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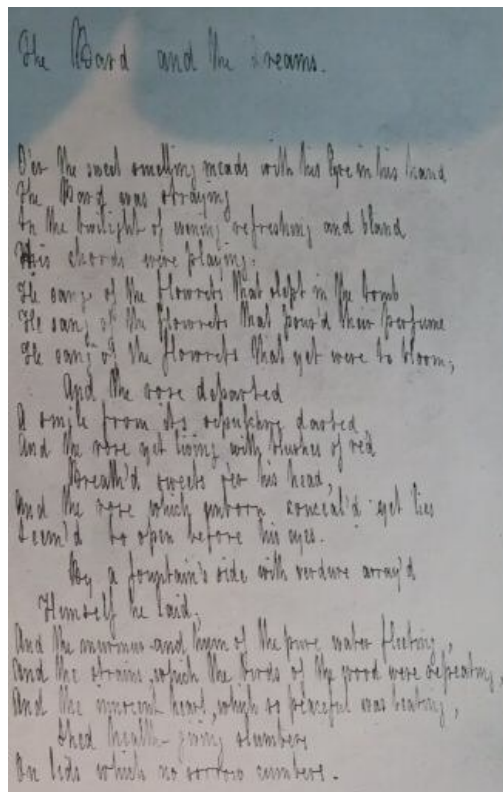
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK QUEEN BERNGERD, THE BARD AND THE DREAMS, AND OTHER BALLADS ***

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**QUEEN BERNGERD
THE BARD AND THE DREAMS
AND
OTHER BALLADS**

BY
GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
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1913

QUEEN BERNGERD

p. 7

Long ere the Sun the heaven arrayed,
For her morning gift her Lord she prayed:
"Give me Samsøe to have and to hold,
And from every maiden a crown of gold."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The King he answered Berngerd thus:
"Madam, crave something less of us,
For many a maid lives 'neath our sway
To 'scape from death could the like not pay."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"My gentle Lord, then hear my prayer,
Suffer not ladies the scarlet to wear;
And, Sir, you must grant me this boon beside,
Let no boor's son a good courser ride."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"What ladies can buy to wear they are free,
And hindrance none they shall meet from me;
If the son of a Boor can a horse support,
'Fore God, I'll never destroy his sport!"
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

p. 8

"My Lord, we'll that matter let drop to the ground;
With chains of steel let the land be bound,
So that man or woman thereout or therein
Withouten toll cannot hope to win."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"How should we so much steel obtain,
As to bind therewith the land and main?
O Madam! some mercy and kindness shew,
Or expect the curse of the people now."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"To Ribe, to winter there, we'll depart,
There smiths we shall find well skilled in their art;
Both locks and keys will we have made,
And toen and iron palisade."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

p. 9

"Faggot and coal shall the boor give free,
The smith shall work without thanks or fee.
My Lord, be persuaded, I rede ye do,
Much benefit thence shall to thee accrue."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"My father was King in the land before me,
And a King for his father also had he;
The Kings of the Danes to live contrive
Without Boor and Burger skinning alive."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"Sir, what would a peasant more
Than a latticed window and wicker door?
What shall a peasant keep in his stall
Save one draught ox and a cow withall?
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

"Each peasant's wife of a son made light
Shall give me an ounce of gold so bright;
But if to a daughter birth she give,
Only the half I'm content to receive."
Woe befall her, Berngerd.

p. 10

The King he turned on his other side,
He'd heard enough to suffice for that tide.
As soon as sleep his brow came o'er,
Dagmar he thought stood his face before.

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

“The bitter flower, Sir King, you hold,
Brings you trouble, as I foretold.
Be sure if this year you seek the fray,
You suffer not Berngerd at home to stay.

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

“If she with her flatteries blind your eyes,
The child will weep in the cradle that lies.
Take her with you, I rede and beseech,
How that will boot you time will teach.”

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The King has proclaimed through the whole country,
To the war with him each tenth man should hie.

