

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous F

George Borrow

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PREFACE

The ballads in this volume are translated from the Works of OEHLENSLAEGGER, (a poet who is yet living, and who stands high in the estimation of his countrymen,) and from the KIAEMPE VISER, a collection of old songs, celebrating the actions of the ancient heroes of Scandinavia.

The old Danish poets were, for the most part, extremely rude in their versification. Their stanzas of four or two lines have not the full rhyme of vowel and consonant, but merely what the Spaniards call the "assonante," or vowel rhyme, and attention seldom seems to have been paid to the number of FEET on which the lines moved along. But, however defective their poetry may be in point of harmony of numbers, it describes, in vivid and barbaric language, scenes of barbaric grandeur, which in these days are never witnessed; and, which, though the modern muse may imagine, she generally fails in attempting to pourtray, from the violent desire to be smooth and tuneful, forgetting that smoothness and tunefulness are nearly synonymous with tameness and unmeaningness.

I expect shortly to lay before the public a complete translation of the KIAEMPE VISER, made by me some years ago; and of which, I hope, the specimens here produced will not give an unfavourable idea.

It was originally my intention to publish, among the "Miscellaneous Pieces," several translations from the Gaelic, formerly the language of the western world; the noble tongue

"A labhair Padric' nninse Fail na Riogh.
'San faighe caomhsin Colum naomhta' n I."

Which Patrick spoke in Innisfail, to heathen chiefs of old
Which Columb, the mild prophet-saint, spoke in his island-hold –

but I have retained them, with one exception, till I possess a sufficient quantity to form an entire volume.

FROM ALLAN CUNNINGHAM,

TO GEORGE BORROW,
On his proposing to translate the 'Kiaepe Viser.'

Sing, sing, my friend; breathe life again
Through Norway's song and Denmark's strain:
On flowing Thames and Forth, in flood,
Pour Haco's war-song, fierce and rude.
O'er England's strength, through Scotland's cold,
His warrior minstrels marched of old –
Called on the wolf and bird of prey
To feast on Ireland's shore and bay;
And France, thy forward knights and bold,
Rough Rollo's ravens croaked them cold.
Sing, sing of earth and ocean's lords,
Their songs as conquering as their swords;
Strains, steeped in many a strange belief,
Now stern as steel, now soft as grief –
Wild, witching, warlike, brief, sublime,
Stamped with the image of their time;
When chafed—the call is sharp and high
For carnage, as the eagles cry;
When pleased—the mood is meek, and mild,
And gentle, as an unweaned child.
Sing, sing of haunted shores and shelves,
St. Oluf and his spiteful elves,
Of that wise dame, in true love need,
Who of the clear stream formed the steed –
How youthful Svend, in sorrow sharp,
The inspired strings rent from his harp;
And Sivard, in his cloak of felt,
Danced with the green oak at his belt –
Or sing the Sorceress of the wood,
The amorous Merman of the flood –
Or elves that, o'er the unfathomed stream,
Sport thick as motes in morning beam –
Or bid me sail from Iceland Isle,
With Rosmer and fair Ellenlyle,
What time the blood-crow's flight was south,
Bearing a man's leg in its mouth.
Though rough and rude, those strains are rife
Of things kin to immortal life,
Which touch the heart and tinge the cheek,
As deeply as divinest Greek.
In simple words and unsought rhyme,
Give me the songs of olden time.

FROM ALLAN CUNNINGHAM,

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

THE DEATH–RAVEN.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

The silken sail, which caught the summer breeze,
Drove the light vessel through the azure seas;
Upon the lofty deck, Dame Sigrid lay,
And watch'd the setting of the orb of day:
Then, all at once, the smiling sky grew dark,
The breakers rav'd, and sinking seem'd the bark;
The wild Death–raven, perch'd upon the mast,
Scream'd 'mid the tumult, and awoke the blast.

Dame Sigrid saw the demon bird on high,
And tear–drops started in her beauteous eye;
Her cheeks, which late like blushing roses bloom'd,
Had now the pallid hue of fear assum'd:
"O wild death–raven, calm thy frightful rage,
Nor war with one who warfare cannot wage.
Tame yonder billows, make them cease to roar,
And I will give thee pounds of golden ore."

"With gold thou must not hope to pay the brave,
For gold I will not calm a single wave,
For gold I will not hush the stormy air,
And yet my heart is mov'd by thy despair;
Give me the treasure hid beneath thy belt,
And straight yon clouds in harmless rain shall melt,
And down I'll thunder, with my claws of steel.
Upon the merman clinging to your keel."

"What I conceal'd beneath my girdle bear,
Is thine—irrevocably thine—I swear.
Thou hast refus'd a great and noble prey,
To get possession of my closet key.
Lo! here it is, and, when within thy maw,
May'st thou much comfort from the morsel draw!"
The polish'd steel upon the deck she cast,
And off the raven flutter'd from the mast.

Then down at once he plung'd amid the main,
And clove the merman's frightful head in twain;
The foam–clad billows to repose he brought,
And tam'd the tempest with the speed of thought;
Then, with a thrice–repeated demon cry,
He soar'd aloft and vanish'd in the sky:
A soft wind blew the ship towards the land,

THE DEATH–RAVEN.

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And soon Dame Sigrid reach'd the wish'd-for strand.

Once, late at eve, she play'd upon her harp,
Close by the lake where slowly swam the carp;
And, as the moon-beam down upon her shone,
She thought of Norway, and its pine-woods lone.
"Yet love I Denmark," said she, "and the Danes,
For o'er them Alf, my mighty husband, reigns."
Then 'neath her girdle something mov'd and yearn'd,
And into terror all her bliss was turn'd.

"Ah! now I know thy meaning, cruel bird . . . "
Long sat she, then, and neither spoke nor stirr'd.
Faint, through the mist which rob'd the sky in gray,
The pale stars glimmer'd from the milky way.
"Ah! now I know thy meaning, cruel bird . . . "
She strove in vain to breathe another word.
Above her head, its leaf the aspen shook –
Moist as her cheek, and pallid as her look.

Full five months pass'd, ere she, 'mid night and gloom,
Brought forth with pain an infant from her womb:
They baptiz'd it, at midnight's murky hour,
Lest it should fall within the demon's power.
It was a boy, more lovely than the morn,
Yet Sigrid's heart with bitter care was torn.
Deep in a grot, through which a brook did flow,
With crystal drops they sprinkled Harrald's brow.

He grew and grew, till upon Danish ground
No youth to match the stripling could be found;
He was at once so graceful and so strong –
His look was fire, and his speech was song.
When yet a child, he tam'd the battle steed,
And only thought of war and daring deed;
But yet Queen Sigrid nurs'd prophetic fears,
And when she view'd him, always swam in tears.

One evening late, she lay upon her bed,
(King Alf, her noble spouse, was long since dead)
She felt so languid, and her aching breast
With more than usual sorrow was oppress'd.
Ah, then she heard a sudden sound that thrill'd
Her every nerve, and life's warm current chill'd:–
The bird of death had through the casement flown,
And thus he scream'd to her, in frightful tone:

"The wealthy bird came towering,
Came scowring,
O'er hill and stream.
'Look here, look here, thou needy bird,

THE DEATH-RAVEN.

How gay my feathers gleam.'

"The needy bird came fluttering,
Came muttering,
And sadly sang,
'Look here, look here, thou wealthy bird,
How loose my feathers hang.'

"Remember, Queen, the stormy day,
When cast away
Thou wast so nigh:—
Thou wast the needy bird that day,
And unto me didst cry.

"Death—raven now comes towering,
Comes scowering,
O'er hill and stream;
But when wilt thou, Dame Sigrid fair,
Thy plighted word redeem."

A hollow moan from Sigrid's bosom came,
While he survey'd her with his eye of flame:
"Fly," said she; "demon monster, get thee hence!
My humble pray'r shall be my son's defence."
She cross'd herself, and then the fiend flew out;
But first, contemptuously he danc'd about,
And sang, "No pray'r shall save him from my rage;
In Christian blood my thirst I will assuage."

Young Harrald seiz'd his scarlet cap, and cried,
"I'll probe the grief my mother fain would hide;"
Then, rushing into her apartment fair,
"O mother," said he, "wherefore sitt'st thou there,
Far from thy family at dead of night,
With lips so mute, and cheeks so ghastly white?
Tell me what lies so heavy at thy heart;
Grief, when confided, loses half its smart."

"O Harrald," sigh'd she, yielding to his pray'r,
"Creatures are swarming in the earth and air,
Who, wild with wickedness, and hot with wrath,
Wage war on those who follow virtue's path.
One of those fiends is on the watch for thee,
Arm'd with a promise wrung by him from me:
His blood—shot eyes in narrow sockets roll,
And every night he leaves his mirksome hole.

"He was a kind of God, in former days;
Kings worshipp'd him, and minstrels sang his praise;
But when Christ's doctrine through the dark North flam'd,
His, and all evil spirits' might was tam'd.

He now is but a raven; yet is still
Full strong enough to work on thee his will:
Lost is the wretch who in his power falls –
Vainly he shrieks, in vain for mercy calls."

She whisper'd to him then, with bloodless lip,
What had befallen her on board the ship;
But youthful Harrald listen'd undismay'd,
And merely gripp'd the handle of his blade.
"My son," she murmur'd, when her tale was told,
"Fear withers me, but thou look'st blythe and bold."
The youth uplifted then his sparkling eye,
And said, whilst gazing on the moon-lit sky,

"Once, my dear mother, at the close of day,
Among tall flowers in the grove I lay,
Soft sang the linnets from a thousand trees,
And, sweetly lull'd, I slumber'd by degrees.
Then, heaven's curtain was, methought, undrawn,
And, clad in hues that deck the brow of morn,
An angel slowly sank towards the earth,
Which seem'd to hail him with a smile of mirth.

"He rais'd his hand, and bade me fix my eye
Upon a chain which, hanging from the sky,
Embrac'd the world; and, stretching high and low,
Clink'd, as it mov'd, the notes of joy and wo:
The links that came in sight were purpled o'er
Full frequently with what seem'd human gore;
Of various metals made, it clasp'd the mould, –
Steel clung to silver, iron clung to gold.

"Then said the angel, with majestic air, –
'The chain of destiny thou seest there.
Accept whate'er it gives, and murmur not;
For hard necessity has cast each lot.'
He vanish'd—I awoke with sudden start,
But that strange dream was graven on my heart.
I go wherever fate shall please to call, –
Without God's leave, no fly to earth can fall."

It thunders—and from midnight's mirky cloud,
Comes peal on peal reverberating loud:
The froth-clad breakers cast, with sullen roar,
A Scottish bark upon the whiten'd shore.
Straight to the royal palace hasten then
A lovely maid and thirty sea-worn men.
Minona, Scotland's princess, Scotland's boast,
The storm has driven to the Danish coast.

Oft, while the train hew timber in the groves,

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Minona, arm in arm, with Harrald roves.
Warm from his lip the words of passion flow;
Pure in her eyes the flames of passion glow.
One summer eve, upon a mossy bank,
Mouth join'd to mouth, and breast to breast, they sank:
The moon arose in haste to see their love,
And wild birds carroll'd from the boughs above.

But now the ship, which seem'd of late a wreck,
Floats with a mast set proudly on her deck.
Minona kisses Harrald's blooming face,
Whilst he attends her to the parting place.
His bold young heart beats high against his side –
She sail'd away—and, like one petrified,
Full long he stood upon the shore, to view
The smooth keel slipping through the waters blue.

Months pass, and Sigrid's sorrow disappears;
The wild death–raven's might no more she fears;
A gentle red bedecks her cheek again,
And briny drops her eye no longer stain.
"My Harrald stalks in manly size and strength;
Swart bird of darkness, I rejoice at length;
If thy curst claw could hurt my gallant son,
Long, long, ere this, the deed would have been done."

But Harrald look'd so moody and forlorn,
And thus his mother he address'd one morn:
"Minona's face is equall'd by her mind;
Methinks she calls me from her hills of wind?
Give me a ship with men and gold at need,
And let me to her father's kingdom speed;
I'll soon return, and back across the tide
Bring thee a daughter, and myself a bride."

Dame Sigrid promis'd him an answer soon,
And went that night, when risen was the moon,
Deep through the black recesses of the wood,
To where old Bruno's shelter'd cabin stood.
She enter'd—there he sat behind his board,
His woollen vestment girded by a cord;
The little lamp, which hung from overhead,
Gleam'd on the Bible—leaves before him spread.

"Hail to thee, Father!—man of hoary age,
Thy Queen demands from thee thy counsel sage.
Young Harrald to a distant land will go,
And I his destiny would gladly know:
Thou read'st the stars,—O do the stars portend
That he shall come to an untimely end?
Take from his mother's heart this one last care,

And she will always name thee in her pray'r."

The hermit, rising from his lonely nook,
With naked head, and coldly placid look,
Went out and gaz'd intently on the sky,
Whose lights were letters to his ancient eye.
"The stars," said he, "in friendly order stand,
One only, flashes like an angry brand:—
Thy Harrald, gentle Queen, will not be slain
Upon the EARTH, nor yet upon the MAIN."

While thus the seer prophetically spoke,
A flush of joy o'er Sigrid's features broke:
"He'll not be slain on ocean or on land,"
She said, and kiss'd the hermit's wrinkled hand;
"Why then, I'm happy, and my son is free
To mount his bark, and gallop through the sea:
Upon the grey stone he will sit as king,
When, in the grave, my bones are mouldering."

The painted galley floats now in the creek —
Flags at her mast, and garlands at her beak;
High on the yard-arm hoisted is the sail,
Half spread it flutters in the evening gale.
The night before he goes, young Harrald stray'd
Into the wood where first he saw his maid:
Burning impatience fever'd all his blood,
He wish'd for wings to bear him o'er the flood.

Then sigh'd the wind among the bushy grounds,
Far in the distance rose the yell of hounds:
The flame-wisps, starting from the sedge and grass,
Hung, 'mid the vapours, over the morass.
Up to him came a beldame, wildly drest,
Bearing a closely-folded feather-vest:
She smil'd upon him with her cheeks so wan,
Gave him the robe, and was already gone.

Young Harrald, though astonish'd, has no fears;
The mighty garment in his hand he rears:
Of wond'rous lovely feathers it was made,
Which once the roc and ostrich had array'd.
He wishes much to veil in it his form,
And speed as rapidly as speeds the storm:
He puts it on, then seeks the open plain, —
Takes a short flight, and flutters back again.

"Courage!" he cried, "I will no longer stay;
Scotland shall see me, ere the break of day."
Then like a dragon in the air he soars,
Startled from slumber, in his wake it roars.

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His wings across the ocean take their flight;
Groves, cities, hills, have vanish'd from his sight, –
See! there he goes, lone rider of the sky,
Miles underneath him, black the billows lie.

