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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CHILD MAIDELVOLD, AND OTHER
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CHILD MAIDELVOLD AND OTHER BALLADS

BY
GEORGE BORROW

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CHILD MAIDELVOLD.

p. 5

The fair Sidselil, of all maidens the flower,
With her mother the Queen sat at work in her bower.

So hard at the woof the fair Sidselil plies,
That out from her bosom, so white, the milk flies.

“Now hear thou, O Sidselil, child of my heart,
What causes the milk from thy bosom to start?”

“O that is not milk, my dear mother, I vow,
It is but the mead I was drinking just now.”

“Unlike are the two, most unlike to the sight,
The one it is brown, and the other is white.”

“I see it is best that the truth be declared,
The handsome Child Maidelvold me has ensnared.”

“And if it be truth what thou now hast declared,
And handsome Child Maidelvold thee has ensnared,

“Aloft on the gallows I’ll hang him, I trow,
And burn thee to ashes the gallows below.”

Proud Sidselil she her blue mantle puts on,
And unto Child Maidelvold’s bower she is gone.

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With her fingers so tapering she twirled at the pin:
"Child Maidelvold rise, and with speed let me in."

"I've summoned no one the tribunal before,
And at night to no one will I open my door."

"Child Maidelvold rise, I beseech, in Christ's name,
I've spoke to my mother who knows of my shame.

"Aloft on the gallows she'll hang thee, I trow,
And burn me to ashes the gallows below."

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"O I will not hang, my sweet maiden, for thee
And thou shalt not burn, my sweet maiden, for me.

"Collect thou thy gold in the coffer with speed,
And I'll to the stable and saddle my steed."

He flung round the maiden his mantle so wide,
And he lifted her up on his courser of pride.

They came to the wood of the briar and rose,
There Sidselil craved for a while to repose.

"Now art thou fatigued by thy journey, sweet love,
Or say, does the saddle too close for thee prove?"

"I am not o'ercome by the journey, sweet love,
But the saddle too close for my burden doth prove."

He spread on the cold earth his mantle so wide:
"Here rest thee a space and I'll watch by thy side."

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"O Jesus, that one of my maidens were near,
The pains of a mother are on me I fear."

"Thy maidens are now at a distance from thee,
And thou hast no one to assist thee but me."

"'Twere better to perish again and again,
Than thou should'st stand by me and gaze on my pain."

"Then take off thy kerchief and cover my head,
And perhaps I may stand in the wise woman's stead."

"One draught of pure water could'st thou bring me now,
To cheer up my heart that is sinking so low?"

So faithful to her was the Child, and so true,
He fetched her the drink in her gold spangled shoe.

Child Maidelvold sped through the forest so black,
He went to the fountain the wearisome track.

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And when he arrived at the fount in the vale,
Two nightingales sat there and sang him their tale:

"Dead Sidselil lieth beneath the green bough,
With two little babes on her bosom of snow."

He paid little heed to the nightingales' lay,
And traced through the forest his wearisome way.

But, ah! what a spectacle burst on his view,
The little birds' story he found to be true.

A grave broad and deep has Child Maidelvold made,
Therein the unfortunate three he has laid.

As o'er them he clamped the mould down with his boot,
He thought that the babies screamed under his foot.

Against a grey stone has the Child set his sword,
The point of the blade his heart mortally gor'd.

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He was true to his Sidselil whilst he had breath,
He lies 'neath the earth now beside her in death.

*** Another, but widely different, version of this Ballad was printed in *Romantic Ballads*, 1826, pp. 28-31, under the title *Sir Middel*. In this version the name of the heroine is Swanelil, in place of Sidselil; and that of the hero is Sir Middel, in place of Child Maidelvold.

Sir Peter and Kirstin they sat by the board,
Betwixt them in jest there passed many a word.

“Now listen to me, good Sir Peter the knight,
Say, when wilt thou me to thy bridal invite?”

“’Twill be held in a far distant country, I trow,
So far that to come quite unable art thou.”

“And though thou shouldst hold it, Sir Peter, in Rome,
If thou shouldst invite me I’d certainly come.”

“And if at my bridals thou wish to appear,
Behind thou must leave all thy red golden gear.”

“In my red golden gear I will ever go dight,
For it was not gained by dishonor, Sir Knight.”

Sir Peter he bids them his bridals get ready,
Cries Kirstin: “Now shoe ye my palfrey so steady.”

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Fair Kirstin she saddles her courser so gray,
To the house of Sir Peter she taketh her way.

She rides her horse into Sir Peter’s court yard,
And there stood the knight, clad in sable and mard.

“Now hear thou, Sir Peter, so handsome and fine,
Say, may I this day skink before thee the wine?”

