The Canterbury Poets.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP.

GERMAN BALLADS.

GERMAN BALLADS. TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY ELIZABETH CRAIGMYLE.

"Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee: thou art translated!"

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TO E. A. D.

" *Du bist mîn, ich bin dîn,*
Des sollst du gewiss sîn.
Du bist beschlozzen in mîn Herzen,
Verlorn is das sluzzelin,—
Du musst immer darinne sîn."

—WERTHER VON TEGERNSEE,
12th Century.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

FEW remarks are more often quoted than Fletcher of Saltoun's, "Let me make the ballads of a country, and I care not who makes its laws." But the laws of Fletcher's own country at one time took an unfair advantage over the ballads. For in Calvinistic Scotland of the sixteenth century, these metrical romances were considered as altogether profane and ungodly, and no marriage could be celebrated unless the contracting parties deposited £10 as caution-money that they would have no minstrels at the wedding. Under the Regent Morton, printing a ballad was punishable with death, and in 1579 two luckless poets were actually hanged for the high crime and misdemeanour of making ballads. What Morton and Knox would have done with the still more criminal translator of ballads it is impossible to say.

But when paternal legislation is required to

repress a common crime, that crime is generally the outcome of some widely-spread and universal instinct. All nations as they rise above the savage condition show the instinct for story-telling and story-hearing, and the epic-and-ballad stage has been passed through by all who have set their mark on the history of civilisation. The great epics come early in the heroic age, the mists of time rest over the origin of the Iliad and the Odyssey, and even in the time of Pisistratus a class of men called the Rhapsodists had arisen, whose profession it was to recite the Homeric poems. France has her noble Chanson de Roland, Spain her Chronicle of the Cid. The Northern branches of the Teutonic race have the wild legends of the two Eddas, Heimskringla, the Kalevala, the Volsunga Saga, and the Laxdæla Saga. The two latter have, in our own era, served as the foundation of Morris' mediæval legends, "Sigurd the Volsung," and "The Lovers of Gudrun." England and Germany hold in common the treasure of Beowulf, while the Nibelungen Lied and Gudrun have a common origin and story with the Norse Sagas. The Ballad in all countries existed contemporaneously with the Epic. The Odyssey itself has been held to be but a collection of ballads, and Cato and Cicero speak regretfully of the old ballads of the Latin language which

had perished before their day. While Omar Khayyàm sat beneath the rose-trees at Naishaipur stringing his Rubaiayát like pearls, a more virile and less pessimistic race of poets in Iran and Khorassan were singing of Zal and Rodáhver, Rustem, and Khai-Khosroo. In Turkestan, Roushan Beg the free-booter was celebrated, and the "Leap of Kurroglou" was sung at every watch-fire. Spain had her heroes in the Cid and Bernardo del Carpio, and readers of Cervantes will remember the peasant whom Don Quixote saw going forth to his work, "singing the ballad of Roncesvalles." Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers were the common inheritance of all the nations of Frankish and Visigothic blood. The ballads of France perhaps show to disadvantage beside those of her sister-nation: the *Chansons de Gestes* probably supplied their place to a great extent. Yet La Belle Isambourg, and that dramatic figure of the sea-captain, who when denied his lady-love defiantly answers, "Je l'aurai par mer, Je l'aurai par terre, Ou par trahison," at once occur to the lover of ballads. Of the Northern ballad-literature which produced such supreme ballads as "Clerk Saunders," "Glasgerion," and "Childe Waters," it is unnecessary to speak here.

Ballads are the natural development of tradition, myth, folklore, and superstition. The floating

traditions of the great deeds of great men are gathered up into the historical ballad, in which Germany is peculiarly rich. Without going back, with Dahn and Lingg, to Arminius and Attila, she has many heroes. Kaiser Karl, Richard the Fearless, Roland and his brother-in-arms, Oliver, are claimed both by East and by West Franks, and sung of both in France and in Germany. But the romantic figure of Frederick Barbarossa, enchanted in his subterranean castle, and that of the chivalric Emperor Maximilian—"the last of the knights"—are purely German.

Turning from the historic to the romantic ballad, we are at once struck by the rarity of the feminine element. The institutions of chivalry had no such deep hold on the Teutonic as on the Latin races. When woman ceased to be reverenced as an Alruna-wife, and a mother of heroes, she was not elevated into a goddess of tilt-yard and tourney. Probably this may account for the unusual paucity of the sentimental ballad. Bürger, indeed, wrote a tragical love-story, "Lenardo and Blandine," as powerful as it is unpleasant, a variant on the historic fate of the unfortunate *trouvère*, Guillaume de Cabestan, with a king's daughter substituted for the wife of the Seigneur de Roussillon. But, with the exception of Heine, none of the romantic poets seem to care

to make love, whether fortunate or ill-starred, their theme.