He hears a clapping on the midnight wind:
Speed, Harrald, speed! the raven is behind.
Flames from his swarthy–rolling eye are cast:–
"Ha! Harrald," scream'd he, "have we met at last?"
For the first time, the youth felt terror's force;
Pale grew his cheek, as that of clammy corse,
Chill was his blood, his nervous arm was faint,
While thus he stammer'd forth his lowly plaint:

"I see it is in vain to strive with fate;
Thank God, my soul is far above thy hate;
But, ere my mortal part thou dost destroy,
Let me one moment of sweet bliss enjoy:
The fair unmatch'd Minona is my love,
For her I travell'd, fool–like, here above:
Let me fly to her with my last farewell,
And I am thine, ere morning decks the fell."

Firmly the raven holding him in air,
Survey'd his prize with fiercely–rabid glare:
"Now is the time to wreak on thee my lust;
Yet thou shalt own that I am good and just."
Then from its socket, Harrald's eye he tore,
And drank a full half of the hero's gore:–
"Since I have mark'd thee, thou art free to go;
But loiter not when thou art there below."

Young Harrald sinks with many a sob and tear,
Down from the sky to nature's lower sphere:
He rested long beneath the poplar tall,
Which grew up, under the red church's wall.
Then, rising slow, he feebly stagger'd on,
Till his Minona's bower he had won.
Trembling and sad he stood beside the door –
Pale as a spectre, and besprent with gore!

"Minona, come, ere Harrald's youthful heart
Is burst by love and complicated smart.
Soon will his figure disappear from earth,
Yet we shall meet in heaven's halls of mirth:
Minona, come and give me one embrace,
That I may instantly my path retrace."
Thus warbles he in passion's wildest note,
While death each moment rattles in his throat.

Minona came: "Almighty God!" she cried,

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"My Harrald's ghost has wander'd o'er the tide;
Red clots of blood his yellow tresses streak,
Drops of the same are running down his cheek."

"Minona, love, survey me yet more near,
It is no shadow which accosts thee here;
Place thy warm hand upon my heart, and feel
Whether it beats for thee with slacken'd zeal."

At once the current of her tears she stopp'd,
His arm upheld her, or the maid had dropp'd;
The roses faded from her face away,
And on her head the raven locks grew gray.
All he had borne, and what he yet must bear,
He murmurs to her whilst she trembles there:
The hero then with dying ardour press'd,
For the last time, his bosom to her breast.

"Farewell! Minona, all my fears are flown,
And if I grieve, it is for thee alone:
Give me a kiss, and give me too a smile,
And let not tears that parting look defile.
Now will I drink the bitter draught of death,
And yield courageously my forfeit breath:—
Farewell! may heaven take thee in its care,"
He said, and mounted swiftly in the air.

She gaz'd; but he had vanish'd from her view;
She stood forsaken in the damp and dew,
Then dark emotion quiver'd in her eye,
And thus she pray'd, with hands uplifted high:
"Thou who wert vainly tempted in the wild,
Thou who wert always charitably mild,
Thou who mad'st Peter walk on billows blue,
Enable me my Harrald to pursue."

Sunken already was the morning star,
The song of nightingales was heard afar,
The red sun peep'd above the mountain's brow,
And flowers scented all the vale below.
There came a youthful maiden, gaily drest,
Bearing upon her back a feather-vest;
Fondly she kiss'd Minona's features wan,
Gave her the robe, and then at once was gone.

And straight Minona clothes in it her limbs,
And soaring upward through the ether swims:
To moan and sob, her madden'd breast disdains,
Too big for such low comfort are its pains.
The fowls that meet her in yon airy fields,
She clips in pieces with an axe she wields;
Each clanging pinion ceaselessly she plies,

THE DEATH—RAVEN.

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But cannot meet the raven or his prize.

She hears a faint shriek in the air below,
And, swift as eagle pounces on his foe,
Down, down, she dropp'd, and lighted on the shore,
Which far and wide was wet with Harrald's gore.
She smil'd so ruefully, but still was mute –
His good right hand was lying at her foot:
That pledge of truth, in love's unclouded day,
Was the sole remnant of the demon's prey.

Deep in her breast she hid the bloody hand,
And bade adieu, for ever, to the land:
Again she scower'd through the airy path,
Her eyeballs terrible with madden'd wrath:
The raven–sorcerer at length she spied,
And soon her steel was with his hot blood dyed:
The huge black body, piecemeal, found a grave
Amid the bosom of the briny wave.

The ocean billows fret and foam no more,
But softly rush towards the pebbled shore,
On which the lindens stand, in many a group,
With leafy boughs that o'er the waters droop.
There floats one single cloudlet in the blue,
Close where the pale moon shows her face anew:
It is Minona dying there that flies, –
She sinks not!—no—she mounts unto the skies.

FRIDLEIF AND HELGA.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

The woods were in leaf, and they cast a sweet shade;
Among them walk'd Helga, the beautiful maid.

The water is dashing o'er yon little stones;
She sat down beside it, and rested her bones.

She sat down, and soon, from a bush that was near,
Sir Fridleif approach'd her with sword and with spear:

"Ah, pity me, Helga, and fly me not now,
I live, only live, on the smile of thy brow:

"In thy father's whole garden is found not a rose,
Which bright as thyself, and as beautiful grows."

"Sir Fridleif, thy words are but meant to deceive,
Yet tell me what brings thee so late here at eve."

"I cannot find rest, and I cannot find ease,
Though sweet sing the linnets among the wild trees;

"If thou wilt but promise, one day to be mine,
No more shall I sorrow, no more shall I pine."

She sank in his arms, and her cheeks were as red
As the sun when he sinks in his watery bed;

But soon she arose from his loving embrace;
He walk'd by her side, through the wood, for a space.

"Now listen, young Fridleif, the gallant and bold,
Take off from my finger this ring of red gold,

Take off from my finger this ring of red gold,
And part with it not, till in death thou art cold."

Sir Fridleif stood there in a sorrowful plight,
Salt tears wet his eyeballs, and blinded his sight.

"Go home, and I'll come to thy father with speed,
And claim thee from him, on my mighty grey steed."

Sir Fridleif, at night, through the thick forest rode,

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He fain would arrive at his lov'd one's abode;

His harness was clanking, his helm glitter'd sheen,
His horse was so swift, and himself was so keen:

He reach'd the proud castle, and jump'd on the ground,
His horse to the branch of a linden he bound;

He shoulder'd his mantle of grey otter skin,
And through the wide door, to Sir Erik went in.

"Here sitt'st thou, Sir Erik, in scarlet array'd;
I've wedded thy daughter, the beautiful maid."

"And who art thou, Rider? what feat hast thou done?
No nidering coward shall e'er be my son."

"O far have I wander'd, renown'd is my name,
The heroes I conquer'd wherever I came:

"Han Elland, 't is true, long disputed the ground,
But yet he receiv'd from my hand his death-wound."

Sir Erik then alter'd his countenance quite,
And out hurried he, in the gloom of the night.

"Fill high, little Kirstin, my best drinking cup,
And be the brown liquor with poison mixt up."

She gave him the draught, and returning with speed,
"Young gallant," said he, "thou must taste my old mead."

Sir Fridleif unbuckled his helmet and drank;
Sweat sprung from his forehead--his features grew blank.

"I never have drain'd, since the day I was born,
A bitterer draught, from a costlier horn:

"My course is completed, my life is summ'd up,
For treason I smell in the dregs of the cup."

Sir Erik then said, while he stamp'd on the ground,
"Young knight, 't is thy fortune to die like a hound.

"My best belov'd friend thou didst boast to have slain,
And I have aveng'd him by giving thee bane:

"Not Helga, but Hela, {1} shall now be thy bride;
Dark blue are her cheeks, and she looks stony-eyed."

"Sir Erik, thy words are both witty and wise,

FRIDLEIF AND HELGA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

And hell, when it has thee, will have a rich prize!

"Convey unto Helga her gold ring so red;
Be sure to inform her when Fridleif is dead;

"But flame shall give water, and marble shall bleed,
Before thou shalt win by this treacherous deed:

"And I will not die like a hound, in the straw,
But go, like a hero, to Odin and Thor."

He cut himself thrice, with his keen-cutting glaive,
And went to Valhalla, {2} the way of the brave.

The knight bade his daughter come into the room:
"Look here, my sweet child, on thy merry bridegroom."

She look'd on the body, and gave a wild start;
"O father, why hadst thou so cruel a heart?"

She moan'd and lamented, she rav'd and she curst;
She look'd on her love, till her very eyes burst.

At midnight, Sir Erik was standing there mute,
With two pallid corses beside his cold foot:

He stood stiff and still; and when morning-light came,
He stood, like a post, without life in his frame.

The youth and the maid were together interr'd,
Sir Erik could not from his posture be stirr'd:

He stood there, as stiffly, for thirty long days,
And look'd on the earth with a petrified gaze.

'T is said, on the night of the thirtieth long day,
To dust and to ashes he moulder'd away.

SIR MIDDEL.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

So tightly was Swanelil lacing her vest,
That forth spouted milk, from each lily-white breast;
That saw the Queen-mother, and thus she begun:
"What maketh the milk from thy bosom to run?"
"O this is not milk, my dear mother, I vow;
It is but the mead I was drinking just now."
"Ha! out on thee minion! these eyes have their sight;
Would'st tell me that mead, in its colour, is white?"
"Well, well, since the proofs are so glaring and strong,
I own that Sir Middel has done me a wrong."
"And was he the miscreant? dear shall he pay,
For the cloud he has cast on our honour's bright ray;
I'll hang him up; yes, I will hang him with scorn,
And burn thee to ashes, at breaking of morn."
The maiden departed in anguish and wo,
And straight to Sir Middel it lists her to go;
Arriv'd at the portal, she sounded the bell,
"Now wake thee, love, if thou art living and well."
Sir Middel he heard her, and sprang from his bed;
Not knowing her voice, in confusion he said,
"Away: for I have neither candle nor light,
And I swear that no mortal shall enter this night!"
"Now busk ye, Sir Middel, in Christ's holy name;
I fly from my mother, who knows of my shame;
She'll hang thee up; yes, she will hang thee with scorn,
And burn me to ashes, at breaking of morn."
"Ha! laugh at her threat'nings, so empty and wild;
She neither shall hang me, nor burn thee, my child:
Collect what is precious, in jewels and garb,
And I'll to the stable and saddle my barb."
He gave her the cloak, that he us'd at his need,
And he lifted her up, on the broad-bosom'd steed.
The forest is gain'd, and the city is past,
When her eyes to the heaven she wistfully cast.
"What ails thee, dear maid? we had better now stay,
For thou art fatigu'd by the length of the way."
"I am not fatigu'd by the length of the way;
But my seat is uneasy, in truth, I must say."
He spread, on the cold earth, his mantle so wide;
"Now rest thee, my love, and I'll watch by thy side."
"O Jesus, that one of my maidens were near!
The pains of a mother are on me, I fear."
"Thy maidens are now at a distance from thee,

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

And thou art alone in the forest with me."
"Twere better to perish, again and again,
Than thou should'st stand by me, and gaze on my pain."
"Then take off thy kerchief, and cover my head,
And perhaps I may stand in the wise-woman's stead."
"O Christ, that I had but a draught of the wave!
To quench my death-thirst, and my temples to lave."
Sir Middel was to her so tender and true,
And he fetch'd her the drink in her gold-spangled shoe.
The fountain was distant, and when he drew near,
Two nightingales sat there and sang in his ear:
"Thy love, she is dead, and for ever at rest,
With two little babes that lie cold on her breast."
Such was their song; but he heeded them not,
And trac'd his way back to the desolate spot;
But oh, what a spectacle burst on his view!
For all they had told him was fatally true.
He dug a deep grave by the side of a tree,
And buried therein the unfortunate three.
As he clamp'd the mould down with his iron-heel'd boot
He thought that the babies scream'd under his foot:
Then placing his weapon against a grey stone,
He cast himself on it, and died with a groan.
Ye maidens of Norway, henceforward beware!
For love, when unbridled, will end in despair.

ELVIR-SHADES.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

A sultry eve pursu'd a sultry day;
Dark streaks of purple in the sky were seen,
And shadows half conceal'd the lonely way;

I spurr'd my courser, and more swiftly rode,
In moody silence, through the forests green,
Where doves and linnets had their lone abode:

It was my fate to reach a brook, at last,
Which, by sweet-scented bushes fenc'd around,
Defiance bade to heat and nipping blast.

Inclin'd to rest, and hear the wild birds' song,
I stretch'd myself upon that brook's soft bound,
And there I fell asleep and slumber'd long;

And only woke, O wonder, to perceive
A gold-hair'd maiden, as a snowdrop pale,
Her slender form from out the ground upheave:

Then fear o'ercame me, and this daring heart
Beat three times audibly against my mail;
I wish'd to speak, but could no sound impart.

And see! another maid rose up and took
Some drops of water from the foaming rill,
And gaz'd upon me with a wistful look.

Said she, "What brings thee to this lonely place?
But do not fear, for thou shalt meet no ill;
Thou steel-clad warrior, full of youth and grace."

"No;" sang the other, in delightful tone,
"But thou shalt gaze on prodigies which ne'er
To man's unhallow'd eye have yet been shown."

The brook which lately brawl'd among the trees
Stood still, the murmur of that song to hear;
No green leaf stirr'd, and fetter'd seem'd the breeze.

The thrush, upstarting in the distant dell,
Shook its brown wing, with golden streaks array'd,
And ap'd the witch-notes, as they rose and fell.

ELVIR-SHADES.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Bright gleam'd the lake's broad sheet of liquid blue,
Where, with the rabid pike, the troutling play'd;
The rose unlock'd its folded leaves anew,

And blush'd, besprinkled with the night's cold tear.
Once more the lily rais'd its head and smil'd,
All ghastly white, as when it decks the bier.

Though sweet she sang, my fears were not the less,
For in her accents there was something wild,
Which I can feel, 't is true, but not express.

"Come with us," sang she, "deep below the earth,
Where sun ne'er burns, and storm-winds never rave;
Come with us to our halls of princely mirth,

"There thou shalt learn from us the Runic lay;
But dip thee, first, in yonder crystal wave,
Which binds thee to the Elfin race for aye:

"Though painted flowers on earth's breast abound,
Yet we have far more lovely ones below;
Like grass the chrysolites there strew the ground."

"O come," the other syren did exclaim,
"For rubies there more red than roses grow –
The sapphir's blue the violet puts to shame."

I rais'd my eyes to heaven's starry dome,
And gripp'd my faulchion with convulsive might,
Resolv'd no witchcraft should my mind o'ercome.