“To skink wine before me if thee I permit,
Thou on the stone bench with the servants shalt sit.”

Adown her cheeks trickled the tear-drops so free—
How hard by each mortal insulted to be!

To the high and wide hall good Sir Peter proceeds,
Fair Kirstin behind him in rich scarlet weeds.

A coronet glittered her temples upon,
And full of gold rings were her fingers, each one.

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When into the hall little Kirstin she came,
Uprose to receive her each maiden and dame.

She took in her fair hand the white silver can,
To skink mead before the young knight she began.

The youthful bride said to her servant: “Canst tell
The name of that skinker, that sweet demoiselle?”

Then answered the servant, as low as she might:
“’Tis only Sir Peter his love-lady light.”

“And if he possessed such a leman, why rode
Sir Peter the knight to my father’s abode?”

“And had good Sir Peter a leman so brave,
O why did he me of my father e’er crave.”

“More gold she displays on her ten fingers small,
Than my father could show in his good castle all.”

Now o’er was the supper, the laugh and the song,
To retire to her bed the young bride she doth long.

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With the bride to the bridal apartment they go,
Fair Kirstin in front bears the yellow flambeau.

The bride in the soft bridal couch they have plac’d,
To come to her arms good Sir Peter made haste.

INGEFRED AND GUDRUNE.

Ingefred and Gudrunne they sate in their bower,

Each bloomed a beauteous fragrant flower—
So sweet it is in summer tide!

A working the gold fair Ingefred kept,
Still sate Gudrune, and bitterly wept.

“Dear sister Gudrune so fain I’d know
Why down thy cheek the salt tears flow?”

“Cause enough have I to be thus forlorn,
With a load of sorrow my heart is worn.

“Hear, Ingefred, hear what I say to thee,
Wilt thou to-night stand bride for me?”

“If bride for me thou wilt stand to-night,
I’ll give thee my bridal clothes thee to requite.

“And more, much more to thee I’ll give,
All my bride jewels thou shalt receive.”

“O I will not stand for bride in thy room,
Save I also obtain thy merry bridegroom.”

“Betide me whatever the Lord ordain
From me my bridegroom thou never shalt gain.”

In silks so costly the bride they arrayed,
And unto the kirk the bride they conveyed.

In golden cloth weed the holy priest stands,
He joins of Gudrune and Samsing the hands.

O’er the downs and green grass meadows they sped,
Where the herdsman watched his herd as it fed.

“Of thy beauteous self, dear Damsel, take heed,
Ne’er enter the house of Sir Samsing, I rede.

“Sir Samsing possesses two nightingales
Who tell of the Ladies such wondrous tales.

“With their voices of harmony they can declare
Whether maiden or none has fallen to his share.”

The chariot they stopped in the green wood shade,
An exchange ’twixt them of their clothes they made.

They change of their dress whatever they please,
Their faces they cannot exchange with like ease.

To Sir Samsing’s house the bride they conveyed,
Of the ruddy gold no spare was made.

On the bridal throne the bride they plac’d,
They skinked the mead for the bride to taste.

Then said from his place the court buffoon,
“Methinks thou art Ingefred not Gudrune.”

From off her hand a gold ring she took,
Which she gave the buffoon with entreating look.

Said he: “I’m an oaf and have drunk too hard,
To words of mine pay no regard.”

’Twas deep at night, and down fell the mist,
To her bed the young bride they assist.

Sir Samsing spoke to his nightingales twain:
“Before my young bride sing now a strain.

“A song now sing which shall avouch
Whether I’ve a maiden or none in my couch.”

“A maid’s in the bed, that’s certain and sure,
Gudrune is standing yet on the floor.”

“Proud Ingefred straight from my couch retire!
Gudrune come hither, or dread my ire!

“Now tell me, Gudrune, with open heart,
What made thee from thy bed depart?”

“My father, alas! dwelt near the strand,

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When war and bloodshed filled the land.

"Full eight there were broke into my bower,
One only ravished my virgin flower."

Upon her fair cheek he gave a kiss:
"My dearest, my dearest, all sorrow dismiss;

"My swains they were that broke into thy bower,
'Twas I that gathered thy virgin flower."

Fair Ingefred gained, because bride she had been,
One of the King's knights of handsome mien.

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SIR RIBOLT.

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Ribolt the son of a Count was he—
Gulborg he courted in secrecy.

Since she was a child the maid he woo'd,
And till she had come to womanhood.

"Gulborg do thou become my bride,
In a better land than thou shalt reside.

"Unto the land I thee will bear,
Where grief ne'er comes the mind to tear.

"To an island 'neath a blissful sky,
Where thou shalt live and never die."

