

Right bitter was the agony
That wrung that soldier proud:
Thrice did he strive to answer,
And thrice he groaned aloud.
Then he gave the riven banner
To the old man's shaking hand,
Saying—"That is all I bring ye
From the bravest of the land!
Ay! ye may look upon it—
It was guarded well and long,
By your brothers and your children,
By the valiant and the strong.
One by one they fell around it,
As the archers laid them low,
Grimly dying, still unconquered,
With their faces to the foe.
Ay! well ye may look upon it—
There is more than honour there
Else, be sure, I had not brought it
From the field of dark despair.
Never yet was royal banner
Steeped in such a costly dye;—
It hath lain upon a bosom
Where no other shroud shall lie.
Sirs! I charge you, keep it holy,
Keep it as a sacred thing,
For the stain ye see upon it
Was—the life-blood of your King!'

Woe, woe and lamentation!
What a piteous cry was there!
Widows, maidens, mothers, children,
Shrieking, sobbing in despair! . . .
"O the blackest day for Scotland
That she ever knew before!
O our King! the good, the noble,
Shall we see him never more?