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## TORD OF HAFSBOROUGH AND OTHER BALLADS

BY

GEORGE BORROW

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1914

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## TORD OF HAFSBOROUGH

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It was Tord of Hafsborough, O'er the verdant wold would ride, And there he lost his hammer of gold, 'Twas lost for so long a tide.

It was Tord of Hafsborough, His brother he addressed: "Thou shalt away to the Norland hills, My hammer be thy quest."

It was Lokke Leyemand, A feather robe o'er him drew; And away to the Norland mountains high O'er the briny sea he flew.

In the midst of the castle yard He smoothèd his array; Then straight he took to the castle hall, To the carlish Count his way.

"Be welcome, Lokke Leyemand, Be welcome my castle to; Say! how fare things in Hafsborough?

With the land how does it go?" "O, well fare things in Hafsborough, And well in the country all; Tord has his golden hammer lost, Therefore seek I your hall." "Tord he shall not his hammer get, Thou back may'st carry him word; Full five-and-ninety fathoms deep It lies in the earth interred. "Tord he shall not his hammer get, To thee I vow and swear, Save he give me Damsel Fridleifsborg, With all his goods and gear." It was Lokke Levemand, O'er himself the feather robe drew; And with his answer back amain O'er the briny sea he flew. "Thou never wilt get thy hammer of gold, Upon that thou may'st rely, Unless he have Damsel Fridleifsborg, And all our property." Then answered straight the proud Damsel, Upon the bench as she sate: "Ye'd better give me a Christian man, Than the laidly trold for mate. "But we will take our old father. And deck so fine his head. And we'll carry him to the Northern hills, To stand for bride in my stead." And now to the house of the merry bridegroom They the young old bride convey; Upon her dress no gold was spared, For a verity I say. And so they took the lovely bride, On the bride-bench placed her frame; And to skink before the bride himself The carlish Count he came. Then she ate six oxen bodies. And three fat swine beside; Loaves seven hundred were her meal, Ere for a draught she cried. Before her thirst she could assuage She drank ten casks of ale; She set the can once more to her mouth And to hickuping then she fell. The carlish Count strode up and down, And wrung his hands so sore: "O whence can this young bride be come? She does so much devour! The Count he called to his Botelere: "Thou hadst better broach away, For we have here such a wondrous bride, She'll drink for ever and aye." Answered then Lokke Leyemand, 'Neath his sleeve he laughed with glee: "For full eight days she has not ate. She longed so much for thee." Outspake the laidly carlish Count, And thus the Count did cry: "O, call ye in my serving swains, Bid them come instantly. "Go, fetch me hither the hammer of gold, Glad I'll surrender it;

If I can either in honour or shame,

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Of such a young bride be quit."

The Kempions eight in number were, Who the hammer brought on a tree; They laid it down so courteously Across the young bride's knee.

It was then the youthful bride Took up the hammer big;

I tell to ye for a verity She swung it like a twig.

First she slew the carlish count, That throld both laid and tall; And then as they strove to 'scape through the door, She slew the little trolds all.

The guests and the Norland men each one So downcast were of mood; Blows from the hand of the bride they got That robbed their cheeks of blood.

It was Lokke Leyemand, He opened his mouth in game: "Now we will fare to our country home, And our sire a widow proclaim."

### FROM THE ARABIC

O thou who fain would'st wisdom gain, Live night and day untired; For by repeated toil and pain It is alone acquired.

## THORVALD Svend Tveskjeg havde sig en Maud

Swayne Tveskieg did a man possess, Sir Thorvald hight; Though fierce in war, kind acts in peace Were his delight. From port to port his vessels fast Sailed wide around, And made, where'er they anchor cast, His name renown'd. But Thorvald has freed his King. Prisoners he bought-clothes, liberty, On them bestowed, And sent men home from slavery To their abode. And many an old man got his boy, His age's stay; And many a maid her youth's sole joy, Her lover gay. But Thorvald has freed his King. A brave fight Thorvald loved full dear, For brave his mood; But never did he dip his spear In feeble blood. He followed Swayne to many a fray With war-shield bright, And his mere presence scar'd away Foul deeds of might. But Thorvald has freed his King.