Coming into the supernatural domain, we miss the familiar form of the enchanted princess who has been bewitched into shape of a beast by the power of gramarye, and also notice that the highly poetic superstition of the were-wolf has given rise to scarce a single poem. The German ballad, being a late product, had no organic connection with the ages when such superstitions really entered into the life of the people. Fairies, also, are conspicuous by their absence; but in compensation this branch of German literature is extremely rich in all manner of ghostly apparitions, and the spectre bridegroom, who appears in one or two English ballads, is a common figure. The place of the "good folk" is supplied by the Elves, Neckan, and Erl-king: the ghostly shadow whose touch, in Goethe's well-known ballad, kills the child in its father's arms. Herder's "Sir Olaf" deals with the Erl-king's fascinating daughters, who dance by moonlight on the wild heath. Neckan, the water sprite, is a harmless water-kelpie, whose evil propensities are confined to a deal of mischief.

Perhaps a short glance at the history of German literature may help to explain why the ballad in Germany sprung not from the people but from the educated classes.

Passing over the Beowulf Saga and the fragmentary Hildebrandslied,—a Germanic "Sohrab and Rustem,"—we come to the thirteenth century, the time of the *Volksepos*. The Nibelungen-Lied (1210) and Gudrun (1225) have been called the Iliad and Odyssey of German literature. The "Lay of the Niblungs" is full of the material which makes the ballads of other lands,—the wrestle between Gunther and Brunhild, where the warrior-maiden ties her bridegroom with her girdle to the wall of the bride chamber,—the slaying of Sigfried as he stoops over the forest well,—Chriemhild finding the dead body of Sigfried lying across her threshold in the grey of the morning,—the murderer sitting before the hall of Chriemhild with the sword of the murdered man gleaming bright across his knees,—the Burgundians fighting to the last while the blazing rafters of the hall crash down around them,—the awful smile on the white lips of Chriemhild as Gunther and Hagen stand fettered before her,—these are the stuff of which another nation makes the ballads that wander through the land upon the lips of minstrels. But if ballads there indeed were, they have perished.

Then came the epoch of the knightly Minnesingers, Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Gottfried von Strasburg. The two latter are the authors of the romances of

"Parcival" and "Tristan und Isolde," which in our own century gave Wagner the *motif* for two of his operas. Tannhäuser, too, lived in this epoch, —he who, in the most pathetic of legends, still "drees his weird" in the enchanted caverns of Venusberg. In the fifteenth century appeared the genuine ballad, such as the "Ballad of Tannhäuser," and the "Noble Moringer," which is the original of Scott's novel, *The Betrothed.* But the *Volkslieder*, or folk-songs, held the place in Germany taken by the ballads in other countries. Possibly the more musical and tender type of the national genius accounts for this.

Then in the sixteenth century came Dr. Martin Luther and the Reformation, and the national literature became wholly given over to theology and satire writing, though the common people still lent a greedy ear to the legends of the Wandering Jew and Faustus. In the middle of the eighteenth century Bodmer and Breitinger tried vainly to revive popular interest in the works of the Hohenstaufen period,—the chivalric epoch of Germany,— but the age of chivalry was gone. It was from our own country that the Romantic impulse was to come.

The eighteenth century was pre-eminently the epoch of dreary primness in European poetry. Correctness was the deity worshipped by all; solemn Alexandrines were the rule in France, and

the glittering iambics of Pope were the standard of England, while Germany was wholly devoted to Gottsched, Bodmer, and the dreary scriptural epics of Klopstock. In 1765 Bishop Percy, of Dromore, published his famous *Reliques of English Poetry*, which was welcomed with acclamation, not only in England but all over the Continent. Macpherson's "Ossian" too appeared, and Fingal and Selma were taken to the bosom of Germany. Everywhere attention was turned to the ballads which had almost fallen into oblivion. Spain had, to her honour, long since recognised her national heritage, and collected the Moorish ballads in the Cancionero of 1510, while the ballads of the Cid had been published by Escobar in 1615. Later on the ill-fated Gérard de Nerval, just in time, collected the folk-ballads of France. And in 1778 Herder published the "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern," and in "Deutsche Art und Kunst," strove to guide the thought of Germany to the ancient models. Our own grand old ballad of "Sir Patrick Spens" was among the Scottish ballads which appeared in the first-named work.

Then Germany woke up in dismay, to find that she alone of the nations had no old ballads to edit: for the Volkslied had taken the place of the chanted romance of other countries. However, with characteristic patience she began to devote

herself to ballad-making. But the result was the *Kunst-ballad*, not the *Volk-ballad*—the outcome of a mere artistic impulse, not of the heart of the people rapt into song.

Bürger (1747-1794) was one of the most enthusiastic admirers of Percy and Ossian, and has produced some splendid ballads, instinct with life, fire, and power. But, if imitation be the sincerest flattery, then the good Bishop of Dromore had a genuine flatterer in this poet. "He has been stealing like a carrion-crow!" was the unkind criticism passed by Wieland on the scriptural epics of his old master, Bodmer: and the same remark might be applied to Bürger. His ballad of "Der Kaiser und der Abt," has its prototype in the old English ballad, "King John and the Abbot of Canterbury;" "Die Entführung" is formed on the model of "The Childe of Elle;" while "Graf Walter" is the beautiful old ballad "Childe Waters," in a German setting. I am told that even the celebrated "Lenore" is an English ballad, "William and Helen," set against the background of the Seven Years' War. "Lenore" and "The Wild Huntsman," along with Percy's *Reliques*, it will be remembered, gave Sir Walter Scott his earliest impetus to that field of literature where his first laurels were won. Perhaps we owe to Bürger and Percy, not only the "Border Minstrelsy," but,

indirectly, the "Eve of St. John" and the "Lay of the Last Minstrel."

