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FAIR

ISLAND

A TALE IN VERSE

KIRKWALL

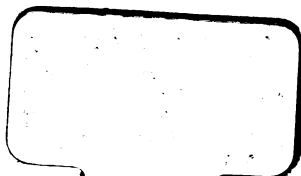
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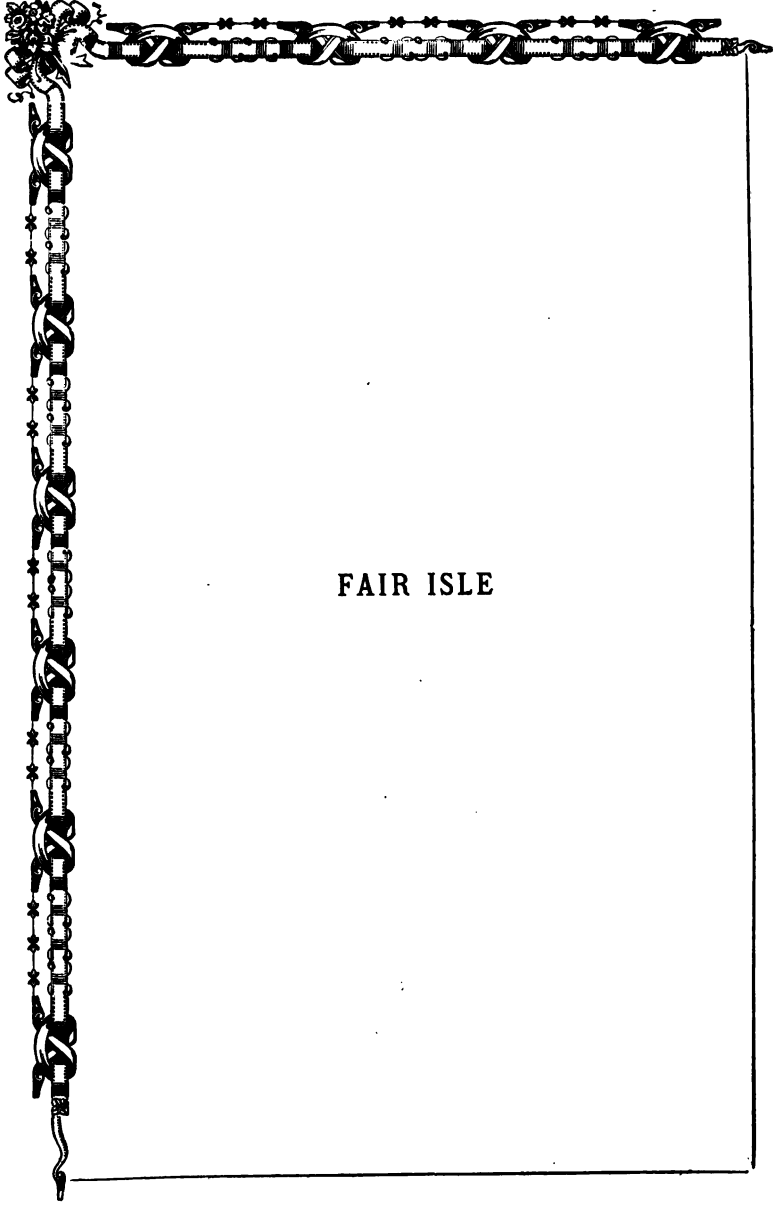


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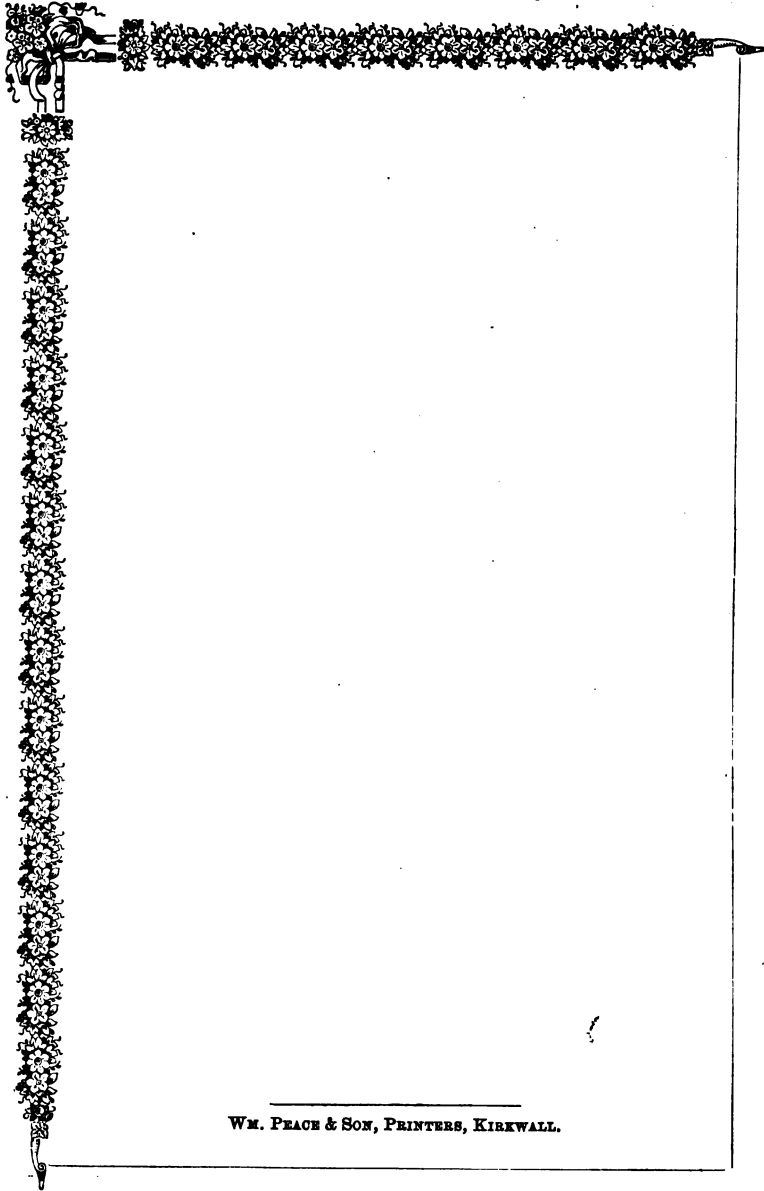






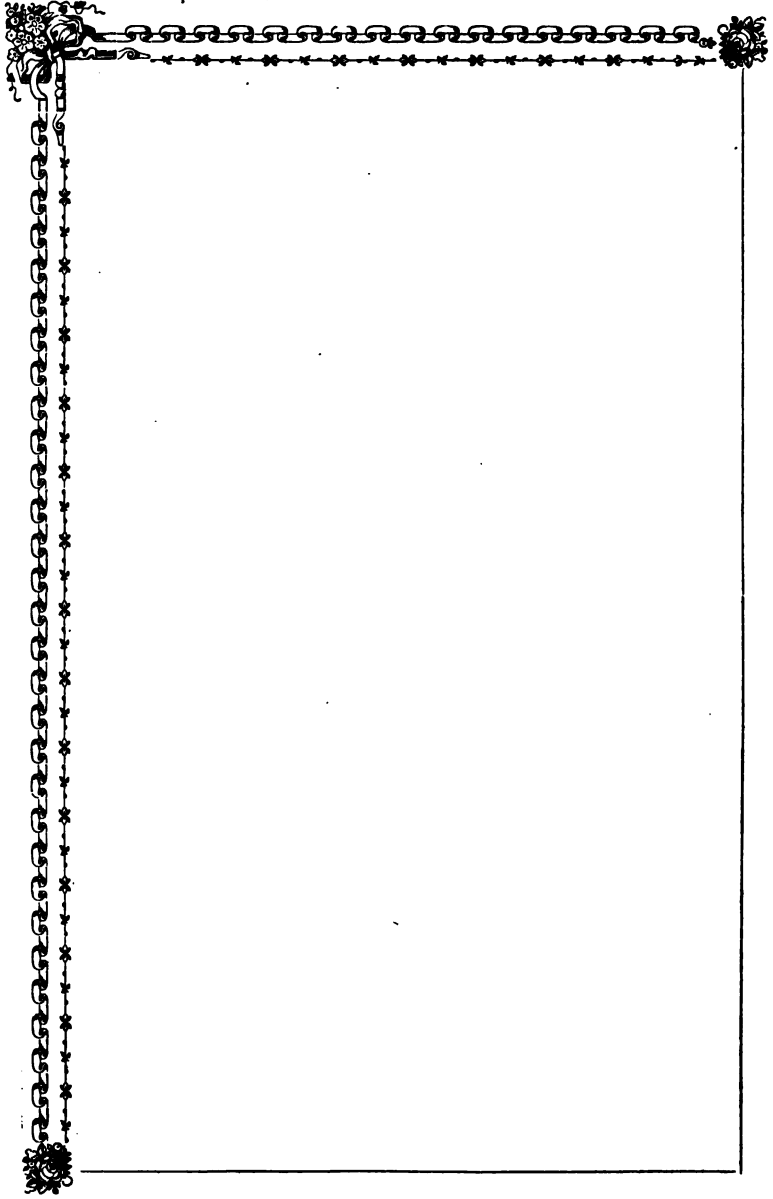


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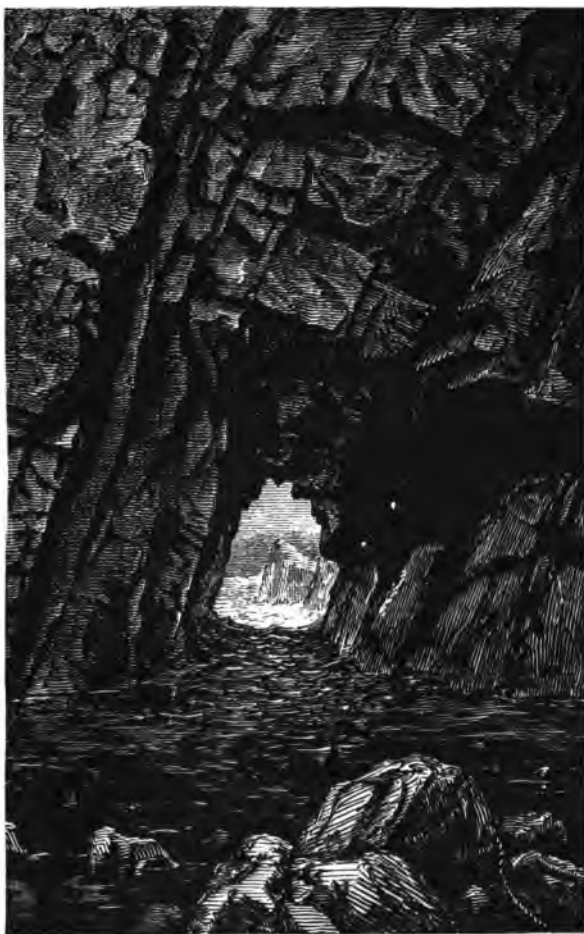
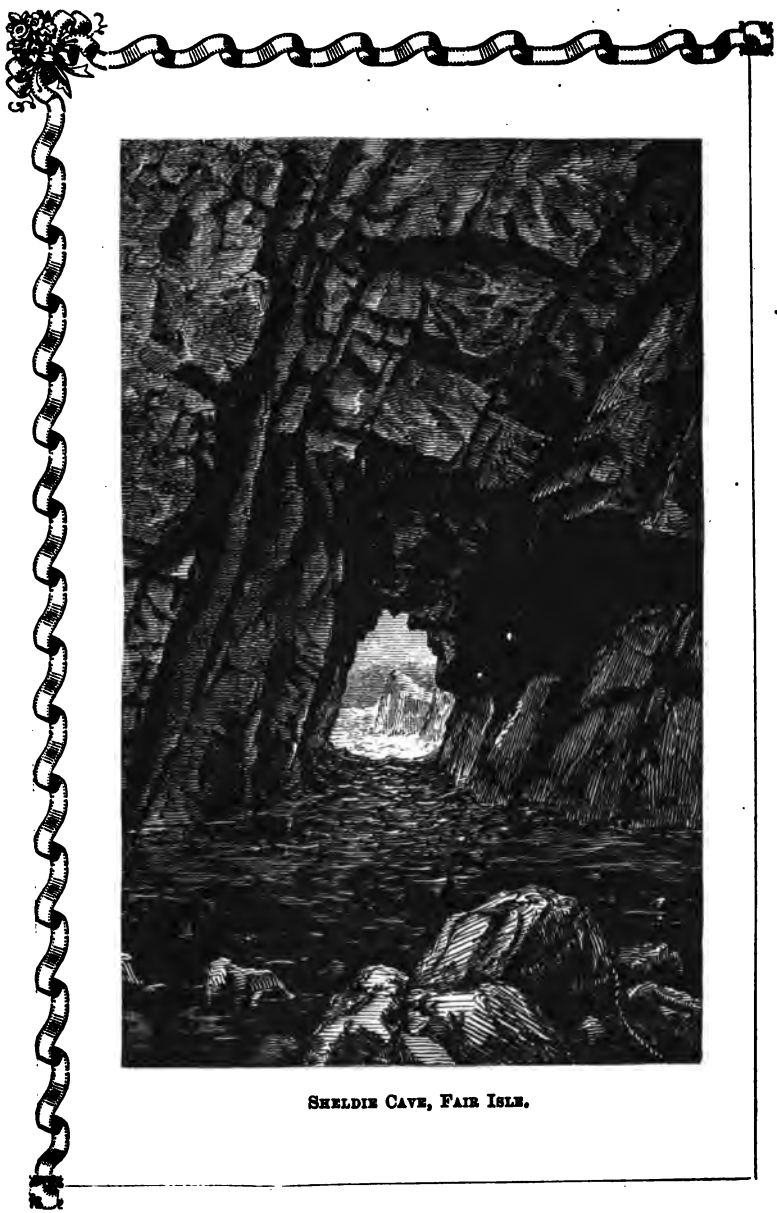


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SHELDIN CAVE, FAIR ISLE.

