

Kildwick Grange – A Legend of the Civil War by **Nellie K. Blissett (written about 1840)**

It is night on the moors – the rising moon
Gleams cold and pale in the cloudy sky.
The storm will be down in its wrath right soon,
The gusts of wind wail mournfully.
Yet hoof beats ring through the misty night.
From Skipton Castle these horsemen come,
Swift must he ride on so wild a night
Who, 'ere the morning would reach his home.
Yet, so no enemy ride behind
Little care they for rain or wind.

Coates of Kildwick Grange is there,
And Samuel Swyer of Cononley,
And the Lord of the Hall of Kildwick fair,
Hugh Curren – third of that desperate three.
The malignants seek for them far and near,
But Skipton's Castle lies far behind,
Above the sable pines appear.
Below the Aire's bright waters wind
In front as over the stones they strain,
The lights of Cononley shine thro' the rain.

A hurried parley beside the gate
And Swyer rides in 'neath the pine boughs black,
The others speed on, for they dare not wait
E'en now the foe may be on their track.
Far behind lie the tasselled pines
Like ebony lance points rising tall,
Through the driving sleet a faint glare shines
The distant lights of Farnhill Hall.
The wind is rising, the rain sweeps by
Black with the storm in the starless sky.

Away,..away...Royd House is past,
Deep mid its shadowy yews embowered,
And Kildwick Bridge is near at last,
The pebbles gleam in thousands – showered
From beneath the tread of each straining steed,
A hurried farewell is all they say.
They dare not pause in that hour of need
O'er the dark bridge – Curren rides away.
The hoof beats die out on the hollow stone,
And Roger Coates rides on alone.

His helm is bright with frozen sleet,
His eyes are dimmed with the driving rain.
He stays for a moment, his charger fleet,
Then boldly urges him on again.
Away! There is surely a sound below,
A distant shout on the rising breeze,
Or is it the waters as they flow,
Or the crashing sound of the storm filled trees?
Away! They dash on, fierce and fleet
To clatter away through Steeton's Street.

The gabled house is reached at last,
To earth the wearied horseman springs,
O'er the nearest post the rein is cast
And a mighty blow on the portal rings.
The door flies open – a burst of light –
Both horse and rider may rest at will
And Roger Coates comes in from the night.
But his look is restless, and watchful still.
Uneasily still his glance roves round
And the shout of the foe is in every sound.

The door of the room is opened wide
And all spring up from the lighted board,
"The malignants are near – Ride, Roger, ride!"
No rest for the Grange of Kildwick Lord.
In haste he springs on the steaming steed,
Wet with the rain and white with foam,
May he not fail him now at need –
Away! For the northern hills and home.
Down, they rush, that fearless pair
Down to the waves of the foaming Aire.

Poor wearied steed – the tide is deep.
Will this wild ride in the river end?
Or doth his master danger keep
The life in the beast of that dauntless friend.
The Aire is forded – beneath the hill
To the left the Lang Kirk of Craven lies,
A mass of shadows, dark and still,
Unmoved by the wrath of the angry skies.
And far above, now faint, now bright,
A changing radiance gleams through the night.

Onward they go – but now they hear
Not far away a clatter and stir.
The panting charger pricks his ear,
Then shudders beneath the stinging spur;
Their foes are behind – up the gill they dash.
Oh, welcoming sight! For bright and clear
The lights of the Grange of Kildwick flash,
And danger is past, and home is near,
And that reckless horseman in sort most strange
Rides into the court of Kildwick Grange.

Darkly drove the wild March hail,
Darkly the gusty rain swept by,
The night lay dark upon hill and dale,
There was no light in the stormy sky.
The wind arose and sank again
Sweeping past with sobbing cry.
With a shrieking sound, as on one in pain
Or of demons in their revelry
With a sobbing and laughter weird and strange.
O'er the gabled roof of Kildwick Grange.

Within where the dying embers gleamed
Fanned by the wind to sudden flame
Where the flickering tapers radiance strained
Sat Rosamond, the Grange's Dame.
On her white face the red light flashed
As she sat there in the deepening night,
Hearing the raindrops as they splashed
A dreary song on the lattice bright,
And the storm raged on without stay or change
Over the gables of Kildwick Grange.

