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THE BLIND OLD KING.

German

Ballads, Songs, etc.

Comprising Translations from
Schiller, Uhland, Bürger, Goethe, Körner,
Becker, Fouqué, Chamisso,
etc. etc.



To the Reader.



IN sending forth the following little volume, it may be proper to inform the reader that he is to expect a somewhat miscellaneous collection. It comprises, under the general name of *German Ballads and Songs*, 1st, a series of Translations (most of them newly executed) from Schiller and the other authors whose names appear in the table of contents; 2d, a number of Original Pieces, founded on German subjects. Among these are one or two (such as "Odin's Sacrifice") not strictly German, though they are all, it is supposed, sufficiently cognate to justify their insertion in such a volume. A few pieces of a more humorous character than the rest have, for distinction's sake, been thrown together at the end.



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The Song of the Brave Man.

BÜRGER.

THE brave man's praise in song is told
Like bell or organ's echoing tone;
When bravery is the theme, not gold
But song rewards—nor song alone:
Thank God, who prompts the brave man's deed,
And crowns him with his heavenly meed.

The spring-gale swept the southern sea,
And moist o'er fair Italia passed:
As from the wolf the cattle flee,
So fled the clouds before the blast;
It pierced the wood, it scoured the field,
And floods long froze before it yield.

On mountain-summits melts the snow,
And countless cataracts resound;
An ocean whelms the vales below;
The gathering stream o'erleaps the mound;
High dash the waves on every side,
And fearful icebergs choke the tide.

On arch and pillar reared, and made
Of solid stone, above the flood
A bridge across the stream was laid,
And midway rose a small abode;
Here lived a tollman, child, and wife,
O tollman, tollman, fly for life!

The tempest now more fiercely rang;
Near and more near its tumult howled.
Upon his roof the tollman sprang,
And gazed upon it as it scowled;
O gracious God, have pity now—
Who, who can hear and save but Thou!

The icebergs meet, and wildly crash
From either shore, now here, now there;
On every side the waters dash,
And down both arch and pillar tear.
The trembling tollman, child, and wife,
Shrieked louder than the tempest's strife.

The icebergs thundered, fall on fall,
In uproar wild along the shore;
They burst the bridge's shattered wall,
Pillar by pillar down they bore:
The havoc onward made its way—
"Have mercy, Heaven!" they louder pray.

Aloft, upon the farther brink,
A crowd stands gazing, great and small;
They scream and wring their hands, but shrink
To risk the rescue, one and all.
The trembling tollman, child, and wife,
Above the tempest shrieked for life.

When should resound the brave man's fame
Louder than bell or organ's tone?
In noblest song we'll give his name,
And place it there, aloft, alone.
Destruction is within a span;
Come to the rescue, thou brave man!

A count of noble race and worth
Up gallops on his courser bold.
What in his hand is proffered forth?
A purse brimful of dazzling gold.
Two hundred pieces are his prize
Who now to help the wretched flies!

Where's the brave man will strive to save?
Is it the count, my song?—O no!
Although the generous count is brave,
A braver on this task must go.
Come forth, brave man, advance with speed;
Impending ruin speaks thy need.

Higher and higher swells the flood,
Louder and louder roars the wind,
Colder and chiller grows the blood:
Oh, where shall we a saviour find?
Pillar on pillar, arch and wall,
In quick succession crash and fall.

Halloo! halloo! oh, who will fly?

The count the tempting prize uprears.
They hear, they shudder, and they sigh;

But among thousands none appears:
In vain the tollman, child, and wife,
Above the tempest shriek for life.

But, see! a humble peasant now
Starts forth, the noble deed to dare;
Noble and lofty is his brow,
Although his garb is coarse and bare;
He heard the boon proclaimed anew,
And saw how near destruction drew,

And boldly, in the name of God,
He leapt into a fishing bark,
And o'er the waves triumphant rode
Through whirlpool, storm, and billow dark;
But, ah! the boat is far too small
At once to bear and save them all.

But thrice through gulfs he toiled along
That might the stoutest heart appal;
And thrice with manly sinews strong
Rowed happily to save them all:
And scarcely were they safe and well
When the last tottering ruin fell.

