

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

12 *Glenfinlas; or Lord Ronald's Coronach*

“O hone a rie! O hone a rie!
The pride of Albin's line is o'er,
And fall'n Glenartney's stateliest tree;
We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!” —

O, sprung from great Macgillianore, 5
The chief that never fear'd a foe,
How matchless was thy broad claymore,
How deadly thine unerring bow!

Well can the Saxon widows tell,
How, on the Teith's resounding shore, 10
The boldest Lowland warriors fell,
As down from Lenny's pass you bore.

But o'er his hills, in festal day,
How blazed Lord Ronald's beltane-tree,
While youths and maids the light strathspey 15
So nimbly danced with Highland glee!

Cheer'd by the strength of Ronald's shell,
E'en age forgot his tresses hoar;
But now the loud lament we swell,
O ne'er to see Lord Ronald more! 20

From distant isles a chieftain came,
The joys of Ronald's halls to find,
And chase with him the dark-brown game,
That bounds o'er Albin's hills of wind.

'Twas Moy; whom in Columba's isle 25
The seer's prophetic spirit found,

As, with a minstrel's fire the while,
He waked his harp's harmonious sound.

Full many a spell to him was known,
Which wandering spirits shrink to hear; 30
And many a lay of potent tone,
Was never meant for mortal ear.

For there, 'tis said, in mystic mood,
High converse with the dead they hold,
And oft espy the fated shroud, 35
That shall the future corpse enfold.

O so it fell, that on a day,
To rouse the red deer from their den,
The Chiefs have ta'en their distant way,
And scour'd the deep Glenfinlas glen. 40

No vassals wait their sports to aid,
To watch their safety, deck their board;
Their simple dress, the Highland plaid,
Their trusty guard, the Highland sword.

Three summer days, through brake and dell, 45
Their whistling shafts successful flew;
And still, when dewy evening fell,
The quarry to their hut they drew.

In grey Glenfinlas' deepest nook
The solitary cabin stood, 50
Fast by Moneira's sullen brook,
Which murmurs through that lonely wood.

Soft fell the night, the sky was calm,
When three successive days had flown;
And summer mist in dewy balm 55
Steep'd heathy bank, and mossy stone.

The moon, half-hid in silvery flakes,
Afar her dubious radiance shed,
Quivering on Katrine's distant lakes,
And resting on Benledi's head. 60

Now in their hut, in social guise,
Their silvan fare the Chiefs enjoy;
And pleasure laughs in Ronald's eyes,
As many a pledge he quaffs to Moy.

"What lack we here to crown our bliss, 65
While thus the pulse of joy beats high?
What, but fair woman's yielding kiss,
Her panting breath and melting eye?

"To chase the deer of yonder shades,
This morning left their father's pile 70
The fairest of our mountain maids,
The daughters of the proud Glengyle.

"Long have I sought sweet Mary's heart,
And dropp'd the tear, and heaved the sigh:
But vain the lover's wily art, 75
Beneath a sister's watchful eye.

"But thou mayst teach that guardian fair,
While far with Mary I am flown,
Of other hearts to cease her care,
And find it hard to guard her own. 80

"Touch but thy harp, thou soon shalt see
The lovely Flora of Glengyle,
Unmindful of her charge and me,
Hang on thy notes, 'twixt tear and smile.

"Or, if she choose a melting tale, 85
All underneath the greenwood bough,
Will good St. Oran's rule prevail,

Stern huntsman of the rigid brow?" —

"Since Enrick's fight, since Morna's death,
No more on me shall rapture rise, 90
Responsive to the panting breath,
Or yielding kiss, or melting eyes.

"E'en then, when o'er the heath of woe,
Where sunk my hopes of love and fame,
I bade my harp's wild wailings flow, 95
On me the Seer's sad spirit came.

"The last dread curse of angry heaven,
With ghastly sights and sounds of woe,
To dash each glimpse of joy was given —
The gift, the future ill to know. 100

"The bark thou saw'st, yon summer morn,
So gaily part from Oban's bay,
My eye beheld her dash'd and torn,
Far on the rocky Colonsay.

"Thy Fergus too — thy sister's son, 105
Thou saw'st, with pride, the gallant's power,
As marching 'gainst the Lord of Downe,
He left the skirts of huge Benmore.

"Thou only saw'st their tartans wave,
As down Benvoirlich's side they wound, 110
Heard'st but the pibroch, answering brave
To many a target clanking round.

"I heard the groans, I mark'd the tears,
I saw the wound his bosom bore,
When on the serried Saxon spears 115
He pour'd his clan's resistless roar.

"And thou, who bidst me think of bliss,

And bidst my heart awake to glee,
And court, like thee, the wanton kiss —
That heart, O Ronald, bleeds for thee! 120

“I see the death-damps chill thy brow;
I hear thy Warning Spirit cry;
The corpse-lights dance — they’re gone, and now . . .
No more is given to gifted eye!” —

“Alone enjoy thy dreary dreams, 125
Sad prophet of the evil hour!
Say, should we scorn joy’s transient beams,
Because to-morrow’s storm may lour?

“Or false, or sooth, thy words of woe,
Clangillian’s Chieftain ne’er shall fear; 130
His blood shall bound at rapture’s glow,
Though doom’d to stain the Saxon spear.

