

THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF HENRIK IBSEN

Translated by John Northam



SECTION FOUR
POEMS FROM THE SECOND CHRISTIANIA PERIOD

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1857-64

PROLOGUE
at
THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF THE TALE OF THE MOUNTAINS
at the Kristiania Norwegian Theatre
[18th Sept. 1857]

It is not so far distant — the memory survives —
Since we found wholly alien the common people's lives,
Since ancient peasant ballads, the lur's resounding tone,
Were likely to be met with in country parts alone.

A little to the south, though, art bloomed and bard-hood too,
Whereof we caught a little whiff (at second hand, it's true),
But life in moor and forest, the life the folk there lead
Remained a world denied us, a book we could not read.

Could an artistic subject be wrought of such-like stuff?
Therein can the aesthetic be treated well enough?
Thus posed our bards the question and sang of "pagan days",
Composing — on Apollo and Bacchus — "folkish" lays.

But two of Norway's sons saw things in quite a different light.
Of course, — for they had slumbered a whole midsummer night,
Dreamt of the sprite's weird chanting close by the rushing fall,
And what it was they heard there, they sang back to us all.

Yes, — poetry thus issued from out our native ground;
It was the first spring bird-call song to make our groves resound, —
It sang a long while lonely, grew poorly for a spell,
But what grows now but slowly may some day grow right well.

For should the bush and berry make green our summer clime,
Then birds will sit and sing beneath the sæter-trees with time!
And if the folk list kindly to lur and zither string
Then in the farm-yard, on the scree it's tenfold they will ring.

But yon pair who delivered our true and native voice,
Shall, till the final reaping, in high esteem rejoice;
Now may they share in slumber the mother-land's embrace, —
Their graves may be forgotten, their names nought can efface.

Henr. Ibsen

Ibsen was appointed artistic director to the Norwegian Theatre which had failed, since its foundation in 1852, to promote specifically Norwegian talent, subject-matter and language. Within a fortnight of his arrival Ibsen put on a double bill: The Tale of the Mountains, a ballad-opera by Henrik Bjærregaard, and a sequel by Henrik Wergeland — the two, now

dead, “sons of Norway” who had drawn on native themes. The production was very well received “A little to the south” — a reference to Danish literature.

AT OLE VIG’S GRAVE

Thursday 24 December 1857.

Warrior, rest! your day of battle ended,
Wounds, no longer burning, mended
In your noble breast!
For the goal of your ambitions,
For your folk, you fought life’s missions
To the last, dour test.
Good the deed you have exemplified,
Grace’s bounty you’ve now sampled, —
Bliss’s timeless rest.
God’s hand will in charity
Open to your soul now free!
Your reward, now strife must cease,
Is heaven’s peace!

H.Ibsen

Ole Vig, of yeoman stock, became one of the leading activists in the field of education. He died of mental exhaustion at the age of 33.

TO THE MEMORY OF CARL JOHAN

(dedicated to the Carl Johan Society)

Dead Prince, what more tribute, pray?
Has the North, your bier-side keeping,
Offered you no filial weeping,
Mourned not by your lifeless clay?
Have we not in song and rhyme
Raised memorials unstinted
Where your name in gold imprinted
Will resist the lapse of time?

Judged we not our fame to rise
With your noble reputation?
Drew we not, with approbation,
Profit from your enterprise?
Your triumphant faring forth
On your Alexander-mission, —
Stands it not, a shared tradition,
In the annals of the North?

Dead Prince, what more tribute, pray?
 Are all claims not met then, truly,
 Has the folk not praised you duly,
 Mourned beside your lifeless clay?
 Do you think that memory's due
 Can be traced in other fashion
 Than through word-play fired with passion,
 Limned in ceremonial hue? —

Why, in Norway's youthful breast
 Warm and vital tides are streaming;
 Brother, quit nostalgic dreaming,
 Share in day-time's epic quest!
 Let a spring dawn be imparted
 To our northern region's sky,
 Let *our actions* testify
 To the great, the great departed!

Gaze turned inward, gaze intent
 On the heritage endued us!
 He well knew and well construed us
 When he wrote his testament!
 For our hero-monarch's grave
 Folds more than the *hero* in it, —
 There, though buried deep within it,
 Lies *our time's first Scandinave*!

Brotherhood on freedom founded —
 Thus the King's last testament!
 An unfinished muniment
 There it stands yet, scrub-surrounded.
 For the cause, then, up! Away!
 Up, North's sons, to toil ungrudging!
 Tasks achieved repay the drudging,
 Morning's toil, the strenuous day!

Bard-like, of prophetic power,
 Noble Carl Johan would stand;
 Past the mundane's desert sand
 He glimpsed future's garden flower.
 Whet your eyesight's blunted sense;
 Then your gaze shall dwell, arrested,
 On the vision that attested
 Carl Johan's percipience.

Storm dissension's soldiery!
 More heroic spearhead never
 Led the Nordic sons' endeavour
 On to war and victory!
 Spurn the present's petty strife,
 Conflict between rival factions;

Look towards the whole, not fractions,
Towards our noble future life!

May the North's strong foster-ties,
Royal dream in deeds new-minted,
Be the epitaph imprinted
Where the buried hero lies!
Kinship scorning fell and wave,
Mutual aims with mutual power,
Be our thanks to the endower,
This our time's first Scandinave.

Henr. Ibsen

Count Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's marshals, elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810, became King, after Norway's severance from Denmark in 1814, of the joint kingdom of Sweden/Norway with the title Carl Johan. Norway, which had sought independence, was initially hostile to him, but Ibsen hails him as the originator of the concept of a united Scandinavia. He died in 1844. Ibsen was a member of the Society. Alexander mission — Carl Johan visited Alexander of Russia to obtain his consent to the amalgamation of Norway with Sweden; in return he supported Russian claims to Finland.

SONG AT THE CELEBRATION OF OUR FOREFATHERS' MEMORY

13th January 1858

(Mel: "Vift stolt paa Codans Bølger")

In folk-lore's ample regions
Are spots that clouds o'erlay;
There rune-stones in their legions
Portentous signs display;
We note, so be our choice is
For myth or history,
A host of scattered voices; —
But never harmony.

But if the mind's exertions
Attain its Nordic goal,
In Memory's scattered versions
We'll find a theme that's whole;
And should the bard's flame kindle,
And should the folk respond, —
The Present's murk will dwindle,
We'll see one mutual bond.

For Bygone's clear perception
Is what our times most need,
If that inspired conception
Is ever to succeed,
If yonder thunderous presage
With triple potency

Is to bear North its message
Of Memory's poesy.

Henr. Ibsen

Triple potency — the collaboration of Norway, Sweden and Denmark to form one Scandinavian bloc.

SONG
at
THE CELEBRATION AT KLINGENBERG
17th May 1858
Mel: "Høiest løfter jeg nu Guldpokalen."

Brother Norsemen, let your song go swinging
Fairly o'er the fell;
Set your joy in freedom freely winging
In bright evening's spell!
Let your joyous lay be dedicated
As a festive song
To the strivers who've worked hard and long
That your birthright may be reinstated!

But a solemn vow too must be blended
In your sounding lay:
Vow that Memory's range shall be extended
And enriched some day: —
Vow to stand unmoved, like sturdy paling,
By your legacy, —
Guard it with mind's perspicacity,
Ward it well 'gainst fury's weapon-flailing!

Yes, that gift you'll honour by your striving,
To the North you'll tell
That the Bygone's golden seeds are thriving
Freshly on the fell!
Hail, then, Norway's muster, fair and vernal!
In its freedom see
No bedizened, rootless maypole tree,
But a sturdy pine-tree that's eternal!

Henr. Ibsen

Klingenberg, the oldest and best known amusement park in Christiania, later named the Tivoli.

KING HAAKON'S BANQUET HALL,
a narrative poem.
(By Henrik Ibsen)

In Bergen's burgh high revelry;
King Haakon's hall rejoices;

A score of turrets to the sky
 Rang out their brazen voices;
 Nine nights in jest and pastime flew,
 Mirth made each day seem shorter,
 For Scotland's prince was plighted to
 King Eric's little daughter.

For guard and groom the cloth was spread
 Upon the royal table,
 A mesh of green wreathed overhead
 From castle-spire and gable;
 The throngs, decked out for holiday,
 In every street-way clustered,
 And moored abreast in Bergen's bay
 Gilt dragon-prows lay mustered.

At last — one evening in the fall, —
 The merry-making ended,
 Swept from the east a misty pall
 On fjord and fell descended;
 The palace grove where elm-trees lean
 Above the strand was crowded,
 Though late the hour folk still were seen,
 Their brows all grave and clouded.

The pretty five-year-old king's bride
 To Scotland must be sailing,
 The ship's hauled off the Holm to ride
 Before the wind prevailing; —
 It lies beside the quay close by
 The church of the Apostle,
 And kindled lanterns hung on high
 In elm- and birch-boughs jostle.

And to a thousand torches red
 The leaves glowed as on fire;
 Along the strand a whisper spread,
 The lur-horn sound rose higher;
 And then the palace gates unlock;
 The foreign delegation
 With henchmen, guards, approach the dock
 In stately ostentation.

The king's musicians followed them, —
 The king's self next in order;
 The king's brow girt with many a gem
 Set in a golden border;
 From the king's sides and shoulders flowed
 The scarlet he was wearing,
 But in his wake four squires strode,
 His train right proudly bearing.

His eye a pensive grief portrayed
 As in a glass reflected,
 Upon his brow a shadow played,
 His mind soared, far-projected;
 For distant Scotland's royal throne
 It gull-like spanned the water,
 Where sceptre, bride-bed, burial-stone
 Stand ready for his daughter.

On the king's left strode pace for pace
 The Scottish lord new-cited
 To serve in the Crown Prince's place
 And to his bride be plighted.
 He raised upon his massive arm
 The fair maid who sat gazing
 Upon the evening's noisy charm,
 The links and lanterns blazing.

Like a small plaything of her own
 Her little hands were bearing
 The crown which on far Scotland's throne
 She would, as queen, be wearing;
 She showed the precious jewellery
 As on the troop went sweeping:
 "See what my father's given me;
 Now it's all mine, for keeping!"

The throng laughed loudly and with zest
 And clapped their hands right bravely;
 But in the king's wake strode a guest,
 With teeth tight-clenched, full gravely.
 Withdrawn, a frown his forehead seamed,
 His smile, part indignation;
 Sir Audun Huggleikssøn, esteemed
 The first man of the nation.

But Haakon, Audun's near of kin,
 A duke, the king's own brother,
 At the child's words, with crafty grin
 Looked sharply at the other;
 He stole a glance at Audun's grip,
 In fury clenched so tightly,
 Then nodded at the sweet young slip
 Who sat the Scot's arm lightly.

And after in a medley streamed
 Lords, ladies bright as flowers;
 Fine silver head-tires softly gleamed
 Beneath the green-wood bowers;
 As phosphorescence in the night

Burns where the rudder races,
 So man by man the train shone bright
 That trod the monarch's paces.

Aboard the Scottish craft the sail
 On gilded yard was swelling; —
 And townsfolk, chatting, homeward trail,
 Each one to his own dwelling.
 Soon Eric, festive-garbed, appears
 Back in the banquet quarter,
 But down the firth the vessel steers
 That bears the king's young daughter.

Within the elm-grove all is night, —
 The lamps' red glow, abated.
 Where, at the bluff, to left and right
 The fjord was separated, —
 Two men in secret linger on,
 One handsome, full of fire, —
 It is Sir Audun Hugleikssøn
 And Haldor, his good squire.

Sir Audun from the bluff observed
 Far off the ship receding,
 While still outlined where Ashland curved
 It could be seen proceeding,
 But then it altered course to run
 Up through the Sound and vanished; —
 And then he bowed his head as one
 Whose every hope is banished.

How tall he was and strong and proud!
 Cheeks brown and freckle-spotted,
 His forehead manly deeds avowed
 With candid rune-lines plotted;
 The brow's keen stars, they testified
 To saga-thoughts most daring; —
 So stood he while the little bride
 On sea-borne planks went faring.

He summoned Haldor with a word; —
 His deep voice seemed to ponder;
 "I think of what last year occurred
 At Hægranæs, home yonder, —
 Returning from the chase one night
 We paused a while together;
 A raven from the nearby height
 Croaked o'er us in the heather.

"Your kin have long possessed the art
 Of bird-call divination;

You once tweaked Future's veil to chart
 My life's predestination, —
 You swore to me the raven's cry
 Predicted, come all weather,
 That she who quits the land and I
 Should end, one fall, *together*.

"One lie your prophecy has been,
 The raven's croak mere prating;
 Soon she must grace as Scotland's queen
 The golden throne there waiting."
 And Audun turned away enraged, —
 But Haldor then, his squire,
 Laughed in his beard as he engaged
 Right warmly with his sire.

"What though the young princess be gone
 For Scotland yonder sailing,
 This, sire, you may depend upon:
 You'll meet again, unfailing;
 The raven's croak declared your fate
 And hers, for both 'tis plighted, —
 Where're she goes she'll, soon or late,
 Be at your side, united.

Sir Audun simply shrugged askance
 And gave his words no heeding;
 He stood as in a thoughtful trance,
 A torpor vision-breeding.
 He creased his thick and matted brow
 And clutched his sword-hilt tightly,
 Reviving many a memory now,
 Some gloomily some lightly.

"I meted justice, set the law,
 Gave Lagabøter backing,
 I warded rapine's tooth and claw,
 I soothed the land's sore racking;
 And as his envoy I have plied
 The wild and western waters,
 And brought back Eric's royal bride
 From Britain to these quarters.

"King Eric I in peace sustained,
 In time of need, defended, —
 Base trickery was all I gained,
 With death, perhaps, intended —
 He's wroth with me, I well may guess,
 But north, by Søndmør's sector,
 In Lyster, high on Hægranæs,
 My stronghold stands protector.

“There I am safe and there I’ll go;
 My business here is ended;
 I turn my mind from Eric though
 We’re from one line descended.
 I asked for the princess’s hand,
 To meet his debt of honour,
 And he — discourteously banned
 The regent’s claim upon her!

“On Hægranæs such dreams I’ve dreamed
 Past any man’s conception;
 The raven’s prophecy I deemed
 No fanciful deception.
 I thought a message was implied
 That I’d fain prove not hollow;
 Were but the princess once my bride
 Then many a thing might follow.

“For heirless is King Eric, far
 Declined into recession, —
 Prince Haakon, scarcely popular,
 Can thank me for succession.
 No expedition-leader he,
 No statesman in the making —
 Were I king’s son-in-law, I see
 The measures I’d be taking!”

And thus he dreamed and further dreamed, —
 Then started from his trancing;
 For from the banquet-hall there streamed
 High mirth, to set night dancing.
There breathed the harp, the fiddle rang
 Like spruce when spring is blowing,
 The comely palace-maidens sang,
 While on the dance kept flowing.

He cried “Away! leave merry jest,
 King’s banquet, harps and laughter;
 When Eric’s child set in the west
 My kingdom followed after.
 Make ready ship, this very night
 We’ll wend our way together!” — —
 A raven from the nearest height
 Croaked o’er him in the heather.

Sir Audun halted in mid-stride,
 He felt his blood was rising,
 He turned to Haldor, staring-eyed
 And voiceless, for advising.
 The squire made but a little bow
 And smiled through teeth clenched tightly:

“Hail to thee, Norway’s lord — for now
Thy fate I fathom rightly!”

Then Audun’s mighty bosom swelled,
The silk shirt ripped asunder:
Into his voice a tremor welled,
He scarce could speak for wonder;
He whispered: “Raven — what’s foretold?”
Thus answered his escorter:
“It sang then of a throne of gold,
For you and Eric’s daughter!”

He tore the chain from round his neck; —
“God help a traitor, squire — —!
If Norway’s throne’s for sale, I reck
To know who’ll be one buyer! — —
Take this as pay and thanks in one, —
Bear home alone the tiding —
That Audun Huggleiksson stays on,
Here, with the King abiding!”

Then in the east a bank of cloud
On storm’s wide wings ascended;
But still from Haakon’s hall rang loud
High mirth and music blended;
On, for the laughter, harps he pressed,
The feast’s right royal quarter; —
But west the ship fared, ever west
With Eric’s little daughter.