Who is the brave man?—who is he?
Say on, my song, his name unfold.
And did he risk his life to be
The master of that glittering gold?
Had the proud count ne'er shewed the boon,
Would he have risked his life as soon?

"Here," cried the count, "bold-hearted friend,
Receive the prize now thine to share,
And nobly earned!" But list the end.
The count a lofty soul might bear,
But higher feelings swelled the breast
Of the brave man, so meanly drest.

"My life," he said, "shall ne'er be sold
For sordid pelf—content, though poor:
But to the tollman give your gold—
His all is lost—his lot is sore."
Thus firmly spoke he, inly cheered,
Then turned his back, and disappeared.

The brave man's praise in song is told
Like bell or organ's echoing tone;
When bravery is the theme, not gold
But song rewards—nor song alone:
Thank God, who prompts the brave man's deed,
And crowns him with his heavenly meed.



The Wild Huntsman.

BÜRGER.

THE Rhinegrave winds his horn—"Away!
To horse! On foot! The chase—hurrah!"
Up leaps his steed with eager neigh,
On comes his train with loud huzza;
The hounds uncoupled rush at speed,
Clattering o'er bush, and brake, and mead.

In Sunday brightness, still and fair,
Yon church uplifts her stately tower;
The solemn bell that calls to prayer
Peals deeply forth the wonted hour,
While far and lovely, soft and slow,
The reverent anthem soundeth low.

Right o'er the hallowed path they ride,
With wild halloo and ringing shout;
Behold! behold! from either side
A single horseman joins the rout;

A fiery roan the left — the right
A graceful steed of silver white.

Who were those riders? Well I guess,
But know not, nor may utter more;
A face of springtide gentleness
The youthful right-hand horseman wore;
Tawny and fierce, the other's eye
Shot lightnings like an angry sky.

"Right welcome!" cried the hunter-lord,
"To the noble chase right welcome be!
No sport can earth or heaven afford
Of fairer fame or merrier glee."
He clapped his hands with joyous cry,
And shook his hunting-cap on high.

"Ill blends thy horn, so wild and vain" —
Thus did the right-hand horseman say —
"With solemn bell and choral strain;
Return, forbear the chase to-day!
Oh, let thy better self persuade!
Be not by evil thoughts betrayed!"

"The chase, my noble lord, the chase!"
Eager the left-hand horseman cried;
"Let the dull bells ring, and the pale monks sing,
'Tis to the merry chase we ride!
Of me, come learn thou princely lore,
And list yon prater's words no more."

"Well spoken, rider frank and free!
A hero to my taste art thou;
Let him who loves not veneriè
Mutter his prayers and knit his brow;

Out, pious fool! I hold my way,
Let it offend thee as it may."

Hurrah! hurrah! o'er dale and hill,
O'er field and plain, away they ride;
But, right and left, those horsemen still
Keep closely at the baron's side.
Up leaps from yonder sheltering crag
A stag of ten—a milk-white stag.

Louder the chief his horn doth wind,
Faster on foot, on horse, they fly;
Lo, one by one, before, behind,
The panting vassals sink and die!
"Ay, sink to hell! A baron's glee
Must ne'er be marred for such as ye!"

Lo, to a field of yellow corn
The trembling stag for refuge flies;
And see, a peasant, poor and worn,
Pleads to the earl in piteous guise:
"Have mercy, noble baron! Spare
The hope of want, the fruit of care!"

Forward the right-hand horseman spurred,
Mildly to cheek and gently warn;
The left, with many a scoffing word,
Urges the deed of ruthless scorn;
The baron spurns that gentle pleading,
And follows where the left is leading.

"Hence, dog!" in tones of furious wrath
The earl disdains the peasant's woe;
"Hence, or I hew thee from my path!
Hurrah, companions! forward, ho!"

In token that the truth he hears,
Rattle your whips about his ears !"

'Tis said, 'tis done ! On, on they dash,
That lowly fence the baron leapt ;
Behind, with clanging horn and crash,
Hound, horse, and man, in fury swept ;
Hound, horse, and man, the full ears crushing,
Till steamed the field beneath their rushing.

