

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818)

9 *Elver's Hoh*

DANISH.

The original is to be found in the "Kiampe-Viiser," Copenhagen, 1739. My version of this Ballad (as also of most of the Danish Ballads in this collection) was made from a German translation to be found in Herder's "Volkslieder."

The knight laid his head upon Elver's Hoh,
Soft slumbers his senses beguiling;
Fatigue press'd its seal on his eyelids, when lo!
Two maidens drew near to him, smiling;
The one she kiss'd softly Sir Algamore's eyes; 5
The other she whisper'd him sweetly,
— "Arise! thou gallant young warrior, arise,
"For the dance it goes gaily and featly!

"Arise, thou gallant young warrior, arise,
"And dance with us now and for ever! 10
"My damsels with music thine ear shall surprise,
"And sweeter a mortal heard never —"
Then straight of young maidens appear'd a fair throng,
Who their voices in harmony raising,
The winds they were still as the sounds flew along, 15
By silence their melody praising.

The winds they were still as the sounds flew along,
The wolf howl'd no more from the mountains;
The rivers were mute upon hearing the song,
And calm'd the loud rush of their fountains: 20
The fish, as they swam in the waters so clear,
To the soft sounds delighted attended,
And nightingales, charm'd the sweet accents to hear,
Their notes with the melody blended.

— “Now hear me, thou gallant young warrior, now hear! 25
“If thou wilt partake of our pleasure,
“We’ll teach thee to draw the pale moon from her sphere,
“We’ll show thee the sorcerer’s treasure!
“We’ll teach thee the Runic rhyme, teach thee to hold
“The wild bear in magical fetters, 30
“To charm the red dragon, who broods over gold,
“And tame him by mystical letters.” —

Now hither, now thither, then danced the gay band,
By witchcraft the hero surprising,
Who ever sat silent, his sword in his hand, 35
Their sports and their pleasures despising.
— “Now hear me, thou gallant young warrior, now hear!
“If still thou disdain’st what we proffer,
“With dagger and knife from thy breast will we tear
“Thine heart, which refuses our offer!” — 40

Oh! glad was the knight when he heard the cock crow!
His enemies trembled, and left him:
Else must he have stayed upon Elver’s Hoh,
And the witches of life had bereft him.
Beware then, ye warriors, returning by night 45
From court, dress’d in gold and in silver;
Beware how you slumber on Elver’s rough height,
Beware of the witches of Elver!

1801

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