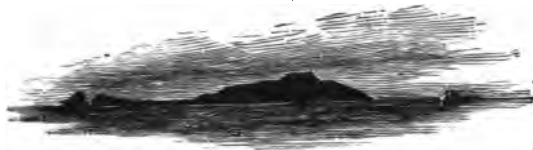
# FAIR ISLE

A TALE IN VERSE

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY A SHETLANDER

WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

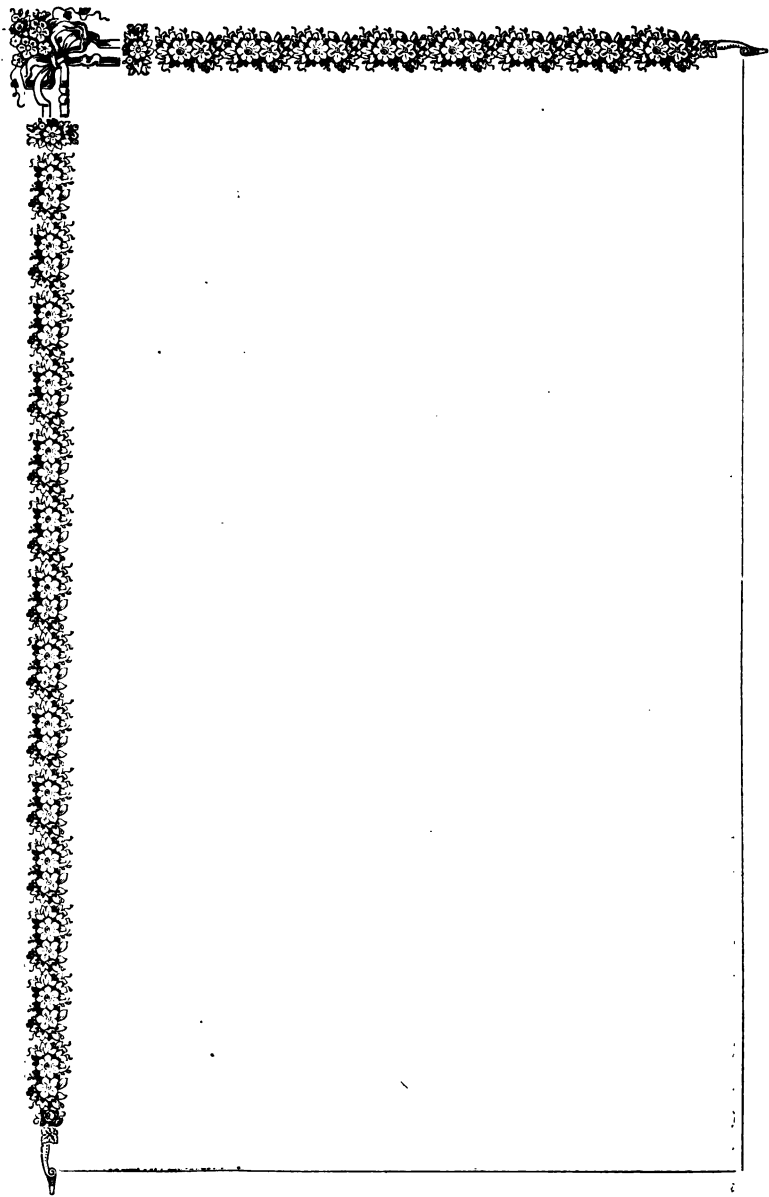
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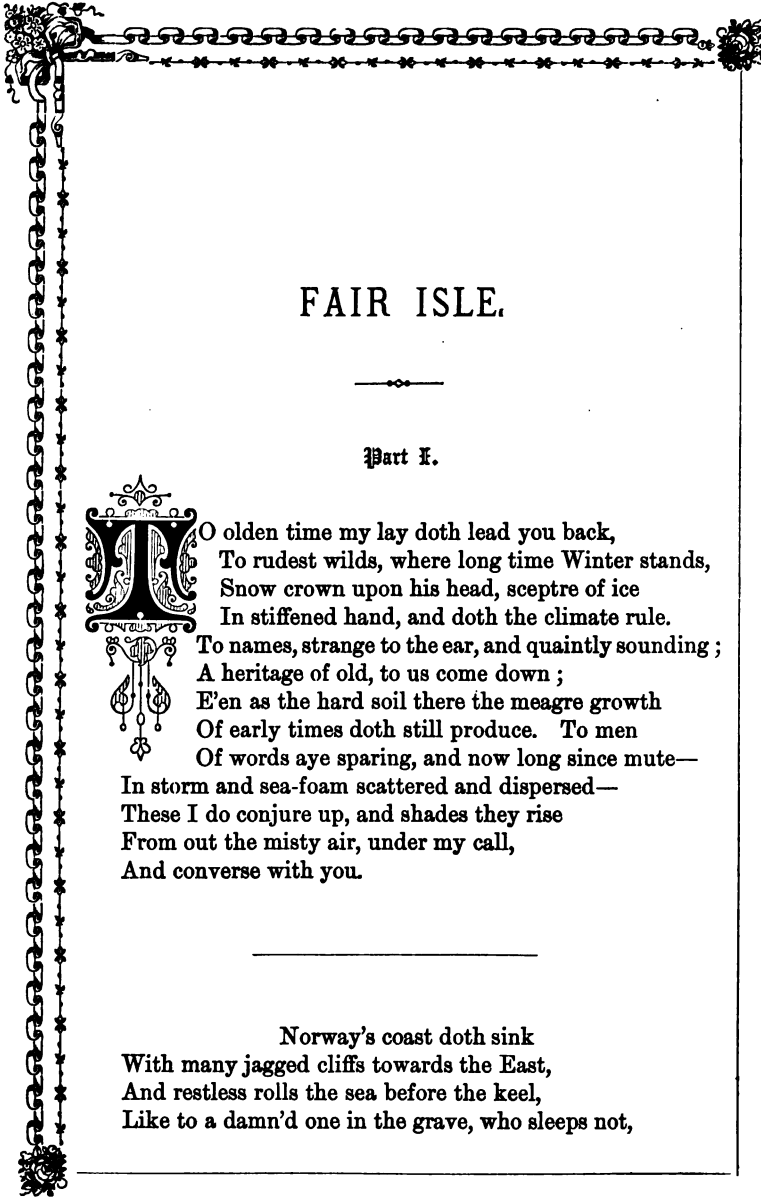


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288. c. 19.





## FAIR ISLE.

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### Part I.

**N**O olden time my lay doth lead you back,  
To rudest wilds, where long time Winter stands,  
Snow crown upon his head, sceptre of ice  
In stiffened hand, and doth the climate rule.  
To names, strange to the ear, and quaintly sounding ;  
A heritage of old, to us come down ;  
E'en as the hard soil there the meagre growth  
Of early times doth still produce. To men  
Of words aye sparing, and now long since mute—  
In storm and sea-foam scattered and dispersed—  
These I do conjure up, and shades they rise  
From out the misty air, under my call,  
And converse with you.

---

Norway's coast doth sink  
With many jagged cliffs towards the East,  
And restless rolls the sea before the keel,  
Like to a damn'd one in the grave, who sleeps not,

But all night long groans on. Then here and there  
Is seen erst after two days' sail, what seems  
Like sea-birds floating on a wave-crest high ;  
But faint and dim in th' atmosphere of Heaven  
It grows, then vanisheth again in gloom  
Like to a ghost. Soon towards us hoarsely roars  
The surge's swell, and screaming flies a swarm  
Of sea-mews round the mast. Now peers from out  
The mist a rock precipitous—and more  
Than one—on all sides—by milky foam o'er dashed :  
It is the Shetland isles ; by sailors' lips  
Since days of which no memory remains  
Hetland it has been called—the new found land.

A strange wild land indeed ! once on a time by heat  
And great convulsive throes of Nature's womb  
Cast up to light. Then by the waves washed o'er  
And rocked like to an unfledged brood of birds  
With doleful lullaby. An offspring bold  
Towers Hetland hundred-headed in the air ;  
Around the head the storm-wind roars ; the feet  
The greedy-eating tooth of strong tide gnaws,  
Which also snake-like round the limbs entwines.  
A ridge from out the deep doth rear and twist  
Its watery form, by black scales overspread,  
A monster of the abyss, and "Skerry" named ;  
Stone shears it is, which thrust their giant teeth  
Mute-lurking in the body of the ship.  
By flood tide they are hidden, but the ebb  
Lays bare their jaws by its continuous swirl.  
Aloft the tern of silver gray, with shrilling voice  
Laughs out ; the northern diver plungeth down  
Into the vortex, while on edge of crag  
Cowers, booty-spying, motionless the auk.  
As now, so was it aye.

## To race of men

A small part only of these hundred isles  
Can house and home, and nourishment afford ;  
Who, erst as leader, brought them to these rocks  
Is known to none, but yet their language points  
Across the sea to Norway, to whom first  
This Hetland did belong. Then Britain's hand  
Was outstretched after it, and Shetland fell  
Together with the Orkneys to its grasp.  
Then changed itself the language of these isles,  
A mélange of the Norse, the old home tongue  
And England's speech and accent it became.  
Still show the people's height, their eyes and hair,  
They sprang from Norland's stock. By nature nursed  
With niggard breast, their speech's fountain scant  
Became ; but yet from many a maiden glance  
Shines bright and clear, a rare and heavenly blue,  
And shining golden hair round fair white brows  
Floats free, as if Heaven meant to compensate  
For lack of other gifts.

## In moor and sand

Their houses, which are ofttime only huts,  
Like nests of eider ducks stand isolate,  
But here and there a tiny thorp they form.  
A thatch roof overspreads the dwelling small,  
The wall of which is stone. No tree, nor bush  
Riseth from base of sterile, rocky cleft,  
Nor from the vale where marsh and heather growth  
The soil doth choke. The brown peat moor is seen,  
By mists o'erhung, from which resounds the cry  
Of whistling swan which broodeth on the waste.  
'Tis late in Autumn ere the corn matures,  
The meagre barley fields which only now and then  
A plough upturns : the harvest often fails,

And breadless, through the winter long, the board  
Where hunger with dried fish, and sea-fowls' eggs  
Of brightly speckled hue, contents itself.  
The Islands offer pasture ground for sheep,  
And cattle also, of a species small,  
With shaggy coats. The ownership of them  
Is source of wealth, and forms the difference 'twixt  
The poor and rich. The sea, with mighty wave  
Casts on the shore the seal—the whale comes too  
As guest, and leaves, as present to his host,  
Though 'gainst his will, his bones, and skin and oil.  
By fowling some maintain themselves, and some  
Burn kelp from sea-tang, and by Winter's storms  
For months long separate from neighbouring isle,  
Schooled by necessity, each makes for self  
The things his life demands; with axe and plane,  
With file and anvil, shapes the tools required  
For labour. Housewife and daughter meanwhile  
Dresses and shoes prepare; grind corn to meal,  
The meal to dough transform, and then the dough  
To bread do bake. When writing must be done—  
A rare event—the quill is then brought out  
From store which in a chest concealed doth lie,  
Mayhap provided by the wife, when she  
For bridal furnishings to Lerwick came—  
The one small town on Mainland situate—  
The largest of these isles. There sits the Foud  
To make the laws respected, and convoke  
The Thing, and judgment give in case of strife.  
The burden of his office is but light,  
For falsehood and deceit, robb'ry and theft  
Are as unknown in Hetland, as a lock  
On door or press. Yet brawls and discord rise  
At times in Summer, with the foreign crews  
Whose ships from east and west for trade do come

And anchor in the bays—these must be judged,  
 But soon that time is o'er, scarce three short months—  
 From Summer solstice-day, until the time  
 Of middle Harvest. Then the choir of storms  
 Begins its ceaseless song, and thund'ring adds  
 The organ of the wave its myriad voice.  
 The breakers pale with fury, lash the cliffs  
 And scare with threats of death each sail that dares  
 Attempt to near the shore. By a wild wall  
 Of foam girt round, Hetland for nine long months  
 Lies separated from the outer world.  
 The Winter comes with dreary, darksome days,  
 Which scarce a gleam of noontide sun illumines ;  
 For fog obscures th' uncertain light, and rain  
 In heavy and incessant drip descends—  
 Spring, Harvest, Winter, all one dull, damp night.  
 Then by the hearth burns dried pith\* dipped in oil,  
 And shadows flicker in the narrow room  
 Which shelters and unites the family.  
 The weaver's shuttle flies, the spinning wheel  
 Doth join its whirl to gusts of storm-wind fierce  
 Which make the rafters shake. Loud moans the wave,  
 And legends old, from out the Edda's depths,  
 Are whispered through the night. As 'tis to-day  
 So was it aye : since the first wreath of smoke  
 On Hetland's rocky heights told man was there.