My lengthen'd silence vex'd the maidens sore:
"Wilt thou detain us here the live-long night,
Or must we, stripling, proffer something more?"

"Taught by us, thou shalt bind the rugged bear, –
Seize on the mighty dragon's heap of gold, –
And slay the cockatrice while in her lair!

"But from thy breast the blood we will suck out,
Unless thou follow us beneath the mould!
Decide, decide, nor longer pause in doubt!"

Cold sweat I shed, and as, with trembling hand,
I strove to whirl my beaming faulchion round,
It sank, enthrall'd by magic's potent band.

Each witch drew nigh, with dagger high uprear'd;
Just then a cock, beyond the wild wood's bound,

ELVIR–SHADES.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Crew loud—and in the earth they disappear'd.

I flung myself upon my frighten'd barb,
Just as the shades began to grow less murk,
And sun-beams clad the sky in gayer garb.

Let each young warrior from such places fly:
Disease and death beneath the flowers lurk;
And elves would suck the warm blood from his eye.

THE HEDDYBEE-SPECTRE.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

I clomb in haste my dappled steed,
And gallop'd far o'er mount and mead;
And when the day drew nigh its close,
I laid me down to take repose.

I laid me down to take repose,
And slumbers sweet fell o'er my brows:
And then, methought, as there I slept,
From out the ground the dead man leapt.

Said he, "If thou art valiant, Knight,
My murder soon will see the light;
For thou wilt ride to Heddybee,
Where live my youthful brothers three:

"And there, too, thou wilt surely find
My father dear and mother kind;
And there sits Kate, my much-loved wife,
Who with her women took my life.

"They chok'd me, as in bed I lay,
Then wrapp'd me in a truss of hay;
And bore me out at dead of night,
And laid me in this lonely height.

"The Groom, who lately clean'd my stall,
Now struts and vapours through my hall, –
Eats gaily with my silver knife,
And sleeps with Kate, my much-lov'd wife.

"His place is highest at the board;
But what is most to be deplor'd,
He gives my babes so little bread,
And mocks them now their sire is dead.

"Clad in my clothes he proudly stalks
Along the shady forest-walks;
And, arm'd with bow and hunting spear,
He shoots my birds and stabs my deer.

"Were I alive, to meet him now,
All underneath the linden bough,
With no one nigh, my wrath to check,

THE HEDDYBEE-SPECTRE.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

I'd wring his head from off his neck!

"But hie thee hence to Heddybee,
Where live my youthful brothers three;
First tell them all--then stab the groom –
Allow my wife a milder doom."

SIR JOHN.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

Sir Lave to the island stray'd;
He wedded there a lovely maid:
"I'll have her yet," said John.

He brought her home across the main,
With knights and ladies in the train:
"I'm close behind," said John.

They plac'd her on the bridal seat;
Sir Lave bade them drink and eat:
"Aye: that we will," said John.

The servants led her then to bed,
But could not loose her girdle red!
"I can, perhaps," said John.

He shut the door with all his might;
He lock'd it fast, and quench'd the light:
"I shall sleep here," said John.

A servant to Sir Lave hied; –
"Sir John is sleeping with the bride:"
"Aye, that I am," said John.

Sir Lave to the chamber flew:
"Arise, and straight the door undo!"
"A likely thing!" said John.

He struck with shield, he struck with spear –
"Come out, thou Dog, and fight me here!"
"Another time," said John.

"And since thou with my bride hast lain,
To our good king I will complain."
"That thou canst do," said John.

As soon as e'er the morning shone,
Sir Lave sought our monarch's throne;
"I'll go there too," said John.

"O King, chastise this wicked wight,
For with my wife he slept last night."
"T is very true," said John.

SIR JOHN.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

"Since ye two love one pretty face,
Your lances must decide the case."
"With all my heart," said John.

The sun on high was shining bright,
And thousands came to see the fight:
"Lo! here I am:" said John.

The first course that they ran so free,
Sir John's horse fell upon his knee:
"Now help me God!" said John.

The next course that they ran, in ire,
Sir Lave fell among the mire.
"He's dead enough!" said John.

The victor to the castle hied,
And there in tears he found the bride:
"Thou art my own," said John.

That night, forgetting all alarms,
Again she blest him in her arms.
"I have her now!" said John.

MAY {3} ASDA.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

May Asda is gone to the merry green wood;
Like flax was each tress on her temples that stood;
Her cheek like the rose-leaf that perfumes the air;
Her form, like the lily-stalk, graceful and fair:

She mourn'd for her lover, Sir Frovin the brave,
For he had embark'd on the boisterous wave;
And, burning to gather the laurels of war,
Had sail'd with King Humble to Orkney afar:

At feast and at revel, wherever she went,
Her thoughts on his perils and dangers were bent;
No joy has the heart that loves fondly and dear –
No pleasure save when the lov'd object is near!

May Asda walk'd out in the bonny noon-tide,
And roam'd where the beeches grew up in their pride;
She sat herself down on the green sloping hill,
Where liv'd the Erl-people, {4} and where they live still:

Then trembled the turf, as she sat in repose,
And straight from the mountain three maidens arose;
And with them a loom, and upon it a woof,
As white as the snow when it falls on the roof.

Of red shining gold was the fairy-loom made;
They sang and they danc'd, and their swift shuttles play'd;
Their song was of death, and their song was of life,
It sounded like billows in tumult and strife.

They gave her the woof, with a sorrowful look,
And vanish'd like bubbles that burst on the brook;
But deep in the mountain was heard a sweet strain,
As the lady went home to her bower again.

The web was unfinish'd; she wove and she spun,
Nor rested a moment, until it was done;
And there was enough, when the work was complete,
To form for a dead man a shirt or a sheet.

The heroes return'd from the well-foughten field,
And bore home Sir Frovin's corse, laid on a shield;
Sad sight for the maid! but she still was alert,

MAY {3} ASDA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

And sew'd round the body the funeral shirt:

And when she had come to the very last stitch,
Her feelings, so long suppress'd, rose to a pitch,
The cold clammy sweat from her features outbroke;
Death struck her, and meekly she bow'd to the stroke.

She rests with her lover now deep in the grave,
And o'er them the beeches their mossy boughs wave;
There sing the Erl-maidens their ditties aloud,
And dance while the merry moon peeps from the cloud.

AAGER AND ELIZA.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

Have ye heard of bold Sir Aager,
How he rode to yonder isle;
There he saw the sweet Eliza,
Who upon him deign'd to smile.

There he married sweet Eliza,
With her lands and ruddy gold –
Wo is me! the Monday after,
Dead he lay beneath the mould!

In her bower sat Eliza;
Rent the air with shriek and groan;
All which heard the good Sir Aager,
Underneath the granite stone.

Up his mighty limbs he gather'd,
Took the coffin on his back;
And to fair Eliza's bower
Hasten'd, by the well-known track.

On her chamber's lowly portal,
With his fingers long and thin,
Thrice he tapp'd, and bade Eliza
Straightway let her bridegroom in!

Straightway answer'd fair Eliza,
"I will not undo my door
Till I hear thee name sweet Jesus,
As thou oft hast done before."

"Rise, O rise, my own Eliza,
And undo thy chamber door;
I can name the name of Jesus,
As I once could do before."

Up then rose the sweet Eliza, –
Up she rose, and twirl'd the pin.
Straight the chamber door flew open,
And the dead man glided in.

With her comb she comb'd his ringlets,
For she felt but little fear:
On each lock that she adjusted

AAGER AND ELIZA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Fell a hot and briny tear.

"Listen, now, my good Sir Ager,
Dearest bridegroom, all I crave
Is to know how it goes with thee,
In that lonely place, the grave?"

"Every time that thou rejoicest,
And thy breast with pleasure heaves,
Then that moment is my coffin
Lin'd with rose and laurel leaves.

"Every time that thou art shedding
From thine eyes the briny flood,
Then that moment is my coffin
Fill'd with black and loathsome blood.

"Heard I not the red cock crowing,
Distant far upon the wind?
Down to dust the dead are going,
And I may not stop behind.

"Heaven's ruddy portals open, –
Daylight bursts upon my view;
Though the word be hard to utter,
I must bid thee, love, adieu!"

Up his mighty limbs he gather'd,
Took the coffin on his back,
To the church-yard straight he hasten'd
By the well-known, beaten, track.

Up then rose the sweet Eliza;
Tear-drops on her features stood,
While her lover she attended
Through the dark and dreary wood.

When they reach'd the lone enclosure,
(Last, sad, refuge of the dead) –
From the cheeks of good Sir Ager
All the lovely colour fled:

"Listen, now, my sweet Eliza,
If my peace be dear to thee:
Never, then, from this time forward,
Shed a single tear for me.

"Turn thy lovely eyes to heaven,
Where the stars are beaming pale;
Thou canst tell me, then, for certain,
If the night begins to fail."

AAGER AND ELIZA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

When she turn'd her eyes to heaven,
All with stars besprinkled o'er,
In the earth the dead man glided,
And she never saw him more.

Homeward went the sweet Eliza;
Oh, her heart was chill and cold:—
Wo is me! the Monday after,
Dead she lay beneath the mould!

SAINT OLUF.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

St. Oluf was a mighty king,
Who rul'd the Northern land;
The holy Christian faith he preach'd,
And taught it, sword in hand.

St. Oluf built a lofty ship,
With sails of silk so fair;
"To Hornelummer I must go,
And see what's passing there."

"O do not go," the seamen said,
"To yonder fatal ground,
Where savage Jutts, {5} and wicked elves,
And demon sprites, abound."

St. Oluf climb'd the vessel's side;
His courage nought could tame!
"Heave up, heave up the anchor straight;
Let's go in Jesu's name.

"The cross shall be my faulchion now –
The book of God my shield;
And, arm'd with them, I hope and trust
To make the demons yield."

And swift, as eagle cleaves the sky,
The gallant vessel flew;
Direct for Hornelummer's rock,
Through ocean's wavy blue.

'T was early in the morning tide
When she cast anchor there;
And, lo! the Jutt stood on the cliff,
To breathe the morning air:

His eyes were like the burning beal –
His mouth was all awry;
The truth I tell, and say he stood
Full twenty cubits high:

His beard was like a horse's mane,
And down his bosom roll'd;
The claws that fenc'd his finger ends

SAINT OLUF.

Were frightful to behold.

"I never yet have seen," he cried,
"A ship come near my strand,
That here to shore I could not drag,
By putting out my hand."

The good St. Oluf smil'd thereat,
And thus address'd his crew:
"Now hold your tongues, and well observe
What I'm about to do."

The giant stretch'd his mighty arm;
The ship was nigh his own;
But when St. Oluf rais'd the cross,
He sank knee-deep in stone.

"Here am I, sunk knee-deep in stone!
My legs I cannot move;
But, since my back and fists are free,
My might thou yet shalt prove."

"Be still, be still, thou noisy guest –
Be still for evermore;
Become a rock and beetle there,
Above the billows hoar."

Up started then, from out the hill,
The demon's hoary wife;
She curs'd the king a thousand times,
And brandish'd high her knife.

Sore wonder'd then the little elves,
Who sat within the hill,
To see their mother, all at once,
Stand likewise stiff and still:

"'T is done," they cried, "by yonder wight,
Who rides upon the waves;
Let's wade out to him, through the surf,
And beat him with our staves."

At Hornelummer happen'd then,
What happen'd ne'er before;
The elfins wish'd to leave the hill,
And could not find a door:

They ran their heads against the wall,
And tried to break it through;
They could not break the solid rock,
But broke their necks in lieu.

SAINT OLUF.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Now, thanks to God, and Jesus Christ,
And good St. Oluf's arm,
To Hornelummer we can sail
Without mishap or harm.

THE HEROES OF DOVREFELD.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

On Dovrefeld, {6} in Norway,
Were once together seen
The twelve heroic brothers
Of Ingeborg, the queen:

And they were all magicians,
Possesst of mighty art,
Who freely read the Runic,
And knew the rhyme by heart. {7}

The first could turn the lightning,
And quench its ruddy gleam:
The second, with a whisper,
Could still the running stream:

The third beneath the water
Could dive like any fish:
The fourth could get provision
By striking on his dish:

The fifth upon the gold harp
So pleasantly could play,
That all the men who heard him
Began to dance away:

The sixth, he had a bugle,
And when he blew a blast,
The stoutest of his foemen
Would fly before him fast:

The seventh, unimpeded,
Through solid hills could roam:
The eighth could walk the ocean,
When billows were in foam:

The ninth could draw, by magic,
The fishes from the deep:
The tenth was never weary,
Nor overcome by sleep:

The eleventh bound the dragon
Which crept among the grass;
And all he wish'd to happen

THE HEROES OF DOVREFELD.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Was sure to come to pass:

The twelfth, who was reputed
The wisest of the band,
Knew what was going forward
In every foreign land.

And now, forsooth, I tell ye,
Who listen to my strain,
That such a set of brothers
Will ne'er be seen again.

SVEND VONVED.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

Grimm, in the preface to his German translation of the *Kiaempe Viser*, characterizes this Ballad in the following magnificent words:—

"Seltsam ist das Lied von dem Held Vonved. Unter dem Empfang des Zauberseegens und mit rathselhaften Worten, dass er nie wiederkehre oder dann den Tod seines Vaters rachen müsse, reitet er aus. Lange sieht er keine Stadt und keinen Menschen, dann, wer sich ihm entgegen stellt, den wirft er nieder, den Hirten legt er seine Rathsel vor über das edelste und abscheuungswürdigste, über den Gang der Sonne und die Ruhe des Todten: wer sie nicht löst, den erschlagt er; trotzig sitzt er unter den Helden, ihre Anerbietungen gefallen ihm nicht, er reitet heim, erschlagt zwölf Zauberweiber, die ihm entgegen kommen, dann seine Mutter, endlich zernichtet er auch sein Saitenspiel, damit kein Wohlklang mehr den wilden Sinn besänftige. Es scheint dieses Lied vor allen in einer eigenen Bedeutung gedichtet, und den Mismuth eines zerstörten herumirrenden Gemüths anzuzeigen, das seine Rathsel will gelöst haben: es ist die Angst eines Menschen darin ausgedrückt, der die Flügel, die er fühlt, nicht frei bewegen kann, und der, wenn ihn diese Angst peinigt, gegen alles, auch gegen sein Liebstes, wüthen muss. Dieser Charakter scheint dem Norden ganz eigenthümlich; in dem seltsamen Leben Königs Sigurd des Jerusalemfahrers, auch in Shakspeare's Hamlet ist etwas ähnliches."

