

William Bell Scott (1811-90)

## 2 *Glenkindie*

*About Glenkindie and his man,  
A false ballant hath long been writ;  
Some bootless loon had written it,  
    Upon a bootless plan:  
    But I have found the true at last,  
And here it is, so hold it fast.  
'Twas made by a kind damozel  
Who loved him and his man right well.*

Glenkindie, best of harpers, came  
    Unbidden to our town,  
And he was sad and sad to see,  
    For love had worn him down.

It was the love, as all men know, 5  
    The love that brought him down,  
The hopeless love for the king's daughter,  
    The dove that heired a crown.

Now he wore not that collar of gold, 10  
    His dress was forest green,  
His wondrous fair and rich mantel  
    Had lost its silvery sheen.

But still by his side walked Rafe, his boy, 15  
    In goodly cramoisie,  
Of all the boys that ever I saw,  
    The goodliest boy was he.

Oh, Rafe the page, oh Rafe the page, 20  
    Ye stole the heart frae me,  
Oh, Rafe the page, oh Rafe the page,  
    I wonder where ye be;  
We ne'er may see Glenkindie more,  
    But may we never see thee?

Glenkindie came within the hall,  
We set him on the dais,  
And gave him bread, and gave him wine, 25  
The best in all the place.

We set for him the guests' high chair,  
And spread the naperie,  
Our Dame herself would serve for him,  
And I for Rafe, perdie! 30

But down he sat on a low, low stool,  
And thrust his long legs out,  
And leant his back to the high chair,  
And turned his harp about.

He turned it round, he stroked the strings, 35  
He touched each tirling-pin,  
He put his mouth to the sounding-board  
And breathed his breath therein.

And Rafe sat over against his face,  
And looked at him wistfullie, 40  
I almost grat ere he began,  
They were so sad to see.

The very first stroke he strack that day  
We all came crowding near,  
And the second stroke he strack that day 45  
We all were smit with fear.

The third stroke that he strack that day  
Full fain we were to cry,  
The fourth stroke that he strack that day  
We thought that we would die. 50

No tongue can tell how sweet it was,  
How far and yet how near,  
We saw the saints in Paradise,  
And bairnies on their bier.

And our sweet Dame saw her good lord 55  
She told me privilie —  
She saw him as she saw him last,  
On his ship upon the sea.

Anon he laid his little harp by,  
He shut his wondrous eyes, 60  
We stood a long time like dumb things,  
Stood in a dumb surprise.

Then all at once we left that trance,  
And shouted where we stood,  
We clasped each other's hands and vowed 65  
We would be wise and good.

Soon he rose up and Rafe rose too,  
He drank wine and broke bread,  
He clasped hands with our trembling Dame,  
But never a word he said. 70  
They went, alack and lack-a-day,  
They went the way they came.

I followed them all down the floor,  
And oh but I had drouth,  
To touch his cheek, to touch his hand, 75  
To kiss Rafe's velvet mouth.

But I knew such was not for me;  
They went straight from the door;  
We saw them fade within the mist,  
And never saw them more. 80

(From *A Poet's Harvest Home: Being One Hundred Short Poems*. London, 1882)