“E’en now, to meet me in yon dell,
My Mary’s buskins brush the dew.”
He spoke, nor bade the Chief farewell, 135
But called his dogs, and gay withdrew.

Within an hour return’d each hound;
In rush’d the rousers of the deer;
They howl’d in melancholy sound,
Then closely couch’d beside the Seer. 140

No Ronald yet; though midnight came,
And sad were Moy’s prophetic dreams,
As, bending o’er the dying flame,
He fed the watch-fire’s quivering gleams.

Sudden the hounds erect their ears, 145
And sudden cease their moaning howl;
Close press’d to Moy, they mark their fears
By shivering limbs and stifled growl.

Untouch'd, the harp began to ring,
As softly, slowly, oped the door; 150
And shook responsive every string,
As light a footstep press'd the floor.

And by the watch-fire's glimmering light,
Close by the minstrel's side was seen
An huntress maid, in beauty bright, 155
All dropping wet her robes of green.

All dropping wet her garments seem;
Chill'd was her cheek, her bosom bare,
As, bending o'er the dying gleam,
She wrung the moisture from her hair. 160

With maiden blush, she softly said,
"O gentle huntsman, hast thou seen,
In deep Glenfinlas' moonlight glade,
A lovely maid in vest of green:

"With her a Chief in Highland pride; 165
His shoulders bear the hunter's bow,
The mountain dirk adorns his side,
Far on the wind his tartans flow?" —

"And who art thou? and who are they?"
All ghastly gazing, Moy replied: 170
"And why, beneath the moon's pale ray,
Dare ye thus roam Glenfinlas' side?" —

"Where wild Loch Katrine pours her tide,
Blue, dark, and deep, round many an isle,
Our father's towers o'erhang her side, 175
The castle of the bold Glengyle.

"To chase the dun Glenfinlas deer,
Our woodland course this morn we bore,

And haply met, while wandering here,
The son of great Macgillianore. 180

“O aid me, then, to seek the pair,
Whom, loitering in the woods, I lost;
Alone, I dare not venture there,
Where walks, they say, the shrieking ghost.” —

“Yes, many a shrieking ghost walks there; 185
Then, first, my own sad vow to keep,
Here will I pour my midnight prayer,
Which still must rise when mortals sleep.” —

“O first, for pity’s gentle sake,
Guide a lone wanderer on her way! 190
For I must cross the haunted brake,
And reach my father’s towers ere day.” —

“First, three times tell each Ave-bead,
And thrice a Pater-noster say;
Then kiss with me the holy rede; 195
So shall we safely wend our way.” —

“O shame to knighthood, strange and foul!
Go, doff the bonnet from thy brow,
And shroud thee in the monkish cowl,
Which best befits thy sullen vow. 200

“Not so, by high Dunlathmon’s fire,
Thy heart was froze to love and joy,
When gaily rung thy raptured lyre
To wanton Morna’s melting eye.”

Wild stared the minstrel’s eyes of flame, 205
And high his sable locks arose,
And quick his colour went and came,
As fear and rage alternate rose.

“And thou! when by the blazing oak
I lay, to her and love resign’d, 210
Say, rode ye on the eddying smoke,
Or sail’d ye on the midnight wind?”

“Not thine a race of mortal blood,
Nor old Glengyle’s pretended line;
Thy dame, the Lady of the Flood — 215
Thy sire, the Monarch of the Mine.”

He mutter’d thrice St. Oran’s rhyme,
And thrice St. Fillan’s powerful prayer;
Then turn’d him to the eastern clime,
And sternly shook his coal-black hair. 220

And, bending o’er his harp, he flung
His wildest witch-notes on the wind;
And loud, and high, and strange, they rung,
As many a magic change they find.

Tall wax’d the Spirit’s altering form, 225
Till to the roof her stature grew;
Then, mingling with the rising storm,
With one wild yell away she flew.

Rain beats, hail rattles, whirlwinds tear:
The slender hut in fragments flew; 230
But not a lock of Moy’s loose hair
Was waved by wind, or wet by dew.

Wild mingling with the howling gale,
Loud bursts of ghastly laughter rise;
High o’er the minstrel’s head they sail, 235
And die amid the northern skies.

The voice of thunder shook the wood,
As ceased the more than mortal yell;
And, spattering foul, a shower of blood

Upon the hissing firebrands fell. 240

 Next dropp'd from high a mangled arm;
 The fingers strain'd an half-drawn blade:
 And last, the life-blood streaming warm,
 Torn from the trunk, a gasping head.

 Oft o'er that head, in battling field, 245
 Stream'd the proud crest of high Benmore;
 That arm the broad claymore could wield,
 Which dyed the Teith with Saxon gore.

 Woe to Moneira's sullen rills!
 Woe to Glenfinlas' dreary glen! 250
 There never son of Albin's hills
 Shall draw the hunter's shaft agen!

 E'en the tired pilgrim's burning feet
 At noon shall shun that sheltering den,
 Lest, journeying in their rage, he meet 255
 The wayward Ladies of the Glen.

 And we — behind the Chieftain's shield,
 No more shall we in safety dwell;
 None leads the people to the field —
 And we the loud lament must swell. 260

 O hone a rie! O hone a rie!
 The pride of Albin's line is o'er!
 And fall'n Glenartney's stateliest tree;
 We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!

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