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Title: Ellen of Villenskov, and Other Ballads

Editor: Thomas James Wise

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Release date: May 12, 2009 [eBook #28772]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ELLEN OF VILLENSKOV, AND OTHER
BALLADS ***

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
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ELLEN OF VILLENSKOV AND OTHER BALLADS

BY
GEORGE BORROW

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1913

ELLEN OF VILLENSKOV.

p. 5

There lies a wold in Vester Haf,
There builds a boor his hold;
And thither he carries hawk and hound,
He'll stay through winter's cold.

He takes with him both hound and cock,
He means there long to stay;
The wild deer in the wood that are
For his arrival pay.

He hews the oak and poplar tall,
He fells the good beech tree;
Then fill'd was the laidly Troid with spite
That he should make so free.

He hews him posts, he hews him balks,
He early toils and late;
Out spake the Trolds within the hill:
"Who knocks at such a rate?"

Then up and spake the youngest Troid,
As emmet small to view:
"O here is come a Christian man,
But verily he shall rue."

Upstood the smallest of the Trolds,
And round he roll'd his eyes:
"O we will hie to the yeoman's house,

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And o'er him hold assize.

"He hews away our sheltering wood,
Meanwhile shall we be tame?
No! I from him his wife will take,
And make him suffer shame."

All the Trolds in the hill that were
Wild for the fray upbound;
They hie away to the yeoman's house,
Their tails all curling round.

Seven and a hundred were the Trolds,
Their laidliness was great;
To the yeoman's house they'll go as guests,
With him to drink and eat.

The hound is yelling in the yard,
The herdsman blows his horn;
Crows the cock and clucks the hen
As the yeoman throws them corn.

Of Villenskov the yeoman saw
The Trolds the window through:
"Now help me Jesu, Mary's son,
Those trolds have me in view."

He sign'd the cross in every nook,
But mostly in his room;
Some of the Trolds in fright thereat
Flew to the forest's gloom.

Some flew east, and some flew west,
And some flew north away;
And others flew to the valleys deep,
Where still, I trow, they stay.

But ah! the smallest of the Trolds
Bold enter'd at the door;
For crossing he refus'd to flee,
Was bent on mischief sore.

The housewife thought of a good device,
She plac'd him at the board,
And before him set both ale and meat,
With many a courteous word.

"Hear, husbandman of Villenskov,
Attend to what I say;
Who has to thee permission given
To build where I have sway?"

"Since thou to build within my bounds
Hast ta'en the liberty,
Thou shalt to me thy housewife give,
For I with her will lie."

Then answer made the hapless man,
As God gave him the thought:
"Thou shalt not Ellen get from me,
Like her I value nought."

He answer made unto the Trold:
"Let but my wife alone,
And do thou take my money and goods,
And keep them for thy own."

"Then I will Ellen take, and thee,
And tread ye both to gore;
And I will take thy silver and gold
And hide it 'neath my floor."

The yeoman and his household all
Were seized with mighty fright:
"Better that one of us be lost
Than all destroy'd outright."

Then up and stood the desp'rate man,
With sore affliction rife;
And he has given his Ellen dear

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To the young Trolld for wife.

Then wax'd he glad, and sprang about,
So fondly her he pressed;
O then how pale her cheeks became,
She was so sore distrest!

Then out and spake the afflicted Dame
Whilst shedding many a tear:
"O God in mercy look on me,
My fate is hard to bear.

"I did possess as fair a man
As ever walk'd-on mead,
But now perforce with laidly Trolld
Must do adulterous deed."

He kiss'd her once, he kiss'd her twice,
Her heart yet sadder grew;
The laidliest Devil he became
That man did ever view.

When the third time he her would kiss
She call'd on Mary's son;
Then he became a lovely knight,
His elfin shape was gone.

It happen'd neath a linden green
He was from woe releas'd;
Then straightway fled all fear and dread,
So well they all were pleas'd.

"Hear, thou beloved Ellenlile,
Consent my wife to be,
And all the gold in England's isle
I will bestow on thee.

"When I was little, Death from me
My mother took away;
My step-dame drove me forth, and I
Became a Trolld so gray.

"I'll give thy husband gifts of price
And titles fair beside;
In verity, thou yeoman's dame,
Thou wilt become my bride."

"Thou noble knight, we'll thank the Lord
From woe who set us free,
If thou wilt wed some fair young maid
You both may live in glee."

"If thee I can't in marriage get
I'll have thy daughter bright,
And all thy benefits to me
By crowning her requite.

"Thanks, Ellen, thanks, thou woman wise,
To praise thee I'll not cease;
If I may not thy love obtain
I'll leave thee here in peace."

Now builds the yeoman on his isle,
And no one him offends;
His daughter bears old England's crown,
And happy days she spends.

Now Ellen has, the yeoman's wife,
Escap'd from care and harm;
She's mother to a Queen, who sleeps
Within a Monarch's arm.