“My dearest Lady, worthy thou art
In the field of honour to bear a part.”

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

The first shaft shot on the battle day
To the heart of Berngerd found its way;
No soul was seen with a tearful eye—
Who for Berngerd would sorrow or sigh?

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

Now lies Berngerd in the cold black ground,
Oxen are still in the Boor’s stall found.
Berngerd she lies ’neath the dingy sward,
The Danes their Monarch love and regard.

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

Now Berngerd lies in eternal pains,
The boor his horse and cow retains.
A name she left of such evil savour,
So little the poor man did she favour.

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

’Tis better to live in humble state,
Than rich with a poor man’s curse and hate;
After virtue better to ceaseless strain
Than the wealth of the world with scorn obtain.

Woe befall her, Berngerd.

p. 11

p. 12

DAME MARTHA’S FOUNTAIN

p. 13

Dame Martha dwelt at Karisegaard,
So many kind deeds she wrought:
If the winter were sharp and the rich man hard,
Her gate the indigent sought.

With her hand the hungry she loved to feed,
To the sick she lent her aid;
The prisoner oft from his chains she freed,
And for souls of sinners pray’d.

Denmark’s land was in peril dire,
The Swede around burnt and slew;
The castle of Martha was wrapped in fire,
To the church the good lady flew.

She dwelt in the tower both night and day,
There unto her none repaired;
’Neath the church roof sat the dull owl gray,
And at the good lady stared.

p. 14

In the house of the Lord she dwelt safe and content
’Till the foes their departure had ta’en;
Then back to her ruined castle she went,
And bade it be builded again.

There found the houseless a cover once more,
And the mouths of the hungry bread;
But all in Karise-By ^[14] wept sore
When they knew Dame Martha dead.

And when the Dame lay in her coffin and smil'd,
So calm with her pallid face,
O there was never so little a child
But was brought on her to gaze.

The bell on the day of the burial toll'd,
And youth and age shed the tear;
No man was ever so weak or old
But helped to lift the bier.

When they the bier set down for a space,
And rested upon the road,
A fountain sprang forth in that very place,
To this hour has it flow'd.

God bless for ever the pious soul,
Her blessings no lips can tell;
For oft have the sick become sound and whole,
Who drank at Dame Martha's well!

The tower yet stands with gloomy nook,
Where Dame Martha sat of old;
The stranger comes thereon to look,
And to hear the story told.

p. 15

THE BARD AND THE DREAMS

p. 16

O'er the sweet smelling meads with his lyre in his hand
The bard was straying;
In the twilight of evening, refreshing and bland,
His chords were playing.
He sang of the flowrets that slept in the tomb,
He sang of the flowrets that poured their perfume,
He sang of the flowrets that yet were to bloom.

And the rose departed,
A smile from its sepulchre darted;
And the rose yet living with blushes of red
Breathed sweets o'er his head.
And the rose which unborn concealed yet lies,
Seemed to open before his eyes.
By a fountain's side with verdure array'd
Himself he laid.

And the murmur and hum of the pure water fleeting,
And the strains, which the birds of the wood were repeating,
And the innocent heart, which so peaceful was beating,
Shed health-giving slumbers,
On lids which no sorrow cumbered.

p. 17

In the visions of sleep there came to his side
A sire with locks snow-hoary;
And the songster sped with that sire for his guide
To an unknown territory.

On ruins majestic himself he found,
The mouldering bones of old heroes lay round;
Their ghosts awaking
Rose from their graves wild gestures making.
The youth was quaking—
But the old man smiled as his mind he led
To the kempion times long fled.

Then a lamp in the night's deep silence shone
Through the dingy mould,
And under the masses of fallen stone
There glittered gold.

p. 18

To the harp then pointing the sage disappears,
And the youth shed tears.
"Yes, yes, the young bard thy countenance knows,"
So sang in wild passion the boy—
"Not in vain in my bosom a holy fire glows,
Not in vain thy bright lamp the grave's mystery shews,
The bard will obey thee with joy."