Enshrouded by the vap'rous mists of Time  
 Those islands' names fall quaintly on the ear,  
 Fetlar and Bressa, Samphray, Mousa, Yell,  
 Noss, Uya, Hascosea—then in the north  
 Unst, with dread-towering cliffs, and gloomy caves,  
 Dusky, sea-worn and washed, where sleep the shades

\* The natives of Shetland were in the habit of using the pith of *Juncus Effusus* (Floss) and other plants as wicks for their lamps.—*Trans.*



Of by-gone ancient days. And all around  
 Encircled by the endless sea, and steep  
 To it descending are groups of "Skerries"  
 Unhabitable, wild. Now towards the south,  
 Through cloudy air, a faint outline is seen  
 Confus'd and dim, like some grey phantom ship,  
 Yet firm, unmoved by wind. A lonely isle  
 'Twixt Hetland and the Orkneys there looms forth,  
 Uprearing high to Heaven its bold, proud head,  
 The Fair Isle—to Shetland appertaining,  
 And of like origin, and by like race  
 Inhabited at first. A mere insect  
 It seemeth, from a thick swarm disjoin'd  
 And here alone into the wave cast down.  
 Scarce to one hundred count the souls who dwell  
 Upon the south side of this desert spot,  
 Like earth's last habitants, or like to men  
 Forgotten by the world, strange to the age,  
 Unmoved by other change than the rain-drops  
 Of birth and death which variation make,  
 And grave themselves into their life's hard soil.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now to this place my lay must lead you back  
 Well nigh three hundred years.

'Twas early Summer,  
 Yet Midsummer day rose dull and sunless  
 Over the land and sea. Weeks long had raged  
 A storm from th' east with not an hour of rest,  
 But now at length in the grey morning dawn  
 The gale was sleeping, yet its bed was rough,  
 And by wild dreams disturbed, it threw out groans  
 And froth and foam.

There in the south appears  
A giant ball with which the wave doth play :  
It casts it in the air, then seizes it  
Just like a tiger, which his prey lets 'scape,  
Then pouncing grasps it, and his cubs therewith  
Diverts, then strikes his claws into it fierce,  
And beating stuns it.

From village huts  
Have hastened out to Fair Isle's rocky shore  
Men, women, children, all : their flaxen hair  
By sea-breeze blown about ; with eyes wide ope  
And curious gaze they scan the object strange  
Which hither like a great, dead whale by sea  
Is being borne. The dark and mighty hull  
Announces plain—it is a ship of war,  
Dismasted, rudderless. It drifteth on,  
Prow foremost. The stem oft raiseth up to view  
All foam besprent, the figure of a man,  
With pointed beard, and with the Golden Fleece,  
Hung by broad chain ; while on the quarter-deck  
A crowd of men do wring their hands, and gaze  
Up Heavenwards.

Now is the tiger sate  
With his rough play. Raising his paw, he strikes  
And fiercely plants his claws in his foe's neck.  
So grasps the wave the ship, and hurls it high  
Upon a reef. A thunder-crash—a scream  
As from a single throat—the phantom then  
Hath disappeared.

A drowning cry of woe  
Yet rings out here and there—a struggling arm,  
A head breaks through the surf. A strong-made boat

Managed by stronger hands, from shore puts forth  
To save what yet there may remain to save.

There, by the wave itself is one upborne  
Whom deep it had already dragged, in whose ear  
The wild pulsations of his blood had hissed  
And consciousness effaced. Now in caprice  
It bears him back to light ; his body grasps  
As with a hundred smiting giant-fists,  
Then like a cork it tosses him to land.

There lies he senseless, stunned ; his raven locks  
Drip round his brow, but when the women now  
Take hold of him, to lift him, he raiseth  
Up himself uninjured, stares round, then speaks,  
But strange the tongue ; they understand him not  
Till cometh one of Fair Isle's grey-haired men  
Who once unto the Netherlands had sailed  
While still a youth. He lists, and then he tries  
The stranger's speech. "Thou speak'st a foreign tongue,  
As they in Flanders speak." "I am a Walloon,"  
The other makes reply, but water pours  
From out his ears and mouth and chokes his utterance.

Soon goes he on. "Are ye here friends or foes?"  
"Why ask? We here are enemies to none."  
"Whose is this island?" "England's." "Ha! Accursed!"  
He stamps the ground. "So may ye end on me  
The work your sea began." Then straight will he  
Rush back into the flood, but they hold him.  
"The brine hath maddened him, give him to drink,"  
The old man calls. A maiden hastes, returns ;  
A thirsty draught he takes, then looks more calm  
And says, "Receive my thanks, I feel refreshed,  
And, whoe'er ye be, know, we are Spaniards,

Our ship the first that to the war left Antwerp.”  
“A war with whom?” the old man asks surprised.  
Yet more astonished sounds the answer back.  
“Ye know it not? Hath the storm then driv’n us  
From off the earth up to another star?  
Ye know not then what agitates the world?  
Nought of the war such as the world ne’er saw!”  
The old man shakes his head. “How harms that us?  
They who make war, seek gain, and we are poor;  
Therefore such news ne’er reacheth us. Yet speak;  
Relate to us.”

The stranger then began,  
“’Tis now a month ago, since we set sail  
With twice a hundred ships. Our fighting men  
Near twenty thousand, horse and foot; sent out  
By Philip, King of Spain, my gracious lord,  
On whose dominions the sun doth never set,  
To break and crush the pride of your great queen;  
Invincible the name he gave our fleet.  
To battle we sailed forth, like eagles, which  
’Gainst swallows fight, for ev’n so puny seemed  
To us the hostile force of your small ships.  
A gale then caught us in the Straits; no gale  
But Satan’s living breath it was which came  
The brood of heretics to help. Then burst  
The sea before our eyes and half our fleet  
Engulphed; the rest would not obey the helm,  
And then the hellish birds, with swallow-flight  
Swooped round about, a dainty meal to seek  
On our disabled hull. Darkness came on,  
Nor lifted till to-day. Three weeks the waves  
In fog have driv’n us; yet at times we saw  
Before us drift—a dead friend’s form it seemed—  
A Spanish Wreck: but we, the Admiral’s ship,  
Having on board the Duke of Medina

Sidonia, were destined here first to——”

The speaker starts, and stops and gazes out  
Where now the rescuing boat returns to land  
Filled to the water's edge with heavy freight  
Of human life, that's just escaped from death.  
Prostrate they lie ; one man alone, in front  
Erect doth stand, his grey hair round his brow  
Doth cling, and from his eyes a vacant stare,  
From which all life seems fled, is fixed on Heav'n.  
Corpse-like he looks, although he stands erect :  
So far his soul hath flown.

Now in low tones

The Walloon whisp'ring tells—“ He comes! 'tis he—  
The Admiral—to him 'twas not ordained,  
Yet better that he lay in Ocean's depths  
Till the great day of doom.”

The boat now gains

The shore ; they land, and quietly the Duke  
Steps out upon the beach. From lip to lip  
Their tale hath flown, but yet the island-folk  
Receive into their midst—as guests—those men  
Just 'scaped from death. Then with uncovered head  
The old interpreter draws near the Duke,  
And to him by the Walloon speaks.

“ We are

Not foes, my lord, misfortune makes us friends ;  
Here is no place for hate, but human woe  
Calls for our aid. Continue here with us ;  
What poverty can give, it giveth free ;  
And should Heav'n will, in time we'll guide you back  
Unto your own home-land.”

## Mutely the Duke

Doth grasp the old man's hand. Behind him then  
A wave with mighty crest doth cast on shore,  
Near to his feet, the figure of a man  
With pointed beard, and with the Golden Fleece,  
Hung with broad chain. The prow and figure head  
Of th' Admiral's ship it is ; with loud crash  
It striketh on the rocks, while through the flakes  
Of foam King Philip's eye-ball gleameth white.

\* \* \* \* \*

Although the island scarce a dozen leagues  
Doth measure round—yet North from South like lands  
Wide Sundered lie ; for at Creation's prime  
Some tumult wild, a yawning rocky chasm  
Did form between them. A whirl of strong tide  
With many arms into the cauldron pours,  
And boils in its abyss. The ground which slopes  
Thereto, is marsh in which the foot doth sink.  
Birds in their flight alone may venture o'er ;  
And if in Summer-time a fisher's boat  
May safely plough its way around the cliffs,  
Yet Winter stern divides the Isle's two points  
Ev'n as completely as the world's two poles.

But yet upon the lonely northern point  
A dwelling stands, erected firm and strong,  
A homestead from the grey old days when here  
The roving Northman homeward bore in ships  
The plunder he had gained : high by strong wall  
Around encircled, Cendriksburg its name  
So long as Mem'ry of Fair Isle hath spok'n.  
It stands close to the island's highest peak—  
The Ward Hill—whence on clear, bright days, the eye  
Can north to Hetland reach. This hill doth shield  
Full well the farm and vegetation round

From biting blast, that sheep and cattle here  
Good pasture find. A creek that teems with fish  
Runs inland near the house. Thus Nature grants  
Enough for man's support ; yea, more, she gives  
An overstore of all his simplest wants.  
The owner of this place is known by all  
His household, and the tenants of his land,  
As "Laird of Cendriksburg." From sire to son  
Those men—a little group—have served the Laird,  
But been by him regarded rather friends  
Than underlings. In like succession has  
The name of Cendrik been inherited  
Ev'n from the earliest times by son from sire.  
They live, debarred from converse with the world  
Ev'n more than those on Fair Isle's southern shore,  
Their kindred ; from them not quite divided,  
But yet with them their intercourse is rare.  
They pass their lives in quiet peaceful days,  
In want or woe, sufficient to themselves,  
They on no help depend. Twelve months had come  
And gone, since that the land its master had  
Exchanged—and where the wave leaps to the rock  
Old Cendrik sleeps, safe in his stony bed  
Enclosed, and his descendant ruleth now  
The house and land, an only child—alone,  
His mother too had died 'ere he was more  
Than child. But now a youth of twenty years  
He stands, the strongest man within the isle,  
In stature towering over all ; his limbs  
A giant warrior strength declare, while from  
His blue eyes' glance, a gentle and almost  
A dreamy, boyish character looks out.  
Yet he 'tis first who danger doth defy  
Where'er it threatens, and of the vanquished he  
Is aye the last to turn his back. His word,

And e'en his look, young tho' he is, each one  
Implicitly obeys, respects in him  
The Laird, and loves the friend—the sure defence  
And counsellor, who to all needy ones  
Doth aye assistance give.

'Twas now the eve  
Of the same day, about whose noontide hour  
The Spanish flag-ship broke upon the reef  
Close to the shore. In Spring or Harvest—  
For the Winter stands apart—night would have  
Long ere this concealed the ling'ring gray in  
Western sky ; but now, in Summer's bridal,  
A crimson flush shone out—though still through clouds—  
The first bright tint that day ; it was a gleam  
Such as at night in northern lands, the sun  
Doth cast mysteriously o'er sleeping earth.  
The farm lay hushed in rest ; but Cendrik still  
Was wand'ring on the shore. His temples throbbed,  
Although the work of day was long since done ;  
And thus he sought the cooling sea-breeze here,  
And in a lonely mood he sauntered on.  
Then suddenly he paused, for near the cliffs  
Before him rose a face illumed in glow  
Of sunset sky ; it mutely gazed upon  
The sporting waves, and from the maiden brow  
Soft, rippling hair, bright golden, loosely fell.  
His uncle Folkolf's child it was, who, near  
To him in years, was orphan'd like himself.  
His playmate once, in every boyish game  
His daring helper—now grown tall and slight,  
The quiet mistress of his home. No word  
Of discord had at any time dissolved  
That bond of childhood's years, but as time sped  
It seemed to fall away. For many years





Each had the other shunned, so far as common  
Interests of each day allowed. To her hand  
Ev'n ere the old man's death, the house affairs  
Entrusted were, and when he died, the son  
For them retained her. Carefully her work  
Performing, she ne'er maintained her claim  
Or rights of cousinship ; as servant maid  
Fulfilled her duty well ; not diff'rent from  
The others there, she stood in word and deed  
A serving maid. It was her own desire  
Ev'n from the first, and so it yet remained.

