

And pity, not the least, had warmed his veins
His tongue was loosened and he told his tale.

“ Oh, Malcolm, if a sin can be atoned
By suffering, I have suffered : and I know
That suffering has atoned : yet not mine own.
I was thrust down amongst the dregs of men.
I hated them, I who abased my wit
To wake their dreadful mirth, more fallen than they.
My heart was hardened, and my life each day
Slipped down to lower levels. This I knew
And I abhorred myself. Belief in God
I had not, nor in man : in naught but hell,
For in my breast I bore the fires of hell.
I would have died but durst not, for, beyond,
I saw my torment, ever deepening, robbed
Of the faint hope of change which eased it now.
And change at last befell. Week upon week,
What time the bells rang o’er the Sabbath fields,
Armoured in purity, a fair sweet girl