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

Weber, Henry William

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Sir Guncelin

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SIR GUNCELIN.

THE following rude, uncouth, and ridiculous piece, seems to be an imitation of the balladized copy of the Eddic Tale of Thor's Hammer, (which has been admirably translated by the Hon. W. Herbert,) inserted in the *Kæmpe Viser*, in which the characters are all giants merely, and not gods.—It shews in what manner the heroes and heroines of Gothic Romance have been treated by the vulgar in later times; and gives a rude and barbarous, but just and characteristic, picture of an ancient Scandinavian wedding. Capricious and extravagant as the painting may seem, it is nevertheless, in all essential points, true to Nature, and the manners and usages of the times.

Who is meant by Mother Skrat, we do not pretend to say, as we have never had the pleasure of meeting with her elsewhere, and do not find her in any of our repositories of Gothic divinities. But this is, probably, because we have so few ludicrous compositions of the elder Scandinavians remaining. We take her to be the goddess who presided over obstreperous mirth and horse-play of every kind, and to be here invoked by the spectators, to save them from bursting their sides with laughter. “Skratte” in Danish, signifies generally “to split or crack;” and particularly to “split the sides with laughing.”

SIR GUNCELIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH KÆMPE VISER, p. 50.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1591.

*Det var Grefvø Herr Guncelin,
 Hand taler til moder sin :
 Jeg vil ridè mig op paa Land,
 Og friste Manddom min,
 (Vel op förrè Dag, vi komme
 vel ofver den Hede.)*

It was the Earl Sir Guncelin
 To his mother he can say,
 "It's I will ride me up-o-land,
 My manhood to essay."
 (*Up, up afore day, sac come we well over the heath-O.*)

"And wilt thou ride thee up-o-land,
 And dost thou tell me sae?
 Then I'll gie thee a steed sae good,
 Men call him Karl the gray.
 (*Up, up afore, &c.*)

"Then I'll gie thee a steed sae good,
 Men call him Karl the gray ;

Ye ne'er need buckle on a spur
Or helm, whan him ye hae.

“ At never a kemp maun ye career,
Frae never ane rin awa',
Untill ye meet with him, the kemp
That men call Ifver Blaa.”

It was the Earl Sir Guncelin
Can by a green hill ride,
There met he him, little Tilventin,
And bade him halt and bide.

“ Well met, well met, young Tilventin,
Whare did ye lie last night ?”
“ I lay at Bratensborg, whare they
Strike fire frae helmets bright.”

It was the Earl Sir Guncelin
Look'd under his helmet red :
“ Sae be't wi' little Tilventin !—
Thou's spoken thy ain dead.”

It was the Earl Sir Guncelin,
He his sword out drew ;
It was little Tilventin
He in pieces hew.

Sae rade he till Bratensborg,
He rapped at the yate :
“ Is there here ony kemp within
That dares wi' me debate ?”

It was Sir Ifver Blaa,
To the east he turn'd about :
“ Help now Ulf and Ismer Grib ;
I hear a kemp thereout.”

It was Sir Ifver Blaa,
 And he look'd to the West:
 "Thereout I hear Sir Guncelin:
 Help, Otthin! as thou can best."

It was the Earl Sir Guncelin,
 And helm o'er neck he flang;
 Sae heard, though mony a mile away,
 His mother dear the clang.

That lady she waken'd at still midnight,
 And till her lord she said:
 "May God Almighty rightly rede
 That our son may well be sped!"

The firsten tilt they thegither rode,
 Those kemp sae stark and bold,
 Wide on the field Sir Ifver Blaa
 Was cast upon the mold.

"Hear thou, Earl Guncelin,
 An thou will lat me live,
 I ha'e me a betrothed bride,
 And her to thee I'll give."

"I'll none of thy betrothed bride;
 Yet wedded would I be:
 Give me Salenta, sister thine,
 As better liketh me."

Sae rode they to the bride-ale;
 They roundly rode in fere;
 And they hae bidden the kempery men
 To come frae far and near.

They bade him, Vidrich Verlandson,
 Stark Tidrich out of Bern,

R

And Holger Danske, that ay for feats
Of chivalry did yearn.

Child Sivard Snaren they hae bidden,
Afore the bride to ride ;
And Ettin Langshanks he maun be
All by the bridegroom's side.

They've bidden Master Hildebrand,
And he the torch maun bear ;
Him followed twice sax kemps, and they
Drank and made lusty cheer.

And hither came Folquard Spillemand ;
For that the kemps sall pay ;
And hither came King Sigfrid Horne,
As he shall rue the day.

It was proud Lady Grimild,
Was bidden to busk the bride ;
But hard and fast her feet and hands
Wi' fetters they hae tied.

Theretill came Lady Gunde Hette,
In Norden Field that bade ;
She drank and she danced,
And luckily was sped.

There in came Lady Brynial,
And she carved for the bride ;
Her follow'd seven sma damsels,
And sat the kemps beside.

They follow'd the bride to the chamber in,
Their breakfast there to eat ;
Of groats four barrels she ate up,
Sae well she lik'd that meat.

Sax oxen she ate up, theretill
 Eight fitches of the brawn ;
 Seven hogsheads of the ale she drank,
 Or she to yex began.

They follow'd the bride intill the ha' ;
 Sae bowden was her skin,
 They dang down five ells o' the wa'
 Ere they could get her in.

They led the bride to the bride-bench,
 And gently set her down :
 Her weight it brake the marble bench,
 And she came to the ground.

They serv'd her wi' the best o' fare ;
 She made na brocks o' meat ;
 Five oxen, and ten gude fat swine
 Clean up the witch did eat.

That mark'd the bridegroom (well he might !)
 'Twas little to his wish :
 " I never yet saw sae young a bride
 Lay her lugs sae in a dish !"

Up syne sprang the kempery men ;
 Thegither they advise :
 " Whilk will ye rather pitch the bar,
 Or kemp in knightly guise ?"

The kempery men a ring they drew
 All on the sward sae green ;
 And there, in honour o' the bride,
 The courtly game begin.

The young bride wi' the mickle neives
 Up frae the bride-bench sprang :

And up to tulzie wi' her there lap
The Ettin wi' shanks sae lang.

There danced and dinnled bench and board,
And sparks frae helmets fly;
Out then leapt the kemps sae bold:
" Help, Mother Skratt !" they cry.

And there a sturdy dance began,
Frae Ribè, and in till Slie :
The least kemp in the dance that was
Was five ell under the knee.

The least kemp in the dance that was
Was little Mimmering Tand ;
He was amang that heathen folk
The only Christian Man.