And now so unexpected was she there,  
In the red evening light, upon the shore,  
He paused almost afraid, and then at once  
The blood rushed to his temples, and they throbbed  
More quickly than before. He stood afar ;  
She saw him not, and the loud plashing waves  
Had drowned his foot-fall ; a while in dread  
He lingered, then pursued his way along,  
But as this led him to the narrow path .  
Not far from which she sat, so stepped he up  
Towards her then, and said, "So late here, Folkma ?  
Methought that all were sleeping save myself."  
She raised her head, and answered, "Thy commands  
Require me not at this hour in the house,  
And fear not that the morrow's dawn shall find  
Me late awaked." He stood and saw amazed  
Her golden hair in the night wind glimm'ring,  
Then quickly thus he answered : "Thou art right,  
'Tis pleasant here to sit, when all else sleeps ;  
I too was tempted out"—and on the stone  
Beside her then, he sat him down to rest.  
Now silent they remained, and calm beheld  
The clouds march on ; with hollow voice, the waves



Were moaning yet, but gradually they slept.  
And now upon the sea's horizon clear  
The sun's bright face, without a cloud, shone like  
A ball of fire. It's solemn, midnight light  
Fell on the waves' white foam like flashing sparks,  
And Folkma's brow was dipped in purple glow.  
"The sun brings Summer late to us this year,  
Yet brings he it," said Cendrik now ; "Meseems  
I ne'er longed for it so." The maid spake not,  
Then spake he yet again : "Methinks too that  
The Summer once was fairer, than it for  
Many years hath been. Then were we gladdened  
By its near approach. Was't not so with thee?"  
To that she gave assent. "In truth it was."  
Then eagerly he asked : "And why no more,  
As hitherto? Is it the Summer's fault?"  
"Whose then?" Her words were only uttered half,  
For now she tried to draw away her hand  
Which he had seized ; but he detained it yet  
With pressure soft, as if he craved her leave  
To hold it there, and so she let it rest.  
Close to their feet the crested waves would break  
And then fall back again : they silent sat,  
Till Cendrik spake once more : "Folkma, oft hath  
It been as if a voice within me said  
That our fault 'twas, and if we so desired  
The Summer came ev'n fairer than before.  
Is't madness that my heart to-day beats wild  
Within my breast!" His hand became round hers  
More firmly clasped ; then he felt her pulse-beats  
Thrill warm and fast 'gainst his, and so likewise  
The maiden's bosom quickly rose and fell,  
A lovely copy of the waves below.  
Now sudden stretched she forth her other hand  
Out towards the sea, and hastily exclaimed,

As if his question had not reached her ear,  
"What is that, Cendrik?" For the first time now  
Her voice fell on his ear like childhood's greeting,  
A sound of Summer time, which since those days  
Had not returned. "What mean'st thou, Folkma?" asked  
He, while he tried to still his trembling heart.  
His eyes obeyed her pointing hand, but as  
He looked, he raised his arm towards her neck  
And clasped it light. Then sprang she up in fear.  
"See there! What is't? It comes and sinks again,  
Now riseth up once more. See! it gleameth  
Like to a pale face from the Spirit land."

And as she spake, a bird from upper air  
Flew with shrill, piercing cries; another came,  
And soon a swarm, all darted towards the spot,  
Where something with the waves arose and fell.  
'Fore Cendrik's eyes there seemed to float a veil  
In purple sparkling light of midnight sea.  
Was't threads of Folkma's golden hair which wove  
A net before his sight—then passed and left  
His vision clear. A human form he saw  
Driv'n as the sport of waves, an arm embraced  
A floating spar: lifeless and effortless  
It looked, and by the sea tossed like a ball  
Towards the rocks—whereon ere long its head  
Would fiercely strike. No time for pond'ring now,  
But action swift, to rescue him if life  
Remained; and as to lightning's flash succeeds  
The thunder's roll, so, on the flash of thought  
Dashed Cendrik through the surf. He fought therewith  
E'en like a lord, who, in grim ire, his slaves  
Doth cast aside; before his arm the swarm  
Of greedy birds dispersed, and then the prey  
O'er which they watching flew, he strongly grasped,

And 'circled with his arm. Back to the sea  
He thrust the floating wood, on which the stiff  
And lifeless-like white fingers tightly clung.  
Then raising high the stranger's face above  
The waves, he bore him with strong arm ashore,  
To Folkma's feet, and joyfully exclaimed,  
"He lives! In truth a gladsome omen 'tis  
Of Summer, since it life again restores!  
He owes thee thanks for his, for thine eye plucked  
Him from the waves; mine arm but perfected  
Thy work; so now on him thy care bestow."

And so the maiden eye and hand inclined  
To help the rescued one. A youth he was,  
Scarce more than boy, with features finely formed;  
His raven hair in wavy ringlets fell  
Around his brow of death-like hue; his breast  
Still breathing moved beneath the sailor's coarse  
Rough dress; the lips now gasped for breath, the hand  
Felt groping round, then from the mouth escaped  
A deep drawn sigh, and slowly, softly oped  
Themselves the dark eyelids. The deep brown eyes  
Looked upwards as if veiled by visions yet,  
But soon as 'fore them Cendrik's beard they saw  
The pupils wider grew, and a wild gleam  
Of terror flashed from out their sable depths.  
Then every limb in anguish seemed to strive  
To gain its strength, and tott'ring rose he up  
As if to flee. His feet refuse their aid.  
Thus stands he, breathless, till in gentle tones  
Cendrik addresseth him, and questions whence  
He came, how long the sea had driven him, but  
The handsome stranger silent shakes his head;  
He understands him not. On Folkma's face  
His look now for the first time falls—a bright,

A radiant look, without a shade of fear ;  
 And sudden as a drowning man doth seize  
 A spar, he firmly round her throws his arms,  
 And thus on her supports himself.

As soon

As Cendrik this perceives, a tremor light  
 Doth o'er his eyelids move. The picture's fine!  
 Too fine almost, when now the stranger's cheeks  
 A lively red o'erspreads, as if the source  
 In Folkma's blooming countenance to his  
 Transferred itself. With impulse quick, Cendrik  
 Puts forth his hand and says, "Thou art too weak,  
 Thou canst not walk." He raiseth in his arms  
 And bears away the youth's light form, who strives  
 To free himself, and with shy look to Folkma  
 Stretcheth out his hand. She followeth them,  
 And lessens thus his fear : the Summer sun,  
 Which scarce had 'neath the sea's horizon sunk,  
 Was now returned with glorious light again.  
 And at that time they entered Cendriksburg.

\* \* \* \* \*

Life often is a dream to waking eyes,  
 Yet dream is life unto the captive soul,  
 Mute, God-sent messenger from Vanaheim,\*  
 The shining palace underneath the sea,  
 Within whose crystal walls is nothing hid.  
 There dreams are wov'n by Oegis'† ancient race,  
 The restless Vanen. Swiftly flies their spool,  
 And casts black weft across the golden warp ;  
 Then breathe they o'er the dream-web with their mouth,  
 And so it floateth up on silvern pearls,  
 And Vilis seize it with their fingers pale

\* Vanaheim—the home or kingdom of the Vanen or Vanir.

† Oegis—the sea-god, whose domain is the wide, lonely sea.

And carry it away. On a moonbeam,  
 Or glimmer of a star, they bear it in  
 The darkened chamber, where a sleeper's breath  
 Doth rise and fall, and hastily they spread  
 The dream net over him—then leaps his heart  
 With joy in sleep, or strives, and sobs, and groans.  
 But soundless they, like to the morning wind,  
 Soar vanishing again, with faces pale  
 And veiled around in light transparent garb,  
 With flowing, golden hair like gossamer.  
 They travel over land and sea at night  
 So fair, than none who once beholds their face  
 May cease to gaze on them. Yet woe to him  
 Who doth behold them, for dead brides are they,  
 Who ere their wedding eve, in earth's cold lap  
 Did find their bridal bed. Fierce thirst for love—  
 Their heart's unquenchable and strong desire  
 For living men—doth lead them back to earth.  
 But he 'gainst whom their hair or dress doth sweep,  
 On whom their chill and dewy kisses fall,  
 Lieth cold and breathless when grey morning comes.  
 Thus hover they by night, in moonlit air  
 Round Hetland's rocky cliffs, and Fair Isle's shore ;  
 But when the sound of morning wind is heard,  
 When day-dawn glimmers in the eastern sky,  
 They dip and vanish in the sea like swans.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nightly a dream to Folkma's chamber came,  
 A net of bright and golden thread-work formed ;  
 She knew it well, it was the sunbeams which  
 The Summer brought with it ; it wrapped her round,  
 With splendour only, for its rays warmed not.  
 Shades by dark woof across the web were wov'n  
 Of other coloured threads, that seemed black hairs :

These lay with freezing touch upon her heart  
And stole her breath, a snare, which ever close  
And closer drew; and, as the net entwines  
The mazed fish, so closed the mesh-work of  
The dream, with choking power round Folkma's heart.  
In vain this strove with loud and anxious beats  
To free itself, but thick and thicker fell  
The frost of death upon her helpless soul.  
Throughout the night she uttered plaintive sobs ;  
Then came the day, a dream with waking eye,  
And all was as before. There lay now clear  
Around on rock and sea, the Summer's brief  
But brilliant sunshine, and Cendriksburg from  
Early morn until the close of eve stood  
Dipped in the-changing light. Rang in the vale  
The lowing of the kine, high on sharp cliffs  
Climbed sheep and goats, the fisher zealous cast  
His net along the shore. 'Twas ever so,  
And nothing altered in this tranquil spot  
Since for the first time Folkma's lullaby  
Was chanted by the waves ; and yet her life  
Passed dream-like now before her waking eyes.  
One thing alone was changed since former days—  
A guest was in the house. With silent lips  
The stranger youth, who soon had perfect health  
Regained, now moved with light step round the place :  
Plainly his raven locks let him afar be  
Recognised ; friendly his look, his greeting,  
In an unfamiliar tongue. His converse  
Went no farther—his language was unknown,  
And thus appeared he like an image mute.  
Yet all day long he zealous made attempt  
With work to compensate his host for what  
He hospitably gave. He ready helped  
In every work, but specially he sought

To be the maiden's help, and glad indeed  
And pleased they seemed, with the assistance giv'n.  
Extinguished now those signs of fear, which in  
His eyes the sight of Cendrik had at first  
Awaked, and willing walked he oft with him  
Alone, across the fields, and o'er the rocks.  
They silent went, for to them also failed  
A common speech ; yet 'twas from day to day  
As if an understanding 'twixt them grew,  
Which needed not a spoken sound—the hand  
That pointing showed, the brow in question raised,  
A nodded Aye or No sufficient spake.  
One word alone spok'n by the open lips  
And pearl-white teeth conveyed a meaning sound  
To Cendrik's ear, "Español!" The stranger  
Was a Spaniard. A week passed by, when with  
A fisher, whom his trade had northward led,  
The tidings came, from south of Fair Isle, of  
The war-ship's loss, and how the strangers there  
Did wait, until they homeward could return.  
Thus was the speechless mystery unloosed,  
Yet still another hid itself from view.  
Nightly the dream to Folkma's chamber came :  
Then sat she in the breeze upon the rocks,  
'Twas night, yet brilliant stood the sun above  
The ocean's edge, announcing Summer-time.  
Her eyes were dazzled by the reddish glare,  
And nothing saw, but soft and warm she felt  
A hand that in her own did rest. Then rose  
From ocean's depths, an object light and dark  
At once—a crested wave broke over her,  
And whirling dashed her o'er with foaming spray,  
And dragged the hand from hers. An icy chill  
Pierced through her frame ; the sun grew dark ; she groped  
In anguish blind around, and found but night



And empty air. A frantic cry was wrung  
By torment from her pent up soul, and with  
The cry awaked, she started up from sleep.

Then came the day, the dream with waking eye,  
And all was as before ; 'twas better even  
Than 'twas wont to be ; for Cendrik now as  
Ne'er before gave her his hand each morn in  
Friendly greeting, and in his voice she heard  
The tone familiar of their childhood's days :  
But was his mood a grave or jesting one,  
No blood with hasty beat coursed through his veins ;  
And when he spake his glance ne'er fell on her,  
Yet seemed a lustre in his eye, as if  
The azure of the Summer heav'n lay there ;  
Also a dream-like gaze, lit up at times  
By gold threads wov'n therein in Vanaheim.

Silent as ever sat the young guest still  
At the household board. All gladly saw him,  
And stolen glances oft the maidens took,  
Raising their eyes up to his raven locks.  
His language still to them was strange, strange too  
Was theirs to him ; their daily life had not  
Yet 'tween them thrown a bridge. Cendrik alone  
In some strange way could understand him ev'n  
Without a word or sign. It often seemed  
A mystery how each unerringly  
And true, perceived the other's mute desire.  
To Folkma long a puzzle 'twas, till once  
Her eye and not her ear the language found  
In which they both conversed. Each looked on each  
No longer than a pulse beat ; in that time  
There rose within their eyes a sudden gleam,  
A double ray, which meeting, blended in

A rippling wave-like harmony of light,  
Just as in Autumn through the silent night  
The sea, in mystic, wondrous flashes gleams.  
It bore a tone which needed not the ear  
To know its meaning—a language rich in  
All expression of question or reply.  
Thus each the other mutely understood.