Uhland's poetic activity was spread over a long life (1787-1862). He is a writer of many ballads, and has been extolled by German writers as nearer the type of the old minstrel than any other of their poets, while "König Karl's Meerfahrt" is sometimes chosen as the typical German ballad. But it requires exceptional talent to lift the four-line stanza, which he so often uses, above the level of prose-narration; while hybrids between the Art-ballad and Folk-ballad, such as "Roland Schildträger," will always be wearisome to an English ear. His "Luck of Edenhall," and "Castle by the Sea," are familiar to all through the medium of Longfellow's scholarly translations. The few ballads translated by Bayard Taylor have also been adequately rendered.

But the German ballad had yet to receive its highest development, and to rise above Uhland's verse-tales, and Bürger's modifications of Percy. Goethe and Schiller had passed through their Sturm und Drang period: the last "Robber" had disappeared from the highways of Germany, and Werther, after having written "Letters" both from heaven and from hell, was at last allowed to rest peacefully in his grave. It was impossible that the two great poets should not be swayed by the

romantic impulse; and 1797 is noted in German literary history as the "Year of Ballads," when the two working on the same lines produced such brilliant results.

Goethe, with his customary insight, said a notable thing when he laid down as the first canon of the ballad that it should be "mysterious." For the touch of mystery makes the supreme ballad. Centuries before Goethe had enunciated it, the impulse to the weird and mystic had swayed the forgotten Scottish song-smiths from whose hands came the Border Ballads. It is this eeriness that we feel in the "Wife of Usher's Well"—

> "It fell about the Martinmas,
> When nichts are lang and mirk,
> The wife's three sons cam' hame again,
> And their hats were o' the birk.
>
> It neither grew in syke or ditch,
> On earthly brae or sheugh,
> But by the gates of Paradise
> That birk grew fair eneuch."

The finest touch perhaps in all our own ballad-literature is—

> "It was mirk, mirk nicht, and nae stern-licht,
> And they waded through red blude up to the knee,
> *For a' the blude that's shed on earth*
> *Rins through the springs o' that countrie.*"

The "Bride of Corinth" and "Lenore" mark the

highest level which the "mystic" ballad has reached in modern times.

The "God and the Bayaderé" is of an entirely different type. Rich and sonorous as is the metre of the "Bride of Corinth," the rhythm of this poem has a still more bewildering beauty. And yet so absorbed are we in the action and thought of the poem, that it is only after many readings that the artistic charm of the setting strikes us. Every word is pictorial, every line instinct with music. While we read it we are but the instruments on which a great master is playing. And at the end we are lifted into a region to which no other German poet has ever risen. As the God lifts his mortal beloved from the corpse-fire, so "the sweep of the great wings" raises us for a time over small conceptions and limited prejudices into a realm of divine tolerance and charity. Goethe's life-work has built him a throne far in the empyrean, "where Orpheus and where Homer are," but this supreme flower of ballad-poetry alone would be sufficient to give him place among the Immortals.

In the domain of the *Kunst-ballad*, the outcome of a purely artistic conception, Schiller can fully challenge comparison with his great contemporary. The martial fire of Körner, the passion of Heine, the wide-reaching insight of Goethe, were utterly beyond Schiller. Perhaps also his classical

ballads are, at times, too rich with ornament; his allusions too recondite for the average man whose Lemprière is on the top shelf, and whose ideas of the "Thymbrian" and "Polyxena" are but misty. Gargantua's ideal for the education of Pantagruel was to make that hopeful prince "a bottomless pit of all knowledge;" and Schiller is too apt to take for granted that his readers' education has been conducted on the same admirable principles. But as stories the ballads are admirable: such legends as the "Ring of Polykrates" and "Damon and Pythias," the world will never be weary of telling and hearing. His metres, rich, varied, sonorous, changing with the feeling of the ballad, are a miracle of artistic perfection. Unfortunately, his most superb metric success, the "Song of the Bell," as not a ballad, cannot have place in this collection. In it the wedding of sense with sound is carried to its highest possible pitch.

When we read Goethe, under the sway of that universal intellect, we are dominated by the elemental passions such as love, terror, or despair. His ethic breadth is Shakespearian in its wideness. For Goethe, like the Sophokles of Matthew Arnold's sonnet, "saw life steadily, and saw it whole." Schiller's poetic vision was far more *borné*, and perhaps there was some truth in his modest self-appraisement, "Gegen Goethe bin ich,

und bleib' ich, ein poetischer Lump." When we read his poems we enter at once into a narrower sphere, where we are sometimes inclined to resent the obvious didactic purpose. Schiller had a most orthodox belief in the edifying triumph of the good, and the equally edifying downfall of the wicked. Some one ethic end is steadily kept in view in each ballad. "Damon and Pythias" is the glorification of friendship,—though one does wonder idly what response was made by the immortal pair of friends to the tyrant's final request to be admitted "in eurem Bund der dritte." The Crusader, in "The Fight with the Dragon," learns the hard lesson that to obey is better than sacrifice —even sacrifice of dragons. In the "Glove," Lady Kunigonde is taught that manly self-respect is to be as jealously guarded as knightly honour, that no man can be made the puppet and plaything of a woman without degradation. The good Fridolin is perhaps a little wearisome, and his triumphant vindication leaves us cold; while the effect of "Ritter Toggenburg" is rather mawkish than touching.