"Singular is the song of the hero Vonved. After having received the magic blessing, he rides out, darkly hinting that he must never return, or have avenged the death of his father. For a long time he sees no city and no man; he then overthrows whomsoever opposes him; he lays his enigmas before the herdsmen, concerning that which is most grand, and that which is most horrible; concerning the course of the sun and the repose of the dead; he who cannot explain them is slaughtered. Haughtily he sits among the heroes—their invitations do not please him—he rides home—slays twelve sorceresses who come against him—then his mother, and at last he demolishes his harp, so that no sweet sound shall in future soften his wild humour. This song, more than any of the rest, seems to be composed with a meaning of its own; and shows the melancholy of a ruined, wandering mind, which will have its enigmas cleared up! The anguish of a man is expressed therein, who cannot move freely the wings which he feels; and, who, when this anguish torments him, is forced to deal out destruction against all—even against his best-beloved. Such a character seems to be quite the property of the North. In the

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

strange life of King Sigurd, the wanderer to Jerusalem, and likewise in Shakspeare's Hamlet, there is something similar."

Svend Vonved sits in his lonely bower;
He strikes his harp with a hand of power;
His harp return'd a responsive din;
Then came his mother hurrying in:
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

In came his mother Adeline,
And who was she, but a queen, so fine:
"Now hark, Svend Vonved! out must thou ride,
And wage stout battle with knights of pride.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Avenge thy father's untimely end;
To me, or another, thy gold harp lend;
This moment boune {8} thee, and straight begone!
I rede {9} thee, do it, my own dear son."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved binds his sword to his side;
He fain will battle with knights of pride.
"When may I look for thee once more here?
When roast the heifer, and spice the beer?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"When stones shall take, of themselves, a flight,
And ravens' feathers are woxen {10} white,
Then may'st thou expect Svend Vonved home:
In all my days, I will never come."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

His mother took that in evil part:
"I hear, young gallant, that mad thou art;
Wherever thou goest, on land or sea,
Disgrace and shame shall attend on thee."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He kiss'd her thrice, with his lips of fire:
"Appease, O mother, appease thine ire;
Ne'er wish me any mischance to know,
For thou canst not tell how far I may go."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Then I will bless thee, this very day;
Thou never shalt perish in any fray;
Success shall be in thy courser tall;
Success in thyself, which is best of all.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

SVEND VONVED.

"Success in thy hand, success in thy foot,
In struggle with man, in battle with brute;
The holy God and Saint Drotten { 11 } dear
Shall guide and watch thee through thy career.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"They both shall take thee beneath their care,
Then surely thou never shalt evilly fare:
See yonder sword of steel so white,
No helm nor shield shall resist its bite."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved took up the word again –
"I'll range the mountain, and rove the plain,
Peasant and noble I'll wound and slay;
All, all, for my father's wrong shall pay."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved bound his sword to his side,
He fain will battle with knights of pride;
So fierce and strange was his whole array,
No mortal ventur'd to cross his way.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

His helm was blinking against the sun,
His spurs were clinking his heels upon, . . .
His horse was springing, with bridle ringing,
While sat the warrior wildly singing.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He rode a day, he rode for three,
No town nor city he yet could see;
"Ha!" said the youth, "by my father's hand,
There is no city in all this land."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He rode and lilted, he rode and sang,
Then met he by chance Sir Thule Vang;
Sir Thule Vang, with his twelve sons bold,
All cas'd in iron, the bright and cold.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved took his sword from his side,
He fain would battle with knights so tried;
The proud Sir Thule he first ran through,
And then, in succession, his sons he slew.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved binds his sword to his side,
It lists him farther to ride, to ride;

SVEND VONVED.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

He rode along by the grene shaw; { 12 }
The Brute-carl { 13 } there with surprise he saw.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

A wild swine sat on his shoulders broad,
Upon his bosom a black bear snor'd;
And about his fingers, with hair o'erhung,
The squirrel sported, and weasel clung.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Now, Brute-carl, yield thy booty to me,
Or I will take it by force from thee.
Say, wilt thou quickly thy beasts forego,
Or venture with me to bandy a blow?
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Much rather, much rather, I'll fight with thee,
Than thou my booty should'st get from me;
I never was bidden the like to do,
Since good King Esmer in fight I slew."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"And did'st thou slay King Esmer fine?
Why, then thou slewest dear father mine;
And soon, full soon, shalt thou pay for him,
With the flesh hackt off from thy every limb!"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

They drew a circle upon the sward;
They both were dour, as the rocks are hard;
Forsooth, I tell you, their hearts were steel'd, —
The one to the other no jot would yield.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

They fought for a day, — they fought for two, —
And so on the third they were fain to do;
But ere the fourth day reach'd the night,
The Brute-carl fell, and was slain outright.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved binds his sword to his side,
Farther and farther he lists to ride:
He rode at the foot of a hill so steep,
There saw he a herd as he drove the sheep.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Now tell me, Herd, and tell me fair,
Whose are the sheep thou art driving there?
And what is rounder than a wheel?
And where do they eat the holiest meal?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

SVEND VONVED.

"Where does the fish stand up in the flood?
And where is the bird that's redder than blood?
Where do they mingle the best, best, wine?
And where with his knights does Vidrik dine?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

There sat the herd, he sat in thought;
To ne'er a question he answer'd aught.
Svend gave him a stroke, a stroke so sore,
That his lung and his liver came out before.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

On, on went he, till more sheep he spied;
The herd sat, too, by a deep pit's side.
"Now tell me, Herd, and tell me fair,
Whose are the sheep thou art tending there?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"See yonder house, with turret and tower,
There feasting serves to beguile the hour;
There dwells a man, Tygge Nold by name,
With his twelve fair sons, who are knights of fame."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Enough, Sir Herd; now lend an ear –
Go, tell Tygge Nold to come out here."
From his breast Svend Vonved a gold ring drew;
At the foot of the herd the gold ring he threw.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

And as Svend Vonved approach'd the spot,
His booty among them they 'gan to allot.
Some would have his polish'd glaive,
Others, his harness, or courser brave.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved stops, in reflection deep;
He thought it best he his horse should keep:
His hauberk and faulchion he will not lose,
Much rather to fight the youth will choose.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Had'st thou twelve sons to the twelve thou hast,
And cam'st in the midst of them charging me fast,
Sooner should'st thou wring water from steel,
Than thou in such fashion with me should'st deal.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He prick'd with his spur his courser tall,
Which sprang, at once, over the gate and wall.

SVEND VONVED.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Tygge Nold there he has stretch'd in blood,
And his twelve sons too, that beside him stood.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Then turn'd he his steed, in haste, about, –
Svend Vonved, the knight, so youthful and stout;
Forward he went o'er mountain and moor,
No mortal he met, which vex'd him sore.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He came, at length, to another flock,
Where a herd sat combing his yellow lock:
"Now listen, Herd, with the fleecy care;
Listen, and give me answers fair."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"What is rounder than a wheel?
Where do they eat the holiest meal?
Where does the sun go down to his seat?
And where do they lay the dead man's feet?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"What fills the valleys one and all?
What is cloth'd best in the monarch's hall?
What cries more loud than cranes can cry?
And what can in whiteness the swan outvie?
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Who on his back his beard does wear?
Who 'neath his chin his nose does bear?
What's more black than the blackest sloe?
And what is swifter than a roe?
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Where is the bridge that is most broad?
What is, by man, the most abhorr'd?
Where leads, where leads, the highest road up?
And say, where the hottest of drink they sup."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"The sun is rounder than a wheel.
They eat at the altar the holiest meal.
The sun in the West goes down to his seat:
And they lay to the East the dead man's feet.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Snow fills the valleys, one and all.
Man is cloth'd best in the monarch's hall.
Thunder cries louder than cranes can cry.
Angels in whiteness the swan outvie.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

SVEND VONVED.

"His beard on his back the lapwing wears.
His nose 'neath his chin the elfin bears. {14}
More black is sin than the blackest sloe:
And thought is swifter than any roe.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Ice is, of bridges, the bridge most broad.
The toad is, of all things, the most abhorr'd.
To paradise leads the highest road up:
And in hell the hottest of drink they sup."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Now hast thou given me answers fair,
To each and all of my questions rare;
And now, I pray thee, be my guide,
To the nearest spot where warriors bide."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"To Sonderborg I'll show thee straight,
Where drink the heroes early and late:
There thou wilt find of knights a crew,
Haughty of heart, and hard to subdue."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

With a bright gold ring was his arm array'd,
Full fifteen pounds that gold ring weigh'd,
That has he given the herd, for a meed,
Because he will show him the knights with speed.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved enter'd the castle yard;
There Randolph, wrapt in his skins, {15} kept guard:
"Ho! Caitiff, ho! with shield and brand,
What art thou doing in this my land?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"I will, I will, with my single hand,
Take from thee, Knave, the whole of thy land:
I will, I will, with my single toe,
Lay thee and each of thy castles low."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Thou shalt not, with thy single hand,
Take from me, Hound, an inch of my land;
And far, far less, shalt thou, with thy toe,
Lay me or one of my castles low.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Thou shalt not e'er, with finger of thine,
Strike asunder one limb of mine; {16}

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I am for thee too woxen and stark,
As thou, to thy cost, shalt quickly mark."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved unsheath'd his faulchion bright,
With haughty Randolph he fain will fight;
Randolph he there has slain in his might,
And Strandulph too, with full good right.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

The rest against him came out pell-mell,
Then slew he Carl Ege, the fierce and fell:—
He slew the great, he slew the small;
He slew till his foes were slaughter'd all.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved binds his sword to his side,
It lists him farther to ride, to ride;
He found upon the desolate wold
A burly {17} knight, of aspect bold.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Now tell me, Rider, noble and good,
Where does the fish stand up in the flood?
Where do they mingle the best, best wine?
And where with his knights does Vidrik dine?"
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"The fish in the East stands up in the flood.
They drink in the North the wine so good.
In Halland's hall does Vidrik dine,
With his swains around, and his warriors fine."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

From his breast Svend Vonved a gold ring drew;
At the foot of the knight the gold ring he threw:
"Go! say thou wert the very last man
Who gold from the hand of Svend Vonved wan."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved came where the castle rose;
He bade the watchmen the gate unclose:
As none of the watchmen obey'd his cry,
He sprang at once over the ramparts high.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He tied his steed to a ring in the wall,
Then in he went to the wide stone hall;
Down he sat at the head of the board,
To no one present he utter'd a word.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

SVEND VONVED.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

He drank and he ate, he ate and he drank,
He ask'd no leave, and return'd no thank;
"Ne'er have I been on Christian ground
Where so many curst tongues were clanging round."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

King Vidrik spoke to good knights three:
"Go, bind that lowering swain for me;
Should ye not bind the stranger guest,
Ye will not serve me as ye can best."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Should'st thou send three, and twenty times three,
And come thyself to lay hold of me;
The son of a dog thou wilt still remain,
And yet to bind me have tried in vain.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Esmer, my father, who lies on his bier,
And proud Adeline, my mother so dear,
Oft and strictly have caution'd me
To waste no breath upon hounds like thee."
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"And was King Esmer thy father's name,
And Adeline that of his virtuous Dame?
Thou art Svend Vonved, the stripling wild,
My own dear sister's only child.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Svend Vonved, wilt thou bide with me here?
Honour awaits thee, and costly cheer;
Whenever it lists thee abroad to wend,
Upon thee shall knights and swains attend.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Silver and gold thou never shalt lack,
Or helm to thy head, or mail to thy back;"
But to this and the like he would lend no ear,
And home to his mother he now will steer.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved gallop'd along the way;
To fancies dark was his mind a prey:
Riding he enter'd the castle yard
Where stood twelve witches wrinkled and scarr'd:
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

There stood they all, with spindle and rok, {18} –
Each over the shinbone gave him a knock:

SVEND VONVED.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Svend turn'd his steed, in fury, round;
The witches he there has hew'd to the ground.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

He hew'd the witches limb from limb,
So little mercy they got from him;
His mother came out, and was serv'd the same,
Into fifteen pieces he hackt her frame.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Then in he went to his lonely bower,
There drank he the wine, the wine of power:
His much-lov'd harp he play'd upon
Till the strings were broken, every one.
Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

THE TOURNAMENT.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

This is one of those Ballads which, from the days of Arild, have been much sung in Denmark: we find in it the names and bearings of most of those renowned heroes, who are mentioned separately in other poems. It divides itself into two parts;—the first, which treats of the warrior's bearings, has a great resemblance to the 178th chapter of the *Vilkina Saga*, as likewise has the last part, wherein the *Duel* is described, to the 180th and 181st chapters of the same.

I cannot here forbear quoting and translating what *Anders Sorensen Vedel*, the good old Editor of the first Edition of the *Kiaempe Viser*, which appeared in 1591, says concerning the apparently superhuman performances of the heroes therein celebrated.

"Hvad ellers Kiaempernes Storlemhed Styrke og anden Vilkaar berorer, som overgaaer de Menneskers der nu leve deres Vaext og Kraft, det Stykke kan ikke her noksom nu forhandles, men skal i den Danske Kronikes tredie Bog videligere omtales. Thi det jo i Sandhed befindes og bevises af adskillige Documenter og Kundskab, at disse gamle Hellede, som de kaldes, have levet fast laenger, og vaeret mandeligere større stærkere og hoiere end den gemene Mand er, som nu lever paa denne Dag."

"That part which relates to these Warriors' size, strength, or other qualities, so far surpassing the stature and powers of the men who now exist, cannot be here sufficiently treated upon, but shall be further discussed in the third Book of the *Danish Chronicles*: for, in truth, it is discovered and proved from various documents and sources, that these old heroes, as they are called, lived much longer, and were manlier, stouter, stronger, and taller, than man at the present day."

Six score there were, six score and ten,
From Hald that rode that day;
And when they came to Brattingsborg
They pitch'd their pavilion gay.

King Nilaus stood on the turret's top,
Had all around in sight:
"Why hold those heroes their lives so cheap,
That it lists them here to fight?"

"Now, hear me, *Sivard Snaresvend*;
Far hast thou rov'd, and wide,

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Those warriors' weapons thou shalt prove,
To their tent thou must straightway ride."

It was Sivard Snaresvend,
To the broad tent speeded he then:
"I greet ye fair, in my master's name,
All, all, ye Dane king's men.

"Now, be not wroth that here I come;
I come as a warrior, free:
The battle together we soon will prove;
Let me your bearings see."

There stands upon the first good shield
A lion, so fierce and stark,
With a crown on his head, of the ruddy gold,
That is King Diderik's mark.

There shine upon the second shield
A hammer and pincers bright;
Them carries Vidrik Verlandson,
Ne'er gives he quarter in fight.

There shines upon the third good shield
A falcon, blazing with gold;
And that by Helled Hogan is borne;
No knight, than he, more bold.

There shines upon the fourth good shield
An eagle, and that is red;
Is borne by none but Olger, the Dane;
He strikes his foemen dead.

