

**Borrow George**

**The Song of Deirdra, King  
Byrge and his Brothers, and  
Other Ballads**



George Borrow

**The Song of Deirdra, King Byrge  
and his Brothers, and Other Ballads**

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# **Borrow George**

## **The Song of Deirdra, King Byrge and his Brothers, and Other Ballads**

### **THE SONG OF DEIRDRA**

Farewell, grey Albyn, much loved land,  
I ne'er shall see thy hills again;  
Upon those hills I oft would stand  
And view the chase sweep o'er the plain.

'Twas pleasant from their tops I ween  
To see the stag that bounding ran;  
And all the rout of hunters keen,  
The sons of Usna in the van.

The chiefs of Albyn feasted high,  
Amidst them Usna's children shone;  
And Nasa kissed in secrecy  
The daughter fair of high Dundron.

To her a milk-white doe he sent,  
With little fawn that frisked and played  
And once to visit her he went,  
As home from Inverness he strayed.

The news was scarcely brought to me  
When jealous rage inflamed my mind;  
I took my boat and rushed to sea,  
For death, for speedy death, inclined.

But swiftly swimming at my stern  
Came Ainlie bold and Ardan tall;  
Those faithful striplings made me turn  
And brought me back to Nasa's hall.

Then thrice he swore upon his arms,  
His burnished arms, the foeman's bane,  
That he would never wake alarms  
In this fond breast of mine again.

Dundron's fair daughter also swore,  
And called to witness earth and sky,  
That since his love for her was o'er  
A maiden she would live and die.

Ah did she know that slain in fight,  
He wets with gore the Irish hill,  
How great would be her moan this night,  
But greater far would mine be still.

## THE DIVER

### A BALLAD TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

“Where is the man who will dive for his King,  
In the pool as it rushes with turbulent sweep?  
A cup from this surf-beaten jetty I fling,  
And he who will seek it below in the deep,  
And will bring it again to the light of the day,  
As the meed of his valour shall bear it away.

“Now courage, my knights, and my warriors bold,  
For, one, two, and three, and away it shall go – ”  
He toss’d, as he said it, the goblet of gold  
Deep, deep in the howling abysses below. —  
“Where is the hero who ventures to brave  
The whirl of the pool, and the break of the wave?”

The steel-coated lancemen, and nobles around,  
Spoke not, but they trembled in silent surprise,  
And pale they all stood on the cliff’s giddy bound,  
And no one would venture to dive for the prize.  
“Three times have I spoke, but no hero will spring  
And dive for the goblet, and dive for the King.”

But still they were silent and pale as before,  
Till a brave son of Eirin, in venturous pride,  
Dash’d forth from the lancemen’s trembling corps  
And canted his helm, cast his mantle aside,  
While spearman, and noble, and lady, and knight,  
Gazed on the bold stripling in breathless affright.

Unmoved by the thoughts of his horrible doom,  
He mounted the cliff – and he paus’d on his leap,  
For the waves which the pool had imbibed in its womb  
Were spouted in thunder again from the deep, —  
Yes! as they return’d, their report was as loud  
As the peal when it bursts from the storm-riven cloud.

It roared, and it drizzled, it hiss’d and it whirl’d,  
And it bubbled like water when mingled with flame,  
And columns of foam to the heaven were hurl’d,  
And billow on billow tumultuously came;  
It seem’d that the womb of the ocean would bear  
Sea over sea to the uppermost air.

It thundered again as the wave gathered slow,

And black from the drizzling foam as it fell,  
The mouth of the fathomless tunnel below  
Was seen like the pass to the regions of hell;  
The waters roll round it, and gather and boom,  
And then all at once disappear in the gloom.

And now ere the waves had returned from the deep,  
The youth wiped the sweat-drops which hung on his brows,  
And he plunged – and the cataracts over him sweep,  
And a shout from his terrified comrades arose;  
And then there succeeded a horrible pause  
For the whirlpool had clos'd its mysterious jaws.

And stiller it grew on the watery waste,  
In the womb of the ocean it bellow'd alone,  
The knights said their Aves in terrified haste,  
And crowded each pinnacle, jetty, and stone:  
“The high-hearted stripling is whelm'd in the tide,  
Ah! wail him,” was echoed from every side.

“If the monarch had buried his crown in the pool  
And said: ‘He shall wear it who brings it again,’  
I would not have been so insensate a fool  
As to dive when all hope of returning were vain;



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