

S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834)

*1 The Ballad of the Dark Ladié*

A Fragment

Beneath yon birch with silver bark,  
And boughs so pendulous and fair,  
The brook falls scatter'd down the rock:  
And all is mossy there!

And there upon the moss she sits, 5  
The Dark Ladié in silent pain;  
The heavy tear is in her eye,  
And drops and swells again.

Three times she sends her little page 10  
Up the castled mountain's breast,  
If he might find the Knight that wears  
The Griffin for his crest.

The sun was sloping down the sky,  
And she had linger'd there all day,  
Counting moments, dreaming fears — 15  
Oh wherefore can he stay?

She hears a rustling o'er the brook,  
She sees far off a swinging bough!  
"Tis He! 'Tis my betrothéd Knight!  
Lord Falkland, it is Thou!" 20

She springs, she clasps him round the neck,  
She sobs a thousand hopes and fears,  
Her kisses glowing on his cheeks  
She quenches with her tears.

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'My friends with rude ungentle words 25  
They scoff and bid me fly to thee!  
O give me shelter in thy breast!  
O shield and shelter me!

'My Henry, I have given thee much,

I gave what I can ne'er recall, 30  
I gave my heart, I gave my peace,  
O Heaven! I gave thee all.'

The Knight made answer to the Maid,  
While to his heart he held her hand,  
'Nine castles hath my noble sire, 35  
None statelier in the land.

'The fairest one shall be my love's,  
The fairest castle of the nine!  
Wait only till the stars peep out,  
The fairest shall be thine: 40

'Wait only till the hand of eve  
Hath wholly closed yon western bars,  
And through the dark we two will steal  
Beneath the twinkling stars!' —

'The dark? the dark? No! not the dark? 45  
The twinkling stars? How, Henry? How?'  
O God! 'twas in the eye of noon  
He pledged his sacred vow!

And in the eye of noon my love  
Shall lead me from my mother's door, 50  
Sweet boys and girls all clothed in white  
Strewing flowers before:

But first the nodding minstrels go  
With music meet for lordly bowers,  
The children next in snow-white vests, 55  
Strewing buds and flowers!

And then my love and I shall pace,  
My jet black hair in pearly braids,  
Between our comely bachelors  
And blushing bridal maids. 60  
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1834

(From *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Oxford, 1912)