Henceforth in Cendrik's mind there daily grew  
An active and solicitous desire  
For his young guest's welfare. The chamber where  
Till now the youth had nightly sought repose  
Seemed to the Laird too gloomy and too small.  
And to the best room of the house, he with  
His own hands bore a couch, an heir-loom, made  
Of oaken wood, and finely carved, long since  
A grandsire's bridal bed. Folkma he bade  
To ope the chest, wherein untouched was kept  
His mother's precious store of linen fine,  
And with the best which in it hidden lay  
To equip the bed and room. Silent as  
In a serving-maid becoming was, she  
Did his will, but when the evening came, she  
Met the stranger, whose arm she took and led  
Him to the shore, where sheltered in a creek  
The boats all lay. Then pointing to a skiff  
She said "España," and raised her hand  
Towards the south, to show the road by sea  
Which might conduct him safely back to friends  
And native land. Seizing an oar, she made  
A sign expressive, she was prepared to  
Bear him company ; but though the Spaniard  
Plainly her meaning understood, yet mute  
He shook his head, while to his forehead rose  
A vivid, hasty blush ; then turned his steps

Back to the farm, clad in the sailor's dress—  
 The same coarse garb he wore when hither driv'n  
 By sea, and which until this day, ev'n while  
 He slept he never once had laid aside.

With head bowed low Folkma did wend her way  
 Home after him, entered her chamber, and  
 From out a coffer drew a smooth white staff  
 Of ashen wood. With count'nance pale, she cast  
 An earnest look to Heav'n, with trembling hand  
 Then quickly cut an ancient Runic charm  
 On the white wood ; merely fantastic signs,  
 Yet they expressed the song which Gerda sang  
 When she with sorrow Odin's charm did seize.

As this Runic character I cut  
 I forbid, I banish  
 Man's company from the maid,  
 Man's society.

As this Runic character I cut  
 With it withdraw I evil charms ;  
 The staff bears weal, the staff bears woe ;  
 Heimdall\* guards it.

Holding the ash wood in her garments hid,  
 She glided towards the youth's new sleeping place,  
 Listening with cautious ear. Void was the room.  
 She entered it ; then hastily concealed  
 The staff among the sea-grass of the bed  
 Beneath the eider-down, and ran outside  
 In fear, with bated breath down to the shore,  
 Where rushing restlessly the billows broke.

And restless too tossed Folkma on her couch

\* "Heimdall is the warder of the gods, and is therefore placed on the borders of heaven, to prevent the giants from forcing their way over the bridge Bifröst."—(Mallet's "Northern Antiquities.")

When now on Cendriksburg lay darkening night,  
And all was hushed in sleep. The dream returned,  
Veiled in the dusky light and without sound,  
Ev'n as a Vila\* moving o'er the sea.  
From out the floating white mist veil there shone  
A double brownish light ; it nearer came ;  
A puzzling vision 'twas. It stronger grew,  
This star-like glare ; now 'twas a double flash  
Of diamond rays, dazzling the eyes, and now  
Two great black coals, fanned into ardent glow  
By living breath. They blazed with flaming heat,  
Like balls of fire which from the vault of Heav'n  
Were downward hurled ; rushing to earth they came  
With lightning speed, straight down to Folkma's heart.  
And soon they reached their aim ; burned and consum'd  
Her blood in vapour rose. A deadly pang  
Wrung terror shriek from Folkma's lips, and with  
Fixed, palsied look she started up.

'Twas then

A dream, as each night brought in varied guise  
Still round her hung the glimmer of its light,  
And outside moved in white and shining form  
The slender moon's canoe.† Folkma restrained  
Her breath and listened, mute : the house was hushed.  
No sound, a sleep like death, only her heart throbb'd  
And her breast went heaving like the sea, when  
The storm hath spent its wrath. She found no rest ;  
It drove her forth, whither she knew not, but  
Away! Yet as she now her chamber left,  
Her foot with noiseless tread passed on towards

\* See p. 24.

† An ancient popular belief of the Northern nations that the moon travelled across the river of heaven (the milky way) in a silver boat.

The sleeping-room in which she had arranged  
 The stranger's couch. List'ning with stealthy ear,  
 She heard no sound of sleeper's breath come through  
 The silent night. Almost unconsciously  
 She raised her hand, unclosed the door, and stood  
 And stared, then groped ;—the bed was empty, and  
 Was yet untouched.

The Summer night hung o'er  
 The island with the stillness of deep sleep,  
 The soft wind by the shore passed like a warm  
 And living breath ; the wave alone, ev'n as  
 A child at play, moved towards the beach, toying  
 With shells, then quietly drew back agzin ;  
 The waning moon sailed through the space of heav'n,  
 And threw a fitful light, and shadows cast.  
 It gazed not now with sov'reign pride, down from  
 The throne of night, and star on star formed clear  
 A sparkling diadem around its light.

O'ershone by it Folkma went dreamily  
 Forth to the shore ; she seemed in double dream,  
 With waking look, and eyes still tranced in sleep ;  
 The sea sang to her fevered sense the song  
 She heard in childhood, and with closed eyes  
 She list'ning went : then her eyelids rose, and  
 Her foot moved on towards the narrow path  
 Which lay close to the sea. Here too no sound  
 Except the changeless chant of murm'ring waves,  
 Except the pulses of her trembling heart.  
 What will it ? What with constant hammer stroke  
 Doth drive it so ? Thou dream-befooled thing,  
 Give rest—give peace!

Then suddenly it paused

As if the order hearing, it obeyed  
And ceased the hammer stroke. An uttered sound  
Rang through the night—a foreign word, which ne'er  
Before had Folkma heard, but yet she knew  
The voice which spake it; the accent too its  
Meaning told her, as if to her since youth  
It had familiar been. She stood, and looked  
To see who spake. Her eye discovered nought  
But rock and sea, lifeless seemed all around;  
But where the riven cliffs sloped to the sea  
Just there, a something stirred, unreal-like,  
A play of shadows, the wav'ring moonlight  
Cast it—two phantoms semblant on the rocks.  
With rigid look Folkma did gaze thereon,  
But all again was hushed and motionless;  
But there! a shadow arm did rise, and once  
Again from Cendrik's lips in accents glad  
The foreign word did come, and suddenly  
Without a sound, the shadows did embrace.

As by the rock the white lashed sea leaps up  
In foam to heav'n, the seething blood doth rush  
Upward to Folkma's brow. A thick net-work  
It spreadeth o'er her sight; her reason fades,  
And like the bird which on its passage flight  
Errs from the flock, but with an impulse dim  
Sails onward through the mist, so strays her foot  
Pathless, inland, straight on from North to South.  
The rocks she upwards climbs, and on the ridge  
Which sheer descends, she wandereth ev'n as  
Night walkers, fearless, unforeboding go.  
The giddy steep no conscious fear awakes  
Within her breast, for nightly hath the dream  
Glared on her with a terror worse, and this  
Is also dream, from which she strives to wake.

Forward! Away! And down the steep she glides.  
From sleep disturbed, the osprey soars from out  
His eyrie, and in rage wheels round her head,  
Flapping his mighty wings. She hears him not,  
For now anew she clings with cramp-like hold  
To the steep wall. The chamois of the Alps  
No bolder ascent dares, no braver leap  
On needle points, scorning the cliffs and fear.  
The glimm'ring moonlight, and the stars still give  
Their guidance, but now the heav'nly\* boat sails  
Down towards the west, and sinketh in the sea.  
The darkness falls, she pauseth not, restless  
Her heart's wild throbbing drives her ; in it there  
Beats a drop of the Valkyrie's† haughty  
Ancient blood, which with magic heat doth steel  
Her woman's weaker strength. The day now dawns,  
And brown the marshy ground beneath appears ;  
She must go through, in the wet hollow path,  
The sobbing, quaking mass. The mould'ring roots  
A knotty mat-work form, which to her knee  
Doth reach, and thus impedes her progress o'er.  
The lapwing screaming flies above her head,  
And at her side the hern on stilted legs  
Doth scarcely turn his long curved neck before  
The new inhabitant of this, his realm.  
Forward! She will, she must, for there she'll find  
The purpose of her dream. There stretcheth now  
A winding creek in front, to bar her way.  
She stands, but thinks not, nor delays ; one pull  
And her loose garment falls ; she holds it high

\* See p. 31.

† Valkyries—lit. Choosers of the Slain ; maidens possessed of a high degree of heroic courage, who attended Odin on the field of battle.

Upon her shoulders, thus Elf-like\* adorned  
By her golden hair. She darts into the flood.  
The current like a smooth snake doth entwine  
Around her fair white form, but swimming fights  
Her arm 'gainst its advance, and struggles brave  
Up to the rugged shore. Before her stands  
A new rock precipice, steep wall and gorge ;  
Onward and over, now her shadow flies  
Along with her, but when the ardent sun  
Reacheth the zenith, breaks a loud cry forth,  
The first from Folkma's lips, for at her feet,  
Immersed in splendour of the noontide sun,  
Her goal doth lie—the roofs beside the shore  
Which Fair Isle's south side girdeth.

From afar

Her eye discerns the Spaniards' raven locks,  
Which mixeth with the natives' flaxen hair.  
The shipwrecked guests do still remain ; they wait  
A friendly wind, by which they in light craft  
May cross to Hetland, and a trading ship  
Espy to bear them home. From day to day  
They linger on, for ev'n in thought they dread  
Their Royal Master's threat'ning countenance ;  
And many a one is bound to Fair Isle's coast  
By maiden faces of no threat'ning look.  
Though guests they came, yet more as masters now  
They rule the island.

Quickly now they close

In circle round this stranger, who from North

\* There were Elves of Light, and Elves of Darkness ;—the former fairer than the sun, the latter blacker than pitch. (*Vide Mallet's "Northern Antiquities."*)



Descends the hill ; their wond'ring glances tell  
She is the fairest whom they yet have seen.  
Who is't and whence comes she? With hasty words  
Folkma addresseth them, then bethinks her,  
When mute they shake the head, that also they  
Know not the tongue she speaks, and eager tries  
By signs to help herself—but all in vain,  
Until the old interpreter doth help.  
With his assistance by the Walloon's lips  
She then declares whence she hath come, and that  
Near Cendriksburg a Spanish girl was cast  
Ashore, who is now there detained by force,  
And in distress doth hither send for help.



## FAIR ISLE.

Part II.

HE tells it breathless, while the foreign crew  
Are taught it by the two inquirers' lips,  
Yet all mutely shake the head ! alone the  
Admiral makes answer—" 'Tis deception,  
And cannot be, for on the pain of death  
The king forbade that any woman should  
Remain on board our ships."

"Ye know it not!"

Folkma exclaims. "Then hath she you deceived  
As me at first !" Puzzling awhile, she thinks  
How she may prove her words. Wild leaps her heart,  
As she recalls the word, the foreign word,  
Which in glad tones had echoed through the night  
From Cendrik's lips, when the two shadows met.  
And stamm'ring she repeats : "Alienor"—

Alienor—as echo it returns  
Back from a grey-haired Spaniard's lips, who, pale  
To death affright, doth strive for breath, then quick  
Himself composing, cries with joyous look :  
"O Santa Virgin! Holy Virgin thanks!  
I thought that with the others she lay 'neath  
The stormy sea. Punish me, my Master!  
But help her, rescue her ;—mine is the guilt!

Don Miguel, Corunna's richest merchant,—  
 Her father, in whose service I remained  
 Till you, my Duke, did summon me,—had her  
 As bride unto the old Don Felipe  
 Destined ;—a shameful Jewish bargain 'twas,  
 Gold against gold ;—she wept, wrung her white hands  
 In vain beseeching. Don Miguel, wrathful,  
 Dragged her by the hair, and urgèd on the priest  
 To do his work in haste. The day was fixed  
 And the high altar decked. Then to me she  
 Came at evening, and embraced my knees—  
 I had her thereon rocked a thousand times,  
 When so high ;—despairingly she looked—Sir,  
 Ye saw it not—Would I not help her ? had  
 She in the world not one friend left—but that—  
 She pointed to the dull gray of the sea.  
 Forth from my press I took a sailor's garb,  
 Cut short her long, soft, silken hair, and as  
 On that same night our vessel put to sea  
 I took her with me ;—punish me, my Duke!  
 But rescue her! The Virgin thanks! She lives!  
 I gladly die.”

He speaks, and Folkma hears.  
 The words she knows not, but their sense and sound,  
 The old man's glad beseeching look, her eye  
 And ear can read. She falls upon her knees,  
 And towards the Duke imploringly, she too  
 Doth stretch her hand. He bows, and with a mild,  
 Grave look thus speaks he :

“ In the sea thy guilt,  
 My gray-haired friend, was cleansed ; its waters washed  
 Thee free from it. May this be sign to me,  
 That fearless too, before its Judge's eye

My old age may appear. Prepare at once  
To leave this isle. To Hetland, north we'll steer,  
Touching at Cendriksburg, in order there  
To free the maiden from restraint, and home  
With us conduct her. She, once 'neath my care,  
Will by her father be no longer forced  
Unto the hateful tie."

