

THE PASS OF BRANDER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX GENTLEMAN."

Along the Pass of Brander,
Full many a year ago,
There trudged a weary woman
Deep through the blinding snow;

A weary widow woman,
With sweet, soft English tongue;
A stranger in the Highland glens,
Feeble, and pale, and young.

And with her simple story,
She passed from door to door;
"Oh, give me just a piece of bread,
And a night's rest once more.

"My husband was a sailor:
He sailed from Oban Bay.
I want to take his baby home,
And lay it where he lay;

"I'll lay it on his mother's breast,
And then I'll gladly go."
And she held up a thin, thin hand,
As white as any snow.

Along the Pass of Brander
The wind sang, soft and still;
The stars stood silently above
Ben Cruachan's mighty hill.

The Awe was like a river of glass,
And doubled in its tide,
The great black Pass of Brander
Rose on the other side.

An eerie place to travel through,
But she was not afraid
Of ghost or wraith, of beast or man—
"I'm too near God," she said.

The path grew longer, longer—
Such poor soft English feet!
But 'twas a brave young English heart
Patient, and calm, and sweet.

At length her steps grew heavy as lead!
The baby woke and cried;
She stopped and fed it at her breast,
Upon the lone moor-side.

Then strange, strange thoughts came
into her head;
She saw her cottage door;

She heard sweet English bells chime
faint

Across the Highland moor.

Deep sleep was stealing o'er her lids,
A soft sleep without pain:
She rose and clutched her baby tight,
And tried to walk again.

But vain the struggle, vain the toil;
"It is too late!" she cried.
And from Ben Cruachan's lofty top
She saw white angels glide.

"They'll robe me, without any lack,
In shining robes all new."
So one by one, to wrap the boy,
Her garments off she drew.

Warm sheltered, like young bird in
nest,
She placed him by a stone,
Saying, "The angels watch the child,
Until this night be gone."

Weeping—"If I should save thee,
child,
No man will show me scorn."
Then lay down, white on the white
snow,
As bare as the babe new-born.

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It is a brave young sailor;
No man from Oban Bay:
His granddame's pride, his shipmates'
boast,
So handsome, bold and gay;

But his check will pale of a sudden,
And his tears gush like a tide,
If you name the Pass of Brander,
Where his English mother died.

NOTE.—This anecdote was told by the late Dr Norman Macleod, who had once referred to it in a sermon preached by him at Glasgow. After service, a sailor came up to him and said, with a burst of tears, "Sir, that story of yours is true. The woman was *my mother!*" The author of this beautiful poetical version has strangely changed the nationality of the heroine. She was of Highland and not of English birth.