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THE DALBY BEAR

AND OTHER BALLADS

BY GEORGE BORROW

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THE DALBY BEAR

p. 5

There goes a bear on Dalby moors, Oxen and horses he devours.

The peasants are in deep distress The laidly bear should them oppress.

Their heads together at length they lay, How they the bear might seize and slay.

They drove their porkers through the wood, The bear turn'd round as he lay at food.

Outspoke as best he could the bear: "What kind of guests approach my lair?"

Uprose the bear amain from his food, A christian man before him stood.

A little hour together they fought, The bear to the earth the man has brought.

Fast came a knight as he could make, He heard the heart of the peasant break.

The bear upon him fiercely glar'd;

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"Thou needst not hurry, I'm prepar'd." "And thou by me shalt be stoutly met, So thou may'st vapour and thou may'st threat. "If thou hast spear and nimble hand. I've claws and teeth at my command." They fought for a day, they fought for two, And so on the third they continu'd to do. But when to night the fourth day drew, The bear to the earth the warrior threw. "Thou wilt no victory gain from me, Thou haughty knight, thou may'st certain be. "I late was the son of a powerful King, A Queen me into the world did bring. "My Step-dame chang'd me, as you see, p. 7 She'd ruin me to eternity. "About the wild forest I have run, To the boors much scathe and violence done. "In winter and in summer's tide In peace for me they could not bide. "But they may thank my cruel Dame. For 'twas through her I a bear became. "She plac'd around my neck so tight An iron band in wrath and spite. "If thou this accursed band canst break Thy life from thee I will not take." "O I will help thee from thy thrall; Maria's son who has power for all "Will loosen from thee this stubborn band, Full able thereto is his right hand." O'er him the cross the knight did make, The iron burst from the bruin's neck. He became a youth as fair as day, p. 8 His father's realm he went to sway. A noble maid awaits the knight, The hand of the Monarch's sister bright. They liv'd together in honor and joy, To the cruel Stepdame's great annoy. A hard flint rock she soon became, For herself she earn'd both woe and shame. TYGGE HERMANDSEN p. 9

Down o'er the isle in torrents fell On a Thursday morn the rain; To fetch his bride now forth shall ride Sir Tygge Hermandsen.

Sir Tygge out of the window look'd. The brooks ran boisterously: "To ride out now would bring me woe, So dear no bride I'll buy.

"But hear thou, Nilaus Benditson, Long shanks has thy good steed; I beg for the love of the God above You'll fetch my bride with speed."

Then answer'd Nilaus Benditson. In his sleeve thus answer'd he: "If me thou dispatch thy bride to fetch I'll trick thee certainly."

It was Nilaus Benditson,
He rode the bride to meet;
There hung silk sheen and sendal green
Before his courser's feet.

They clad themselves in silken cloth, And in cloth of gold beside; In long array to the Kirk their way They took with the youthful bride.

The bride before the holy Kirk door Like a blooming rose did stand; Oft did she turn to the water, to learn If the bridegroom was at hand.

Then answer'd Nilaus Benditson,
He stood by the bride so close:
"The brooks so roar'd that to cross the ford
He fear'd would wet his hose."

They plac'd the bride on the bridal bench With pomp and honor high; Oft would they turn to the water to learn If the bridegroom bold drew nigh.

In the silver cup they skink the ale, And the nut-brown mead they pour; Thus things they sped till day was fled, And until of bed the hour.

They lifted up the youthful bride, In the bride-bed her they set; And there sat she for hours three, There came no bridegroom yet.

The priests before the bride-bed stood, And sang with all their might: "Who in the bed in the bridegroom's stead Shall sleep with the bride tonight?"

Then forth stepp'd Nilaus Benditson, His lac'd shoe off flung he: "With the bride so bright I'll sleep tonight, And give her my troth with glee."

So they the bridal solemnized, And glad themselves they made; At home was then Tygge Hermandsen, To cross the brooks afraid.

It chanc'd upon a Wednesday, The waters began to fall; Across came then Tygge Hermandsen With his gay bridesmen all.

And he came to the bridal house Where the feast was spread in state, Then up and cried the youthful bride: "Ride back, you come too late."

"Now hear, thou beauteous Sidselil, I've this to complain of thee, That thou hast ta'en another swain And broke thy troth with me."