King Eric’s infant daughter, Margaret, was, through her Scottish mother, next in line to the Scottish throne to which there was no male heir; as such she was in political terms a valued prize competed for, (though Ibsen omits the politics) by England and Scotland. Margaret died en route for Scotland in the Orkneys in 1240. Audun Huggleiksson, a powerful figure during the reign of Magnus the Law Giver, acted as regent during the minority of Eric. An ambitious and unscrupulous man, he was imprisoned in 1299 and executed by Eric’s successor in 1302 — hence the enigmatic prophecy and the tragic intimations of the rising storm. Hægraness, a headland east of Trondheim.

SONG
at
THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
OF THE
FRIENDS OF CHRISTIAN AUGUST.

[25 Sept.] 1858.

(Mel: Vift stolt paa Codans Bølger)

War-weapons drawn, in order,
Betrayed but undismayed,
On coast and mountain border
Stood Norway’s watch arrayed,

Brows broke in that contention,
 Our soil blushed red therein,
 That neighbourly dissension
 With doughty Swedes, our kin.

But heaven's will decided
 The North should live it through;
 For both sides were provided
 A helmsman matched by few; —
 His fame shall spread wherever
 May beat Norwegian hearts;
 His task, his dear endeavour:
 To fetch Spring to these parts.

And therefore, here we muster
 To offer him our song.
 He stood here mid the bluster
 Of kin-strife loud and long; —
 Now kin, once wroth, see truly
 Strength comes from unity;
 Hence it is meet *Friends* duly
 Should praise his probity.

But more yet is befitting
 The great man's league of Friends:
 We'll drain a pledge committing
 To reconciliation's ends.
 Strike on, then, Norway's rifles,
 Strike on at strife's behest!
 But not, or honour stifles,
 Our doughty kinsmen's breast!

Henr. Ibsen

Christian August, Prince of Augustenberg, leader of a government mission sent by Frederick VI, who, as King of Denmark/Norway, provoked in 1808 an English blockade that cut connections between the two parts of his kingdom. Christian August won the love of the Norwegians by his democratic ways and by his support for Norway's ill equipped citizen army when it briefly resisted being incorporated with Sweden. However, he showed statesmanship by refusing to attack Sweden in retaliation. His love of Norway, combined with his concern for Scandinavian unity, made him a popular prospective heir to the new joint kingdom of Sweden/Norway. Elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1809, he died a year later..

A WAKE

Way up the dale that verges the fell
 A log hut lies with its byre;
 Through the smoke-vent two bare summits scowl
 Down on the open fire.

They are short of sky in the farmstead,
 There's scarce a strip of it showing;
 They are short of sun; midsummer time

Brings just an hour's glowing.

But folk on the farm scarce give it a thought;
They calmly perform their labours; —
Six week-days, milking and on the fell,
And Sundays, church with the neighbours.

Now, though, the worst has befallen, —
The man lies confined and tended,
The door stands wide open, just one last time
Will he darken it; then it's all ended.

The holy words have been read and been heard,
Church-candles light the bier dimly;
Grandmother stares with an eye of grief
Up through the smoke-vent, grimly.

Today the old lady feels crushed between
Those summits devoid of cover;
It seems to her that the pair of them loom
Over the roof above her.

Each mourner there broods and then broods again,
Each breast feels the sorrow's starkness;
As though it were perched up there on the peaks
And were beating its wings of darkness.

But out where the church is the valley's broad,
Heaven's heights are displayed, the sun's shining, —
Out there such a beautiful light's bestowed
On those who must sit repining.

The weeks will pass by for those quiet folk
Up at the hut and byre;
The naked summits will doubtless glare,
Yet more closely massed, on the fire.

The sun will appear to them briefer still
When the mid-summer light starts sinking;
But wounds will be healed, the mind is strong,
The years will pass, to their thinking.

For though it is hard in loss and gloom
To cope with the daily labours, —
Yet it is bliss to be looking ahead
To Sunday church with the neighbours.

SONG
at
THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW BUILDING
FOR LILLEHAMMER'S GRAMMAR AND SECONDARY SCHOOL
Friday 5th Nov. 1858.
(Mel: I Rosenlund under Sagas Hal.)

When slopes are fading and woods must shed
Their autumn leaves in their legions, —
We consecrate a new seedling-bed
For Mind's perpetual regions.
High up on solid rock it rears,
By sturdy walls protected; —
God bless benignly through the years
This work that we've erected!

But mountain progeny know full well
That highland plants keep on thriving,
That pine-tops grown on the lofty fell
Thrust bravely, heavenward striving;
They know that straws mid rocky falls
Ripe, golden ears can nourish; —
So here, within the school-house walls
May fertile learning flourish!

For God will answer this garden's needs
With His fair, clement weather,
That Thought's young shoots, and that Mind's new seeds
May thrive and ripen together;
He sends mild outdoor breezes where
Light gleams from Life's high places;
For Thought depends upon fresh air
As bird-songs need Spring's graces.

* * *

Be pledged, then, blessed nursery,
To Mind's inspiring tendance!
The seed sown here will sprout sturdily
On graves of our far descendants.
Do not divide life's springtime zest
From disciplined instruction, —
See, in the school-house walls, the best
Of shields, but no obstruction!

Henr. Ibsen

Norway had reason to be proud of its educational system; by 1860, ten years earlier than England, it instituted universal and compulsory education.

SONG AT THE STUDENT BALL
the 15th December 1858.

Festive is the student's mind;
In his rich young soul there's beaming
Lamp-light cast by Thought refined,
The Ideal's bright tapers gleaming;
Everyday's null regimen,
Where folk slave and where folk slumber,
Lies beyond the student's ken,
He'll not yield and swell the number.
(Festive is the student's mind!)

Spell-bound is the student's sight;
World's grim field where carnage lowers,
Lit by Soul's brave flash of light
Seems to him the best of bowers.
Strife itself seems festive play,
Boldly in the ranks he marches,
Seeks his goal the nearest way
Through fair rose-chain-woven arches.
(Spell-bound is the student's sight!)

Lovely is the student's dream,
Precious his envisioned booty, —
Long live, then, the student's dream.
Long live Woman in her beauty!
Her ideal-fired radiance, —
For the youth, a dew-like shower, —
Never fell on him perchance
With tonight's abundant power.
(Lovely is the student's dream!)

Henr. Ibsen

LIFE'S SPRING

A poem

by

HENR. IBSEN

1858

1

I will out, I will out, God's nature's there,
The joy of a bright spring day;
My bosom bursts, at my cage-bars I tear,
I've the wings and the heart for the fray.

I've the heart for a battle with worldly woe;
It has fettered me far too long.
Now I must revel and laughing go
With the spring-time's fluttering throng.

I've breathed elegiacal frost-flowers white
 On window-panes chill as ice;
 A heart-felt beam from the home of light
 Has destroyed now that cold device.

My mind's like a barque with topsail spread,
 I am blithesome, young and I'm free;
 My course is set for the heights ahead,
 You'll be left behind in my sea!

So out with the ballast of judgement sound!
 Then set the last scrap she'll take!
 Perhaps I'll be running my vessel aground
 But I'll leave your astern in my wake!

2

Birch trees sprout on the mountain sides
 Mid anemones, stones clad in mosses,
 A seething vitality resides
 In each fresh young branch that tosses.

Birches turn green in the fell-side's lee
 So lushly as though they'd be bursting;
 A birth-pang courses voluptuously
 Through virginal twigs, life-thirsting.

Birches brightly spangle the fell,
 Scent freshly the dew of morning,
 Though they, come Mid-summer Eve, could well
 Be stripped for the vent's adorning.

Hillside birch! For each leaf you gain
 For your glittering virgin raiment, —
 I'll treasure a pregnant pollen-grain
 To grow into song, as repayment.

Like you I have vital strengths that heave
 And strive for the daylight shining;
 Should they run dry come Mid-summer Eve
 That's little cause for repining.

Perhaps I'll fall silent ere you are stripped bare —
 Can *I* know what fate to adjust to — ?
 But free in the Spring while it's lush and fair
 I'll keep singing, because I *must* do!

Like a thousand ensigns fanning
 When a calm alights,
 See — young, tender pines are spanning
 Moorland and the heights.

There's a path through, wheresoever
 It may chance to lead —
 Anywhere, but homeward, never. —

Vent, the smoke-vent or chimney customarily adorned with greenery for the occasion.

THE SEAGULL'S CRY

On land and sea the outlook's rough,
 Bad weather southward too;
 My Danish brother, sign enough
 An evening storm is due.
 Up here, from the Norwegian fjord
 A flock of gulls compete
 In soaring flight to spread abroad
 A warning cry that, by the Lord,
 Is more robust than sweet.

But ride, grey sea-bird, even so
 The rack on Ran's wild steed!
 Scream out, scream out; 'tis meet although
 Your voice be harsh indeed!
 'Tis meet your cry should be so hoarse,
 No dulcet minstrelsy;
 The blind reefs break the billows' force,
 A rain-squall hither sets its course, —
 Shriek, 'tis your destiny!

You nightingale in Denmark's wood,
 Why are you vexed that trills
 You uttered in yon regions should
 Be lost mid pine-clad hills?
 Here in the North you have no place,
 Abroad your fostering,
 By Norway's fjords no kin can trace,
 Nor did the glaciers e'er embrace
 Your birthright in their ring.

Say, brother, have you heard aloft
 The grebe when clouds hang grey; —
 Has *that* a voice as trim and soft
 As larks down Zealand way?
 A thousand feet at least it sails
 The height when Autumn's due,

Like some blood-boltered child it wails,
 It never learnt sweet, dulcet scales,
 Spring's serenade, from you!

Trust me, as little as the spruce
 And birch on moorland ground
 Will to the tempest's bow produce
 The self-same fiddle sound,
 So little can your starling be,
 Your royal bird, a sounding-board
 For the late Autumn's melody
 Sea-borne at dusk across the sea
 From Senjen's nesting horde.

You, Dane — you are yourself as weak
 In voice and meanly bred;
 But do not bid us, out of pique,
 Change Norway's steel for lead.
 For you it was who missed the breeze
 That sped the time's swift keel,
 Long since you held the obsequies
 For language keen as winter seas,
 As your forefathers' steel.

You coped well, on the frontier lined,
 When your dear blood must flow;
 But hostile forces in your mind —
 When did you face *that* foe?
 You trounced the Teuton in fair fray,
 Drove south his horde in flight —
 But exultation fades away;
 The Hun troll in your breast holds sway,
 Still claims his freehold right.

You lauded feats your sons achieved,
 But German was the mode, —
 In German style your daughters grieved,
 So too your bards' song flowed!
 And German your best runic stave
 On saga-folk of yore — ;
 Come, break the bond, the times so crave!
 And if you dare not — then the grave —
 You will be worth no more!

Henr. Ibsen

Ibsen's admiration for the physical courage shown by the Danes in the face of German aggression was matched by his contempt for their reluctance to recognise native Norwegian language in place of the Dano-Norwegian used for literary purposes. He goes further by accusing the Danes of cultural subservience to Germanic models. Ran, a sea-goddess whose wild horse symbolises the storm; Zealand, the island on which Copenhagen stands; Senjen, a rookery of sea birds off the Norwegian coast.

SONG AT
MADAM MARIE GERHARDINE HOFF'S GRAVE
30 May 1859.

Life's garden blossomed, you walked there, no other
So richly endowed, as a wife and a mother;
You gazed on a future through Hope's bright hue —
A grave, a grave lay in wait for you!

Death's angel beckoned, he bade you attend him;
On radiance's billows you steer now, ascending;
You cannot now solace your loved one's dearth —
A grave, a grave is your home on earth.

Springtime's fair blooms on your coffin now scattered
Contain welcome comfort for hope that's been shattered, —
They bury a life-seed deep in the mould:
The grave, the grave, then a dawn of gold!

Souls who lament now, o'er shadowed by sorrow!
Beyond night's veil beckons the promise of morrow;
In faith there's a salve for bereavement's sting:
The grave, the grave, then reunion's Spring!

TO WOMAN
AT THE FOURTH GREAT SONG FESTIVAL
WHITSUN 1859
IN ARENDAL

With summer in soul through the fjord and the Sound we bowled;
High spirits bloomed as the choruses rolled!
In hillside leaf display,
In bird-song on our way
We found the same craving, the urge that we feel, —
Lust for the light, jubilation and zeal!

The soul of a singer's a birch when the Spring's at best;
Veins all a-seethe with a mighty zest;
It ripens there one day,
A leaf-crown on the spray, —
See, there's his fulfilment, in song that now blooms:
Lust after light is life's challenge that looms!

But here in the land of light's luring is Woman's place, —
Soul-seedlings owe their fresh shoots to her grace;

Will seek her for their own
 Anew as songs full-grown!
 Praise be to Woman where song's billows ring,
 The fairest of beams in the songster's bright Spring!

Henr. Ibsen

SONG
 at
 THE GYMNATIC FESTIVAL
 26th June 1859.
 (Mel. Aa Kjøre Vatn aa kjøre Ved etc)

A cheerful, chirruping flock are we,
 Of mettle, manly in our thinking;
 We've stayed indoors long enough where we
 Were ice-bound, on our anchors jinking;
 Countryside, coast know the summer's here,
 We in our breasts can feel summer's cheer!
 Blue is the fjord;
 We must abroad,
 To drink the air where massed blooms are winking!

So let life threaten its grind and grief;
 We'll scare those gloomy demons soundly!
 We have a potent, a mild relief
 That heals both soul and limb profoundly;
 The goodly spirits are with us arrayed,
 We face the foeman's army undismayed;
 Level the lance, —
 Heroes, advance,
 Sing victory's chorus, fresh and roundly!

Yes, hence our brotherhood still exists,
 Has kept, through the years, surviving;
 We champion Light's cause in the lists, —
 God bless the goal and the striving!
 It's time for action, and that calls for men
 Whose minds are clear to gird swords again; —
 If that is so, —
 Well then, let's go!
 Though small our flock is strong and thriving!

Henr. Ibsen

4th JULY 1859.

Youthful Norway, strike your flag,
 Leave it to the flag-staff clinging;
 Festival wears sorrow's gag,
 Autumn's weight subdues the singing.

Summer's sun is in eclipse,
 Brings no smile to peoples' lips;
 Through the land the rumours quicken
 That our King lies sorely stricken.

Yes, lies stricken far from here,
 Has no eye for sun-lit bowers,
 Youthful Norway, send him cheer,
 Send the folk's fair, heart-grown flowers!
 Air from life's reviving spring
 May remit his suffering.
 Watch his couch in silent session,
 Offer all in your possession.

He gave all to serve the folk,
 Modest, held in warm affection.
 Now vile sickness at a stroke
 Veils his brow with foul infection; —
 Visit him with lullaby,
 Have him in your bosom lie,
 Let him steer for dreamland's beaches, —
 Sweet dreams share the gift of leeches.

Stricken King! His straining breast
 Heaves, a sea storm-lashed and surgent;
 Ah, what was a treasure chest
 Houses now death's fatal serpent.
 Youthful Norway, sooth its pain
 With the dew of song's refrain;
 Folk-hymns for the king's condition,
 Though no cure, may bring remission!

Drowse then, King, and gently rest,
 All the folk will be attendant; —
 Visit grove and mountain crest,
 Norway's pine-wastes, fells resplendent;
 By the firth, in every bay,
 It is one fair Sabbath day;
 King, repose! A pensive nation
 Broods upon its celebration!

In yon dales where torrents foam,
 Skirting ridge and fallen boulders,
 Stands the peasant's log-built home
 Shaded by the leaf-clad shoulders.
 White of beard, the peasant waits
 On his threshold near the gates,
 Stops each rider-by and, hailing,
 Asks him if the king is ailing.

And the old man, lone again,
 Stands outside his humble dwelling,
 Shakes his white and hoary mane,
 Strews the hearth with sweetly smelling
 Birch. It is King Oscar's day,
 Hence the hut's in fine array:
 Hedge-blooms on the shelves and presses,
 Pensive thoughts fill heart's recesses!

Steer your flight above the bay,
 Watch that garden fenced with railing;
 Watch that rag the boy at play
 Fastens red upon the paling!
 He once heard his father brag
 That the flag's King Oscar's flag, —
 So he, in right kingly manner,
 From the harbour, — hoists the banner!

Swan-winged, creaming foam and froth,
 Out to sea the brig goes faring
 Dressed in triple-coloured cloth,
 Our King Oscar's name declaring;
 Weather-tanned, the lad astern
 Scans the dancing waves that churn.
 Each Norwegian ship bears on her
 Norway's flag in Oscar's honour! —

Ah, King, — 'tis a paltry dream
 Your folk's lullabies provide you;
 Serpent's death-bite, torment's stream
 Strengthless to your bed have tied you; —
 But if ever cool relief
 Wafts o'er all your pain and grief, —
 Take it for a prayer addressing
 God, with all your peoples' blessing!