"To the land thou never me wilt bear,
But grief shall come the mind to tear.

"Nor me to the isle wilt thou convey
Where I've no death to the Lord to pay."

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"O there no grass but the leek up-springs,
And there no bird but the cuckoo sings.

"No other water flows than wine,
Thou may'st believe these words of mine."

"But how from the Castle can I fly?
So many watch incessantly.

"I'm watched by father, watched by mother,
By sister I am watched, and brother.

"I'm watched by the man to whom I'm plighted,
And I fear him more than the rest united."

"Although by all thy clan controll'd,
Thy promise to me thou yet shall hold.

"In my acton blue I thee will case,
And my golden helm on thy head I'll place.

"I'll gird thee with my sword of worth,
Then none will think that a maid rides forth.

"Decked with my gilded spurs so free,
Thou off may'st ride though thy father see."

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O'er her he threw his mantle wide,
And set her upon his steed of pride.

When on the moor themselves they found,
Met them a Count, in arms renown'd.

"Here, Ribolt, hear, dear comrade mine,
Say, who's that fair young page of thine?"

"Comrade, it is my youngest brother,
I've ta'en him from his doting mother."

"It little avails such tales to tell;
Gulborg, Gulborg, I know thee well.

"Thy scarlet dress thou may'st disguise,

But thy cheeks of rose I recognise.

"Thy hair I know of fairest sort,
For long I've served at thy father's court.

"By thy garb and shoon I know thee not,
But I know the knight who thy troth has got."

A bracelet drew she forth of gold,
And gave it to that Count so bold:

"Where'er thou rest thee at close of day,
Be sure no word of me thou say."

The Count he rode to Kulloe house,
Where the kempes were drinking a deep carouse.

He enter'd at Sir Truid's gate—
At his table wide Sir Truid sate.

"Here, Truid, thou sitt'st the red wine taking,
Whilst Ribolt off with thy bride is making."

Then through his hall Sir Truid roar'd:
"Up, up, ye knights, take helm and sward!"

Barely a mile had they advanced
When fair Gulborg behind her glanced.

"O yonder my father's steed I see,
And the knight who is betrothed to me."

"Gulborg, be therefore in no pain,
But hold our steeds by the bridle rein.

"And though to earth thou see me fall,
Gulborg thou must not upon me call.

"And though thou see me freely bleed,
Let not my name from thy mouth proceed."

His helm on his head Sir Ribolt cast,
Gulborg with her fair hands laced it fast.

Then, crying his cry, he slays outright
Her father dear and her plighted knight,

And, at the second "Halloo," he slew
Her brothers with locks of yellow hue.

"Desist, O Ribolt, my heart's ador'd,
'Tis time, 'tis time to sheath thy sword.

"My youngest brother I pray thee spare,
That he to my mother may tidings bear;

"Bear her the tidings of the slaughter,
O would she never had borne a daughter!"

Scarce had the name of Ribolt sounded,
When Ribolt tottered, deadly wounded.

He sheathed his faulchion, blood be-dyed:
"Come, dear Gulborg, we hence will ride."

They thread the mazes of the wood,
No word escaped him, bad or good.

"Hear, Ribolt, hear, my destined mate,
Why art not glad as thou wast of late?"

"Gulborg, I feel my life-blood leak,
Gulborg, I feel me faint and weak.

"But chiefly, chiefly I look not pleas'd
Because Death's hand my heart has seiz'd."

"Myself of my girdle I'll dis-array,
And thy streaming blood will stanch and stay."

"God bless thee ever, my own true love,
Of service slight will thy girdle prove."

And when to the Castle gate they won,
His mother stood there and leaned thereon.

“Welcome, my son, thou art welcome twice,
And thy fair young bride she is welcome thrice.

“I ne’er have seen a bride so pale
Come travelling over hill and dale.”

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“If pale she be is a wonder slight,
When she has witness’d so hard a fight.

“God grant I may retain my breath
Whilst parting presents I bequeath.

“To my father I give my courser tall,
O mother I pray thee a priest to call.

“And unto my brother, who’s standing near,
I give Gulborg whom I love so dear.”

“O willingly her to wife I’d take,
If, brother, ’twere not for the black sin’s sake.”

“May the Lord God me in my trouble aid,
So sure as she is for me a maid.

“’Twas only once that I had the bliss
From her rosy mouth to snatch a kiss.”

“O better, better to sink in death,
Than unto two brothers plight my faith.”

Ribolt was dead ere the cock did cry,
Gulborg was dead ere the sun was high.

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They bore from the Castle corses three,
A handsome corse was each to see.

The one was Ribolt, the other his bride,
His mother the third, of grief she died.

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