Folkma hears, and reads  
Again the meaning of the words ;—a sound  
Of thanks, of gladness struggles from her lips,  
Then stops—she reels, and strength forsaken, sinks  
To earth, in heavy swoon resembling death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rocked in a boat, and still in death-like sleep,  
They homeward bore her. Stretched upon a mat  
She lay, while seated close beside her was,  
As faithful guardian of her slumbers, the  
Venerable Duke. And following them,  
As 'twere a scornful image of the great  
Invincible Armada, there pushed out  
From the island's shore a puny squadron  
Of slender craft—five boats held easily  
The remnants of the great proud fleet of Spain.  
Yet were they all with sailing gear, and oars  
Provided well, also with weapons, such  
As Fair Isle's wood and iron could supply ;  
For hostile waters round them lay, and to  
A hostile land they went. Thus forward, and  
Towards north they sailed—a flying host, astray  
In unknown regions—yet, in case of need,  
Prepared to strive for and to conquer a  
Path back to their native land. Searching looks  
They cautious cast around, and careful scanned



The wide horizon. An image of old  
By-gone days seemed from the flood awaked, when  
On the bow the Northman stood, hand on sword,  
Sweeping the sea with his clear, falcon glance.  
They spake too here of daring bravery,  
Which death despising, of firm purpose was  
Its aim to conquer, or with craft or force,  
Be friend or foe as chanced, and if need were,  
Haughty defiance shew to all those who  
Resistance offer'd.

Rowing by the cliffs  
Of Fair Isle passed the train of boats along,  
Ploughing the tranquil waters. The sails hung  
Slack and loosely stretched by wind, and often  
Deceived the sailors' hopes. They thought themselves  
Near unto Cendriksburg, yet ever rose  
Lifeless and uniform, a new rough mass  
Of dismal skerries, and still lay Folkma  
Unawakened, under the charm of sleep ;  
Thus without guidance moved they slowly on.  
The summer day did promise still its light  
For many hours, but gradually, a faint  
Green line appeared before the sun, and in  
The west, a something like a white snow-wall  
Immovable, the sky line hid from view.  
Amazed, the eye did thereon rest : it was  
As if the North Pole's distant icy shore  
Had drifted thither, and now fixed remained.  
Still gently blew the wind. Then forward looked  
A keen eye glance, and a shout echoed loud,  
"There 'tis!" On the Ward Hill rose Cendriksburg ;  
Its roof far off was seen, and the sun cast  
His yellow light around ; then seemed it dipped  
In green, which soon to a pale grey did change.  
And now more strongly bent they to their oars.

But on the land not distant from the shore  
An eye was gazing out towards the sea.  
Two figures looked, for on the rocky ridge  
Stood Cendrik's tow'ring form ; Alienor  
With blushing face pressed close to him, was by  
His arm embraced. The evening light beheld  
Her quite transformed. A maiden stood she there  
Clad in the native dress of Hetland's girls,  
Which suited strangely with her raven hair.  
Yet scarce now could the eye th' illusion tell  
Which by the sailor's dress before was wrought ;  
For like a tropic flower, firm clinging to  
A vig'rous tree stem, her face leaned soft and  
Maidenly against his breast ; from calyx  
Of the lovely flower, the dark brown eyes, shy  
And lovingly looked up, while gentle breath  
Of wind played whisp'ring through the boy-like curls  
Which clust'ring round her youthful forehead hung.  
They both were silent, yet their lips' deep red  
Bore impress still of loving converse, which  
They had exchanged, and o'er the waving curls  
Of the dark hair Cendrik now quietly gazed  
Out towards the white and snowy form which rose  
Upon the horizon. Dreamily a smile  
Played round his mouth, and then in gentle tones  
Spake he, nodding while he looked : " Nehal\* weaves  
A bridal dress."

But as he spake, he turned  
His gaze around towards south. From that point came  
What seemed a flock of great, white-breasted mewes  
Nearing the island's shore. 'Twas also like  
Five herons nimbly moving on, each with

\* Nehal or Nehalennia—a female divinity.

A dozen feet, which glitt'ring from the flood  
Arose and fell. Now Cendrik keenly looked,  
For 'twas a fleet of boats ; nearer it came  
With rapid motion ; on black hair, such as  
Alienor's, the sun poured down his light.  
In foremost of the boats, then suddenly  
Its rays were kindled to a pure, bright flame  
Upon a head— 'twas Folkma's golden hair ;  
None other was so fair and sunny bright  
In Hetland's isles ; and with quick, lightning flash  
To Cendrik it made clear, all that had passed.  
One little instant fades the blood from out  
His cheek and temples, his arm expressive  
Points to the approaching boats, his eye with  
Look inquiring turns on Alienor,  
Who comprehends, and trembling answer gives,  
" I am a part of thee—thy property,  
And will what thou wilt—help us, speak, command ;  
They come to sunder us ;—rather be dead !"  
Round her he clasps his arm, then quick his eye  
Doth scan the Spaniards' numbers—then, the wall  
Of Cendriksburg. Again, he rapid turns  
Towards the west, and murmuring, his lips  
Anew repeat—" Nehal weaves—"

On the wide sea

On cloudy island which no eye hath seen,  
Nehal sits throned, in mantle grey enwrapped,  
For grey are all things there, like to the face  
Which she conceals, the hand with which she weaves,  
And like the fabric which her shuttle makes.  
From earliest time she was—yet still no sleep  
Hath pressed her eyelids. Ceaseless is her work,  
A ship her carriage ; ever spinning drives  
She nightly in it round her native coast

Through sea and air. From her quick fingers flies  
The greyish thread-work—it flows and floats ev'n  
As her horses' cloud-like waving manes, and  
Rocks itself upon the dull grey billows,  
A night robe formed of loose, ash-coloured thread.  
Then Nehal's wrinkled hand signs to the wind,  
And sighing he comes from th' abyss. He throws  
Upon his shoulders broad what she hath wov'n,  
And bears it thence. Still fights he with the sleep  
Which him in fetters held, but gradually  
His chest expands, and drinks in long deep draughts  
The fresh sea-air, then snorting it exhales.  
His great and mighty pinions he outspreads  
And soars with noise to Heav'n, then sinks to earth,  
And blust'ring, casteth Nehal's ashy thread  
All round about. Still far off shines the light  
Like sun illumined snow, but o'er it sweeps  
A dull chaos which blots the world from sight.  
The bird in terror cowers on the ground  
Grown sightless, for the dark of night doth kill  
The light and sound in air.

And sudden thus  
Arose a thick fog covering driv'n by wind,  
Hiding the isle from sight. Rock, strand, and sea  
Did vanish ; scarce the ground on which the foot  
Did tread could still be seen. As if th' abyss  
Had upward rolled, sank Cendriksburg from view,  
And faint twilight, as at Creation's dawn,  
Now covered all. Then, quick within his arm,  
With footstep sure, which had no need of light  
But of the sense by which the blinded bird  
Its way in darkness finds—unerring thus  
Upon the path of which each stone since youth  
Had ever to his foot familiar been,



Cendrik now bore Alienor. With his  
 Fair burden, who around him firmly clasped  
 Her arms, downward he went towards the creek  
 To right of the farm wall. Without a sound  
 He stayed his foot, for, through the fog towards left,  
 Sounded the oars, which searching on the stones  
 Strayed by the shore, and Folkma's voice exclaimed,  
 "This way!—land where'er it be. Once ashore  
 I'll guide you safely upward to the house."  
 Thus much—to understand these words hath the  
 Spaniards' ear now learned ;—they land, and in the  
 Dense fog their heavy tread resoundeth loud  
 Upon the rocks. The two who breathless stand  
 In hiding, are by Folkma's dress nigh touched.  
 She pointeth forward :—"There—Alienor—"  
 The sound now passeth on to Cendriksburg.  
 One little moment still the Laird in flight  
 List'ning delays—then fares he blindly forth  
 Towards his goal ; he gropeth with his hand  
 And reacheth it—a little skiff. It takes  
 The man and woman hastily on board,  
 And with light, muffled oar-stroke pusheth quick  
 Far out into the bay.

\* \* \* \* \*

Above was heard  
 The voice of Folkma asking thro' the house  
 After the stranger guest. The servants there  
 Looked dumb amazed on her attendant train  
 Of followers, who eagerly with her  
 Rushed on from door to door. 'Twas all in vain,  
 Empty each chamber stood ; each hiding place  
 In vain searched thro', disclosed not those they sought.  
 But soon the Spaniards in the cellar stores  
 Discovered mead, and deeming themselves as

The conquerors of Cendriksburg, emptied  
 With sailor thirst the cask. The Duke allowed  
 It, saying nought, for eye and tongue half drunk  
 Already told that his restraint would meet  
 Defiant scorn. Folkma alone still strayed  
 In vain search thro' each corner of the place.  
 Thus passed the hours away.

With look sublime  
 Prepared for strife in shining silver helm  
 Nehal's old foe\* appeareth in the Heav'ns.  
 Betwixt these two since dawn of time, hath reigned  
 A feud unceasing. Him alone she fears ;  
 To others offers she contempt. As she  
 With old and wrinkled grey face murm'ring threats,  
 So he in youth perpetual brilliant shines,  
 And laughing grasps by night her ashy thread  
 With his white, shining hand. No maiden twists  
 So speedily her distaff's flaky yarn  
 To thread, as he in thousand pieces tears  
 The work of Nehal's wheel. Below him still  
 O'er earth it spreadeth far—but scarcely shines  
 His clear eye glance upon the fabric dark  
 Than its grey border thrills—then mounts and falls  
 And shakes and yields—then from his lips there comes  
 A silv'ry breath, cool like a whispered song  
 From the dark Universe—now it wheels round  
 An Army† terror-struck and turns to flight.  
 It sinketh in the sea and shadowy fades  
 In air and light from view. Drawing deep breath  
 And freed from Nehal's magic curse, the world

\* The moon, in all Teutonic languages, was of the masculine gender.

† This has reference to a Teutonic myth which explained certain striking appearances of the clouds or sky, as caused by two combating hosts—one of them led by a female divinity;—in this case *Nehal*.

Doth raise her ever changeful face ;—and the  
Fair Conqueror beaming with joy looks down  
Upon the scattered foe.

On Folkma then

His clear eye fell, as she outside the house  
Did wander purposeless around. Again  
The rocks and roof illumined by the moon  
Rose slowly up—the dull grey sheet upon  
The sea was rent, and a broad mirrored light  
Came from the waves. Her look towards it turned  
On a dark speck, already far, like head  
Of northern diver rising from the waves.  
Her list'ning ear, a distant oar-stroke caught,  
Quite soft, scarce audible.

The fog for hours

Hath Cendrik's boat in circles caused to move,  
And as the light again returns, before  
Him still the homestead lies ; the Ward Hill's peak  
Doth cast its shadow nigh unto his oar,  
So quicker pulls he now. Whither? Not long  
He thinks—the waste in middle of the isle  
Affords the best refuge, rowing towards right  
He turns his little craft.

There! What is't? There throngs

From Cendriksburg a dark host to the bay.  
At Folkma's cry they all have hastened out.  
She points—a drunken oath is the reply ;  
And as the osprey after booty dives,  
So in the boats the numerous host doth rush :  
But lo! Their drunkenness doth pass ; their hands  
Are only fired by it to active strength,  
And from shore their vessels speed.

## Cendrik sees

Too late ; they throng upon him from the isle.  
Gains he the land before, so follow they  
Hard pressing on his steps. Unthinkingly  
He turns about, straight out to open sea  
A shout of triumph now salutes his ear.  
They have him, for the number of their oars  
Makes up the space he's gained. But Cendrik's arm  
Hath giant strength fed by the maddened blood  
Which rusheth in his breast. He beats the waves.  
A lightning flash shoots through his brain, one thought  
Alone he hath : Straight on towards the North,  
Towards Hetland!

## Wind and sea lie deathly still—

No breath, scarce is the surface of the sea  
In tiny wavelets raised. Brightly the moon  
Doth shine while travelling on its way, and fills  
The furrows of the keel with silv'ry light.  
Oh! that it fell extinguished from the sky  
And Nehal's dark grey hand would cover it  
With endless, ashy night. Curses now speak  
From Cendrik's eye upon his childhood's friend.  
It points the track of those who flee, and till  
Day dawn it fades not. Ceaseless goes the chase  
Through rippling moonlight, on which here and there  
The flashing oars cast spray.

## Watching keenly

Stands Folkma their pursuer on the bow,  
And as the compass aye to northward points  
So points her hand the way. Yet hours go by,  
And Cendrik's will and strength defiance bid  
To the o'erwhelming numbers of his foes ;  
And scarcely is the space between them yet

Lessened at all. The moon now sets, the chase  
In morning grey doth rage.