Scared by that coming storm, the stag
Flies, breathless, over waving meads,
Through field and plain, o'er vale and crag,
Pursued, but yet unreached, he speeds,
And, bootless cunning ! strives to hide
'Mid gentle flocks in pastures wide.

But up and down, through wood and plain,
And to and fro, through plain and wood,
The hurrying hounds upon him gain,
Scenting his steps, athirst for blood ;
Their rage the trembling shepherd sees,
And sues for pity on his knees.

" Mercy, oh, mercy ! Not in sport
Make poor and peaceful flocks your prey !
The hapless widow's sole support.
Ah, pause and think ! Ah, do not slay !
Spare to the poor their little all —
Mercy, oh, mercy ! hear my call !"

Forward the right-hand horseman spurr'd,
In soothing tones to check and warn ;
The left, with mocking laugh and word,
Urges the deed of ruthless scorn ;

The baron spurns that gentle pleading,
And follows where the left is leading.

“ Out of my path, rash cur ! Away !
I would that in yon quivering kine
My dogs could make thyself their prey,
And yonder beldame wife of thine :
Think ye my heart would then be loath
Up to yon heavens to send ye both ? ”

“ Hurrah, companions ! Forward there !
Ho, tantara ! hark away ! ”
Then every hound did raging tear
With cruel teeth the nearest prey ;
Beneath the bleeding shepherd's eye
His bleeding flock are rent, and die.

Scarcely, with ever-slackening pace,
The stag escapes that murderous crowd ;
With blood and foam on flank and face,
He seeks a thicket's midnight shroud ;
Deep in the darkness of the wood
A hermit's forest-temple stood.

With crack of whip and clang of horn,
With crashing hoofs that shake the air,
With cries of mirth and shouts of scorn,
The wild troop follow even there :
Lo, from his prayers aroused, they see
The hermit come, with gentle plea.

“ Cease, nor pollute this sacred shade !
Cease, nor profane this hallowed time !
God's creature cries to Him for aid,
And calls for vengeance on thy crime.

For the last time, be warned ! Forbear,
Or dread destruction and despair !”

Forward the right-hand horseman spurred,
With anxious eyes to check and warn ;
The left, with many a scoffing word,
Urges the deed of ruthless scorn :
Woe, woe ! he spurns that gentle pleading,
And follows where the left is leading.

“ Destruction ? let it fall !” he cries ;
“ Dreamest thou my heart to overawe ?
If yonder cell were heaven or hell,
To me ’twould matter not a straw :
Away, thou fool ! God’s wrath or thine
Shall never baffle sport of mine.

My whip I swing, my horn I wind ;
Hurrah, companions ! Forward there !”
Ha !—cell before, and train behind,
At once have melted into air ;
And shout, and yell, and hunter’s call,
Sink into deathlike silence all.

The trembling baron gazes round ;
His whip he swings—no echo wakes ;
He shouts, and cannot hear a sound ;
He winds—his horn no answer makes.
On either flank his steed he spurs :
In vain—it neither starts nor stirs.

And gradual darkness o’er him now
Closes, and closes like a grave ;
’Tis silence all, save deep and low
A murmur like a distant wave :

And, lo, a thunder-voice on high
Proclaims his sentence terribly.

"Thou mad blasphemer! pause, attend:
God, man, and beast have felt thy wrongs;
The groans of thine oppressed ascend
To Him to whom revenge belongs;
Accused, condemned, and sentenced, see
Grim Vengeance lights her torch for thee.

Fly, sinner, fly! and from this hour,
Till weary time itself shall close,
By hell's inexorable power
Be chased: a warning dread to those
Who scorn, at Pleasure's sinful word,
Alike God's creatures and their Lord."

Lo, swarthy yellow lightning breaks
Through the soft shadow of the trees:
In marrow, bone, and nerve he quakes;
He seems to burn, to thrill, to freeze;
Cold Horror frowns before—behind
Hisses the storm and shrieks the wind.

Still raved the blast and roared the storm,
When from the womb of earth arose
A sable hand of giant form:
The fingers open—lo, they close!
See, see, his quivering neck they clench!
See, see, his head around they wrench!

Beneath him yawns a fiery flood,
Green, blue, and red; its waves of flame
Swarming with hell's terrific brood
Of shapes too horrible to name.

