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Title: Axel Thordson and Fair Valborg: a ballad

Editor: Thomas James Wise

Translator: George Borrow

Release date: December 4, 2008 [eBook #27406]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AXEL THORDSON AND FAIR VALBORG: A BALLAD ***

Transcribed from the 1913 Thomas J. Wise pamphlet by David Price, email ccx074@pglaf.org. Many thanks to Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, UK, for kindly supplying the images from which this transcription was made.

**AXEL THORDSON
AND FAIR VALBORG
A BALLAD**

BY
GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1913

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p. 4

AXEL THORDSON AND FAIR VALBORG.

p. 5

At the wide board at tables play,
With pleasure and with glee abounding
The ladies twain in fair array,
The game they play is most astounding.

How fly about the dies so small,
Such sudden turnings are they making;
And so does Fortune's wheel withal,
We scarcely know the route 'tis taking.

Dame Julli grand, and Malfred Queen,
At tables were their time employing;
Not distant on the floor was seen
A child with pear and apple toying.

Upon the floor the child it walked,
It played with apples and with flowers;
Then in Sir Axel Thordson stalked,
Was bound for Rome's imperial towers.

p. 6

He greets the Dames repeatedly,
At courtesy he had no master;
He loved the child in secrecy,

But fate had doomed them much disaster.

His eyeballs brimming full of tears
Full tenderly her cheek he patted:
"O would thou wast of fitting years,
With Axel Thordson to be mated!"

Answered his youngest sister straight,
Thus answered she her gallant brother:
"Though she this night to woman's state
Had won, ye might not wed each other."

Answered the Damsel's mother high,
And she the simple truth has stated:
"A worthy pair I don't deny,
But, oh! ye are too near related."

A gold ring off his arm he drew,
To play with that he fondly bade her;
To years of reason when she grew
To palen and to pine it made her.

p. 7

"That I've betrothed thee, little bride,
In mind I beg that thou wilt carry;
And now from out the land I'll ride,
With foreign masters long to tarry."

Sir Axel out of the country hied,
His breast with love and valour glowing.
In cloister they have placed his bride,
Instruction to receive in sewing.

They taught to her the silken scam,
They taught her writing, taught her reading;
Through land and city soon the fame
Of Valborg's virtue goes, and breeding.

The noble ways that she displays
Attract the general admiration,
And though full young she's ranked among
The very sages of the nation.

And there eleven years she stay'd,
Till God had called away her mother;
The Queen to court then took the maid,
Selecting her 'fore every other.

p. 8

Served at the Emperor's court meantime
The knight, with gold his spurs were glaring;
A glittering faulchion decked his side,
And truly knightly was his bearing.

Sir Axel lies in pomp and state
As well beseems so rich a noble;
But he at night no rest can get,
His dreams are full of woe and trouble.

Sir Axel in the chamber high
Doth lie on softest silk and fairest,
But sleep alas has fled his eye,
He's ever thinking of his dearest.

Sir Emmer's child, his Valborg fair,
He dreamt sat drest in costly fashion;
And Hogen, son of the King, by her
Sat softly pleading for his passion.

The morning sun its lustre shed,
The lark's sweet voice on high was ringing;
Sir Axel started from his bed,
His clothes upon him swiftly flinging.

p. 9

He saddled straight his good grey horse,
Within the wood he'll take his pleasure;
His dreams from out his head he'll force
By listening to the wild bird's measure.

When to the wood Sir Axel wan,
Where blushing roses thick were growing;
In foreign garb he met a man

Upon a pilgrimage was going.

“Now pilgrim good a merry morn,
Say, whither, whither art thou faring?
Thou’rt from the land where I was born,
For that thy vestments are declaring.”

“My native land is Norraway,
From Gild’s high race I boast my being;
To Rome’s famed town I’ve vowed to stray,
My mind is bent the Pope on seeing.”

“From Gildish race if thou be sprung,
Then pilgrim thou art my relation;
Has Valborg me from memory flung?
Of her canst give me information?”

“O Valborg is a damsel bright,
There’s few than I should know her better;
Full many a gay and gallant knight
She holds in love’s enchanting fetter.

