



THE HUNTERS LEAP.

DEATH AND THE HUNTER.

HER beams all rosy the morning flings
 O'er valley and hill, where music rings,—
 But 'tis not the sky-bird's song so sweet,
 Nor the wood-thrush that cheers the fawn's retreat;
 It is not the nightingale's tuneful spell
 That swells the wild depths of the forest along,
 For she to our isle hath bid farewell,
 And sung to the groves her parting song—
 Shed their last blossoms the weeping shades,
 When through the forest's lone arcades
 Sighed the last echoes of her lay,
 As to fairer climes she winged her way,
 Where brighter moons and richer flowers
 Illume and deck her gorgeous bowers.
 And now,—no thrilling midnight song
 Is heard the desolate woods among,

Save the voice of the ruffian winds that rove
With lawless force abroad, and rend
The rich-tinted wreaths from bower and grove,
That beneath their gusty tyranny bend ;
While as in their might and their wrath they roam,
They fright the dove from her ravaged home.
And now,—no harmony by day
Is heard, save the redbreast's pensive lay ;
His warbled dirge-notes o'er the grave
Where summer, wrapped in rose-leaf shroud,
Sleeps while the wintery tempests rave,
Till the sun in splendour waxes proud,
And to life the spell-bound goddess wakes,
Who, as onward, rejoicing, her path she takes,
Pomp, beauty, and odours, and riches showers,
Turning our clime into Eden's bowers !

What music floats then on the early gale
Down Autumn's long-withdrawing vale ?
It is the shrill and mellow horn
That wakes the echoes of the morn,
And with it come the hunter's yell,
And death-cry in harmonious swell,
Of the dew-snuffing hounds from far,
With all the rout of sylvan war.

Heart-buoyant as the amber-coloured cloudlet rent
By the wanton winds 'mid the firmament;
With cheek of the morn, and joy-lighted eye
That rivals the tint of the sunny sky;
And merry as the lark that floats embowered
In that cloudlet, with gold so splendidly showered,
The gay youthful hunter backs his steed
And urges him with headlong speed
O'er moorland, heath, wilds mountainous,
Nor fears down rugged steeps to rush,
The antlered king of the shades to chase,
Whose swiftness long maintains the race.

Hark, the fierce halloo through the forest resounds!
As full in sight the wild stag bounds;
Then darts away, like a beam of light,
While the hunters pursue like a thunder-cloud of
night!
Caps high are waved to cheer the glad rout,
While the valleys re-echo with their hoarse savage
shout.
But there is one of that motley crew
On a shadowy steed of ghastly hue,
'Tis Death on his pale horse who follows the throng,
But joins not the laugh, the shout, or the song.

Ha ! who lies there with blood-streaming wound ?
The young hunter his courser hath dashed to the
ground !

With that sad groan fled his last breath—
Thy human game is won, O Death !

On, on his gay companions speed,
They heard not his fall, they saw not his steed
Beside his master groaning lie,
Lingering out life in agony !

Rose cloudless the hunter's moon that night,
As the horse and his rider together lay ;
On the blood-stained stones fell her pale light,
That trembled at the crimson hue,
Now blended with the evening dew,

While paler than that pale moon-ray

The hunter youth, at morn so gay,

Stretched his cold limbs, forgetful quite

Of the merry chase and the banquet night !

Silence reigned round that lonely place,

Far, far away were the sons of the chase ;

Amid the hall in noisy glee

At feast and tipsy revelry.

Far, far away was the maid of truth,
Who fondly loved that hunter youth ;
She gazed on the radiant star of night,

She thought on her lover, and chid his stay,
She watched the clouds in their lofty flight

As they crossed the moon in dim array ;
Then sadly told the lingering hour,
As the clock struck slow from the village tower !

Ah ! little did she think that moon,
To the night-wearied pilgrim so rich a boon—
On the gore-clotted locks of her lover were flinging
Its pitying beam, as cold he lay,
With death-glazed eye by his “ gallant gray,”
While round him the shadowy woods were ringing
With the dirge of the screech-owl, whose frightful
tones
Were mingled with the dying courser’s groans !

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