

WE WEAR CHAIN MAIL KNICKERS

An Ynys Fawr Songbook

Volume Five

This is the fifth volume of a book of songs and poems. This volume is entirely from Master Snorri Blóðdrekkr ór Óðinslundi, oft described as St. Ursula's Bane. They are not, except in rare cases, intended to be sung at feasts, but at revels and camp-fires. This is because, although broad-ballading is a period concept, the music, with rare exceptions, is not.

As with the other volumes I hope that no-one takes offence at any of the words that have been used, but will accept them all in the spirit of fun in which they are written. It is **not** the place of broad-ballading to be cruel or vindictive but to educate and entertain. I hope that all persons and places mentioned can laugh at themselves as we should not stand too much on our dignity. Could all prose objections to the contents, and especially any libels of me in song or verse, please be sent to me so that I can include them in a volume with proper acknowledgement. I hope you enjoy this selection.

Χρῶλφ

Hrölf Herjölfssen
Baron et al.
Current version
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Unto All Those Into Whose Hands These Pages May Come:

Greetings from Master Snorri Blóðdrekkr ór Óðinslundi, St. Ursula's Bane, also known as Vulgar Snorri, or Foul Snorri. Allow me to introduce myself : A second son, I left my native Iceland, late in the Christian 10th Century, to seek my fortune. As His Excellency, Baron Hrölf, mentioned, this is all original work, written to while away time on the long journey to the sunrise end of the Silk Road. I may make no claim, however, to The Song of Snorri, for which the Virgins and Martyrs of the College of St. Ursula are responsible. Introductory comments are by the Baron, or by myself. While I have no objection to the reproduction of this work, I would appreciate receiving copies of any circulars/ newsletters that do so. (Please spell my name correctly - if you don't have an "ð", use a simple "d"). Mail sent to the Baron will find me.

My thanks to all who have aided, and inspired, my efforts, especially Baron Hrölf, and his long-suffering family.

Enjoy!

(Snorri.)

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Snorri's first effort at a "serious", sort-of-period poem, suitable for airing in the thick of an event. This one saw the light of day (it was night-time), at the Baronial Investiture Feast, A.S.XXVIII. It is reasonably generic, although written under the influence of the Crusades.

A Lady Lorn.

The lady sits amid the bower,
Embroidery in her lap ignored;
Silken threads are idly fingered.
Her brow by worry deeply scored,
She waits upon th'appointed hour.

"The battle's course was almost run,
Enemy routed, put to flight
In disarray; a full retreat.
Oh! It was a stirring sight!
Convinced were we the vict'ry won."

Her thoughts dwell, on her gentle lord;
Long years since he had ridden out,
To answer summons from his liege.
He'd tarried not, nor did he doubt,
The justice of his Baron's word.

"Pursuit was up a mountain pass.
My horse's lameness slowed my pace;
Its wounding chafed my spirits so!
Your lord looked fair to win the chase,
But I was hobbling at the last!"

From her sleeve she'd torn a swatch,
A gaudy rag, a silken twist.
She pinned it to his riding cloak,
A token of his presence missed;
To speed him home with all despatch.

"Then, up ahead, the foemen turned,
To fall upon our noble knights.
The pass, with massive boulders blocked,
And I left witness to the plight
Of butchered men - hard lesson learned."

He'd clattered off along his way;
His arm was raised in farewell, fond.
No words of comfort could he give,
Or tell how long he must be gone.
She could, but wouldn't, bid him stay.

Three weeks ago, word had arrived;
Her missing lord was homeward bound.
The Baron's page the message brought:
He'd escaped, yet bore a grievous wound.
By Fate's decree he had survived!

News had come, one awful night,
As storm-clouds roiled, wind shook bare trees.
The fire crouched in hearth, subdued.
Her staghounds howled, rain washed from eaves;
Bright lightnings caused the servants fright.

The hour attends, a group appears,
Inside the hall, to ring the fire;
Grim, ragged men, and crippled, too.
Their look, fatigued, unease inspires.
Last night, sleep fled, pursued by fears.

"Dear Lady, I must let you know,
I saw your knight cut from his horse,
While Chaos raged across the field.
He led a strong, and valiant force,
Yet treachery did bring them down."

Would she know him, how could she tell,
For which of these worn men she'd tarried this while?
Certainty now, when seen through the crowd,
That weathered face. Lit by a smile,
His kindly eyes, remembered so well.

The next poem is actually a song; Snorri's first attempt at period-style song writing. The melody is based on a 13th century, northern French song. Unfortunately we cannot put the tune in here (we lack the software) but will pass it on if you send the usual stamped and addressed envelope.

Ah, my heart, the larks are singing sweet,
In the firmament of deep azure.
Blossoms float in clouds upon the trees,
And the bees through heavy perfume swim.

Why was it that you stopped that day
To help a fallen cripple stand?
But then, you were forever kind,
So careless of your precious life.

On the day they came to take you out,
With your body tortured by the pain,

Survival

I cursed Fate, in spite, a thousand-fold;
I shamed your memory on that day.

When I woke upon a welcome morn,
From my swollen throat I nearly choked.
I thought I should soon be with you, love,
But Cruel Fate assailed me, yet again.

In the Spring I go out walking still,
Down the paths that wander through the bow'r.
'Though my body walks, in solitude,
In my mind, you're always by my side.

Post-scriptum: Snorri says that this light-hearted song was inspired by the Black Plague.

A Riddle.

With sweet caress she touches me,
Yet most jealous mistress she can be.
So carefully she guards her treasure,
But when she gives, gives without measure.
She comes, as 'though intent to stay,
Then, turned from me, she goes away.
She bids me rest, as stars fill the night,
And rouses me gently, to Morning's light.

Snorri alleges that the next two poems were commissioned by me. In fact, Snorri said he was going to do (wanted to do. Snorri.) a verse based on every form mentioned in *Ars Poetica Societatis (Compleat Anachronist #67)*. I foolishly and casually remarked that he should tell the story of the trip to the Brass Monkey Investiture (a long and involved tale) as a haiku and the tale of Cormac becoming Scapegoat of the West as a saga. I will stop saying things like this. Snorri regards it to be a challenge. The first, the haiku, tells the story of the twenty-eight-and-a-half-hour trip of the Blue Van to the Brass Monkey War, in seventeen syllables. The second is of forty verses and is the account of how Cormac the Traveller came to be the Scapegoat of the West.

M-memories.

Multiple, mistimed mischance
Made Monkey meandering
Martyrdom.

Snorri maintains that this is a bit dry and lacking in essential details.

The Rise of Cormac, Scapegoat of the West.

It was a grim, and fearful time,
A time of turmoil, and unrest;
When, beacon-like, the idea flared,
To name Cormac, Scapegoat of the West.

One awful afternoon, while in dire debate,
On the imminence of the visit of the King,
Someone astute raised the question, disturbing,
"Would the King the West Seneschal bring?"

For great King Christian was sallying forth,
To His Kingdom's most southern extension,
With the fair Queen, Susan, and Ladies-in-Waiting,
And Baronial-formation intention.

Siobhan held the fort, for the natives were restless,
So the task would go to the next in the chain;
Yet to report on the Drachenwald Coronation
Was our sad loss, and Isabeau's gain.

Isabeau's gain was our loss, as I've said,
And Morwenna would be on the spot, it would seem,
Guiding Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies, also,
When Morwenna, I think it was, hit on a scheme.

Morwenna, you see, would be horribly busy,
Attending the Crown, and the Coronet, too;
She thought she could readily make handy use
Of an eager, responsible shoulder, or two.

Our Seneschal, dear, was a capable sort,
She'd triumphed through many a mettlesome task.
The advising, and counselling, were soon enough done,
But taking the blame was a bit much to ask.

She sought Mistress Madelaine's help in her quest,
For the Baroness-to-be knew a few things, and more,
Additional souls bent their minds to the problem,
And Cormac's name suddenly sprang to the fore.

When informed of his new, and important position,
Cormac didn't seem very much set upon;
But then, as I'm sure I neglected to tell you,
Our Cormac, the Traveller, is naturally blonde.

The great day arrived, and the King sat in State,
(On the wonderful throne Ianto's father had made),
His radiant Queen, Susan, was there at His side;
Odindisa and Gwynnaeth filled out the parade.

Then up from the still, and the hush of the Court,
The Herald boomed out, in a voice loud, and dread,
That "Cormac, the Traveller, should kneel, front and centre,
Or suffer the Immortals to lop off his head!"

As Cormac came forward, in robes black, and flowing,
To kneel in the Presence, his halo shone bright;
The King could be seen, almost visibly thinking,
"By all that is Holy, We've chosen a-right..."

The lad's face, so youthful, and fully enthused,
Enraptured, upturned, at the foot of the throne;
Guileless, his features with candour suffused,
And naive, not skin deep, but as deep as the bone.

The King then was happy to make the appointment,
To name Cormac the One to accept all the Blame,
It gave Him some time out from matters of State,
To play Fairy King, and the Quest Twister game.

The position Cormac accepted most ably;
He shouldered the weight of the West Kingdom worry,
By shuffling about on his knees, and his elbows,
And, periodically, howling out, "Sorry!"

The Queen, for Her part, took it all in Her stride,
But, sometimes, appeared at a loss what to do;
Should She rest Her fine slipper upon his bent neck,
Or try to avoid dripping groveller's goo?

A Scapegoat can be very useful, you know,
As Sasha discovered, when in the manure;
"The fact that Stormhold brought the Knowne World to war,
Just can't be our fault, but young Cormac's, I'm sure!"

When the battles were over, and the Investiture done,
And the King must return to His central Domain,
He called Cormac before Him, on forehead and knees,
And said, "Cormac, Our Scapegoat forever remain."

So, if your children won't frolic, or your palfrey has colic,
Or your bunions, nocturnally, give you no rest;
Heed now my sage words, point the Finger of Blame,
At Cormac, Official Scapegoat of the West.

I feel somewhat troubled, this verse should be doubled,
The Baron's commission was two times as long;
Shorter than forty, of verses but twenty,
It's all Cormac's fault, as was said all along!

This Section is An Ozmas Hymnal

Or

A Brass Monkey Wail. (A.S.XXVIII)

A Winter War Song of Ynys Fawr.

(to the tune of "It came upon a Midnight clear...")

It's found amid a Winter drear
That glorious combat unfolds,
When gracious ladies gather near
To cheer their warriors bold.
The foe has landed in Ynys Fawr
From northern, Barbarian shores.
Th' invasion leads us to believe
It's time for Brass Monkey War.

