

That seemed to suit the stormy state of men's uncertain minds.
 The touch of care had blanched her cheek—her smile was sadder now,
 The weight of royalty had pressed too heavy on her brow;
 And traitors to her councils came, and rebels to the field;
 The Stuart sceptre well she swayed, but the sword she could not wield.
 She thought of all her blighted hopes—the dreams of youth's brief day,
 And summoned Rizzio with his lute, and bade the minstrel play
 The songs she loved in early years—the songs of gay Navarre,
 The songs, perchance, that erst were sung by gallant Chatelard;
 They half beguiled her of her cares, they soothed her into smiles.
 They won her thoughts from bigots' zeal, and fierce domestic broils;
 But hark! the tramp of armed men! the Douglas' battle-cry!
 They come—they come; and lo! the scowl of Ruthven's hollow eye!
 And swords are drawn, and daggers gleam, and tears and words are vain.
 The ruffian steel is in his heart—the faithful Rizzio's slain!
 Then Mary Stuart brushed aside the tears that trickling fell:
 "Now for my father's arm!" she said; "my woman's heart, farewell!"

THE PRISON.

The scene was changed. It was a lake, with one small, lonely isle,
 And there, within the prison walls of its baronial pile,
 Stern men stood menacing their queen, till she should stoop to sign
 The traitorous scroll that snatched the crown from her ancestral line;
 "My lords! my lords!" the captive said, "were I but once more free,
 With ten good knights on yonder shore to aid my cause and me,
 That parchment would I scatter wide to every breeze that blows,
 And once more reign a Stuart Queen o'er my remorseless foes!"
 A red spot burned upon her cheek, streamed her rich tresses down,
 She wrote the words. She stood erect—a queen without a crown.

THE DEFEAT.

The scene was changed. A royal host a royal banner bore,
 And the faithful of the land stood round their smiling queen once more;
 She stayed her steed upon a hill—she saw them marching by—
 She heard their shouts—she read success in every flashing eye;
 The tumult of the strife begins—it roars—it dies away;
 And Mary's troops and banners now, and courtiers where are they?
 Scattered and strewn, and flying far, defenceless and undone—
 Oh! God; to see what she has lost, and think what guilt has won!
 Away!—away! thy gallant steed must act no laggard's part;
 Yet vain his speed, for thou dost bear the arrow in thy heart.

THE SCAFFOLD.

The scene was changed. Beside the block a sullen headsmen stood,
 And gleamed the broad axe in his hand that soon must drip with blood.
 With slow and steady step there came a lady through the hall,
 And breathless silence chained the lips, and touched the hearts of all;
 Rich were the sable robes she wore—her white veil round her fell,
 And from her neck there hung the cross—the cross she loved so well.
 I knew that queenly form again, though blighted was its bloom;
 I saw that grief had decked it out—an offering for the tomb!
 I knew the eye, though faint its light, that once so brightly shone;
 I knew the voice, though feeble now, that thrilled with every tone;
 I knew the ringlets, almost gray, once threads of living gold;
 I knew that bounding grace of step—that symmetry of mould.
 Even now I see her far away, in that calm convent aisle,
 I hear her chant her Vesper hymn, I mark her holy smile.
 Even now I see her bursting forth upon her bridal morn,
 A new star in the firmament, to light and glory born.
 Alas! the change; she placed her foot upon a triple throne,
 And on the scaffold now she stands—beside the block, alone!
 The little dog that licks her hands, the last of all the crowd
 Who sunned themselves beneath her glance, and round her footsteps bowed.
 Her neck is bared—the blow is struck—the soul is passed away—
 The bright—the beautiful—is now a bleeding piece of clay!
 The dog is moaning piteously; and as it gurgles o'er
 Laps the warm blood that trickling runs unheded to the floor!
 The blood of beauty, wealth and power—the heart's-blood of a queen—
 The noblest of the Stuart race—the fairest earth had seen—
 Lapped by a dog! Go; think of it in silence and alone;
 Then weigh against a grain of sand the glories of a throne.