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WOONG OF KING SIGURD



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THE WOONG OF KING SIGURD,
AND THE BALLAD OF THE
PAGE AND THE KING'S
DAUGHTER.





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THE
WOOING OF KING SIGURD,
AND THE BALLAD OF THE
PAGE AND THE KING'S
DAUGHTER.

TRANSLATED FROM GEIBEL BY
ELLEN COOK.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY M. B. AND M. I. B.,

LITHOGRAPHED BY M. I. BOOTH.

SECOND EDITION.



LONDON:
BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.

1864.





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THE BALLAD OF THE KING SIGURD.

KING SIGURD'S BRIDAL VOYAGE.

I.

THE spring had come. No more the snow-drifts
stood
On the hill sides; sweet violets fill'd the
wood;
The blue waves danced along, from ice set free,
When grey-hair'd king Sigurd put forth to sea.

II.

He spread his sails from far Upsala's strand,
Coasting along the shore, from land to land,
To levy gifts, and use the ancient right
That each should take what best him pleased,—by might.

III.

The ninth morn on their voyage gaily laugh'd,
Each skald and knight his first carouse had quaff'd,
'Midst sails and cordage May winds softly play'd,
When on a smiling shore their course they stay'd.



The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IV.

Thus spake the king, when on the land they stood—
“ So joyful beats my heart, so light my mood,
“ I know not if the spring-tide makes me gay,
“ Or our good wine—a youth I feel to-day.”

V.

Further they strode along the yellow sand,
On booty bent ; when lo ! a lovely band
Of merry girls to wash their garments troop'd,
To where some elders o'er a brooklet stoop'd.

VI.

Gaily they work'd, and sang in sportive mood
Over their toil ; their mistresses by them stood,
A maiden fair, who on her mantle wore
A jewell'd clasp ; her wrist a falcon bore.

VII.

In her sweet youth she stood, her rosy face
Beam'd like the early morn ; with wondrous grace
Her golden curls fell o'er her girlish form,
And put the shining of her clasp to scorn.

VIII.

Then, deeply musing, spake the king Sigurd :
“ A lovely maiden, by my royal word !
“ Spite of my age, her for my bride I'll take”—
He thought—“ or fure for love my heart will break.”

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IX.

Then to his skalds—"Who is the maid? how named?"
"The child, oh king! of Alf the Wife, far famed;
"Alfsonnè is her name, because her hair
"Gleams golden as the sunshine, and as fair.

X.

"For matchless purity the maiden's known,
"Two brothers guard her honour as their own,
"Called Alfblond-bart and Eric Harfenshall,
"Since Alf the Wife feasts in Valhalla's hall."

XI.

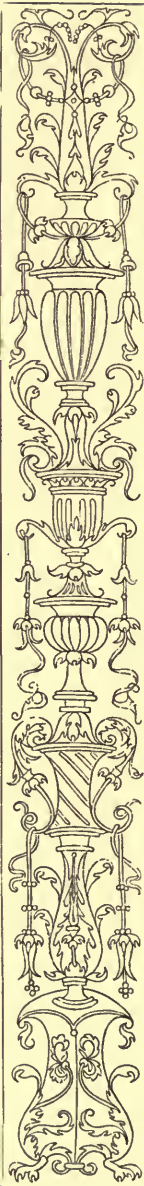
Then thus the king—"Blest be the hour, fair maid,
"When, led by love, thy steps by me have stay'd:
"Ah! might I beg thee, sweetest one, to bring
"A draught of water from that crystal spring?"

XII.

Alfsonnè ran and fill'd, the vessel brought;
Slowly king Sigurd drank, as thus he thought:
"Here quaff I love and youth." Old fool, and vain!
To dream such treasures can be thine again!

XIII.

Then smiling spake he—"Thanks to thee I owe
"For this cool draught; but sweeter drink, I know,
"The red wine sparkling on thy rosy lip,—
"Banquet for gods, love from such mouth to sip.