But when the battle is o'er and done
And tempers no longer are frayed,
We'll find whomever it was that won
And offer the wounded our aid.
Then off we go to the Feasting Hall
For good ale and mountains of food.
We'll have songs and music as evening falls,
Mulled wine if we're in the mood.

Our city lies in peril clear;
The usurpers' offensive soon starts,
To try to force our postern gate
Or scale our great ramparts.
We'll hack and slash and wound and slay,
The dead we will pile up high.
The wolves' great hunger we'll sate today,
And ravens darken the sky.

Silent Night Revisited.
(to the tune of "Silent Night.")

Silent night, reconaissance night,
Watch yon camp by firelight.
Tally the sentries abroad on their beat,
Count the tents where the warriors sleep.
Check the wagon supplies,
We'll take them all by surprise.

Engineer's night, artillery night,
Check the windage, set the sight.
Strain the cords on the great ballistae,
Fire the bolts, loose them accurately.
Defenders are swept from the wall,
Tomorrow the city will fall.

Silent night, furtive night,
Blades are loosened, bellies tight.
Creep like wraiths through the gathering mists,
Clench your weapons in white-knuckled fists.
When we have them surrounded,
Wait for the signal to sound.

Foray night, cavalry night,
Flank that company on the right.
Eager battle-steeds caper and snort,
At the "Advance!", lances lower from port.
Thundering hooves gallop near,
See eyes a-glitter with fear.

Violent night, massacre night,
Swing your sword, feel it bite.
Knife the sentry a-doze on his round,
Slay the rest as they sleep on the ground.
Seize the horses and wagons,
By the first light we'll be gone.

Violent night, pillaging night,
Smash the gates, set roofs a-light.
Fire frolics on buckets of tar,
Screams of anguish are heard from afar.
Slaughter's done in the square,
Quarter the town 'til it's bare.

Jubilant night, victory night,
We have won a terrible fight.
Glare from flames reflects from the snow,
Prisoners and hostages kneel in a row.
Watching the Face of Defeat,
Makes Victory's Cup taste more sweet.

(Quietly)

Silent night, silent night,
All is calm, moonlight's bright.
Nothing's stirring, nor makes slightest sound,
Gentle snow forms a burial mound.
Sleep in Heavenly Peace,
Sleep in Heavenly Peace.

A War Primer (for Ozmas).
(to the tune of "Deck the Halls...")

Think on matters military,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
'Tis the season to be wary,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Don we now our war apparel,
Fa-la-la-la-la-la, la-la-la.
With our enemy we'll quarrel,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

Form your ranks to left and right,
It shall be a glorious fight,
Lo! The enemy draws nigh,
Bearer! Raise the standard high!

Spearmen! Form a prickly hedge,
Drive the foe from rampart's edge,
Archers! Loose! Let arrows fall,
Make pincushions of them all.

Sworders! Let you now march forward,
You must quell the teeming horde,
Hoist your shields, unsheath your swords,
You shall crimson paint the sward.

Engineers! Come one and all,
It's time for vaulted walls to fall,
Mangonel and trebuchet,
Bolts to fly from ballistae.

Cavalry! Your mounts bestride,
Channel now the rushing tide,
Set your lances, face your shields,
Advance!, and scarlet flush the fields.

Miners! Fetch your picks and barrows,
It's time to cut entrenching furrows,
Scratch your tunnels 'neath the curtain,
Of vict'ry's imminence be certain.

Chirurgeons! Find your knives and leeches,
The wounded foe your aid beseeches,
Splint the breaks and strap the bruises,
The prisoners will have their uses.

Spadesmen! Dig your dark abodes,
Into them the corpses load,
Fill the graves and stamp them down,
Hope the shades stay underground.

Ploughman! Goad your oxen on,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Make your furrows straight and long,
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Harvest sheaves of golden grain,
Fa-la-la-la-la-la, la-la-la.
'Til the red tide flows again.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

Battle Cheer.
(to the tune of "We wish you a Merry Christmas.")

We wish you a scrappy battle,
We wish you a scrappy battle,
We wish you a scrappy battle,
And a victory clear.
Sword-blows helmets ring, sharp arrow flights sing,
We wish you a scrappy battle,
And a victory clear.

We all want a bloody mêlée,
We all want a bloody mêlée,
We all want a bloody mêlée,
So let's start one here.
Men fall, horses scream, in carnage extreme,
We all want a bloody melee,
So let's start one here.

We all set a crafty ambush,
We all set a crafty ambush,
We all set a crafty ambush,
To fill them with fear.
That Shadow encroaching, the Morrigu's near,
We all set a crafty ambush,
To fill them with fear.

We won't go until they sortie,
We won't go until they sortie,
We won't go until they sortie,
Resistance is dear.
Great Odin approaches, with his mighty spear,
We won't go until they sortie,
Resistance is dear.

We wish you a gory combat,
We wish you a gory combat,
We wish you a gory combat,
The enemy's near.
Continue the fray, 'til close of the day,
We wish you a gory combat,
The enemy's near.

We wish you a scrappy battle,
We wish you a scrappy battle,
We wish you a scrappy battle,
And a victory clear.

Bright blood from a gash, look Death in the eye.
Wild howls from the forest, the wolf-hunger's high.
Dark clouds overhead, as raven flocks fly.
Wind rustles in hedgerow, with sorrowing sigh.
O'ertaken by numbness, oblivion's nigh.
We wish you a scrappy battle, and a victory clear.

This song is dedicated to Lord Martin de Mont Blanc, Autocrat of the Brass Monkey War and Baronial Investiture, A.S. XXVIII

A Theme for the Brass Monkey War.
(to the tune of "Jingle Bells.")

Riding through the hills, our wain is loaded down
With armour and supplies, to Brass Monkey War we're bound.
The weather's cold and drear, Mt. Roland glooms on high,
Oh! What fun we're going to have; it's a lovely day to die-oh!

Chorus:

Ming, Ming, Ming, de Bonk, bonk,
Autocrat supreme.
He will rule the world by Christmas...
That's his fondest dream-oh!
Ming, Ming, Ming, de Bonk, bonk,
Autocrat supreme.

Post Scriptum: The name, "Ming", has been given for Lord Martin's enthusiastic approach to autocratting . . . something to do with a certain Emperor in a certain sci-fi movie, I think. (Snorri.)

He will rule the world by Christmas...
That's his fondest dream.

It's warring time again, the brigands ring about.
Lock and bar the gates, get your weapons out.
Set the cauldron up, brim'd full with boiling oil,
Tip it o'er the crenels and our slippery foe we'll foil-oh!

When the battle's won, a-feasting we will go;
Some Southern hospitality our honoured guests we'll show;
With trenchers piled high, our tankards overflow,
Tall tales and belly-dancers; it is all part of the show-oh!

A Rowing Song.

(to the tune of "We Three Kings of Orient.")

Viking time approaches anon,
Very soon our ships will be gone.
Kiss your sweetheart, grab your sleeping roll,
Drakkars slip down the fjord - Oh-oh!

Chorus:

Don your helmet, raise your shield,
Swing your axe until they yield.
Fight 'til Odin's fair Valkyrja
Guide us to Valhalla's Field.

The ocean's breast is where we belong,
A fair, strong breeze to speed us along.
Constellations guide through darkness,
Seabirds accompany - Oh-oh!

Choose we now our dragon-ship's way,
Paris is fine for a short holiday.
Ireland's rich, as is Byzantium,
Shetland is cold and wet - Oh-oh!

Drop the sails, we'll beach our boats here,
Teach yon hamlet the meaning of fear.
Sack the church, chase fleet-foot maidens,
Spit-roast the village pig - Oh-oh!

Ship the oars, our luck has gone fair.
Isn't that a monastery there?
Gold and vestments, candelabra,
Plunder the pantry, too - Oh-oh!

Wend we home, we'll carry no more,
Wives and girlfriends wait on the shore.
Feasting, drinking, song and dancing,
Stories when Winter comes - Oh-oh!

Ragnarok we dread and we fear,
Odin's eaten by awful Fenrir.
Thor will smite cold-hearted Jotun,
Heimdall shall sound his Horn - Oh-oh!

A Dedication to the Archers of Ynys Fawr.
(to the tune of "Lead, Kindly Light...")

Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling doom; lead blindly on.
The foe abounds and I am all alone; lead blindly on.
Speed thou my shaft,(I cannot hope to see
The distant war),please let it find a heavy.

Fight, mighty King, we're nigh to overrun; fight mightily.
Their host is great, our fortune now uncertain; fight mightily.
Strike thou with strength,we cannot hope to hear,
The distant horn that sounds delivery's near.

Scheme, Seneschal, from dim and secret rooms; scheme furtively.
The King has gone, he trusts you with the key; scheme furtively.
Take now thy chance,(while throne-room echoes emptily),
To seize the crown; don't miss the opportunity.

Ride, valiant Knight, astride your charger proud; ride valiantly.
The King's in peril, aid is sorely needed; ride valiantly.
Sweep through their ranks, yet do not pause to see
The fearsome wounds you dealt so competently.

Heal, Chirurgeon, these raw and ragged wounds; heal tenderly.
For Life is short, and squandered needlessly; heal tenderly.
Ease now my pains, I cannot hope to see
The dawning sun; recovery's all due to thee.

'Ware, lonely Queen, the Seneschal is plotting; 'ware constantly.
The King is captured by foul treachery; 'ware constantly.
Keep now thy troth, the populace will need to see
Thy firm intent; a promise kept faithfully.

Creep, Assassin, the Seneschal sleeps lightly; creep silently.
The castle guards patrol diligently; creep silently.
Cudgel, garotte, or poison swift to do the deed.
But, dagger? No! Stuck corpses tend to bleed.

Rule, gracious King, most conscientiously; rule carefully.
Hunt traitors out who plan clandestinely; rule carefully.
Sweet, now, the peace, but nevermore forgetful be
Of Death's reward for those who rule complacently.

Lead, kindly Light, avoid yon gaping tomb; lead blindly on.
The wind is chill, I dread its eerie murmur; lead blindly on.
Glow, dim, perceived; through murky darkness I ascend,
To sigh relief; time yet 'til I meet my end.

Here endeth the Hymnal.

The Joust. (a triolet.)

The herald's trumpet silence clamoured.
In the hush, a lady's cry,
For the knight of whom she was enamoured.
The herald's trumpet silence clamoured.
Swift chargers' hooves the greensward hammered;
Felled, the young knight closed his eyes.
The herald's trumpet silence clamoured.
In the hush, a lady's cry.

