

XVIII

"It vanished like a fitting ghost!
Behind this tomb," he said, "'twas lost—
This tomb, where oft I deemed lies stored
Of Mortham's Indian wealth the hoard.
'Tis true, the aged servants said
Here his lamented wife is laid;
But weightier reasons may be guessed
For their lord's strict and stern behest,
That none should on his steps intrude,
Whene'er he sought this solitude.—
An ancient mariner I knew,
What time I sailed with Morgan's crew,
Who oft, 'mid our carousals, spake
Of Raleigh, Forbisher, and Drake;
Adventurous hearts! who bartered, bold,
Their English steel for Spanish gold.
Trust not, would his experience say,
Captain or comrade with your prey;
But seek some charnel, when, at full,
The moon gilds skeleton and skull:
There dig, and tomb your precious heap,
And bid the dead your treasure keep;^a
Sure stewards they, if fitting spell
Their service to the task compel.
Lacks there such charnel?—kill a slave,
Or prisoner, on the treasure-grave;
And bid his discontented ghost
Stalk nightly on his lonely post.—
Such was his tale. Its truth, I ween
Is in my morning vision seen."—

XIX

Wilfrid, who scorned the legend wild,
In mingled mirth and pity smiled,
Much marvelling that a breast so bold
In such fond tale belief should hold;
But yet of Bertram sought to know
The apparition's form and show.—

^a If time did not permit the buccaneers to lavish away their plunder in their usual debaucheries, they were wont to hide it, with many superstitious solemnities, in the desert islands and keys which they frequented, and where much treasure, whose lawless owners perished without reclaiming it, is still supposed to be concealed. The most cruel of mankind are often the most superstitious, and these pirates are said to have had recourse to a horrid ritual in order to secure an unearthly guardian to their treasures. They killed a negro or Spaniard, and buried him with the treasure, believing that his spirit would haunt the spot, and terrify away all intruders. I cannot produce any other authority on which this custom is ascribed to them than that of maritime tradition, which is, however, amply sufficient for the purposes of poetry.

The power within the guilty breast,
Oft vanquished, never quite suppressed,
That unsubdued and lurking lies,
To take the felon by surprise,
And force him, as by magic spell,
In his despite his guilt to tell,—
That power in Bertram's breast awoke;
Scarce conscious he was heard, he spake:
" 'Twas Mortham's form, from foot to head!
His morion, with the plume of red,
His shape, his mien—'twas Mortham, right
As when I slew him in the fight."—
"Thou slay him?—thou?"—With conscious start
He heard, then manned his haughty heart—
"I slew him?—I!—I had forgot
Thou, stripling, knewst not of the plot.
But it is spoken—nor will I
Deed done, or spoken word, deny.
I slew him; I! for thankless pride;—
'Twas by this hand that Mortham died."—

XX

Wilfrid, of gentle hand and heart,
Averse to every active part,
But most averse to martial broil,
From danger shrunk, and turned from toil;
Yet the meek lover of the lyre
Nursed one brave spark of noble fire;
Against injustice, fraud, or wrong,
His blood beat high, his hand waxed strong.
Not his the nerves that could sustain
Unshaken, danger, toil, and pain;
But, when that spark blazed forth to flame,
He rose superior to his frame.
And now it came, that generous mood;
And, in full current of his blood,
On Bertram he laid desperate hand,
Placed firm his foot, and drew his brand.
"Should every fiend, to whom thou'rt sold,
Rise in thine aid, I keep my hold.—
Arouse there, ho! take spear and sword!
Attack the murderer of your Lord!"

XXI

A moment fixed, as by a spell,
Stood Bertram—it seemed miracle,

^a All who are conversant with the administration of criminal justice, must remember many occasions in which malefactors appear to have conducted themselves with a species of infatuation, either by making unnecessary confidences respecting their guilt, or by sudden and involuntary allusions to circumstances by which it could not fail to be exposed. A remarkable instance occurred in the celebrated case of Eugene Aram.

That one so feeble, soft, and tame,
 Set grasp on warlike Risingham.
 But when he felt a feeble stroke,
 The fiend within the ruffian woke!
 To wrench the sword from Wilfrid's hand,
 To dash him headlong on the sand,
 Was but one moment's work,—one more
 Had drenched the blade in Wilfrid's gore;
 But, in the instant it arose,
 To end his life, his love, his woes,
 A warlike form, that marked the scene,
 Presents his rapier sheathed between,
 Parries the fast-descending blow,
 And steps 'twixt Wilfrid and his foe;
 Nor then unscabbarded his brand,
 But, sternly pointing with his hand,
 With monarch's voice forbade the fight,
 And motioned Bertram from his sight.
 "Go, and repent,"—he said, "while time
 Is given thee; add not crime to crime."—

