

Robert Surtees (1779-1834)

1 *Barthram's Dirge*

They shot him dead at the Nine-Stane Rig,
Beside the Headless Cross,
And they left him lying in his blood,
Upon the moor and moss.

They made a bier of the broken bow, 5
The sauch and the aspin gray,
And they bore him to the Lady Chapèl,
And waked him there all day.

A lady came to that lonely bower,
And threw her robes aside; 10
She tore her ling long yellow hair,
And knelt at Barthram's side.

She bathed him in the Lady-Well,
His wounds sae deep and sair;
And she plaited a garland for his breast, 15
And a garland for his hair.

They rowed him in a lily-sheet,
And bare him to his earth;
And the Gray Friars sung the dead man's mass
As they passed the Chapel Garth. 20

They buried him at the mirk midnight,
When the dew fell cold and still:
When the aspin gray forgot to play,
And the mist clung to the hill.

They dug his grave but a bare foot deep, 25
By the edge of the Nine-Stane Burn,
And they covered him o'er with the heather-flower,
The moss, and the lady-fern.

A Gray Friar staid upon the grave,
And sang till the morning-tide; 30
And a friar shall sing for Barthram's soul
While the Headless Cross shall bide.

1802-03

(From G. B. Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 1. London, 1881)