The next poem is dedicated to the Lady, Helen, a member of the College of St. Ursula, of the 11,000 Virgins and Martyrs (Rowany.), and one of the Immortals.

An Ode to Helen.

All around, in shimmering veils of green,
Fey dryads beckon forth bright Spring.
The Sun, Earth's brow, doth lingering, kiss;
Wrens chorus by, and bees take wing.

Yet in my heart do dark clouds low'r,
Across a landscape, bare and cold.
The sorrowing wind, with mournful murmur,
My soul, in its hopeless grasp, enfolds.

My Love lives on a distant shore.
Her lips, from mine own, are far away;
Yet were I a dove, on trembling wing,
I would fly to her side - O, Happy Day!

For Helen, of Virtue, unreproached,
Fair captor of my willing soul;
From whom I durst not seek release
'Though tireless æons must unroll.

For Helen, of Beauty, uncompar'd,
Plucked from my breast my eager heart;
And proud Heroes, once of Mycenæ,
Could not, but try, to make us part.

Dear Helen hath my Reason robbed;
My Rhyming verse she hath untwined,
And holds me thrall to Time's dim end,
Or least, 'til Requiem bell doth chime.

This poem was written about the driving (read "low-altitude flight") of Hrölf, new Baron Ynys Fawr, during the weekend of his Investiture. I believe the title comes from a remark made by Sir William the Lucky, one of the survivors.(Snorri.)

The Flying Norseman

He sleeps not, nor takes nourishment
Save strangely thickened mud.
His beard writhes, wild, Medusoid;
Wide eyes are shot with blood.

My knuckles, tight, fear-whitened,
Held me perched upon the bench,
My heart a-quail within me,
My alimentary system clenched.

He swerved, rushed up around the hill
As Fear deprived my nerves;
A sign flashed by that read, "Do not
O'ertake on crests or curves."

He rides the road, unendingly,
Racing swift 'gainst Father Time.
Mortals name him, "Flying Norseman",
Cursed to drive Warp-Factor Nine.

Master Hrölf's Birthday Song.

This is to the tune of The Last Resort by the Eagles. It was written for the Leo's and My Birthday Picnic A.S.XXVII. How could I resist this marvellously titled work (although it is more than a bit embarrassing).

He came from Sydney Town, in New South Wales,
Where the city-dwellers lay, heavy in the sand.
He grew up tall and strong, bearded and hearty,
Just as his fathers came across the sea.

They packed him off to school, for agriculture,
To teach him farming life, and chasing cows.
Had a class in crutching sheep, one in wool classing,
Learnt about the fibre count and the lanolin.

He heard about a place, people were smiling,
Talked about role-playing games, the walls were blue.
They played with dice and things, Dungeons and Dragons,
Military memories, and Monty Python too.

He joined the SCA, an early member,
In the western borders of, the Kingdom of the West.
He found his lady love, then they were married.
They moved to alpine lands, left Rowany.

You can leave it all behind, and sail, to the island,
As Hrölf and Mistress Madelaine did, so many years ago.
They even brought their younger ones, Brenden and Sarah,
Brought Jess and Peggys too, to Ynys Fawr.

And you can see them there, on Sunday morning,
Stand up and sing for Hrölf, it's his birthday do.
He was born Taxation Day, Leonardo too
This song is finished now, Happy 'Day to you-ou-ou.

The Early Barony.(Ynys Fawr.)

(to the tune of "My Old Man's a Dustman.")

Oh! My Baron's Byzantine, he has Byzantine armour.
He wears long, flowing nightshirts, or short ones if it's warmer.
The Baroness is Frenchy, or Swedish on the side.
She wears a bird and leafy wreath for talents recognized.

The Seneschal's Morwenna, to oysters she is partial,
But when she gets her whips and chains she's off to be a Marshal.
Our Herald's called the "Dromond", from Greek for "running fast",
For as you know the ancient Greeks were fond of pinching ass.

Our autocrats are famous in places far and near;
Their conquest of the whole Knowne Worlde is what sane people fear.
The Universe is really big, with lots of pieces in it.
They'll organise its ticks and tocks down to the nearest minute.

The fighting types of Ynys Fawr are nearly always blonde.
Their hair is often shown to be bright yellow and quite long.
They've got a little troop, Sunburst Battalion as it's known,
And you can fight within it even if your hair is brown.

The archers of our Barony are feared for damn good reason;
Sometimes they get the notion there's a Marshal open season.
But, if you're watching combat and you hear a mighty "Booom!"
No need to be alarmed, they've just deployed the Hammer of Doom™.

The fingers of our seamstresses, are swift and sure and nimble.
The only thing that slows them down is where they left the thimble.
They'll whip you up some real fine garb, with pleat and dart and tuck,
But never bring them Peasant Things, they'll scream and run amok.

The mead they brew around here is the finest in the World;
I had a couple of swallows once and now my hair is curled.
They add exotic spices, and fruity morsels too,
And if you care to raise your cup, I'll drink "Good Health!" with you.

And now, a poem to celebrate the Dancing Girls of Ynys Fawr. Snorri found the original manuscript while searching for the sunrise end of the Silk Road.

A Merchant's Woe.

I was a simple merchant,
In the camel-trading game;
Known as Ali Abdullah ben Ali,
Of modest trading fame.

I traded at the Market
At the end of Camel Alley;
I had the finest beasts there
To be found in Happy Valley.

There were camels fast, and camels tall,
And camels from far Samarkand.
When I counted them all on my tally-sheet,
They numbered one more than one thousand.

I heard a step out in the street,
Before my tent it tarried;

To my waiting ear, by the gentle breeze,
A silken whisper was carried.

Stepping to the front of my tent,
The flap I lifted wide,
To greet the patron waiting without
And usher him inside.

The morning light was clear and bright,
No clouds to mar the blue.
My eyes lit upon the fairest maid
I've ever been pleased to view.

"I've come today to your camel stall
To purchase a riding beast;
A journey to make to the sands of the coast,
To dance at the Great Pasha's Feast."

She lowered her veil, so slowly;
My eyes widened in surprise,
For I was sure I gazed upon
The Face of Paradise.

I made my opening offer
To her shyly lowered eyes,
“Seek not to take advantage, Master”,
She said, with breathy sigh.

She seemed a soft and helpless girl,
So quickly I grew bolder;
I deftly placed my eager palm
Upon her silky shoulder.

Her trembling my desire enflamed;
My heart was filled with greed.
She said, “Please treat me fairly, Sir,
Respect I sorely need.”

Her resistance I sought to overcome
By crafty merchant wile.
I went so far as to favour her
With my brightest merchant smile.

She sprang back from my sweating grasp,
And cried, “Oh, no, Sir, no!”
Resolve was hard within my breast
Not to let her go.

Then she stepped again towards me,
And I thought I’d have my way;
But I stopped, bemused, uncertain,
As her hips began to sway.

Her hands were as the flutt’ring doves,
That wing softly through the air;

Her skin was milk and honey,
And the raven’s wing her hair.

She stamped her feet, so delicate,
Then shuffled on the sand;
At this point my reason left me,
And I could barely stand.

She walked Egyptian, Camel-danced,
Leapt and shimmied on the table;
But all the while, incessantly,
She rocked Creation’s Cradle.

My sight was filled with swirling silks,
As she whirled and pranced and spun;
Brief flashes of her golden flesh
Had me fairly quite undone.

My nostrils were filled with her heady scent;
My soul within me aching;
My senses by her dance enslaved;
The earth beneath me quaking.

My ears were filled with thundering,
As sweat broke on my brow.
I sat, like stone, enraptured;
For how long? I do not know.

It was late in the day, and the Sun was low,
When I finally came to my senses.
I stepped outside of my tent to see,
Naught, but empty, broken fences.

Heed now a former merchant’s words,
On Life and Happiness.
May Allah pack the eyeballs in sand,
Of those who mix Pleasure and Business.

A Challenge to War.

This poem was presented prior to the commencement of hostilities, at the Brass Monkey War. A.S. XXVIII.(Snorri.)

Be welcome! Foolhardy, to the wide Field of Corpses.
We await, so eager, the sound of the horn.
Come on! Rush forward! As the Sun settles down,
On the westering hill, Wolf and Raven shall feast!

See the face of our maidens, the fairest yet known,
In the favour of Freya, their modesty sure.
For the glimpse of a smile, for the breath of a moment,
In the anguish of Love, e’en the Gods fall to Madness!

Feel the bight of our blades, as they chew through your armour,
Hew down your shields, gnaw, hungry, on bone.
Stand! Do not falter! Most timid of foemen;
There’s naught to be feared, save the Bright Smile of Death!

See the Mothers of Ynys Fawr, most skilful of matrons;
Spinners of Harmony, Weavers of Love.
Fount of our children; keep hearth-fires burning;
Welcome us home, at the end of our journey.

See the broad expanses, of Odin’s grim Coppice;
So long in the shank, yet sharper of tooth.
Fear not! Our foe, your pain will not linger,
Your death, by our hand, shall surely be hastened.

The wise of our Wyrð, have supped as did Sigurd;
Read the flight of the bee, speak the call of the bird.
The meanest of growths, in the deep of the forest,
Shall not keep its secrets, for all these they know.

See the glittering teeth, of the Rainbow of Iron!
Hear the terrible hum, of the Swift Bees of Death!
Our archers grin, as they stretch back their bowstrings;
Yet, laughing, they'll play, with the strings of your guts!

See the limitless flow, of our great, golden lakes.
Come! Dip your tankard, quaff of it fully.
Sample the Nectar, the Soul of the Poet,
Odin's dread secret, exchanged for an eye.

See the might of our Jarlholl, the ranks of our warriors,
See our Champions battle, in Great Odin's Fury.
Beware! O, ye foe, of our Shield-Maiden's favours;
The Valkyrja gather, for greedy Hel beckons!

An acrostic poem:

Pegasus.

Prancing hooves through cloud-banks canter,
Eager nostrils snuff the gale;
Great pinions thrust the Four Winds forth.
As Furies, wailing, dissipate,
Storms crash, and flash, in tempest, vile;
Undaunted, across the trackless Vault
Sure steps seek, swiftly, journey's end.

The next poem may also be sung, to the tune of "Survival".

The Impulse of Youth.

One morning, at a Springtime fair,
A bonnie lassie caught my eye;
She was a blossom, wilting, tossed,
Upon the sea of passers-by.