There shines upon the fifth good shield
A couchant hawk, on a wall;
That's borne by Master Hildebrand;
He tries, with heroes, a fall.

And now comes forth the sixth good shield
A linden is thereupon;
And that by young Sir Humble is borne,
King Abelon's eldest son.

There shines upon the seventh good shield
A spur, of a fashion so free;
And that is borne by Hogan, the less,
Because he will foremost be.

There shines upon the eighth good shield
A gray wolf, meagre and gaunt;
Is borne by youthful Ulf van Jern;

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Beware how him you taunt!

There shine upon the ninth good shield
Three arrows, and white are they;
Are borne by Vidrik Stageson,
And trust that gallant you may.

There shines upon the tenth good shield
A fiddle, and 'neath it a bow;
That's borne by Folker Spillemand;
For drink he will sleep forego.

There shines upon the eleventh shield
A dragon that looks so dire;
Is carried by Orm, the youthful swain;
He trembles at no man's ire.

And, now, behold the twelfth good shield,
And upon it a burning brand;
Is borne by stout Sir Vifferlin
Through many a prince's land.

There stands upon the thirteenth shield
A sprig of the mournful yew;
That's borne by Harrald Griskeson;
And he's a comrade true.

There stand upon the fourteenth shield
A cloak, and a mighty staff;
And them bore Alsing, the stalwart monk,
When he beat his foes to chaff.

And now comes forth the fifteenth shield,
And upon it three naked blades
Are borne by good King Esmer's sons,
In their wars and furious raids.

There stands upon the sixteenth shield,
With coal-black pinion, a crow;
That's borne by rich Count Raadengaard;
The dark Runes well can he throw. {19}

There shines upon the seventeenth shield
A horse, so stately and high,
Is borne by Count Sir Guncelin;
"Slay! slay! bide not," is his cry.

There shine upon the eighteenth shield
A man, and a fierce wild boar,
Are borne by the Count of Lidebiarg;
His blows fall heavy and sore.

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There shines upon the nineteenth shield
A hound, at the stretch of his speed;
Is borne by Oisten Kiaempe, bold;
He risks his neck without heed.

There shines upon the twentieth shield,
Among branches, a rose, so gay;
Wherever Sir Nordman comes in war,
He bears bright honour away.

There shines on the one-and-twentieth shield
A vase, and of copper 't is made;
That's borne by Mogan Sir Olgerson;
He wins broad lands with his blade.

And now comes forth the next good shield,
With a sun dispelling the mirk;
And that by Asbiorn Milde is borne;
He sets the knights' backs at work. {20}

There shines on the three-and-twentieth shield
An arm, in a manacle bound;
And that by Alvor Sir Lange is borne,
To the heroes he hands mead round.

Now comes the four-and-twentieth shield,
And a bright sword there you see;
And that by Humble Sir Jerfing is borne;
Full worthy of that is he.

There shines upon the next good shield
A goss-hawk, striking his game;
That's borne by a knight, the best of all –
Sir Iver Blaa is his name.

Now comes the six-and-twentieth shield,
A jav'lin there you spy;
Is borne by little Mimring Tan;
From no one will he fly.

Such knights and bearings as were there,
And who can them all relate;
It was Sivard, the Snaresvend;
No longer he deign'd to wait.

"If there be one of the Dane king's men,
Who at Dyst {21} is willing to ride,
Let him, I pray, without pause or delay,
Meet me by the wild wood's side.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

"The man among you, ye Danish court men,
Who at Dyst has won most meeds;
Him I am ready to fight, this day,
For both of our noble steeds."

The heroes cast the die on the board;
The die it roll'd so wide:
"Since, young Sir Humble, it stops by thee,
'Gainst Sivard thou must ride."

Sir Humble struck his hand on the board;
No longer he lists to play:
I tell you, forsooth, that the rosy hue
From his cheek fast faded away.

"Now, hear me, Vidrik Verlandson;
Thou art so free a man;
Do lend me Skimming, thy horse, this day;
I'll pledge for him what I can:

"Eight good castles, in Birting's land,
As pledges for him I'll set;
My sister too, the lily-cheek'd maid,
A fairer thou ne'er hast met:

"Eight good castles, and eight good knights;
I'd scorn to offer thee less:
If Skimming should meet any hurt this day,
My sister thou shalt caress."

"If yonder mountains all were gold,
And yonder streams were wine;
The whole for Skimming I would not take;
I bless God he is mine.

"Sivard is a purblind swain;
Sees not to his faulchion's end:
If Skimming were hurt thou couldst not pay me
With the help of thy every friend.

"The sword it whirls in Sivard's hand,
As whirl the sails of the mill;
If thou take Skimming 'gainst that wild fool,
'T is sorely against my will."

Humble, he sat him on Skimming's back,
So gallantly can he ride;
But Skimming thought it passing strange
That a spur was clapt to his side.

The first course that together they rode,

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So strong were the knightly two,
Asunder went Humble's saddle-ring,
And a furlong his good shield flew.

"Methinks thou art a fair young swain,
And well thy horse canst ride;
Dismount thee, straight, and gird up thy steed;
I am willing for thee to bide."

The second course that together they rode
Was worthy of knights renown'd;
Then both their saddles burst in two,
And Humble was sent to the ground.

"Now have I cast thee from thy steed,
Thy courser by right is mine;
But, tell me, youthful and gallant swain,
Who art thou, and of what line?"

"Now have I won from thee the prize,
And Skimming belongs to me;
But, tell me, youthful and gallant swain,
What parents gave birth to thee?"

"Abelon is my father's name;
He sits upon Birting's throne:
Queen Ellina my mother is,
And that for truth is known.

"Queen Ellina my mother is –
A Queen whom all admire;
Good King Abelon Haardestaal,
So call they my hoary sire.

"And who am I, but Humble, the young,
A knight of Birting's land;
Of hero race, whose fame extends
To the wide earth's farthest strand."

"If Abelon be thy father's name,
The courser I straight restore;
Thou art, I find, my very good friend;
I knew thee not, youth, before.

"If Queen Ellina thy mother is,
Then Skimming thou hast rewon;
Thou art, indeed, my very good friend;
Thou art my sister's son.

"Take both the shield ropes, take them straight,
And bind me to yon oak tree;

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Then hie thee back to King Diderik,
And say thou hast conquer'd me."

In came Humble, the youthful knight,
Was clad in a kirtle, green;
"O! I have got my courser again,
And have bound the warrior keen."

In came Humble, with boot and spur,
He cast on the table his sword:
"Sivard stands in the green wood bound,
He speaks not a single word.

"O, I have been to the wild forest,
And have seiz'd the warrior stark;
Sivard there was taken by me,
And tied to the oak's rough bark."

"Now hear me, young Sir Humble, the knight,
'T is plain a jest is meant,
Whenever Sivard was bound by thee,
'T was done with his own consent."

It was Vidrik Verlandson,
And he would fain know all.
"O, I will ride to the wood, and see
How Sivard endures his thrall."

Vidrik spoke to his burly groom:
"Go, saddle me Skimming gray,
For I will ride to the wood, and hear
What Sivard himself will say."

Sivard stands in the good green wood,
There sees he Vidrik ride:
"If Vidrik finds me bounden here,
He'll hew my rib-bones from my side."

Then loud laugh'd Vidrik Verlandson,
And Skimming began to neigh,
For Sivard rooted the oak tree up;
He dar'd no longer stay.

The queen she sat in the high, high, loft,
And thence look'd far and wide:
"O there comes Sivard Snaresvend,
With a stately oak at his side."

Then loud laugh'd fair Queen Gloriant,
As she look'd on Sivard full:
"Thou wert, no doubt, in great, great need,

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

When thou such flowers didst pull."

The King he stood at the castle gate,
In his robes and kingly crown:
"O there comes Sivard Snaresvend,
And he brings us Summer to town." {22}

Now dance the heroes by Brattingsborg;
They dance in their coats of felt;
There dances Sivard, the purblind swain,
With an oak tree under his belt.

VIDRIK VERLANDSON.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

King Diderik sits in the halls of Bern,
And he boasts of his deeds of might;
So many a swain in battle he's fell'd,
And taken so many a knight.

King Diderik sits in the halls of Bern,
And he strikes his moony shield;
"O, would that I knew of a hero now,
'Gainst whom I could take the field."

Then answer'd Master Hildebrand,
(For he knew all things best,)
"There sleeps a Giant at Birtingsberg;
Dar'st thou disturb his rest?"

"Now, hear me, Master Hildebrand;
Thou art huge in body and limb;
Thou foremost shall ride, in the wood, this day,
And bear our challenge to him."

Then answer'd Master Hildebrand,
So careful a knight was he;
"Not so, my Lord, will I do, this day,
For the wages delight not me."

Then out spoke Vidrik Verlandson,
And he spoke in wrathful mood;
"O, I'll be first of the band, this day,
All through the Birting wood."

Then out spoke Vidrik Verlandson,
And he spoke with lofty pride;
"The smith he forg'd me a faulchion good,
That can steel, like cloth, divide."

They were three hundred valorous knights,
Unto Birting's land that rode;
They go in quest of Langben the Jutt,
To the gloomy wood, his abode.

Then out spoke Vidrik Verlandson;
"A wondrous game we'll play;
For I will ride in the green wood first,

VIDRIK VERLANDSON.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

If ye'll but trust me away."

Then answer'd bold King Diderik,
He answer'd hastily then;
"When thou therein shalt have found the Jutt
Come back for me and my men."

It was Vidrik Verlandson,
In the forest alone he sped;
And there he found so little a way,
Which up to the Giant led.

It was Vidrik Verlandson,
He came unto Birting's hill;
There black and dread lay Langben the Jutt,
He lay stretch'd out, and still.

It was Vidrik Verlandson,
With his lance touch'd him on the knee;
"Wake up! wake up! now Langben the Jutt,
Thou sleepest full sound, I see."

"Here have I lain, for many a year,
Mid the leaf and the dew-wet herb;
But never, till now, came a warrior by,
That has dar'd my sleep to disturb."

"Here stand I, Vidrik Verlandson,
With a sword, so good, at my side;
I came to wake thee up from thy sleep,
Betide whatever betide."

It was Langben the Giant, then,
Turn'd up the white of his eye;
"O, whence can come this warrior youth,
Who such bold words lets fly?"

"But hear, but hear, thou warrior youth;
I will not do battle with thee,
Except thou prove of a knightly race;
So thy lineage tell to me."

"A handsome smith my father was,
And Verland hight was he:
Bodild they call'd my mother fair;
Queen over countries three:

"Skimming I call my noble steed,
Begot from the wild sea-mare:
Blank {23} do I call my haughty helm,
Because it glitters so fair:

VIDRIK VERLANDSON.

"Skrepping I call my good thick shield;
Steel shafts have furrow'd it o'er:
Mimmering have I nam'd my sword;
'T is harden'd in heroes' gore:

"And I am Vidrik Verlandson;
For clothes bright iron I wear:
Stand'st thou not up on thy long, long legs,
I'll pin thee down to thy lair:

"Do thou stand up on thy long, long legs,
Nor look so dogged and grim;
The King holds out before the wood;
Thou shalt yield thy treasure to him."

"All, all the gold that I possess,
I will keep with great renown;
I'll yield it at no little horse-boy's word,
To the best king wearing a crown."

"So young and little as here I seem,
Thou shalt find me prompt in a fray;
I'll hew the head from thy shoulders off,
And thy much gold bear away."

It was Langben the mighty Jutt,
With fury his heart was fir'd;
"Ride hence! ride hence! thou warrior youth,
If of life thou be not tir'd."

Skimming sprang up, with both his legs,
Against the giant's side
Asunder went five of his rib-bones then,
And the fight began at that tide.

It was Langben the lofty Jutt,
He wav'd his steel mace round;
He sent a blow after Vidrik;
But the mace struck deep in the ground.

It was Langben the lofty Jutt,
Who had thought his foeman to slay,
But the blow fell short of Vidrik;
For the good horse bore him away.

It was Langben the lofty Jutt,
That shouted in wild despair:
"Now lies my mace in the hillock fast,
As though 't were hammer'd in there!"

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Vidrik paus'd no moment's space;
So ready was he to assail:
"Upon him, Skimming, upon him once more!
Now, Mimmering, now prevail!"

He seiz'd his sword in both his hands,
Unto Langben Giant he flew;
He struck him so hard in the hairy breast,
That the point his lungs went through.

Now Langben Giant has got a wound,
And he's waken'd thoroughly now;
So gladly would he have paid it back,
But, alas! he knew not how.

"Accursed be thou, young Vidrik!
And accurs'd thy piercing steel!
Thou hast given me, see, a wound in my breast,
Whence rise the pains I feel."

I'll hew thee, Giant, I'll hew thee as small
As leaves that are borne on the blast,
Except thou showest me all the gear,
That hid in the forest thou hast."

"Forbear, O Vidrik Verlandson,
Strike me not cruelly dead!
And I will lead thee straight to my house,
That's thatch'd with gold so red."

Vidrik rode, and the Giant crept,
So far through the forest ways,
They found the house with the red gold thatch'd;
It glitter'd like straw in a blaze.

"Therein, therein are heaps of gold,
No King has a greater store;
Do thou remove the big black stone,
And lift from the hinges the door."

With both hands Vidrik seiz'd the stone,
But to stir it in vain did he try;
The Giant took it with finger and thumb,
And lifted it up in the sky.

"Now hear, now hear, thou warrior youth,
Thou canst wheel thy courser about;
But in every feat of manly strength
I could beat thee out and out."

Then answer'd Vidrik Verlandson,

VIDRIK VERLANDSON.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

(He fear'd for himself some ill)
"T is not the custom of any wise man
His strength on a stone to spill."

"Therein, therein is much more gold
Than fifteen kings can show;
Hear me, Vidrik Verlandson,
Thou therein first shalt go."

Then answer'd Vidrik Verlandson,
(For his cunning intent he saw)
"Thou shalt lead the way into thine own house,
For that is warrior-law."

It was Langben the Giant then,
To the door he stoop'd down low:
It was Vidrik Verlandson
Cleft off his head at a blow.

Away the quivering body he drew,
And propp'd it against an oak;
Then back he rode the long, long way,
He's thought of a wondrous joke.

With giant's blood he besmear'd himself,
And besmear'd his steed all o'er;
Then back he rides to King Diderik,
Pretends to be wounded sore.

"Here bide ye in peace, my companions good,
All under the grass-green hill;
Langben the Giant has smote me to day,
I doubt I shall fare but ill."

"If thou from the Giant hast got a blow,
Thy life must be nigh its close;
We'll ride swift back to the halls of Bern,
No man more will we lose."