Henr. Ibsen

King Oscar's birthday was celebrated on July 4th; he died four days later. King Oscar's flag: one of the King's first acts on his accession was to authorise Norway's naval vessels to fly specifically Norwegian colours, something that Norway had pressed for over many years.

THE PEOPLE'S GRIEF

The church bells now a message bear
 Wide o'er the fjord and fell;
 Two kindred folk in mourning-wear
 Now bid their prince farewell.
 Today there's but a single thought
 In thronging market, silent room, —
 From log-built cabin, royal fort

One race, two kindred folk consort
To honour Oscar's tomb!

Long have the people and its prince
Shared drawn-out days of pain;
The palace is now silent since
The king's long fight was vain.
The chapel portal will soon close,
There he will rest in sleep,
But outside there's a seed that grows
In course of time fair blooms, and those
Death's scythe shall never reap.

His clay within the grave sleeps sound,
In light his soul aspires, —
There Son and Father he has found
Mid the transfigured choirs.
As heroes famed neared Heaven's gate
In hosts slain by the sword,
So marched King Oscar in like state,
His host of witnesses as great,
To stand before the Lord.

His train was not of warrior breed,
Steel-smitten men in ranks;
His cause a better voice can plead:
The people's hymn of thanks!
In Oscar's modest steps on earth
Resplendent fairies trod;
They came to witness to his worth,
His following made up the dearth
When he approached his God.

And so with God now take your rest, —
Your mission here is spent;
Your deeds stand, in fair Summer dressed,
Your finest monument.
And sorrow's cloud that spread its night
Shall clear the land henceforth, —
But Oscar's strife for truth and right
The folk, the royal line, shall write
In annals of the North.

Henr. Ibsen

Written for King Oscar's funeral service 8th August 1859. The poem awards heroic stature to a king who furthered the cultural life of the nation.

PROLOGUE,
 delivered in the Norwegian Theatre
 21st August [1859].

Grief for Oscar, our bereavement,
 Hall and church have long conveyed.
 His late deeds, his high achievement
 Verse and music have portrayed.
 Here, from this place too, shall rise
 One more voice that testifies; —
 Testifies there are few places
 Where his fame has left no traces.

Sagas are like symphonies,
 Filled with tunes and themes unnumbered,
 Sometimes muted, sometimes thundered,
 Rich with life's complexities.
 Hårdråder's in major key,
 Set for lur and brazenry, —
 Athelstan's sweet minor, cherished
 By the race, have never perished.

So, too, shall King Oscar's ring
 Fresh and hale throughout the ages;
 His display, though sparse, presages
 Whispering, a northern Spring.
 Hence his saga is repaid
 With fair Memory's accolade;
 It shall never be rejected,
 Never by the folk neglected.

Yes, it prophesies a Spring
 Dawning o'er these northern quarters,
 The first daylight on our waters,
 Our hill-people's burgeoning!
 And as grown men in extremes
 Hark back to their stripling dreams,
 So the North shall hark, with reason,
 Back to Oscar's radiant season.

Well his thought bloomed in us all,
 Understanding of his mission:
 Kindred souls in coalition
 Was the folk's great rallying-call.
 And thereby we came to long
 For a living verse and song
 That would picture our Norwegian
 Life in dale and upland region.

What makes us so rich and strong
 As our life in rock-bound straitness,
 As our forebears' deeds of greatness
 Limned in imagery and song?
 As our own reflection's gleam
 Mirrored in Art's welling stream,
 As the music whose profusion
 Answers all the heart's confusion?

Hence King Oscar's signature
 Deep in runic stone is rendered;
 Folk-verse, drama folk-engendered
 Blazed new trails, his guidance sure.
 Still the road is hard and bleak,
 Still the seedling's young and weak;
 But it houses vital power,
 May well burgeon forth to flower.

And, in course of time maybe,
 Art with manly approbation
 Will construe his reputation,
 Celebrate it worthily.
 He who swung the spirit's sword
 Merits poesy's award,
 Merits poesy in native
 Speech that's folk-spun and creative!

Henr. Ibsen

Hådråder, the great Norwegian warrior, leader of the Varangian mercenaries in Constantinople before he became King of Norway in 1047; as claimant to the English throne he fought, and was killed, at Stamford Bridge in 1066; Athelstan, a successor to King Alfred, was a promoter of learning and literature in England. He made gifts of books to various religious foundations.

THE STORM-PETREL

“Storm-petrels roost where the land is sheering”; —
 An old skipper said that, in my very hearing.

She dabbles her wings in foam as she's floundering;
 Rides the big rollers; no sign of foundering.

The bird and the waves rise and fall there together;
 In calms she is silent, shrieks in foul weather.

She moves in a way that's half swimming, half flying,
 A dream between heaven and hell's pit plying.

Too heavy for air, too light for wave-wallowing — :
 Poet-bird, poet-bird, — the line I've been following!

Yes, and what's worst is, — in pedants' eyes
Most of this passes for sailors' lies.

Sheering: where the underwater land mass falls steeply away.

THE STUDENTS' GREETING
TO
HIS MAJESTY
KING CHARLES
5th October 1859.

Spirit's troop, the youthful and aspiring,
Greet our Norway's King!
Burning breasts entice the tongue to choiring,
Dance and revelling!
Hence we flock in force on this occasion,
Visit you with song,
Carve the student memory in strong
Runes, that ne'er shall yield to time's erosion.

You are Oscar's heir in double manner,
Heir to debts and rights,
Left by him who hoist the three-toned banner
Over Norway's heights.
Royal rights you will defend with mettle,
They are rich and rare,
Hoard the northern peoples' loving care.
Royal debts you will, in due course, settle!

Settle them, recall his exhortations,
Oscar's message, well:
"There's no place for strife 'twix northern nations;
There but brothers dwell!"
Freeman rights alone and freeman powers,
With their freehold lease,
Can unite them in a time of peace
As when mighty Vigrid-contests lower!

On then, King, command the flag's unfurling,
We shall march behind!
Kin beyond the peaks and billows swirling
Share the self-same mind!
Lo, the cynosure of all the nation,
Now's *your* time to act, —
Ours, to hope: that you'll not break the pact
Promised in your kingly proclamation!

Henr. Ibsen

At
THE GRAVESIDE OF SOLICITOR OLE CARELIUS SCHULRUD
12th October 1859.

PROLOGUE

So soon perforce the bond was broken,
So soon you sought your resting-place;
And yet the coffin-wreath, grief's token,
Is not your memory's final trace;
Beyond the grave it will sustain
Hope that we'll meet in God's domain.

A blessed hope amid life's anguish,
Best remedy for the bereft!
A boon for those that strive to vanquish
Their woe, whom you untimely left, —
For her, who must grief's journey brave,
For him, the old man by the grave.

EPILOGUE

Arise then, soul, and freely winging
Seek home in God the Father's breast!
For us Hope's voices shall keep ringing
Of union after death's brief rest!
Our home's not mould and night forlorn
But in eternity's bright dawn.

Schulrud was Ibsen's bosom friend in Grimstad.

At
THE DEDICATION OF THE CHORAL BANNER
23rd Nov. 1859.

Once more flocks of singers blithely cluster
Neath the banner's play,
Once more sons of song in memory muster
West, to Agder's bay.
Once more sagas with fair-coloured figures
Pass before soul's eye, —
Conjure Spring and verse and melody,
Sprinkle May-time's dew on Winter's rigours.

As a hewn stone on the warrior's barrow
Soundless speaks but bold, —
So the banner shall song's precinct hallow,
Muster young and old, —
Carry onward o'er Time's rapid streaming
Legends, richly dight,

Of our songster-faring, songster-flight,
Of its blithe adventures and its dreaming.

Gold-embroidered, Woman's fair creation
Has been song-baptised; —
For song's heirs a spire of inspiration,
Faith, Hope there devised, —
Under thee we meet, thus congregated,
Soul's song to revere,
Hand in hand towards the light we steer,
Swell the wealth of gold that's ne'er abated!

Henr. Ibsen

At this festival, two choral societies, the Professionals and the Artisans, combined to dedicate the banners made for each by the ladies of Bergen.

OPEN LETTER
to
H.Ø.BLOM.

When things went wrong for northern gods — quite madly —,
When Balder was struck down and Odin sat
Like some decrepit granddad, propped up sadly
On Lidskjalv's cushions, body-guard out flat,
When even Thor eschews the brimming vat
And Brage slouching o'er his harp plays badly:
Thus spake the warrior: "World's extinction looms."
Now Wiehe's gone, — the forecast's H.Ø.Blom's.

You are the warrior who's the populace's
Prophetic lightning, giving folk a lead,
Reporting metrically common-places
That give the shoal of minnows what they need,
You glimpse already snouts and horns indeed
In goblin swarms poised where our frontier traces;
But what you spied on Pegasus, from heaven,
Appeared in *Morning Post*, December 7.

You fear a Ragnarok's about to thump
"Barbarically" on our door already.
Accordingly, the tail-piece, bright, unsteady,
Stuck on your poem-comet's scrawny rump;
Trust me, the Muses find it all too heady,
Your image-figleaf didn't hide the bump.
So please, stop throttling, as a bard, our calling,
Use prose; — your verse is clumsy, quite appalling.

Remember that your faith's known by your deeds,
Don't fool yourself, thin ice is hard to manage.
You fancy you're a Knight of Taste, one reads,

And yet you'd "yoke" our mother in a marriage
 With one of Thespis' pair that draw his carriage, —
 With both, may God forgive you, of the steeds!
 That fleshy thought is rotten to the kernel,
 In verse that mental diet's quite infernal!

You write about a star-role's understudy,
 When folk require a battle-song to scream,
 On "substitution" you're a fuddy-duddy,
 Your eye is blinded by tea-table steam, —
 You've got a well-trained hippogriff for cuddy,
 Yet hire the pedant-poem's cart-horse team;
 Ahead, a castle — peaks and turrets sally, —
 But you prefer retreating to the valley.

They raised once, from a pyramid's recesses,
 A balsamed corpse, and put it on display.
 There proudly in its fossilled shroud it lay,
 Had quite forgotten how the sun caresses;
 What new it saw, it ten times worse assesses
 Than withered, bankrupt gods of olden day;
 "A bitter smile" played on its lips, emphatic
 Scorn for the times — because they were not static.

Exactly so you opened up this brawl;
 You want the age to sleep, on your compulsion,
 Life's clamant vigour fills you with revulsion,
 Back to the silent pit you long to crawl;
 Yet *your* breast housed a sounding-board, recall,
 Where many an elfin thought gained winged propulsion,
 Flew forth and settled, bred a generation, —
 But you — denied them their legitimation!

You fail to gauge the people's disposition,
 You scorn the very fruit of your own seed,
 The plot you meant to plough is full of weed,
 Abandoned by your spineless inanition.
 Is growing weeds the scope of our ambition?
 Those verses of your own — take those indeed; —
 On every line it's Danish style that battens,
 Even Vinje's clogged with Danish thinking-patterns.

But back now to your gloomy prophesying
 That after Christmas Ragnarok is due.
 Come, all of you, turn out and let's start trying
 To change Art's food, find something that will do.
 Our native bark-gruel's sour, and bitter too,
 Which can't be helped by praying or by crying, —
 But readers know that Art is international, —
 So bring a Japanese troupe here — that's rational.

No, royal Copenhagen, when all's told,
 Monopolises all our importation;
 Thus as Madeira's blended imitation
 Becomes fine vintage, barrelled in the hold,
 Just so nonentities brought here get sold
 Much over-priced because of their migration;
 We seat at Art's high boards those who'd be able
 To grace, at best, a Zealand tailor's table.

Your fault if I now put my guns to use,
 And in the host picked off each dreary snuffler,
 And blazed away at every worn-out scuffler
 That pours you out your Dry Madeira juice.
 Cothurnus hasn't, surely, turned old shuffler,
 Ambrosial food to grub a peasant chews,
 With that bouquet of comment, hardly handsome,
 In Number 3, for choirmaster Hansen?

Well, let that wait its turn to come along; —
 I seize this chance of glimpsing through the doorway
 The marvel that's awaiting us in Norway;
 That near event lamented in your song.
 To pick on individuals would be wrong;
 I found my case upon *your* dirge, sung *your* way:
 This coming age is Ragnarok, you grumble;
 It follows, then, Valhalla too must crumble.

For Ragnarok precedes Valhalla's fall,
 We all learnt that from our first kindergarten.
 We've got Andhrimner, who is still on call,
 And no-one doubts his diet can enhearten, —
 At least those Thursday bellies, though more Spartan
 Than what the old gods ordered in their hall.
 There is no lack of heroes; critics strike them,
 But don't quite kill — for still the public like them.

But where is Thor now, yonder with his hammer?
 That mighty Thor who cleaves the beetling height
 And brings home Freia to the North's blithe clamour,
 Leaving the troll to chew his beard for fright.
 And where is Freyr, who can bestrew such glamour
 Upon the slopes with birch and rowan bright?
 And where is Ydun's apple? Where, dear fellow!
 All I can see's a pear that's over-mellow!

No, Ydun's apple's gone, that's the position,
 And Balder's off come April or before,
 That's why the Last Day limps towards fruition
 Despite the club- and arrow-wielding war;
 Ground arms, stand easy, and escape the chore,
 Climb on the table, sewing shrouds your mission;

A god who drowns — don't commit that blunder —
Can never be revived — he must go under!

But trust me — Ragnarok, too, has an ending; —
Beyond the ridge a new sun tincts the skies;
It's dawn already in the youngs' fresh eyes,
The better morrow's near for apprehending,
Then you will see the light of day extending,
Though tree-trunks were bolt-blasted in the night, —
Then you shall see: the highest of the seven
Is — not Valhalla — Gimle's brave new heaven!

Henr. Ibsen

Blom, a conservative writer of plays, poems and critical articles, had infuriated Ibsen by describing the departure of the Danish actor Vilhelm Wiehe as portending doom for the Norwegian Theatre, though he had himself been, in his day, a national romantic. Ibsen, mocking his fixation with the old literary tradition, claims that the future lay not with the old Valhalla (a mocking reference to the Danish Theatre in Christiania) but with the young and native talent that inspired the Norwegian Theatre. Vinje, a near contemporary of Ibsen's who strongly espoused the cause of Norwegian literature.

For the mythological references, see 'The Bard in Valhalla' above. Andhrimner, the cook to the gods; Ydun, a goddess whose miraculous apples gave eternal strength and vigour; Ragnarok, the catastrophic collapse of the Nordic heaven, which was followed by the creation of a new heaven, Gimle.

LINES DASHED OFF TO H.Ø.BLOM

Roof aflame, wolf at the door
Can make many a sluggard rally,
Stir up those that drowns before
To the ultimate reveillé.
Even you, old H.Q. sweat,
Even you the trumpet roused
From the bunk-bed where you frowsted
Like some pine the wind's upset.

Wolf at door, the roof aflame
Can revive when strength's at zero,
Danger's great demands reclaim
Café blow-hard as a hero.
Why, the old grey in its stall
Whinnies at the bugle-call;
You, too, made your sabre rattle,
You, too, wanted to give battle!

Last year someone spread the news
(Called, in Dansk, pup for his labour)
That your old and rusted sabre
Still sat sheathed, unfit to use.
Ah, the faces pulled, my word,
By the good-folk who replied

That at last you must have died,
Thue-buried, print-interred.

Such talk was irrational,
Kite-flown rumour, wildly flighted, —
We can see now, clearly sighted,
You're awake and — national.
For such cunning holds and blows,
Nordic clinches, body-blasters
From the good old days, one knows
Only a real Norwegian masters.

Dale-bound, tied in torpor's trusses,
You have skulked for many a year;
Now you've gone beserk, I fear,
Blasting off your blunderbusses!
And you've little ammunition
Left you for the wars that rage:
Powder in cheese-ripe condition,
Words that match liqueur for age.

"Dolt" and "thug" and such like cries
Through the raging racket rattle;
Ah, I thought the last supplies
Banged off in the Campbell battle.
Notwithstanding my dissent,
In the fjord The Shoal's still showing;
Hence the Daily's seas present
To our gaze the Marwhal blowing.

Ha, if only our young force
Boasted some such Birchleg power
Up front, where the arrows shower,
Victory would be ours of course!
That's what we're objecting to!
Makes one grieve, it's far from cheering
When one sees a man like you
Join the Danes by volunteering.