The "Diver" seems at first sight to be at variance with Schiller's usual methods, yet it is only in seeming. "Twice have the knights been shamed by a squire,"—the brave youth has dared the unknown horrors of Charybdis, has brought back the treasure, by his heroism has won

the heart of the king's daughter, and knows that he loves and is beloved. It is over no foiled life that the whirlpool closes.

In the "Cranes of Ibykus," the singer does indeed fall beneath the dagger of the assassins, but the foul deed cannot be hidden from the eyes of the Immortal Gods, and is brought to light by the guilty conscience of the murderers. The scene in the theatre when the chorus enters carries the mind involuntarily back to Greek tragedy. The conclusion is very noble, the tone Hellenic, and the whole poem a marvel of clearness, energy, and compression. It was a favourite with Schiller, and Goethe, who read it in the manuscript, gave the author many suggestions.

Goethe and Schiller were the Dioscuri of the Romantic renaissance. After Schiller's death, in 1805, Goethe permanently forsook the ballad for the drama, and devoted himself to the completion of "Faust." Then the ballad fell into the hands of the mob of gentlemen who write with ease, and there was a slight relaxing of interest in this form of poetry in favour of the universal and widely-spread study of the Carlovingian and Hohenstaufen Cycle of Romances. But it was only the recoil of the wave which was again to sweep shoreward in the magnificent movement of Neo-Romanticism.

The voice of the new era was Heine. With all

his cynicism, he was at heart what Nodier called him—*un romantique defroqué*—belonging to the new school in reality, though not marching under its banner. The passionate cry, the haunting, intangible beauty of his untranslatable lyrics, is known to every lover of poetry. But his ballad-writing was the work of a boy of sixteen or seventeen, to whom the touch of "Red Sefchen's" beautiful mouth had opened the gates of passion. Possibly the weird setting of this, his first amour, had a power in directing his genius. His ballads are mystic, ghostly, gruesome, in a word "uncanny";—what we should expect from the boy whose first love was the executioner's niece, whose first kiss was snatched beneath the shadow of the sword which had drunk the life-blood of a hundred doomed wretches. To Heine might be applied the cynic saying of a recent writer, that every man walks through life with the bacchante, Sex, on his left hand, the skeleton Death on his right, and while he scourges himself for leering at the one, he murmurs prayers against the other. But Heine murmurs no prayer. Throughout his life he had eyes only for the beautiful, unveiled form of the bacchanal, till the grisly skeleton became the daily companion and couch-mate of the nine years spent on his "mattress-grave." Strangely powerful, and imaginative as are the ballads, "Im süssen Traum,"

"Ich lag und schlief," and "Was treibt und tobt mein tolles Blut?" they have an unhealthy fascination. These all belong to the "Junge Leiden" section of the "Buch der Lieder," but "The Pilgrimage to Kevlaar," the most beautiful of all his ballads, is in the "Heimkehr" cycle. This half-indicated love-story is full of an exquisite tenderness, a pathetic beauty, a delicacy of feeling, which Heine's ballads reached here only. Perhaps we owe it to a momentary touch of that "heavenly home-sickness" of which he tells us in his introduction to the Romances.

Very remarkable among these early "Traumbilder" is the poem entitled "Ein Traum gar seltsam schauerlich," where he sees the apparition of a maiden washing his shroud, squaring his coffin plank, and finally digging his grave. The mystic Washers of the Shroud appear both in Greek and in Norse superstition, but it may be questioned whether the ghastly idea has been ever used more effectively than by Heine. The short poem called "The Asra" is also noticeable for the restrained and delicate beauty of its treatment of the passion of love. It has the same fragile loveliness that startles us in some of Edgar Poe's early poems, the chill but exquisite fantasy of frost-work on the window pane.

Heine's enemy, Count Platen, on whom he made

such an unprovoked attack in the "Reisebilder," was more of a reflective poet than a writer of ballads, yet during his residence in Italy he produced a few fine classical ballads. Rückert's "Barbarossa," besides being a fine romantic ballad, has the advantage of dealing with a well-known German hero, and therefore is one of the best known modern German poems.

Germany has never had any lack of martial poetry. The War of Liberation in 1813 developed at any rate two poets, old Arndt, whose "Was ist das Deutsche Vaterland?" and "Der Gott der Eisen wachsen liess," roused the spirit of Germany, and the brilliant and gifted Körner, whose early death in the war was a loss to German literature. And in our own day the Franco-German War of 1870 had its poets. No one can read Freiligrath's stirring "Hurra, Germania!"—a ballad with the ring of steel in it — without recognising that Romance is no outworn thing, and that the German ballad still has a great future before it.

