# THE STORY AND SONG OF BLACK RODERICK

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The Story and Song of Black Roderick by Dora Sigerson

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## **DORA SIGERSON**

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#### BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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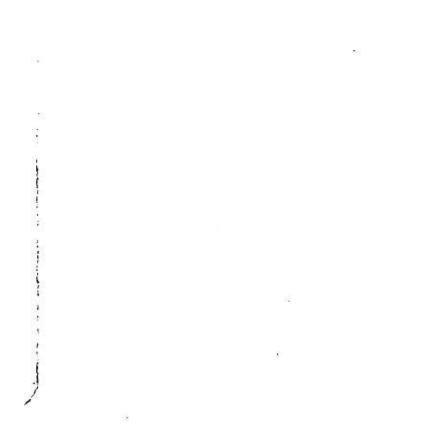
VERSES THE FAIRY CHANGELING, AND OTHER POEMS MY LADY'S SLIPPER, AND OTHER POEMS BALLADS AND POEMS THE FATHER CONFESSOR THE WOMAN WHO WENT TO HELL AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD THE COUNTRY-HOUSE PARTY

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### THE STORY AND SONG OF BLACK RODERICK

THIS is the story of Black Earl Roderick, the story and the song of his pride and of his humbling; of the bitterness of his heart, and of the love that came to it at last; of his threatened destruction, and the strange and wonderful way of his salvation.

So shall I begin and tell.

He left his gray castle at the dawn of the morning, and with many a knight to bear him company rode, not eager and swift, like a prince who went to find a treasure, but steady and slow, as we should go to meet sorrow. Not one of the hundred men who followed dared to lilt a lay or fling a laugh-

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ing jest from his mouth. All rode silent amongst their gay trappings, for so saith a song:

> It was the Black Earl Roderick Who rode towards the south; The frown was heavy on his brow, The sneer upon his mouth.

Behind him rode a hundred men All gay with plume and spear; But not a one did lilt a song His weary way to cheer.

So stern was Black Earl Roderick Upon his wedding-day, To none he spake a single word Who met him on his way.

And of those that passed him as he went there were none who dared to bid him Godspeed, and only one whispered at all; she was Mora of the Knowledge, who was picking herbs in a lonely place and saw him ride.

'There goeth the hunter,' said she; ''tis a white doe that thou wouldst kill. High

#### BLACK RODERICK

hanging to thee, my lord, upon a windy day!'

And of all the flying things he met in his going, one only dared to put pain upon him, and she was a honey-bee who stabbed his cheek with her sword.

'Would I could slay thee,' she cried, 'ere thou rob the hive of its honey!'

And of all the creeping things that passed him on his way only one tried to stay him; she was the bramble who cast her thorn across his path so his steed well-nigh stumbled.

'Would I could make thee fall, Black Earl, who now art so high, ere thou rob fruit from the branch!'

Only one living thing upon the mountains saw him go without mourning, and he was the red weasel who took the world as he found it.

'Tears will not heal a wound,' saith he, 'but they will quench a fire. Thy hive is in danger, bee,' quoth he. 'Bramble, thy flowers are scattered and thy fruit lost.'

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