

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)