

# Golfre,

*A Gothic Swiss Tale.*

*In Five Parts.*

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

Where freezing wastes of dazzl'ing Snow  
O'er LEMAN's Lake rose, tow'ring;  
The BARON GOLFRE'S Castle strong  
Was seen, the silv'ry peaks among,  
With ramparts, darkly low'ring!—

Tall Battlements of flint, uprose,  
Long shadowing down the valley,  
A grove of sombre Pine, antique,  
Amid the white expanse would break,  
In many a gloomy alley.

A strong portcullis entrance show'd,  
With ivy brown hung over;  
And stagnate the green moat was found,  
Whene'er the Trav'ler wander'd round,  
Or moon-enamour'd Lover.

Within the spacious Courts were seen  
A thousand gothic fancics;  
Of banners, trophies, armour bright,  
Of shields, thick batter'd in the fight,  
And interwoven lances.

The BARON GOLFRE long had been  
To solitude devoted;  
And oft, in pray'r would pass the night  
'Till day's vermilion stream of light  
Along the blue hill floated.

And yet, his pray'r was little mark'd  
With pure and calm devotion;  
For oft, upon the pavement bare,  
He'd dash his limbs and rend his hair  
With terrible emotion!

And sometimes he, at midnight hour  
Would howl, like wolves, wide-prowling;  
And pale, the lamps would glimmer round—

And deep, the self-mov'd bell would sound  
A knell prophetic, tolling!

For, in the Hall, three lamps were seen,  
That quiver'd dim;—and near them  
A bell rope hung, that from the Tow'r  
Three knells would toll, at midnight's hour,  
Startl'ing the soul to hear them!

And oft, a dreadful crash was heard,  
Shaking the Castle's chambers!  
And suddenly, the lights would turn  
To paly grey, and dimly bum,  
Like flint and dying embers.

Beneath the steep, a Maiden dwelt,  
The dove-eyed ZORINETTO;  
A damsel blest with ev'ry grace—  
And springing from as old a race—  
As Lady of LORETTO!

Her dwelling was a Goatherd's poor;  
Yet she his heart delighted;  
Their little hovel open stood,  
Beside a lonesome frowning wood,  
To travellers—benighted.

Yet oft, at midnight when the Moon  
Its dappled course was steering,  
The Castle bell would break their sleep,  
And ZORINETTO slow would creep—  
To bar the wicket—fearing!

What did she fear? O! dreadful thought!  
The Moon's wan lustre, streaming;  
The dim grey lamps, the crashing sound,  
The lonely Bittern—shrieking round  
The roof,—with pale light gleaming.

And often, when the wintry wind  
Loud whistled o'er their dwelling;  
They sat beside their faggot fire  
While ZORINETTO'S aged Sire  
A dismal Tale was telling.

He told a long and dismal Tale

How a fair LADY perish'd;  
How her sweet Baby, doom'd to be  
The partner of her destiny  
Was by a peasant cherish'd!

He told a long and dismal Tale,  
How, from a flinty Tow'r  
A Lady wailing sad was seen,  
The lofty grated bars between,  
At dawnlight's purple hour!

He told a Tale of bitter woe,  
His heart with pity swelling,  
How the fair LADY pin'd and died,  
And how her Ghost, at Christmas-tide—  
Would wander,—near her dwelling.

He told her, how a lowly DAME  
The LADY, lorn, befriended—  
Who chang'd her own dear baby, dead,  
And took the LADY'S in its stead—  
And then—“*Forgive her Heav'n!*” He said,  
And so, his Story ended.

GOLFRE,

PART SECOND.

As on the rushy floor she sat,  
Her hand her pale cheek pressing;  
Oft, on the GOATHERDS face, her eyes  
Would fix intent, her mute surprize—  
In frequent starts confessing.

Then, slowly would she turn her head,  
And watch the narrow wicket;  
And shudder, while the wintry blast  
In shrilly cadence swiftly past  
Along the neighb'ring thicket.

One night, it was in winter time,  
The Castle bell was tolling;  
The air was still, the Moon was seen,  
Sporting, her starry train between,  
The thin, clouds round her rolling.

And now she watch'd the wasting lamps  
Her timid bosom panting;  
And now, the Crickets faintly sing,  
And now she hears the Raven's wing  
Sweeping their low roof, slanting.

