

Samuel Ferguson (1810-86)

2 *The Forester's Complaint*

Through our wild wood-walks here,
Sunbright and shady,
Free as the forest deer
Roams a lone lady:
Far from her castle-keep, 5
Down in the valley,
Roams she, by dingle deep,
Green holm and alley,
With her sweet presence bright
Gladd'ning my dwelling — 10
Oh, fair her face of light,
Past the tongue's telling!
Woe was me
E'er to see
Beauty so shining; 15
Ever since, hourly,
Have I been pining!

In our blithe sports' debates
Down by the river,
I, of my merry mates, 20
Foremost was ever;
Skilfullest with my flute,
Leading the maidens
Heark'ning, by moonlight, mute,
To its sweet cadence: 25
Sprightliest in the dance
Tripping together —
Such a one was I once
Ere she came hither!
Woe was me 30
E'er to see
Beauty so shining;
Ever since, hourly,
Have I been pining!

Loud now my comrades laugh 35
 As I pass by them;
 Broadsword and quarter-staff
 No more I ply them:
 Coy now the maidens frown
 Wanting their dances; 40
 How can their faces brown
 Win one, who fancies
 Even an angel's face
 Dark to be seen would
 Be, by the Lily-grace 45
 Gladd'ning the greenwood?
 Woe was me
 E'er to see
 Beauty so shining;
 Ever since, hourly, 50
 Have I been pining!

Wolf, by my broken bow
 Idle is lying,
 While through the woods I go,
 All the day, sighing, 55
 Tracing her footsteps small
 Through the moss'd cover,
 Hiding then, breathless all,
 At the sight of her,
 Lest my rude gazing should 60
 From her haunt scare her —
 Oh, what a solitude
 Wanting her, there were!
 Woe was me
 E'er to see 65
 Beauty so shining;
 Ever since, hourly,
 Have I been pining!

(From *Lays of the Western Gael 1865*. Otley,
 Washington D. C.: Woodstock Books, 2001)