May it profit you, I say,
Fighting in the foeman's fetter!
Hope they settle to the letter
Down Norse-Copenhagen way!
Monies you expect for wages
Could stay on account for ages, —
Just because, before year's dying,
Denmark's colours will be flying! — —

I forgot, when last I wrote,
Any mention of Herr Comus,
Domicile refused by vote

Of good taste's own major domus.
 Now all that's become redundant;
 From *your* pit's poetic seams
 You've mined comic ore that gleams,
 Eighteen-carat, and abundant.

As our Tybo you sang loudly
 Of yourself and Brabant too;
 You did Master Gert right proudly, —
 But another time will do;
 Wit's weak hams may look anæmic
 Hosed in verse, but terms Hellenic, —
 School-beak alpha, beta, gamma, —
 Earn no public shame or clamour!

Cock-crow seems to suit you poorly,
 There could be a reason why;
 Cock-crow in the night still, surely,
 Carries its old prophecy.
 Best, then, straighten what's misshapen;
 For as sure as good taste's capon
 In the stalls starts plumage-showing,
 So the cock on stage starts crowing! — —

You've worn out the native jerkin,
 Cast it scornfully away!
 What about that bear-fight, worked in
 Saga-style, that bold affray?
That was language, full and rounded; —
 But by Danish mouths expounded, —
 Just you try it — you'll see how
 Bear turns into "mast-fed sow".

Your brown bear, he was Norwegian,
 Quite a viking's match you know;
 So let's grasp his middle region
 Then, — hop, step — it's down we go.
 Watch out for the bog, man, natheless,
 Keep the hide quite clean — be strict —
 Let the battle-field inflict
 Skin-wounds but leave honour scatheless!

You'll not, in this blind condition,
 Rail long in your folk's dispraise;
 Folk-life and the folk-tradition
 Claim you to construe their ways!
 Rather than raise Cain to harm a
 Youthful state we've newly made, —
 Sing out from the stage a drama
 As a *double* renegade!

Thue, a Norwegian grammar school teacher, author of a reader containing "Texts in the Mother Tongue"; Campbell battle, the notorious fracas at the performance in 1857 of 'The Campbells' by Wergeland; the play was heckled by the "Danish faction"; Marwhal, Ibsen's deliberate misspelling (Narrehvalen — idiot whale) for narwhal; Birchleg, a warrior who wore birch-bark leggings; volunteering, Bløm had earlier joined the Danish volunteers to fight the Germans, but Ibsen now taunts him with being on the Danish side in the critical war and joining the coterie of Norwegian writers congregated in Copenhagen. Comus, a devotee of Bacchus; Tybo (who boasts of his exploits at Brabant) and Gert Westphaler, two characters out of Holberg's plays; the bear-fight, perhaps a reference to Ibsen's "The Vikings at Helgeland", where the plot turns on a hero's (Sigurd) fight with a bear and ends with Hjørdis throwing herself off the edge of a cliff; "double renegade" invites Bløm, having deserted once to Denmark, to desert back to Norway and the Norwegian Theatre.

UPLAND LIFE

Deep in the valley, summer night
 Outspreads its shady veils;
 Eve's wind-stirred sea invades the height,
 The beetling crag assails:
 And there the cloud's blue billows sweep,
 No eye can now attest
 The glacier that by day could keep
 A watchful eye upon the deep
 With sun-gold on its crest.

But higher there's a land sun-kissed,
 An island group on show,
 Set in a surf of rolling mist,
 Bathed in an amber glow.
 The silent mountain birds incline
 Like ships far out to sea,
 While peaks beyond the glacier-tine,
 Ranged like a troll-manned battle-line,
 Confront God westwardly.

But view yon herder's hut and fold
 Below the glacier's dome:
 The fell shows blue, snow glitters cold
 About the tranquil home.
 A world unto itself it seems,
 So, too, the folk who fend;
 Barred from the dale by rocks and streams
 They share the heavenly vault that gleams,
 The self-same God their friend.

View yon fair sæter-wench who waits,
 By evening's shadow stirred.
 The elfin thought she contemplates
 Still unbaptised by word.
 She does not know how long 'twill stay
 Nor what might be its name, —

But as the lur and cow-bells play
 Her dreams sense haven far away, —
 Beyond the glacier's flame! — —

Your summer life's so brief a boon
 On pastures glacier-bound;
 The giant's rigid cape will soon
 Enfold both peak and pound.
 Then to the inglenook you'll cleave,
 At life's familiar chores, —
 But spinning flax and wool to weave,
 Take heart — one golden summer's eve
 Is well worth winter's flaws!

ON THE HEIGHTS

1

My pack slung on my back at last,
 My rifle in my hand,
 The damper closed and door made fast
 With pin and withy band;
 A step, then, my old mother's way —
 Her own hut stands close by, —
 A parting handclasp, — just to say
 "I shall be back as soon I may, —
 And until then, — goodbye!"

The narrow path winds up the hill,
 It curves into the trees;
 Behind me fjord and valley fill
 With moon-hazed reveries.
 On past my neighbour's wall I press, —
 The farmyard still as night;
 But from the hedge-row gate I guess
 At leaf-sounds on a linen dress,
 A tinkling soft and light.

She stood there all in white arrayed
 And bade me time of day;
 She was so fair, so fine a maid,
 Fresh as a highland spray.
 One glance she used for teasing me,
 One for a hint of smile! —
 I smiled like her, and suddenly
 I was hard by the gate, and she, —
 Her eyes turned moist the while.

I threw my arm about her waist,
 She blushed and paled as well;
 I claimed her for my wife, embraced, —

Her bosom rose and fell.
 Now she was mine — I swore it true,
 Entire, not partly, no!
 I sensed her gaze down at her shoe, —
 The leaf-brooch tinkled forth anew:
 Because she trembled so.

She begged so nicely, I refrained,
 The teasing mood returned;
 My pounding heart-beat throbbed and strained,
 My frantic bosom burned; —
 I begged so nicely, she fell still,
 We made a well-matched pair;
 I sensed a song came from the hill
 As though sprites, elves and spectres shrill
 Laughed in the leafage there.

The narrow path wound up the hill,
 It curved into the trees;
 Behind me fjord and valley fill
 With moon-hazed reveries.
 I sat so fevered, she so white
 Near where the cliff's edge turned;
 We whispered in the sultry night, —
 I do not know what followed, quite,
 But know my forehead burned.

I threw my arms about her waist,
 She hung within their arc, —
 As my young wife and I embraced
 The sprite sang in the dark;
 If ghouls laughed as I made her mine
 I now but faintly know; —
 I feared no sprite's contemptuous whine, —
 I only saw her scared, and fine,
 And felt her tremble so.

2

I lay in the south-facing coomb
 And watched the sun's first rays;
 The depths lay veiled in clouded gloom,
 The ice- and snow-fields blaze.
 I see the red house yonder where
 Both I and mother bide.
 My mother's slaved and drudged down there,
 I've grown up blithe and free from care, —
 God knows what else beside.

She's up betimes; the smoke-swirls reach,
 I fancy, through the air,
 I think I see her go to bleach

White-woven stuffs down there.
 Yes, carry on your usual chores;
 God bless you and provide!
 I'll fetch you from the reindeer moors
 A splendid pelt that shall be yours,
 And some too for my bride!

And where is *she*? Must still delight
 In dream's disjointed play.
 Remember nothing of last night,
 Though dream of it you may!
 But once awake — rip out the stress
 From memory, — as do I.
 You are my lovely bride, no less,
 Weave linen, sew your bridal dress;
 Our way to church is nigh!

How hard seems separation's path
 From her one's heart holds dear; —
 But longing is a cleansing bath,
 It brings me health and cheer.
 I stand here like a soul inspired,
 My blood's so purged I feel; —
 A life not even half complete,
 A life where sin and guilt compete
 I tread beneath my heel.

Each dark desire, each passion wild
 Expelled as by the rod;
 I feel so blithe and reconciled
 Both to myself and God!
 A glance now over fjord and scree,
 The pine-crests crowding tight, —
 And then, the reindeer trail for me; —
 Goodbye then mother! Bride-to-be!
 And now I'm for the height!

3

Low in the west there's cloud ablaze,
 There's flame above the fell,
 But shrouding mist still overlays
 The remnants of the dell.
 My foot was weary, sad my mood,
 I pondered ill at ease;
 But from the cliff's edge where I brood
 Ling gleams as though by blood imbued
 And trembles to the breeze.

I picked myself a sprig of ling
 And stuck it in my hat;
 Close by, a sparse bush, furnishing

Snug lodging for all that.
 And thoughts they came and thoughts they went
 Like folk who go to pray;
 They flocked around, they stared intent,
 Held session, sentenced by consent,
 Then softly slipped away.

Had I been close to you again,
 My yesternight's plucked stem,
 I would, a trusty hound, have lain
 Before your kirtle's hem;
 Have bathed deep in your eyes' sweet balm,
 Have scoured my soul forlorn;
 The troll that witched me with its charm
 Last evening at your father's farm
 I would have slain with scorn.

I sprang up triumph-flushed to raise
 A winged prayer to the Lord,
 That He throughout your length of days
 Bright, radiant sun afford!
 No! I'm too strong for that I swear,
 Too young to shrink from strife,
 I *will* a task more hard to bear,
 And so, God, harken to my prayer:
 Make hard her way through life!

Dam up whatever stream she meet,
 With ice the footbridge glaze,
 Let screes draw blood from stone-gashed feet,
 Make steep the sæter ways;
 I'll raise her high upon my arm
 Across the wildest chute;
 I'll bench her in my bosom's calm, —
 Dare then to visit her with harm,
 And *that*, Lord, we'll dispute!

4

From a long way south he's travelled,
 Travelled an expanse of waters;
 On his brow mute thoughts lie ravelled
 Like the lights in northern quarters.

Sorrow lurks within his laughter,
 Lips speak though they do not utter;
 But of what? As well ask after
 Wind's song when the pine-slopes flutter.

His cold eye is overpowering;
 I've no more its full depth sounded
 Than the black tarn's which the towering

Glacier's breasts have bred and bounded.

Gloomy thoughts are there reflected,
Lumber bird-like, helter-skelter;
There's another squall expected, —
Take in sail then, — run for shelter!

In mid-moor occurred our meeting,
I with rifle, he with setters;
Fellowship from our first greeting, —
I would gladly break those fetters.

Why accept then this submission?
How I've wished this bond could sever;
Now I think it's *my* volition
That he's robbed me of, for ever.

5

"Why, come evening, yearn for mother's
House down yonder? Tell me whether
You sleep better under covers
Than on plumped brown highland heather?"

Mother, and the cat, watched o'er me
By my bed at close of daytime,
Span and sang until dreams bore me
Off into the night for playtime.

"Dreams, oh dreams, — why this abstraction?
Daytime deeds are better, trust me!
Drain life's cup; — more satisfaction
Than a nap with sires grown fusty!"

"Reindeer race across the moorland;
After them, go hell-for-leather! —
Better that than clearing poor land
Down there, piling stones together!"

But I hear the church bells ringing
From the headland stretched before us!
"Let them ring, and keep on singing —
Fosses make a better chorus!"

Churchward *she* and my old mother,
Prayer-book kerchiefed, will be wending.
"Trust me, man, you're meant for other
Tasks than routine church-attending!"

Organ sounds within the choir;
On the altar, candles glowing.
"Mountain storm-songs rate far higher,

Snow-glare makes a better showing!"

Hell-for-leather then! Come, wander
O'er the fells' white hump and hollow!
Let them walk to church down yonder,
Those that choose to, — I'll not follow!

6

Autumn's near; below the ranges
Hark, the last few herd-bells falter!
Upland freedom's lost — life changes
Back to cattle-stall and halter!

Winter soon will hang its awning
From the bluff, enfold it thickly;
Paths will soon be blocked — a warning
That I must head homeward, quickly.

Home? Is *that* my home then, truly,
Where my mind's no longer turning?
He's long chastened my unruly
Thoughts, I've steeled, myself, my yearning.

Dale-life stifles emulation!
Drudgery for mere survival;
I found *here* my stimulation,
I need fells and moors to rival.

Here in this deserted dwelling
I have housed my wealth of treasure;
There's a bench, a stove, sweet smelling
Air, and time to think at leisure.

Elf-thoughts in the night, evoking
Danger's scent to warn the chary;
He has offered magic's cloaking;
I, though tempted, am still wary.

Winter in these wildernesses
Steels weak thoughts I need to master, —
Bird-song's sickly-sweet excesses
Do not make the blood pulse faster.

If till Spring this loft's to house me,
Then I'll strive for their expansion, —
Raise them from their chores, and rouse me,
Bench them in the highlands' mansion,

Teach the doctrine that I've chosen,
Tempt them to home-spurning laughter;
Upland life, though ice-bound, frozen,

Will not seem as strange thereafter.

7

Here through long, long weeks I languished, —
Loneliness made heart the fonder;
Drained by warring memories, anguished,
I must seek my dear ones yonder.

Just one day, then break the tether,
Hers, my loved one's, and my mother's, —
Scale again my realms of heather
Which, come Spring, shall house two others.

I must go! — Ugh, drifts are forming!
I have been a little tardy.
Through the waste wild winter's swarming, —
And now every path's debarred me.

8

Long weeks passed; I shook off the cloud,
Nostalgia no longer disturbed me;
River and stream shared an icy shroud,
Round hung the moon where the drifts stood proud
And glittering stars shone superbly.

I was too lively to sit and mope
Indoors as the day descended;
The hut allowed spirits and thought no scope,
I went ranging the heights till the plunge of the slope
Halted me, where the fells ended.

The dale was at rest in the gulf displayed;
Then chimes, from the headland winging — !
I listened — , how gentle the sound they made;
Where was it before that I'd heard it played — ?
Then I recognised church bells ringing!

They rang with the festival yule-tide sound,
The familiar chimes were assuring.
A light appears past my neighbour's pound,
My mother's hut casts a gleam around,
Beguiling me, strangely alluring.

Home, despite all its wretchedness,
Now a saga with images thronging!
Up here the harsh upland ruggedness,
Down there I'd a mother and wife, no less, —
Small wonder I felt such longing.

A laugh behind me, so dry and short;
It was the hunter, the stranger.

He had heard my every wordless thought;
 "I think my young friend is overwrought, —
 Ah, yes; home sweet home, there's the danger!"

Once more I stood resolute, staunch and bold,
 Was strong again by my reckoning;
 Upland winds fanned my bosom cold,
 Never again would it throb as of old
 To the yule-tide symbols' beckoning.

Then farm-yard and roof were caught in the play
 Of light from my mother's dwelling.
 At first like the dawn of a winter's day;
 Then clouds of smoke spread an overlay
 And then the red glare came welling.

It burned, it blazed, then a mighty fall;
 I screamed in the night for sorrow;
 The hunter soothed me: "Why fuss? — no call —
 It's only the old house burning, that's all,
 The cat and the punch for tomorrow!"

He sounded so wise in my despair
 That I was seized with trembling;
 He showed how effectively the glare
 Blended with fitful moonbeams there,
 A sunset sky resembling.

He viewed the setting, his hands cupped round
 To gain just the right perspective;
 Then music, a song made the fells resound,
 And then I sensed mother's soul had found
 The angelic host protective.

"Patient in drudgery, patient in pain,
 Patient you passed through life's sorrow;
 Thus gently we bear you to God's domain
 Far o'er the heights to find peace again
 Where heaven delights in the morrow!"

The hunter was gone, the moon concealed;
 My blood — fire and frost contending, —
 With my burden of grief I ranged far afield —
 But it must be confessed the effect appealed
 Of that mingled sunset blending!

The perfect midsummer day released
 Its shimmering light o'er the heather;
 Church bells rang to the wedding feast,
 Crowds on horseback down there increased,

Lining the route together.

A shot from my neighbour's ramp rang out,
There were birch-twigs to mark the turning,
The farmyard was crowded enough, beyond doubt,
But I laughed loud in my steep redout
Though wind-flushed tears were burning.

I seemed to hear rhymes that were meant to sting,
Cruel laughter from spite proceeding;
I sensed I was butt for crude ballading,
I lay on the cliff-edge, I tore at the ling,
And bit till my tongue was bleeding.

A gallant sight as away they go,
She riding tall as they started,
Her waist-long tresses about her flow,
They glisten, they shine — as well I know
From that evening down there when we parted.