XXII

Mute, and uncertain, and amazed,
 As on a vision, Bertram gazed!
 'Twas Mortham's bearing, bold and high,
 His sinewy frame, his falcon eye,
 His look and accent of command,
 The martial gesture of his hand,
 His stately form, spare-built and tall,
 His war-bleached locks—'twas Mortham all
 Through Bertram's dizzy brain career
 A thousand thoughts, and all of fear;
 His wavering faith received not quite
 The form he saw as Mortham's sprite,
 But more he feared it, if it stood
 His lord, in living flesh and blood.—
 What spectre can the charnel send,
 So dreadful as an injured friend?
 Then, too, the habit of command,
 Used by the leader of the band,
 When Risingham, for many a day,
 Had marched and fought beneath his sway,
 Tamed him—and, with reverted face,
 Backwards he bore his sullen pace,
 Oft stopped, and oft on Mortham stared,
 And dark as rated mastiff glared;
 But when the tramp of steeds was heard,
 Plunged in the glen, and disappeared.
 Nor longer there the warrior stood,
 Retiring eastward through the wood;
 But first to Wilfrid warning gives,
 "Tell thou to none that Mortham lives."—

XXIII

Still rung these words in Wilfrid's ear,
 Hinting he knew not what of fear,
 When nearer came the coursers' tread,
 And, with his father at their head,
 Of horsemen armed a gallant power
 Reined up their steeds before the tower.
 "Whence these pale looks, my son?" he said:
 "Where's Bertram? Why that naked blade?"—
 Wilfrid ambiguously replied,
 (For Mortham's charge his honour tied,
 "Bertram is gone—the villain's word
 Avouched him murderer of his lord!
 Even now we fought—but, when your tread
 Announced you nigh, the felon fled."—
 In Wycliffe's conscious eye appear
 A guilty hope, a guilty fear;
 On his pale brow the dew-drop broke,
 And his lip quivered as he spoke;—

XXIV

"A murderer!—Philip Mortham died
 Amid the battle's wildest tide.
 Wilfrid, or Bertram raves, or you!
 Yet, grant such strange confession true,
 Pursuit were vain—let him fly far—
 Justice must sleep in civil war."—
 A gallant youth rode near his side,
 Brave Rokeby's page, in battle tried;
 That morn, an embassy of weight
 He brought to Barnard's castle gate,
 And followed now in Wycliffe's train,
 An answer for his lord to gain.
 His steed, whose arched and sable neck
 A hundred wreaths of foam bedeck,
 Chafed not against the curb more high
 Than he at Oswald's cold reply;
 He bit his lip, implored his saint,
 (His the old faith)—then burst restraint.

XXV

"Yes! I beheld his bloody fall,
 By that base traitor's dastard ball,
 Just when I thought to measure sword,
 Presumptuous hope! with Mortham's lord,
 And shall the murderer 'scape, who slew
 His leader generous, brave, and true?
 Escape! while on the dew you trace
 The marks of his gigantic pace?
 No! ere the sun that dew shall dry,
 False Risingham shall yield or die."—

Ring out the Castle 'larum bell!
 Arouse the peasants with the knell!
 Meantime, disperse—ride, gallants, ride!
 Beset the wood on every side.
 But if among you one there be,
 That honours Mortham's memory,
 Let him dismount and follow me!
 Else on your crests sit fear and shame,
 And foul suspicion dog your name!"—

XXVI

Instant to earth young REDMOND sprung;
 Instant on earth the harness rung
 Of twenty men of Wycliffe's band,
 Who waited not their lord's command.
 Redmond his spurs from buskins drew,
 His mantle from his shoulders threw,
 His pistols in his belt he placed,
 The green-wood gained, the footsteps traced
 Shouted like huntsman to his hounds,
 "To cover, hark!"—and in he bounds.
 Scarce heard was Oswald's anxious cry,
 "Suspicion!—yes—pursue him—fly—
 But venture not, in useless strife,
 On ruffian desperate of his life.
 Whoever finds him, shoot him dead!
 Five hundred nobles for his head!"

XXVII

The horsemen galloped to make good
 Each path that issued from the wood.
 Loud from the thickets rung the shout
 Of Redmond and his eager rout;
 With them was Wilfrid, stung with ire,
 And envying Redmond's martial fire,
 And emulous of fame.—But where
 Is Oswald, noble Mortham's heir?
 He, bound by honour, law, and faith,
 Avenger of his kinsman's death?—
 Leaning against the elmin tree,
 With drooping head and slackened knee,
 And clenched teeth, and close-clasped hands,
 In agony of soul he stands!
 His downcast eye on earth is bent,
 His soul to every sound is lent;
 For in each shout that cleaves the air,
 May ring discovery and despair.

XXVIII

What 'vailed it him, that brightly played
 The morning sun on Mortham's glade?
 All seems in giddy round to ride,
 Like objects on a stormy tide,

Seen eddying by the moonlight dim,
 Imperfectly to sink and swim.
 What 'vailed it, that the fair domain,
 Its battled mansion, hill and plain,
 On which the sun so brightly shone,
 Envied so long, was now his own?
 The lowest dungeon, in that hour,
 Of Brackenbury's dismal tower,^b
 Had been his choice, could such a doom
 Have opened Mortham's bloody tomb!
 Forced, too, to turn unwilling ear
 To each surmise of hope or fear,
 Murmured among the rustics round,
 Who gathered at the 'larum sound,
 He dared not turn his head away,
 Even to look up to heaven to pray,
 Or call on hell, in bitter mood,
 For one sharp death-shot from the wood!