Now fails the strength  
In Cendrik's arm, yet nay—he feels approach  
Some ghost-like power which from the deep doth rise  
And strive to seize the oars. But short respite,  
And though with stiffened fingers his hand holds,  
Yet still it moves—and on Alienor  
His look is mutely fixed. She feels with him,  
Reads in his face the sad words he restrains,  
And pointeth silent downward ;—rather death  
United to him 'neath the sea, than home  
To Spain without him. Dazzling in the East  
Riseth the sun, and steep and riv'n doth lower  
The rocky wilds of Hetland towards the North.  
Too late—he feels ;—a man is but a man,  
And faintness weaveth now a dark'ning veil  
Across his eyes.

But look! What moveth there  
Across the black hair of Alienor?  
Doth he mistake? Straining his eyes, he stares.  
The sea in ripples moves—nearer it comes,  
Rapid and dancing, shines. It comes—'tis here—  
It breatheth with cool breath, and Cendrik springs  
Up from the thwart. He grasps with trembling hand  
The mast—the rope-work flies—the sail upfurls,  
And clearly whistling now the morning wind  
The canvas fills.

The Spaniards with a curse  
Its whistling greet ; their booty almost caught  
Escapeth now on wings, driven by the wind.  
One moment only ere to them it reached,

Still 'tis enough to lengthen out anew  
The space between them : and transformèd now  
It hastes from sight away. Like a white flock  
Of sea-gulls seem they, close upon the waves,  
Which unto speedy flight a fugitive  
Sea swallow scares. Thus they pursue ; the foam  
Up to the bow doth hiss, and casteth spray  
In whirling flakes around the mast. The sea  
Doth swelling rear itself, as it would hurl  
The boat of the pursuers like a dart  
Towards its goal, and hoarsely thund'ring booms  
The breaking surge from Hetland's rocky coast,  
Which ever nearer riseth up to view.  
Like a safe net which nothing can escape  
It girds the shore ; the hunters loud exult,  
Their game again is fast. Backward to sea  
It cannot win a path—it must to land—  
There they'll have it. And so without resource  
Forward towards the grasping cliffs Cendrik's boat  
With full sail speeds.

Now bursts before him  
In the rocky wall a cleft scarce broader  
Than his boat, the strong tide's constant surging  
Hath dug it out and worn it honey-combed ;  
The wave before it stops, and as the flakes  
Of foam fly from the bit, and o'er the reins  
Of hastily curbed race-horse, so the rage  
Of breakers whirling angry foam to Heav'n  
Fills with white cataract the death-like gloom  
Of the narrow entrance. Timid above it  
Flies the sea-gull, its sharp screeching voice is  
Lost amid the roar.

Cendrik's face no sign

Of fear betrays ; yet once again his eye  
 Is keenly fixed upon Alienor :  
 Then steady through the white gulf makes he way,  
 With cramp'd hold grasps the helm—a shock—hissed round  
 By greedy waves the breast of the sea-bird  
 Shoots in and through—Is't alive or dead ?—

And close behind its wings the foe doth chase ;  
 But as from sight it flies—the Spaniard stops,  
 White as the foaming waves his brow grows pale  
 Beneath his raven hair. In terror turns  
 His helm around—backward! The chase is o'er.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not long her scant adornment Summer lays  
 On Hetland's rocky brow. Like to a wreath  
 Of fair green myrtle leaves it is which on  
 Her wedding morn a youthful maiden bride  
 Sets on her hair, but looses ere the night ;  
 Such transient days of transport and delight,  
 With hot flush'd cheeks and dream-entranced eye,  
 Is Hetland's summer-time ; yet brings the night  
 Not the fulfilment of the promised joy.  
 The evening shade with hand ungentle tears  
 The wreath away, scattered in the wind its  
 With'ring leaves fly round, and a forsaken wife  
 With grey bleached hair, and sad eye, dimmed in tears  
 Of mourning, Hetland motionless doth gaze  
 Upon the wide sea round. The storm-wind pipes  
 A shrill discordant bridal song of scorn,  
 And groaning, sobs the sea a mournful dirge  
 Thro' the lone wedding night.

'Twas Autumn now,  
 Changing to shorter days ; barren and brown

The heath upon the hillside withered looked.  
The Summer's guests that in their passage flight  
Had until now, when singly on the wing,  
With gay song cheered themselves, already were  
Towards the south returned. The field was cleared  
Of the scant corn which ripened there, and of  
The cattle, which no pasture now could find.  
Already on the hearth the Winter fire  
Crackled and sparkled, and together there  
At ev'ning joined the scant speech of the men  
And whirring of the loom.

In Scalloway\* now

Was a sight unwonted seen. Seldom had  
The Autumn brought such crowd of foreign guests  
From southern shores; they wandered bold and proud  
For full two weeks all armed through the place.  
If friend or foe—if in their look request,  
Defiance or a threat—'twas hard to say.  
One gave what they desired—gave it at once—  
But secretly all wished their visitors  
Back to their Spanish land. For the first time  
Now was Hetland's Foud by cares official robbed  
Of sleep at night; the Duke, when need required,  
In close restraint would keep his men, but his  
Authority now stood on tott'ring feet;  
And this he felt, so, when a trading ship  
Occasion offered to return to Spain,  
Then left he Mainland. With him went but two  
Of his companions in adversity,  
The others all remained. Among them was  
The grey-haired sailor who Don Miguel served.  
It grieved him from his Admiral to part,

\* At the time of the Spanish Armada, Scalloway must have been the only town in Shetland.



Yet would he not return until his child—  
So called he Alienor—was found again  
And taken with him. His face told plainly  
That for this reason only he remained,  
Whilst in the others 'twas pretext alone  
To ramble through the islands here and there  
In freedom unrestrained, and half as guests  
And half as pirates gain whate'er in them  
Awoke desire. Under the old man's care,  
Went Folkma wand'ring round from bay to bay  
In search of those two who had disappeared,  
Whom none since the sea-chase had seen. Did some  
Retreat conceal them? or had th' abyss of  
Whirling waters swallowed them? Not a trace  
Bore witness of them in the circle of  
This drear and rocky world. Only the news  
Was brought from Fair Isle that Cendrik had not  
There returned again. Oft Folkma alone  
Would in a small boat roam the island group;  
At times attended by the foreign crew;  
Yet she required not safeguard in the host  
Of her wild sailor comrades. Her forehead  
White as marble—the silent, steady look  
From her blue eyes, made all respect and fear,  
And shew her courtesy. And curiously,  
Those swarthy forms seemed unto her alone  
To yield, as to a sovereign. She would rule  
By glance and gesture, and obediently  
The proud, defiant set her will performed.

Then gradual to the folk of Scall'way grew  
The Spaniards' bold increasing arrogance  
Too burdensome; from day to day rose strife;  
To threats it came, to seize them all as foes  
And give them up to England. Against the

People's earnestly united strength their  
Numbers were too few. Still in Lerwick bay,  
A German schooner lay prepared to sail,  
The only trader left, ready for sea  
On the next day. The Spaniards in the night  
The vessel now attacked, scared overboard  
The crew, who woke in terror from their sleep ;  
Then hoisted up the sails before from land  
Assistance came. Driv'n northward by the wind,  
And in the only ship which Autumn still  
Had left on Mainland's coast, they could not be  
O'er'ta'en, and so escaped.

They wandered now  
Like pirates in the neighbourhood around,  
On Bressa, Fetlar, Yell—they crowded on  
The rocky shores ; within some sheltered bay  
They cast their anchor, hastened then on shore  
And carried off by force what was refused  
To their request. Yet still they aye maintained  
As pretext, that they roamed but with the view  
To trace and find the daughter of their land,  
And rescue her from hard, oppressive bonds.  
But those who only had this aim before  
Their eyes, the old friend of Alienor,  
And Folkma, ever stayed with hopeful hearts  
On board the ship, which now sailed farther north  
Towards the island Unst, the most remote  
Of England's maritime authority.

The world seems ended here : as a polyp  
Which stretcheth hundredfold its rocky arms,  
Unst riseth up an ocean Cerberus  
At gate of mist, the dread of Nifelheim.\*

\* Literally, nebulous home—the shadowy region of death, cold and dreary as mist.—(Vide Mallet's "Northern Antiquities.")

No member of the old earth's form exists  
More lacerate by restless, gushing veins  
Ceaseless outworn. A Titan's strength once threw  
This giant block of stone 'gainst Heaven's face  
From out the red heat of the Cyclop's fire,  
Then it grew cold and lifeless, bare and brown,  
Till crashing north here on the basalt rock  
The polar ice was driv'n. In a wild strife  
In early times, a brown and polar bear  
Each other clutched and scratched and tore their flesh ;  
Their hoarse throats growl'd out thunder. The ice bear  
Slow scarred the strong sheathed belly of its foe,  
And gnawed it through. And then in different shape,  
Its hard jaws took a soft and fluent form ;  
As waves they now remained, and licking washed  
The wounded body of its vanquished foe.  
Wild cleft 'gainst cleft did stare, where'er the tooth  
Had gnawed deep to the bone. Yet now it heaved  
With movement strange, soon a small winding pass,  
Then high, gigantic dome-shaped arch arose  
In earth's dark bosom. Nought that living breathed  
Bore yet a record of the years that passed  
By hundred thousands, when dripping, dropping,  
Through darkness of the caves monotonous,  
With ever equal sound the water fell.  
Chalk grew up from the floor, and from the roof  
In drops it hung, and meeting joined in one  
In endless night. Then back the ocean rolled :  
Some revolution of the globe swept it  
Around unto the other hemisphere,  
And now but half the entrance of the arch  
The waters closed. Then the first light broke  
Into the darksome workshop. Resplendent  
The youthful day in brilliant colours saw  
The rocky roof on all sides round upheld

By columns, grand in white and red and green,  
Like entrance hall to some vast minster church ;  
And eyes upon this splendour looked, but with  
Dull, stupid gaze. The great cave bear had come,  
And in the sheltered grottos, purring reared  
His progeny. His hunger marvelled not  
At slender, fairy shapes of stalactite ;  
It drove him swimming out in search of prey ;  
Ev'n on the mammoth greedily he fell,  
And with the flesh of the primeval beasts,  
The giant stag, and elk, and deer, he crept  
To bowels of the earth. Again, in time  
A hurricane came snorting from the north,  
And turned the ocean back. With angry roar  
The high flood threw itself on its old realm,  
And quick its swell the low doorway did bar ;  
With thousand licking tongues it foamed white  
Into the cave depths, up the organ pipes  
Of stalactite it rose—a maddened howl  
Of pain—a smothered groan, as now the rage  
Of stronger beast of prey the weaker slew—  
Then all grew still, and bones alone from slime  
And mud now speak, after unmeasured time,  
Of that great fight. Thousands of years again  
In silence passed away ; the sea by turns  
Would vanish and then reappear, and thus  
In long succession quietly destroyed  
Cave-dwelling beasts. And then came man, pursued  
By his own race with clubs and stones, and forced  
To seek a refuge here. At first though like  
Wild animal, he grew of milder mood  
And more experienced hand. With the soft down  
Of eider-duck he made for wife and child  
A warm, dry nest among the stalactite.  
No powerful swimming arm now bore him here,

But roughly fashioned boat. From the bright sun,  
 From heav'nly blue, and from the mystic light  
 Mid minster columns of his under world,  
 Some dim perception of a "Great Spirit"  
 Grew in his heart, and signs Druidic carved  
 He on the rock. There stood they, as remnants  
 Of a vanished race—puzzle of ages past—  
 Who counts them, names them, or knows ought of them ?  
 They vanished too, and lonely in the caves  
 Echoed the dripping fall of water-drops.  
 But legend speaks in witching music-tones,  
 Charming the senses, dreamy as the call  
 From Nixie's lips, who lureth to her realm :  
 The list'ners all have fled ; the owl alone  
 As last remaining ruler whirs around  
 The faintly glimm'ring cleft. Thus lie to-day  
 The caves of Unst, ev'n as in days to which  
 The earliest knowledge of mankind doth reach.