She crossed the stream matching stride for stride,
The bridegroom and she together. —
My heart was set free and my tears were dried,
I had fought the fight to the end, sore tried;
I had no more trials to weather.

Composed, I stood on the brink and scanned
That summer scene, reflective.
The cavalcade seemed a glittering band, —
I cupped my eye with a hollowed hand
To gain just the right perspective.

The fluttering scarves, the coifs that shine,
The mens' coats gleaming redly,
Church with its consecrated wine,
Lovely bride who was once all mine,
The happiness that had fled me, —

I saw it all as I watched serene,
Viewing from life's high regions;
A nobler radiance bathed the scene
But lo, that is something that none have seen
Who huddle below in their legions.

Then laughter behind me, so dry and short,
It was the huntsman, the stranger:
"My dear man, from what I heard I've brought
My neatly-laced rucksack and all for nought, —
Not needed, now there's no danger!"

No, now I'm a man who can stand alone,

But thanks for your kind intention;
 The blood in my veins doesn't race now, I've grown
 Aware that my bosom becomes as stone,
 Symptoms, not mere invention.

I drained the strengthening draught, the last;
 The heights are no longer freezing;
 My sail's collapsed, I've a broken mast, —
 But look, the colour her red skirt cast
 As it gleamed through birch-trees — how pleasing!

Away they gallop, then show anew
 Far off, at the church-path turning.
 My fairest memory, all joy to you.
 I've traded my final verse for a view
 That is loftier, more discerning.

I'm resolute now, respond to the call
 That bids there are heights to wander!
 I've lived out my life as the lowland's thrall;
 Up here there is freedom and God withal,
 The rest merely grope down yonder.

Leaf-sounds, leaf-brooch: a brooch hung with little metal leaves.

PROLOGUE

[at a performance in the Student Union theatre on
 19th March 1860 in aid of the Student Building Fund]

A legend lives on, an old one,
 From India's fable-land;
 It tells of a palace created
 On the most holy strand.

It says there the lucky fellow
 Owning the magic lamp
 Raised up the golden turrets
 All in one night, the scamp.

His yearning soared strong and lofty,
 Desire became stone, well-dressed,
 It grew into pillars and arches
 As the proud work progressed.

His aim was another world-wonder,
 But youthfulness reigned in his mind,
 And so he could laugh at the hazards
 And doubt had no role assigned.

And that's why good spirits came flocking
 From earth and from sky and from sea,
 His longings they cast in metal,
 Gave form to his fantasy.

And that's how the lucky fellow
 Owning the magic lamp
 Raised up the lofty turrets
 All in one night, the scamp! — — —

Time has run out for fables,
 Faith ranks below a call;
 Building means deeds, not dreaming,
 If it's to grow up tall.

But youth has a self-reliance
 That's of a deathless sort;
 To Hope, ever-fresh and lovely,
 Flock spirits to lend support.

See, that's why we're boldly building
 The castle of Thought's proud pile;
 Favouring spirits are with us, —
 That's why it proceeds in style.

'Twill soon be a task accomplished; —
 Our thanks, then, to one and all,
 Who brought to our lucky vision
 A stone to augment this new hall!

The Danish poet Æhlenschläger, whom Ibsen greatly admired (see the Bard in Valhalla above), wrote a work called "Alladdin".

EPILOGUE

at Mr and Mrs Døvre's Benefit Performance
 30 April 1860
 (delivered by Mrs Døvre)

Memories, that by day go diving
 Deep into oblivion's well, —
 Visions, dowsed by life's rude striving,
 Now, this evening, work their spell.
 Feelings intimately stirred,
 Fumbling for interpretation, —
 I shall bunch for presentation
 In a warm and grateful word.

I was just a child when here
 My young talents were first tested;
 Then the star for which I quested

Seemed to beckon me so near.
 Oh, a fine conceit forsooth, —
 Day by day I learnt the truth:
 Yonder road is steep and wearing,
 Life itself too short for faring.

Distant, strange the world seemed, truly;
 Art-vocation's tender shoots
 Sprouted from my own mind's roots,
 Grew like home-reared young, unruly.
 Full of life, oft prone to wildness,
 I would shoo them out of doors;
 You embraced them as though yours,
 Watched them with the eye of mildness.

Wench-song on the sæter's lea,
 Dreams, delightful dale-side measures,
 Forest life past peak and scree,
 I'd depict as dearest treasures.
 If I managed to convey
 Just one heartfelt trait and plainly
 Brought it to the light of day,
 I shall not have lived quite vainly.

Thanks for all your loyalty,
 Thanks for kindness truly proven,
 Thanks for memories richly woven,
 Vestments for life's apogee!
 Some day I may well impart
 Better how I yearn at heart,
Yearn, despite the fells' attraction,
To give thanks, on stage, in action!

THE STUDENTS' GREETING
 to
 PROFESSOR A.M. SCHWEIGAARD
 13TH MAY 1860

Like a clearing where dense woods are soughing
 Lay our fatherland.
 Vainly the old peasant shares went ploughing
 Through the barren sand.
 What was needed most was sun's admission,
 Light to cleanse the shade; —
 Forth they went, with shining broad-axe blade,
 Noble pioneers of blessed tradition.

Then, amidst that waste where tree-trunks mouldered,
 Life began to show;
 There, where flickering pine-roots spat and smouldered,

Corn began to grow; —
 And as soon as pioneer-work was ended, —
 Farm flanked farm by then, —
 There sprang up a breed of mighty men, —
 Single singers too the greenwood wended.

Noble pioneer in spirit's regions!
 You are of that band
 To whose day-task murk must yield its legions
 In our fatherland.
 Sun-gold sifted down through wind-felled spruces
 To your broad-axe blade; —
 Hence we greet you with this serenade
 That a heart-felt gratitude produces.

Wide-spread though it be, your life's endeavour,
 Saga does you right;
 We, true sons of Reason's church forever,
 Honour you this night.
 Far your visions shone, the uplands brightening
 At their gleam's behest; —
 Legend has it, seedlings flourish best
 When to westward there's the flash of lightning.

A tribute to the professor in his twentieth year in office. He had been brilliant and influential, both as an academic and as a political thinker of the reformist and Utilitarian tendency.

TO PARLIAMENT
 (17th May 1860)

Members, find you
 Tales that bind you,
 Saved from legend's night?
 Or have you forgotten
 Egil's king-begotten
 Jæmte-mission,
 Earl's submission
 To our king's geld-right?

Egil's tried men
 Fain would hide when
 Forth the greybeard strode.
 One by one flee, shirking;
 On the hill-side lurking
 Jæmte glowers; —
 Blood-red flowers
 Rose-like bloom the road.

Anger burrows

Deep its furrows
 In the greybeard's frown;
 Round him foes were packing;
 He was trapped, shield lacking.
 Then, a vision
 That tradition
 Hands, through saga, down.

Roughly battered
 Rock-slabs shattered,
 He with hemp-rope lashed
 On his breast's vast hollow,
 Strode, though none would follow,
 Goalward freely; —
 Jæmte steel he,
 Jæmte's host he smashed.

Earl discovered,
 Geld recovered,
 He graced Jæmte's hall.
 Friendly words resounded,
 Table-mead abounded,
 Strife had ended; —
 None contended
 Since for Egil's fall. —

Freedom-sired,
 Folk-inspired
 Men from dale and strand, —
 You have Egil's mettle,
 Hence on each shall settle
 His high glory
 Garbed in story
 Who, like him, dare stand!

Egil was sent by his king to demand tribute due to him from the Earl of Jæmte, a district of Sweden inland from Trondheim. Details, for example the improvised breastplate of stone, are taken from Egil's Saga. Ibsen uses the theme for its contemporary relevance: Norway's parliament had recently refused to accede to a Swedish attempt to renege on the agreed terms of union between the two countries.

SONG
 for
 The Winners
 AT THE SHOOTING-MATCH AT LADEGAARDSSØEN
 1st July 1860
 Mel. For Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland.

Our Norway is a citadel
 With ramparts sound though battered.
 Before them bloodied foemen fell,

The foe's strong shield-wall shattered.
 For on its walls there stood arrayed
 A muster, weak, but undismayed, —
 And freedom's flag on high displayed
 A splendour o'er them scattered.

Keen was the Norseman peasant's sight,
 His aim a skill to treasure;
 His ancient piece flashed lightning-bright,
 Which gave the foe small pleasure.
 But then peace breathed its summer gust;
 The gun hung on the wall to rust, —
 But woe should it so stay there, just
 When none dare fail to measure!

No, Norway's son is strong and free,
 Would honour his extraction;
 Sport once, he knows, lent dignity,
 Man's noblest satisfaction.
 So cheer all those who bear away
 A winner's trophy from the fray!
 Let all men shoot like these today
 When time calls out for action!

Henr. Ibsen

Rifle associations were highly regarded; they recalled the volunteer militia that repelled Sweden's attempted invasion in 1814 to prevent Norway from establishing, at Eidsvoll, an independent constitution. Ibsen was a member of one such association.

SONG
 AT THE MILITARY BALL IN KRISTIANIA
 ON KING CHARLES'S CORONATION DAY
 [5th August 1860]

Upon the King of Norway's brow
 The crown's bright circlet's shining;
 The whole land joins the revel now,
 The country, coast combining.
 And though he's far beyond our view
 His name amongst his men rings true;
 The King's the soldiers' friend, whereto
 They'd swear without repining.

Behind the frontier ranges dwell
 Our Swedish kin, stout-hearted;
 His steel has been recorded well,
 We know how it has smarted.
 He's like a greybeard, staunch in stress;
 But we've a lad's hot-headedness;
 Combined we'd harder smite, not less, —
 A thought to foes imparted!

Yes, should the need to fend the North
 From foreign foes betide us,
 We'll in the King's steps venture forth,
 With Sweden's sons beside us.
 Fresh coronation it would seem:
 A kingly circlet of esteem
 Would on the King's brow cast the gleam
 That summer dawns provide us!

Henr. Ibsen

SONG
 for
 THE SWEDISH PARLIAMENTARY CORONATION-
 DELEGATION IN TRONDHJEM 1860

You beheld the temple, chancel shattered,
 High vaults broken down;
 Still it tells, though hoary-grey and battered,
 Tales of high renown:
 There the doughty Swedes once hymned their force's
 Blood-drenched battle-line;
 To the altar's foot in Olaf's shrine
 Reckless Swedes once dared to tie their horses.

You beheld the land's white snow-fields yonder,
 Narrow dales you saw;
 They too speak and make the memory ponder
 Enmities of yore:
 Shattered temple walls past restoration,
 Olaf's shrine destroyed; —
 But up yonder there's a host deployed,
 Wrapped in sleep and moorland isolation.

Swedish brothers! O'er the mountain border
 Now a roadway climbs.
 Now the shrine is a new tale's recorder,
 Tale of recent times.
 Here, where fiercest hatred blazed its warning,
 Kinsmen now unite;
 Here, remembrancer of havoc's night,
 Stands a hall of promise, triumph's dawning.

Yes, though Olaf's hallowed church was broken,
 Yet the folk still thrive;
 And, if Sweden's manhood sleeps unwoke, —
 She has more, alive.
 Blest then be her flag's high reputation,
 Ours too, newly-won; —

Let them in the North's cause wave as one,
Led by one prince to one destination!

King Olaf II — St Olaf — was buried after his death at Stiklestad (1030) in St Clement's Church in Trondheim; The great cathedral that was later built in his honour fell into disrepair but was restored later in the nineteenth century.

SONG
to
THE SWEDISH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
at the celebration at Klingenberg 17th August 1860
(Mel. Hellig Olaf stod ved Fjorden)

Out from Norway's coast the ship bore Norway's men,
Mælar's strand their destination;
There the North's high prince gave pledge to Sweden's men,
There performed his coronation.
Sweden's future hopes were consecrated there;
Norway's men stood by, that all might witness bear.
 Calm the pledge they gave:
 Triumph or the grave;
Peace, fraternal federation!

O'er the mountain barrier fared a solemn band;
It was Sweden's best, its manhood's flower.
High the King raised Norway's sceptre, sword in hand,
Freely crowned himself in regal power.
Swedish brothers, you stood by then, witness true,
Saw the northern prince wears not one crown but two!
 You shall safe maintain
 All the King's domain
Should the threat of brute force glower.

Coronation verses through the North now ring,
Fairest Saga taught the measure:
You have nobly honoured Norway's Spring,
Yours our hearts most fondly treasure.
High and hallowed still resounds the call
That neighbours' sons be fostered in one's hall.
 Our North's Yggdrasil
 Keeps its vigour still, —
To the crushed root-worm's displeasure.

Henr. Ibsen

Mælar, the lake on which Stockholm stands. Yggdrasil, in mythology the great tree sustaining the universe; Norway's Spring, the process which had gained momentum during the 1850's and 60's, whereby Norwegian literature joined the mainstream of European modern realism.

ON THE DEATH OF J. L. HEIBERG

Now all mouths his praises number!
But the bard had first to slumber.

Tearful thanks the folk now pay him;
First, though on the bier must lay him.

Denmark's youth, you could have truly
Honoured your dead bard more duly!

Praised on high his life's achievement;
Spared the trappings of bereavement.

He strove, made the times' trolls yield all;
You, though, crushed him in the shield-wall.

He a torch to Denmark handed;
You his bosom with it branded.

Sword-skill he to you confided;
You against his heart applied it.

Smiles and tears his song created;
But the man you immolated.

Many in our northern regions
Now enlist in Tyrfing's legions;

Many a breast has here been branded
With the very torch they handed.

Woe, if Danes forget the ringing
Of their own bards' voices singing.

Woe, if that grand sound were muted
In the clamour southward bruited.

Woe, if the new generation
Found their song a strange creation.

Woe, if heirs to bardic passion
Grew up garbed in German fashion!

Time can further strong alliance,
Sometimes hatred and defiance.

Brother ever bound to brother
Can in kinship's fetters smother,

Scorn shared blood and shared tradition,
Hate the ties of coalition.

Break one link, make one concession,
Then Remorse will take possession,

Like some night-bird soar, aspire,
In the breast cool hatred's fire.

Plainsmen, men too from the valley
To their forebears' hall now rally.

Men from fjord, from upland others
Wield the sword to aid their brothers.

Out of enmity, of striving,
Fairest pines grow, stoutly thriving.

In the North's chain links past number
Deep within its soil now slumber.

But a seed that shall not perish
Has come down for us to cherish.

Tend it, if the thorn-crown baited
Sower is to sleep placated.

May it bear and burst and scatter;
Fight on to the end, no matter!

Henr. Ibsen

J. L. Heiberg, a Danish intellectual of remarkable range — philosopher, scholar, theatre director, playwright, poet. His wife was a distinguished actress for whom Ibsen wrote what is perhaps his finest poem, the Rhyme Letter to Fru Heiberg (below). Tyrting — Tyr the god of war.

TERJE VIGEN

There once lived a man, very grizzled and grey,
On the furthestmost reef there could be; —
He harmed not a soul in the slightest way,
Whether by land or by sea;
His eyes though sometimes with menace glared, —
Most when a storm was nigh, —
And then he seemed troubled, so folk declared,

And then there were few who'd not feel scared
With Terje Vigen by.

I saw him later, just once — he lay
With his catch alongside the quay;
His hair was white but he sang, as gay
And spry as a boy was he.
He bantered with lasses who happened abroad,
He joked with the lads, each one,
He waved his sou'wester and sprang aboard;
Then hoisting the jib he left the fjord
For home, the old eagle, in sun.

Now all that I've heard about Terje I'll try
To tell you from first to last,
And if it should sometimes seem a bit dry
It's true to what really passed;
It isn't exactly a first-hand piece,
But still it's from friends of his then —
From those who stood by at his last release
And closed up his eyes for the sleep of peace
When he died near on three-score and ten.

He proved quite a scamp in his younger days,
Left home soon to range abroad;
Had gone through a lot in all sorts of ways
As youngest seaman on board.
Later, jumped ship in Amsterdam,
But pined in the end for home,
And sailed on "The Union", captain Pram;
But there no-one knew him, the straying lamb
Who'd left, a mere lad, to roam.

Now he'd grown tall, in a handsome style,
And he dressed with a certain pride.
But father and mother had died meanwhile,
In fact all his kin beside.
Then Terje moped for a day, maybe two, —
But soon shed his misery.
With land underfoot he found much to rue,
No, better to build, live the freedom he knew
On the surge of the mighty sea!