And, as the wicket latch she clos'd,  
A groan was heard!—she trembled!  
And now a clashing, steely sound,  
In quick vibrations echoed round,  
Like murd'rous swords, assembled!

She started back; she look'd around,  
The Goatherd Swain was sleeping;  
A stagnate paleness mark'd her cheek,  
She would have call'd, but could not speak,  
While, through the lattice peeping.

And O! how dimly shone the Moon,  
Upon the snowy mountain!  
And fiercely did the wild blast blow,  
And now her tears began to flow,  
Fast, as a falling fountain.

And now she heard the Castle bell  
Again toll sad and slowly;  
She knelt and sigh'd: the lamp burnt pale—  
She thought upon the dismal Tale—  
And pray'd, with fervour holy!

And now, her little string of beads  
She kiss'd,—and cross'd her breast;  
It was a simple rosary,  
Made of the Mountain Holly-tree,  
By Sainted Father's blest!

And now the wicket open flew,  
As though a whirlwind fell'd it;  
And now a ghastly figure stood  
Before the Maiden—while her blood  
Congeal'd, as she beheld it!

His face was pale, his eyes were wild,  
His beard was dark; and near him  
A stream of light was seen to glide,  
Marking a poniard, crimson-dyed;  
The bravest soul might fear him!

His forehead was all gash'd and gor'd—  
His vest was black and flowing  
His strong hand grasp'd a dagger keen,  
And wild and frantic was his mien,  
Dread signs of terror, showing.

“O fly not!” the BARON cried  
“In HEAV'N's name, do not fear me!”  
Just as he spoke the bell thrice toll'd—  
Three paly lamps they now behold—  
While a faint voice, cried,—“HEAR ME!”

And now, upon the threshold low,  
The wounded GOLFRE, kneeling,  
Again to HEAV'N address'd his pray'r;  
The waning Moon, with livid glare,  
Was down the dark sky stealing.

They led him in, they bath'd his wounds,  
Tears, to the red stream adding:  
The haughty GOLFRE gaz'd, admir'd!  
The Peasant Girl his fancy fir'd,

And set his senses, madding!

He prest her hand; she turn'd away,  
Her blushes deeper glowing,  
Her cheek still spangled o'er with tears;  
So the wild rose more fresh appears  
When the soft dews are flowing!

Again, the BARON fondly gaz'd;  
Poor ZORIELLO trembled;  
And GOLFRE watch'd her throbbing breast  
Which seem'd, with weighty-woes oppress'd,  
And softest Love, dissembled.

The GOATHERD, fourscore years had seen,  
And he was sick and needy;  
The BARON wore a SWORD of GOLD,  
Which Poverty might well behold,  
With eyes, wide stretch'd, and greedy!

The dawn arose! The yellow light  
Around the Alps spread cheating!  
The BARON kiss'd the GOATHERD'S child—  
“Farewell!” she cried,—and blushing smil'd,  
No future peril fearing.

Now GOLFRE homeward beat his way  
His breast with passion burning:  
The Chapel bell was rung, for pray'r,  
And all—save GOLFRE, prostrate there—  
Thank'd HEAV'N, for his returning!

GOLFRE.

PART THIRD.

Three times the orient ray was seen  
Above the East cliff mounting,  
When GOLFRE sought the Cottage Grace  
To share the honours of his race,  
With treasures, beyond counting!

The Ev'ning Sun was burning red  
The Twilight veil spread slowly;  
While ZORIETTO, near the wood  
Where long a little cross had stood,  
Was singing Vespers holy.

And now she kiss'd her Holly-beads,  
And now she cross'd her breast;  
The night-dew fell from ev'ry tree—  
It fell upon her rosary,  
Like tears of Heav'n twice bless'd!

She knelt upon the brown moss, cold,  
She knelt, with eyes, mild beaming!  
The day had clos'd, she heard a sigh!  
She mark'd the clear and frosty sky  
With starry lustre gleaming.

She rose; she heard the draw-bridge chains  
Loud clanking down the valley;  
She mark'd the yellow torches shine  
Between the antique groves of Pine—  
Bright'ning each gloomy alley.

And now the breeze began to blow,  
Soft-stealing up the mountain;  
It seem'd at first a dulcet sound—  
Like mingled waters, wand'ring round  
Slow falling from a fountain.