"Now wend thee, bold King Diderik,
Wend into the wood with me;
And all the gold that the giant had,
That will I show to thee."

"If thou hast slain the giant this day,
'T will far be blaz'd in the land;
And the warrior lives not in this world,
'Gainst whom thou may'st fear to stand."

But what befel King Diderik's men?
When the giant they first perceiv'd,

VIDRIK VERLANDSON.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

They all stopp'd short, in the good green wood,
Of courage at once bereav'd.

They thought the giant verily would
That moment after them stride:
Not one of them all would have battled with him;
Back would they all have hied.

It was Vidrik Verlandson,
He laugh'd at their craven fear:
"How would ye have fac'd him when alive,
Ye dare not him, dead, go near?"

With his lance's haft the body he push'd,
The head came toppling down:
That the Giant was a warrior stark,
Forsooth, I am forc'd to own.

Out took they then his ruddy gold,
And shar'd it amongst the band:
To Vidrik came the largest part,
For 't was earn'd with his good hand.

Little car'd he for the booty, I ween,
But he thought of his meed of fame;
When men should say, in the Danish land,
That the Giant he overcame.

So gladly rode they to Bern again;
King Diderik gladdest of all:
There caus'd he Vidrik Verlandson
To sit next him in the hall.

ELVIR HILL.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

Upon this Ballad Oehlenslaeger founded his "Elvir Shades," a translation of which has already been given.

I rested my head upon Elvir Hill's side, and my eyes were beginning to slumber;
That moment there rose up before me two maids, whose charms would take ages to number.

One patted my face, and the other exclaim'd, while loading my cheek with her kisses,
"Rise, rise, for to dance with you here we have sped from the undermost caves and abysses.

"Rise, fair-headed swain, and refuse not to dance; and I and my sister will sing thee
The loveliest ditties that ever were heard, and the prettiest presents will bring thee."

Then both of them sang so delightful a song, that the boisterous river before us
Stood suddenly quiet and placid, as though 't were afraid to disturb the sweet chorus.

The boisterous stream stood suddenly still, though accusom'd to foam and to bellow;
And, fearless, the trout play'd along with the pike, and the pike play'd with him as his fellow.

The fishes, whose dwelling was deep in the flood, up, up from their caverns did sally;
The gay little birds of the forest began to warble, forthwith, in the valley.

"Now, listen thou fair-headed swain, and if thou wilt stand up and dance for a minute,
We'll teach thee to open the sorcerer's book, and to read all the Runic that's in it.

"The bear and the wolf thou shalt trammel, unto the thick stem of the oak, at thy pleasure;
Before thee the dragon shall fly from his nest, and shall leave thee sole lord of his treasure."

ELVIR HILL.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Then about and around on the moonlight hill, in their fairy fashion
they sported,
While unmov'd sat the gallant and fair young swain, whom they, in
their wantonness, courted.

"And wilt thou not grant us our civil request, proud stripling, and
wilt thou deny it?
By hell's ruddy blazes, our gold-handled knife shall lay thee for
ever in quiet."

And if my good luck had not manag'd it so, that the cock crew out,
then, in the distance,
I should have been murder'd by them, on the hill, without power to
offer resistance.

'T is therefore I counsel each young Danish swain, who may ride in
the forest so dreary,
Ne'er to lay down upon lone Elvir Hill though he chance to be ever so
weary.

WALDEMAR'S CHASE.

The following Ballad is merely a versification of one of the many feats of Waldemar, the famed phantom hunter of the North, an account of whom, and of Palnatoka and Groom the Jutt, both spectres of a similar character, may be found in Thiele's Danske Folkesagn.

Late at eve they were toiling on Harribee bank,
For in harvest men ne'er should be idle:
Towards them rode Waldemar, meagre and lank,
And he linger'd and drew up his bridle.

"Success to your labour; and have ye to night
Seen any thing pass ye, while reaping?"
"Yes, yes;" said a peasant, "I saw something white,
Just now, through the corn—stubble creeping."

"Which way did it go?" "Why methought to the beach."
Then off went Waldemar bounding;
A few minutes after, they heard a faint screech,
And the horn of the hunter resounding.

Then back came he, laughing in horrible tone,
And the blood in their veins ran the colder,
When they saw that a fresh—slaughter'd mermaid was thrown
Athwart his proud barb's dappled shoulder.

Said he, "I have chas'd her for seven score years,
As she landed to drink at the fountains."
No more did he deign to their terrified ears,
But gallop'd away to the mountains.

THE MERMAN.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

"Do thou, dear Mother, contrive amain
How Marsk Stig's daughter I may gain."

She made him, of water, a noble steed,
Whose trappings were form'd from rush and reed.

To a young knight chang'd she then her son;
To Mary's church at full speed he's gone.

His foaming horse to the gate he bound,
And pac'd the church full three times round:

When in he walk'd with his plume on high,
The dead men gave from their tombs a sigh:

The priest heard that, and he clos'd his book;
"Methinks yon knight has a strange wild look."

Then laugh'd the maiden beneath her sleeve;
"If he were my husband I should not grieve."

He stepp'd over benches one and two:
"O, Marsk Stig's daughter, I doat on you."

He stepp'd over benches two and three:
"O, Marsk Stig's daughter, come home with me."

Then said the maid, without more ado,
"Here take my troth, I will go with you."

They went from the church a bridal train,
And danc'd so gaily across the plain;

They danc'd till they came to the strand, and then
They were forsaken by maids and men.

"Now, Marsk Stig's daughter, sit down and rest;
To build a boat I will do my best."

He built a boat of the whitest sand,
And away they went from the smiling land;

But when they had cross'd the ninth green wave,

THE MERMAN.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Down sunk the boat to the ocean cave!

I caution ye, maids, as well as I can,
Ne'er give your troth to an unknown man.

THE DECEIVED MERMAN.

FROM THE OLD DANISH.

Fair Agnes alone on the sea-shore stood,
Then rose a Merman from out the flood:

"Now, Agnes, hear what I say to thee,
Wilt thou my leman consent to be?"

"O, freely that will I become,
If thou but take me beneath the foam."

He stopp'd her ears, and he stopp'd her eyes,
And into the ocean he took his prize.

The Merman's leman was Agnes there, –
She bore him sons and daughters fair:

One day by the cradle she sat and sang,
Then heard she above how the church bells rang:

She went to the Merman, and kiss'd his brow;
"Once more to church I would gladly go."

"And thou to church once more shalt go,
But come to thy babes back here below."

He flung his arm her body around,
And he lifted her up unto England's ground.

Fair Agnes in at the church door stepp'd,
Behind her mother, who sorely wept.

"O Agnes, Agnes, daughter dear!
Where hast thou been this many a year?"

"O, I have been deep, deep under the sea,
And liv'd with the Merman in love and glee."

"And what for thy honour did he give thee,
When he made thee his leman beneath the sea?"

"He gave me silver, he gave me gold,
And sprigs of coral my hair to hold."

The Merman up to the church door came;

THE DECEIVED MERMAN.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

His eyes they shone like a yellow flame;

His face was white, and his beard was green –
A fairer demon was never seen.

"Now, Agnes, Agnes, list to me,
Thy babes are longing so after thee."

"I cannot come yet, here must I stay
Until the priest shall have said his say."

And when the priest had said his say,
She thought with her mother at home she'd stay.

"O Agnes, Agnes, list to me,
Thy babes are sorrowing after thee."

"Let them sorrow, and sorrow their fill,
But back to them never return I will."

"Think on them, Agnes, think on them all;
Think on the great one, think on the small."

"Little, O little, care I for them all,
Or for the great one, or for the small."

O, bitterly then did the Merman weep;
He hied him back to the foamy deep:

But, often his shrieks and mournful cries,
At midnight's hour, from thence arise.

MISCELLANIES.

CANTATA.

This is Denmark's holyday;
Dance, ye maidens!
Sing, ye men!
Tune, ye harpers!
Blush, ye heroes!
This is Denmark's holyday.

ONE VOICE.

In right's enjoyment, in the arm of love,
Beneath the olive's shadow,
The Daneman sat;
Whilst wet and steaming wav'd the bloody flag
Above the regions of the sunny South.
Pure was our heaven, –
Pure and blue;
For, with his pinions, angel Peace dispell'd
All reek and vapour from mild virtue's sphere;
Then lower'd Battle's blood–bespatter'd son
Upon our coast, –
And haggard Envy lent to him her torch,
Which sparkled high with hell's sulphureous light,
Then fled the genius of peace, and wept.

A SECOND VOICE.

But mighty thunders peal'd; the earth it shook,
While rattled all the moss–grown giant stones, {24}
And Oldom's sunken grave–hill rais'd itself;
Then started Skiold and Frode,
And Svend, and Knud, and Waldemar, {25}
In copper hauberks up, and pointing to
Rust–spots of blood on faulchion and on shield –
They vanish'd:
And in the Gothic aisles, high arch'd and dim,
Wild flutter'd of itself, the ancient banner
Which hung above a hero's bones;
The faulchion clatter'd loud and ceaselessly
Within the tomb of Christian the Fourth, {26}
By Tordenskiold's {27} chapel on the strand,
Wild rose the daring Mermaid's witching song;
The stones were loosen'd round about the grave
Where lay great Juul;
And Hvidtfeld, clad in a transparent mist,

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

With smiles cherubic beaming on his face,
Stray'd, arm in arm, with his heroic brothers,
Along the deep.

CHORUS.

We felt the presence of one and all;
The old flags wav'd in the arsenal,
A wondrous spirit went round, went round
The Northern ground.

ONE VOICE.

Then waken'd Thor, {28}
And drew around his loins the mighty belt
Of bear-sinews;
With love fraternal harden'd he his shield,
With eager haste he sharp'd his blunted glaive,
And, with the iron of his hammer, touch'd
Each Dane's and every Norman's breast –
Shot his heroic flame therein, and smil'd!

MANY VOICES.

And Denmark and Norway smil'd.

LOUD CHORUS.

Upon the water,
Upon the land,
We boun'd for slaughter,
At Thor's command.

MAIDENS.

Then fell our tears so quickly,
We breath'd, we breath'd so thickly,
While scarce our lips could stammer forth
Prayers for you, and for the North.

MATRONS.

And we, and we, with breasts that smarted,
Knelt, lowly knelt, whilst firm ye stood,
From us and from affection parted,
In reek and smoke, in brothers' blood!

CHORUS OF MEN.

Tenderness comes from God;
Woman and man in its praise should sing;

CANTATA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

But tenderness flies at honour's nod;
We offer all up to our land and King.

ONE VOICE.

What sang ye, warlike throngs?
Repeat, repeat this day,
One of the simple, nervous, songs
Ye murmur'd out, when, hot with wrongs,
Ye waited the coming fray.

UNIVERSAL CHORUS.

We love, we all love thee, beneficent Peace,
SOLO.

Like the wave of the wild North main,
Foaming and frothing came on our foe;
Proud of his triumphs, proud of his train,
He thought to lay us low:
But, from Denmark's lines of oak,
A horrible, horrible volley outbroke;
Then tumbled his mast,
His courage fell fast;
And the wave, which resembled his furious mood,
Was now with his blood embrued.

CHORUS.

This is Denmark's holyday;
Dance, ye maidens!
Sing, ye men!
Tune, ye harpers!
Blush, ye heroes!
This is Denmark's holyday.

A VOICE.

But, hark! what sobbing and what mournful notes
Are mixing with our hymns of ardent joy!
Hush, hush, be still;
A band of white-rob'd maids approaches slow,
With lily chaplets round their yellow locks,
With heavy tear-drops in their sunken eye;
Broken and trembling sounds
The melancholy song,
Accompanied by harp-tones rising mild.

YOUTHFUL MAIDENS.

Love, with rosy fetter,

CANTATA.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Held us firmly bound;
Pure unmix'd enjoyment
Grateful here we found.
Bosom, bosom meeting,
'Gainst our youths we press'd;
Bright the moon arose, then,
Glad to see us blest.

Denmark's honour beckon'd,
Loud the canon roar'd;
Perish'd in the battle
They whom we ador'd.
Sweet is, grave, thy slumber,
Free from care and noise;
Short are earthly sorrows, –
Endless heaven's joys.

SUDDEN CHORUS OF THE SLAIN WARRIORS IS HEARD FROM ON HIGH.

From the heavenly, clear, invisible, home
Our voices come:
No joy can resemble the joy which reigns
In our seraph veins.
Lov'd ones, lov'd ones, weep for us not,
Soon shall ye here partake of our lot;
High o'er the stars' extremest line
The sun of affection more bright shall shine:
Brothers, brothers, 't is sweet to die
For the land of our birth, and the maid of our eye.
Blest are ye who like us shall fall;
The righteous Jehovah rewards, above,
Courage and love:
Hallelujah, peace be with you all!

THE HAIL-STORM.

FROM THE NORSE.

Sigvald Jarl was a famous Sea Rover, who, when unengaged in his predatory expeditions, resided at Jomsborg, in Denmark. He was the terror of the Norwegian coasts, which he ravaged and pillaged almost at his pleasure. Hacon Jarl, who at that time sat on the Norwegian throne, being informed that Sigvald meditated a grand descent, and knowing that he himself was unable to oppose him, had recourse to his God, Thorgerd, to whom he sacrificed his son Erling. In what manner Thorgerd assisted him and his forces, when the Danes landed, will best be learned from the bold song which the circumstance gave rise to, and which the following is a feeble attempt to translate.

When from our ships we bounded,
I heard, with fear astounded,
The storm of Thorgerd's waking,
From Northern vapours breaking;
With flinty masses blended,
Gigantic hail descended,
And thick and fiercely rattled
Against us there embattled.

To aid the hostile maces,
It drifted in our faces;
It drifted, dealing slaughter,
And blood ran out like water –
Ran reeking, red, and horrid,
From batter'd cheek and forehead;
We plied our swords, but no men
Can stand 'gainst hail and foemen.

And demon Thorgerd raging
To see us still engaging,
Shot, downward from the heaven,
His shafts of flaming levin;
Then sank our brave in numbers,
To cold eternal slumbers;
There lay the good and gallant,
Renown'd for warlike talent.

Our captain, this perceiving,
The signal made for leaving,
And with his ship departed,
Downcast and broken-hearted;

THE HAIL-STORM.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

War, death, and consternation,
Pursu'd our embarkation;
We did our best, but no men
Can stand 'gainst hail and foemen.

THE ELDER-WITCH.

According to the Danish tradition, there is a female Elf in the elder tree, which she leaves every midnight; and, having strolled among the fields, returns to it before morning.

Though tall the oak, and firm its stem,
Though far abroad its boughs are spread,
Though high the poplar lifts its head,
I have no song for them.
A theme more bright, more bright would be
The winsome, winsome elder tree,
Beneath whose shade I sit reclin'd; –
It holds a witch within its bark,
A lovely witch who haunts the dark,
And fills with love my mind.