Then, a year later, young Terje wed, —
The die had been quickly cast.
He must have repented the deed, folk said,
That suddenly bound him fast.
So under a roof of his own he stayed
One winter, one long carouse —
Though gleaming window-panes still displayed
Neat little curtains and flowers arrayed

In the small, red-painted house.

The ice broke up when the mild winds blew
 And Terje's brig sailed straightway;
 Come autumn he'd meet the grey geese that flew
 On course for their southern stay.
 A weight seemed to fall on the seaman's breast;
 He knew he was in his prime,
 He'd come from shores that the sun caressed,
 Astern lay a world of light and zest, —
 Ahead, a grim winter-time.

They anchored; his shipmates on shore-leave bent
 Were gone, for a long carouse.
 He eyed them with envy as off they went,
 Then he stood by his silent house.
 He peeped in through curtains as white as can be, —
 Inside he saw two bestowed, —
 His wife spinning flax there quietly,
 But there in the cot lay a sight to see,
 A pink baby girl, who crowed.

It's said that Terje was inspired
 To soberness in one leap.
 He toiled and he slaved but he never tired
 Of rocking his babe to sleep.
 On Sabbath eve when the nearest farm
 Rang wild with the dancing there,
 The songs that he sang at home held most charm
 When little Anna lay in his arm
 And tugged at his thick brown hair.

Life ambled along till the war broke out
 In eighteen hundred and nine;
 The people's plight is still talked about,
 Privation and slow decline.
 Cruisers from England blockaded each port,
 Starvation afflicted the poor,
 Crops failed and even the rich went short,
 A pair of strong hands was but scant support
 With death and disease at the door.

Then Terje moped for a day, maybe two
 But soon shed his misery.
 He thought of a comrade old and true,
 The surge of the mighty sea. —
 Out west his exploit still lives, compiled
 In legend, a deed of great note:
 "As soon as the gales blew a bit less wild,
 Terje Vigen rowed for his wife and child
 Overseas in an open boat!"

The smallest cutter that he could find
 He chose for the Skagen trip.
 Sails and tackle he left behind, —
 Such gear he forebore to ship.
 He reckoned, did Terje, the boat would steer
 If seas ran contrarywise;
 To keep clear of the Jutland reef was a chore, —
 But worse was the English man-o-war,
 The lookout's keen eagle eyes.

Then trusting to luck with a faith profound
 He lustily plied the oars.
 He got to Fladstrand quite safe and sound
 And shopped for his precious stores.
 God knows his cargo was nothing grand:
 Three casks of barley, that's all;
 But Terje came from a wretched land, —
 He now had the means of life to hand;
 His wife and child had first call.

He slaved on the thwart three nights and days,
 That hero, that man of might;
 The fourth dawn, there in the sun's first rays
 A band of mist hove in sight.
 It wasn't just fugitive cloud he knew,
 It was mountains, clefts, peaks he saw;
 But over the ridges there came in view
 The Imenes saddle, broad and blue.
 He knew where he'd made the shore.

He'd almost reached home, although he must
 Hold out for a last brief plod!
 His heart was uplifted in faith and trust,
 On his tongue was a prayer to God.
 And then the words froze on his lips; he found
 He'd made no mistake, it was true, —
 He saw a corvette in Hesnes Sound
 With canvas a-back, hove to.

His boat was hailed; a signal was fired,
 And the nearest escape was barred;
 The flurry that moved with the sun expired
 So Terje went westward, hard.
 They lowered the jollyboat over the side,
 He heard the song raised by the crew, — —
 With his feet on the cutter's ribs spread wide
 He rowed till the sea-foam seethed to the stride,
 He drew blood from his fingernails too.

Gjæsling's the reef with the covered top

Just east of the Homberg Sound.
 An onshore wind makes a ugly chop
 And but two feet under there's ground.
 The foam flashes white there, glitters like gold
 However dead calm it be; —
 But though the breakers be never so bold
 Inshore it's most often calm, all told,
 In the broken force of the sea.

Inshore Terje headed; his vessel flew
 Like an arrow through foam and spray;
 But hard in his wake the jollyboat crew,
 Fifteen of them, toiled away.
 It was then that he called through the surf's loud roar
 To God in his direst dread:
 "Hidden away on the stony shore
 Sits my wife in a house that is wretched and poor
 And waits, with the child, for bread!"

But fifteen raise more of a din than he can;
 An echo of Lyngør's griefs.
 Luck's on the side of the Englishman
 Patrolling through Norway's reefs.
 Then Terje rammed on the shoaling top,
 The jollyboat grounded as well;
 The officer in the bow called "Stop!"
 He lifted an oar-butt and let it drop
 To stove in the cutter's shell.

The impact shattered both rib and plank,
 A torrent of sea gushed through;
 In two feet of water that cargo sank,
 But Terje's defiance grew.
 He broke the armed cordon that had arrived
 And over the gunwale he sprang, —
 He dived and he swam and again he dived;
 But the jollyboat cleared; though he turned and contrived
 The gun-fire and sabres rang.

They fished him out, hauled him over the side;
 A salvo from the corvette;
 Aft on the poop-deck, flushed with pride,
 Stood the captain, scarce eighteen as yet.
 His very first prize was Terje's boat,
 His vanity knew no check;
 But Terje saw that escape was remote; —
 That strong man knelt with a sob in his throat
 To plead on the warship's deck.

He bargained with tears, in return they made fun,
 They bartered their scorn for his plea.

An east wind was rising, so England's son,
 Triumphant, put out to sea.
 Then Terje fell silent: befall what may,
 He kept his grief private now.
 Yet all of his captors were moved to say
 That suddenly something seemed blown away
 From the clouded span of his brow.

He spent five long years in the hulks, men swear,
 Confined in the prison's din.
 His shoulders grew bent, he turned white of hair
 In dreaming of home and kin.
 He brooded on something he never unveiled
 As though the one treasure he owned.
 Then eighteen-fourteen came and peace prevailed;
 Then home Norway's captives, with Terje, sailed
 In a frigate the Swedes had loaned.

Back home on the quayside he came ashore,
 Ship's pilot by royal writ;
 But few in that grizzled creature saw
 The young sailor who'd left so fit.
 His home was another's; he went to crave
 Some news of his darling pair:
 "The husband forsook them and nobody gave,
 They both ended up in a common grave
 That the parish's pauper-folk share." — —

Years passed by and he plied his trade
 On the furthestmost isle did he;
 There wasn't a foe in the world he'd made,
 Whether by land or by sea.
 His eye, though, sometimes with menace glared,
 When surf on the shoals tossed high, —
 And then he seemed troubled, so folk declared,
 And then there were few who would not feel scared
 With Terje Vigen by.

One evening — bright moon and a leeward flaw —
 There's a stir where the pilots sit;
 An English yacht being swept ashore
 With foresail and main both split.
 The flag on the foretop displayed the red
 And wordless appeal abroad.
 A little inshore was a cutter that sped
 Close-hauled and tacked through the gale ahead
 Till the pilot stood firm on board.

He looked like a grizzle-haired hero — he manned
 The helm, showing no concern; —
 The yacht responded, stood out from the land,

The cutter in tow astern.
 The lord came aft, doffed the hat he wore,
 His lady, with babe, at his heel;
 "Preserve us alive from this surf's wild roar,
 I promise more wealth than you've lacked before." —
 But the pilot let go the wheel.

His cheek became white, a laugh twitched his lip
 Like a smile that breaks through at last.
 Carried in further the lord's fine ship
 Ran up on the reef, stuck fast.
 "Abandon ship! To the boats with all speed,
 My lady, my lord I say!
 We'll shiver to pieces, — clear signs to read, —
 But closer inshore there's the sheltered lead;
 My wake-line will show you the way!"

Phosphorous blazed as they raced along
 Towards land with the precious load.
 Aft stood the pilot, tall and strong,
 And keenly his fierce eye glowed.
 He sighted to leeward on Gjæsling's bare top
 And on Hesnes Sound windward as well;
 Then letting go helm and the stay-sail strop
 He lifted an oar-butt and let it drop
 And stove in the cutter's shell.

In rushed the sea with a burst of spray, — —
 A shudder ran through the wreck — ;
 But the mother, all pallid with dismay,
 Had snatched up her child from the deck.
 "Anna my baby" she cried out distraught;
 The greybeard he started, did he;
 He put the helm over, he made the sheet taut,
 The boat seemed a very bird when brought
 To ride the rough seething sea.

It grounded, they sank; but calmness itself
 Inshore of the arc of rough seas;
 Under the boat ran a hidden shelf,
 The water came up to their knees.
 His lordship shouted: "The reef — look here,
 It's moving — no skerry I trow!"
 The pilot smiled: "You have nought to fear:
 Three barley-casks on a boat sunk here
 Is the reef that holds us now."

The thought of a half-forgotten deed
 Flashed over his lordship's face —
 The seaman who'd knelt on his deck to plead
 In tears — he recalled apace!

Then cried Terje Vigen: "You held my all
 In your hand, — thrown away for renown.
 One moment from now and revenge will fall — —".
 'Twas then the Norwegian stood there, tall,
 While the proud English lord knelt down.

But Terje stood propped on the upright oar
 As straight as in younger days;
 His hair streamed wild in the gusting flaw,
 His eyes one compelling blaze.
 "You sailed in your mighty corvette with pride,
 I rowed in my humble boat;
 I toiled for my own till I nearly died,
 You robbed them of food and then when I cried
 Found it easy to mock and gloat.

Your wealthy lady's as bright as the spring,
 Her hand is all silken-fine, —
 My poor wife's hand was a roughened thing,
 But still, for all that, she was mine.
 Your child's hair is golden, her eyes as blue
 As a little guest of our Lord;
 My daughter was nothing to boast of, true,
 Was thin, God help us, and grey-faced too
 Like most at the poor folks' board.

See, *those* were my riches upon this earth,
 They were all I could claim as my due.
 I thought it a treasure of such great worth;
 Yet it weighed but a mite with you.
 The hour of revenge has now struck, beware, —
 Your turn to endure has come round
 To match the long years that I've had to bear
 That bowed down my shoulders and whitened my hair
 And buried my joy in the ground."

Seizing the child he wrenched it free,
 With his left grasped the lady's waist.
 "Stand back there, my lord! One step and 'twill be
 At the cost of both lives, your haste!"
 The Briton poised to renew the fray,
 His arm, though, was limp with fright; —
 His breathing came hot; his eyes turned away,
 And his hair — it showed in the dawn of day —
 Turned grey in that single night.

But Terje's forehead had shed its frown,
 His bosom moved calm and free.
 He reverently set the young infant down,
 He kissed its hand, tenderly.
 He breathed as though loosed from a prison cell,

He spoke in a mild, level way:
 “Terje Vigen’s himself again, he is well.
 Until now my blood raced like a stream on the fell;
 For I *had* to, I *had* to repay.

The long, long years in the prison’s maw,
 ’Twas they turned my heart amiss.
 Since then I’ve bent like a highland straw,
 I’ve peered in a foul abyss.
 But now that’s all over; we’re quits withal;
 You sinned without guile, I know.
 I gave what I had — and you took my all,
 And so, if you think you’ve been wronged, then call
 On God, for He fashioned me so.” —

All safe and sound by the dawn’s first light;
 The yacht lay in port at last.
 The less said the better about that night
 But still Terje’s name spread fast.
 The nightmare’s grey clouds were swept away
 By one night’s wild storm and wreck;
 And Terje bore straighter than most from that day
 The shoulders that bowed the time he lay
 To kneel on the man-o-war’s deck.

Milord and milady came — crowds indeed —
 As he stood in his poor abode;
 They shook him by hand, bade farewell and God speed
 And paid him the thanks they owed:
 For rescue from howling gale, distress,
 For rescue from shoal and wild sea;
 But Terje was stroking the young child’s dress:
 “Not so, our saviour in need was no less
 Than *this* little mite by me!” — —

The yacht then headed for Hesnes Sound,
 The Norwegian flag was raised.
 Just to the west there is foam-washed ground, —
 And *there* a salute-gun blazed.
 A teardrop glistened in Terje’s eyes;
 He watched from a nearby height:
 “Much have I lost, much gained likewise.
 Perhaps ’twas a blessing in disguise, —
 So the thanks, God, are yours by right!”

’Twas thus that I saw him, just once — he lay
 With his catch alongside the quay;
 His hair was white but he sang, as gay
 And spry as a boy was he.
 He bantered with lasses who happened abroad,
 He joked with the lads, each one,

He waved his sou'wester and sprang aboard
 Then hoisting the jib he left the fjord
 For home, the old eagle, in sun.

In Fjære churchyard I saw a grave
 That lay in a weathered spot;
 Unkempt, it was shallow, decrepit, save
 For the headboard that marked the plot.
 It read "Thærie Wiighen" in white, the year
 He went to his rest shown too.
 He lay to the winds and the suns that sear,
 So stiff and tough was the grass growing near,
 But wild flowers were showing through.

Henr. Ibsen

Terje Vigen written probably during 1861. The English blockade of Norway was undertaken because Denmark/Norway had agreed with France and Russia to close its ports against English commerce. Skagan, Fladstrand, on the northern tip of Denmark. Prisoners such as *Terje Vigen* were kept on hulks at Chatham; Lyngør, a harbour north of Grimstad where in 1814 British ships sank Norway's last frigate. Fjære, *Terje Vigen's* reputed burial spot, is near Grimstad.

EPILOGUE AT MR BUCHER'S BENEFIT APPEARANCE
 IN THE NORWEGIAN THEATRE
 (14th January 1861)

I made my first appearance
 A stranger here, and new,
 By fjord and fell divided
 From home, from kinfolk too.
 Hence I approached faint-hearted
 The narrow strip of stage,
 For shrewd eyes were observing
 The unknown's pupilage.

The space here was restricted
 And low beneath the roof,
 And thought, when it went groping,
 Met many a sharp reproof;
 But out of the shrewd eyes watching
 Beamed a kindness, bright and clear;
 No longer as a stranger
 The stranger now stood here.

Here friendship's hands were proffered,
 A compact nought can harm,
 I grew as much at home here
 As on my mother's farm —
 I felt then my youthful powers! —
 I would, nay I must succeed!
 My new-found home's advancement

Became my most sacred need. —

The space here now is lighter,
 There's height beneath the roof —
 And time is pointing onward,
 A dawning sky the proof;
 But who can have forgotten
 That childhood wretchedness;
 Child-labour was enlisted
 To save the house, no less!

And down came the ancient structure,
 Today, in the rubble's stead,
 There rises a finer building,
 Much lighter, with space overhead;
 Whence comes a thought that's soothing
 'Mid the stresses of time, the strain:
 I too played a part, supplying
 My stone to the work in train.

So thanks for the tonic potion
 Provided so cordially!
 Thanks for each glowing reflection
 I carry through life with me!
 Hard I shall strive, with ambition,
 Though it come brief and short,
 On, to the temple of Vision,
 Up, to the stronghold, Thought!

Henr. Ibsen

The Norwegian Theatre was comprehensively redesigned and refurbished during the summer of 1860. It was reopened on October 11th with an orchestral overture conducted by the famous violinist Ole Bull, who also, after the reading of a prologue, played to the audience.

PERIL AT SEA (Written March 1861)

With surf-troubled holms and no trees to boast,
 It shows pretty grim, does Norway's coast,
 The western approach most dourly;
 Close in, though, you'll find many bays disposed,
 Sun-warmed and sparkling and snugly enclosed,
 Where your anchor will hold securely.

There you've a shelter of leaning trees;
 Fields that resemble the very seas,
 Their crops waving golden-mellow.
 In by the quay where the flag is seen,
 Tucked under the slope on a thin patch of green,
 Wooden houses stand, red and some yellow.

Places I visited, where I had dreamed
 As the full-blown storms and as flurries streamed
 Cooling the brow of the waters.
 Life in these parts has its wretcheder side;
 Yet many a deed showing strength and bold pride
 I can vouch for still in some quarters.

I still recall, though it's years since then,
 The quiet women, the silent men
 At war with the might of the weather.
 Their saga's but short and briefly run, —
 Yet in its course a great deed can be done;
 Such as this I shall put together.

There lived in a haven that's much the same
 A pilot, — old, I forget his name
 But know that war-service intruded.
 He'd fought as a lad in the Roads the day
 That Nelson put the white flag on display, —
 Then came home when peace was concluded.

Now he was stooped, weather-beaten and grey.
 His trio of sons, as all would say,
 Were but so-so, and rated according.
 Lads for the sea they were, that much was clear;
 Were named thereabouts as first, without peer,
 When it came to a ship and its boarding.

