

Borrow George

The Serpent Knight, and Other Ballads



George Borrow
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THE SERPENT KNIGHT

Signelil sits in her bower alone,
Of her golden harp she waked the tone.

Beneath her mantle her harp she played,
Then in came striding the worm so laid.

“Proud Signelil, if thou me wilt wed,
I’ll give thee store of gold so red.”

“Forbid the heavenly God so great
That I should become the Lindworm’s mate.”

“Since thee I may not for a wife acquire,
Kiss me only and I’ll retire.”

The linen so white betwixt she placed,
And the laidly worm she kissed in haste.

With his tail of serpent up strook he,
From beneath her dress the blood ran free.

The Lindworm down from the chamber strode,
Wringing her hands behind she trode.

And when she came out upon the stair
Her seven bold brothers met her there.

“Welcome our sister, whither dost hie?
Keep’st thou the Lindworm company?”

“Ah, yes! with the laidly worm I go,
Because hard fate will have it so.”

The Lindworm into the mountain strode,
Wringing her hands behind she trode.

She fell on her knee, and her prayer she made,
“Now son of Mary deign to aid.”

And when he had come to the mountain in,
Off he cast his serpent’s skin.

His snake’s appearance off he shook,
And the form of a stately knight he took.

“Thanks for thy trouble, proud Signelil,
Now live and die with thee I will.”

Now is proud Signild free from fright,
In a prince's arm she sleeps each night.

SIR OLAF

Sir Olaf rides on his courser tall,
Guests to bid to his bridal hall.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

In fours and fives the elfins dance,
The elf-king's daughter I see advance.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf, cease so fierce to ride,
And dance with me for a little tide.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“I may not dance, I may not stay,
To-morrow is my bridal day.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf, if thou wilt dance with me,
Two buckskin boots I'll give to thee.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“I dare not dance, I dare not stay,
To-morrow is my bridal day.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf, if thou wilt dance with me,
A silken shirt I’ll give to thee.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“A silken shirt so fair and fine,
Which my mother bleach’d in the pale moon-shine.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“I dare not dance, I must away,
To-morrow is my bridal day.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf, if thou wilt dance with me,
A helm of gold I’ll give to thee.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“A helm of gold is a bonny thing,
But I dare not tread the elfin ring.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“And if thou wilt not dance with me,
Disease and death shall follow thee.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

She struck him on the shoulder bone,
Fiercer pain he ne’er had known.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

Upon his steed she lifts the knight,

“Now hie thee home to thy heart’s delight.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

And when he came to his home so late,
His mother stood at the castle gate.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Now tell to me, my dearest son,
Why look’st so pale and woe-begone?”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“O well may he look pale, I ween,
Who has felt the stroke of the Elfin Queen.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf, list, my joy and pride,
What shall I say to thy youthful bride?”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Thou’lt tell my bride the wood I rove,
My courser and my hounds to prove.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

The next, next morn at break of day
The bride arrives with her friends so gay.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

They skinkéd mead, they skinkéd wine:
“Where is Sir Olaf, bridegroom mine?”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

“Sir Olaf’s gone the woods to rove,
His courser and his hounds to prove.”

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

She lifted up the mantle red,
There lay Sir Olaf stark and dead.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

The next, next day at early morn,
Corses three from the gate are borne.

Gaily they dance in the greenwood.

Olaf the knight, and his youthful bride,
And his mother dear, who of care had died.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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