Who bore him first a daughter fine,
And then a blooming heir;
They thank'd the Lord on every side
For all their fortune fair.

The daughter now of Ellenlile
Of England has the sway;
And Ellen with her yeoman lives,

URANIENBORG.

From Heiberg.

Thou who the strand dost wander,
Thy steps, O traveller, stay!
Turn to the island yonder,
And listen to my lay.
Thy every meditation
Bid hither, hither stray:
On yonder banks its station
Had once a Castelaye.

In long past days in glory
It stood, and grandeur sheen
Now 'twas so transitory
Its ruins scarce are seen.
But in old days I warrant
Its equal was not found;
From every side apparent
High tower'd it from the ground.

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For no sea-king intended
I ween was yonder hold;
Urania, it ascended
In praise of thee so bold.
Close by the ocean roaring,
Far, far from mortal jars,
It stood tow'rds heaven soaring,
And tow'rds the little stars.

A gate in the wall eastward,
Display'd its mighty mouth;
There was another westward,
And spires stood north and south.
The dome itself, high rearing,
A slender spirelet bore,
Upon it, ever veering,
A Pegasus gilt o'er.

Towers which the sight astounded
In north and south were plac'd;
Upon strong pillars founded,
And with fair galleries grac'd.
And there caught the attention
Of those that thither stroll'd,
Quadrants of hugh dimension,
And speres in frames that roll'd.

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From yonder Castle, gazing
Across the isle, you spied
The woods, their heads up-raising,
And ocean's bluey tide.
The halls the sight enchanted
With colours bright of blee;
The gardens they were planted
With many a flower and tree.

When down came night careering
And vanish'd was the sun,
The stars were seen appearing
All heaven's arch upon.
Then far was heard the yelling,
When you thereto gave heed,
Of those that watch'd the dwelling,
Four hounds of mastiff breed.

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The good knight ceas'd to walk on
The fields of war and gore,
His helm and sword the balk on
He hung, to use no more.
From earth, its woe and riot,

His soul had taken flight,
When in his chamber quiet
He sat at dead of night.

Then he his eye erected
Into the night so far,
And keen the course inspected
Of every twinkling star.
The stars his fame transported
Wide over sea and land,
And kings his friendship courted,
And sought his islet's strand.

But point the stars from heaven
To lands far o'er the main;
He went, by fortune driven,
And ne'er returned again.
The haughty walls through sorrow
Have long since sunken low,
And heavy plow-shares furrow
Thy house, Urania, now.

Each time the sun is sinking
It friendly looks on Hveen;
Its rays there linger, thinking
On what the place has been.
The moon hastes melancholy
Past, past the coast so dear,
And in love's transport holy
Shines Freya's starlet clear.

Then suddenly takes to heaving
Of that same ruin'd hold
The basis deep, believing
It is some eve of old.
For many moments gladly
'Twould rise up from the mould;
But ah! it can't, and sadly
Sinks in death's slumber cold.

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THE READY ANSWER.

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The brother to his dear sister spake;
"Wilt thou not quickly a husband take?"

"Dear brother, I'll do no such thing,
I'm far too young for marrying."

"Then why so oft do I hear it said
That thou preparest thee to wed?"

"Ah! folks such store of scandal say,
That only fools attention pay."

"Who was that gallant knight, that rode
This morning early from thy abode?"

"A very gallant knight, indeed,
It was my page upon his steed."

"What might that pair of shoes betide,
That lately stood by thy bedside?"

"If pair of shoes stood ever there,
That pair of shoes my slippers were."

"Those children small, how came they, say,
The other day in thy bed that lay?"

"No children small I ween were they,
But pups with which I'm wont to play."

"How happ'd this morn that baby scream.
Which from thy chamber broke my dream?"

"O babes in that guise seldom squall,
My maid cried for her keys so small."

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“What might that splendid cradle mean,
Which hidden here I oft have seen?”

“It was no cradle met thine eyes,
But my silk woof about that lies.

“Brother if thou hast questions more,
I’ve other answers still in store.”

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When women for answers are at stop,
There’ll be in the main no water drop.

EPIGRAMS

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1.

There’s no living, my boy, without plenty of gold,
But gold to obtain you must ever be bold.
The Diver will never who feareth the shark
Bring up precious pearls from the sea caverns dark.

2.

O think not you’ll change what on high is designed,
Though you lift up your hands and to heaven you shout;
The Angel will grieve not, who governs the wind,
Though a gust should the lamp of the widow blow out.

3.

Load not thyself with gold, O mortal man, for know
No strength thou’lt have for loads when summon’d hence away.
Avoid excess of meat, it maketh gross, I trow,
And gross thou must not be when summon’d hence away;
For through the narrow gate thou’lt find it hard to go
Of death, if thou art gross when summon’d hence away.

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LONDON:

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