The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

XIV.

“ By day and night how gladly would I taste
“ Such draughts divine.” Then angrily, in haste
Spake, red with shame and scorn, the lovely maid :
“ I see thou art a stranger hither stray’d :

XV.

“ A noble damsel dost thou dare accoft
“ As some base hireling to all virtue lost ?
“ Such wanton trifling, wert thou e’en a king,
“ Would foul dishonour on thy grey beard bring.”

XVI.

Then, in her anger, down the stream she threw
Her water jar ; the shatter’d fragments strew
The flinty bed ; whilst she, like snow-white hind,
Fled swift along the banks, fleet as the wind

XVII.

Follow’d her bird. Amazed stood Sigurd there,
Till then he had not deem’d she was so fair ;
Stroking his beard he cried in accents stern—
“ To Alfheim, warriors ! now our steps we turn.”



The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

HOW KING SIGURD CAME TO ALFHEIM.

I.

GAY banners waved from Alfheim's ancient walls,
The time was May, and music fill'd the halls,
When news was brought, which startled every
ear,

That king Sigurd from the sea shore drew near.

II.

They strode to meet him from their castle's wall,
Those two brave heroes, Eric Harfenshall
And Alfblood-bart; not joyful was their mood,
Their sister's danger well they understood.


III.

Upon the bridge they stay'd to council take:
"A dream dream'd I last night," young Eric spake;
"I saw a kingly vulture from aloft
"Swoop down upon a white dove, fair and soft.

IV.

"The snow-white dove I shelter'd in my breast,
"The vulture still his fell design hard press'd
"And kill'd the dove, which, brother mine, I fear
"Was our Alfsonn'—the vulture, Sigurd here.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

v.

“ How shall we guard her, if he seeks the maid ?”
“ Wear we our swords for nought ?” Alfblond-bart said ;
“ Our shields and corslets ? ne'er shall our sweet May
“ In the cold arms of aged winter lay.”

vi.

Whilst thus they spoke, arose a wild shrill sound
Of cymbals, trumpets, from the plains around ;
Amidst his warriors king Sigurd draws near,
In festal garments all his train appear.

vii.

Upon the bridge where Alfheim's banners swell'd
Came Alf to meet him ; in his hand he held
A golden cup with jewels on the rim,
And fill'd with costly wine e'en to the brim.

viii.

With homage due the grey-hair'd king he meets,
His presence with the loving-cup he greets ;
Low bow the men of Alf's and Eric's house :
He takes the cup, but drinks no deep carouse.

ix.

“ I will not drink nor rest me by your fires,”
He said, “ till I have told my heart's desires :
“ My head is grey, but rich my court and rare,
“ A golden crown is worth your golden hair.

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

X.

“ I love your sifter, with her for my bride ;
“ She must go with me, seated by my side,
“ Her locks of gold will gild my old roof tree,
“ And Alfsonnè shall Sigurd’s sunshine be.”

XI.

Then spake Alfblond-bart with a darkening frown,—
“ Brief question needs brief answer, from our town :
“ If such your object, go ye hence in peace,
“ And Sigurd prithee let your love song cease.

XII.

“ In winter days, when snow and hail fall fast,
“ No rose is gather’d ; and in ages past
“ He was a savage who from home would tear
“ A youthful maid—your wooing take elsewhere.”


XIII.

Then stood king Sigurd dumb, as turn’d to stone,
Or as some wretch is struck through blood and bone
By Odin’s lightning ; shame to think that he
To whom all heroes bent the willing knee,

XIV.

Should be so scorn’d. Quick rush’d the hot red blood
Up to his brow, and in his angry mood
So hard he press’d the gold and jewell’d cup,
That high towards heaven the wine flew sparkling up.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

xv.

Then cried he, turning to the castle wall,
"Farewell Blond-bart, and Eric Harfenshall;
"Farewell sweet Alfsonn'—by my kingly word,
"Ye soon shall learn how woos the king Sigurd."