“So well to me the maid is known,
The mard and sable rich she weareth;
From all the maids at court that wone
The belle, the belle sweet Valborg beareth.

“Upgrown Sir Knight is Valborg now,
A lily she among the daisies;
Amongst our maidens high or low
No fairer ever met my gazes.

“In earth beside her lord beloved
The good Dame Julli now is sleeping;
From cloister Valborg is removed,
The Queen is favours on her heaping.

“With strings of pearls her hair is tied,
Around her wrist red gold there gloweth,
She’s named ‘Sir Axel’s bonnie bride’
By every voice where’er she goeth.

“They called her thy betrothed maid,
Sir Axel, but her friends united
Have hope she will Prince Hogen wed,
And with that hope they are delighted.”

Sir Axel robed himself that day
In the best guise that he was able,
And to the hall he took his way
Where Emperor Henrik sat at table.

“Hail Henrik Emperor mild of heart,
In whose good grace I’ve long been basking,
For home that I may straight depart
The freedom I now take of asking.

“My sire and mother both are dead,
Exposed to foes my lands are lying,
Another my betrothed will wed,
And that’s the call to me most crying.”

“The leave for which thy heart doth yearn
Reluctantly Sir Knight I give thee;
Whene’er it please thee to return
Most gladly I’ll Sir Knight receive thee.”

Away from court Sir Axel rode,
A gallant band attend behind him;
And all that at the Court abode
Unto the care of God consign’d him.

So fast he speeded on his way,
Him followed thrice ten swains so merry;
But when he reached his castellaye
The noble knight was solitary.

Alone he reached his castle good,
His gallant courser panting, snorting:
And there his sister Helfred stood,

p. 10

p. 11

p. 12

Against the gate herself supporting.

"Here standst thou, Helfred, sister dear,
Thou little didst expect my coming;
How doth it with sweet Valborg fare,
That roselet 'mongst the flowers blooming?"

"Dear brother well doth Valborg fare
She all our maids exceeds in honor;
The Queen she tends, who's chosen her
Before them all to wait upon her."

"Now rede me, Helfred, sister fine,
Thy very best advice I'm needing;
How can I speak with maiden mine
Apart removed from mortals heeding?"

"The very best of silk put on,
And clothe thee in thy garments fairest;
And say that thou with her alone
Must speak, for thou my message bearest."

It was Sir Axel Thordson, knight,
As he the hall's high steps ascended,
He met Queen Malfred's damsels bright
From evening song as back they wended.

To Valborg he his snowy hand
Extends, with voice of sweetness saying:
"I come from Helfred fair, thy friend,
A private scroll to thee conveying."

The lovely Valborg op'd in haste
And read with beating heart the letter;
Therein the words of love were trac'd,
No one could have imagined better.

Within it lay five golden rings,
With roses wrought and lilies fairly;
"Sir Axel Thordson sends these things
Who thee betroth'd in childhood early.

"I have thy word to be my bride,
Now prove thou to thy promise steady;
On earth so wide or sea's salt tide
I'll ne'er deceive thee, beauteous lady."

Then to a niche proceeded both,
Obeying thus the wish of heaven;
They vowed an oath when they their troth
Had once more to each other given.

They swore an oath by Mary may,
And eke by Dorothy the sainted,
That in pure honor live would they,
And die in honor pure untainted.

Sir Axel to the King's court rides,
Delighted now beyond all measure;
In the Queen's bower Valborg bides,
And sports and smiles with glee and pleasure.

For five months' tide thus matters stood,
And till nine months had over wended,
Forth stepped eleven counts so good
And fairly for her hand pretended.

Eleven knights of prowess rare
Declared their passion well and fairly;
The twelfth was Hogen, Norway's heir,
And he pursued her late and early.

"Now do thou hear, O Valborg fine,
If thou'lt accept me for thy lover
Thou as my lawful Queen shalt shine,
And Norway's crown thy brows shall cover."

"Now do thou hear, thou King's son high,
Thy noble love I cannot favour,
For I've betrothed in secrecy

Sir Axel, and I'll wrong him never."

O then with wrath the King's son shook,
The maid no longer he entreated;
He smoothed his garb, and him betook
To where his Mother high was seated.