A celebrated critic has lately informed the reading world that the prevalent taste for the novel of adventure is due to a "recrudescence of barbarism." This is an hard saying; and has caused great searchings of spirit among those tasteless barbarians who still prefer *The Three*

Musketeers and *Allan Quatermain* to *Robert Elsmere* and the *Kreutzer Sonata.* Another critic also has recently remarked that the poetic ideal of the day is to write bad ballads in pseudo-Scotch. Poor Romance has always been treated cavalierly by the critics,—those watch-dogs of the stairs of Art. But nevertheless there is a consensus of opinion that we are on the edge of a great Romantic revival such as the end of the last century saw. The day of the ballade is well-nigh over, and the whirligig of Time has brought in the ballad's revenges.

The great temple of Poetry has many altars; and we are each free to burn candles before our own particular saint of literature, whether it be at the magnificent altar of Browning, in the Gothic side-chapel of Morris, or "the shrine, occult, withheld, untrod" where Rossetti is worshipped. But many of the devoutest worshippers of these, or other literary idols, still love the bracing outside air of the ballads. And many who have no appreciation of the poetry of sentiment or imagination yet are foremost among the sworn lovers of this fascinating form of poetry. Though they be ignorant of Tennyson, and acknowledge not Heine, yet their eyes glisten over the pathetic close of "Græme and Bewick," or flash at Körner's "Sword-Song."

So long as the world remains, men will sail the sea with Sir Patrick Spens, share Janet's night-vigil at Carterhaugh, stoop over the crag with Kempion to kiss the enchanted princess, face the Eldritch Knight with Syr Cauline, and draw the bow with Sweet William of Cloudeslie. There will never come a time when Chevy Chase will not stir hearts like Sidney's, "as with a trumpet." The generations that come after us will still see Germaine's husband standing at the door praying for entrance: the bower of Aucassin and Nicolette will never be untrodden by the feet of lovers. Our children's children will still see the lithe figure of the Diver poised for the spring into Charybdis, and watch the sparks struck out by the hoofs of the black stallion, as the figures of Lenore and her spectre-lover flash past them into the darkness. At midnight the door may open, and the ghostly Bride of Corinth may glide in, spectral in her white robes. These things are secure above time and fashion. For the nineteenth century and its pessimism will pass away; but a straight stroke, a good horse, and a fair woman are things in which all generations and races of men will take delight. Despite the fluctuations of popular taste, the ballad instinct is planted imperishably in the hearts of men, and therefore is immortal.

ELIZABETH CRAIGMYLE.

GERMAN BALLADS.

BÜRGER.

LENORE.

LENORE she woke at morning-red,
(O, but her dreams were eerie !)
" Love William, art thou untrue or dead ?
For thy coming I grow weary."
He was with old King Frederick's powers
Through the fight at Prague in its bloody hours,
No message came to tell
What chance to him befell.

The Empress and the King at last
Decreed the strife surcease.
Their warlike thoughts away they cast,
And made the longed-for peace.
And either army did homeward come
With clang of trumpet and kettledrum,
With joyful sound of singing,
And green boughs round them clinging.

And far and wide, and wide and far,
Through every path and street,
Folk came to hail them from the war,
With shouts of joy to greet.
"Thank God!" the wives and children cried,
"Welcome!" from many a maiden bride,
Only Lenore did miss
Her lover's clasp and kiss.

In every face her love she sought,
Vain was her anxious tasking,
For there was none could tell her ought,
Useless was all her asking.
The soldiers passed and left her there,
And then she tore her raven hair,
Cast herself on the ground,
In passionate sorrow drowned.

The mother ran to clasp her child:—
"God shield us all from harms!
Dear one, what is this grief so wild?"
And clasped her in her arms.
"O mother! mother! unending woe!
This world and the next to rack may go.
The mercy of God is dead!
Woe, woe is me!" she said.

"Help, God, our Lord! Look down on us!
Child, say 'Thy will be done.'
His will is best, though it be thus,—
Pity us, Holy Son!"
"O mother, mother! Words and wind!
God robbed me. He is cruel and blind.
What use of all my praying?
Now,—no more need of saying."

"Have pity, Lord! Thy children know
Thy help in their distress;
The blessed Sacrament shall grow
A thing to heal and bless."
"O mother, I feel this grief of mine
Past help of blessèd bread and wine.
No sacrament will give
Dead men the power to live."

"My child, it may be thy false true-love
In a far-off distant land,
Has cast off his faith like an easy glove,
And given another his hand.
Whistle him lightly down the wind,
His fault will he rue, his loss will he find.
The coward will regret his lie,
In the hour when he comes to die."

"O mother, mother, 'Lost' is 'lost.'
'Forlorn' is e'en 'forlorn.'
I have bought Death at a mighty cost,
O, had I ne'er been born!
The light of life is quenched, I know,
Like a torch blown out it is even so,
And God in heaven is dead.
Woe, woe upon my head."

"Enter not into judgment, Lord,
Her heart and brain are dazed,
Heavy on her is laid thy sword,
Through sorrow she is crazed.
Forget thine earthly love's distress;
Think upon Heaven's blessedness,
So that thou shalt not miss
The Heavenly Bridegroom's kiss."

"O mother! what is dreary heaven?
O mother, what is hell?
With him, with him is all my heaven,
Without him, *that* is hell.
To lights of heaven and earth am I blind;
They are quenched like torches in the wind
Blessed?—Without my love,
Not here, nor in heaven above."