Out of the darkness came a sound
Neither of wind nor yet of rain,
Half by the eddyng hail blasts drowned
Yet ringing nearer again and again.
Out of the darkness and the night,
Out of the storm's deep sounding din,
A horseman dashed to the lattice bright
And called to her who sat within.
Wherefore rides that wanderer strange
Under the walls of Kildwick Grange?

She rose and swept through the ancient Hall
Where sword and cask shone fair to see,
Within the court cried a Roundhead tall,
“Undo the door right speedily,
Fast the malignants ride behind.
From Skiptons keep they have followed me.
Far shall they ride before they find
The Lord of the Grange of Kildwick free.
Far may they ride before they range
Thro’ the time-worn halls of Kildwick Grange.”

He followed her up the winding stair
Into the secret chamber dim.
And out of the cold grey shadow there
Her eyes shone wide and wild on him,
A stir, a shout in the court below,
A rattle of horses over the stones,
A clashing of swords that are drawn from sheaths
And voices upraised in angry tones.
A crashing of doors in the windy dark,
And the deep, fierce din of the watch dogs bark.

A voice beneath in the rain and wind,
“Whom seek ye, friends, our Lord is away.”
“We have chased him here, riding fast behind.
He is in the Grange what ‘ere you say.”
The heaving door on its hinges swung.
They heard steps entering below,
The clatter of arms as they clashed and rung
And voices speaking fierce tho’ low,
Steps dying away when the search seemed vain.
And, at last, but the drip of the departing rain.

All was silent, the wind wept by
With a softer cadence – the storm was o’er.
Then rose a sudden triumphant cry,
And the foe was back in the court once more.
“Ye lying Roundheads – why have ye said that Roger Coates is far from home?
There’s a steed in the stable that far hath fled,
Wet with the rain and white with foam.
Let your Lord come forth, or by King and Crown
Faggot and flame shall bring him down.”

He bent and kissed her in her place
As the last words rang out loud and clear.
Then turned away with stern, sad face,
Like a man who knows not hope nor fear.
Once more the gate on its hinges swung.
He hears steps entering fast below;
He lifted the sword from where it hung –
“They are in the Grange now, dearest , go!
The fight is fought and the battle vain.
There’s all to lose and nought to gain.”

Over the threshold’s shattered ledge,
Into the oak carved hall they came.
The moon shone forth from the black storm’s edge
And silvered the face of that stately dame;
Lovely and fearless, calm and pale,
Into the shadowy hall came she,
And the leader felt his bold heart fail
As he looked on that face, so fair to see.
“For whom do you seek at home so strange?”
“For Roger Coates of Kildwick Grange.”

“He’s not here.” They looked askance.
“His steed’s in the stable, lady fair.”
But they shrank ‘neath the light of that calm glance,
Clear and fearless in its despair.
Then rose those tones of hate once more.
“If he comes not forth , the Grange shall burn.”
A sudden stain on the oaken floor,
And she answers nothing in return.
But the leader started in swift surprise,
With affrighted look and uplifted eyes.

And every trooper looked up again.
Then stood there mute as stone beside,
For high above every head a stain
Of darkest crimson the rafters dyed.
No stain was that of soaking rain,
No wine spilt on that rafter wide.
And all knew why they had searched in vain
And how the Lord of Kildwick died.
And each one turned like a man afraid
And followed his chief thro’ the portals shade.

But Rosamond's look with horror filled
Like avenging fire on those warriors fell.
Shuddering she spoke yet, if iron willed.
"Come, look at the work you have wrought so well."
They stood there, silent and asked no more.
Again they followed her up the stairs.
She opened wide the secret door
And left them, mute, in the torch light there.
Voiceless and awed before that sight,
Flushed and still in the silent night.

In the Lang Kirk, 'neath the altar rail
The Lord of the Grange lies calm at rest.
Soft gleams the 'prisoned sunlight pale
On the Arms of Craven upon his breast.
And to this day, at the Grange they show
The stain of blood on the oaken floor.
And when the wild March breezes blow
Sweeping fiercely o'er moss and moor,
They tell in their revelry weird and strange,
Of Roger Coates of Kildwick Grange.