

Robert Surtees (1779-1834)

1 *Barthram's Dirge*

They shot him dead at the Nine-Stane Rig,  
Beside the Headless Cross,  
And they left him lying in his blood,  
Upon the moor and moss.

They made a bier of the broken bow, 5  
The sauch and the aspin gray,  
And they bore him to the Lady Chapèl,  
And waked him there all day.

A lady came to that lonely bower,  
And threw her robes aside; 10  
She tore her ling long yellow hair,  
And knelt at Barthram's side.

She bathed him in the Lady-Well,  
His wounds sae deep and sair;  
And she plaited a garland for his breast, 15  
And a garland for his hair.

They rowed him in a lily-sheet,  
And bare him to his earth;  
And the Gray Friars sung the dead man's mass  
As they passed the Chapel Garth. 20

They buried him at the mirk midnight,  
When the dew fell cold and still:  
When the aspin gray forgot to play,  
And the mist clung to the hill.

They dug his grave but a bare foot deep, 25  
By the edge of the Nine-Stane Burn,  
And they covered him o'er with the heather-flower,  
The moss, and the lady-fern.

A Gray Friar staid upon the grave,  
And sang till the morning-tide; 30  
And a friar shall sing for Barthram's soul  
While the Headless Cross shall bide.

*1802-03*

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