I quickly shouldered through the crush,
To offer her my arm to grasp;
Her throat, so soft, was fluttering,
With heart-felt sigh, and breathy gasp.

"Kind Sir, I thank you for your aid;
I seek escape, from house-arrest.
My hated uncle keeps me bond."
My heart, outraged, near burst my breast!

As we sought to leave the city gate,
A guard there raised a hue, and cry.
We fled, and hid, down forest paths,
While grim-faced soldiers galloped by.

I asked the maid who she might be,
When we found a moment's blessed peace;
"I thought you knew, good Sir," she said,
"I am the Baron's only niece."

So, heed my sage, and hard-won lore;
Young girls are good for naught, but praise.
The way those Baron's-men pursue,
They'll force me to an early grave...

A Drunkard's Lament.

Sunrise through the bottom of a bottle
Greets me opening heavy-lidded eyes.
The blacksmith's anvil ringing 'twixt my ears
Is harmonizing with the buzzing flies.

Sunrise from the bottom of a barrel:
The Morning After at the end of Time.
The hovering demons caterwaul in chorus.
While the iron bells of Hell resound and chime.

The next poem was written for the cover page of the Ynys Fawr A.S. XXIX Purgatorio bid. Baron Hrölf gave me the title. (Snorri.)

Tramwywr.

The armoured warrior sits his steed,
An outcrop of the craggy cliff.

Crying birds wheel by, unheeded;
His gaze the far horizon sweeps.

From his place of birth, he'd journeyed far
To lands, both awesome and remote.
Exiled, he waits with patient longing;
The swirling mists their secrets whisper. . .

And now, the twenty-eight-and-a-half-hour trip of the Blue Van to the Brass Monkey War, the way Snorri alleges it should be done. **A CAVEAT:** This is a LONG poem, not to be attempted by those prone to medical conditions!

The Blue Van Saga.

It was late, about eight, on Odin's day evening,
When the Van started out on the trek to the War
Besides Madelaine, Sarah, Romille and Brenden,
It was also tight-packed, from the roof to the floor.

Master Hrölf was there at the start of the trip,
But he left before the night was much older;
For prior to picking up Cormac the Traveller
They had to locate a green, V.I.P. folder.

As he was leaving them, Hrölf gave a warning
In a voice that rang hollow, sepulchral, and dire,
"Be sure that you make a short stop-in at Kempton,
For diesel and 60-lbs. air in each tire..."

So merrily off down the road they essayed,
The first several miles flew quite rapidly by,
'Til they stopped in at Kempton; the servo was closed,
And a tankful of diesel they just couldn't buy.

It was no major hassle, they had half a tank,
And the old Van often gets mileage enough,
Then at 2130, while climbing Spring Hill,
The cold Wind of Fate gave a tentative puff.

I told you before that the Van was quite laden,
The inside was stacked 'til it wouldn't pack higher;
In terms, culinary, the Van was "well-stuffed",
And so, in a quite different way, was the tire.

The tire gave out in a fashion alarming,
I'm told it made noises like "Bang!", or, "Ka-boom!"
These sounds, in themselves, are not that disconcerting,
For Ynys Fawr's home to the Hammer of Doom™.

However, it's not what one seeks in a tire,
This one, for all practical use, was a loss;
So Romille was called up, on the slopes of Spring Hill,
To show the recalcitrant Van who was Boss.

Apparently Madelaine was somewhat distressed,
When offered her childhood to view, one more time;
Romille had her hands full, with wresting the wheel,
So the old Van, the oncoming truck, wouldn't climb.

The Van finally stopped at the side of the road;
It was prime time to find all the tire-changing stuff.
The fact it was hidden, deep under the load,
Was really a shame, and really...well...tough!

Unloading the Van was a straightforward task,
Tho' the clouds lowered down and the night was pitch black.
The clouds were not raining, when out of the dark,
A resounding "Eureka!" uncovered the jack.

It was Cormac's First Time, on that dark, dismal night,
So the Lady Romille lent a sure, helping hand;
Once he'd tightened the nuts, and then put down his spanner,
Our Cormac, no boy now, was really a Man.

They set off once more, loaded up to the gunnels,
And finally breasted the crest of Spring Hill;
But at 2330, while passing by Ross,
The replacement rear tire grew frightfully ill.

So Cormac set off on a perilous journey,
A distance he walked of a good league, and some,
To call Master Hrölf from the depths of his slumber,
And persuade him on nocturnal rescue to come.

Cormac's long absence was cause for concern,
"Divided we fall"; just sit, worry and wait.
So Madelaine used all the extra time over,
To practise Dread Maddie, and sitting in State.

At 0400, to herald the morning,
Hrölf arrived with some friends in a passenger van.
He took Madelaine and kids, but he left poor, old Cormac,
For Cormac, remember, was now a real Man.

Poor Lady Romille, our own local Provost
Was also, with Cormac, obliged to remain.
She called on her tale-spinning skill, most abundant,
To keep Vasily, Artos, and Hal entertained.

Father Patterson stopped by, sometime in the morning,
And left them a thermos of café-au-lait,
So while they saw visions from too much caffeine,
They, hopefully, wouldn't have faded away.

Quite late in the morning, the skies opened up,
And torrents of RAIN really bucketed down.
But, thankfully, it was not that much longer,
'Til Morwenna's arrival, and no-one was drowned.

When arriving, quite timely, with fresh cigarettes,
Morwenna, by Lady Romille, was attacked.
The coffee was slurped from a styrofoam cup,
Known in terms, scientific, an "old artifact".

With Morwenna's chaffering, the tire was fixed,
And she, and her lot, given leave to depart;
But she had been gone, less than half-of-a-minute,
When the Vanners discovered the Van wouldn't start.

So, they flagged down a helpful, and rich, passerby,
Who had - Wonder of Wonders - his own mobile phone;
Romille importuned him, for use of his handset,
Because she had hopes to call Mother at home.

Romille phoned her Mum, on the nice mobile set,
And asked her to contact the R.A.C.T.
Ma Patterson rang, but by slip of the tongue,
The guy at the servo thought she was crazy.

Next on the visiting list for this trip,
Isabella popped up in her Mini, quite full.
Juliana was with her, but Fortune did frown;
The Mini could not even manage a pull.

I neglected to mention the state of supply,
Of victual matter, was really quite sad.
Two bars of chocolate(which brand?), cheese and crackers,
And a dry loaf, of white bread, was all that they had.

With everyone nearing the end of their tether,
The auto-club fellow did finally show.
They were off down the road, by at least 1630,
Not started by pushing, but started by tow.

It was at this time, half-an-hour after dark,
(The War was arranged as a Mid-Winter fight.).
They had driven awhile, but quite slowly, it seemed,
When a bright spark opined that the 'lamps gave no light.

By the aid of a hand-torch, the journey continued,
Along Midlands Highway, and on into Perth;
Where fruitless enquiries established the fact
That the Perthners were suff'ring a battery-dearth.

So, a second, hand-torch lit the road to King's Meadows,
To get them home safely to Mum's restaurant,
Where Ma Patterson fed them a fine, bang-up dinner,
And attended to all of their culin'ry wants.

Somewhere, while involved in this part of the story,
My thoughts on the matter did muddle, and jumble.
Forgive me, but visions of all of that tucker,
Caused my eyeballs to cross, and my belly to rumble.

A new auto-club man made another attempt,
To fix the poor Van; get it back on the street.
But we think that an old, Irish fellow, named Murphy,
Was helping him out, 'cos the Van had him beat.

This is a song; the melody being based on a Crusade-period, French song: "Tristes Plaisirs."

A Crusader's Farewell.

My friend, most true, must we part so soon?
Our time, together, flew swiftly by.
We triumphed, through full many perils,
To find our way to this foreign land.

We left the home of our youth behind,
A shelter from all of Life's weary cares.
We journeyed, our cause just and Holy;
Our companions, strong and pious men.

Well, dear readers, it had to happen: While listening to a particularly execrable, karaoke rendition of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody", one lo-o-ong night at work (as a bouncer....sorry, Hotel Security) Snorri felt the first, faint stirrings of the:

Bohemian Rhinohide.

Where is my lady? Why won't she talk to me?
Trapped on the Eric, with no escape from Stick-Jockery.
Shading my eyes, I look to the Lists to see:
It's just the fourth round -- I need some ginger-mead,
Because the Sun is high, my shield is low,
I've bruised my thigh, and stubbed my toe.

It seemed, then, that Luck would now smile in their favour;
A man at the servo was glad to assist.
But, at 2005, taking time out from dinner,
The servo was closed; the attendant they'd missed.

It wasn't so long, after dinner was done,
That Hrölf made an entrance, with Tangles in tow.
The time had arrived to continue the journey,
With everyone ready, and raring to go.

So, off through the great, urban Launceston sprawl,
They ventured, lost pilgrims, out into the night;
In search of a vendor of new power cells,
To give them high-beam, and to furnish them light.

And thus, in such fashion, Ulysses set out,
So Cortes went after the Face-lifting Fountain.
Marco Polo did not really have it so rough,
And Hillary - well - he just climbed up a mountain.

Their efforts at questing, were efforts most Epic;
Their fight, through the Maze, for the Lode-source they sought.
The Grail, open 24-hours, appeared;
Absolution! A shiny, new batt'ry was bought.

The shiny, new battery was nestled in place;
The clamps, both the wires and terminals held.
The engine was fired, and gurgled to life;
A switch was depressed, and THE DARK WAS DISPELLED!

Then, off through the night, on their journey once more;
No longer held hostage, in thrall to the dark.
They barrelled along, with their sights firmly set,
On the tunnel's bright end, a place called "Gowrie Park".

At the Site, it was night, when there rose a great cheer;
It was half-past the hour when the dead come alive.
An incredulous group heard the startling news:
It was true! The long-missing Blue Van had arrived!

Frantic families united, and Hrölf got some sleep,
But most folks were reaching a fine party state.
A wonderful weekend was had by us all, but
The trip back, is quite something else to relate!

Should I take that sword-blow?
Oops, I think I've lost my left knee (left knee).

My lord, I think I've won; laid my sword upside your head,
Creased your helm and you're not dead?
My lord, your blow took my arm; don't feel you have to throw your shield away.
Marshalls, cry "Lay on!" The populace draws nigh,
And I'll be stiff and sore this time tomorrow,
Parry on, parry on, as if nothing's really battered...