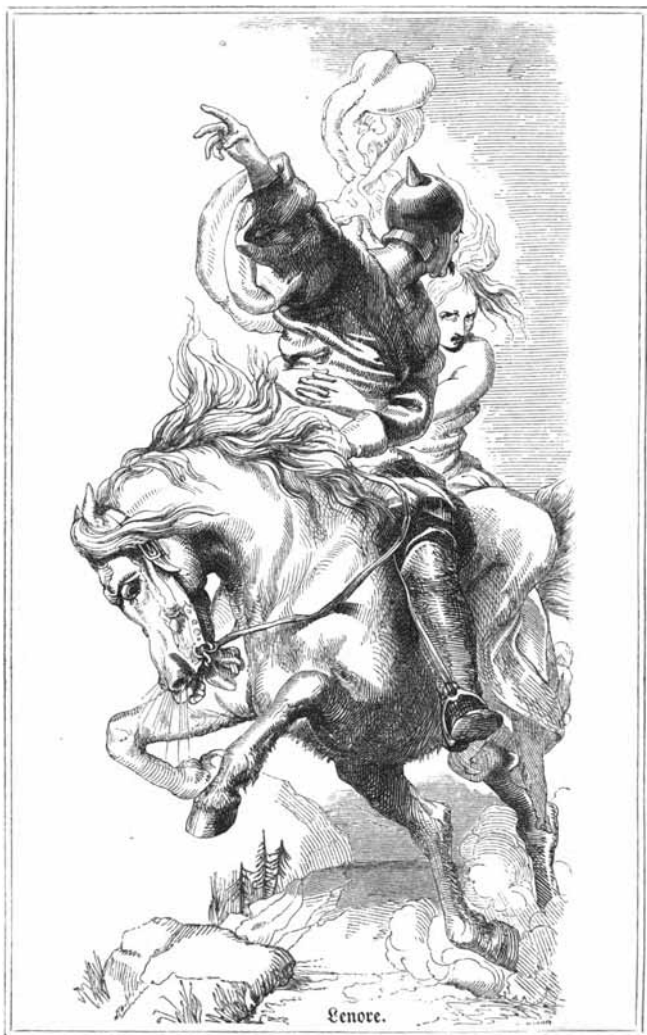
Lo, in an instant, from the deep,
At once a thousand hell-hounds leap!

Through woods and fields, away, away,
Howling aloud, the sinner flew;
But through the whole wide world, for aye,
Those baying dogs of hell pursue:
By day in earth's deep caves; by night
High in the air they hold their flight.

Still backward stares his pallid face,
While forward speeds each shuddering limb;
He sees those monsters of the chase,
Athirst for blood, and gaunt and grim,
The greedy jaws for him that gape,
And the fiend-huntsman's awful shape.

This is that chase, which sweeps aloft,
And shall till breaks the day of doom,
Startling the lonely wanderer oft
When night hath closed and all is gloom;
Seen by full many a huntsman pale,
Whose lips must never breathe the tale.





L E N O R E.

BURGER.

FROM heavy dreams arose Lenore,
 When day was dawning red;
 "O Wilhelm! wilt thou come no more?
 And art thou false, or dead?"
 He fought with Frederick's armèd powers
 Beneath fair Prague's beleaguered towers,
 No tidings of his weal returning
 To her from whom he parted mourning.

The king and empress, wearied now
 With strife so long and vain,
 Rein the proud heart, and smooth the brow,
 And join in peace again;
 And either host, with song and lay,
 And cymbal-clash, and clarion gay,
 And laurelled brows, and shouts of mirth,
 Wend joyously to home and hearth.

And every where, do porch and stair,
 Terrace, and bridge, and street,
 Groan with a throng of old and young,
 Those merry troops to greet.
 "Thank God!" fond wives and children cry—
 "Welcome!" the glad bride whispers, shy.—
 But kiss and greeting came no more
 To thee, ah, desolate Lenore!

And to and fro, and name by name,
 The train she questions through;
 Alas, not one of all who came
 Tidings of Wilhelm knew!

Now, when the mighty host had past,
Down on the earth herself she cast,
And rent, with gestures of despair,
The ringlets of her raven hair!

