

Thus spoke the bold George Douglas
To Scotland's weeping queen,
As, by her side, he gazed upon
The battle's changing scene.

And, as he spoke, five horsemen
Came dashing from the wood,
Their chargers' necks were white with foam,
Their spurs were red with blood.

"Now, madam, now," the Douglas cried;
"Sec, sec, those men-at-arms, who ride
"So fiercely there below;

"The foremost oft has crossed your path—
"Good cause, indeed, your highness hath
"Lord Lindsay's name to know.

"The next is William of Lochleven,
"Than whom you have not, under heaven,
"A more relentless foe:

"Nor is the title of the third,
"To Mary Stuart strange;
"Methinks your majesty has heard

"A name that serves as rally-word,
"Whenever factious fire's are stirred,
"Kirkaldy of the Grange.

"The other two, their arms proclaim,
"As common men, unknown to fame.

"These horsemen are already,
"Fair lady, on your track;
"Then hasto to fly, and I will try
"My best, to keep them back."

"Stay, Douglas," quoth Queen Mary,
"And lower down your lance,
"For one to five are fearful odds,
"You must not dare the chance."

"Alone I dare my lance to lay
"At rest, against their host;
"Know, lady, know, our clansmen say,
"In skirmish, raid, or battle fray,
"A Douglas, be he who he may,
"Will never leave his post."

"Alas! then," Mary Stuart cried;
"Too late, too late,
"I see your fate;
"None ever loved me, but he died."

Between Queen Mary and her foes,
Close where a gentle hillock rose,
There stretched a little plain;
Upon whose edge a pass there lay,
Where rocks, strewn thickly in the way,
Well mounted knight might hold at bay,
Or charger's course restrain.
This was, indeed, the only place,
Within the intervening space,

Where one stout arm, alone could hope,
With odds as great as five, to cope.
The Douglas has his efforts strained;
This plain is crossed, this pass is gained;
And, charging down the hillock's heather,
He and Lochleven clash together.

With waving crest, and lance at rest,
The Douglas meets his foes:
And backward beat, from off his seat,
The foremost horseman goes.

Although, in Scotland wide, but few
Could match him in the field,
Lochleven's spear was broken through,
And shattered was his shield.
That dauntless knight, that fearless man,
The bravest of his gullant clan,
Was rendered, by one lance's thrust,
A rigid mass of lifeless dust.

Lord Lindsay, riding next, dashed by;
His battle-axe was raised on high,
And as he passed, he aimed a blow,
To lay Queen Mary's champion low.
But Douglas, ever on his guard,
For the rude onset stood prepared;
His horse upon its haunches threw,
His sabre from its scabbard drew;
Then, whirling round with tightened rein,
Renewed the dreadful strife again;
And truly, as they stood, they were,
For strength or skill, a well matched pair.
Each stroke they try, each guard they know;
Their weapons flit now high now low;
Thrust follows thrust, and blow meets blow;
Yet all so swiftly, that the eye
No single movement can descry.
At length Lord Lindsay, parrying
His fierce opponent's blade,
Drew back his battle-axe too far,
And bare his helmet laid.
Then Douglas raised a dreadful yell,
On Lindsay's casque his claymore fell,
And, with its force, the trenchant steel,
Cleft the mailed knight from head to heel.

Queen Mary viewed the dreadful fray,
Her prudence bade her haste away,
Her woman's feelings bade her stay;
And feelings, though they may be wrong,
Are ever certain to be strong.
She staid—she saw Lochleven, slain—
Fall lifeless on the bloody plain;
She saw Lord Lindsay, drenched with gore,
Hurled to the ground to rise no more;