When perishing cold set in, blizzard and hail, —
 It was out with the cutter — a reef in the sail,
 Then off on the wings of the welter.
 They knew every channel, restricted or clear,
 They knew every inlet, far and near,
 And they'd bring a ship into shelter.

They would yell in high glee when a loud tempest broke,
 And headwind or no, they would stroke by stroke
 Keep on till the ship was sighted.
 But if they liked fighting the surf and swell
 They fought just as gladly on land as well;
 "A shame" said the folk, united.

In such a haven, as well you know,
 Quite a large muster can often grow
 Of foreign ships on their mooring.
 Sometimes the cause is a head-on gale,
 Sometimes it's damage to shroud and sail,
 Sometimes it's planks that need shoring.

But then there's some life in that little bay!
 In on the patch there's a dance under way
 With fluting and clarinetting.
 Danish melodies, Russian chants,
 English horn-pipes, can-cans from France
 Weave a right motley setting.

The trio I mentioned were sometimes there;
 But that meant a threat to the whole affair.
 I cannot explain their rancour, —
 Suffice it to say, and it passed for true,
 They would bring out their mightiest oaths on cue
 When a Danish craft lay at anchor.

One day — it was summer — in ran a brig
 With trimmest of cordage and ship-shape rig
 And the Danes' national flag was flying.
 Likelier lads you would seldom see
 Than they were, they reefed so efficiently
 As the brig cleared the point outlying.

Come that evening, it's dance and play,
 Come that night it turned bloody fray, —
 For the trio were there, those bold hearties.
 Oaths from the Danes, the Norwegians bawled,
 But neither side triumphed and no-one crawled.
 Honours all square for both parties.

The Danes made mock of them, teased them raw;
 But next time they met, the three lads swore
 Bloody vengeance could be expected.
 The brig weighed anchor — the day was bright —
 The gaff-mounted flag was a handsome sight.
 The set-to was long recollected.

And harsh were the words they endured, those three,
 For having behaved so outrageously;
 But the talking proved vain and hollow.
 A summer passed by, then the autumn's gone;
 The winter weather dragged on and on
 Till it's time for the spring to follow.

Then all of a sudden the wildest of blows
 One night-time in April with fog and thick snows,
 Big surf on the shoals and beaches.
 That night there was no-one could rest ashore; —
 Then a shot was heard, — and again one more; —
 It came from the outer reaches.

Folk flocked the look-out point, old and young;
 But in rolled dense sea-mist and there it hung,

No glimpse of the waters flowing.
 Just once, where the surf broke in white and gold,
 A hollow sound like a thunder-clap rolled
 And they saw something red was showing.

Then the mist lifted and daylight broke.
 The wild-surfing seas seemed to burn and smoke
 As they drowned in each other's scurry.
 But trapped in the breakers they saw a brig
 With trimmest of cordage and ship-shape rig,
 And the Danes' national flag all a-flurry.

The flag that had proudly waved o'er the field
 Now smote the air but for help appealed! —
 Too late for a tack, folk reckoned.
 The anchor had failed and the sail had backed;
 A matter of life and death in fact
 Quite likely the very next second.

Up at the look-out the old exchange notes:
 "Is this fit weather for open boats?"
 "Isn't the sea much too broken?"
 But all lamented as one; they found:
 "The fact it's *Danes* being blown aground
 Seems dreadful by any token!"

"They sent us over such food as we got,
 We went smuggling together though never a lot:
 Our many shared memories aren't banished."
 So they moaned on in the old-uns' ring;
 But the trio, they said not a single thing, —
 For they weren't to the found, they'd vanished.

But out from the head shot a boat at a rate;
 Swifter by far than the elders' debate,
 There is burst its way through the weather!
 Sometimes it fell, sometimes rose on the sea;
 But the three in the boat, they yelled out with glee; —
 Then they boarded, — they'd won together.

The sea was black, like a torrent of mold;
 Menacing sun added red and gold;
 The wreck showed now bright, now sorry.
 The colours resembled the German three —
 They spread out to windward, they foamed on the lee,
 The Danes' national flag their quarry.

Then the encounter turned war-game instead;
 Aboard the Danes' vessel the fluttering red
 Call for help was no longer blowing —
 The trio who'd come know the fairway sound,

The anchor's cut loose and the bow's brought round, —
The boat scuds with all canvas showing.

And off through the reefs and shoals it flies,
In Øresund the brig soon lies,
Rides safe on its anchor yonder.
But those three pilots from Norway's strand,
They took their pay, they were set on land, —
But went home with a lot to ponder.

Yet if they'd been somewhat better taught,
They might have come up with some such thought:
"You tell them, those Hun high-horsemen,
If you're forced to fight for your Danish flag
We'll all give a hand, there's none will lag, —
But first you'll find Norway's Norsemen!"

Henr. Ibsen

A call to Norwegians to forget the old animosities against Denmark which had once ruled over their country. The poem urges support for Denmark partly because it was a vital source of supplies during the English blockade (see Terje Vigen above), partly because it constituted the southern line of defence for the whole of Scandinavia against German expansionism. The Roads — the old man had fought in the battle of Copenhagen in 1801 against Nelson's fleet. Øresund, the sound between Sweden and Denmark.

SONG
at
THE CELEBRATION AT KLINGENBERG
17th May 1861

We are one folk, our land is free!
In song and speech thus sallies
Our jubilation fervently
Through Norway's many valleys.
In travail born, its swaddling, stress,
Baptised in blunt outspokenness,
Cast in the lion's mould, no less,
The soul of Norway rallies.

But, Norsemen, woe if it befalls
That you, through inanition,
Should slump within your forebears' walls,
Day-dreaming of tradition!
You've blows to strike still, many more,
Full many a mile to fare, full sore,
Still many a goal to gain before
You dare claim intermission.

You'll not be free till courage hoist
Its flag at masthead proudly,
Till accents that your forebears voiced

Dare in your song ring loudly.
 You'll not be free till ridge and height,
 Fall's dazzling sunset, spring's clear light
 Pervade the mind as well as sight,
When home's bright meadows crowd thee.

Not free until the North's defence
 Stands firm, the south protected, —
 The Dark-Age thrall-badge flung far hence
 Across the Straits, rejected.
 Not free till all the North is freed!
 Woe, then, to him who dares concede
 Mere words to brothers in dire need, —
 His grave shall be neglected!

So guard your birthright with staunch pride,
 When horn and flag are hailing, —
 Keep night-watch at your brother's side,
 Brave fell-men, never failing!
 Scan well the frontier's mountain wall,
 Spread dale to dale the beacon's call,
 For freedom's God aids free men all, —
 His cause is all-prevailing!

Henr. Ibsen

SONG
 for
 THE UNIVERSITY
 AT THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
 AT KLINGENBERG
 2nd September 1861.
 Mel. Herr Peder kasted Runer.

Across the mountains misty morn came trailing;
 It bore the message: Dark's duress is failing.
 The folk though saw a mirage
 Far off, as in a dream,
 A keep, with spires and turrets
 That o'er the ridge-crest gleam.
 But the ship must be sent a-sailing
 To arrive at the sun-regaling
 Castle Thought.

But here and there mid spruces darkly jumbling
 The wise see clearly, while the folk are fumbling;
 The Doomsday winter ended,
 So, too dream's listless doze, —
 Then was it Norway's May-day
 In land-wide splendour rose:
 Fairest sight of the fell's profusion, —

There it lay in the bright effusion,
Castle Thought.

Yes, 'twas the folk's dream, reared on life's foundation,
Based on the folk's will and its dedication!
Then there soared free a Lidskjalf
High on the stronghold's crest
Where Odin's cunning ravens
Flew in and out to nest.
Still the spirit builds, undefeated,
You've ne'er seen on this earth, completed,
Castle Thought.

'Tis like the church by warriors bold projected:
The trolls of night tore down what day erected;
Up, then, ye youthful muster, —
Keep night-watch unfatigued,
And guard the temple precinct
With Light's own spirit leagued.
When the turrets and spires are soaring
Then shall column and vault rear, shoring
Castle Thought.

Hail, then, our Lidskjalf, this high seat of learning,
With far-flung vistas for the eye discerning,
Thence bridges spring, wide-spanning,
That stretch unendingly,
O'er distance's vast desert
And over Time's broad sea.
Thence shall issue this proclamation:
In the North soars the fair foundation,
Castle Thought.

Henr. Ibsen

In 1811 the King of Denmark ordered a preliminary study to be undertaken that led to the foundation of Oslo University. Doomsday winter translates Ibsen's Fimbulsvinter, the three-year-long winter that portended the destruction of the Nordic gods by the giants; Lidskjalf, Odin's throne-cum-lookout high on his palace roof whence he surveyed the world; the cunning ravens were his spies.

PROLOGUE

at

THE NORWEGIAN THEATRE'S SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

10th October [1861]

Temple spire and royal fort,
Raised by forebears of our nation,
Stand now like the land's stone-wrought
Grief, a muted lamentation.
Norway's banner, blithe and red,
Flew there once with wings outspread, —

Then, half-mast, it drooped and sorrowed
Through the dire days that followed.

Temple-spire's bright golden glance
Squandered on the wind and weather,
Royal hall's once sprightly dance
Soundless, silenced altogether.
But a page from saga linked
These our days with those extinct;
Now the flag flaunts saga's pages
Crammed with runes from distant ages.

People's flag, fly bravely filled,
Free once more, on fell-winds lofted;
Float o'er what the folk now build
As you did once, memory-wafted.
Fan new life, new vigour bring
With your roof-top fluttering;
Let your tongue to freedom rally
Men from fjord and from the valley.

Whisper them: no lifeless stone
Built the people's seat of power;
Prompt them, it was will alone
Brought it, year by year, to tower.
Woe, should none *there* comprehend
What your urgent words portend; —
You would droop, in folds of sadness,
As you did at Svolder's madness!

Woe, should none there in that hall
Heed your message to the nation, —
Let the brave, blue cross then fall,
Shroud the mast in desolation.
Let your blithe red freedom-flag
Droop inert and lifeless sag,
Banner, strike your noble whiteness
Rivalling snowdrifts with its brightness!

Never, that shall never be!
From the fells fair breezes blowing
Raise aloft the colours three,
Bring the strength that's life-bestowing.
In the high-roofed hall there's space,
Spirit's cause deserves a place, —
Harald's vision of our nation
Shall not lack accommodation.

People's pile and royal pile
Opposite each other tower!
Stand like kinfolk, free of guile,
Eye to eye, with equal power; —

Hence will's fiery lightning plays
 In that interchange of gaze; —
 Sverre's, Haakon's, Oscar's holy
 Shades by day build well, if slowly!

May the folk's will, strong and free,
 Watch and ward the folk's endeavour, —
 Shield its works, that liberty
 May, though young, be shrined for ever!
 Let the masonry decay,
 Deeds are columns built to stay,
 Elevate, sustain the nation,
 Norway's weal and reputation.

Henr. Ibsen

The prologue, to a performance of Bjørnson's 'King Sverre', celebrated the laying of the foundation stone of the new Parliament building, which faces the palace from the far end of Karl Johan Street; Svolder, the site of King Olaf I of Norway's defeat and death in AD 1000. King Harald achieved his vision of a unified Norway by his victory over local kings and earls at the sea battle of Havsford in 872.

ON THE OCCASION OF
 ENGINEER CAPTAIN P. STEENSTRUP'S
 54th BIRTHDAY

29th November 1861

Respectfully dedicated by the Engineering Plant's Song Quartet

Birthright's blessing,
 silvered tressing,
 decks the dauntless man.
 Eye and spirit glowing,
 — gifts of heaven's bestowing; —
 labour's guider,
 work-provider,
Steenstrup will and can!

Health and power
 build a bower
 where the boss may dwell.
 Years may pass and vanish,
 but *his* memory banish? —
 Saga's scrivings
 carve great strivings —
his name *she* knows well.

We the choir
 work for hire,
 we who celebrate.
 We stand awe-inspired
 by the good, admired

labour-guider,
work-provider,
Skill's best advocate.

We shall daily
follow gaily
Steenstrup all the way.
A mere taste, our greeting
at this birthday meeting,
as our singing
leads a ringing
Cheer for *him* — hooray!

Peter Steenstrup, born 1807, a naval marine engineer, was instrumental in founding one of the first modern shipyards for the construction of iron-clad steam ships, thus initiating the industrial revolution in Norway. He had captained the first such vessel. Saga: history personified.

17th MAY 1862

Mel: Højest løfter jeg da Guldpokalen

Dark the land lay; — mountains grimly glowered,
shadowing the dale;
fierce against the shore the fjord's foam showered;
loudly sang the gale.
Cruel the hardship in the humble dwelling,
tilth withheld its bread;
seas were barred, across them boomed the dread
din of weaponry; for it was swelling.

Be it noted — during this privation
Liberty moved here;
hence you must now pledge your dedication
to a course that's clear.
Let those prove, on whom your choice may settle,
that in word and deed
they are of sound stock, their sires' true seed,
men in whom run veins of mountain metal!

Norsemen, from the wealth of golden treasure
willed by Eidsvoll's Thing,
you shall beat new pieces out, past measure,
like a Draupner ring!
Cordon round your dearest acquisition,
stand watch o'er the land!
Freedom needs a guard alertly manned;
half the triumph stems from disposition.

Freedom's crown shall blossom forth unstinting,
warded by such might,
spread the barrens with a rosy tinting,

make the black tarn bright!
 Peace's garlands twining Olaf's axes
 lastingly portend:
 Fortune's dew shall on our realm descend,
 Spring by Spring the North's well-being waxes!

Seas were barred: an English blockade resulted from Norway's declaration of independence in 1814; Draupner, Odin's golden ring which was able to reproduce itself indefinitely; Olaf's axes: Saint Olaf became attributed, strangely enough, with Thor's cruciform hammer or two-headed axe.

IN LUND
 AT THE RALLY OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDENTS, 1862
 (Mel: Af Reissiger)

Hail Skaane, low-land's Queen, we hail thee,
 Home of the North's first-fostered dream,
 Where memories of our race loom palely,
 Like mountain walls beyond Time's stream.
 Here once clashed *elders* of our nation,
 Here marched our princes, war to wage,
 But out of conflict grew salvation,
 The North's harmonious Golden Age.

But you have seen a better rally,
 A Braavall worth *our* time's applause.
 Our nation's *youngest* led the tally
 Of fighters in our future's cause.
 It seemed the Valkyr stood there eyeing
 The North, perceiving victory there;
 The North's new leaders in the vying
 Were Æhlenschlæger and Tegnér.

Here flew the flag's initiation,
 Implanted firm on *Sweden's* shore:
 Well met then, Swede, on this occasion
 Shared with your kin from Dan and Nor.
 We'll let our foe's sly, devious legions
 Scan day and night each paper clause, —
 A host of Swedes, of Danes, Norwegians
 Has youth's zeal fighting for its cause.

Henr. Ibsen

Skaane, the southernmost region of Sweden, once part of the Danish Viking kingdom; Lund, the settlement in the south that King Canute turned into a township about C.1020 AD; about 1080 a start was made on the construction of a great stone cathedral there, which later became the seat for the first Scandinavian Archbishop. Braavall, the site of the internecine and bloody battle between Harald Hilditann and his nephew Honig for possession of Sweden; Æhlenschlæger and Tegnér, leaders of, respectively, the Danish and the Swedish historical/romantic movement in literature; our foe — Germany, pursuing its claim on the duchies of Slesvig and Holstein.

SONG
at
THE STUDENTS' RETURN FROM THE RALLY
IN COPENHAGEN
22nd June 1862

(Mel: For Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland.)

There's mention in an ancient tome,
— Great pagan days it traces —
Of our forefathers who would roam
To trade in far off places;
But when the ship again turned head
And north for home and haven sped,
It carried riches back instead,
Bore gold in its embraces.

But some would rather claim it bore
From earth's far-distant regions
A crop, bred on a southern shore,
Of seed, fair plants in legions.
They thrived in Norway's soil and site
Like garden blooms, their colours bright,
Hence in the North gained freehold-right,
Those plants from southern regions.

You too seek distant kin and dance
The billows wildly flowing;
You bring back gold that will enhance
The soul, much seed worth sowing.
Yes, youth's deep murmurs from the heart,
Each flash audacious thought may dart,
Each grand, fair vision born of art
Is truly seed worth sowing.