"Hail, hail to thee, dear Mother mine,
What counsel now canst thou award me?
I've long wooed Valborg, damsel fine,
But, ah! she deigns not to regard me.

"I proffered hand, I proffered land,
For the proud maiden's acceptance;
But she loves Axel, and will stand
By him, that was her declaration."

"If Valborg has on him bestowed
Her troth, to keep it is her duty;
There's many a maid in Norway broad,
My son, of noble birth and beauty."

"Ah! yes, of maids there's many a one
Abounding both in wealth and graces;
But ah! so fair as Valborg none,
Or who such virtue bright possesses."

"Thou canst not gain the maid by force,
For that were crying shame and scandal;
Shouldst thou to weapons have recourse
His sword Sir Axel well can handle."

Then Hogen grew so wroth in mood,
And as in wrath he left his mother
Before him his confessor stood,
Was called Canute, the sable brother.

"Why goes my Lord with face of gloom,
And whither, whither is he roving?
If any ill is o'er him come
O let him tell his servant loving."

"Misfortune's come too hard to bear,
Beneath its heavy weight I cower;
Betrothed has Axel Valborg fair,
To gain her is beyond my power."

"Though Axel to the maid aspires
There's matter shall prevent their mating;
Within the house of sable friars
Are papers to their birth relating.

"They're children of relations near,
Of knightly race renowned and stately;
Unto the fountain them did bear
One Dame, she died at Hoiborg lately.

"Relations by the fount to be
They by our cloister's law are rated;
Besides we see in third degree
The knight and damsel are related.

"My Lord must to the Chapter write
To meet upon this grave occasion;
The Damsel shall not wed the knight,
For I'll prevent the abomination."

It was Hogen, son of the King,
His little servant lad directed:
"To me the maiden's uncles bring,
And be my bidding straight effected."

The counts before the wide, wide board
Are standing with respectful bearing:
"Thou'st summoned us, our gracious Lord,
Of your high will we crave the hearing."

"I ask of ye your niece so dear
That she may share my pomp and power;
To rank of Queen I her will rear

If on your prince ye will bestow her."

Then straight the uncles three replied,
With joyous eyes each other viewing:
"O she was born in lucky tide,
A noble prince for her is suing."

Then quickly donned their best array,
Her uncles three, those counts of power;
And they together took their way
To good Queen Malfred's lofty bower.

First Malfred Queen saluted they,
In manner as became them duteous;
And then they greeted Valborg may,
Of all the maiden band most beauteous.

"Success attend thee through thy life,
Thou child of her we loved so tender;
Prince Hogen thee doth woo for wife,
And we to him will thee surrender."

"And have ye promised me for wife?
Now my three gentle uncles mind me,
I love Sir Axel dear as life,
And faithless he shall never find me."

p. 20

Then answered her those counts so bold,
Her uncles three, with fury glaring:
"Ah ne'er shalt thou the promise hold
Which thou to make hast had the daring."

It was Hogen the King's son then
So many letters broad endighted;
With seven times ten of priestly men
The Archbishop he to him invited.

'Twas Master Erland the good and wise
So carefully the brief read over:
"Now shame on him who this device
Did hatch, Canute I here discover."

The Archbishop placed him by the board,
Bowed to the prince his reverend figure:
"Thou'st sent for me, my gracious lord,
To learn thy high commands I'm eager."

"O long have I a maiden woo'd,
And I to wife would gladly take her;
But most for Axel stands her mood,
Abandon him we now must make her."

p. 21

They've writ and caused upon the Ting
Be read so solemn a citation,
Which should the hapless couple bring
Before the priestly congregation.

The matin singing was at end,
The sun its rays so freshly darted:
To church Sir Axel now must wend
With Valborg fair the loving hearted.

Upsprang the knight on steed of height,
With sighs his anguish deep declaring;
In chariot rode the damsel bright,
In bosom locked her sorrow bearing.

First rode the knight on steed of height,
His thoughts so wide and wild were flying;
Next him in coach the damsel bright
Did ride, to veil her sorrow trying.

Then out and spoke proud Valborg fair,
As they the bridge were passing over:
"A glad heart seldom sighs with care,
Though smiles do oft a sad heart cover."

p. 22

They stopped Maria's Church before,
And from their steeds they have descended,
In stepped they through the lofty door,

By knights and noble friends attended.