"Now hear, thou Tygge Hermandsen, Thou might'st have been aware, I would disdain to wed the swain To wet his feet had fear.

"If thou hadst been a Lady's swain,
And hadst thou lov'd me true,
With thy sword's stroke thou wouldst have broke
Thy way through the billows blue."

"To the cloyster I'll myself betake, And the monkish vow I'll swear; For good or ill, proud Sidselil, p. 11

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"But if hereby thy way shall lie When the brooks shall calmly run, If cheeses two in my store I view In thy sack I'll drop thee one." [13]

THE WICKED STEPMOTHER

p. 14

Sir Ove he has no daughter but one,
All underneath a green hill's side,
He bestow'd her the Lord of Elling upon.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

He bestow'd her upon a gallant knight,
All underneath a green hill's side,
Sir Stig Cob was the gallant hight.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

When a year to end had well nigh come, All underneath a green hill's side. Two sons had Thorelil in her womb. In such peril through the forest they ride.

Hither and thither they carry the dame,
All underneath a green hill's side,
But worse and worse her plight became.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

Sir Stig his bonnet he has put on,
All underneath a green hill's side,
And into the hall to his mother is gone.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"Hear me, dear mother, canst thou rede, All underneath a green hill's side, How it with Thorelil shall speed?" In such peril through the forest they ride.

"For forty weeks and a year I trow, All underneath a green hill's side, Thy Thorelil with child shall go." In such peril through the forest they ride.

"O mother dear, it can scarce be so, All underneath a green hill's side, But forty weeks Mary with Christ did go." In such peril through the forest they ride.

"Since I no help can here obtain,
All underneath a green hill's side,
From whence I came convey me again."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"The horses are grazing upon the moor,
All underneath a green hill's side,
And in their beds the coachmen snore."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"If coach nor coachmen I can get,
All underneath the green hill's side,
I'll tramp on my feet through dry and wet."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

Her lips the word had scarcely said,
All underneath a green hill's side,
When the horses to the coach were led.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

Stig took her so tenderly by the waist,
All underneath a green hill's side.
And her in the gilded coach he plac'd.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

He set her down on the cushions gray, All underneath a green hill's side, p. 15

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And he himself drove the coach away.

In such peril through the forest they ride.

And when they came under the green wood bough,
All underneath a green hill's side,
Her chariot broke her weight below.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"A wondrous woman I sure must be, All underneath a green hill's side, Since my own coach won't carry me." In such peril through the forest they ride.

"My dearest, my dearest, be not dismay'd,
All underneath a green hill's side,
Thou back canst walk with thy husband's aid."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

And when to the castle gate they won,
All underneath a green hill's side,
His sister stood and lean'd thereon.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"O my dear sister, canst thou rede, All underneath a green hill's side, How it with Thorelil will speed?" In such peril through the forest they ride.

Unto her coffer proud Mettelil flew,
All underneath a green hill's side,
Of wax she has fashion'd babies two.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

She drew her blue mantle o'er her head,
All underneath a green hill's side,
And unto her mother's bower she sped.
In such peril through the forest they ride.

"From thy heart, dear mother, all sorrow chase, All underneath a green hill's side, And thy grand-babes take to thy embrace." In such peril through the forest they ride.

"O I had thought with my bunch of keys, All underneath a green hill's side, To overturn her bliss with ease. In such peril through the forest they ride.

"I thought I'd bewitch'd each inch of land,
All underneath a green hill's side,
Save the spot alone where her chest doth stand."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

No sooner was Thorelil thither convey'd, All underneath a green hill's side, Than of two fair sons she light was made. In such peril through the forest they ride.

"O God grant me so long to breathe, All underneath a green hill's side, That parting presents I may bequeath. In such peril through the forest they ride.

"Stig's mother, I give her my sarke to wear, All underneath a green hill's side, May she use it like me with grief and care! In such peril through the forest they ride.

"To his sister I give my embroider'd shoe, All underneath a green hill's side, To wear with glee unmixt with woe. In such peril through the forest they ride.

"A lovely rose is my last bequest,
All underneath a green hill's side,
For Stig to wed, and with her be blest."
In such peril through the forest they ride.

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Footnotes:

[13] She taunts him with the idea of his becoming a monk, and going about with a sack begging for alms.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DALBY BEAR, AND OTHER BALLADS ***

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