HOW THE BROTHERS AND SISTER TOOK
COUNCIL.

I.

LIKE flame in straw is youthful love and rage,
Like glowing iron is love and hate in age;
This shall the two bold brothers shortly know,
And golden-hair'd Alfsonnè to her woe.

II.

The time had come when 'neath the greenwood trees
One seeks cool shade, and on the summer breeze
Is borne the nightingale's sweet song, when sped
To Alfheim in wild haste, his spurs all red,

III.

A knight, who cried—"With trumpet's sudden call
"Enraged Sigurd bade his warriors all
"Bring horses, chariots, and such warlike store
"On board his fleet, a hundred ships and more.

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IV.

“ And he has sworn a stern and solemn vow,
“ Ne'er from Alfheim to turn his vessel's prow
“ Without Alfsonne. Now council must be held,
“ With favouring winds his sails e'en now are swell'd.

V.

Then spake young Eric, “ Swear I by my life,
“ Our sister ne'er shall be king Sigurd's wife.”
“ It must not be ; to dwell near ice would kill
“ Our rose.” Cried Alf, “ consent we never will !

VI.

“ Upon the blood-stain'd heather will I lie ;
“ More joyful far, more joyful see her die,
“ And breathe her fresh young life out up above,
“ Than see her wed a man she cannot love.”


VII.

At a high casement, sad with care they spake,
Above the sea ; upon their sight now brake,
Like swallows' flight, a mass of snow-white sail ;
'Twas Sigurd's fleet — such numbers must prevail.

VIII.

On board the ships the sunlight flash'd and glared,
On polish'd coats of steel, and spears were bared
As thick as ears of corn in harvest days ;
With calm stern eyes the brothers stand and gaze.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IX.

They fought the upper room, where sat the maid
Alfsonnè, in her golden locks array'd,
Weaving a snow-white garment, as she sang,
Small silvery boats in the bright fabric sprang.

X.

When she her brothers saw, in haste she speaks—
“ Oh! what has chafed the red blood from your cheeks?
“ Sure no slight thing has caused such sudden fear.”
Spake Alfblond-bart—“ The king Sigurd draws near.

XI.

“ Ten thousand swords surround him as he lands,
“ To force thee to his love he fierce demands;
“ Resist we cannot, since our force is small:
“ Who will thy honour guard should we both fall?”

XII.

When they had ceased pale was Alfsonnè's face,
Some few tears dropt, (she felt them no disgrace,
From her sweet eyes, then spake she—“ Brothers dear,
“ I know what is my duty, have no fear.

XIII.

“ Alf's daughter would prefer death's cold embrace
“ Rather than take in kingly bed a place
“ By Sigurd's side. I have a deadly draught
“ Which will, I think the gods, not fail when quaff'd:



The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

XIV.

“ My sole help now. Lo! yonder on the strand
“ I see the helmets of his warrior band :
“ Leave me awhile, my time is nearly come ;
“ What one *must* do is best when quickly done.”

XV.

With silent steps strode Blondbart from the hall,
Kiss'd her upon the eyes brave Harfenshall,
Left she should see his tears, then all alone
They left Alfsonne. She made no idle moan,

XVI.

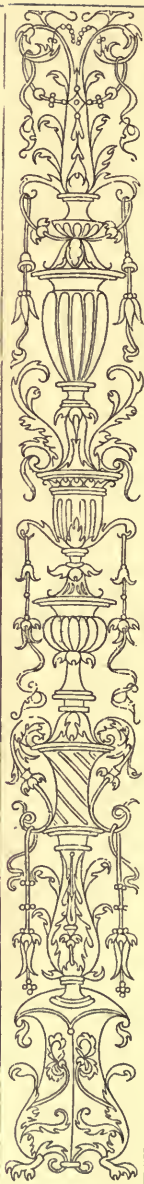
But stept to a small shrine, whence from a nook
A golden cup and silver flask she took,
Within was magic juice of blood-red hue,
Which some foul witch one moonlit night did brew.