And now, in wilder tone it rose,  
The white peaks sweeping, shrilly:  
It play'd amidst her golden hair  
It kiss'd her bosom cold and fair—  
And sweet, as vale-born Lily

She heard the hollow tread of feet  
Thridding the piny cluster;  
The torches flam'd before the wind—  
And many a spark was left behind,  
To mock the glow-worm's lustre.

She saw them guard the Cottage door,  
Her heart beat high with wonder!  
She heard the fierce and Northern blast  
As o'er the topmost point it past  
Like peals of bursting thunder!

And now she hied her swift along  
And reach'd the guarded wicket;  
But O! what terror fill'd her soul,  
When thrice she heard the deep bell toll—  
Above the gloomy thicket.

Now fierce, the BARON darted forth,  
His trembling victim seizing;  
She felt her blood, in evr'y vein  
Move, with a sense of dead'ning pain,  
As though her heart were freezing.

This night," said he, "Yon castle tow'rs  
"Shall echo to their centre  
"For, by the HOLY CROSS, I swear,"—  
And straight a CROSS of ruby glare  
Did through the wicket enter!

And now a snowy hand was seen  
Slow moving, round the chamber!  
A clasp of pearl, it seem'd to bear—  
A clasp of pearl, most rich and rare!  
Fix'd to a zone of amber.

And now the lowly Hovel shook,  
The wicket open flying,  
And by, the croaking RAVEN flew  
And, whistling shrill, the night-blast blew  
Like shrieks, that mark the dying!

But suddenly the tumult ceas'd—  
And silence, still more fearful,  
Around the little chamber spread  
Such horrors as attend the dead,

Where no Sun glitters chearful!

“Now JESU HEAR ME!” GOLFRE cried,  
“HEAR ME,” a faint voice mutter’d!”  
The BARON drew his poniard forth—  
The Maiden sunk upon the earth,  
And—“Save me Heav’n!” she utter’d.

“Yes, Heav’n will save thee,” GOLFRE said,  
“Save thee, to be MY bride!”  
But while he spoke a beam of light  
Shone on her bosom, deathly white,  
Then onward seem’d to glide.

And now the GOATHERD, on his knees,  
With frantic accent cried,  
“O! GOD forbid! that *I* should see  
“The beauteous ZORIELLO, be  
“The BARON GOLFRE’S bride!

“Poor Lady! she did shrink and fall,  
“As leaves fall in September!  
“Then be not BARON GOLFRE’S bride—  
“Alack! in yon black tow’r SHE died—  
“Full well, I do remember!”

“Oft, to the lattice grate I stole  
“To hear her, sweetly singing;  
“And oft, whole nights, beside the moat,  
“I listen’d to the dying note—  
“Till matin’s bell was ringing.

And when she died! Poor Lady dear!  
“A sack of gold, she gave,  
“That masses every Christmas day  
“Twelve bare-foot Monks should sing, or say,  
“Slow moving round her Grave

“That, at the Holy Virgin’s shrine  
“Three Lamps should burn for ever—  
“That, ev’ry month, the bell should toll,  
“For pray’rs to save her Husband’s soul—  
“I shall forget it, never!”

While thus he spoke, the BARON’S eye  
Look’d inward on his soul:

For He the masses *ne'er* had said—  
No lamps, their quiv'ring light had shed,  
No bell, been taught to toll!

And yet, the bell did toll, self-mov'd;  
And sickly lamps were gleaming;  
And oft, their faintly wand'ring light  
Illum'd the Chapel aisles at night,  
Till Morn's broad eye, was beaming.

GOLFRE,

PART FOURTH.

The Maid refus'd the BARON'S suit,  
For, well she lov'd another;  
The angry GOLFRE'S vengeful rage  
Nor pride nor reason could assuage,  
Nor pity prompt to smother.

His Sword was gone; the Goatherd Swain  
Seem'd guilty, past recalling  
The BARON now his life demands  
Where the tall Gibbet skirts the lands  
With black'ning bones appalling!

Low at the BARON's feet, in tears  
Fair ZORETTO kneeling,  
The Goatherd's life requir'd;—but found  
That Pride can give the deepest wound  
Without the pang of feeling.

