, and gold his spur, 10
 His cloak was all of Poland fur,
 His hose with silver twined;
 His Bilboa blade, by Marchmen felt,
 Hung in a broad and studded belt;

He will on Musgrave's body prove,
He lies most foully in his throat."

LORD DACRE

"Forward, brave champions, to the fight!
Sound trumpets!"—

LORD HOME

—"God defend the right!"—

Then, Teviot! how thine echoes rang, 10
When bugle-sound and trumpet clang
Let loose the martial foes,
And in mid-list, with shield poised high,
And measured step and wary eye,
The combatants did close. 15

XXI

Ill would it suit your gentle ear,
Ye lovely listeners, to hear
How to the axe the helms did sound,
And blood pour'd down from many a wound;
For desperate was the strife and long, 5
And either warrior fierce and strong.
But were each dame a listening knight,
I well could tell how warriors fight!
For I have seen war's lightning flashing,
Seen the claymore with bayonet clashing, 10
Seen through red blood the war-horse dashing,
And scorn'd, amid the reeling strife,
To yield a step for death or life.—

XXII

'Tis done, 'tis done! that fatal blow
Has stretched him on the bloody plain;
He strives to rise—Brave Musgrave, no!
Thence never shalt thou rise again!
5 He chokes in blood—some friendly hand
Undo the visor's barred band,
Unfix the gorget's iron clasp,
And give him room for life to gasp!—
O, bootless aid!—haste, holy Friar,
10 Haste, ere the sinner shall expire!
Of all his guilt let him be shriven,
And smooth his path from earth to heaven!

XXIII

In haste the holy Friar sped;—
His naked foot was dyed with red,
As through the lists he ran;
Unmindful of the shouts on high,
5 That hail'd the conqueror's victory,
He raised the dying man;
Loose waved his silver beard and hair,
As o'er him he kneel'd down in prayer;
And still the crucifix on high
10 He holds before his darkening eye;
And still he bends an anxious ear,
His faltering penitence to hear;
Still props him from the bloody sod,
Still, even when soul and body part,
15 Pours ghostly comfort on his heart,

And bids him trust in God!
Unheard he prays;—the death-pang's o'er!
Richard of Musgrave breathes no more.

XXIV

As if exhausted in the fight,
Or musing o'er the piteous sight,
The silent victor stands;
His beaver did he not unclasp,
Mark'd not the shouts, felt not the grasp
Of gratulating hands.
When lo! strange cries of wild surprise,
Mingled with seeming terror, rise
Among the Scottish bands;
And all, amid the throng'd array,
In panic haste gave open way
To a half-naked ghastly man,
Who downward from the castle ran:
He cross'd the barriers at a bound,
And wild and haggard look'd around,
As dizzy, and in pain;
And all, upon the armèd ground,
Knew William of Deloraine!
Each ladye sprung from seat with speed;
Vaulted each marshal from his steed;
"And who art thou," they cried,
"Who hast this battle fought and won?"—
His plumèd helm was soon undone—
"Cranstoun of Teviot-side!

*Cranstoun fights for
Deloraine*

25 For this fair prize I've fought and won,"—
And to the Ladye led her son.

XXV

Full oft the rescued boy she kiss'd,
And often press'd him to her breast;
For, under all her dauntless show,
Her heart had throbb'd at every blow;
5 Yet not Lord Cranstoun deign'd she greet,
Though low he kneelèd at her feet.
Me lists not tell what words were made,
What Douglas, Home, and Howard said—
—For Howard was a generous foe—
10 And how the clan united pray'd
The Ladye would the feud forgo,
And deign to bless the nuptial hour
Of Cranstoun's Lord and Teviot's Flower.