XVII.

Out on the battlements she pass'd, there lay
All round her gleaming hills and seas ; the day
Cast its last beams on rocky heights and wood—
She ne'er had felt the world so fair and good.

XVIII.

“ Farewell,” she cried, “ oh, sun and day's fair light,
“ Farewell, sweet spring-time, my young life's delight ;
“ No more in violet woods my steps shall stray ;
“ Farewell, sweet streams, which oft have seen me play.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

XIX.

“ Ne'er shall I hear the gay birds sing again
“ On bright May morn; ah! ne'er shall love's sweet pain
“ Be mine. I am so young that life I crave—
“ Oh, king Sigurd, why force me to my grave?”

XX.

The contents of the golden cup she drank,
Then heavy fell her eyelids, and she sank
With white cold lips upon the ground, her hair
Fell like a golden veil all o'er her there.

XXI.

Then stillness fell on all surrounding things,
Daylight had vanish'd, when a sound of wings
Was borne upon the breeze, her falcon dear
It was, who came to seek his mistress here.

XXII.

When lying there so still Alfsonne he found,
Three times he flew in wheeling circles round,
As if to wake her; finding it in vain,
He soar'd out in the moonlit air again.







The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

HOW ALF AND ERIC WERE SLAIN.

I.

IN the cool morning hour, when the young day
All rosy cheek'd still on the mountains lay,
With clang of arms were Alfheim's meadows
rife,—

'Twixt Alf's and Sigurd's men began the strife.

II.

Trembled the ground as horses' hoofs rush'd by,
Danced helmet plumes, and banners waved on high;
Hark how the splinters fly from spear and lance,
As clad in steel the squadrons quick advance.


III.

On shields and coat of mail rang strokes of sword,
Clatter'd the shafts like hail; the red blood pour'd
As streams let loose; there wrestled mortal foes,
Till o'er the plain the dust in clouds arose.

IV.

King Sigurd on a brazen chariot stood,
In corslet of light steel; with dragon's blood
His battle axe, two-handed, had, by aid
Of dwarfs, been temper'd; fire flash'd from its blade.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

v.

A vulture's head and claws of purest gold
Upon his helm he bore, bright to behold ;
All o'er the battle plain at headlong speed
Led by his voice, bore him his coal-black steed.

vi.

Ragnar his son rode by king Sigurd's side,
Surnamed The Grim ; though still in youth's spring-tide,
Already bearded ; strife he loved so well,
That loud he laugh'd as thick his fierce blows fell.

vii.

He sang—" Upon the battle field there stands
" A hedge of roses ripe for heroes' hands,
" Valhalla's gates ope wide for those who fall,
" Then on, brave warriors ! here I pledge ye all."

viii.

Into the thickest of the fight they dash'd
At fiery speed ; their chariot wheels were splash'd
With foemen's blood : to Alfheim drove they on,
And through the ranks their sword a passage won.

ix.

When Alfblond-bart king Sigurd's helm espied,
" Behold the crest," to Eric then he cried,
" Of that fell vulture, who to her cold grave
" Brought our white dove : Ye gods, befriend the brave !"

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

x.

With sword upraised upon the king he sprang—
Ah! then how fast fell blows 'midst deafening clang,
As Blond-bart struck with his relentless blade
In mad despair to avenge that injured maid.

xi.

In Sigurd's coat of mail he spied a rent
Wherein to thrust, but fiercely Ragnar sent
A blow with his huge axe full at his head :
Crashing he fell, his fair beard stain'd with red.

xii.

Vanish'd his life, closed were his angry eyes,
King Sigurd o'er his body where it lies
Drove his war chariot towards Harfenshall,
Who wild with rage had mark'd his brother's fall.


xiii.