Midst of the Church's aisle they stay'd,
Their steps the advancing Chapter facing;
All saw they were at heart afraid
Who on that luckless two were gazing.

Advanced with silver staff in hand
The Archbishop then, of reverend carriage;
Behind him all the priestly band
Who should forbid the lovers' marriage.

Then forth Canute the brother trode,
With scrolls of pedigree was laden;
And from those scrolls alack he show'd
That near akin were knight and maiden.

The tree of pedigree was read
By the command of that black brother;
They were akin full clear it made,
And both by lineage of the mother.

Descended of a lineage high
Each to the other stood related,
In third degree their affinity,
So priests the pair have separated.

Two cousins they from Gild's root sprung,
A prodigy of virtue either;
Proud Valborg fair and Axel young
Must never, never come together.

What time they were baptized one Dame
Did bear them to the sacred fountain;
Their Godfather he was the same,
His name Sir Asbiorn of the mountain.

Relations they by birth and blood,
Of Gildish race renowned and dreaded;
Relations they beside in God,
Alas! they never can be wedded.

They led them to the shrine, and placed
A kerchief in their hands which quiver;
Their lineage and line are traced,
And priests are bent their bands to sever.

They 'twixt the two the cloth cut through,
A portion each in hand retaineth;
However great and high his state
There's none that o'er his fortune reigneth.

"The handkerchief is parted now,
Ye have parted us for good and ever,
But whilst with life our breasts shall glow
Our love ye shall dissever never."

The gold ring off her hand to take
And bracelet from her wrist they hastened;
His gifts they gave to Axel back,
The knot of love was now unfastened.

The gold he on the altar threw,
To Olave that he consecrated,
And swore to bide to Valborg true
As long as he to live was fated.

Then wroth grew Hogen son of the King,
Who stood his scarlet garb array'd in:
"Since her from mind thou canst not fling
'Tis clear and plain she is no maiden."

Outspoke of the clerks the wisest wight,
E'en Erland he the good Archdeacon:
"The man who does not know the might
Of love an ignorant man I reckon.

"With water we the fire can quench,
And slake the brand that's fiercely glowing,
But though the flame with floods we drench

p. 23

p. 24

p. 25

The flame of love will yet be growing.

“The sun shines bright on hill and plain,
We sink its scorching fury under,
But ah; love’s chain is harder pain,
And none can break its links asunder.”

Then Axel turned to yonder Lord,
His manly cheek with rage was ruddy:
“To-morrow I’ll rebut thy word
Although it cost me life and body.”

Then forward on the flagstone wide
The prince advanced, inflamed with passion:
“To-morrow thou an oath,” he cried,
“Shalt swear without equivocation.

“Thou on thy sword an oath to me
Shalt swear, and on the brevier holy,
Whether Valborg is a maid for thee
Or whether ye have committed folly.”

“Proud prince, if I must take that oath
I it can do with heart approving;
To fight thee ne’er shalt find me loth
Whilst I this hand have power of moving.”

That night Dame Eskelin in her bed
Was by her lord Sir Hagen sleeping:
“What have I dream’d?” she, starting, said,
“Saint Bridget take me ’neath thy keeping.

“Methought that Julli fair and mild
Beneath the earth who long has rested,
That I would help her hapless child
So mournfully with tears requested.

“I have full seven sons, my lord,
And each has thirty swains so steady,
They to their loins shall bind the sword
And up and help the beauteous lady.

“And thou shalt saddle ten steeds so free
And ride away like gallant noble,
Heading our house’s chivalry
To stand by Valborg in her trouble.

“Full seven sons, my lord, have we,
They all are counts so bold and sprightly;
It is our joy and pride to see
They bear themselves so well and knightly.

“Two cousins I and Julli were—
The peace of God attend upon her!
If I forsake in this affair
Her child ’twill be to our dishonor.”

’Twas early in the morning tide,
Rose o’er the wold the sun in lustre;
Within the Castle’s halls of pride
The knights to swear the oath now muster.

Then up Sir Axel Thordson rose,
And lifted up his arm of power:
“Come, swear with me, of Gildish house
Ye counts of chivalry the flower.”