*Ladye and Cranstoun
engaged.*

*Ladye
greet
boy*

XXVI

She look'd to river, look'd to hill,
Thought on the Spirit's prophecy,
Then broke her silence stern and still,—
"Not you, but Fate, has vanquish'd me.
5 Their influence kindly stars may shower
On Teviot's tide and Branksome's tower,
For pride is quell'd, and love is free."—
She took fair Margaret by the hand,
Who, breathless, trembling, scarce might stand;
10 That hand to Cranstoun's lord gave she:—

“As I am true to thee and thine,
 Do thou be true to me and mine!
 This clasp of love our bond shall be;
 For this is your betrothing day,
 And all these noble lords shall stay,
 To grace it with their company.”—

XXVII

All as they left the listed plain,
 Much of the story she did gain;
 How Cranstoun fought with Deloraine,
 And of his page, and of the Book
 Which from the wounded knight he took;
 And how he sought her castle high,
 That morn, by help of gramarye;
 How, in Sir William's armour dight,
 Stolen by the page, while slept the knight,
 He took on him the single fight.
 But half his tale he left unsaid,
 And linger'd till he join'd the maid.—
 Cared not the Ladye to betray
 Her mystic arts in view of day;
 But well she thought, ere midnight came,
 Of that strange page the pride to tame,
 From his foul hands the Book to save,
 And send it back to Michael's grave.—
 Needs not to tell each tender word
 'Twixt Margaret and 'twixt Cranstoun's lord;
 Nor how she told of former woes,
 And how her bosom fell and rose,

While he and Musgrave bandied blows.—
 Needs not these lover's joys to tell:
 One day, fair maids, you'll know them well.

XXVIII

William of Deloraine, some chance
 Had waken'd from his deathlike trance;
 And taught that, in the listed plain,
 Another, in his arms and shield,
 Against fierce Musgrave axe did wield,
 Under the name of Deloraine.
 Hence, to the field, unarm'd, he ran,
 And hence his presence scared the clan,
 Who held him for some fleeting wraith,
 And not a man of blood and breath.
 Not much this new ally he loved,
 Yet, when he saw what hap had proved,
 He greeted him right heartilie:
 He would not waken old debate,
 For he was void of rancorous hate,
 Though rude, and scant of courtesy;
 In raids he spilt but seldom blood,
 Unless when men-at-arms withstood,
 Or, as was meet, for deadly feud.
 He ne'er bore grudge for stalwart blow,
 Ta'en in fair fight from gallant foe:
 And so 't was seen of him, e'en now.
 When on dead Musgrave he look'd down;
 Grief darkened on his rugged brow,
 Though half disguised with a frown;

And thus, while sorrow bent his head,
His foeman's epitaph he made.

XXIX

“Now, Richard Musgrave, liest thou here!

I ween, my deadly enemy;
For, if I slew thy brother dear,
Thou slew'st a sister's son to me;
And when I lay in dungeon dark,
Of Naworth Castle, long months three,
Till ransom'd for a thousand mark,
Dark Musgrave, it was long of thee.
And, Musgrave, could our fight be tried,
And thou wert now alive, as I,
No mortal man should us divide,
Till one, or both of us, did die;
Yet rest thee God! for well I know
I ne'er shall find a nobler foe.
In all the northern counties here,
Whose word is Shaffle, spur, and spear,
Thou wert the best to follow gear!
'T was pleasure, as we look'd behind,
To see how thou the chase could'st wind,
Cheer the dark blood-hound on his way,
And with the bugle rouse the fray!
I'd give the lands of Deloraine,
Dark Musgrave were alive again.”—

XXX

So mourn'd he, till Lord Dacre's band
Were bowning back to Cumberland.

They raised brave Musgrave from the field,
And laid him on his bloody shield;
5 On levell'd lances, four and four,
By turns, the noble burden bore
Before, at times, upon the gale,
Was heard the Minstrel's plaintive wail
Behind, four priests, in sable stole,
10 Sung requiem for the warrior's soul:
Around, the horsemen slowly rode;
With trailing pikes the spearmen trode;
And thus the gallant knight they bore,
Through Liddesdale to Leven's shore;
15 Thence to Holme Coltrame's lofty nave,
And laid him in his father's grave.

(Interlude)

The harp's wild notes, though hush'd the song,
The mimic march of death prolong;
Now seems it far, and now a-near,
Now meets, and now eludes the ear;
5 Now seems some mountain side to sweep,
Now faintly dies in valley deep;
Seems now as if the Minstrel's wail,
Now the sad requiem, loads the gale;
Last o'er the warrior's closing grave,
10 Rung the full choir in choral stave.

After due pause, they bade him tell
Why he, who touch'd the harp so well,
Should thus, with ill-rewarded toil,

*Chamilton tells how he
was treated by Musgrave*