Huzzah! The bout I've won! Sweat trickles down my spine,
What's that list-shield next to mine?
Slowly! My lord Herald, don't hurry so!
Got to have a drink or two, and shake it loose.
Curses! What'd he do? (Should I take that sword-blow?)
The Sun is in my eyes,
I wish this lord just wasn't so quick and small...

I see a little Florentino of a man,
Oh! forsooth! Oh! forsooth! Will you look at his swords go?
Lunging forth and feinting,-- very disconcerting me!
Lunging high, feinting low! Feinting high, lunging low!
Lunging high and feinting low: Where did he go?
My sword-arm's heavy, and my sight is blurring,
He's just a new guy, from a small Barony!
Spare him his life if he yields on his knees.
Hit him high! Hit him low! Will you take that blow?
Bit tippy? No! I will not take that blow! (Take that blow!)
Bit tippy? I will not take that blow! (Take that blow!)
Bit tippy? I will not take that blow! (Take that blow!)
Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! HOLD!
Oh, lady Marshall, lady Marshall,
Will you make him take that blow?
His helm's come off and he's dropping slowly to his knees, his knees, his knees...

So you say that my new armour catches your eye?
And you've thought of some wonderful new ways to die?
Oh, Lady! Be my consort, dear Lady!
It's final round, please say you'll wait for me here.
(ooh, Oy, yay! Oy, yay!)
Nothing's really battered, except my sore left knee...
Nothing's really battered, nothing's really battered, on me...
Should I take that sword-blow?

And, now, something light, based on the tune of “Survival.”:

A Tippler’s Confession.

Inside my helm, I keep a flask,
To try to quench a fighter’s thirst.
I hope my head’s not hit so hard,
As to cause my brandy-flask to burst.

Within my cloak, I have a gourd,
Of “uisghe”, as the Celts do make;
In Wintertime it warms me up,
And helps my raging thirst to slake.

Beside my bed, I keep a jug,
Of ale that’s cold, and frothy, too;
I find it helps me sleep, again,
When I wake at one o’clock, or two.

Beside my fire, I keep a pot,
To fill with mulled, and cloven wine,
My brain gets rather fuzzy, when
The spice and vapours both combine.

Under my vest, I keep a skin,
I carry in it milky stout;
In Winter, when it’s well tucked-in,
There’s never need for thawing out.

On the kitchen bench, I keep a jar,
It brews mead by the fire-grate.
So, if you’d care to wander in,
We’ll have a mug to celebrate!

A Traveller’s Tale.

One fine morning, along my way,
A wrong turn in the road I took.
The path led through a forest, deep,
Beside a silent brook.

Beneath a sky of verdant hue,
No twigs, or leaves, by breezes stirred,
The mast lay thick, unscuff’d by tread
Of human, beast or bird.

A spotted hind did I espy,
Within a thicket, well concealed.
The flick of ears, and trembling flanks,
Her nervous state revealed.

A muzzle, smooth and delicate,
Supped ‘freshing draughts of mossy air.
Soft doe eyes widened with alarm;
She knew my presence there.

The flash of white, then out of sight,
She sought escape through tangled brush.
Close on her trail I quickly sprang
To part the leafy crush.

She leapt the stream, flew up a hill,
I tracked her through a grove of oak;
Beyond a bulky, granite knoll,
A dale with bramble choked.

Blood brought me to a stand of birch,
With head held low, she stood her ground.
The near-side hoof was wounded sore;
Her breath a gasping sound.

In pity did I turn away,
Compassions, small, I do possess;
The truth, I lost the heart to kill,
In face of such distress.

As evening closed, I chanced across
A Lady, with a brindle hound,
Beside the fading path; her seat
A green, and grassy mound.

“Oh, Stranger, if you’d be so kind,
Escort me to my humble place.”
Then, lost to reason, I became
Enraptured of her face.

Her arm within mine own, entwined,
She, through the dark’ning forest, led;
My mind, of thought most barren, save
For comforts of her bed.

A clearing opened from the trees,
The cottage, grown with climbing vine;
And, by the carven lintel-post,
There stood the spotted hind.

With sick’ning growl, the hound lunged out,
To set upon the crippled deer.
She waited, calmly, showing not
An outward sign of fear.

I darted in to grab the hound,
And dragged him from the stricken doe.
A frightful clamour rose about,
The Lady’s voice screamed “No!”

I turned to where the Lady stood,
(The sight there chilled me to the bone.)
Before me, changing evilly,
From Lady, fair, to stone.

A woman, dressed in tattered rags,
Sat near the door, with blood-drenched hand;
And by my boot, in tunic, striped,
There lay a bearded man.

“My lord, I thank you for your aid,
In rescue from enchantment, dread.
We thought we’d only find escape
When one of us were dead.”

“But for your kindness shown to me,
This gamble I would not have won.
By rescue from the hound’s attack,
The wicked spell’s undone.”

I bent to help the fallen man.
Quite readily, the tale he told;
The witch had changed, and stolen them,
While at their father's hold.

The woman did become my wife;
She favoured me with children, tall.
By tales of strange enchantments, now,
Their children I enthrall.

This is a simple, acrostic poem, about one of Snorri's favourite times of the year.

Impressions of Spring.

Sunbeams that playfully shine through soft showers;
Pink sprays of blossom, in gnarled cherry bowers;
Rainbows to buttress the broad, azure sky;
Impatient fledgelings attempting to fly;
Newborns a-frolic on unsteady knees;
Gold daffodils glow: a bright beacon for bees.

This poem was written to see just how courtly Snorri could be. It may be sung to the tune of "Survival."

A Courtly Lay.

Wondrous day! When first I saw your face;
The Heavens broke, and light streamed forth.
While all around in dimness lay,
Your radiance shone, for all to see.

To my trembling lips I raised your hand;
Your skin, of milk, so smooth and fine.
I dared not let your fingers brush
My flesh, unworthy, rude and coarse.

When we attend our secret place,
Our path is lit by moonlight bright.
From prying eyes, by trees, we're hid,
And the night-birds warn us of pursuit.

I love you, more than Life, itself,
I freely tell you, by my troth.
If you do not feel the same for me,
Please hold me, for this one last night.

A poem for Lord Richard of Dunheved, who complains of Snorri's blank verse, which usually isn't.

An Octet of Couplets.

The sun, in shafts of glowing gold,
Raised mist from moist, and crumbling mould.
Where waves lapped soft, with sparkling gleam,
A hart and hind browsed by a stream.
The forester, in doublet, green,
Peered through a tangled, briar screen.
A snapping twig; the hind flew off,
The hart stood fast, with grunting cough.
He lowered his broad, curving rack,
And pawed the turf, poised for attack.
The huntsman raised a great, yew bow,
To loose a shaft. The hart brought down,
His hot blood ran, he gave up Life;
Yet brought the bowman naught, but strife:
For taking sport from Norman kings
Ensures the guilty poacher swings.

The Ursulan Cycle.

In which the tale is told of how the 11,000 Virgins and Martyrs of the College of St. Ursula first met Snorri Blóðdrekkr ór Óðinslundi, thereafter known as St. Ursula's Bane.

Part, the First: - Through song,(to the tune of "Greensleeves") the Ursulans seek to slight the hitherto good name of Snorri, to redress an imagined injury to their Honour. It was performed at the Second Brass Monkey War, A.S.XXVIII, before Their Majesties, Christian and Susan, King and Queen of the West, and Their Highnesses, Brusi and Catherine, Prince and Princess of Lochac. Tangwystl, Woodsley, Helen, Will, Lars and Tanw are responsible for this . . .

The Song of Snorri.

Bold Helen made a work of Art
That did our Purity proclaim,
Of wondrous Beauty and Renown
That did uphold St. Ursula's name.

"Harr! Harr! What's this 'ere?"
Said Snorri, "Harr!", as he walked by.
He dropped his beard into his beer,
"Virginity?", did Snorri cry.

Said Snorri, "Harr! It won't be long
'Til Virginity it is no more!
I'm mean and tough and ugly and strong
And I'll batter down their door!"

Helen and Tangwystl
Gliding sweetly down the hall,
In dresses of the purest white
They spied the writing on the wall.

Vulgar Snorri we here accuse
Of besmirching our name most fair.
We call upon Lars Larfeysson,
The Champion of the Mighty Bear.

[Challenge from Lars.]

Defend our purest Virginity;
Put Snorri's head upon a plate!
And we'll forever grateful be
When he meets his deserved Fate.

Part, the Second: - In which Snorri, now St. Ursula's Bane, offers rebuttal to the Ursulans, by warning the populace of their insidious plot...

St. Ursula's Bane Retort.

A carrot, a carrot, my kingdom for a carrot!
We'll march all day, attack and slay;
We're fiercer than wild ferrets.
Our souls we'll sell to the deepest Hell,
All for the sake of a carrot.

We packed our gear and took a trip
Across the southern waters.
To our pious cause we shall enlist
Your children, sons and daughters.

We're led by pure St. Ursula,
A friend to all true virgins;
She also shows benevolence
To those with martyred urgings.

Part, the Third: - In which, on the day after the War, Snorri composes a poem to tell it like it really was (Oddly enough, it may be sung to the tune of "Greensleeves").

So chain your rough Barbarians,
Restrain your loutish brutes.
The coarse and lewd will find their necks
'Neath our unsullied boots.

At the turn of the moon, when with passion we swoon,
We search not bars, nor stables;
For History's seen, on men we're not keen,
But we're fond of fine root veg-e-tables.

A carrot, a carrot,... (return to first verse)

A Token for the Ursulans.

Because of a slight unintended
By the inoffensive Snorri,
The proud and vengeful St. Ursulans
Sought to make poor Snorri sorry.

They meant to have him squirm with shame
By ridiculing the man in song.
Their choice of music accompaniment
Did send their careful scheme a-wrong.

For Snorri, now St. Ursula's Bane,
Did listen to their choristry.
Soprano by Helen and Tangwystl;
Deep "Harrs!" by Will and Woodsley.

Then near the end of their soulful chant,
Great Lars, St. Ursula's Champion, dread,
Did offer challenge to Snorri, meek,
"Recant, or stand to lose your head!"

Bold Snorri swiftly filled the breach,
And stood his ground before the court;
To offer up some words well writ,
He called, "St. Ursula's Bane Retort."

The word was given to all and sundry
Of penchants, Ursulan, vegetable,
To proselytize the Know-ne World
To Carrothood, immutable.

List! List! To my plaint sincere.
Hark now, ye all, to what I say;
The day They let Lord Snorri play,
Lars Larfeysson had gone away...