And, rising in his stirrup, hurl'd his spear
Full at the vulture's crest as it drew near ;
Quick turn'd the king aside, the lance but tore
The mantle which he on his shoulder wore.

xiv.

In rage he drove his chariot at his foe,
Till he could aim two-handed one fell blow,
Then swung his battle-axe aloft, till bright
Like yellow flame it flash'd in the sun's light.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

xv.

Through Eric's bridle the sharp angry steel
Cut to his horse's neck ; with sudden wheel,
Madden'd with pain, it gave one furious bound
And flung its master backwards on the ground.

xvi.

His foot stay'd in the stirrup, whilst his steed
O'er all the field dragg'd him at frantic speed,
Trailing his light brown hair ; his youthful head
Laid low : Alfheim's sweet maids will mourn him dead.

xvii.

When Alfheim's warriors saw their leader slain
They soon gave way ; and o'er the battle plain,
Flinging away their arms, fled to the shore,
Or to the distant hills, and all was o'er.

xviii.

King Sigurd on his horn now blew a blast,
The shrill note o'er the field had scarcely past
To call his warriors, when around they stood,
Their coats of mail deep dyed in hostile blood.

xix.

In happy mood he hail'd them one by one,
And bade them seek the strand, then to his son—
“ My hero Ragnar, well thou bearest steel !
“ Now shalt thou prove in sweeter toil thy zeal.

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

xx.

“ The field is ours, and fee ! the foemen flies :
“ Now bring Alfsonn’ to me, my beauteous prize !
“ To-day I wed the maid in royal state,
“ With eighty years there’s little time to wait.”

HOW KING SIGURD CELEBRATED HIS BRIDAL DAY.

I.

MIDST Sigurd’s fleet, near that fell field of fight,
Lay moor’d a ship, all deck’d in colours bright ;
The masts and top-masts built of wood most rare,
Whence costly pennons flutter’d in the air.

II.

Of snow-white linen had the sails been made,
And e’en the cordage richest silk display’d ;
Silver the anchor, and of bronze the helm,
Such was the bridal ship—worth half a realm.

III.

Hard by, upon the shore, king Sigurd stood,
Purple his mantle, radiant in his mood,
Full of deep love for that sweet maid he burns,
Whom Ragnar sought. Ah ! joy to grief oft turns.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IV.

Forth from the castle drew young Ragnar nigh,
As o'er the plain some storm hangs in the sky,
E'er fierce it bursts in crash and lightning's play—
So on his youthful brow dark horror lay.

V.

Seven armèd warriors follow'd him, who bore
A stately bier with tapestry thrown o'er ;
Slowly they stepp'd with awe-struck fadden'd eyes,
Greeting the king, whose soul within him dies.

VI.

Then Ragnar spoke—" Alas ! bad news I bring,
" Like raven croaking must I seem, oh king !
" Here is Alfsonnè, whom thy soul did crave,
" Thy bride she cannot be—she weds the grave."

VII.

He beckon'd to his knights that they should lay
Their burden down, then gently drew away
The hangings from the bier—as on a bed
Behold the lovely maiden pale and dead.

VIII.

She lay, 'midst lily buds, as if in sleep ;
Closed were her eyes, her cheeks their colour keep ;
Clothed in white garments, of all jewels bare,
Her only ornament her golden hair.

The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

IX.

When Sigurd saw the maid lie cold as snow,
He felt as if right through his heart a blow
Were dealt by two-edged sword: by heaven he swore
That love like this he ne'er had felt before.

X.

No tears he shed, but stood with sad, fixed gaze,
And features sternly set, as in amaze:
He look'd like marble image carved right well,
And silence deep through all the ranks there fell.

XI.