Soon ran her mother to her side,
With quick and fond embrace;
"What ails my darling child?" she cried;
"Now God vouchsafe his grace!"
"O mother, mother! Woe is woe!
Hence, dreary world, with all thy woe!
God hath no help—no pity, fate;
Alas for me most desolate!"

"Help, Lord! Oh, cast us not away!
Whate'er Thou dost is right!
Kneel down, my daughter, kneel and pray,
And God shall give thee light."
"O mother, mother! Idle thought!
For me hath God no mercy wrought!
My prayers were all in vain, in vain!
What need I now to pray again?"

"Help, Lord! Our Father's pitying love
All those who seek have found:
The holy sacrament shall prove
Balm to thy burning wound."
"O mother, mother! what I feel
No sacrament can soothe or heal:
No sacrament restores," she said,
"Life to the cold and speechless dead."

"Yet hear!—if, false to faith and truth,
In some far paynim land

He leaves the lessons of his youth,
And seeks another's hand,
Forget him : little joy, believe,
His bootless falsehood shall achieve ;
The crime, when soul and body part,
Shall lie like lead upon his heart."

" O mother, death, and death alone
I covet, most forlorn !
For lost is lost, and gone is gone ;
Would I had ne'er been born !
Die, die, my light, for ever die !
Quenched, quenched in night and sorrow, lie !
God hath no help,—no pity, fate ;
Woe, woe to me, most desolate !"

" Help, Lord ! Oh, judge her not, nor mark
Thy poor child's erring ways !
Her words are wild, her soul is dark,
She knows not what she says.
Ah, child, forget thine earthly fate,
On God's pure bliss to meditate ;
So to thy spirit shall be given
A better spouse— a spouse from heaven."

" O mother, mother, what is bliss ?
O mother, what is hell ?
With him, with him is only bliss,
Without my Wilhelm, hell !
Die, die, my light, for ever die !
Quenched, quenched, in night and sorrow lie !
Severed from him, to this lone heart
Nor earth nor heaven can bliss impart."

In burning brain and bursting vein
Despair his empire held;
With God's good will, her spirit still
Thus strove, and thus rebelled;
She rent her hair, she beat her breast,
Till sank the weary sun to rest,
And the clear arch of purple night
Was peopled by the stars of light.

Hark! on the pavement, tramp, tramp, tramp,
A horse's flying feet;
With clash and clang the rider sprang
Full swiftly from his seat;
And hark! the door-latch moves aloft,
Tinkle, tinkle, slow and soft,
Then through the door, distinct and clear,
These words salute the maiden's ear:

"Holá, my love! the door undo!
Sweet, dost thou wake or sleep?
And art thou false, or art thou true?
And dost thou smile or weep?"
"Ah, Wilhelm, thou?—so late, mine own!
Long have I watched and wept alone;
Oh, much I have endured!—and now,
Answer me, love,—whence comest thou?"

"We only ride by night, my love;
From Prague's far land I come.
Forth, forth, sweet bride—thou too must ride;
I come to fetch thee home!"

"Ah, Wilhelm, only wait till morn;
The blast wails in the rustling thorn:
Come, dearest, come, again to rest
Thy head upon this faithful breast."

"Let it whistle and wail in the withered thorn,
My child, let it wail and roar;
But the steed stamps and springs, and the good spur
rings,

And I must not linger more.
Up, gird thyself, and mount behind!
My steed is fleetest than the wind;
A hundred miles to-night we ride
To seek our couch, my gentle bride."

"A hundred miles? so brief the time!
And I—But mockest thou?
List the dull echo of the chime—
It struck eleven but now!"

"Look up! the moon shines clear and wide,
We and the dead, full fast we ride!
I warrant, fairest, thou and I
To-night in bridal-bed shall lie!"

"But say, where stands thy bridal-hall?
Thy couch, how may we gain?"
"Far hence—far hence! calm, cold, and small!
Six narrow planks, by twain!"

"Is room for me?" "For thee and me!
Come, mount behind me speedily!
The wedding guests await the bride;
The chamber doors are opened wide."

