

EDINBURGH AFTER FLODDEN

Then man the walls like burghers stout,
And fight while fight you may.
'Twere better that in fiery flame
The roof should thunder down,
Than that the foot of foreign foe
Should trample in the town!"

Then in came Randolph Murray,—
His step was slow and weak;
And, as he doffed his dinted helm,
The tears ran down his cheek:
They fell upon his corselet,
And on his mailed hand,
As he gazed around him wistfully,
Leaning sorely on his brand.
And none who then beheld him
But straight were smote with fear,
For a bolder and a sterner man
Had never couched a spear.
They knew so sad a messenger
Some ghastly news must bring;
And all of them were fathers,
And their sons were with the King.

And up then rose the Provost¹—
A brave old man was he,
Of ancient name, and knightly fame,
And chivalrous degree. . . .
Oh, woeful now was 'he old man's look,
And he spake right heavily—
"Now, Randolph, tell thy tidings,
However sharp they be!
Woe is written on thy visage,
Death is looking from thy face:
Speak!—though it be of overthrow,
It cannot be disgrace!"

¹ *Provost*: mayor.