That Pow'r can mock the snff'rer's woes  
And triumph o'er the sighing;  
Can scorn the noblest mind oppress'd,  
Can fill with thorns the feeling breast  
Soft pity's tear denying.

“Take me,” she cried, “but spare his age—  
“Let me his ransom tender;  
“I will the fatal deed atone,  
“For crimes that never were my own,  
“My breaking heart surrender.”

The marriage day was fix'd, the Tow'rs  
With banners rich were mounted;  
His heart beat high against his side  
While GOLFRE, waiting for his bride.  
The weary minutes counted.

The snow fell fast, with mingling hail;  
The dawn was late, and louring;  
Poor ZORETTO rose aghast!  
Unmindful of the Northern blast  
And prowling Wolves, devouring,

Swift to the wood of Pines she flew,  
Love made the assignation;  
For there, the sov'reign of her soul  
Watch'd the blue mists of morning roll  
Around her habitation.

The BARON, by a Spy appriz'd,  
Was there before his Bride;  
He seiz'd the Youth, and madly strew'd  
The white Cliff, with his steaming blood,  
Then hurl'd him down its side.

And now 'twas said, an hungry wolf  
Had made the Youth his prey:  
His heart lay frozen on the snow,  
And here and there a purple glow  
Speckled the pathless way.

The marriage day at length arriv'd,  
The Priest bestow'd his blessing  
*A clasp of orient pearl* fast bound  
*A zone of amber* circling round,  
Her slender waist compressing.

On ZORIENTIO'S snowy breast  
A ruby cross was heaving;  
So the pale snow-drop faintly glows,  
When shelter'd by the damask rose,  
Their beauties interweaving!

And now the holy VOW began  
Upon her lips to falter!  
And now all deathly wan she grew  
And now three lamps, of livid hue  
Pass'd slowly round the Altar.

And now she saw the clasp of pearl  
A ruby lustre taking:  
And thrice she heard the Castle bell  
Ring out a loud funereal knell  
The antique turrets shaking.

O! then how pale the BARON grew,  
His eyes wide staring fearful!  
While o'er the Virgin's image fair  
A sable veil was borne on air

Shading her dim eyes, tearful.

And, on her breast a clasp of pearl  
Was stain'd with blood, fast flowing:  
And round her lovely waist she wore  
An amber zone; a cross she bore  
Of rubies—richly glowing.

The Bride, her dove-like eyes to Heav'n  
Rais'd, calling Christ to save her!  
The cross now danc'd upon her breast;  
The shudd'ring Priest his fears confest,  
And benedictions gave her.

Upon the pavement sunk the Bride  
Cold as a corpse, and fainting!  
The pearly clasp, self-bursting, show'd  
Her beating side, where crimson glow'd  
Three spots, of nature's painting.

Three crimson spots, of deepest hue!  
The BARON gaz'd with wonder:  
For on his buried Lady's side  
Just three such drops had nature dyed,  
An equal space asunder.

And now remembrance brought to view,  
For Heav'n the truth discloses,  
The Baby, who had early died,  
Bore, tinted on its little side,  
Three spots—as red as roses!

Now, ere the wedding-day had past,  
Stern GOLFRE, and his Bride  
Walk'd forth to taste the ev'ning breeze  
Soft sighing, mid the sombre trees,  
That drest the mountain's side.

And now, beneath the grove of Pine,  
Two lovely Forms were gliding;  
A Lady, with a beauteous face!  
A Youth with stern, but manly, grace  
Smil'd,—as in scorn deriding.

Close, ' by the wond'ring Bride they pass'd,  
The red Sun sinking slowly

And to the little cross they hied—  
And there she saw them, side by side,  
Kneeling, with fervour holy.

The little cross was golden ting'd  
The western radiance stealing;  
And now it bore a purple hue,  
And now all black and dim it grew,  
And still she saw them, kneeling.

White were their robes as fleecy snow  
Their faces pale, yet chearful.  
Their golden hair, like waves of light  
Shone lust'rous mid the glooms of night  
Their starry eyes were tearful.

And now they look'd to Heav'n, and smil'd,  
Three paly lamps descended  
And now their shoulders seem'd to bear  
Expanding pinions broad and fair,  
And now they wav'd in viewless air!  
And so, the Vision ended.

GOLFRE,

PART FIFTH.