\* \* \* \* \*

But here and there upon this wild appears  
 A poor and lonely cottage near the shore,  
 Much like the eyrie of some great sea-bird.  
 Those huts are mostly fitted up with planks  
 And wreck-wood, from some ship dashed by the storm  
 'Gainst the precipice. In them fishers live,  
 For other nourishment than "Ocean's fruit"  
 Ripens not here ; scarcely can hungered men  
 With ceaseless toil a bare subsistence gain.  
 Their poverty no greedy eye attracts  
 For treasured store. But yet in spite of this  
 The schooner with the Spanish pirate crew  
 Had hither strayed. Midday had scarcely passed, -  
 Yet twilight drew a veil across the sky,  
 And as the wind whistles among the reeds,

So swept a hollow murm'ring sound across  
The northward heavens ; therefore the Spaniards had  
Already at an early hour chos'n out  
A sheltered anchorage among the creeks  
To them strange and unsafe. A fisher's hut  
Near to this spot stood lonely on the cliffs,  
Yet its bare, wretched look did not arouse  
Their lust of gain. Folkma's boat alone, loosed  
From the vessel's stern, rowed thitherward : she  
Entered stooping through the humble door, where  
Seated by his torn nets mending them, an  
Aged fisherman amazed received her.  
Spring of words, he scarce asked what she sought,  
But hospitably offered meat and drink ;  
Then list'ning to the wind he spake. "To-night  
A gale from north will fiercely blow, it has  
Been long a-brewing. Furl your canvas close,  
And lay your vessel on the weather shore,  
Else will the gale drive it upon the rocks  
In atoms like old wood." Folkma to this  
Gave but indiffrent heed ; she bent her steps  
Towards the door, and then almost from wont  
She turned, and looking round once more, enquired  
If 'neath his roof the fisherman had seen  
Guests, strangers to the land, or heard perhaps  
Such spoken of :—a woman with black hair,  
In sailor's dress ; with whom also a man,  
A head even taller than the fisher was.  
The old man shook his head, and said : "No—nought"—  
Then his eyes he raised—"nought of the dark hair,  
But a strange man ev'n of gigantic height  
I saw not long ago—farther away,  
Where unto Norwick bay the caves look down.  
I knew him not, he stood afar, and seemed  
Looking for sea-mews' eggs, which plentiful

As tang lie there ;—so tall—his shadow stretched  
Behind him far.”

In Folkma's eye, there gleamed  
A 'wildered look. “Where saidst thou 'twas?” A sharp  
Inlet towards the west he pointed out,  
And said, “'Tis two hours' distance from this spot  
Where I beheld him stand. “My thanks!” Her foot  
Sped through the doorway. “What wilt thou?” cried he.  
“Thiassi\* will to-night seize Idun's hair :  
Go to thy ship, and tell them all to land  
Ere Loki's† pale face threat'ning on them looks.”

She heard not, for her oar already dipped  
And westwards urged her boat. The inlet soon  
Grew narrower, high tow'ring, vertical  
To right and left rose dark and gloomy peaks  
Of the stone wall, and like a twisted band  
Formed in dark loops, the water wound itself  
Around its foot ; in wider basins then  
It lay outstretched, soundless and mirror smooth.  
Only like spectral sign of life now rowed  
The boat of Folkma : silence reigned around  
The dreary waste, upon whose naked rocks  
No blade moved in the wind. At times was heard  
From the dark whistling swan a mournful cry  
Through the grey air, from which like ashes fell  
Slowly the growing gloom—a leaden light,  
Not day, not night—a misty middle realm  
At the sad spirit gate of th' under world,

\* Thiassi—one of the frost giants, who with Loki's help succeeded in bringing Iduna with her golden apples out of Asgard, and carrying her off to Iötunheim.

† Loki—“The calumniator of the gods,” connected with the kingdom of the dead as being the father of Hel, the goddess of death.

To which with silent keel Death's ferryman  
The waters dark doth cross.

A shudder passed  
Through Folkma's youthful frame. What madness like  
A phantom drove her here? While yet in life,  
What sought she in the kingdom of the dead?  
Haste back unto the living world! Here beats  
No heart-throb, and no woman's bosom swells  
With rapturous joy or pain. Illusion!  
'Tis a phantom of her brain hath lured her  
Hither. Haste back!

With hasty oar-stroke turned  
She back her boat upon the glimm'ring track  
Which it had ploughed. 'Twas vanished now—in vain  
Her eye looked round. Came she from here? from there?  
The silent, sombre flood gave no reply;  
A snake-like coil that twisted and untwined  
'Mong skerries, hundredfold now wound itself.  
On pushed her boat, straight on, and with keen eye  
Folkma glanced round;—when she approached she had  
Not seen this cleft. Aside she turned her look,  
But strange and tow'ring wild, rocks closed her in  
On every side, smoth'ring almost the life  
From out her heart. Her oar still farther strayed  
Aimless away: day's last faint light had sunk,  
And here and there the reefs did stretch themselves  
With shears invisible, and creaking clutched  
And caught her boat. 'Twas night—no outlet now—  
A sullen murmur with a constant clang  
Like distant breakers, dull and heavy rolled  
High o'er the summits of the rocks; shrilly  
A frightened cry now pierced the darkened air  
From thousand sea-birds, shrill it died away.



In the next moment, flew they forth in haste,  
 And but the murmur in the darkness swelled.  
 Not for the first time now did night o'ertake  
 The northern child, in a deserted waste.  
 Towards the bank Folkma with skilful arm  
 Drew up her boat, around a pointed stone  
 The painter cast, and fearless stretched herself  
 Beside it there. The weird and spectral light  
 Before had images of terror wov'n,  
 But not so night. She sat and waking dream  
 Her senses seized, and with illusion soft  
 Before her closed eyes it passed. Yet not  
 Like to those dreams by night at Cendriksburg,  
 'Twas pleasant whisp'ring wind, and clear and kind  
 The Summer sun broke out through grey like fog ;  
 Quite faint a glimmer came and upwards grew,  
 And with it all the valley spread out soft  
 And vernal green ; warm to the very heart  
 Breathed sweet, soft air, and through the gentle breath  
 A voice e'en like it called aloud her name—  
 "Where art thou, Folkma? Here! Come on the sea!"  
 Again it sings us Freya's\* sunny song!—  
 A net, trembling with golden thread-work, still  
 Enwrapped the form that called ; now stood he there,  
 Blue-eyed and laughing—round his youthful brow  
 The flaxen hair—

She then unclosed her eyes,  
 But almost terrified doth timid glance  
 Downward, behind. What is't? Doth she still dream  
 With open eyes? Remains the dream 'fore them?  
 'Tis night no longer round her here ; the sun  
 Illumes with reddish light, air, rock and sea,

\* The goddess of love.

As at midnight in Summer's bridal-time  
He glows o'er sleeping earth from ocean's verge.  
Folkma perplexed looks up once more—the dream  
Then vanisheth ; her eye speaks consciousness  
Of the right meaning : 'Tis the Northern Light!

Still motionless upon the reddish night  
Her eye doth look—then comes a plashing sound  
Like that with which before outbreak of storm  
The fish through water shoots—by turns it sweeps  
Along, then dives ; it comes, an oar-stroke 'tis,  
And now—a boat—and high by Northern Light  
O'ershone stands Cendrik there.

Crouching behind

In shadow Folkma as on a spectre  
Looks after him. He sees her not, impelled  
By eager haste forward he drives his boat.  
He hears not that another, gliding dips  
Into the sea, and soundless after him  
Ploughs through the flood. At times doth Folkma's oar  
Push on the rocks—at times with light oar-stroke,  
As wing of sea-gull 'gainst the wave doth brush,  
It riseth up—yet constant following dips.  
Then sudden, trackless, Cendrik's boat is gone,  
Devoured by mountain wall. Folkma doth stare  
With look amazed, but soon the puzzle solves,  
For day-clear in the rock the red night shows  
A gloomy vault of stone, by th' ocean's edge  
Only half hid. A little moment's space  
Stays Folkma waiting there, then glideth she  
Into th' earth's gloomy opening after the  
Boat of Cendrik. Her hair in passing sweeps  
Against the rocky roof, but wider grows  
The space above, to right and left. The ground

Bedims the peaceful water-mirror round,  
But shining from its depths, seemeth the light  
Which o'er the outer world is spread, cast back  
In mystic glow. A building, strange, dream-like,  
With bluish pillars, columns white, doth rise  
In arches over Folkma's head. 'Mongst them  
The reddish brilliance of the Northern Light  
In fairy splendour plays, and quiv'ring sparks  
Of crimson light it casteth thro' the space.  
She notes it not, her eye alone is 'ware  
Of Cendrik's boat, which now deserted lies  
Close by the rocks. Above it, in the stone  
A flight of steps ascends, hewn in the rocks  
By human hands in bygone, ancient days.  
Upwards it leads, her foot already flies  
On the steep edge. A winding in the rock  
Leads to a smaller chamber in the heart  
Of the great cavern, safe protected from  
The dripping of the rocks. Ev'n like a nest  
The ground with moss and eider-down is spread.  
The light reflected falls but faintly here,  
Yet on the couch it shines on raven hair  
And a pale woman's face. Another head  
Now hideth it—a foot rings on the rocks—  
And "Cendrik!" "Folkma!" is exclaimed; then mute  
Each on the other looks. Long time—no sound  
Except the even trickling fall of drops.  
He speaks the first, "What wilt thou?" stretching forth  
Her hand she points: "The maiden there?" "My wife."  
A sudden twitching quivers round her mouth.  
"The people of her race wait outside there;  
Shall I call them?" Cendrik a moment stands  
Breathless, dismayed—a lightning flash of hate  
Shoots from his eye—of senses reft, he lifts  
His powerful arm to Folkma's brow. She stands

Erect and fearless. "Strike me, and kill me ;"  
Then backward falls his arm, and closely twines  
Around Alienor's neck, head and hair,  
And proud he calls, "Go then, and to my foes  
Betray me yet again, who was thy friend,  
Not from the living, from the dead alone  
Shall ye tear her !" A thrill of pain doth pass  
With death-like pallor over Folkma's face.  
She notes the look, full of contempt of death,  
Which he deep in Alienor's brown eyes  
Doth cast, and which ev'n to her soul doth reach,  
And piteously she screams. Then sudden moves  
Her golden hair towards him, she winds her arm  
Around his neck—her lips she presseth close  
And long upon his mouth, stealing his breath—  
Now she withdraws her hand—he stands amazed,  
And speechless looks on her. She shouts with joy  
Exulting, delirium in her eye,  
"Still thou art mine ! My lips have kissed thee,  
A Vila\* am I, and betrothed to thee :  
There stands my bridal bed !" And with wild leap  
Over the rocky steep she throws herself  
Down to the cavern's depths. A plash is heard.  
Pierced through by horror chill, Cendrik in haste  
Descends the steps. There motionless she lies,  
All crushed ; the gold threads of her hair float round  
In blood-like, crimson, sparkling Northern Light.  
Into the boat he raiseth the dead form ;  
While close beside him, mute and trembling stands  
Alienor. The wet hand seizeth he,  
In which he still feels warmth, then down on her  
With fixed look gazeth. The water round him  
Doth whirl and gurgle now with dismal sound.  
Like thousand outstretched tongues it upwards licks

\* See page 24.

And sucks round on the walls, and washeth white  
The margin of the steps. He hears it not,  
He looks but on the pale face of the dead.  
Then through the bowels of the earth doth pass  
A hollow trembling, which echoing rolls  
Like thunder 'mongst the rocks. Then leaps he up.  
What can it be? Night's red sheen dies away.  
From entrance of the cave a dark wave crest  
Rolls blustering; flashing in foam it hisseth  
Ev'n to his breast. 'Tis the high flood, the sea,  
The ocean which doth storm its ancient realm,  
And crashing hurleth fragments of the rocks  
Before it here. A gleam of consciousness  
Flasheth through Cendrik's brain; his hand doth grasp  
Alienor, and down beside the dead  
He drags her in the boat; with giant strength  
Driveth his skiff towards the small outlet,  
Well-nigh doth force it through, when roaring, snorts  
A tossing wave, and backward shoots the boat.  
Once more he fighteth like despair—in vain!  
The sea doth close the door, no outlet now.  
Inside the flood doth rise; with stronger arm  
The raging tempest drives it up—backward!  
In darkness groping for the steps the boat  
Of Cendrik strays, the surge already half  
Doth cover them. Mounting with tott'ring steps,  
He bears within his arms Alienor.  
Till 'neath his foot, with senses all confused,  
He feels the soft floor of the chamber small,  
There sinks he down. In death-like darkness swells  
The sea up th' organ pipes of stalactite,  
Slow to the stone arch raiseth it the boat  
With Folkma's cold, dead form. A whisper strays  
Yet through the gloom, a dream of anguish sweet;  
Then all grows still, still ev'n as Folkma's lips,

And breathless too. But outside in the glow  
 Of blood-red Northern Light, the Spaniards' ship  
 Is driv'n far south—back to their native strand.

\* \* \* \* \*

To olden times my lay hath led you 'back,  
 To names strange to the ear ; to men long since  
 In storm and sea-foam scattered and grown mute.  
 They passed, Hetland remained. To-day as then  
 The sea roars on the rocks—dimly Fair Isle  
 Lies in the south like a grey phantom sail.  
 Northward at the mist-gate of th' under world  
 Unst lies outstretched. The sea, within its caves  
 Doth ebb and flow. To dome-shaped roof still mount  
 In brilliant hues the wondrous columned shapes  
 Raised by the fall of drops, and lonely sounds  
 Like constant measuring pendulum of Time  
 The fall of dripping water on the ground.  
 Still legend speaks—with witching music voice  
 Charming the senses—dreamy as the call  
 From Nixie's lips, which lureth to her realm,  
 And Folkma's cavern by the folk 'tis named.



' SHEEP CRAIG, FAIR ISLE.

