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Illustrations of northern antiquities, from the earlier Teutonic and Scandinavian romances

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Appendix III

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APPENDIX III.

THE BATTLE OF KING TIDRICH AND THE LION WITH THE LINDEN-WORM.*

Translated from the Danish.

THE reasons for inserting a translation of this ballad in this place have been already explained in the Analysis of the third Division of the Book of Heroes, (page 122, note 1.) As has been there remarked, the incidents are closely copied from the adventure of Wölfdietrich with the dragons. The Danish ballad-singer has substituted for the latter hero, his grandson, Dietrich of Bern, and has ignorantly confounded the emperor Ot-nit with the renowned Siegfried, whose fall is very differently related in the German and Scandinavian romances. The value of the ballad is not great, but there is something whimsical and ludicrous in attributing the gift of speech to the lion and the dragon.

*Det var Meester kong Tidrich,
Hand skulde fra Bern udride:
Der fant hand den Løwe og lede Lind-Orm,
Saa ynckelig monne de stride.
Den Lindorm hand tog en af, &c. &c.*

The royal Master Tidrich
Sped him to ride from Bern:
A lion he found and a laithly worm,
Fighting the battle stern.

* That linden-worm is one of the numerous appellations for the ideal monster usually called the dragon, has been already observed, (p. 60. note.)

They fought a day, and they fought two,
Till the third at night they fought ;
But then the laithly linden-worm
To the ground the lion brought.

In his need the lion cried,
When the valiant king he viewed,
" Help me, and shield me from the worm,
Tidrich, thou champion good.

" Free me for thy high renown,
And for thy royal might ;
Free me for the golden lion
Thou bear'st in thy buckler bright.

" Come to my aid, thou noble king,
I conjure thee by thy name !
With gold am I painted in thy shield,
Burning like a flame."

Long stood the royal hero ;
It thought him well and right,
" I will help the lion in his need,
Whatever may betide."

It was the bold King Tidrich
Drew out his falchion good :
He fought with the laithly linden-worm ;
His sword stood deep in blood.*

The noble lord no longer bode,
He hewed with might and main ;
Deep in he thrust his blade of steel,
At the hilt it broke in twain.

The lind-worm took him on his back,
The steed beneath her tongue ;
Bore them into the hollow hill,
To her eleven young.

She cast the steed before them ;
To a cave she bore the knight :—

* Hans sward stoed alt i blod.

" Eat up the little morsel,
While I rest me from the fight.

" Eat up the prey, though small it be,
While I rest me from the stour,
And when I from my sleep awake,
The man ye shall devour."

The royal Master Tidrich
Sought all the hill around;
There that noble falchion
Hight Adclring he found.

There he found that trusty blade,
And two knives were burnished bright :—
" God rest thy soul, King Sigfred !
Thou here to death wert dight.

" I have been with thee in lord-like hosts,
In many a bloody strife ;
Never have I known that here
Thou hast lost thy noble life."

And now the royal hero
Would try the sword of fame ;
He hewed into the rocky sides,
That the cave stood all in flame.

But when a dragon young beheld
The flames gleam far and wide,
" Who dares disturb the hostess
In her own chamber ?" he cried.

Angry grew the dragon young,
And he raised him wrathfully,
" Who dares disturb the hostess
In her own house ?" cried he.

He told it to the other young worms,
Where in the cave they lay :—
" If our mother old awake,
It's thou shalt rue the day."

Up and spake the royal knight,
His mind in turmoil deep,

"Thy mother with an uncouth dream
Will I wake out of her sleep.

"Thy mother slew King Sigfred,
That high renowned sire;
Soon, with this hand, upon ye all,
Will I wreak my vengeance dire."

Up awoke the lind-worm old,
And her heart began to fear :—
"Who dares so boldly wake me?
What sounds are those I hear?"—

"'Tis I, King Tidrich, lord of Bern :
Fain would I speak to thee.
Yestreen, beneath thy curled tail,
To thy cave thou carried'st me."—

"Oh, kill me not, thou noble king!
Lo, here the precious gold;
I ween 'twere better we abide
Thy friends, thou champion bold."—

"I will not trust thy lying tongue ;
Thou fain wouldst me beguile ;
Full many heroes hast thou done
To death with thy evil wile."—

"Hear, thou royal champion,
Oh! strike me not to death!
It's I will shew thee thy true love,
Who lies in the cave beneath.

"Search high above my head,
Thou wilt find the little key ;
Search low beneath my feet,
And enter the cave with me."—

"Above thy head will I not search,
But there the fight begin ;
Nor will I search below thy feet,
But there the battle win."

First he killed the laithly linden-worm,
And then her eleven young ;

But he could not leave the hollow hill
For the laithly dragon's tongue.

Soon he digged a hole so deep,
His left foot straight before,
That he might not lose his life
In the venomous dragons' gore.

And now against the lion
Cursed the hero bold :
" Shame and woe befall him,
With curses manifold !

" Right cunningly the wily beast
With wrong has me beguiled ;
Safely my steed had borne me hence,
Were he not on my shield."

But when the lordly lion heard
The wailing of the knight,—
" Stand thou fast, King Tidrich ;
I dig with all my might."

The lion he digged, and the hero struck,
That the rock stood all in fire ;
And had not the lion digged him out,
He had died with sorrow and ire.

'Twas he had slain the laithly worm,
And her eleven young ;
Quickly he left the hollow hill,
With his shield and hauberk strong.

And when he had sped him from the cave,
For his courser 'gan he mourn ;
For now he had killed the laithly worms,
He would fain to Bern return. ¹

" Harken, thou royal champion,
And mourn not for thy steed :
Leap upon my back so broad ;
I will bear thee in thy need."

¹ This is not literal. The original is too prosaic, and runs thus :

Paa hannem torde hand vel lide,
De hafde hver andre frist.
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The lion bore him o'er the dales,
 And o'er the meadows green;
 Gently through the forests dark
 He bore the king, I ween.

The lion and King Tidrich
 Together did they go,
 For each had saved the other
 From sorrow and from woe.

When the king beyond his marches rode,
 By his side the lion sped;
 But when in royal hall he sat,
 In his lap he laid his head.

He was called the knight of the lion;
 With honour the name did he bear;
 And ever until their latest day
 They held each other dear.