

William Robert Spencer (1769-1834)

1 *Beth Gêlert; or, The Grave of the Greyhound*

The spearmen heard the bugle sound,
And cheerly smiled the morn;
And many a brach, and many a hound,
Obeyed Llewelyn's horn.

And still he blew a louder blast, 5
And gave a lustier cheer:
'Come, Gêlert, come, wer't never last
Llewelyn's horn to hear.

'Oh where does faithful Gêlert roam,
The flower of all his race; 10
So true, so brave, a lamb at home,
A lion in the chase?'

'Twas only at Llewelyn's board
The faithful Gêlert fed;
He watched, he served, he cheered his lord, 15
And sentinelled his bed.

In sooth he was a peerless hound,
The gift of royal John;
But now no Gêlert could be found,
And all the chase rode on. 20

And now, as o'er the rocks and dells
The gallant chidings rise,
All Snowdon's craggy chaos yells
The many-mingled cries.

That day Llewelyn little loved 25
The chase of hart and hare;
And scant and small the booty proved,
For Gêlert was not there.

Unpleas'd Llewelyn homeward hied,
When near the portal seat 30
His truant Gêlert he espied,
Bounding his lord to greet.

But when he gain'd his castle door
Aghast the chieftain stood;
The hound all o'er was smeared with gore, 35
His lips, his fangs, ran blood.

Llewelyn gaz'd with fierce surprise;
Unused such looks to meet,
His favourite check'd his joyful guise,
And crouched, and lick'd his feet. 40

Onward in haste Llewelyn pass'd,
And on went Gêlert too;
And still, where'er his eyes he cast,
Fresh blood-gouts shock'd his view.

O'erturn'd his infant's bed he found, 45
With blood-stain'd covert rent;
And all around the walls and ground
With recent blood besprent.

He call'd his child — no voice repli'd —
He search'd with terror wild; 50
Blood, blood he found on every side,
But nowhere found his child.

'Hell hound! my child's by thee devour'd,'
The frantic father cried;
And to the hilt his vengeful sword 55
He plung'd in Gêlert's side.

His suppliant looks, as prone he fell,
No pity could impart;
But still his Gêlert's dying yell

Passed heavy o'er his heart. 60

Aroused by Gêlert's dying yell,
Some slumberer wakened nigh:
What words the parent's joy could tell
To hear his infant's cry!

Concealed beneath a tumbled heap 65
His hurried search had missed,
All glowing from his rosy sleep,
The cherub boy he kissed.

Nor scathe had he, nor harm, nor dread,
But, the same couch beneath, 70
Lay a gaunt wolf, all torn and dead,
Tremendous still in death.

Ah, what was then Llewelyn's pain!
For now the truth was clear;
His gallant hound the wolf had slain, 75
To save Llewelyn's heir.

Vain, vain was all Llewelyn's woe:
'Best of thy kind, adieu!
The frantic blow, which laid thee low,
This heart shall ever rue.' 80

And now a gallant tomb they raise,
With costly sculpture decked;
And marbles storied with his praise
Poor Gêlert's bones protect.

There never could the spearman pass, 85
Or forester, unmoved;
There, oft the tear-besprinkled grass
Llewelyn's sorrow proved.

And there he hung his horn and spear,
And there, as evening fell, 90

In fancy's ear he oft would hear
Poor Gêlert's dying yell.

And till great Snowdon's rocks grow old,
And cease the storm to brave,
The consecrated spot shall hold 95
The name of 'Gêlert's grave'.

1800

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