

James B. Manson (?1820-68)

2 *Sir Guido*

A house of many mansions was  
    Sir Guido's mind, and he  
One chamber had of which he gave  
    No man to know the key.  
Unventilated memories glared 5  
    And festered in the gloom;  
Ah, would he but admit the air,  
    And light up yet the room!  
No charm like this the demon knows  
    To bind us to his will, 10  
No magic like the consciousness  
    Of unacknowledged Ill.

“Now, saddle me the coal-black steed,  
    And make what speed ye may,  
For ill the road and long the ride 15  
    That I must take to-day;”  
Thus speaks Sir Guido, and the groom  
    Hath hasten'd to obey.  
That steed the menials shun, and deem 20  
    He hath a fiendish eye,  
And, save one wicked groom, they say  
    None may approach him nigh;  
And nought, they ween, goes well at home,  
    And none can say “God speed,”  
The day Sir Guido bids his groom 25  
    Bring out the coal-black steed.

Sir Guido seeks his lady's bower  
    With look constrain'd but high,  
Nor stops to wipe the stinging tear  
    That lurks in either eye. 30  
He comes to bid his love farewell,  
    But scarce a word can speak,  
And 'tis a dry and burning lip

He presses on her cheek.  
O lady wondrous fair, the heavens 35  
Were gracious at thy birth:  
And gracious all thy life has been  
As e'er was life on earth!

The coal-black steed is in his stall,  
And neigheth to be free, 40  
But there's a tempest on the wing  
That must not beat on thee.

"One black forbidding cloud," she said,  
"Bounds upward like a bomb,  
But how my heart will bless the storm 45  
That keepeth thee at home!

The coal-black steed is in his stall,  
And in his stall shall stay; —  
'Twould be a sin to make me sad,  
So willing to be gay." 50

"Dear heart, be gay," Sir Guido said,  
"Until I come again;  
I come" — he said, but starts like one  
That feels a sudden pain.

Scarce hath he spoken when the steed 55  
Sends forth a dreary neigh;  
'Twas aye a sound, the menials said,  
Sir Guido must obey.

Like one whose time has come, he rides —  
Fast, fast, and all alone; 60  
Alone they see him ride, and yet  
The groom is also gone.

The lady at her window stood  
To see him take the hill:  
But wherefore is her brow so hot, 65  
And why her heart so chill?

One moment knight and steed were seen  
Against the nether sky,  
Anon the undulating ground  
Hath swept them from her eye; 70  
And yet on hopeless vacancy

She cannot help but gaze,  
Feeling the while a blight has smit  
The blossom of her days!  
She calls it weakness, and would fain 75  
Repel the rising tear,  
Yet cannot choose but gaze again,  
And cannot choose but fear.

The thunder peal'd, the black clouds reel'd,  
The fire-flaught flashed away, — 80  
There's many a stout heart yet that quakes  
Remembering that fierce day!  
Nor did the storm sink till a stroke  
Of night smote out the sky,  
And from the elms the wind at fits 85  
Still sent a dismal sigh.  
The lady starts: she surely hears  
Her good knight pricking fast,  
Or is 't the beating of a heart  
That soon must beat its last? 90  
The old church-bell begins to toll,  
And, hark, a horse's tramp!  
Forth rush the servants in the dark,  
Each menial with a lamp.

The tramp comes on: "I would," says one, 95  
"We had a glimpse of sky;  
The lights burn eerie." On it comes,  
And now the wind is high.  
And now the nearing gallop wakes  
The elmy avenue; 100  
God help us, how the trees did shriek,  
And how the wind it blew!  
A gust of wind, a plash of rain,  
The lights die with a hiss,  
And night seems trebly black, but now 105  
The road he cannot miss.  
The lights are gone, and let them go,  
He cannot miss the way —  
The tramp goes past them, and the steed  
Sends forth his hideous neigh. 110

By that wild neigh, be what it may,  
One poor heart there was riven:  
For the next sound Lady Guido heard  
Came from a harp in heaven.

Yet some will say 'twas not Sir Guy 115  
Did then so strangely pass;  
No gate was found next morn unbarr'd,  
No hoof-dint on the grass;  
But when the lady was interr'd  
Beneath the dodder'd yew, 120  
One grave alone the sexton dug,  
But there anon were two.  
Upon the grassy sod of one  
God's angels come and sit,  
While not a blade was ever found 125  
Upon the other yet.  
In the old churchyard, side by side,  
The graves may still be seen;  
One dry as ashes of the pit,  
And one as emerald green. 130

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