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the Persian

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE ENGEL: A BALLAD; WITH A SERIES  
OF EPIGRAMS FROM THE PERSIAN \*\*\*

Transcribed from the 1913 Thomas J. Wise pamphlet by David Price, email [ccx074@pglaf.org](mailto:ccx074@pglaf.org)

**LITTLE ENGEL**  
**A BALLAD**  
**WITH A SERIES OF**  
**EPIGRAMS FROM THE PERSIAN**

BY  
GEORGE BORROW

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1913

**LITTLE ENGEL.**

p. 5

It was the little Engel, he  
So handsome was and gay;  
To Upland rode he on a tide  
And bore a maid away.

In ill hour he to Upland rode  
And made a maid his prize;  
The first night they together lay  
Was down by Vesteryse.

It was the little Engel he  
Awoke at black midnight,  
And straight begins his dream to state  
In terror and affright.

"Methought the wolf-whelp and his dam,  
The laidly she-wolf gray,  
Tore out my heart, and twixt their teeth  
Did hold it as I lay."

"That thou dream'st little Engel thus  
Can cause slight wonderment,  
When me thou'st ta'en by might and main  
Nor asked my friends' consent."

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In came Solwey Johnsen then  
And stood before the table;  
He was I ween, a clever lad,  
And well to speak was able.

“Hear thou, my lord, Little Engel,  
Rise up and straight begone;  
For here Sir Godey Loumand comes  
By four ways to the town.”

“I fear not four, Solwey Johnsen,  
Nor five fear I, nor ten!  
I fear not Godey Sir Loumand, though  
He come with thirty men.”

“O there are more than four, Sir,  
Or five, Sir, or than ten;  
Here cometh Godey Sir Loumand with  
A hundred armed men.”

It was the little Engel, he  
Took Malfred in his arm:  
“Now, dearest heart, some counsel give  
May free us from this harm.”

It was the little Engel, her  
Upon the white cheek kiss'd:  
“Now do thou hear, my bosom's dear,  
With counsel us assist.”

“The best advice that I can give  
I'll give thee in this case;  
To Mary's Church we will retire,  
They'll ne'er destroy that place.

“We'll gold and silver take, and on  
The scale we'll pile them high;  
To-morrow from the Churchmen we  
The holy place will buy.

“Around you call your merry men all  
To whom you've given bread;  
For refuge we to the Kirk will flee  
Since we are thus bestead.

“Do you take all your merry men who  
Your coursers' backs have prest;  
We'll hie us to our Lady's church,  
And set our hearts at rest.

“That's the best counsel, love, I know,  
A simple woman I;  
In Mary's house we'll lock ourselves,  
And there our foes defy.”

It was the little Engel,  
Into the church he went:  
Sir Loumand to beleaguer him  
A hundred men has sent.

Before the kirk his men they lay  
Till full five months were past;  
It was Godey Sir Loumand  
So wrathful grew at last.

Then spake the mother of little Malfred,  
With hate 'gainst her was fill'd:  
“The Kirk of Maria burn with fire,  
And it with gold rebuild.”

The fire began to burn, to burn,  
The sparkles in they flew;  
At that adread was little Malfred,  
And ashy pale she grew.

It was so hot in the Kirk yard when  
Abroad the blazes sped;  
But in the Kirk still hotter when  
In poured the melted lead.

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It was the little Malfred,  
So frantic was her mood:  
"O let us quick the horses stick,  
And cool us with their blood."

Then little Engel answer made,  
As on the floor he stood:  
"But coolness small shall we derive  
From our good coursers' blood."

Answered the groom who loved the steeds  
As dearly as his breath:  
"Ye'd better little Malfred stick,  
She well deserveth death."

It was the little Engel,  
His arms round Malfred twin'd:  
"No death hast thou deserved from us,  
And none from us shalt find.

"My little Malfred, do thou hear  
What I now say to thee;  
If a son this year thou chance to bear,  
That son name after me."

They placed her on a buckler,  
They placed their spears below,  
And through the window lifted her  
With hearts so full of woe.

It was the little Malfred round  
The church goes staggering now,  
Scorched were her scarlet robes, and scorched  
The ringlets on her brow.

It was the little Malfred fell  
Upon her white bare knee:  
"O may I bear a son this year,  
The avenger of this to be."

So they the little Malfred took  
And in a mantle roll'd,  
And sorrowfully lifted her  
Upon a courser bold.

Outspake the little Malfred when  
She reached the verdant plain:  
"Burnt is our Lady's house this day,  
And burnt so bold a swain.

"Burnt is our Lady's house, and burnt  
Therein so brave a swain;  
His equal till the day of doom  
We ne'er shall see again."

It happened in the autumn tide,  
The autumn of that year,  
That she within her secret bower,  
A beauteous boy did bear.

