

VESSEL,

ture bent  
s comrades went.  
en found  
ng bound,  
grog they sip,  
lant ship:"  
icious man,  
e began.

se, thou art

art,

inely grey,

7 gay,

right is given

s of heaven.

er days

ltered ways,

it gleam,

th dream:

urs teased,

and half pleased.

THE ELDEN TREE.

A Ballad.

A FEAST was spread in the Baron's hall,

And loud was the merry sound,

As minstrels played at lady's call,

And the cup went sparkling round.

For gentle dames sat there, I trow,

By men of mickle might,

And many a chief with dark-red brow,

And many a burly knight.

Each had fought in war's grim ranks,

And some on the surgy sea,

And some on Jordan's sacred banks

For the cause of Christentie.

But who thinks now of blood or strife,  
Or Moor, or Paynim foe ?  
Their eyes beam bright with social life,  
And their hearts with kindness glow.

“ Gramercie, chieftain, on thy tale !  
It smacks of thy merry mood.” —  
“ Aye, monks are sly and women frail  
Since rock and mountain stood.”

“ Fye, fye ! sir knight, thy tongue is keen,  
’Tis sharper than thy steel.” —  
“ So, gentle lady, are thine een,  
As we poor lovers feel.” —

“ Come pledge me well, my lady gay,  
Come pledge me, noble frere ;  
Each cheerful mate on such a day,  
Is friend or mistress dear.”

And lo  
As th  
Till son  
In a

Aye, ce  
For th  
And no  
And

What re  
Or th  
As it to  
Whic

Long y  
By it  
And the  
Who

REE.

or strife,

ocial life,

ess glow.

tale!

l." —

en frail

od."

gue is keen,

dy gay,

e;

day,

THE ELDEN TREE.

257

And louder still came jeer and boast,

As the flagons faster pour,

Till song and tale and laugh are lost

In a wildly mingled roar.

Aye, certes, 'tis an hour of glee,

For the Baron himself doth smile,

And nods his head right cheerily,

And quaffs his cup the while.

What recks he now of midnight fear,

Or the night-wind's dismal moan,

As it tosses the boughs of that Elden Tree,

Which he thinketh so oft upon?

Long years have passed since a deed was done,

By its doer only seen,

And there lives not a man beneath the sun,

Who wotteth that deed hath been.

S

So gay was he, so gay were all,  
They marked not the growing gloom;  
Nor wist they how the darkening hall  
Lowered like the close of doom.

Dull grew the goblet's sheen, and grim  
The features of every guest,  
And colourless banners aloft hung dim,  
Like the clouds of the drizzly West.

Hath time passed then so swift of pace?  
Is this the twilight grey?  
A flash of light passed through the place  
Like the glaring noon of day.

Fierce glanced the momentary blaze  
O'er all the gallant train,  
And each visage pale with dazzled gaze  
Was seen and lost again.

And the t  
Then  
And vari  
And lo

Still glare  
And ro  
And rattl  
And th

And cow  
Are ho  
While lo  
And w

At lengt  
As lig  
A frighte  
And w

REE.

l,  
ing gloom;  
ing hall  
oom.

and grim

ung dim,  
lly West.

ft of pace?

h the place  
ay.

ry blaze

azzled gaze

And the thunder's rolling peal, from far,

Then on and onward drew,

And varied its sound like the broil of war,

And loud and louder grew.

Still glares the lightning blue and pale,

And roars the astounding din;

And rattle the windows with bickering hail,

And the rafters ring within.

And cowering hounds the board beneath

Are howling with piteous moan,

While lords and dames sit still as death,

And words are uttered none.

At length, in the waning tempest's fall,

As light from the welkin broke,

A frightened man rushed through the hall,

And words to the baron spoke.

“The thunder hath stricken your tree so fair;  
Its roots on green-sward lie.” —  
“What tree?” — “The Elden planted there,  
Some thirty years gone by.” —

“And wherefore starest thou on me so,  
With a face so ghastly wild?” —  
“White bones are found in the mould below  
Like the bones of a stripling child.”

Pale he became as the shrouded dead,  
And his eye-balls fixed as stone;  
And down on his bosom dropped his head,  
And he uttered a stifled groan.

Then from the board each guest, amazed,  
Sprung up, and curiously  
Upon his sudden misery gazed,  
And wondered what might be.

Out sp

“ I ]

Both g

His

“ Go c

And

And fe

To c

“ No-

In a

And h

His

“ Hea

Hea

What

Bot

“I have taken your tree so fair;  
 And I would lie.” —  
 Elden planted there,  
 “I will be by.” —

“Thou on me so,  
 wild?” —  
 in the mould below  
 a rippling child.”

“I was roused dead,  
 I was as stone;  
 I dropped his head,  
 and groan.”

“The guest, amazed,  
 gazed,  
 might be.

