









The mouse may cheep in Stirling keep,  
But not, please God, for me.” 150

Sir Mowbray was a gallant knight,  
And raised to high command  
By the great soul that left his clay  
At Borough-on-the-Sand.  
And, give the old knight his wonted place 155  
Among the Southrons hot,  
And let him tread the living sward,  
In teeth of the proud Scot,  
That arm of his hath pith enough  
To show you lion’s play 160  
Where the fire flies from flashing eyes,  
The blue eyes and the grey!

Next morn arose as peaceful  
As if war had never been,  
Though nations twain in battle-gear 165  
Were standing in its sheen,  
With gilded flags like Beltane fires  
All gleaming in the sun,  
And men on both sides muttering, “Thus  
Shall battlefields be won.” 170

Like waters fed by numerous springs  
The Northern ranks are thronged  
With vassal leal and bold outlaw,  
The wronger and the wronged;  
Grim greybeards that have swung their swords 175  
Around the Wallace wight;  
Brave striplings that have fled from home,  
But will not flee from fight;  
And some who have aforetime fought  
Against the leal and true 180  
Will this day stand in Scotland’s van,  
And soldier penance do.  
Yea, even the knave whose caitiff life  
Has hardly one proud day,  
Who comes for plunder — he for once 185  
Has come in time to slay.

King Bruce surveyed his motley host  
With no unhopeful eye:  
“Let every soldier make his bed  
As he would wish to lie! 190  
I give old Scotland’s flag in charge  
To this gray rock,” said he —  
“A standard bearer that shall fly,  
Good friends, as soon as we!”

Our gracious King! Right well we knew 195  
How he had played the man,  
How he had lived an outlaw’s life,  
And borne the Church’s ban,  
And how he kept his fame so well  
In flight, when doomed to flee, 200  
And how he nursed a heart of ruth  
In the breast of victory!

Ho for the men that loved their King  
When loyal men were few!  
Ho for the King that knew his men, 205  
And trusted whom he knew!  
And, Scotsmen, sacred keep that stone  
Till Bannock’s burn run dry,  
For from that stone our stainless flag,  
And not one Scot, did fly. 210

Old Maurice of Inchaffray —  
Save his grey head from harm! —  
Had brought to bless our battle-field  
Saint Fillan’s relic-arm;  
But how our hearts beat in us 215  
When we heard the good man say  
That living arms and laymen nerves  
Were all required to-day!  
And when he raised the Cross, and bade  
Us cry unto the Lord, 220  
And seek the grace of every saint  
That ever drew a sword,  
And pardoned fight and pardoned fall,

Scarce was the counsel given  
 When hand to heart, and knee to earth, 225  
 And every eye to Heaven!  
 Ye could have heard the Abbot tread,  
 Unsandalled though he trod,  
 So breathlessly the Scottish host  
 Were crying to their God! 230  
 "They kneel!" exclaimed the Southern King,  
 "For grace the traitors sue."  
 "They sue for grace," said Umfraville,  
 "But not, my liege, from you!"

Now came proud England's battleburst — 235  
 O ladies, 'twere a sight  
 On which the fairest ladye-eye  
 With joyaunce would alight,  
 To see such gallant gentlemen,  
 At tourney, dance, or play; 240  
 But this was not the time of feast,  
 Or joust, or holiday,  
 And first the cloud of archery  
 Threw out its arrowy sleet;  
 God help the doomed but dauntless breasts 245  
 On whom that shower did beat!  
 But Keith has rounded Milton bog,  
 On Bannock's farthest bank,  
 And with a fair five hundred horse  
 Dashed right into their flank. 250  
 Ten thousand strong the bowmen stood,  
 All trained to bend the yew,  
 But with his fair five hundred  
 The Keith has bit them through.

Then Scotland bared her good broadsword 255  
 And baptised it in blood,  
 And Bannock Burn was swoll'n and red,  
 But not with rain or mud.  
 And when the men-at-arms assayed  
 Our bristling hedge of ash, 260  
 'Twas such a crash of spears that men  
 For miles could hear the crash.

Even the base followers of the camp,  
     Debarred the grace of fight,  
 No sooner heard the crash of spears 265  
     Than they, too, came in sight;  
 Came trooping up the weather-gleam  
     And fringed the Gillies' Hill,  
 Arriving like a fresher force  
     To chase, if not to kill. 270  
 "A second host!" King Edward cried,  
     "And mine is almost gone."  
 "Nay, sire," De Valence said, "The Scots  
     To-day will need but one."

For each man fought as boors might work 275  
     In harvest-time or spring —  
 'Twas the spring-time of liberty,  
     But hate's ingathering —  
 Till on the uneven and pitted ground  
     With calthrops thickly sown, 280  
 A crop of staggering cavaliers  
     And plunging steeds was mown;  
 Till Hereford had turned his rein,  
     Till Gloster's heart was cold —  
 Brave Gloster's deathbed shall be called 285  
     For aye the Bloody Fold —  
 Till knightly D'Argentine had urged  
     The Southern King away,  
 Brave D'Argentine whose one good sword  
     Almost renewed the fray! 290  
 Till home-fast boys and screaming girls  
     Beheld, at Ingram's Crook,  
 Balls of red foam and trunkless heads  
     Slow sailing down the brook!  
 The very winds were vocal, 295  
     The dumb hills seemed to cry,  
 "Your bairns are sleeping at our feet,  
     Ho! save your homes or die."  
 And saved they were and safe they are,  
     And shall be safe and free, 300  
 For Right was Might at Bannock Burn, —  
     To God all Glory be!



