

Llewellyn and His Dog

Hon. W. R. Spencer, England, 1811

The spearman heard the bugle sound,
And cheerily smiled the morn;
And many a brach, and many a hound,
Obeyed Llewellyn's horn.

And still he blew a louder blast,
And gave a louder cheer:
"Come, Gelert, come, why are thou last
Llewellyn's horn to hear!

"Oh, where does faithful Gelert roam?
The flower of all his race!
So true, so brave -- a lamb at home,
A lion in the chase!"

'Twas only at Llewellyn's board
The faithful Gelert fed;
He watched, he served, he cheered his lord,
And sentinel'd his bed.

In sooth he was a peerless hound,
The gift of Royal John --
But now no Gelert could be found,
And all the chase rode on.

And now as over rocks and dells
The gallant chidings rise,
All Snowdon's craggy chaos yells
With many mingled cries.

That day Llewellyn little loved
The chase of hart or hare;
And scant and small the booty proved,
For Gelert was not there.

Unpleas'd Llewellyn homeward hied,
When, near the portal-seat,
His truant, Gelert, he espied,
Bounding his lord to greet.

But when he gained the castle-door,
Aghast the chieftain stood;
The hound all o'er was smeared with gore --
His lips, his fangs ran blood!

Llewellyn gazed with fierce surprise,
Unused such looks to meet,
His favourite checked his joyful guise,
And crouched and licked his feet.

Onward in haste Llewellyn passed --
And on went Gelert too --
And still, where'er his eyes were cast,
Fresh blood-gouts shocked his view!

O'erturned his infant's bed he found,
The bloodstained covert rent,
And all around, the walls and ground,
With recent blood besprent.

He called his child -- no voice replied;
He searched -- with terror wild;
Blood! blood! he found on every side,
But nowhere found the child!

"Hell-hound! my child's by thee devoured!"
The frantic father cried;
And, to the hilt, his vengeful sword
He plunged in Gelert's side!

His suppliant looks, as prone he fell,
No pity could impart;
But still his Gelert's dying yell,
Passed heavy o'er his heart.

Aroused by Gelert's dying yell,
Some slumberer wakened nigh:
What words the parent's joy can tell,
To hear his infant cry?

Concealed beneath a tumbled heap,
His hurried search had missed,
All glowing from his rosy sleep
The cherub-boy he kissed.

Nor scathe had he, nor harm, nor dread --
But the same couch beneath
Lay a gaunt wolf, all torn and dead --
Tremendous still in death!

Ah! what was then Llewellyn's pain,
For now the truth was clear;
The gallant hound the wolf had slain,
To save Llewellyn's heir.

Vain, vain was all Llewellyn's woe;
"Best of thy kind, adieu!
The frantic deed which laid thee low
This heart shall ever rue!"

And now a gallant tomb they raise,
With costly sculpture decked;
And marbles, storied with his praise,
Poor Gelert's bones protect.

Here never could the spearman pass,
Or forester, unmoved;
Here oft the tear-besprinkled grass
Llewellyn's sorrow proved.

And here he hung his horn and spear,
And there, as evening fell,
In fancy's ear he oft would hear
Poor Gelert's dying yell.