When ghosts, at midnight, leave their graves,
And rous'd is every phantom thing;
When mermaids rise and sweetly sing
In concert with the waves;
When Palnatoka, {29} on his steed,
Pursues the elves across the mead,
Or gallops, gallops o'er the sea,
The witch within the elder's bark,
The lovely witch who haunts the dark,
Comes out, comes out to me.

Of leaves the fairies make our bed;
The knight, who moulders 'neath the elm, {30}
Starts up with spear and rusted helm, –
By him the grace is said;
And though her kiss is cold at times,
And does not scent of earthly climes,
Though glaring is her eye, yet still
The witch within the elder's bark,
The lovely witch who haunts the dark,
I prize, and ever will.

Yet, once I lov'd a mortal maid,
And gaz'd, enraptur'd, on her charms,
Oft circled in each other's arms,
Together, here we stray'd; –
But, soon, she found a fairer youth,
And I a fairer maid, forsooth!

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

And one more true, more true to me,
The witch within the elder's bark,
The lovely witch who haunts the dark,
Has been more true to me.

ODE.

FROM THE GAELIC.

"Is luaimnach mo chodal an nochd."

Oh restless, to night, are my slumbers;
Life yet I retain, but not gladness;
My heart in my bosom is wither'd,
And sorrow sits heavy upon me.
For cold, in her grave-hill, is lying
The maid whom I gaz'd on, so fondly,
Whose teeth were like chalk from the quarry,
Whose voice was more sweet than harp music.
Like foam that subsides on the water,
Just where the wild swan has been playing;
Like snow, by the sunny beam melted,
My love, thou wert gone on a sudden.
Salt tears I let fall in abundance,
When memory bringeth before me
That eye, like the placid blue heaven;
That cheek, like the rose in its glory.
Sweet object of warmest affection,
Why could not thy beauty protect thee?
Why, sparing so many a thistle,
Did Death cut so lovely a blossom?
Here pine I, forlorn and abandon'd,
Where once I was cheerful and merry:
No joy shall e'er shine on my visage,
Until my last hour's arrival.
O, like the top grain on the corn-ear,
Or, like the young pine, 'mong the bushes;
Or, like the moon, 'mong the stars shining,
Wert thou, O my love, amongst women!

BEAR SONG.

FROM THE DANISH OF EVALD.

The squirrel that's sporting
Amid the green leaves,
Full oft, with its rustle,
The hunter deceives;
Who starts—and believing
That booty is nigh,
His heart, for a moment,
With pleasure beats high.

"Now, courage!" he mutters,
And crouching below
A thunder-split linden,
He waits for his foe:
"Ha! joy to the hunter;
A monstrous bear
E'en now is approaching,
And bids me prepare.

"Hark! hark! for the monarch
Of forests, ere long,
Will breathe out his bellow,
Deep-throated and strong:"
Thus saying, he gazes
Intently around;
But, death to his wishes!
Can hear not a sound:

Except when, at moments,
The wind rising shrill
Wafts boughs from the bushes,
Across the lone hill.
Wo worth, to thee, squirrel,
Amid the green leaves,
Full oft thy loud rustle
The hunter deceives.

NATIONAL SONG.

FROM THE DANISH OF EVALD.

King Christian stood beside the mast;
Smoke, mixt with flame,
Hung o'er his guns, that rattled fast
Against the Gothmen, as they pass'd:
Then sunk each hostile sail and mast
In smoke and flame.
"Fly!" said the foe: "fly! all that can,
Nor wage, with Denmark's Christian,
The dread, unequal game."

Niels Juul look'd out, and loudly cried,
"Quick! now's the time:"
He hoisted up his banner wide,
And fore and aft his foemen plied;
And loud above the battle cried,
"Quick! now's the time."
"Fly!" said the foe, "'t is Fortune's rule,
To deck the head of Denmark's Juul
With Glory's wreath sublime."

Once, Baltic, when the musket's knell
Rang through the sky,
Down to thy bosom heroes fell
And gasp'd amid the stormy swell;
While, from the shore, a piercing yell
Rang through the sky!
"God aids me," cried our Tordenskiold;
"Proud foes, ye are but vainly bold;
Strike, strike, to me, or fly!"

Thou Danish path to fame and might,
Dark-rolling wave,
Receive a friend who holds as light
The perils of the stormy fight;
Who braves, like thee, the tempest's might;
Dark rolling wave,
O swiftly bear my bark along,
Till, crown'd with conquest, lull'd with song,
I reach my bourne--the grave.

THE OLD OAK.

Here have I stood, the pride of the park,
In winter with snow on my frozen bark;
In spring 'mong the flowers that smiling she spread,
And among my own leaves when summer was fled.
Three hundred years my top I have rais'd,
Three hundred years I have sadly gaz'd
O'er Nature's wide extended scene;
O'er rushing rivers and meadows green,
For though I was always willing to rove,
I never could yet my firm foot move.

They fell'd my brother, who stood by my side,
And flung out his arms so wide, so wide;
How envy I him, for how blest is he,
As the keel of a vessel he sails so free
Around the whole of the monstrous earth;
But I am still in the place of my birth.
I once was too haughty by far to complain,
But am become feeble through age and pain;
And therefore I often give vent to my woes,
When through my branches the wild wind blows.

A night like this, so calm and clear,
I have not seen for many a year;
The milk-white doe and her tender fawn
Are skipping about on the moonlight lawn;
And there, on the verge of my time-worn root,
Two lovers are seated, and both are mute:
Her arm encircles his youthful neck,
For none are present their love to check.
This night would almost my sad heart cheer,
Had I one hope or one single fear.

LINES

TO SIX-FOOT THREE.

A lad, who twenty tongues can talk
And sixty miles a day can walk;
Drink at a draught a pint of rum,
And then be neither sick nor dumb
Can tune a song, and make a verse,
And deeds of Northern kings rehearse
Who never will forsake his friend,
While he his bony fist can bend;
And, though averse to brawl and strife
Will fight a Dutchman with a knife.
O that is just the lad for me,
And such is honest six-foot three.

A braver being ne'er had birth
Since God first kneaded man from earth:
O, I have cause to know him well,
As Ferroe's blacken'd rocks can tell.
Who was it did, at Suderoe,
The deed no other dar'd to do?
Who was it, when the Boff {31} had burst,
And whelm'd me in its womb accurst –
Who was it dash'd amid the wave,
With frantic zeal, my life to save?
Who was it flung the rope to me?
O, who, but honest six-foot three!

Who was it taught my willing tongue,
The songs that Braga {32} fram'd and sung?
Who was it op'd to me the store
Of dark unearthly Runic lore,
And taught me to beguile my time
With Denmark's aged and witching rhyme:
To rest in thought in Elvir shades,
And hear the song of fairy maids;
Or climb the top of Dovrefeld,
Where magic knights their muster held?
Who was it did all this for me?
O, who, but honest six-foot three!

Wherever fate shall bid me roam,
Far, far from social joy and home;
'Mid burning Afric's desert sands,
Or wild Kamschatka's frozen lands;

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Bit by the poison-loaded breeze,
Or blasts which clog with ice the seas;
In lowly cot or lordly hall,
In beggar's rags or robes of pall,
'Mong robber-bands or honest men,
In crowded town or forest den,
I never will unmindful be
Of what I owe to six-foot three.

That form which moves with giant-grace;
That wild, though not unhandsome, face;
That voice which sometimes in its tone
Is softer than the wood-dove's moan,
At others, louder than the storm
Which beats the side of old Cairn Gorm; {33}
That hand, as white as falling snow,
Which yet can fell the stoutest foe;
And, last of all, that noble heart,
Which ne'er from honour's path would start,
Shall never be forgot by me –
So farewell, honest six-foot three!

NATURE'S TEMPERAMENTS.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

SADNESS.

Lo, a pallid fleecy vapour
Far along the East is spread;
Every star has quench'd its taper,
Lately glimmering over head.
On the leaves, that bend so lowly,
Drops of crystal water gleam;
Yawning wide, the peasant slowly
Drives afield his sluggish team.
Dreary looks the forest, lacking
Song of birds that slumber mute;
No rough swain is yet attacking,
With his bill, the beech's root.
Night's terrific ghostly hour
Backward through time's circle flies;
No shrill clock from moss-grown tower
Bids the dead men wake and rise.
Wearied out with midnight riot
Mystic Nature slumbers now;
Mouldering bodies rest in quiet,
'Neath their tomb-lids damp and low;
Sad and chill the wind is sighing
Through the reeds that skirt the pool,
All around looks dead or dying,
Wrapt in sorrow, clad in dool.

GLEE.

Roseate colours on heaven's high arch
Are beginning to mix with the blue and the gray,
Sol now commences his wonderful march,
And the forests' wing'd denizens sing from the spray.
Gaily the rose
Is seen to unclose
Each of her leaves to the brightening ray.
Waves on the lake
Rise, sparkle, and break:
O Venus, O Venus, thy shrine is prepar'd,
Far down in the valley o'erhung by the grove;
Where, all the day, Philomel warbles, unscar'd,
Her silver-ton'd ditty of pleasure and love.

NATURE'S TEMPERAMENTS.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Innocence smiling out—carols the lark,
And the bosom of guilt becomes tranquil again;
Nightmares and visions, the fiends of the dark,
Have abandon'd the blood and have flown from the brain.
Higher the sun
Up heaven has run,
Beaming so fierce that we feel him with pain;
Man, herb, and flower,
Droop under his power.
O Venus, O Venus, thy shrine is prepar'd,
Far down in the valley o'erhung by the grove
Where, all the day, Philomel warbles, unscar'd,
Her silver-ton'd ditty of pleasure and love.

MADNESS.

What darkens, what darkens?—'t is heaven's high roof:
What lightens?—'t is Heckla's flame, shooting aloof:
The proud, the majestic, the rugged old Thor,
The mightiest giant the North ever saw,
Transform'd to a mountain, stands there in the field,
With ice for his corslet, and rock for his shield;
With thunder for voice, and with fire for tongue,
He stands there, so frightful, with vapour o'erhung.
On that other side of the boisterous sea
Black Vulcan, as haughty as ever was he,
Stands, chang'd to a mountain, call'd Etna by name,
Which belches continually oceans of flame.
Much blood have they spilt, and much harm have they done,
For both, when the ancient religions were gone,
Combin'd their wild strength to destroy the new race,
Who were boldly beginning their shrines to deface.
O, Jesus of Nazareth, draw forth the blade
Of vengeance, and speed to thy worshippers' aid;
Beat down the old gods, cut asunder their mail –
Amen!—brother Christians, why look ye so pale.

THE VIOLET-GATHERER.

FROM THE DANISH OF OEHLENSLAEGER.

Pale the moon her light was shedding
O'er the landscape far and wide;
Calmly bright, all ills undreading,
Emma wander'd by my side.

Night's sad birds their harsh notes utter'd,
Perching low among the trees;
Emma's milk-white kirtle flutter'd
Graceful in the rising breeze:

Then, in sweetness more than mortal,
Sang a voice a plaintive air,
As we pass'd the church's portal,
Lo, a ghostly form stood there!

"Emma, come, thy mother's calling;
Lone I lie in night and gloom,
Whilst the sun and moon-beams, falling,
Glance upon my marble tomb."

Emma star'd upon the figure, –
Wish'd to speak, but vainly tried,
Press'd my hand with loving vigour,
Trembled—falter'd—gasp'd—and died!

Home I bore my luckless maiden,
Home I bore her in despair;
Chilly blasts, with night-dew laden,
Rustled through her streaming hair.

Plunging then amid the forest,
Soon I found the stately tree,
Under which, when heat was sorest,
She was wont to sit with me.

Down my cheek ran tears in fever,
While with axe its stem I cut;
Soon it fell, and I with lever
Roll'd it straight to Emma's hut.

Kiss'd her oft, and love empassion'd
Sung a song in wildest tones;
While the oaken boards I fashion'd,

THE VIOLET-GATHERER.

Doom'd to hide her lovely bones.

Thereupon I sought the bower,
Where she kept her single hive;
Morning shone on tree and flower,
All around me look'd alive.

Stung by bees in thousand places,
Out I took the yellow comb;
Emma, deck'd in all her graces,
Past my vision seem'd to roam.

Soon of wax I form'd a taper,
O'er my love it cast its ray,
'Till the night came, clad in vapour,
When in grave I laid her clay.

Deep below me sank the coffin,
While my tears fell fast as rain;
Deep it sank, and I, full often,
Thought to heave it up again.

Soon as e'er the stars, so merry,
Heaven's arch next night illum'd,
Sad I sought the cemetery,
Where my true love lay entomb'd.

Then, in sweetness more than mortal,
Sang a voice a plaintive lay;
Underneath the church's portal
Emma stood in death array.

"Louis! come! thy love is calling;
Lone I lie in night and gloom,
Whilst the sun and moon beams, falling,
Glance upon my lowly tomb."

"Emma! dear!" I cried in gladness,
"Take me too beneath the sod;
Leave me not to pine in sadness,
Here on earth's detested clod."

"Death should only strike the hoary,
Yet, my Louis, thou shalt die,
When the stars again in glory,
Shine upon the midnight sky."

Tears bedeck'd her long eyelashes,
While she kiss'd my features wan;
Then, like flame that dies o'er ashes,
All at once the maid was gone.

THE VIOLET-GATHERER.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Therefore, pluck I painted violets,
Which shall strew my lifeless clay,
When, to night, the stars have call'd me
Unto joys that last for aye.

ODE TO A MOUNTAIN-TORRENT.

FROM THE GERMAN OF STOLBERG.

How lovely art thou in thy tresses of foam,
And yet the warm blood in my bosom grows chill,
When yelling thou rollest thee down from thy home,
'Mid the boom of the echoing forest and hill.

The pine-trees are shaken—they yield to thy shocks,
And spread their vast ruin wide over the ground,
The rocks fly before thee—thou seizest the rocks,
And whirl'st them like pebbles contemptuously round.

The sun-beams have cloth'd thee in glorious dyes,
They streak with the tints of the heavenly bow
Those hovering columns of vapour that rise
Forth from the bubbling cauldron below.

But why art thou seeking the ocean's dark brine?
If grandeur makes happiness, sure it is found,
When forth from the depths of the rock-girdled mine
Thou boundest, and all gives response to thy sound.

Beware thee, O torrent, of yonder dark sea,
For there thou must crouch beneath tyranny's rod,
Here thou art lonely, and lovely, and free, —
Loud as a thunder-peal, strong as a god.

True, it is pleasant, at eve or at noon,
To gaze on the sea and its far-winding bays,
When ting'd with the light of the wandering moon,
Or red with the gold of the midsummer rays.