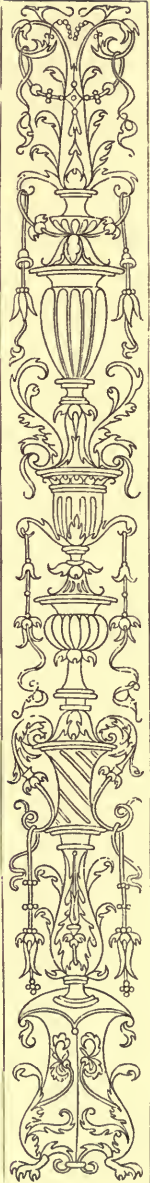
Long without motion stay'd king Sigurd bent,
Then sudden raised his head, and quick there went
A joyful flash from out his eyes, and bold
He braved his fate, heroic to behold.


XII.

He said—"The gods have work'd me grievous harm
"Thus to have snatch'd my prize from this fond arm;
"That I am spared it boots not them to thank,
"What's life to me since my bright sun has sank?"

XIII.

"For seventy years my sword I've borne in war,
"A hundred fights have seen my conquering car;
"Return I will not mourning to my hall,
"An old man shorn of love, of fame, of all.





The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

XIV.

“ I swore a solemn oath to heaven,” he cried,
“ Ne’er to go home without my lovely bride ;
“ Foul shame it were to give that oath the lie,
“ No ! better far a kingly death to die.

XV.

“ Now, warriors hasten to the battle plain,
“ And pile in heaps the bodies of the slain
“ Upon the vessel’s deck, ’tis meet that fo
“ I to Valhalla with my comrades go.

XVI.

“ Then gently lay Alfsonnè on her bier,
“ Beside the helm, and brand of pine uprear ;
“ ’Twill seem, when kindled with its flaming light,
“ As wedding torch fit for a nuptial night.

XVII.

“ Ragnar, farewell ! My brave, my hero boy !
“ To thee I leave my crown with heartfelt joy ;
“ Farewell to all ; now let the music play,
“ And banners wave, ’tis Sigurd’s bridal day !”

XVIII.

The ship equipp’d, on deck the king calm strode,
No knight dare follow on that narrow road ;
He loosed the cable, then the cords which held
The sails slacken’d, till in the winds they swell’d.



The Ballad of the King Sigurd.

xix.

'Midst music went the ship forth on its way,
As floats a dying swan at close of day ;
On deck stood Sigurd, in his good right hand
The hero waved aloft a burning brand.

xx.

The leaping flames rose mirror'd in the sea,
Whilst from the shore came stately melody,
Till ship and hero vanish'd 'neath the wave,
And thus king Sigurd found a sea-king's grave.





BALLAD OF THE PAGE AND THE
KING'S DAUGHTER.

(TRANSLATED FROM GEIBEL.)

PART I.

I.

THE King rides forth to hunt to-day :
And 'midst the forest trees
The hunter's horn, the hounds' deep bay,
Are borne upon the breeze.

II.

And when the noontide pours its rays
Through tangled bush and brake,
The King's fair daughter slowly strays,
Nor knows which path to take.

III.

Softly she rides, and by her side
The Page with golden hair ;
And were she not a kingdom's pride,
They were a lovely pair.





The Page and the King's Daughter.

IV.

He looks on her, loud beats his heart,
Crimson'd are brow and cheeks ;
They've reach'd the beech-trees' thickest part
When glowing red he speaks.

V.

“ To hide my grief, it is in vain,
Oh, Princess, kind and fair ;
My heart it breaks with love's sweet pain,
Ah, listen to my prayer.

VI.

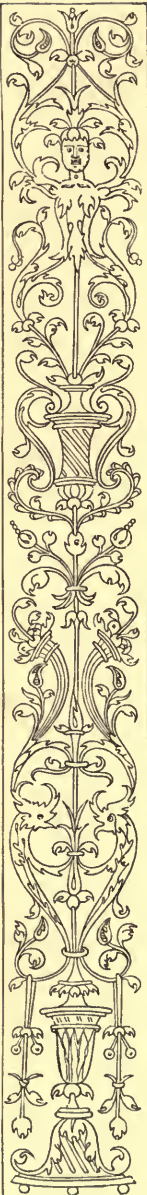
“ If on that rosy mouth I might
Impress one single kiss,
The worst of deaths would seem but light
For such unhop'd-for bliss.”


