

Outline of Canto IV.

1. Norman is on duty as sentinel when Malise returns from a scouting expedition. Malise reports that the king's forces assembled at Doune are ready to march against Clan Alpine. Norman informs Malise that Roderick has provided a shelter on "Ellen's Isle," for the women and children of the clan.

2. In the meantime, by means of an augury known as *the Taghairm*, Brian the hermit endeavours to forecast the issue of the struggle. As a result of this augury, he prophesies that the party which sheds the first blood will be victorious.

3. The scene now changes to Coir Uriskin, where, in the absence of the Douglas, Allan-bane and Ellen are left alone. Ellen is in a gloomy mood, for she believes that her father has gone to give himself up to the king in order to avert the struggle; and in the effort to cheer her, Allan sings the ballad of *Alice Brand*.

4. The song is scarcely ended, when a stranger approaches the cave; and, to Ellen's astonishment and dismay, she recognizes Fitz-James. Believing that Ellen will return his love, he has come to offer her his hand in marriage. Ellen refuses his suit, tells him of her love for Malcolm, and warns him of his danger from Roderick. Before Fitz-James again sets out, he gives Ellen a royal signet-ring, and urges her to seek the king and present her suit to him without delay.

5. As Fitz-James returns through the Trosachs, he meets with a half-crazed woman, named Blanche of Devan, who warns him in a song that he is in danger of betrayal. Fitz-James is now convinced of the treachery of his guide, Red Murdoch, and slays him; but in the meantime Blanche of Devan is killed by a shaft from Murdoch's bow. Fitz-James dips a lock of hair in her blood, and swears that he will avenge her wrongs on Roderick Dhu.

6. Fitz-James conceals himself in the thicket until evening; then in the gathering darkness he tries to find his way. At length, weary and cold, he stumbles upon a watch-fire, before which there lies a mountaineer. The clansman, though a sworn enemy of the Saxon, refuses to take advantage of his weariness, but gives him food and shelter, and promises to guide him the next morning as far as Coilantogle Ford.