They hoist sail on the lofty mast, It was King Swayne, He o'er the bluey billows pass'd p. 12

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With armed train. His mind to harry Bretland <sup>[13a]</sup> boiled; He leapt on shore And every, every thing recoiled His might before. But Thorvald has freed his King. Yet slept not Bretland's chieftain good; He speedily Collected a host in the dark wood Of cavalry. And evil through that subtle plan Befell the Dane; They were ta'en prisoners every man, And last King Swayne. But Thorvald has freed his King. "Now hear thou prison-foogd! <sup>[13b]</sup> and prav My message heed; Unto the castle take thy way, Thence Thorvald lead! Prison and chains become him not, Whose gallant hand So many a handsome lad has brought From slavery's band." But Thorvald has freed his King. The man brought this intelligence To the bower's door, But Thorvald, with loud vehemence, "I'll not go," swore. "What-go, and leave my sovereign here, In durance sore? No! Thorvald then ne'er worthy were To lift shield more." But Thorvald has freed his King. What cannot noble souls effect? Both freedom gain Through Thorvald's prayer, and the respect His deeds obtain. And from that hour unto his grave, Swayne ever show'd Towards his youth's friend, so true and brave, Fit gratitude. But Thorvald has freed his King. Swayne Tveskieg sat with kings one tide, O'er mead and beer, The cushion soft he stroaked and cried, "Sit, Thorvald, here. Thy father ne'er rul'd land like me And my compeers! But yarl and nobleman is he Whose fame thine nears. For Thorvald has freed his King."

## PETER COLBIORNSEN

'Fore Fredereksteen King Carl he lay With mighty host;
But Frederekshal from day to day, Much trouble cost.
To seize the sword each citizen His tools let fall,
And valiant Peter Colbiornsen Was first of all.
Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

'Gainst Frederekshal so fierce and grim Turned Carl his might, The citizens encountered him In numbers slight, p. 14

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But ah, they fought like Northern men, For much loved land, And it was Peter Colbiornsen That led the band. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. Such heavy blows the Norsemen deal Amid the foe, Like ripe corn 'fore the reaper's steel The Swedes sink low. But sturdiest reaper weary will, So happ'd it here; Though many the Norwegians kill, More, more appear. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. Before superior force they flew, As Norsemen fly, They but retired, the fight anew Unawed to ply. Now o'er the bodies of his slain His way Carl makes; He thinks he has the city ta'en, But he mistakes. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. A speedy death his soldiers found Where'er they came; For Norse were posted all around, And greeted them; Then Carl he sent, but sorely vext, To Fredereksteen, And begg'd that he might bury next His slaughtered men. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. "No time, no time to squander e'er Have Norsemen bold, He came self-bidden 'mongst us here," Thus Carl was told; "If we can drive him back agen, We now must try!" And it was Peter Colbiornsen Made that reply. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. Lo! from the town the flames outburst, High-minded men! And he who fired his house the first Was Colbiornsen. Eager to quench the fire, the foes Make guick resort, But bullets fell as fast as snows Down from the fort. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. Now rose the blazes toward the sky, Red, terrible, His heroes' death the King thereby Could see right well. Sir Peter's word he then made good, His host retires; But in his path the steen it stood, And on him fires. Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen. Magnificent 'midst corse and blood Glowed Frederekshal; Illum'd its own men's courage proud, And Swedesmen's fall. Whoe'er saw pile funereal flame So bright as then? Sure never shall expire thy name, O Colbiornsen! Thus for Norroway fight the Norsemen.

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## KRAGELILL

'Twas noised about, 'twas noised about, Full far 'twas noised I ween; King Sigurd has his daughter lost, She stolen from him has been. It was gallant King Sigurd then His bonnet he put on; And he away to the high, high hall To his courtmen and knights is gone. They cast the die upon the board, The die it rolled around; It fell upon Regnfred, the King's son, He to seek the maid is bound. About the world for one winter, And for winters five he sought; But he in all that weary tide Could hear of the maiden nought. It was Regnfred, the King's son, Through the green wood rode his way; And there met him a little stranger lad, About the break of day. "Now do thou hear, thou stranger lad, All that I say to thee; The very next maid that thou know'st of Do thou shew unto me." "And do thou hear, thou fair young swain I pray I may not offend, But the very next maid that I know of Sir Tabor's goats doth tend. "Her kirtle is of kid-skin made, Her mantle of wadmal grey, Her locks, which shine like gleamy gold, Adown her shoulders stray." Then he rode o'er the meadows green, And through the brake and thorn, And there did he the maiden find, She drove her goats from the corn. He took her tenderly in his arm, Kissed her on her cheek so fair: "I entreat thee now by the highest God, Thy father to me declare." "An ancient man my father is, Tends goats in the morass; Kragelill I myself am called, Can I boast of my birth, alas!" It was Regnfred, the King's son, In haste drew out his knife: "Thou shalt to me thy father name, Or thou shall lose thy life." "Sigurd the King my father is, His Queen my mother dear; And I myself am Swanelill, Name fitting for me to bear." Then o'er her threw the mantle blue Regnfred, the King's good son: He lifted her so courteously His courser grey upon.

And he rode o'er the meadows green, And over the plains so wide;Behind him came running an ancient man, And so loud on Kragelill cried.

But the swain gave him both silver and gold,

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Contented away he hied; Then he unhindered did carry the maid To her father's halls of pride.