But Tanw, in secret, was sent forth on watch,
To keep his keen eye on their prized veggie patch.
The finesse of this plan did defeat poor, old Snorri:
A rodent to guard carrots - now there's a worry!

Pax, pax *Daucus carota*, amen.

Part, the Fourth: - An addendum, in which the Ursulan *raison d'être* is explained (to the tune of "Another Brick in the Wall." Pink Floyd.)

A Horticulturalist's Dream.

We don't need no education,
We just need root vegetables;
Of long, straight, stout, bright orange crispness,
Topped with green and leafy curls.
Hey! Peter, naughty bunny boy!
One by one, we'll fill all the holes in the fence.
Bugsy boy, we'll grow carrots at your expense.
[If you don't eat your beets, you can't have any cabbage...
how can you have any cabbage if you don't eat your beets?]
Hey, you behind the scarecrow, stand still, laddie!

Part, the Fifth: - In honour of Ursula, the maiden Saint.

The Martyrdom of St. Ursula.

A vision I beheld, while in Sleep's deep embrace;
At first thought, it was but an ordinary dream.
Then events, unfolding, of a nature, ethereal,
Brought my soul to conviction, it was more than it seemed.

A maiden, I saw, clothed in Purity's white,
Her companions, and she, met by men with drawn swords.
"Attack!", came the order, from their grim commander,
"Smite them down, let none live, by Maximian's word."

The soldiers moved in, and began their attack,
Many practised the skills of the torturer's art.
The maid's raiment, with bright blood, burst blossoms of crimson,
Arrow-wounds marred her flesh; the last shaft pierced her heart.

Many likenesses, fair, of the maid's face and form,
Were afterwards seen throughout lands, near and far;
Most lovingly burned by hot glazier's iron,
Stained by artist's dark tint, bound by 'broiderer's yarn.

Down through centuries, dim, the maid stretched forth her hand,
To ease great burdens borne, by good folk, and the pure.
May there, forever, be those who flock to her banner,
Ensuring St. Ursula's good works endure.

Here endeth the Cycle. . .

And, now, to sing the blues . . .

Blues for the Current Middle Ages.

I journeyed across the Knowne World,
My banner read, "Pennsic, or Bust."
I finally made the war site,
But my armour had turned to rust:

Chorus:

I've got the azures,
My lord, I've got the azures.
When Life gets you down in these Current Middle Ages,
You know you're really azure.

Stepping out onto the Eric,
The marshal there hollered, "Lay on!"
The very next thing that I knew
The marshal said my opponent had won:

I was hoping to get fuzzy-headed,
Drinking mead at a recent feast.
Then, as the evening closed,
The brewer said he'd forgotten the yeast:

Sitting, doing a bit of blackwork;
Laying my stitches, so neat and slow.
When I finished, I found I'd sewn my sleeve
To the skirt of my best bliaut:

At the Ball I impressed the Ladies,
Tripping the Light-so-Fantastique.
But, during the Galliarde, my hose
Made a noise that left me all sick:

I submitted a clever and fancy device
To my local herald, one day.
He said, "If you lose about four colours,
It'll probably look okay..."

The Blóðdrekk Blues.

Stopped to have a word with a pretty maid, walking along last market day;
Stopped to have a word with a pretty maid, walking along last market day;
When I gave her a grin and an evil wink, she screamed and ran quickly away.

During a storm, my longship sank, I had to swim for the shore;
During a storm, my longship sank, I had to swim for the shore;
Now my armour's soggy and salty, and my skin is itchy and sore.

I took my favourite axe on a raid, shield-breaking and splitting some skulls;
I took my favourite axe on a raid, shield-breaking and splitting some skulls;
Now the edge, so recently razor-sharp, is rusted, and pitted, and dull.

A sweet and lively maid I met, I took her and made her my wife;
A sweet and lively maid I met, I took her and made her my wife;
Now her father and her brothers have sworn to take from me my life.

So, if Life's road does twist and turn, and everything always goes wrong;
So, if Life's road does twist and turn, and everything always goes wrong;
Just come over here, we'll cry in our beer, and sing the Blóðdrekk Blues song...

O, woe is me, and woe again, and woe a few times more;
O, woe is me, and woe again, and woe a few times more;
We'll sing, and cry, and drink our ale 'til the innkeep'll serve us no more...

The Viking Question.

(to the tune of "I don't like Mondays." Boomtown Rats.)

The dragonship keels grate on the beach,
Grim raiders swarm ashore;
And nobody's gonna get away from us,
We'll carry off all those not slain.
And the people so hate and fear us,
They seek deliverance from the Dane,
And they can see no reasons, 'cos there are no reasons,
What reasons do we need but your gold?

Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Why are we so-o-o-o-o-o misunderstood?

Our warrior-men are tough and keen,
And they fight in a battle-rage.
And you'll get no warning of our approach
before our dawn attacks commence.
Lindisfarne, we won't do much harm if you welcome us
with open arms,
And they receive no warnings, 'cos there are no warnings,
What warnings do you need?

Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Why must we be-e-e-e-e misunderstood? Down, down,
It gets us all down...

For the lovers amongst you...

Now the villagers hide inside their walls,
Their doors are locked and bolted-tight.
And the first smoke's curling, soon huts'll be burning,
And the raven-flock rises in-the-sky.
And there are screams of terror from the captives, struggling,
As we bind them at their ankles and wrists.
And they expect no mercy, 'cos we have no mercy,
What mercy would we show to our slaves? O, O, O...

And the dragonship keels grate on the beach,
Grim raiders swarm ashore.
Oh, and nobody's gonna get away from us,
We'll carry off all those not slai-ain.
And the people so hate and fear us,
They seek deliverance from the Dane.
And they can see no reasons, 'cos there are no reasons,
What reasons do we need but your gold?

Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Tell me why they don't like Vikings.
Why are we so-o-o-o-o-o misunderstood?

Romeo's Song.

(to the tune of "The Dark End of the Street." The Commitments.)

On your darkened balcony, that is where we won't be seen,
Under the shadow of the spreading leaves, of the old chestnut and walnut trees.
We shall meet, on your darkened balcony; we shall meet.

I know Fate is against our tryst; it's against both our families' wish.
Heart of my heart, our love is strong; emotions so wonderful cannot be wrong.
Steal away, to a helpful country priest; steal away.

The morning found us, the morning found us, the morning found us,
In Love's embrace.
In your sleep, I softly caressed your cheek; in your sleep.

And, when I was exiled, from the town,
And your poisoned body was found,
I could but weep; My Love, how I wept!
Oh, Juliet, why did you die?
Tonight we meet, at your darkened family crypt....

An Archer's Song.

(to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic.")

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the English archery,
They have made a grim example of the French nobility.
They have hushed the rolling thunder of French heavy cavalry,
Their bowmen volley on.

Chorus:

Glory, don't those arrows sing, boys?
Glory, don't those arrows sing?
Glory, don't those arrows sing, boys?
Their bowmen volley on.

I have seen the French knights trample mercenary Genoese,
Then expect to bring the English forces, cringing, to their knees.
But the Yeomen loosed a swarming hail of stinging, iron bees,
Their bowmen volley on.

The Fleur-de-Lis has sworn that it will never sound retreat,
Now it sips the dregs from overbrimming cup of dark Defeat;
While the Lion quaffs the nectar of the fruit of Victory sweet,
Their bowmen volley on.

In the quiet of the coppice staves are gathered from the trees,
And in thicket, forge and farmyard, shafts are made in quantity.
As men make their deadly arrows, may they craft most carefully,
Their bowmen volley on.

In light of the challenge issued by the Barony of Stormhold, to engage the Knowne World in battle, Snorri thought to help them out with an inspirational song. It is to the tune of "Deutschland Über Alles..."

Stormhold! Stormhold!

Stormhold! Stormhold! Marching forward,
Arrayed against the Know-ne World.
See the hosts of mighty warriors,
With their battle-flags unfurled.
Lo! They crush their weakling neighbours;
Widows wail and orphans cry...
On to Vict'ry! On to Glory!
Drakkar banners flutter on high!

Agincourt.

(to the tune of "Ja nus hons pris", Richard the Lion-Hearted.)

One bowstave, two bowstaves, three bowstaves, four;
Slowly we add to the munitions store.
Company, step to the butts, mark your score,
Soon we'll complete preparations for war.
Then shall young Harry go forth on campaign
To meet the French chivalry.

One archer, two archers, three archers, four;
Watch our stout company land on the shore.
Form up the ranks, send out scouts to explore,
Now we are knocking at Phillip's front door.

So, in good order, we march to the fray;
God guide our path this day.

Archers, step forward, nock arrows and draw;
Aim for the knights as they charge to the fore.
Fire your volley, then fire once more,
The enemy fall wounded mortally sore.
See how the pride of the French Fleur-de-Lis
Wilts now at Agincourt.

A poem for the Christians among you...

As I Rested at a Roadside Well.

As I rested at a roadside well,
A white horse, galloping, passed me by.
The rider raised a mighty bow;
There was a crown upon his brow.
Before him, many nations crumbled,
Their people chained, by slavery, humbled.
A horseman, galloping, passed me by,
As I rested at a roadside well.

As I rested at a roadside well,
A red horse, galloping, passed me by.
The rider, with a great sword, thrust;
Its keen edge shone through a bloody crust.
Before him, Peace was lost in strife,
As conflicts raged and war was rife.
Two horsemen, galloping, passed me by,
As I rested at a roadside well.

As I rested at a roadside well,
A black horse, galloping, passed me by.
The rider held a balance high:
The locusts flew; the lands were dry.
Before him, Famine made its way
Where blighted crops had died away.
Three horseman, galloping, passed me by,
As I rested at a roadside well.

As I rested at a roadside well,
A pale horse, galloping, passed me by.
The rider's gaze about him swept:
New orphans wailed; the widows wept.
Before him, Life was put to rout;
Foul demons leered, and capered about.
Four horsemen, galloping, passed me by,
As I rested at a roadside well.

A poem, for one of Snorri's friends:

An Immortal Dedication.

A whistling gleam of razor'd iron, releases folded, crimson veils.
The din, receding from my ken; I seek a quiet, restful place.

By jostling, tranquil languor ends.
A battle-girt maiden stands at my side,
"Waste not the day, the sun soon sets; a host, our presence, yet awaits."
Rising, settling harness straighter; in step, striding on the road,
We come to a broad, and high-beamed hall.
The gable-ends, coiling, mutely snarl; roof-nostrils breathe soft, smoky tendrils.