She came, she sprang, she sate behind
Upon the steed in haste;
Her lily hands she softly twined
Around her lover's waist;
And hurry, hurry, clash, clash, clash!
In clattering gallop forth they dash:

The horseman stoops, the charger reels,
And spurns the sparks with flashing heels.

Right hand and left, with dazzled eye,

She sees, in shrinking wonder,

The field, the fence, the forest, fly!

Hark, how the bridges thunder!

"Fear'st thou, my love? The moon shines bright:

Hurrah! the dead ride fast by night!

And fears my love the dead?" "Ah, nay;

Yet speak not of the dead, I pray!"

Why flutter the ravens wild and grim?

What means yon murmuring strain?

'Tis the tolling bell, 'tis the funeral hymn,

A corpse, and a mourner-train!

On, on they come, so slow, so drear!

They bear a coffin on a bier;

Their note, I ween, was hoarse and harsh,

As lizard's croak in lonely marsh.

"Bury your dead when the midnight's past,

Sad troop and wailing priest!

I ride with my fair young wife, so fast,

Come, come to the bridal feast!

Come hither, come hither, thou chorister train,

And mutter and mumble a festive strain;

Come, priest, and be thy blessing said

Before we seek our bridal bed."

Ceased voice and bell, as by a spell,

And vanished bier and corse;

And hurry, hurry, close they fly

At the heels of the startled horse;

And ever onward, clash, clash, clash,
In clattering gallop forth they dash;
The rider stoops, the charger reels,
And spurns the sparks with thundering heels.

How fast, how fast, fly darting past
Hill, mountain, tree, and bower;
Right, left, and right, they fly like light,
Hamlet, and town, and tower!
"Fear'st thou, my love? The moon shines bright;
Hurrah! the dead ride fast by night.
And dost thou dread the silent dead?"
"Ah, leave them to their rest, the dead!"

Look there! look there! half seen, half lost,
In the moonshine dimly glancing,
By the gallows-tree an airy host
Around the wheel are dancing.
"Sa, sa! ye rabble, come, obey;
Pursue us on our rapid way:
A festive measure ye must tread,
Before we mount our bridal bed."

And hiss, hiss, hiss, all clattering, rush
That rabble crew behind,
As through a withered hazel-bush
Rattles the hollow wind.
And onward, onward, clash, clash, clash,
In thundering gallop forth they dash!
The horseman stoops, the charger reels,
And spurns the sparks with flashing heels.

The cold, strange scene, in moonlight sheen,
How fled it fast and far!

How seemed to fly the heavens on high,
With planet, cloud, and star!
"Fear'st thou, my love? The moon shines bright;
Hurrah! the dead ride fast by night.
And dost thou dread the silent dead?"
"Woe's me! Ah, speak not of the dead!"

"My steed! I hear the cock-crow warn—
Soon is the sand outrun!
My steed! I scent the breath of morn.
Down, down, my steed! 'Tis done!
We reach the goal—the race is past—
'Tis found, 'tis found, our home at last.
Hurrah! how swiftly ride the dead!
Hurrah! we reach our bridal bed."

Sudden, against a grated door,
With slackened rein they dart:
One little stroke the fastenings broke—
The bolts are burst apart.
With clashing sound the doors unclose,
And over graves their pathway goes;
While many a tombstone, dim and white,
Gleams in the moonshine's ghastly light.

Ah, see! ah, see! the rider's mail—
Oh, sight of fear and wonder!—
Doth, piece by piece, like tinder frail,
Drop suddenly asunder.
A skull, all eyeless, bare, and dead,
A naked skull is now his head;
While in his fleshless fingers lean
The hour-glass and the scythe are seen.

The steed stamps wild, the steed rears high,
And scatters sparks around ;
And, ah, beneath her suddenly
It sinks in the yawning ground !
High through the air wild howlings go,
The vaults give up a voice of woe ;
Lenore's weak heart and failing breath
Struggle and pant 'twixt life and death.

Now in the white and cold moonlight,
In wild and wheeling train,
The ghosts begin a fetter-dance,
And howl a mournful strain :
" Forbear, forbear ! With God in heaven
Contend not, though thy heart be riven !
Thy sinful clay hath ceased to live ;
Thine erring soul may God forgive !"

S. M.