VII.

She says not “ Yes”—no answer makes,
But checks her palfrey's reins,
When from the saddle her he takes,
His hand her foot sustains.

VIII.

Down to the woodland's deepest shade
They steal and tell their love ;
The nightingale sings in the glade,
Murmurs the turtle-dove.





Ballad of the Page

IX.

The wild red roses bloom around
Beneath the leafy screen ;
The green fresh moss strews all the ground,
Meet bed for Love's soft Queen.

X.

Upon the mossy bank they stay,
And let their horses rove,
Nor hear the nightingale's sweet lay,
Nor horn wound in the grove.

XI.

Oh, haste thee, King : the gold-haired Page
Is by thy daughter's side ;
She, in his arms, forgets thy rage,
The world, and all beside.

PART II.

I.

DOWN by the castle of the King
Two ride along the shore ;
On high the winds their storm-notes sing,
The waves advancing roar.

and the King's Daughter.

II.

Then to the Page in accents dread
These words the King thus speaks :
“ Who gave thee, friend, that rose-bud red,
That rose thy hat safe keeps ? ”

III.

“ My mother gave me this red rose
When she farewell did say ;
In water every night it blows,
To bloom afresh next day . ”

IV.

Further along the winding creek
Still ride they side by side ;
The sea-gulls flying wildly shriek,
Moans the advancing tide.


V.

When thus the King : “ Boy, tell me true,
Whose is that lock of hair,
Which, as aside thy mantle flew,
Lay on thy bosom bare ? ”

VI.

“ That is my sifter's light brown hair,
'Tis sweet as rose's scent,
With softest filk it might compare,
She wept as thence I went . ”





Ballad of the Page

VII.

Up the steep rock their path now lay,
Where, carved in letters rude,
Are Runic rhymes of olden days,
When thus, in savage mood,

VIII.

A third time spake the wrathful King :
“ Rash boy, oh, tell to me,
Who gave thee that bright golden ring
I on thy finger see ? ”

IX.

“ She who gave me this golden ring
Her heart likewise she gives ;
And she’s the fairest maid, Sir King,
Who in thy kingdom lives. ”

X.

Then, red with anger, cried the King,
His eyes with fury burn :
“ That ring—it is my daughter’s ring,
It’s sparkle I discern.

XI.

“ And if, indeed, with wanton love
Thou’st dared my child to woo,
Thy youthful life no plea shall prove,
In death thy crime thou’lt rue. ”

and the King's Daughter.

XII.

Then to his heart with weapon keen
He smote him—nought can save ;
His blood the Runic stones between
Flows downwards to the waves.

XIII.


Into the sea he did him fling :
“ And, since thou aim’st so high,
Go, seek the haunts where mermaids sing,
To win their queen, go try !”

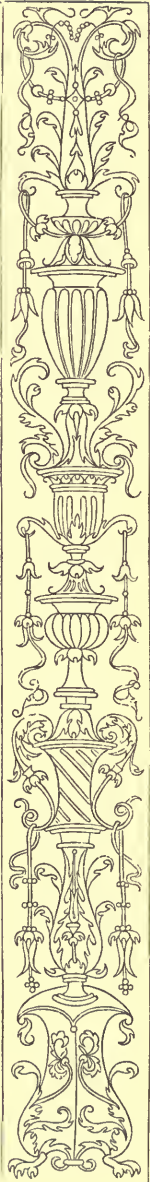
XIV.


To the King's castle by the shore
One horseman rode alone,
Whilst out to sea a body bore
The waves with ceaseless moan.

PART III.

I.

HE Runic stones one summer night
Saw the mermaidens play :
'Midst rippling waters, breezes light,
And moon in heaven which lay.





