

July 27

The Burial March of Dundee

By William E. Aytoun (1813–1865)

From “Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers”

Better known as Claverhouse. A Scottish soldier. He raised a body of Highlanders to fight for James II. against William III., gained the battle of Killiecrankie but fell, mortally wounded, on July 27, 1689.

ON the heights of Killiecrankie
Yester-morn our army lay:
Slowly rose the mist in columns
From the river's broken way;
Hoarsely roared the swollen torrent,
And the pass was wrapped in gloom,
When the clansmen rose together
From their lair amidst the broom.
Then we belted on our tartans,
And our bonnets down we drew,
And we felt our broadswords' edges,
And we proved them to be true;
And we prayed the prayer of soldiers,
And we cried the gathering-cry,
And we clasped the hands of kinsmen,
And we swore to do or die!
Then our leader rode before us
On his war-horse black as night—
Well the Cameronian rebels
Knew that charger in the fight!—
And a cry of exultation
From the bearded warriors rose;
For we loved the house of Claver'se,
And we thought of good Montrose.
But he raised his hand for silence—
“Soldiers! I have sworn a vow:
Ere the evening-star shall glisten
On Schehallion's lofty brow,
Either we shall rest in triumph,
Or another of the Græmes
Shall have died in battle-harness
For his Country and King James!
Think upon the Royal Martyr—
Think of what his race endure—
Think on him whom butchers murder'd
On the field of Magus Muir:—
By his sacred blood I charge ye,

By the ruin'd hearth and shrine—
By the blighted hopes of Scotland,
By your injuries and mine—
Strike this day as if the anvil
Lay beneath your blows the while,
Be they Covenanting traitors,
Or the brood of false Argyle!
Strike! and drive the trembling rebels
Backwards o'er the stormy Forth;
Let them tell their pale Convention
How they fared within the North.
Let them tell that Highland honour
Is not to be bought nor sold,
That we scorn their Prince's anger,
As we loathe his foreign gold.
Strike! and when the fight is over,
If ye look in vain for me,
Where the dead are lying thickest,
Search for him that was Dundee!"

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And the evening-star was shining
On Schehallion's distant head,
When we wiped our bloody broadswords,
And returned to count the dead.
There we found him, gashed and gory,
Stretch'd upon the cumbered plain,
As he told us where to seek him,
In the thickest of the slain.
And a smile was on his visage,
For within his dying ear
Pealed the joyful note of triumph,
And the clansmen's clamorous cheer:
So, amidst the battle's thunder,
Shot, and steel, and scorching flame,
In the glory of his manhood
Passed the spirit of the Græme!
Open wide the vaults of Athol,
Where the bones of heroes rest—
Open wide the hallowed portals
To receive another guest!
Last of Scots, and last of freemen—
Last of all that dauntless race
Who would rather die unsullied
Than outlive the land's disgrace!
O thou lion-hearted warrior!
Reck not of the after-time:
Honour may be deemed dishonour,

Loyalty be called a crime.
Sleep in peace with kindred ashes
Of the noble and the true,
Hands that never failed their country,
Hearts that never baseness knew.
Sleep!—and till the latest trumpet
Wakes the dead from earth and sea,
Scotland shall not boast a braver
Chieftain than our own Dundee!