So raged the madness of despair,
  Like fire in heart and brain.
At God's cruel will she hurled in air
  Wild curses half insane.
She beat her bosom, she wrung her hands,
Till the sunshine shone on other lands,
    Till in the evening sky
    Gold stars shone silently.

And hark! a sound of horse's feet
  The eerie night-wind bore.
The rider sprang from saddle-seat
  With spur-clash at her door.
Hark, at the gate doth the stranger ring;
And the bell it clashes its kling-ling-ling.
    Softly he called her name,
    These were the words that came:—

"Rise up, rise up, mine own sweetheart!
  Are you sleeping, my child, or waking?
Is it laughter or weeping that is thy part,
  Is it holding or forsaking?"
"Thou, Wilhelm,—thou,—and night so late?
To wake and weep hath been my fate,
    Such sorrow was betiding:
    Whence com'st thou hither riding?"

"We saddled our horses at midnight deep,
From Böhmen rode I hither,
I come for my bride when the world's asleep,
But I shall be riding with her."
"Nay, Wilhelm, come within the house;
The wind in the hawthorn holds carouse,
The clasp of my snow-white arm
Shall keep my beloved warm."

"Let the wind set hawthorn boughs a-swing,
And the storm-sprites rave and harry!
The stallion stamps, spur-irons ring,
I may not longer tarry.
Come, kilt thy kirtle, behind me spring,
A hundred miles brook no faltering,
For far away is spread
My sweetheart's bridal-bed."

"Is there a hundred miles between
Us and our bridal-bed?
Eleven has struck on the clock I ween
And dawn will soon shine red."
"Nay, look, my love, at the full moon's face:
We and the dead folk ride apace,
Ere day with darkness meets
You shall press your bridal sheets."

"Now where, dear love, is the bride-chambère,
And when may we hope to win it?"
"Six planks and two small boards are there,
It is cool and still within it."
"Is there room for me?" "Of a suretie.
Come, kilt thy kirtle and ride with me,
For we the guests are wronging,
And the bride-bed faints with longing."

She kilted her kirtle and sprang behind
On the steed as black as night,
And round the rider's waist she twined
Her arms so soft and white.
Into the night away they go
Like a bolt that's launched from a steel cross-bow,
At every horse-hoof's dint
Fire flashes from the flint.

They ride—they ride—on either hand
Too fast to see or know them,
Fly hedges, wastes, and pasture-land
The bridges thunder below them.
"Dost fear, my love? The moon shines bright.
Hurrah! the Dead ride fast by night.—
Dost fear, my love, the Dead?"
"Nay, yet let be the Dead!"

The black black ravens are croaking there,
The mass they sing and say,
The dirge swells out on the midnight air,
"Let us carry the corpse to the clay."
The funeral chant the riders hear,
There are mourners bearing coffin and bier,
The dirge the echoes woke
Like the frogs in dreary croak.

"Ye may bury the corpse at midnight drear,
With dirge and sound of weeping:
I ride through the dark with my sweetheart dear
To a night of happy sleeping.
Come hither, O sexton, O choir, come near
And sing the bride-song sweet to hear,
Come priest, and speak the blessing
Ere we our couch are pressing."

The phantom show it melts like snows;
As if to grant his praying,
An eldritch sound of laughter rose,
But their course knew no delaying.
He never checks his horse's rein,
And through the night they ride amain;
The flashing fire-flaught flies,
The sparks from the horse-hoofs rise.

How flew to right, how flew to left,
  The hills, the trees, the sedges !
How flew to left, to right, to left,
  Townlets and towns and hedges !
" Dost fear, my love ? The moon shines bright.
Hurrah ! the Dead ride fast by night.—
    Dost fear, my love, the Dead ?"
    " Ah, let them rest, the Dead."

See there, see there, on the scaffold's height,
  Around the axe and wheel,
A ghostly crew in the moon's grey light
  Are dancing a ghastly reel.
" Ha, ha, ye foot it lustily,
Come hither, old friends, and follow me.
    To dance shall be your lot
    While I loose her girdle-knot."

And the gallows'-crew they rushed behind
  On the black steed's fiery traces,
As the leaves that whirl in the eddying wind,
  Or dust the hurricane chases.
He never checks his horse's rein,
And through the night they ride amain;
    The flashing fire-flaught flies,
    The sparks from the horse-hoofs rise.

On, on, they race by the moon's pale light,
All things seem flying fast,
The heaven, the stars, the earth, the night
In one wild dream flash past.
"Dost fear, my love? The moon shines bright.
Hurrah! The Dead ride fast by night.—
Dost fear, my love, the Dead?"
"Alas, let be the Dead."

"Soon will the cock's shrill trumpet blare,
The sand will soon be run;
O steed! I scent the morning air;
Press on, brave steed, press on.
We have won to our goal through rain and mire,
The bride-bed shivers with sweet desire,
And dead folk ride apace.—
We have reached the trysting-place."

To a portal latticed with iron grate
He galloped with loosened rein,
And lightly he struck on that gruesome gate,—
Burst bolt and bar in twain!
Its iron jaws are split in sunder,
Over the graves the horse-hoofs thunder,
And shadowy grave-stones loom
I' the moonlit churchyard gloom.