Ballad of the Page

II.

They laugh, they splash, their arms they lave
'Mongst water-lilies fair,
Their golden locks float on the wave,
Glisten their white limbs bare.

III.

A fedgy bearded merman, through
A horn of mussel-shell
Blows blasts to call the giddy crew,
But nought their mirth can quell.

IV.

Then cried the youngest, laughing low,
“ Ah, see what I have here !
A gleaming body white as snow,
Or silver shining clear.

V.

“ Upon a coral reef it lay,
I found it as I dived,
'Twas tangled in a branching spray :
Say, what can be contrived !”

VI.

Around the body in a ring
They troop—their Queen thus spake :
“ So fair and fine this new-found thing,
A harp of it we'll make.

and the King's Daughter.

VII.

“ Come, old Sedge-Beard, my trusty friend,
Thou'rt wife in all things strange ;
A sword-fish thee for horse I'll send,
So thou wilt work this change.”

VIII.

The merman comes, the body takes,
He labours sure and slow ;
The pegs he of the fingers makes,
Of the breast-bone the bow.

IX.

He takes the Queen's bright golden hair,
And with it makes the strings ;
And soon the summer night-winds bear
Strange sounds upon their wings.


X.

The harp he strikes with chords so clear,
The waves forget to moan,
The breezes hold their breath to hear
That soft and wondrous tone.

XI.

The sea-mews fettle on the strand,
The gold-fish swim around,
The winds and waters tranced stand,
All charm'd by that sweet sound.





Ballad of the Page

XII.

The merman sings and plays all night,
Fatigue he doth not feel ;
The mermaids dance, till morn's red light,
In many a graceful wheel.

PART IV.

I.

THE lamps flash in the King's high hall,
The flutes and viols play ;
The King's fair daughter leads the ball,
For 'tis her marriage-day.

II.

A myrtle wreath is on her head,
But ne'er a word she speaks ;
Upon her breast are roses red,
But white as death her cheeks.

III.

All richly clad, with lordly air,
A Prince stands by her side ;
But, oh ! ten thousand times more fair
The Page who for her died.

and the King's Daughter.

IV.

To pass the wine, twelve maidens stand
Around the board of gold,
And Pages swarm on every hand,
Who wreaths and torches hold.

V.

When suddenly the lights dim burn,
The viols cease to play,
And from his throne the King speaks stern,
“What means this silence?—say.”

VI.

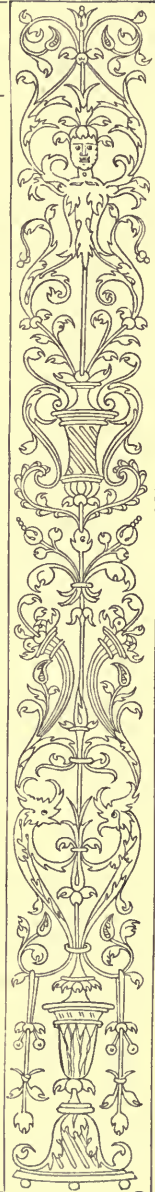
“Before thy castle gates, Sir King,
We hear the merman's lay,
When to his harp we hear him sing,
Our music we must stay.”

VII.

And hark! from out the sea there flow
Into the festal hall,
Through the clear night, sweet sounds and low
Which on their ears soft fall.

VIII.

The sound into the bride's soul steals,
As if in that same hour
Her dead love's presence it reveals
By some strange magic power.



The Page and the King's Daughter.

IX.

She knows not why, but from her eyes
Fast fall the tear-drops down ;
Upon her breast the rose-bud dies,
Low lies her myrtle crown.

X.

To the King's proud soul it piercèd through,
He curfèd it in his heart ;
The Prince to seek his charger flew,
And hurried to depart.

XI.

With broken heart the Bride lies dead,
For Grief hath power to kill :
And when the morning breaketh red,
The Merman's Harp is still.





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