Now has Regnfred, the King's son, O'ercome his dire distress; He sleeps each night so joyously In the arms of his princess.

And now is Damsel Swanelill To kith and kin restored; So joyously she sleeps each night With Regnfred her wedded lord.

## ALLEGAST

The Count such a store of gold had got, His equal for wealth in the land was not.

But the Count he had of a hare the heart, At the slightest thing he with fear would start.

Yet at last he grew of courage so rife, That he wooed the King's daughter to be his wife.

Then answer made Carl, the son of the King: I ne'er will consent to such shameful thing.

"For he served my father like a knave, He'll not bear on his helm the stroke of a glaive.

"Last year the King's coursers he helped to groom, This year he'll to wed the King's daughter presume."

Nought booted all Carl, the King's son, could say; 'Gainst the wish of her brother they gave her away.

Dreamt Carl, the King's son, on his night-couch laid, That he would take up the thieving trade.

"May the Lord God grant I the man may find, Who best can steal of the thieving kind.

"God grant that I in with Allegast fall, Who best can steal of the world's thieves all."

Early at morn the day shone clear, From the house Carl, the King's son, rode in career.

And when to the castle gate he had won, There Allegast stood, and leaned thereupon.

"What kind of man, my friend, may you be, Whom loitering here by the gate I see?"

"The folks, young Sir, me Allegast call, I am the best thief of the world's thieves all."

"Then we'll to each other a solemn oath give, To steal and to thieve all the days that we live.

"Now we will away to the house of the Count, And the courser we'll steal which to ride he is wont."

And when they arrived on the verdant plain, Into hot dispute fell the comrades twain.

They disputed which should break the wall, They disputed which therethrough should crawl.

But Allegast he should break down the wall, And Allegast he should creep through withall.

"But how shall we bear the Count's saddle away? So many bells that saddle array."

The Count to his page that evening said: "My saddle wipe, ere thou get thee to bed. p. 26

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To trust a man I never feel inclined, Unless I know his very inmost mind; Better an open foe your flesh should rend, Than you should deem a secret foe your friend.

"For to-morrow I'm bent to ride to the Ting, I'll have Carl hanged, the son of the King."

Then the Countess in bitter grief answer made: "You'll ne'er live so long as to see him dead.

"My father's servant last year thou wast, Now to sleep with his daughter the honour thou hast."

The Count at that word so ireful grew, He smote his wife that the blood out-flew.

At hand was Sir Carl, heard all they spake: "I soon of this matter an end will make."

Then Carl he entered through the door, And a naked sword in his hand he bore.

"Thou dog, thou shalt never more have the might The gentle daughters of Kings to smite.

"Thou dog, thou shalt never more have the power To threaten Kings' children within thy bower."

The Count by his long yellow locks he took, And by the bed's side his head off strook.

"Do thou lie there, and for ever be banned, I'll bestow on another my sister's hand.

"I'll give her Sir Allegast, he is a knight So true and trusty and valiant in fight."

The King's sweet daughter has Allegast wed, For her infamous husband unwept lies dead.

These gallants were thieves in no other way, Than that they a trick on the Count would play.

But could all thieving come to so fair an end, There's many, I trow, would a-thieving wend!

## **EPIGRAMS**

## 1

Assume a friend's face when a foeman you spy, For his hatred you'll turn into friendship thereby. Deal gentle words round you when threats are outpoured, For not against silk do we use the sharp sword. By means of caresses and promises fair, The elephant fierce you may guide with a hair.

## 2

The lion in woods finds prey of noble kind, In fields of air the hawk sufficient meat; He who would hunt within a house confined,

Must needs possess the spider's hands and feet.

#### 3

Though God provides our daily bread Yet all must seek that bread, I ween; Though all must die, there is no need To rush the dragon's jaws between.

## 4

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A hunter who was always seeking game In evil hour upon a tiger came; Chance to the hunter is not always kind, Instead of game he may a tiger find.

#### 6

The plans of men of shrewdest wit To fail are known, Whilst beardless lads the mark will hit By chance alone.

#### 7

Well was it said, long years ago, Never trust him whom you've given a blow; Trust not the heart you have caused to ache, For thine, if it can, it will surely break. Fling not a stone at the wall of a town, Lest one from the rampart should strike you down.

#### 8

Who roams the world by many wants beset, Is quickly glad his own name to forget; Unless you've gold you cannot do much harm, And if you've gold you need no other arm. Gold if you lack you cannot cross the brine; Better than ten men's strength is one man's coin.

## ON A YOUNG MAN WITH RED HAIR

He is a lad of sober mind, By no means martially inclined; Nor fit to bear war's dreadful shocks, Although he carries fire-locks.

#### \* \* \* \* \*

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## **Footnotes:**

[13a] Britain.

[13b] Prison-foogd, the governor of the prison, Dan fogd.

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