Then in their sable and mard array
Stepped forward stately knights eleven:
“We’ll with Sir Axel swear to-day,
Betide whatever pleases heaven.”

Down Valborg’s cheek ran tears as fleet
As winter rain when fastest pouring:
“Ah where shall I with friends now meet?
Destruction’s voice for me is roaring.”

Answered her uncles all with speed,
Their voice it made her ears to tingle:
“As thou wast single in the rede,

p. 26

p. 27

p. 28

So in the oath be also single."

Then up and spake Archdeacon Erland,
That speech has broken all his patience:
"Thou hast not many friends at hand,
Poor maid, though plenty of relations.

"Thou of relations hast a store,
But friends thou canst not one discover;
God help thee in this peril sore,
And may thou all thy woes get over."

p. 29

"That sire and mother mine are dead,
I've cause I trow to rue sincerely;
But God, who helpeth all in need,
He sees my innocence full clearly.

"Dame Julli sleeps the slab below,
Sir Emmer lies in earth's embraces,
If they but lived my uncles now
Would scarcely turn from me their faces."

And as she sat with cheek so white
And wrung her hands in piteous taking,
Sir Hagen bold appeared in sight,
With speed towards the castle making.

To Valborg strode he hastily,
Behind him all his knightly party:
"My pretty maid to swear with thee
I come to offer free and hearty.

"Full well loves thee Dame Eskelin,
Who every night doth sleep beside me;
Thy Dame and she were close of kin,
And therefore hither have I hied me.

p. 30

"Step forth my sons, I say the word,
And in the oath be ye partakers;
Ye too, stout sons of Carl, the lord
Of Sondervalley's fertile acres."

Forward eleven warriors trode,
The mard and sable they were wearing,
They all were clad in princely mode,
In tresses each his hair was bearing.

Then forward stepped with dauntless air
Those counts eleven all together;
Their trusty swords were gilded fair,
And gilded was their girdles' leather.

We'll vouch the honour of yonder maid,
And blythe with her the oath embark in;
Ye noble couple forward tread,
And all unto your speech shall hearken."

On the mass book Axel laid his hand,
His good sword holding by the handle;
By his side stood the knightly band,
All eager to refute the scandal.

p. 31

The hilt of his brand within his hand,
The point against a flagstone planted,
With demeanour staid the knight he made
The solemn oath from him was wanted.

"'Tis true I had fair Valborg dear,
I loved none like her under heaven.
But ne'er to her have been so near
A kiss to her I might have given."

Her hand then on the sacred book
The maiden laid with modest bearing:
"Upon Sir Axel's form to look
These eyes had never yet the daring."

They raised a heaven o'er her head,
In dress of gala they installed her;
To the high hall the maid they led,

'The cherished of the king' they called her.

In came Hogen the king's son then,
He spake in high exhilaration:
"O there is neither knight nor swain
Shall leave this night my habitation.

"Proud Valborg, from suspicion freed,
I here declare my bosom's dearie;
And she shall be my Queen with speed,
And on her brows the crown shall carry."

The cloth was spread, and down to board
They sat, the skinkers did their duty;
Sir Axel sat, full many a word
Exchanging with his cherish'd beauty.

"Now list, since here apart we be,
O Valborg, thou, my ravished jewel,
Canst form no plan which possibly
May chase from us love's anguish cruel?"

"Sir Axel though to wed I go
The King, 'tis not from inclination;
Though I live years a thousand, thou
Within my heart wilt hold thy station.

"And I will sit in chamber high,
And I'll embroider cap and kirtle:
I'll pass my time so mournfully
E'en like the gentle widow'd turtle.

"Who on the green bough will not rest
Her legs, with weariness which fraught are,
Nor of the limpid pool will taste
Until her feet have soiled the water.

"But Axel thou ride forth with glee,
The hind and savage roe in quest of;
Each thought of me that comes o'er thee
I pray thou wilt thyself divest of.

"My gallant Lord ride forth with glee,
The nimble hare and leveret follow;
All thoughts of me that rise in thee
I beg thee drown in whoop and hollo."

"Though in the green wood I should ride,
And rouse the savage deer from cover,
What should I do in night's still tide
When sleep comes not my eyelids over?"