Again there appeared in the dreams of the stripling
A being who held him intent;
It came as in flood come the high billows rippling,
Like billows when ebbing it went.

Though the look of an aged and slow female wearing,
It ran like the breezes in spring time careering,
Full often it vanished with threatening bearing.
But suddenly caught he the fugitive wild,
And then by his breast a maiden smil'd.
"Thee often I've met on life's journey," he said,
"And when like a meteor thou past me hast sped,
I've seen thee look backward—and threaten.

"O! kiss me, sweet maiden, ere on thou dost stray,
I've seen thee with flowers strew the wanderer's way.
They lived in their brightness,
When thou in this lightness,
Had'st fled farthest off; and sometimes they became
A Bauta-stone over the worm-wasted frame.

"Vouchsafe me a smile," said the youth, "I entreat,
I know thy course lightning-fleet.
Thy light pinions ever
Thou pliest, sweet giver
Of palms, verdant palms, to the stripling so clever,
Who caught thee, though lightning fleet."

Again to his eye a fair vision was given,
A being angelical stood in the heaven.
In morn's fresh rose-hues drest
Stood the spirit blest.
As shines from above
The starlet of love
So kindled his glance toward earth's gentle child.
As the maid to her beckons the youth she loves dearly,
When vespers are chiming and Luna shines clearly,
So toward him beckoned the Angel, and smil'd.

With rapture the songster took thither his way,
Where the winged one of heaven stood beauteous and gay.
But, just as he hoped that the height was surmounted,
Far distant again they each other confronted.
And still the Angel beckoned there,
But—never, never near.
"My seraph! wilt ever avoid my embrace?"
—Said the songster with mortified mien—
"But though I'm unable to climb to thy place,
My eye thou hast blest from the mansions of grace,
And thy heaven, thou distant, I've seen."

His slumber departed, his visions they fled,
But oft when he harped they came into his head.
"Blest, trebly blest, may our life be regarded,
Far unto me hear threefold life is awarded.

"See the roselet departed,
A smile from its tomb has darted.
And the rose, which yet lives in blushes and bloom,
Breathes o'er me perfume.
Yes, from its concealment, the unborn rose
Before me seems to uncloset."

KING OLUF THE SAINT

King Oluf and his brother bold,
'Bout Norroway's rocks a parley hold.
(*So sweet in Drontheim 'tis to dwell!*)

"The one of us two who best can sail,
Shall rule o'er Norroway's hill and dale.

"Who first of us reaches our native ground,
O'er all the region shall King be crown'd."

Then Harald Haardrode answer made:

"Aye, let it be even as thou hast said.

"But if I to-day must sail with thee,
Thou shalt change vessels, I swear, with me.

"For thou hast got the Dragon of speed,
I shall make with the Ox a poor figure indeed.

"The dragon is swift as the clouds in chase,
The ox he moveth at lazy pace."

p. 24

"Hear, Harald, what I shall say to thee,
What thou hast proposed well pleaseth me.

"If my ship in aught be better than thine,
I'm readily, cheerfully lend thee mine.

"Do thou the Dragon so sprightly take,
And I with the Ox will the journey make.

"But first to the Church we'll bend our way,
Ere our hand on sail or on oar we lay."

And into the Church Saint Oluf trode,
His beautiful hair like the bright gold glow'd.

But soon out of breath there came a man:
"Thy brother is sailing off, fast as he can."

"Let them sail, my friend, who to sail may choose,
The word of our Lord we will not lose,

"The Mass is the word of our blessed Lord.
Take water, ye swains, for our table board.

p. 25

"We will sit at board, and the bread we will taste,
Then unto the sea-shore will we haste."

Now down they all sped to the ocean strand,
Where the Ox lay rocking before the land.

And speedily they to the ocean bore
The anchor, and cable, the sail and oar.

Saint Oluf he stood on the prow when on board:
"Now forward, thou Ox, in the name of the Lord!"

He grappled the Ox by the horn so white:
"Hie now as if thou went clover to bite!"