Out spoke the ancient seneschal,

“I pray ye stand apart,  
 Both gentle dames and nobles all,  
 His grief is at his heart.

“Go call Saint Cuthbert’s monk with speed,  
 And let him be quickly shriven,  
 And fetch ye a leech for his body’s need  
 To dight him for earth or heaven.”

“No—fetch me a priest,” the Baron said,  
 In a voice that seemed uttered with pain;  
 And he shuddered and shrunk as he faintly bade  
 His noble guests remain.

“Heaven’s eye each secret deed doth scan;  
 Heaven’s justice all should fear;  
 What I confess to the holy man,  
 Both heaven and you shall hear.”

And soon Saint Cuthbert's monk stood by  
With visage sad, but sweet,  
And cast on the Baron a piteous eye,  
And the Baron knelt low at his feet.

“ O father! I have done a deed  
Which God alone did know:  
A brother's blood these hands have shed  
With many a fiend-like blow.

“ For fiends lent strength, like a powerful charm,  
And my youthful breast impelled,  
And I laughed to see, beneath my arm  
The sickly stripling quelled.

“ A mattock from its pit I took,  
Dug deep for the Elden Tree,  
And I tempted the youth therein to look  
Some curious sight to see.

“ The w  
And e  
I had pla  
O'er t

“ Ah! g  
And s  
When h  
Had p

“ But w  
Who  
They so  
But t

“ And t  
And  
The tho  
In thi



monk stood by  
 t,  
 cious eye,  
 at his feet.

ed  
 v:  
 have shed  
 w.

e a powerful charm,  
 pelled,  
 h my arm  
 l.

ok,  
 ree,  
 rein to look

“ The woodmen to their meal were gone,  
 And ere they returned again,  
 I had planted that tree with my strength alone  
 O'er the body of the slain.

“ Ah! gladly smiled my father then,—  
 And seldom he smiled on me,—  
 When he heard that my skill, like skill of men,  
 Had planted the Elden Tree.

“ But where was his eldest son, so dear,  
 Who nearest his heart had been?  
 They sought him far, they sought him near,  
 But the boy no more was seen.

“ And thus his life and lands he lost,  
 And his father's love beside;  
 The thought that ever rankled most  
 In this heart of secret pride.

“ Ah ! could the partial parent wot  
The cruel pang he gives  
To the child, neglected and forgot,  
Who under his cold eye lives !

“ His elder rights did envy move, —  
These lands and their princely hall ;  
But it was our father’s partial love  
I envied him most of all.

“ Now thirty years have o’er me past,  
And, to the eye of man,  
My lot was with the happy cast,  
My heart it could not scan.

“ Oh ! I have heard in the dead of night  
My murdered brother’s groan,  
And shuddered as the pale moon-light  
On the mangled body shone !

“ My  
Wh  
And  
We

“ O h  
Wi  
May  
Sor

“ The  
Th  
And  
To

Now,  
En  
Its sh  
A s

REE.

t wot

rgot,  
s!

ve, —  
ly hall;  
ove

e past,

d of night

n,  
on-light

!

THE ELDEN TREE.

265

“ My very miners, pent in gloom,  
Whose toil my coffers stored,  
And cursed, belike, their cheerless doom,  
Were happier than their Lord.

“ O holy man! my tale is told  
With pain, with tears, with shame;  
May penance hard, may alms of gold  
Some ghostly favour claim?

“ The knotted scourge shall drink my blood,  
The earth my bed shall be,  
And bitter tears my daily food,  
To earn Heaven’s grace for me.”

Now, where that rueful deed was done,  
Endowed with rights and lands,  
Its sharp spires brightening in the sun,  
A stately abbey stands.

And the meekest monk whose life is there  
 Still spent on bended knee,  
 Is he who built that abbey fair,  
 And planted the Elden Tree.

## NOTE.

The story of this ballad was told to me by the late Sir George Beaumont, as one he had heard from his mother, who said it was a tradition belonging to some castle in the North of England, where it was believed to have happened. It was recommended by him as a good subject for a ballad; and with such a recommendation I was easily tempted to endeavour, at least, to preserve its simple and striking circumstances, in that popular form. I have altered no part of the story, nor have I added any thing, but the founding of the Abbey, and the Baron's becoming a Monk, in imitation of that exquisite ballad, "The Eve of St. John," where so much is implied in so few words, by the two last stanzas, which I have always particularly admired.

There is a nun in Dryburgh bower,

Ne'er looks upon the sun;

There is a Monk in Melrose Tower,

He speaketh word to none.

That nun who ne'er beholds the day,

That Monk who speaks to none,

That nun is Smaylho'mes Lady gay,

That Monk the bold Baron.

THE bride s

Her hair

And faithfu

Yet fast f

New pearlin

New pear

The bride t

Has e'en

Woo

Woo

Is na' s

To b