"Forsooth my father's broad estate
I'll sell for gold and silver pieces,
And hie to foreign regions straight,
And pine until my life-pulse ceases."

"My Lord sell not the lands so broad
Your fathers won with toil and slaughter,
But seek Sir Asbiorn's high abode,
And ask of him his lovely daughter.

"His daughter Alhed thou shalt wed,
And with her live in pomp and splendour;
I'll stand ye in a mother's stead,
And ever kindly service render."

"O I will wed no damsel bright,
When I can vow not faith unshaking;
The Emperor's daughter I would slight
Since thee my own I've failed in making."

Archdeacon Erland now drew near,
To each a fatherly hand extended:
"Now breathe good-bye, my children dear.
'Tis time that your discourse were ended."

To himself aside the Archdeacon cried,
Was filled with indignation bitter:
"Now shame the black Canute betide,

Of this fond pair the ruthless splitter.

Sir Axel to the lovely maid
Now bids good-night with groans and sighing;
His heart with sorrow down is weigh'd,
Like heart of wretch in fetters lying.

Wends to her chamber Valborg fair,
Her maidens all behind her pacing;
Her heart with anguish and despair
With more than furnace heat was blazing.

Early in the morning tide
The sun began to shine so proudly,
Queen Malfred to her maidens cried
Within her bower oft and loudly.

To work the gold so red of blee
Queen Malfred has her maidens ordered;
But still stood Valborg, still stood she,
Her heart with care was all disordered.

"Now Valborg hear, thou damsel dear,
Why sitt'st thou lonely and dejected?
A joy to thee it sure must be,
Thou art a prince's bride elected."

p. 36

"Much sooner I, O Queen, would wone
With Axel as his mate, much sooner
Than I would wear Norwegia's crown,
Enjoying all the regal honour.

"'Twill profit me in scanty guise
That all are flatteries on me heaping,
If with the water of my eyes
My pallid cheeks I'm daily steeping."

For many a day thus matters stood,
For many a day till months were ended;
Sir Axel and his damsel good
Their sports and laughs have all suspended.

Then war, fierce war, drew near that clime,
The foes they were in force alarming;
For Hogen, son of the King, 'tis time
To rise and 'gainst his foes be arming.

He summoned his good banner round
All, all his men both clerks and laity;
To the heart of Axel, knight renown'd,
The call to arms brought sudden gaiety.

p. 37

It was Hogen the King's son bold
Unto the field of battle wended,
And every one who brand could hold
His sovereign to the field attended.

Each man in the land could bear a blade
To fight the foe with him has wended;
Sir Axel he his captain made,
He knew that much on him depended.

Wide o'er the field shone Axel's shield,
That shield which was of white and azure;
Two hearts there stood, both red with blood,
For fame he'll risk his life with pleasure.

Then soon they saw upon the plain
In glittering ranks outspread their foemen;
To fight with men was the question then,
I ween, and not to dance with women.

Sir Axel on that dreadful day
For country fought in manner fitting;
Before him knights in steel array
Are fast their gilded saddles quitting.

p. 38

He slew so many of noble race,
And trampled them his warhorse under;
Not one, not e'en of highest place,

Was spared by Axel's hand of thunder.

He slew the lords of Oppeland,
Upon gigantic coursers mounted;
King Aumund's sons, a stalwart band,
He slew, who manfully him confronted.

Like hay, which in the loft up fling
The boors, the yard-long shafts are flying;
There wounded lies the son of the king,
Upon the earth is Hogen dying.

And when from steed the King's son fell,
O there was none that hasted faster
Than the good knight redoubtable,
Axel, to aid his luckless master.

"Hear, Axel Thordson," Hogen said,
"Avenge my death in gallant fashion,
And thou shalt Norway rule, and wed
The maid we loved with rival passion."

"O I'll revenge, my Lord, thy death,
Or I will do my best endeavour,
For dread of this poor body's scathe,
While life shall last I'll falter never."

Now speed, his eyeballs gleaming wrath,
Sir Axel 'mongst the hostile forces,
And all the foes that crossed his path
To earth are smitten bleeding corses.