An ashen spear at High Seat post;
From broad-brim'd shadow, a feral glare assesses, weighs, winnows, gleans.
Hearty greetings slapping shoulders; tankards flowing, amber-filled.
The flaring hearth backlights the shield-maid, copper-haloed, proud and fine.
Beyond the studded, oaken portal, Winter's cold fingers scabble at shingles,
Bewailing our golden-liquor'd chorus.

The dawning sun, limns shining swine-array.
Shrinking darkness flees bright spear points; raven's pinions sweep the blue.
An axeman's question divides my thoughts...
I find the answer overwhelms.

By jostling, tranquil languor ends.
An armoured maid kneels at my side,
"Get up, my lord, the daylight's wasting. Let us not be late to the feasting-hall."
Rising, dusting harness straighter; in step, striding from the field.
I take my leave of Tangwystl, Immortal,
To rise, and fight, on another day.

It's Fun to be a Light.

(to the tune of "Long as I can see the Light", C.C.R.)

Nock an arrow from my quiver,
For I'm off to war again.
'Though they run, run,
I'll hunt all the Heavies down,
'Cos it's fun to be a Light.

Hark! the heralds sound "Assembly!"
And the marshalls cry "Lay on!"
Shafts are flying, flying,
Here, there, and everywhere;
It's an archer's great delight.

Feathered arrows fall like snow,
And the Heavies start to frown.
Here they come, come,
Pick your target now....
Ain't it grand to be a Light?

Nock an arrow from my quiver,
For I'm off to war again.
'Though they run, run,
I'll hunt all the Heavies down,
'Cos it's fun to be a Light...

The next poem is dedicated to Master Llewen the Unruly, Viscountess Eleanor Lyttelhayles, Lady Miriam Galbraith, and Lady Romille de Mont Blanc. Thank you. (Snorri.)

The Great Broad-Ballad Contest.

(An Account by Second-Hand.)

I would like to tell a story, of battles and glory:
Of the Lochac Bardic Broad-Ballad Contest.
It was late in November, A.S. XXVIII,
Some years before Sasha completed his quest.

Mistake not my interest, I was not a witness,
But still it's a tale that should be retold.
I heard it from Lady Romille de Mont Blanc,
For she, as the Provost, was there in Stormhold.

A song, sung by Master Dafydd of the Glens,
(Of th'unusual deeds of a militant berry),
In German, was out of most gentlefolk's grasp;
'Til in English, he added lines supp-le-men-tary.

Master Llewen the Unruly took time with a harpist,
And a player of woodwind, to learn a new song:
It told of a soul caught in mortal torment,
Who by Plague, and cruel Fate, had most sadly been wronged.

And then, in the midst of the closing of Court,
Lord Sasha Vladimir Obolenskij appeared.
He offered a song, to compete with the Masters,
And showed he was not overawed by two Peers.

The next offering is from Bibo the Unlikely, a simple fool, who is persuaded, by Snorri, to attend events where gentlefolk use scary, late-period words, like "Renaissance", or "Elizabethan". The chorus may be sung to the tune of "My boomerang won't come back . . ."

My Liripipe's Far Too Long.

One night while I was sleeping in a forest, dark and drear,
I woke to find myself being eaten by a hungry bear.
He'd swallowed me, by this time, to a point above the knees,
So I quickly wrapped my liripipe around an old oak tree.
Inside the bear I kicked and punched, and caused him belly-pains,
And very soon thereafter, he had spat me out again.

Chorus:

My liripipe's far too long,
My liripipe's far too long;
It flaps and flops all over the place,
Tangles my ankles and gets in my face.

All my friends tell me that I'm a great disgrace,
'Cos my liripipe's far too long...

Upon my journey through a city street I had to travel;
I snagged my liripipe, and all unknown, it did unravel.
Then, shortly, who processed the street, perched on his sedan-chair?
It had to be none other than His Eminence, the Mayor.
My liripipe got looped and snarled around his bearer's feet,
And, quite suddenly, the Mayor was sitting, howling, in the street.

While playing cards, one evening, with the young Duke of Milan,
I found that Fortune favoured me: I had the winning hand.
The Duke was very cross and tried to say it was in fun;
I told him I'd collect the bet when Morning's light had come.
At Dawn he said he'd give me all that I could wrap around,
So I tied my liripipe 'round his estate, and two whole towns!

Post-Scriptum: The liripipe in question measures out at about 9'1" in length, and has bells on it...

A Poem for a Welsh Feast.

I fain would speak of the mighty Leek,
For I hold opinions strong:
It will keep one hale, in the best of health,
And make one's Life happy and long.

What do the Welsh use, for the making of stews
When caught in the cold Winter's deep?
The finest of Leeks, gently simmered for weeks,
While singing of stealing plump sheep.

Why, one may ask, do the archers of Wales
Have a skill that is without a match?
It's from all the hours they spend loosing shafts,
Chasing birds from a farmer's Leek patch.

Some folk will speak of the "humble Leek",
Yet I would say them, "Nay!"
For the Leek's been proud for many a long year,
And is still as proud today.

A Yule Ballad.

A tale is told, ten years ago,
Milk for a pup and bones for a dog.
Of a farmer's girl and the miller's son.
But keep well clear of the singing bog.

Tom was a strong, well-favoured lad,
And ever a cheery word he had.

One night the wind did howl and blow,
The dark'ning clouds dropped sleet and snow.

Tom went to visit the farmer's girl,
With eyes of blue, and chestnut curls.

The farmer laid in wait for Tom,
And struck him down as he walked along.

Poor Tom was dragged by the farmer's horse,
And, senseless, thrown into the marsh.

Tom sank beneath the murky slough,
The wind then ceased, as did the snow.

When the farmer went home to the farm,
The girl knew Tom had come to harm.

She ran out, searching, through the night,
Without a cloak, and without a light.

The girl was lost, and likely drowned,
Her shift was found by the boggy ground.

On Yuletide nights, when the wind drops down,
Folk near the bog hear a singing sound.

They say it's Mary, Tom's sweet girl,
Milk for a pup and bones for a dog,

With eyes so blue, and chestnut curls.

But keep well clear of the singing bog.

This sonnet was written for the Wedding celebration of Lady Vitéz Tatiana and Lord Ianto van Diemen, February, 1994.

A Wedding Sonnet.

The day your eyes and mine, at first, had met,
And high above, the Sun was made stand still;
That day a gardener stooped, a seed to set
In furrow formed of fertile loam, new tilled.
The soft words that with me you kindly shared,
A gentle touch, my hand, in yours, to hold,
Were whispered song of Spirits of the air

'Mid showers giving of their 'freshing souls.
Your bright gaze, questing, rested on my face
To lift emotions, soaring, in my breast,
Just as the warm Sun's tenderest embrace
Shall spur a seedling's growth by sweet caress.
So let us, Dear One, toil with diligence
To harvest from our Love most sweet content.

A short play, entitled:

The Eve of the Wedding.

SCENE 1: Evening, the Lady Sarah and a pilgrim Friar, in a small sitting-chamber.

F: You were enamoured of your husband's younger brother, my lady?

S: I was young and all alone. My husband, Sir James, was always so serious ... when he was there. It was as though I was living with a stone. Robert was lively and interesting. (Frown crosses Friar's face.)

F: So you and Robert ... ?

S: No! By all that's Holy! Oh, there was gossip! After James rode off with the Crusade, Robert's visits were as welcome as rain in the desert. Then my pregnancy became apparent, and how the tongues flew! (Defiantly.) But I delivered nine months to the day of James' departure! Unfortunately, Robert had already left for the Holy Land, and could not see the doubters eat their words.

F: And Sir James, meanwhile?

S: I heard nothing, of either of them, for two years, until I received a message from the King. It said that the troop Sir James had been with was lost when their fortress was overrun. It said, also, that Robert had been knighted.

F: When Sir Robert returned?

S: When Robert returned, he was so much as James had been before ... (Wistfully.) Oh, he still smiled and told stories, but he rarely had that sparkle in his eye. A few months later, he began courting me.

F: You encouraged him?

S: Yes. Peter, my son, needs a father, and Robert has promised to adopt him.

F: And you, Lady Sarah?

S: I, good friar, am a woman; still young and of good health.

F: Yes, my lady, you are.

(Lady-in-waiting/ page interrupts with news of dinner.)

SCENE 2: Morning, the Lady Sarah, wearing wedding dress, in solar. Maid enters.

M: My lady, this was found in the bed of the friar. (Produces parchment roll/ letter.)

S: The friar? Is he no longer with us, then? (Takes parchment.)

M: No, my lady, he left at dawn.

S: At dawn? Very well. (Dismisses Maid, opens parchment, bends to read it.)

(Voice of Friar.): My lady, please excuse my untimely departure, but I have been called away. I thank you for the generous hospitality that you bestowed on a pilgrim friar. If I may, I would share with you a tale I heard while on my travels:

In an outpost that had been destroyed by the infidel, a letter was found, written by one of the knights to his father. His small band of comrades, being trapped by the enemy and in peril of their very souls, swore a sacred pact with God: that the survivors would take holy orders, as a sign of their gratitude. No survivors were found.

Lady Sarah, I commend you to God. May His blessing be upon you, your son, and your marriage.

(Lady Sarah looks up when finished; glimmer of a tear or two, on pensive face; carefully rolls/ folds parchment.)

S: May God guide your path, my lord friar. (Lady Sarah turns away, to window; fade out.)

At Bay. (a rondel.)

With flashing tusks and red-rim'd eyes,
It whirls and spins a lethal dance,
To face the hounds, that howling, prance
And leap around their bristling prize.

See Trevor, yonder, where he lies.
His flank is ripped; through froth he pants.
With flashing tusks and red-rim'd eyes,
It whirls and spins a lethal dance.

Against this beast, of ancient size,
I'll join the fray; waste not the chance
To grasp my courage with my lance,
And pierce, and hold it, 'til it dies.
With flashing tusks and red-rim'd eyes,
It whirls and spins a lethal dance.

A Sea Voyage.

(to "A Whiter Shade of Pale." Procol Harum.)

The captain gave the order,
"Turn hard about to port",
Then by the count from Erik,
We plied the starboard oars.
The wind was howling harder,
As the whitecaps blew away;
When the other boat began to sink,
We knew we'd won away...

Chorus:

And so we rowed, with all our might,
As the skald composed the tale.

But while half of us were rowing,
All the others had to bail.

A full and stormy season,
We sailed West upon the sea;
'Though we poled the boat through icy-fields,
Land we did not see.
Then the lookout gave a warning:
He had seen a wooded coast.
As the fog-bank drifted open,
We knew Asgard must be close...