To the holy Kirk they carried him,  
They christened him at night;  
They called him little Engel, and  
Concealed him whilst they might.

They fostered him for winter one,  
And so on, till he grew  
The fairest knight beneath the sun  
That you did ever view.

So well he grew and throve until  
Seven years had passed away:  
"Thy uncle slew thy sire, my boy,  
For the first time, that I say."

Still with his mother he remained  
Till five more years were sped:  
"Thy uncle slew thy father, boy,"  
He heard most often said.

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“Now do thou hear, my mother dear,  
Who sittest clad in pall;  
Up under Oe I’ll riding go,  
And serve in the Monarch’s hall.”

“Yes, ride thee hence to Court, and there  
To win thee honor try;  
Forget not who thy father slew,  
For the last time I cry.”

He served so long at court that he  
His friend the Dane King made;  
With heavy heart he’d sit apart  
Whilst others laugh’d and play’d.

The Danish King observed at last  
He grieved at seasons all:  
“Now hear, good youth, I’d know forsooth  
Why thou art sorrow’s thrall.

“Thou grievest like the little bird  
The greenwood bough upon;  
Thou seemest like the lonely wight  
Whose friends are dead and gone.”

“Now do thou hear, thou King of the Danes,  
With grief I down am weigh’d;  
My uncle slew my sire of old,  
And no atonement made.”

“If thou wilt up of the country ride,  
And well avenge that deed,  
As many of my men to thee  
I’ll lend, as thou shalt need.

“If thou’lt avenge thy father’s death,  
Thou shalt have fitting aid;  
Three hundred of my men to thee  
I’ll lend, in steel array’d.”

It was the little Engel, he  
Rides in the greenwood shade;  
He marshals there his good men all,  
And sets him at their head.

In haste came in the little footboy,  
And stood before the table;  
He was I ween a clever lad,  
And well to speak was able.

“Now hear, Sir Godey Loumand, hear,  
Arise and straight begone;  
Little Engel’s coming with his troop  
By four ways to the town.

“Little Engel’s coming with his troop,  
And he’ll be on us soon;  
And wroth is he, as wroth can be,  
His war-lance scrapes the moon.”

“At Stevn and Ting, my boy, I’ve been,  
And wherever people mingle;  
But ne’er, I swear, have I been where  
I’ve heard of little Engel.”

It was Godey Sir Loumand,  
He stroked the page’s cheek;  
“If thou canst give any good advice,  
My pretty footboy, speak.”

“If I can give any good advice  
Most certainly I will;  
In your stone bower yourself immure  
From the approaching ill.

“The walls they are of marble stone,  
The doors they are of lead;  
’Twill wondrous be, my lord, if we  
Therein are prisoners made.”

It was the little Engel, he  
 Halted a while to gaze:  
 "O there doth lie the Kirk, where died  
 My sire in smoke and blaze.

"And there doth stand the castle, where  
 My uncle doth reside;  
 The amends that he shall pay this day  
 The Lord in heaven decide."

By four ways they the bower beset,  
 And for admission call:  
 The little Engel, sprightly elf,  
 Was foremost of them all.

It was Godey Sir Loumand, through  
 The casement out looked he:  
 "Now hark, ye knaves, bid your captain tell  
 Why ye bawl so furiously?"

Then answered little Engel straight  
 Beneath his mantle ruddy:  
 "Engel he's stiled, your sister's child,  
 And I am he, Sir Godey."

Then answered Godey Sir Loumand, he  
 Was surely wroth thereat:  
 "Ride hence, and boast not of thy birth,  
 Thou art a bastard brat."

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"And though a bastard brat I be,  
 My fortune's not the worse;  
 Enough I hold of silver and gold,  
 And ride on a gallant horse.

"And if a bastard brat I be,  
 Thou mad'st me that I trow;  
 But still I've towers, and pleasant bowers,  
 And of green woods enow.

"My sire thou slew'st, and no amends  
 To me didst ever make;  
 Now scoff thou hast upon me cast,  
 For which thy life I'll take.

"Bring gold, my merry men, and that  
 Before the threshold lay;  
 We'll burn the bower this very hour,  
 We well for it can pay."

'Twas hot within the forerom when  
 The fire began to roar;  
 But hotter in the stone bower, when  
 The lead began to pour.

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It was the little Engel, he  
 His courser never turned  
 To ride away from the castelaye  
 Before the bower was burned.

Away at last he rode, and waved  
 His hand in exultation,  
 Upon espying his uncle lying  
 Amidst the conflagration.

Said little Engel, when he saw  
 His uncle's body shrink:  
 "Now thou hast quaffed the self same draught  
 Thou mad'st my father drink."

It was the little Engel, rode  
 Home to his mother's hall;  
 Before it stood his mother good,  
 So fair arrayed in pall.