But, torrent, what is it? what is it?—behold
That lustre as nought but a bait and a snare,
What is the summer sun's purple and gold
To him who breathes not in pure freedom the air.

Abandon, abandon, thy headlong career —
But downward thou rushest—my words are in vain,
Bethink thee that oft-changing winds domineer
On the billowy breast of the time-serving main.

Then haste not, O torrent, to yonder dark sea,
For there thou must crouch beneath tyranny's rod;
Here thou art lonely, and lovely, and free, —

ODE TO A MOUNTAIN-TORRENT.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

Loud as a thunder-peal, strong as a god.

RUNIC VERSES.

O the force of Runic verses,
O the mighty strength of song
Cannot baffle all the curses
Which to mortal state belong.

Slaughter'd chiefs, that buried under
Heaps of marble, long have lain,
Song can rend your tomb asunder,
Give ye life and strength again.

When around his dying capture,
Fierce, the serpent draws his fold,
Song can make him, wild with rapture,
Straight uncoil, and bite the mould.

When from keep and battled tower,
Flames to heaven upward strain,
Song has o'er them greater power,
Than the vapours dropping rain.

It can quench the conflagration
Striding o'er the works of art;
But nor song nor incantation
Can appease love's cruel smart.

O the force of Runic verses,
O the mighty strength of song
Cannot baffle all the curses
Which to mortal state belong.

THOUGHTS ON DEATH.

FROM THE SWEDISH OF C. LOHMAN.

Perhaps 't is folly, but still I feel
My heart—strings quiver, my senses reel,
Thinking how like a fast stream we range
Nearer and nearer to yon dread change,
When soul and spirit filter away,
And leave nothing better than senseless clay.

Yield, beauty, yield; for the grave does gape,
And horribly alter'd reflects thy shape, —
For ah! think not those childish charms
Will rest unrifled in its cold arms,
And think not there, that the rose of love
Will bloom on thy features as here above.

Let him who roams at vanity fair,
In robes that rival the tulip's glare,
Think on the chaplet of leaves which round
His fading forehead will soon be bound;
Think on each dirge the priests will say
When his cold corse is borne away.

Let him who seeketh for wealth uncheck'd
By fear of labour—let him reflect,
The gold he wins will brightly shine,
When he has perish'd with all his line.
Though man may rave and vainly boast,
We are but ashes when at the most.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

FROM THE SWEDISH.

So hot shines the sun upon Nile's yellow stream,
That the palm-trees can save us no more from his beam;
Now comes the desire for home, in full force,
And Northward our phalanx bends swiftly its course.

Now dim underneath us, through distance we view
The green grassy earth, and the ocean's deep blue;
There tempests and frequent disasters arise,
Whilst free and untroubled we wend through the skies.

Lo, high among mountains a meadow lies spread,
And there we alight, and get ready our bed;
There hatch we our eggs, and beneath the chill pole
We wait while the summer months over us roll.

No hunter, desirous to make us his prey,
Invades our lone valley by night or by day;
But green-mantled fairies their merry routs hold,
And fearless the pigmy {34} there hammers its gold.

But when pallid winter, again on the rocks
Shakes down in a shower the snow from his locks,
Then comes the desire for heat, in full force,
And Southward our phalanx bends swiftly its course.

To the verdant Savannah, and palm-shaded plain,
Where the Nile rolls his water, we hurry again;
There rest we till summer's sun, waxing too hot,
Makes us wish for our native, our hill-girded spot.

THE BROKEN HARP.

O thou, who, 'mid the forest trees,
With thy harmonious trembling strain,
Could'st change at once to soothing ease,
My love-sick bosom's cruel pain:
Thou droop'st in dreary silence now,
With shiver'd frame, and broken string,
While here, unhelp'd, beneath the bough
I sit, and feebly strive to sing.

The moon no more illumines the ground;
In night and vapour dies my lay;
For with thy sweet and melting sound
Fled, all at once, her silver ray:
O soon, O soon, shall this sad heart,
Which beats so low, and bleeds so free,
O'ercome by its fell load of smart,
Be broke, O ruin'd harp, like thee!

SCENES.

Observe ye not yon high cliff's brow,
Up which a wanderer clammers slow,
'T is by a hoary ruin crown'd,
Which rocks when shrill winds whistle round;
That is an ancient knightly hold, –
Alas! it droops, deserted, cold;
And sad and cheerless seems to gaze,
Back, back, to yon heroic days,
When youthful Kemps, {35} completely arm'd,
And lovely maids around it swarm'd.

You, in the tower, a hole may see;
A window there has ceas'd to be.
From that once lean'd a damsel bright,
In evening's red and fading light,
And star'd intently down the way,
Up which should come her lover gay:
But, time it flies on rapid wing –
Far off a church is towering,
Within it stand two marble stones,
That rest above the lovers' bones.
But see, the wanderer, with pain,
Has reach'd the pile he wish'd to gain;
Whilst Sol, behind the ruin'd walls,
Down into sacred nature falls.

See, there, two hostile nobles fight,
With tiger–rage and giant–might.
There's seen no smoke, there's heard no shot,
For guns and powder yet were not.
'T was custom then, when foemen warr'd,
To win or lose with spear and sword:
A wild heroic song they yell,
And each the other seeks to fell.
Oft, oft, her ownself to destroy,
Her own hand nature does employ.
There casts the hill up fire–flakes,
And Earth's gigantic body quakes:
There, lightnings through the high blue flash,
And ocean's billows wildly dash:
There, men 'gainst men their muscles strain,
And deal out death, and wounds, and pain.
O Nature! to thyself show less
Of hate, and more of tenderness.

How dusky is the air around;
We are no more above the ground;
But, down we wend within the hill,
Whose springs our ears with hissings fill.
See, there, how rich the ruddy gold
Winds snakeways, 'midst the clammy mould
And hard green stone. By torches' ray,
The harvest there men mow away.
But, see ye not yon gath'ring cloud,
Which 'gainst them cometh paley proud;
That holds the spirit of the hill,
Who brings death in its hand so chill:
If down they do not quickly fall,
Most certainly 't will slay them all;
For sorely wrathful is its mood,
Because they break its solitude:
Because its treasure off they bear,
And fling light o'er its gloomy lair.
'T is white, and Kobbold is the name
Which it from oldest days does claim.

Now, back at once into time we go,
For many a hundred years, I trow.
A gothic chamber salutes your sight:
A taper gleams feebly through the night;
A ghostly man by the board you see,
With his hand to his temples muses he:
Parchments, with age discolour'd and dun;
Ancient shields all written upon;
Tree-bark, bearing ciphers half defac'd;
Stones with Runes and characters grac'd;
Things of more worth than ye are aware,
On the mighty table are pil'd up there.
He gazes now in exstatic trance
Through the casement, out into nature's expanse.
Whene'er we sit at the lone midnight,
And stare out into the dubious light,
Whilst the pallid moon is peering o'er
Ruin'd cloister and crumbling tower,
Feelings so wondrous strange come o'er us;
The past, and the future, arise before us;
The present fadeth, unmark'd, away
In the garb of insignificancy.
He gazes up into nature's height,
The noble man with his eye so bright;
He gazes up to the starry skies,
Whither, sooner or later, we hope to rise;
And now he takes in haste the pen,
And the spirit of Oldom flows from it amain;
The scatter'd Goth-songs he changes unto

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

An Epic which maketh each bosom to glow.
Thanks to the old Monk, toiling thus –
They call him Saxo Grammaticus.

An open field before you lies,
A wind-burst o'er its bosom sighs,
Now all is still, all seems asleep;
'Midst of the field there stands a heap,
Upon the heap stand Runic stones,
Thereunder rest gigantic bones.
From Arild's time, that heap stands there,
But now 't is till'd with utmost care,
In order that its owner may
Thereoff reap golden corn one day.
Oft has he tried, the niggard soul,
The mighty stones away to roll,
As useless burdens of his ground;
But they for that too big were found.
See, see! the moon through cloud and rack
Looks down upon the letters black:
And when the ghost its form uprears
He shines upon its bursting tears –
For oh! the moon's an ancient man,
Describe him, mortal tongue ne'er can,
He shines alike, serene and bright,
At midmost hour of witching night,
Upon the spot of love and glee,
And on the gloomy gallows-tree.
Upon each Rune behold him stare,
While off he hastes through fields of air;
He understands those signs, I'll gage,
Whose meaning lies in sunken age;
And if he were in speaking state,
No doubt the old man could relate
Strange things that have on earth occur'd,
Of which fame ne'er has said a word;
But since with look, with look alone,
He cannot those events make known,
He waketh from his height sublime
Mere longing for the dark gone time.

THE SUICIDE'S GRAVE.

FROM THE GERMAN.

This piece is not translated for the sentiments which it contains, but for its poetical beauties. Although the path of human life is rough and thorny, the mind may always receive consolation by looking forward to the world to come. The mind which rejects a future state has to thank itself for its utter misery and hopelessness.

The evening shadows fall upon the grave
On which I sit; it is no common heap, –
Below its turf are laid the bones of one,
Who, sick of life and misery, did quench
The vital spark which in his bosom burn'd.

The shadows deepen, and the ruddy tinge
Which lately flooded all the western sky
Has now diminish'd to a single streak,
And here I sit, alone, and listen to
The noise of forests, and the hum of groves.

This is the time to think of nature's God,
When birds and fountains, streams and woods, unite
Their various-sounding voices in his praise:
Shall man alone refuse to sing it--yes,
For man, alone, has nought to thank him for.

There's not a joy he gives to us on earth
That is not dash'd with bitterness and gall,
Only when youth is past, and age comes on,
Do we find quiet--quiet is not bliss,
Then tell me, God, what I've to thank thee for.

But to recur to him who rests beneath –
He had a heart enthusiastic, warm,
And form'd for love--no prejudice dwelt there;
He roam'd about the world to find a heart
Which felt with his, he sought, and found it not.

Or if he found it, providence stepp'd in,
And tore the cherish'd object from his sight,
Or fill'd its mind with visions weak and vain –
Could he survive all this? ah, no! he died, –
Died by the hand which injur'd none but him.

THE SUICIDE'S GRAVE.

Romantic Ballads Translated from the Danish and Miscellaneous Pieces

And did he die unpitied and unwept, –
Most probably, for there are fools who think
'T is crime in man to take what is his own –
And 't was on account they laid him here,
Within this sweet, unconsecrated, spot.

There comes a troop of maidens and of youths
Home from their labour—hark! they cease their song,
And, pointing to the grave, with trembling hands,
They make a circuit, thinking that in me
The ghost of the self—murderer they view –
Which, fame says, wanders here.

Footnotes:

{1} The goddess of death—according to the Northern mythology.

{2} The paradise of the Northern mythology.

{3} Moe in Danish signifies Maid, and is pronounced nearly like "May." May is Old English for Maid.

{4} The Fairies.—Ellefolk. Dan.

{5} Giants.—Jette. Dan.

{6} Dovrefeld is the highest mountain in Norway, and in Europe.

{7} Some of the many powers attributed to "Runic verses" will be found described in the song so intituled, in the latter part of this volume.

{8} Boune, to get ready.

{9} Rede, advise. Raader.—Dan.

{10} Woxen, grown. Voxen.—Dan.

{11} Jesus Christ.

{12} Grene shaw, green wood.—Old English.

{13} Brute—carl, dyre—carl.—Original.

{14} By this nose under the chin must be understood, that the elf has so long and crooked a nose, that it reaches and turns up under

his chin. Crooked noses are, in all stories, allowed to be an ingredient of fiendish physiognomy.

{15} Svobt udi maard.--Original.

{16} Slaae mig et mit Ledemod sonder.

{17} Burly, strong.

{18} Rok og teen. The Rok is no longer used in England, though still common in the North. It is a hazle stick, more than a yard long, round which the wool is wound. It is affixed to the side of the spinner, under the left arm.

{19} By scattering "Runes," or Runic letters, over graves, provided they formed a particular rhyme, the ancient Scandinavians imagined that the dead might be aroused.

{20} Han laerer de Kiaempers Ryg at verke.

{21} To ride at Dyst, to battle on horseback.

{22} It was formerly the custom in Denmark, upon St. John's day, to celebrate the arrival of Summer, by troops of youths and maids going out into the woods, and thence returning bedecked with leaves and branches. This ceremony was called "bringing Summer to town."

{23} Blank, clear, shining.--Dan.

{24} Called in Danish Kiaempe--steene; these stones either mark the burial place of a warrior, or the spot where some very remarkable circumstance has occurred.

{25} These were ancient Danish monarchs renowned in song and tale, for warlike exploits and strange adventures. Not far from the Bridge of Vaere in the diocese of Roeskild, is King Frode's grave--hill, which, according to tradition, contains immense treasures, and is the richest in all the land. "Around the King's neck is a gold chain, so long that its other end reaches round his feet." See Thiele's Danske Folkesagn.

{26} Denmark's wisest and greatest king. He entertained a warm friendship for James the First of England, and, attended by his court, came to London to visit him. The ceremonies and rejoicings which this event gave rise to, are well described in an old German book, at present in the British Museum.

{27} Tordenskiold Juul and Hvidtfeld--celebrated Danish admirals. The memory of Tordenskiold is sacred among the peasantry, on account of the victories obtained by him over the Swedes. It is reported of him in Jutland, that when the shot of the enemy was directed thick

and fast against him, he would shake the leaden bullets from out the folds of his clothes.

{28} In the Northern mythology, the God of war and strength. He is girded by a belt of bear-sinews, and bears a hammer called "Miolner," which means the shatterer, and with which he destroys giants, demons, and other foes of Odin the supreme God.

{29} See preface to "Waldemar's Chase," p. 115.

{30} It was frequently the practice of the ancient Norsemen, after having entombed their dead kings and heroes, to plant oaks or other trees over them, in order to prevent their remains being disturbed with facility. In that sublimest of all poems, "The Incantation of Hervor," is a passage to the following effect:

Hervadr, Hiorvadr, Hrani and Angantyr,
I wake ye all under the roots of the trees.

{31} Between the islands of Ferroe the Sea exhibits a phenomenon, called, in the dialect of the Islanders, the Boff. Whilst the salt stream runs strong and glassy through its narrow channel, it is suddenly deformed by seven successive breakers, huge and foamy, which occur without any apparent cause, and infallibly overwhelm any boat which may chance to be in the way of their fury.

{32} The ancient Northern god of music and poetry.

{33} A mountain in the Scottish Highlands.

{34} The Duergar, or Dwarf-elves, of Scandinavia are famous for the dexterity with which they fabricate ornaments of every kind, from the gold which they dig out of the depths of the hills.

{35} Kemp, a warrior.—Old Eng. Dan. Kiempe.