

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775- 1818)

17 *King Hacho's Death Song*

Runic.

*The Original, but in a mutilated state, is inserted in Bartholin. Caus. Contemt. Mort. Here again, as also for the translations of "the Water-King," and of the "Erl-King's Daughter," I must express my obligations to Mr. Herder's Collection.*

Gaundul and Skogul came from Thor,  
To choose a king from out the war,  
Who to Valhalla's joys should speed,  
And drink with Odin beer and mead.

Of Ingwa's race the king renown'd, 5  
Biarner's brother, soon they found,  
As arm'd with helmet, sword and shield,  
With eager step he sought the field,  
Where clashing glaives and dying cries  
Already told the combat's size. 10

With mighty voice he bids appear  
Haleyger brave, and Halmygeer,  
Then forth to urge the fight he goes ,  
The hope of friends, the fear of foes.  
The Norman host soon round him swarms, 15  
And Jutland's monarch stands in arms.

Firmly is grasp'd by Hacho bold,  
The millstone-splitter's hilt of gold,  
Whose blows give death on every side,  
And, as 'twere water, brass divide; 20  
A cloud of javelins veils the sky;  
The crashing shields in splinters fly;  
And on the casques of warriors brave  
Resounds the stroke of many a glaive.

Now Tyr's and Bauga's weapons brown 25  
Break on the Norman monarch's crown;  
Now hotter, fiercer grows the fight,  
Low sinks the pride of many a knight;  
And, dyed in slaughter's crimson hue,  
Torrents of gore their shields bedew; 30  
From meeting weapons lightning gleams;  
From gaping wounds the life-blood streams:  
With falling corpses groans the land,  
And purple waves lash Storda's sand.

The warring heroes now confound 35  
Buckler with buckler, wound with wound:  
As eager as were battle sport,  
Renown they seek, and death they court;  
Till, never more to rise, they fall  
In myriads; while, to Odin's hall, 40  
The dæmon of the tempest brings  
A blood stream on his sable wings.

Apart the hostile chiefs were placed,  
Broken their swords, their helms unlaced;  
Yet neither thought his fate would be, 45  
The hall of Odin soon to see.

— "Great is the feast of gods to-day,"  
Propp'd on her sword, did Gaundul say,  
"Since to their table they invite  
"Hacho, and an his chiefs from flight!" — 50

The fated monarch hears too plain,  
How speaks the chooser of the slain;  
Too plain beholds his startled eye,  
On their black coursers mounted high  
The immortal maids, who near him stand, 55  
Each propp'd on her resistless brand.

— “Goddess of Combat!” Hacho cries,  
“Thus dost thou give the battle’s prize?  
“And do then victory’s gods deny  
“To view my arms with friendly eye?” — 60  
— “Chide not!” fierce Skogul thus replied,  
“For conquest still shall grace thy side;  
“Thou shalt prevail, the foe shall yield,  
“And thine remain the bloody field.” —

She said, and urged her coal-black steed 65  
Swift to the hall of gods to speed;  
And there to Odn’s heroes tell  
A king drew near with them to dwell.

— “Hither,” thus Odin spoke, “the king  
“Let Hermoder and Braga bring; 70  
“A monarch comes, an hero guest,  
“Who well deserves with me to rest.” —

Said Hacho, while his streaming blood  
Pour’d down his limbs its crimson flood,  
— “God Odin’s eyes, my brethren bold, 75  
“Our arms with hostile glance behold!” —

Then Braga spoke. — “Brave monarch, know,  
“Thou to Valhalla’s joys shalt go,  
“There to drink mead in skulls of foes,  
“And at the feast of gods repose: 80  
“To greet thee at the magic gate,  
“E’en now eight hero-brothers wait,  
“With joyful eyes thy coming see,  
“And wish, thou foe of kinge, for thee.” —

— “Yet be my sword,” the king replied, 85  
“Once more in Norman slaughter dyed;  
“Let me, as heroes should, expire,  
“And fall in fight, as fell my sire:

“So shall my glory live, and fame  
“Shall long remember Hacho’s name.” — 90

He ceases, and to combat flies:  
He fights, he conquers, and he dies;  
But soon he finds what joys attend,  
Who dare in fight their days to end:  
Soon as he gains Valhalla’s gate, 95  
Eight heroes there to greet him wait;  
The gods a friend the monarch call,  
And welcome him to Odin’s hall.

Who in Valhalla thus shall be  
Loved and revered, oh! bless’d is he; 100  
His conquest and his fame shall long  
Remember’d be, and live in song.  
Wolf Fenris first his chain shall break,  
And on mankind his fury wreak,  
Ere walks a king in Hacho’s trace, 105  
Or fills so well his vacant place.

Since to the gods the king hath fled,  
Heroes and valiant hosts have bled:  
The bones of friends have strow’d the sand;  
Usurping tyrants sway the land; 110  
And many a tear for Hacho brave  
Still falls upon his honour’d grave.

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