XXIX

At length o'erpassed that dreadful space,
 Back straggling came the scattered chase;
 Jaded and weary, horse and man,
 Returned the troopers, one by one.
 Wilfrid, the last, arrived to say,
 All trace was lost of Bertram's way,
 Though Redmond still, up Brignal wood,
 The hopeless quest in vain pursued.—
 O, fatal doom of human race!
 What tyrant passions passions chase!
 Remorse from Oswald's brow is gone,
 Avarice and pride resume their throne;
 The pang of instant terror by,
 They dictate thus, their slave's reply:

XXX

"Ay—let him range like hasty hound!
 And if the grim wolf's lair be found,
 Small is my care how goes the game
 With Redmond, or with Risingham,
 Nay, answer not, thou simple boy!
 Thy fair Matilda, all so coy
 To thee, is of another mood
 To that bold youth of Erin's blood.
 Thy ditties will she freely praise,
 And pay thy pains with courtly phrase;

^b This tower has been already mentioned: it is situated near the north-eastern extremity of the wall which incloses Barnard Castle, and is traditionally said to have been the prison. By an odd coincidence it bears a name which we naturally connect with imprisonment, from its being that of Sir Robert Brackenbury, lieutenant of the Tower of London under Edward IV. and Richard III.

In a rough path will oft command—
 Accept at least—thy friendly hand;
 His she avoids, or, urged and prayed,
 Unwilling takes his proffered aid,
 While conscious passion plainly speaks
 In downcast look and blushing cheeks.
 Whene'er he sings, will she glide nigh,
 And all her soul is in her eye,
 Yet doubts she still to tender free
 The wonted words of courtesy.
 These are strong signs!—yet wherefore sigh,
 And wipe, effeminate, thine eye?
 Thine shall she be, if thou attend
 The counsels of thy sire and friend.

XXXI

"Scarce wert thou gone, when peep of light
 Brought genuine news of Marston's fight.
 Brave Cromwell turned the doubtful tide,
 And conquest blessed the rightful side;
 Three thousand cavaliers lie dead,
 Rupert and that bold Marquis fled;
 Nobles and knights, so proud of late,
 Must fine for freedom and estate.
 Of these, committed to my charge,
 Is Rokeby, prisoner at large;
 Redmond, his page, arrived to say
 He reaches Barnard's towers to-day.
 Right heavy shall his ransom be,
 Unless that maid compound with thee!
 Go to her now—be bold of cheer,
 While her soul floats 'twixt hope and fear:
 It is the very change of tide,
 When best the female heart is tried—
 Pride, prejudice, and modesty,
 Are in the current swept to sea;
 And the bold swain, who plies his oar,
 May lightly row his bark to shore."

* After the battle of Marston Moor, the earl of Newcastle retired beyond sea in disgust, and many of his followers laid down their arms and made the best composition they could with the committees of parliament. Fines were imposed upon them in proportion to their estates and degrees of delinquency, and these fines were often bestowed upon such persons as had deserved well of the Commons. In some circumstances it happened that the oppressed cavaliers were fain to form family alliances with some powerful person among the triumphant party.

CANTO THIRD.

I

THE hunting tribes of air and earth
 Respect the brethren of their birth;
 Nature, who loves the claim of kind,
 Less cruel chase to each assigned.
 The falcon, poised on soaring wing,
 Watches the wild-duck by the spring;
 The slow-hound wakes the fox's lair;
 The greyhound presses on the hare;
 The eagle pounces on the lamb;
 The wolf devours the fleecy dam;
 Ev'n tiger fell, and sullen bear,
 Their likeness and their lineage spare.
 Man, only, mars kind Nature's plan,
 And turns the fierce pursuit on man:
 Plying war's desultory trade,
 Incursion, flight, and ambushade,
 Since Nimrod, Cush's mighty son,
 At first the bloody game begun.

II

The Indian,^d prowling for his prey,
 Who hears the settlers track his way,
 And knows in distant forest far
 Camp his red brethren of the war;
 He, when each double and disguise
 To baffle the pursuit he tries,
 Low crouching now his head to hide,
 Where swampy streams through rushes glide,
 Now covering with the withered leaves
 The foot-prints that the dew receives;
 He, skilled in every sylvan guile,
 Knows not, nor tries, such various wile,
 As Risingham, when on the wind
 Arose the loud pursuit behind.
 In Rededale his youth had heard^e
 Each art her wily dalesmen dared,

^d The patience, abstinence, and ingenuity exerted by the North American Indians, when in pursuit of plunder or vengeance, is the most distinguished feature in their character; and the activity and address which they display in their retreat are equally surprising.

^e The inhabitants of the valleys of Tyne and Reed were, in ancient times, so inordinately addicted to depredations, that in 1564 the Incorporated Merchant-adventurers of Newcastle made a law that none born in these districts should be admitted apprentice. The inhabitants are stated to be so generally addicted to rapine, that no faith should be reposed in those proceeding from "such lewde and wicked progenitors." This regulation continued to stand unrepealed until 1771.