Then forward the Ox began to hie,
In his wake roll'd the billows boisterously.

He halloed to the lad on the yard so high:
"Do we the Dragon of Harald draw nigh?"

"No more of the pomps of the world I see,
Than the uppermost top of the good oak tree.

p. 26

"I see, 'neath the land of Norroway, skim
Bright silken sails with a golden rim.

"I see, 'neath Norroway's mountains proud,
The Dragon bearing of sail a cloud.

"I see, I see, by Norroway's side,
The Dragon gallantly forward stride!"

On the ribs of the Ox a blow he gave:
"Now faster, faster, over the wave!"

He struck the Ox on the eye with force:
"To the haven much speedier thou must course!"

Then forward the Ox began to leap,
No sailor on deck his stand could keep.

Then cords he took, and his mariners fast
He tied to the vessel's sheets and mast.

'Twas then, 'twas then, the steersman cried:
"But who shall now the vessel guide?"

His white gloves off Saint Oluf throws,

p. 27

And he himself to the rudder goes.

“O we will sail o’er cliff and height,
The nearest way like a line of light.”

So o’er the hills and dales they career,
To them they became like water clear.

They sailed along o’er the mountains blue,
Then out came running the Elfin crew.

“Who sails o’er the gold in which we joy?
Our ancient father who dares annoy?”

“Elf, turn to stone and a stone remain,
Till I by this path return again!”

So they sailed o’er Skaaney’s mountains tall,
And stones became the little elves all.

Out came a Carline, with spindle and rok:
“Saint Oluf! why sailest thou us to mock?”

“Saint Oluf, thou who the red beard hast,
Through my chamber wall thy ship hath passed.”

With a glance of scorn did Saint Oluf say:
“Stand there a flint rock for ever and aye!”

Unchided, unhindered, they bravely sailed on,
Before them yielded both stock and stone.

Still onward they sailed in such gallant guise,
That no man upon them could fix his eyes.

Saint Oluf a bow before his knee bent,
Behind the sail dropped the shaft he sent.

From the prow Saint Oluf a barb shot free,
Behind the Ox fell the shaft in the sea.

Saint Oluf he trusted In Christ alone,
And therefore home by three days he won.

That made Harald with fury storm,
Of a laidly dragon he took the form.

But the Saint was a man of devotion full,
And the Saint gat Norroway’s land to rule.

Into the Church Saint Oluf strode,
He thanked the Saviour in fervent mode.

Saint Oluf walked the Church about,
There shone a glory his ringlets out.

Whom God doth help makes bravely his way,
His enemies win but shame and dismay.

p. 28

p. 29

TO SCRIBBLERS [30]

p. 30

Would it not be more dignified
To run up debts on every side,
And then to pay your debts refuse,
Than write for rascally Reviews?
And lectures give to great and small,
In pothouse, theatre, and town-hall,
Wearing your brains by night and day
To win the means to pay your way?
I vow by him who reigns in [hell],
It would be more respectable!

TO A CONCEITED WOMAN

p. 31

Be still, be still, and speak not back again.
What right have you to answer in this strain?
Whilst I'm a man, a prince of the creation,
You're but a female woman by your station;
A creature for man's sovereign service born,
Whose fitting wages are contempt and scorn.
A creature formed to dive down in the sea
To fetch up sea-eggs for the likes of me;
Only too grateful, when we've stilled our greed,
If on our leavings you're allowed to feed.
If thus I speak, I speak on public grounds,
My only aim is to keep well in bounds.

* * * * *

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p. 32

Footnotes:

[14] Karise-By = Karise Village.

[30] Composed upon the occasion of the refusal by Lockhart to insert, in *The Quarterly Review*, Borrow's Essay suggested by Ford's *Hand-book for Travellers in Spain*, 1845, in the unmutated and unamended form in which the author had written it.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK QUEEN BERNGERD, THE BARD AND THE DREAMS, AND OTHER BALLADS ***

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