But profitless your pains I fear —
Let there be no mistaking —
If journey's end is all you hear
In this our farewell-taking.
Each seed must in its freehold bear
Our northern region's bracing air, —
That kindred growth needs hot-house care
Is mere old-wives' tale-making.

For we must one day read the signs,
That Norway's pines can nourish
The Danish birches as our pines
Midst Sweden's oaks may flourish.
Your native tree has never died;
It prospers best as freedom's bride,

With kindred shoots that grew and vied
In this our festive rally.

Henr. Ibsen

THE PASTURE-HUT ON DRONNINGBJERGET
(By Henr. Ibsen)

Now the hut's built on Norway's fell,
Hugging its foot in their fond embraces
Roses from northern slopes blend well
With blossoms from kindlier places.

Memory's message from southern parts,
Mingled with northern love and affection,
Shall, here renewed, unfold their hearts
Like the ever-green vine's perfection.

Here to this spot that's remote and small,
Memory's knit with its treasure,
Knit too, a name, — just *one*, that's all,
But *three* it serves for good measure.

The pasture hut: a music pavilion built on Bygdø. The occasion was a visit by three Louises: Queen Louise, wife of Charles XV, Princess Louise of the Netherlands and Princess Louise of Norway/Sweden.

COMPLICATIONS
(from a draft of "Love's Comedy")

An apple-tree stood in a garden I know,
it was dripping with blossom white as snow.

About the garden there bustled a bee;
he fell in love with a bloom on the tree.

So peace of mind was denied them both.
But then the pair of them plighted troth.

Off flew the bee on his summer round.
Returned, the blossom had set, he found.

The bee lamented, the set grieved too;
but now there was nothing that they could do.

Close by the tree in a rubble house
lived a quite humble but worthy mouse.

He sighed in secret: "Oh set divine,
my hole would be heaven if you were mine!"

The bee, ever loyal, resumed his roam.
The set had turned fruit when he got back home.

The bee lamented, the fruit grieved too;
but there was nothing that they could do.

Under the eaves, like a basket in style,
a nest clung, a sparrow's domicile.

He sighed in secret: "Oh fruit divine
my nest would be heaven if you were mine."

The bee lamented, the fruit grieved too,
the mouse felt shattered, the sparrow blue.

But things dragged on; no solution in view;—
a case of "there's nothing that we can do".

Then — the fruit fell from the branch and was split.
The mouse, with a smothered "Ah!", died of a fit.

The sparrow fell likewise; still in its hide
when corn-sheaves were hoisted at Christmas-tide.

The bee was now free, but hedgerows stood bare,
and summer's blooms were no longer there.

He entered the beehive, could there relax,
and died full of years as a maker of wax.

It would have been spared, all that bother and fret,
had bee become mouse when the bloom became set.

And all could have ended so well, the whole shoot,
had mouse become sparrow when set became fruit.

SONG

at the Student Union celebration

13th January 1863

(Mel: "For Norge, Kjæmpers Føderland")

We slept the present through, slept small, —
And made us great by dreaming;
But dawn's wind ripped the murky pall
And day took over, beaming.
North's vision, lately reft of sight,
Put Memory's dead dreams to flight,
New life emerged by sound and bight,
Life set the fjords a-gleaming.

We sons of the Norwegian fell

As our Sound-severed neighbours —
 They rouse the North — divine full well,
 We've slept away our labours.
 Dreams are for night-time, deeds for day,
 Our flag shall o'er the victory play
 When we a firm foundation lay
 With clash of swords and sabres.

For cellar-life the lion-shag's
 Too fine a thing to offer,
 Like golden trim on musty rags
 Flung over Memory's coffer.
 It shall be flaunted to serve well
 The brothers three from Sound and fell, —
 Hence here, tonight, we shall repel
 What *Memory's* fare may proffer.

No, *onward, outward* on life's sea
 We'll gaze, though day blow colder,
 A noble brotherhood of three,
 The Cross upon our shoulder.
 Our mission is a *Promised Land*;
 It looms ahead, that lovely strand, —
 Sail, Norsemen! Memory's the grand
 Bold cross upon your shoulder!

Henr. Ibsen

WITH A WATER-LILY

See, my dear, the gift I proffer;
 It's the white-winged bloom I offer;
 Borne on gentle streams it floated
 Fraught with dreams that Spring promoted.

If you'd house it safely, dearest,
 House it in your breast, 'tis nearest;
 Then its leaves shall be the dwelling
 Of a deep and placid swelling.

Child, beware the meek tarn yonder,
 Perilous to those that ponder.
 There the sprite pretends he's drowsing,
 Playful lilies hide his housing.

Child, your breast's the meek tarn yonder,
 Perilous to those that ponder; —
 Playful lilies hide the housing —
 While the sprite pretends he's drowsing.

*My dear — Ibsen originally wrote Marie, the name of one of Susannah Thoresen's sisters.
Perhaps the submerged eroticism of the poem suggested the change.*

SONG
at
THE STUDENT UNION BALL
13th February 1863
(Mel: I Rosenlund.)

A luring, wonderful castle soars
In Memory's earliest morning;
But day-time's cloud of depressing chores
Spread o'er the keep like an awning.
But — should our festival delight,
Your soul will ply its pinions
And for the stronghold's peak take flight,
For Beauty's blithe dominions.

Yes, this is more than a passing fling,
This moment pledged to enjoyment;
It soothes the soul, brings a freshening
To day's dull, sordid employment.
It is a yearning for the home
Where soul, cocooned and flightless,
Bursts forth and soars, transformed, to roam
Midst colour, music, brightness.

So drink at pleasure's prepotent spring,
Go young and warm to your duties!
Seek out, this festival evening,
The tempting shrine that is Beauty's.
Hail, all who've sounding-board for breast,
A mind to jubilation,
Who've wings to join the fray's blithe zest,
Fair swans of this occasion!

H.I.

SONG
at the installation of
THE BUSTS OF
WERGELAND AND WELHAVEN
in the Students' Union.
9th May 1863
Mel. Norafjeld med Jøkel blaa

New-built stands the students' hall;
But within are building
Ghosts from wars rhetorical,
Shades of strife, thought-wielding.
Then our dwelling was baptised,
Graced by female beauty,

Student hopes flocked, well-apprised
By the past, of duty.

Thoughts clash shield on shield, ring bold
Through the thousand valleys, —
It's our folk's thought-Idavold,
This, our hall for rallies.
Here the conflict never dies,
Though *elsewhere* abated;
Here the fallen, god-like, rise
Well-conciliated.

Mind's bold knight shall hew his path
Without hate's invective;
Conflict is Truth's cleansing bath
From the heights' perspective;
Words shall bear a weapon's weight
In those jousts of Reason; —
Well the age deserves its fate
That outlives its season.

From today clear signs invoke
Reconciliation,
Chiselled with incisive stroke,
Memory's warm oblation.
And the lady's gift conveyed
Gentle faith, stout-hearted:
'Tis the loving garland laid
On the brave departed.

Henr. Ibsen

Wergeland and Welhaven, Norway's leading poets who, at one stage, were very strongly antagonistic.

SONG
at
THE SOCIETY OF ART'S RECEPTION
for
THE ACTOR CHR. JØRGENSEN.
30th May 1863
(Mel. Danmark dejligst Vang og Vænge.)

Well I knew the man who sallied
North from Denmark's reach;
Sword, the fervid brow he carried,
Thews, his skill of speech.
Viking-like he sought to measure
Weapon's weight, amass deed-treasure,
Sought to grow, sought high opinion,
Sought a new dominion.

In his mind youth's spate was racing,
 In his heart, Spring's sluice;
 He, mid uplands brisk and bracing,
 Rooted like the spruce.
 Each appearance gained him glory;
 Sometimes he could well be gory,
 But all shared the same opinion:
 He'd gained his dominion.

He, now grey, his mission ending,
 Contemplates the foam,
 Yearns to hear the swan's song blending
 On his island home.
 Drop the shield, axe, sword you wielded,
 Time to rest, you've never yielded, —
 Your great saga of successes
 Shall outlive Time's stresses!

For, as rows of rough-hewn boulder
 By the North Sea waves
 Loud acclaim the brave who moulder,
 Long laid in their graves, —
 So shall you, in Beauty's region,
 Be recalled by boulders legion, —
 To tell ages yet to flower
 Of the man's true power!

Henr. Ibsen

In honour of the Danish actor on the occasion of his departure from the Danish (as opposed to the Norwegian) Theatre in Christiania after more than 30 years service.

A TRIBUTE TO SONG

(Mel. "Hur lange skall i Norden")

Our tongues long ceased their singing,
 Like moping birds, cast down;
 Now song comes freely ringing
 From country, fjord and town.
 The Lead, to summer's gleaming,
 The sons of song parade, —
 Led by a sign, the streaming
 Banner Woman made.

Indeed this Bergen muster
 Holds promise of accord, —
 Where sons of Oslo cluster
 With those from Trondhjem's fjord.
 The bird that ventures soaring
 Round Lindesness and Stat
 May soon be off, exploring
 Kjølen and Kattegat.

Young Norway's voice ascending
 Shall loudly ring abroad,
 With our near neighbours' blending
 The Nordic triple chord;
 Who'er adopts this mission
 Ensures his future fame, —
 But let song's first rendition
 Be ancient Bergen's name!

Written for a student rally in Bergen. Lindesness, an island off the southern tip of Norway; Stat (Statland) in the north, near Namsos; Kjølén, a mountain range between Norway and Sweden; the Kattegat, the straits between Norway and Denmark.

ON A SINGING TRIP

On through the islets that nestle,
 This hallowed and gleaming day,
 Steams our imposing vessel,
 Hundreds of flags on display.

Youngsters aboard are singing,
 Joyous in voice and heart,
 Song floods the fjord, wide-ringing,
 Fills the strait's every part.

Up in the bows, commotion —
 Horns and loud tubas play.
 Church bells call to devotion; —
 But Sawney won't hear them today.

He won't hear the church bell chiming,
 He won't heed his prayer-book's cues,
 He won't heed high mass's timing
 For songs on a Sunday cruise.

But trust me, perched on his foreland,
 Bewildered and gazing out
 Over the echoing moorland, —
 God's not far away, I doubt.

He can't guess our motivation,
 Can't think why we fare so bold,
 But feels well enough the sensation
 Of blood pulsing hot, now cold.

He starts from his clump of heather
 Back there on the headland knap;
 Our singer doffs hat to the weather,
 And Sawney takes off his cap.

Through the brave, bald reach we go faring,
 We speed o'er the rolling blue;
 He watches our smoke, sits staring
 As long as we stay in view.

We fly with flags flaunting out yonder,
 We sing like the birds that fly;
 He settles again to ponder:
 Some big affair just passed by.

We head for the lamps and flowers,
 Bright festivals up the coast;
 No company charms *his* hours
 Save gravity's silent host.

Don't fret that he may have neglected
 Church-going, you kept him so long;
 He's sure to have gained some reflected
 Light from our meeting, our song. —

See, thus shall we youngsters, we brothers,
 Life's voyagers, rich and so gay,
 Rouse and bear witness to others
 Land-wide, in each creek and bay.

There isn't a nook won't be ringing
 With echoes of sorts, though weak.
 It's *we* who are birds blithely singing
 With seed-corn in claw and beak.

Wherever wings may be flourished,
 Ridge-high or low down o'er the firth,
 A seed from the flock is nourished,
 Wind-blown to a pining earth.

Sawny — my attempt to represent Ibsen's faintly derogatory term for a yokel living on the coast north of Bergen.

THE STUDENT UNION'S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

2nd October 1863

Mel. Hur lange skall i Norden.

Our Union has its saga
 Like most of Norway's breed:
 Brought up in stark privation,
 Its daily guest, harsh need; —
 It strove as strive all Norsemen
 For life the live-long day, —
 Self-help its battle harness,

Humble roof its stay.

Our Union has its saga
Like all of Norseman breed:
It owns a golden treasure,
A memory rich indeed,
Bred in bright freedom's morning,
Baptised in derring-do,
Made in the nation's image
Carved and cast anew.

When Freedom's fierce defiance
Swept wildly through the land,
Where else would soul and sinew,
As ours did here, expand?
But when the light of Reason
Dispersed the wild carouse,
That light, too, first descended
On where the students house.

March onward! That's the challenge.
March on throughout your life!
March onward, where it matters,
In Norway's youthful strife!
Though fifty now, old fellow,
Your youth's not reached its end, —
For you have Idun's apples
In thousands still, my friend!

Henr. Ibsen

Christiania University, the first in Norway, was inaugurated in 1813 after lengthy agitation by students; Idun, a goddess whose apples assured the preservation of youth.

FOR NORWAY!

There musters now on Tyra's lines,
This time, perhaps, the last, —
A folk beset, a folk that pines,
Its banner at half-mast.
Betrayed in dire predicament,
Betrayed when battle-clad!
Was *this* then what the handclasp meant
That boded well for North's consent
At Lund and Axelstad?

The words that gushed forth there of late
As from a heart devout,
They proved but a mere prosy spate,
Now it's the turn of drought!
The tree whose leaves such promise gave

In sunshine's festive spell
 Stands lopped and stripped by storms that rave,
 A cross on Nordic youth's own grave
 When dusk in earnest fell.

It was a lie in terms ornate,
 A Judas-kiss, we found,
 When Norway's sons rejoiced of late
 Beside the Danish Sound!
 When last the kings were on parade
 What passed 'twixt lord and lord?
 O, just the same old game once played
 In Stockholm's palace with the blade
 Of Charles the Twelfth's famed sword!

A grieving folk that all forsook
 As deathward it must go, —
 Thus ends the Nordic saga-book; —
 Who shaped its *Finis* so?
 He shaped it whose response was cowed:
 And Tyra? — held by Huns,
 While Denmark's tattered war-flag bowed
 Its rose-red, ample fold to shroud
 The last-slain of its sons.

But you, my countrymen, safe hedged
 Within your snug terrain
 By virtue of a promise pledged
 And straight betrayed again, —
 Take flight, your ancestry disclaim,
 You steered a craven course!
 Flee port to port in Cain-like shame
 And forge yourself a foreign name,
 Deny that you are Norse!

Conceal your home, your infamy,
 Your mother-tongue deny, —
 Else comes the whisper: "Did you see?
 A Norseman scurried by!" —
 Don't ever to the top-mast tie
 The lovely triple hue;
 For any free man sailing by
 Will think that Norway's flag flown high
 Means that a plague-ship's due!

It was a dream. Wake bold and brisk
 From folk-wide sleep to deed!
 All hands on deck! There's kin at risk!
 Swift counsel's what we need!

Still may the saga-record go:
 Danes, Danes own Tyra's hold!
 Still Denmark's tattered flag can blow
 Above the North's rich future, show
 Its proud and rose-red fold.

Henr. Ibsen

Tyra's lines: the Danish line of defence against German aggression; Lund and Axelstad (the old Copenhagen), places where student rallies had recently been held (see above) professing support for Denmark against Germany — promises that, like those made by the rulers of Norway and Sweden, had come to nothing. The same old game — Gustavus IV of Sweden, who imagined himself a reincarnation of Charles XII, unwisely embroiled his country in war with Russia, as a result of which Alexander I retaliated by occupying Finland.

TO FREDERICK THE SEVENTH'S MEMORY
 (Song in the Student Union)

Danes, their anxious watch south-questing,
 Denmark's bulwark man.
 Roskild's church where Frederick's resting
 Will strife's clamour ban.
 Life Danes fight for, reputation;
 Frederick's absent from his station;
 'Jens' must, on the Nordic border
 Be its only warder.

No, — when round the Jutland gateway
 Bloody work's at height,
 Frederick leaves his tomb and straightway
 Cleaves the winds of night,
 Thunders forth like Ossian's giant,
 Weapon drawn, brave and defiant;
 "On, lads! For our reputation; —
 Frederick's at his station!"

Hence he lives so well remembered,
 Denmark's Danish prince;
 Proof — the courage, king-engendered,
 That his folk evince.
 On then, for what truth endorses!
 Frederick's with his Danish forces; —
 Slav or Pole or Croat foe-man
 Cannot beat a yeoman!

Written 1864, the year after the death of Frederick VII of Denmark. The confrontation with Germany for possession of Slesvig and Holstein was approaching its crisis; Dannevirke the ancient fortifications spanning Denmark's southern border. The poem seems to invoke memories of Frederick the Great who led his army against Sweden in 1659. Roskild, a cathedral town, the seat of the Danish kings, near Copenhagen.

Ibsen left for Italy, via Copenhagen and Berlin, on the 5th April 1864.

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