"Here dost thou stand, my mother dear,  
 Arrayed in robes of pall;  
 I've ridden up the land, and well  
 Avenged my father's fall."

p. 19

It was the fair Dame Malfred, wrung  
Her hands and wept amain:  
"I'd but one care before to bear,  
And now, alas, have twain!"

"Dear mother, thou wouldst have it so,  
Now thee in tears I find,  
When duteously thy will I've done:  
How strange is woman's mind!"

He turned his steed and rode away,  
His face with anger red;  
With dishevelled hair, the Dame stood there,  
Such woeful tears she shed.

The little Engel hied him to  
The King his master's court;  
Abroad the Dane King stood, and hailed  
The youth in kindest sort.

Into the hall Sir Engel then  
With the good monarch went:  
"My choicest thanks, thou noble King,  
For thy brave warriors lent.

"Now I've avenged my father's death,  
Burnt is Sir Godey's bower;  
And he therein has found a tomb,  
Who slew my sire of yore."

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## AN ELEGY.

p. 21

Where shall I rest my hapless head,  
Heavy with grief? how plenteously  
Must I the briny torrents shed—  
*Alack and woe is me!*

Our chief is gone, at last, at last,  
The safeguard of our nation he;  
The glory of our age is past—  
*Alack and woe is me!*

Unto the swords, O father dear,  
Of foemen thirsting horribly  
For blood, why leave thy children here?  
*Alack and woe is me!*

Of justice is the fountain dried,  
And mute the law's high symphony;  
Fallen is Europa's brightest pride—  
*Alack and woe is me.*

p. 22

There is a change of times and things  
That passeth on eternally.  
Decreed by Him, the King of Kings—  
*'Tis right—but woe is me!*

Now is the earth with violets gay,  
And flowers manifold to see;  
Now frozen 'neath the winter's sway—  
*How brief the roses be!*

Now shews the sun his head of gold  
With a superior brilliancy;  
Now hides as were he dead and cold—  
*Alack and woe is me.*

O father! I will lave thy tomb  
With tear-drops well becoming me;  
Thy tomb with flowery herbs perfume—  
*How brief the roses be!*

## *From the Persian.*

### 1.

Hear what once the pigmy clever  
To the stupid giant said:  
Things are not of highest value  
Which do highest rear their head;  
The sluggish horse is nothing better  
Than the donkey lowest bred.

### 2.

The man who of his words is sparing  
His strength and weakness hidden keeps;  
Think not every thicket empty,  
Perchance in one a tiger sleeps.

### 3.

If thou would'st ruin 'scape, and blackest woe,  
Unto these words, these precious words attend:  
Never be heedless of a mortal foe,  
Nor choose a proud and envious man for friend.

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### 4.

Sit down with your friends in delightful repose  
When war and contention you see 'midst your foes;  
But when to an end their contentions they bring,  
Then, then seize the bow, and get ready the sling.

### 5.

The hungry hound upon the bone will pounce  
He prowling finds, and not mistrustful pass;  
He asks not whom it did belong to once,  
The prophet's camel or the sinner's ass.

### 6.

Great Aaroun is dead, and is nothing, the man  
Who left forty castles replete with gold store;  
But living though dead is the great Nourshwan,  
In the good name he left he has death triumphed o'er.

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### 7.

Though God provides our daily bread,  
Yet all must seek that bread I ween;  
Though all must die, there is no need  
To rush the dragon's jaws between.

### 8.

#### **THE KING AND HIS FOLLOWERS.**

If in the boor's garden the King eats a pear,  
His servants rapacious the tree will uptear;  
For every five eggs he gives bounteously, more  
Than five hundred fowls will his armies devour.

### 9.

#### **THE DEVOUT MAN AND THE TYRANT.**

If the half of a loaf the devout man receives,  
The half of that half to the wretched he gives;  
But no sooner a tyrant one kingdom has ta'en,  
Than the wish of his heart is another to gain.

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### 10.

## THE CAT AND THE BEGGAR.

If a cat could the power of flying enjoy,  
She all the world's sparrows would quickly destroy;  
If power in the hands of a beggar you place,  
No mercy he'll show to the beggarly race.

## 11. THE KING AND TAYLOR.

The taylor who travels in far foreign lands,  
Can always get bread by the work of his hands;  
But the King who from throne and from country has fled,  
Must oft without supper go sighing to bed.

## 12. GOLD COIN AND STAMPED LEATHER.

Of the children of wisdom how like is the face  
To pure gold that's accepted in every place;  
But the ignorant great are much like leather cash,  
At home which though current, abroad is but trash.

## 13.

So much like a friend with your foe ever deal,  
That you never need dread the least scratch from his steel;  
But ne'er with your friend deal so much like a foe,  
That you ever must dread from his faulchion a blow.

\* \* \* \* \*

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