

THE
OLD SCOTS:
Tragical Song

OF
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.



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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 youthful 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 goats and deer,
Upon the mountain's 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 lov'd,
A maid of beauty rare:
Even Margaret on the Scottish throne
Was never half so fair.
Long had he woo'd, long she refus'd,
With seeming scorn and pride;
Yet oft her eyes confess'd the love
Her fearful words denied.

At length she blessed his well-tryed love,
 Allow'd his tender claim ;
 She vow'd to him her tender heart,
 And own'd an equal flame.

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

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.

Conceal'd among the underwood,
 The crafty Donald lay,
 The brother of Sir John the Græme,
 To watch what they might 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 obey'd,
 Nought boots me to withstand ;
 Some fairer maid in beauty's bloom,
 Shall bless thee with her hand.

Soon will Matilda be forgot,
 And from thy mind effac'd ;
 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—
 And clasp'd her to his throbbing breast,
 Fast lock'd within his arms.
 I spoke no try thy love, she said,
 I'll ne'er wed man but thee;
 The grave shall be my bridal bed,
 If 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 pierc'd his tartans through.
 'This for my brother's slighted love:
 His wrongs sit on my arm—
 Three paces back the youth retir'd,
 And sav'd himself from harm.
 Returning swift, his sword he rear'd,
 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 pass'd,
 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 flight,
 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 till morning stay ;
 For dark and dreary is the night,
 And dang'rous is the way.

All night I'll watch thee 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 wrapp'd 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 glen,
He met the furious Sir John 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.—

And 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 sea;
They reach'd lord Buchan's lofty tow'rs,
By dawning of the day.

Matilda stood without the gate,
Upon a rising ground,
And watch'd 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 ere 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 pierc'd him in the side;

Out spouting came the purple stream,
And all his tartans dyed.

But yet his hand drooped not the sword,
Nor sunk he to the ground,

Till through his 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 rais'd his death-clos'd eyes;
He fix'd 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 clos'd 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 lean'd against the ground,
And bar'd her snowy breast;
Then fell upon her lover's face,
And sunk to endless rest.

FINIS.