Now, suddenly, a storm arose,  
The thunder roar'd, tremendous!  
The lightning flash'd, the howling blast  
Fierce, strong, and desolating, past  
The Altitudes stupendous!

Rent by the wind, a fragment huge  
From the steep summit bounded:  
That summit, where the Peasant's breast  
Found, mid the snow, a grave of rest,  
By GOLFRE'S poniard wounded.

Loud shrieks, across the mountain wild,  
Fill'd up the pause of thunder:  
The groves of Pine the lightning past,  
And swift the desolating blast  
Scatter'd them wide asunder.

The Castle-turrets seem'd to blaze.  
The lightning round them flashing;  
The drawbridge now was all on fire,  
The moat foam'd high, with furious ire,  
Against the black Walls dashing.

The Prison Tow'r was silver white,  
And radiant as the morning;  
Two angels' kings were spreading wide,  
The battlements, from side to side—  
And lofty roof adorning.

And now the Bride was sore afraid,  
She sigh'd, and cross'd her breast;  
She kiss'd her simple rosary,  
Made of the mountain holly tree,  
By sainted Fathers blest.

She kiss'd it once, she kiss'd it twice;  
It seem'd to freeze her breast;  
The cold show'rs fell from ev'ry tree,  
They fell upon her rosary  
Like nature's tears, "twice blest!"

“What do you fear?” the BARON cried—  
For ZORIETTO trembled—  
“A WOLF,” she sigh’d with whisper low,  
“Hark how the angry whirlwinds blow  
“Like Demons dark assembled.

“That WOLF! which did my Lover slay!”  
The BARON wildly started.  
“That Wolf accurs’d!” she madly cried—  
“Whose fangs, by human gore were died,  
“Who dragg’d him down the mountain’s side,  
“And left me—Broken hearted!”

Now GOLFRE shook in ev’ry joint,  
He grasp’d her arm, and mutter’d;  
Hell seem’d to yawn, on ev’ry side,  
“Hear me!” the frantic tyrant cried—  
“HEAR ME!” a faint voice utter’d.

“I hear thee! yes, I hear thee well!”  
Cried GOLFRE, “I’ll content thee.  
“I see thy vengeful eye-balls roll—  
“Thou com’st to claim my guilty soul—  
“The FIENDS—the FIENDS have sent thee!”

And now a Goatherd-Boy was heard—  
Swift climbing up the mountain:  
A Kid was lost, the fearful hind—  
Had rov’d his truant care to find,  
By wood-land’s side—and fountain.

And now a murmur ring throng advanc’d,  
And howlings echoed round them:  
Now GOLFRE tried the path to pace,  
His feet seem’d rooted to the place,  
As though a spell had bound them.

And now loud mingling voices cried—  
“Pursue that WOLF, pursue him!”  
The guilty BARON, conscience stung,  
About his fainting DAUGHTER hung,  
As to the ground she drew him.

“Oh! shield me HOLY MARY! shield  
“A tortur’d wretch!” he mutter’d.  
“A murd’rous WOLF! O GOD! I crave

“A dark unhallow’d silent grave—”  
Aghast the Caitiff utter’d.

“’Twas I, beneath the GOATHERD’S bed  
“The golden sword did cover;  
“’Twas I who tore the quiv’ring wound,  
“Pluck’d forth the heart, and scatter’d round  
“The life-stream of thy Lover.”

And now he writh’d in ev’ry limb,  
And big his heart was swelling;  
Fresh peals of thunder echoed strong,  
With famish’d WOLVES the peaks among  
Their dismal chorus yelling!

“O JESU Save me!” GOLFRE shriek’d—  
But GOLFRE shriek’d no more!  
The rosy dawn’s returning light  
Display’d his corse,—a dreadful sight,  
Black, wither’d, smear’d with gore!

High on a gibbet, near the wood—  
His mangled limbs were hung;  
Yet ZORIEFFO oft was seen  
Prostrate the Chapel aisles between—  
When holy mass was sung.

And there, three lamps now dimly burn,—  
Twelve Monks their masses saying;  
And there, the midnight bell doth toll  
For quiet to the murd’rer’s soul—  
While all around are praying.

For Charity and Pity kind,  
To gentle souls are  
And Mercy is the sainted pow’r,  
Which beams thro’ mis’ry’s darkest hour,  
And lights the way—TO HEAVEN!