In a second's space came a wonder strange,
A hideous thing to tell.
The rider's face knew a ghastly change,
The flesh from the white bones fell.
A featureless skull glares out on her,
No hair to wave, and no lips to stir,
She is clasped by a skeleton !
Still the weird ride goes on.

The coal-black stallion snorts and rears,
Its hoofs dash sparks of fire,
Beneath the riders it disappears,
They have won to their desire.
Wild shrieks on the night-wind come and go,
Wild laughs rise up from the graves below,
The maiden's heart at strife,
Struggled 'twixt death and life.

Ill spirits ring them in crazy dance,
And the dance grows ever dafter;
They point at her in the moon's grey glance,
And howl with eldritch laughter :—
" Though thy heart be broken beneath his rod,
Rebel not. God in heaven is God.
Thou art ours for eternity.—
His grace with thy poor soul be ! "

THE WILD HUNTSMAN.*

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

Right o'er the hallowed path they ride,
With wild halloo and ringing shout:
Behold! behold! on either side
A single Horseman joins the rout;
A fiery roan the left—the right
A graceful steed all silver-white.

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

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

"Ill blends thy horn so wild and vain,"—
  Thus did the right-hand horseman say,
"With solemn bell and Sabbath strain.—
  Return! Forbear the chase to-day.
O, 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 dull bells ring, and 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 venerie
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, these 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 Count in piteous guise;
"Have mercy, noble baron, spare
The hope of want, the fruit of care!"

Forward the right-hand horseman spurred,
  Mildly to check 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 Count disdains the peasant's woe,
"Hence! or I hew thee from my path!
  Hence! Gallant comrades, 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 the field steamed 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, O mercy! Not in sport
  Make poor and peaceful flocks your prey—
The hapless widow's sole support!
  Ah, pause and think! Oh, do not slay!
Spare to the poor their little all—
Mercy, O mercy! hear my call!"

Forward the right-hand horseman spurred,
  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 loth
Up to yon heavens to send ye both?

"Hurrah, companions! Forward there!
Ho, tantarara! 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;
"Deem'st 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 death-like 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.

(*Boys' Own Magazine.*)

EARL WALTER.*

(ADAPTED.)

EARL WALTER cries at the stable door,
"Come water and groom my steed!"
And out there came the fairest may
That e'er served earl at need.

"Well may ye save and see, Lord Earl!
Well may ye save and see!
My golden girdle was once too loose,
Now 'tis too tight for me.

"My body bears the fruit of love
That was 'twixt me and thee,
My silken coat was all too wide,
Too narrow 'tis for me."

* This is a translation of the old English ballad, "Childe Waters," but Bürger's additional touches are of such beauty that I cannot refrain from inserting it here.

"Fair may, if this be as thou say'st,
And mine thy child may be,
So thou shalt deal my red red gold,
And deal my white monnèye.

"Fair may, if this be as thou say'st,
And mine thy child may be,
Ye both shall rule my folk and land,
But, and my castles three."

"O, Earl, for love and faith and troth
What counts thy beaten gold?
And not for land and castles three
Have I mine honour sold.

"A glance of love from your blue eyes
Is more in truth to me,
Than all thy heaps of beaten gold,
Than all thy white monnèye.

"A single kiss from your red mouth
That once gave kisses seven,
Is more than lands and castles three,
Though they were built in Heaven."

"Fair may, this morning must I ride
To guest in Weissenstein,
With me must ride the loveliest maid
On either side the Rhine."

"If thou wilt guest in Weissenstein,
When dawns to-morrow's day,
So let me go with thee, Lord Earl,
And speed thee on thy way.

"Though I be not the loveliest may
On either side the Rhine,
Yet will I clead me as a boy,
And be a page of thine."

"If thou wilt be a page of mine
And change thy sex for me,
Then thou must short thy gown of silk
Two fingers o'er thy knee.

"And thou must short thy golden hair
And short it to thine ear,
If thou wouldst be a page of mine,
Or folk at thee would fleer."

She ran beside his steed that day,
All through the hot noon-tide,
Yet ne'er he spake the courteous word,
"Now, Sweetheart, mount and ride!"

Barefoot she ran through heath and furze,
Through thorn and prickly shoot,
Yet ne'er he spake the courteous word,
"Now, Sweetheart, shoe thy foot!"

"Draw rein, draw rein, thou noble Earl!
Ride not so fierce and fast,
Alas, my body throbs so sore,
Some ill will come at last."

"Fair page, dost see the water wan
Withouten bridge or ford?"
"O God! Earl Walter, pity me!
I cannot swim, my Lord."

Withouten word he plunged his steed
The water wan within;
"Now help me, God in Heaven!" she cries,—
The water wets her chin.

She struggles on with foot and hand,
And up she holds her chin.
Earl Walter's heart was beating sore
When they the shore did win.

When they had swum that water wan,
He called her to his knee,
"Come here, fair may, and see this light,
It shines from far for me!

"Thou seest a lordly castle shine,
Gold-roofed it seems to be,
Twelve lovely maidens sit therein,
The loveliest waits for me.