Then fell the mighty on the plain
Like corn which hand of peasant reapeth;
Sir Axel, young and noble swain,
In all his woes a stout heart keepeth.

So long and well he him did guard
That piecemeal lay his armour scattered;
And still fought hard that stalwart lord
Until his beamy shield was shattered.

Still he defended himself full brave,
Inspiring all with fear and wonder;
Yes even 'till his trusty glaive
At the gold hilt was snapped asunder.

With eighteen wounds, each dire to view,
The noble breast of Axel smarted;
To his tent bore him his friends so true,
At his sad fortune broken-hearted.

Down ran his blood in reeking flood,
He for the victory won has perished;
The last, last word his lips proffer'd
Devotes he to his maiden cherished.

"To Valborg bid a kind adieu,
To Christ's high care I now bequeath her;
We soon shall meet in yonder blue
Were we in joy shall live together."

Enters the hall the little page,
And takes his stand before the table;
'Tis true he was of tender age,
But well to ply his words was able.

"Doff the red silk and don the white,
Ye maids, I've news of sore disaster;
Hogen the prince is slain in fight,
And Axel, too, my gallant master.

"In fight Sir Hogen the King's son fell,
Upon the bier now lies his body;
My master him avenged full well,
But got thereby his death wound bloody.

"'Tis true we've won a victory,
But tempered is our exultation;
We have lost a host of peasantry

p. 39

p. 40

p. 41

And all the best knights of our nation."

How fair Queen Malfred wept that tide
Each mother's heart can form a notion;
The fair Valborg in secret sigh'd,
And wrung her hands in wild emotion.

She calls her servitor in haste,
And him with tears is thus commanding:
"Now fetch ye down the gilded chest
From the high chamber where 'tis standing.

"And the grey horse to the chariot set,
Me to the cloister it shall carry;
Sir Axel's death I'll ne'er forget
So long as on the earth I tarry."

Before Maria's high church door
From out the chariot she alighted;
So sadly on the Church's floor
She stepped, her every joy was blighted.

She took the gold crown from her brow,
And gently that gold crown she laid on
A stone: "I'll have no husband now,"
She sighed, "but die a spotless maiden.

"I twice have been a plighted may,
But wedded bride I could be never:
From henceforth in this abbey grey
From the bleak world myself I'll sever."

Forward her chest adorned with gold
They brought, wherein her treasure's warded;
The treasure 'mongst her friends she dol'd,
Amongst those friends she most regarded.

First she took out a necklace fine,
Hung round with ornaments of splendor;
And that she gave to Eskeline,
The Dame who showed her love so tender.

The big arm-band and bracelet broad
Then taking from the gilded coffer,
On bold Sir Hagen she bestow'd,
To swear with her who made the offer.

A hundred golden rings so sheen,
With silver and with gold no little,
She gave the counts of handsome mien
Who swore the oath was her acquittal.

To church she gave, to cloister gave,
Her bounty priest and prelate booted;
And for the soul of Axel brave
She daily masses instituted.

She gave to orphans, and the clan
Who rove with hunger's pangs tormented;
Unto the image of Saint Ann
A red gold crown she has presented.

"Now Bishop with the earth so black
Do thou effect my consecration;
And when a nun let me not lack
Thy mild paternal consolation.

"Come Aage, dear Archbishop, come,
Do thou the Lord's devoted make me;
This blessed place shall be my home
Till out a lifeless corse they take me."

There were so many warriors bold
Whose hearts were all with sorrow laden,
When they saw cast the dingy mould
O'er Valborg's arm, the lovely maiden.

Now Valborg in that abbey grey
Doth go, its utmost strictness bearing;
From no mass will she keep away,

In every matin song she's sharing.

Of maids and dames there's every year
Full many a one to cloister given;
But none so fair as Valborg dear,
Whose equal lives not under heaven.

'Tis better ne'er to breathe the air
Than pine for ever on in sadness;
Each day to eat one's bread with care,
And ne'er enjoy a moment's gladness.

To them repentance God impart,
By whose vile means are those divided,
Who have each other dear at heart,
And whose love is by honor guided.

* * * * *

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Printed for THOMAS J. WISE, Hampstead, N.W.
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BALLAD ***

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