"Thou seest a stately castle shine,
Of marble gleaming wide,
Twelve lovely maidens dance therein
The loveliest is my bride."

"I see a lordly castle stand
Gold-roofed i' the evening sun.
On thee and on the maid within
I ask Christ's benison.

"I see a stately castle stand
Full fair and white this tide.
Christ's benison be still on thee,
And on thy chosen bride."

The twain rode to the castle fair,
Like gold i' the evening light,
They looked within the castle gate
That was of marble white.

They saw the lovely maidens twelve
Were playing at the ball;
But fairer than them all was she
Who led the steeds to stall.

They saw the lovely maidens twelve,
The dance's circle lead;
But fairer than them all was she
Who littered down the steed.

Out spake Earl Walter's sister fair,
And wonderingly spake she,
"Your page, good brother mine? A page
Was never fair as he.

"Fairer is he than any page
That serves the king at court.
Yet is his girdle all too tight,
His gown of green too short.

"As if he were my mother's son
I love him standing there.
Now may I lead your page this night
Into a chamber fair?"

"Nay, such a page," Earl Walter cried,
"Who runs through heath and wold,
Ye must not lay in chamber fair,
Nor lap in cloth of gold.

"A boy who runs the livelong day
Through mud, and dust, and mire,
May eat his morsel with the dogs,
And sleep beside the fire."

And when the vespers had been sung,
And all were boune to bed,
"Come here, my page, and mark thou well
My words," Earl Walter said.

"Go to the castle-town, and search
Through every lane and street,
And bring me straight the fairest maid
That thou may'st chance to meet."

She went into the castle-town,
Through every lane and street,
She brought to him the fairest maid
That she could chance to greet.

"Now let me lie at your bed-foot,
Lord Earl, till dawn of day:
In all the castle is no place
Where I my head may lay."

He beckoned, and the page she sank
Across her master's feet,
And, till the dawn of morning grey,
She lay in slumber sweet.

"Hallo! hallo! I hear without
The herdsmen greet the day.
Up, lazy page! and feed my horse
With golden oats and hay.

"Give him his fill of golden oats,
Of golden oats and hay,
So he may fresh and ready be
To bear me home to-day."

She sank beside the manger there,
  Her travail had begun,
And there, within the horses' stall,
  She's borne a fair young son.

Then rose the ancient Countess up,
  And to her son did call,
"Rise up, son Walter, rise and look
  Within thy horses' stall.

"For in the stall there houses sure
  Some eerie ghost forlorn,
It sobs even as a woman sobs
  The hour her child is born."

Up rose Earl Walter, from the wall
  He caught his garments down,
And round his body white he wrapt
  His furred and silken gown.

And at the stable-door he stood,
  And held him close and still,
The sobs the maiden sobbed in pain
  Softened his iron will.

And, "Lullaby, my little child,"
  Between her sobs she said,
"Lie still, my babe, nor sob so sore,
  Or thou wilt soon be dead.

"May God give thee, my little child,
His choicest blessings all!
Thy mother shall wear a shroud of white,
Thy father purple and pall."

"O hold, thou sweetest maid on earth!
Mine own true sweet heart, hold!
My heart is not of frozen ice,
Nor yet of marble cold.

"O now be still, mine own sweet heart!
And sob no more for me,
Christening and wedding both to-night
The self-same hour shall be."

NOTES.

THE WILD HUNTSMAN.

Sir Walter Scott's note, appended to his translation of this ballad, is as follows :—"The tradition on which it is founded bears that formerly a Wildgrave, or keeper of a royal forest, named Falkenberg, was so much addicted to the pleasures of the chase, and otherwise so extremely profligate and cruel, that he not only followed this unhallowed amusement on the Sabbath, and other days consecrated to religious duty, but accompanied it with the most unheard-of oppression of the poor peasants under his vassalage. When this second Nimrod died, the people adopted a superstition, founded probably on the many uncouth sounds heard in the depths of a German forest during the silence of the night. They conceived they still heard the cry of the Wildgrave's hounds, and the well-known cheer of the deceased hunter, the sounds of his horse's feet, and the rustling of the branches before the game, the pack, and the sportsman, are also distinctly discriminated, but the phantoms are rarely, if ever, visible. Once, as a benighted hunter heard this infernal chase pass by him, at the sound of the halloo with which the spectral huntsman cheered his hounds, he could not refrain from crying, 'Gluck zu, Falkenberg!' 'Dost thou wish me good sport?' answered a hoarse voice; 'thou shalt share the game.' And there was thrown at him what seemed to be a huge piece of foul carrion. The daring hunter lost two of his best horses soon after, and never perfectly recovered the personal effects of the ghostly greeting. This tale, though told with some variations, is believed all over Germany.

"The French had a similar tradition concerning an aerial hunter who infested the forest of Fontainebleau. He was sometimes visible: when he appeared as a huntsman surrounded

by dogs, a tall, grisly figure. Some account of him may be found in 'Sully's Memoirs,' who says he was called 'Le Grand Veneur.'"

Since Scott wrote the foregoing, this last tradition of which he speaks has been caught up into the very third heaven of poetry, by giving rise to Victor Hugo's magnificent "*Chasseur Noir.*"