Chorus...

I'm a Stickjock.

(to the tune of "A--hole.", by Denis Leary.)

Gentlefolks, I'd like to sing a song about the Tournament scene:

About me, about you,

About the way our Fighter's hearts beat way down in the bottom of our breastplates;

About that sweaty feeling we get on the inside of our jupons;

Maybe below the jupon, maybe in the sub-jupon area,

Maybe in the short-ribs, maybe in the kidney-belt,

Maybe even in the cup we don't know.

I'm just a quiet, young lord, in a fairly new group,

We haven't any Old Farts, with Alphabet Soup.

I like feasting, and dancing, and madrigals, too;

Got my own fancy banner, in a nice shade of blue.

I do all my sewing, and calligraphy, too;

I make my own feast-gear, and a lovely home-brew.

But, sometimes, that just ain't enough, to keep a lord like me interested, (O, Nay!) No way! (uh-uh!)

Nay, I've gotta go out, and knock holes, in someone else's defence, (Oy, yay!) Lay on! Pray fight fair!

I like to count bruises, and revel in pain;

I think that my helm is too tight for my brain ...

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! He's a Stickjock!)

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! Such a Stickjock!)

I have blue-jean leggings, and white-sneakered feet;

I wear an old, sweat-y gambeson, in the mid-Summer heat ...

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! He's a Stickjock!)

I'm a Stickjock! (He's the World's biggest Stickjock!)

And, then, when my sword-blows find unarmoured places,

There's impolite language, from grimacing faces ...

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! He's a Stickjock!)

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a really tough Stickjock!)

Maybe I should've accepted that blow: it left a great dent on the bridge of my nose.

Am I upset if my rhino-rep. grows?

NAAYY!!

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! He's a Stickjock!)

I'm a Stickjock! (He's the World's baddest Stickjock!)

(Monologue.) You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna get myself a 17-year-old, bubble-gum-popping Valley-girl, bottle-blonde, in a bunny-fur bikini, & fluoro-coloured chain-mail lingerie & a Viking helmet with fur-rimmed horns on it. Huzzah! And I'm gonna let her follow me around, saying things like "Wow! Fer shure!" & "Totally radical, Dude!", slurping down slushees from the convenience store in the 2-litre, jumbo, movie-promotional cups; & then when she's done slurping down her artificially sweetened cola slushee, she'll unzip the Velcro™ on her fake-fur leopard-skin pouch, wipe her lips with a towelette, say "Icky!" & pass me the mobile-phone so I can accept an incoming call & there ain't a B.O.D.-damned thing anyone can do about it. Y'know why? Becos I'll be the King, that's why! Four words -- by-Right-of-Arms-King! O.K.?

Laurels, Knights, Pelicans -- they can have all the meetings they want -- they can have a big meeting right there in the middle of Pennsic War, & it won't make a lick of difference becous I'll be the King! O.K.? Viking Jack's not here -- he's sleeping. As soon as he fell asleep we took his armour & when he wakes up he's gonna be purty upset. Y'know why? Have you ever seen a purple plastic sequin? Well, we sewed 15 million of those suckers on his armour -- that's how upset Jack's gonna be! I'm gonna get Viking Jack & Rhino Mick & Bossy Bob (Hold!) & Florentine Fred (Hold!) & a barrel of mead (Hold!) & drive down to Ansteorra (Hold!) &

(Y'know, you really are a Stickjock.)

Why don't you just armour up, and lay on, pal?

I'm a Stickjock! (He's a Stickjock! He's a Stickjock!)

I'm a Stickjock! (He's the World's biggest Stickjock!)

S-TI-KJ-OK! Everybody! S-TI-KJ-OK! (Stick-jo-ock! Stick-jo-ock! Oooh!)

I'm a Stickjock, and I'm proud of it

The answer to A Riddle, is the Sea.

This poem was written shortly before my first trip to the Rowany Festival.

The First Journey.

Far, and far, and far away,
We'll wend our slow, determined way.
Through mists and fogs we'll find our path,
Our footsteps ever pointing North.
Upon the surging, briny tide,
We'll sail to find the farther side.
Beyond the highland's rocky peak,
There lies the end of our lonely trek.
Then, what tales we'll have if we wish to tell
Of our first sight of Rowany Festival.

War Challenge for Rowany Festival, A.S.XXVIII

All about armies rising, answering levy-calls,
Balefully, cold winds blow, bearing war tidings.
Coming from coastlands, chanting to sea-gods,
Dragon-prows drive shorewards; fill river's broad delta.
Eagerly, grim raiders leap to beach-gravel,
Fierce for the fight-feast, first to Valholl.
Great heroes shout greetings, greedy gore-tongues at hand;
Helms herald battle and Hel's dark abode.
In blood-gilt war-harness, forming up swine-array,
Jarls foster friendship, freely gift-giving.
Kinsmen come thronging, adding to war-din,
Looking for weapon-strife, lusting for glory.
Many are mighty, known for much fighting,
Not shirking ever from great Odin's work:
Open-mouthed jugs to fill brimming over,
Poured full of fury, hungry for war.
Quaffing high spirits housecarls make shield-walls,
Ranging high ramparts, rushing to reave.
See Ingibjorg Ambardottir, Stormhold's feared Baroness,
Turn her great host to the fray's thickest eddy.
Under slow-spreading silence on the Field of the Dead
Valkyrja take soul-claims from newly slain ranks. As
Wolves wail in shadows, awaiting gore-feasting,
Exulting crows croaking crowd greying sky's vault.
Yet again gather storm-clouds, gladly greeted by
Zeal in strong hearts and raven's red song.

Post-scriptum: Originally, the "S"line read,

"See Sven the Stormdriven, Stormhold's feared Baron," but as the Baron, due to injury, was unable to lead his force in battle, it seemed only right to give credit where it was due.

A Nonette. (Rowany Festival, A.S.XXVIII.)

I walked the fields in search of a verse,
Looking at trees, with thoughts of great Odin;
Hoping to invoke the power of poets.
I chanced upon a shaded glade
And rested a short while.
Birds called from bushes,
Clouds gathered, and
Warriors found
Valhalla.

A short round song, to the tune of "By the Waters of Babylon.":
A Round of Plague. (A.S.XXVIII.)
By the loogie, the loogie, of Rowany,
We were brought down low, down low, nigh unto Death.
We were struck by the, were struck by the, the Plague of Rowany.

The Forge. (a rondel.)
The blacksmith's hand the hammer gripped,
And hardened muscles bunched in knots.
His reddened brow was slick and hot;
Broad feet wide-set, his face tight-lipped.

His blood, swift arrows spilled; it dripped
To dust well mixed with crimson clots.
The blacksmith's hand the hammer gripped,
And hardened muscles bunched in knots.

Before the smith, a raider tripped,
His boot caught in the gory glut;
So swiftly Life's fey balance tipped,
His skull crushed, as a broken pot.
The blacksmith's hand the hammer gripped,
And hardened muscles bunched in knots.

To the tune of "White Rabbit." (Grace Slick and the Great Society.)
Consolation.

Some blows make you stagger, and some blows make you fall,
But the blows that hit your helmet, don't do any harm at all:
Go ask squires, in the feasting-hall.
So if you go tourney-fighting, and your armour starts to gall,
Remember a shy and lovely maiden, hopes to meet you at the Ball.
She told Alys, at the market-stall.
When the voice of the Herald, tells you "Arm up! It's time to go!"
And you've got a touch of concussion, and your shield-arm's moving slow,
Think of Alys, as she whispered low,
"When all the fighting's finished, and you've fallen, nearly dead,
And a lady brings you water, let her soothe and bathe your head.
Remember, by your heart's intent, be you led, be you led."

This poem was written on a wonderfully stormy night:

A Night's Gale.
The moaning wind, through gilded trees, with talons scrapes at soul's unease.
Leaves flurry, thick, and spiral, wild; bent branches shake their heads to scold.
The glowing Moon, by cloudy shreds, across the vault of Night is led.
But - Quiet, now! The wind has hushed - taut nerves by silent void are crushed;
Then, howling glee, the gale leaps high, and fearsome shadows blot the sky:
Look, look! There they fly! Look again! See them ride!
Hear the clash of their harness, the boom of their stride;
The snort of their grim steeds that chase down the stars;
The bay of their pack that chills strongest of hearts.
Tonight rides the Wild Hunt and Chaos runs free;
Yet what is their quarry and where can it flee?
Cries of deep anguish ring out in sharp gusts,
And nothing can save it, for slaughter they must.
Decreed by dread Powers they ride with the Moon;
Forever their compact - they ride to their Doom.

This poem was inspired by the memory of a white cap that kept falling off:

In Aid of a Maid.

One dark night, I stopped into a tavern for to sup;
An empty bar - the 'keep had meat and ale to fill my cup.
A comely maid did serve, her tresses 'neath a snow-white cap;
She slipped, and tripped, and landed, all a-spraddle, in my lap.
I threw out my arms and held her tight, to save her from her plight,
And in my haste to help her, I dislodged her cap of white.
Her tresses flew, her skirts flounced,"Oh, kind lord, I do entreat
Proceed with care, and gently, ere you sweep me from my feet."
Nor long it was ere we were twain a-standing and composed;
Her breath was quick, her cheeks were flushèd as a petal'd rose.
"My lord, your timely aid I thank, and this do I avow:
I'll no more wear a snowy cap upon my maiden's brow."

This poem was written for the Camel, Lochac's heraldic newsletter. (940514.)

Heraldsies.

While I was talking with a Herald just the other day,
He prefaced every sentence by - dramatic pause - "Oy, yay!"
I guess he got the habit after speaking for the King,
But in a private tête-à-tête, it's quite an awkward thing.

I asked a Herald I encountered all about Court stuff.
Ere long his eyeballs bulged, and he began to steam and huff;
"They never do it by the book!", then he waved his arms about.
I tried to get a word in, but his bellow drowned me out.

I showed a Herald my device - I thought it was all right.
The look that came across his face was not a pretty sight.
It went argent, gules, then vairy vert, as his ears began to glow;
"You want me to comment on your device? In just one word - Hell, no!"

Clandestiny. (a sonnet.)

In caverns far beneath the cobbled streets,
'Midst hollow echoes of the dimming past,
Are catacombs where thou and I do meet:
A place our troth and pact may be made fast.
The city roofs by glowing Sun are gilt,
Caressed by breeze or moist with gentle show'r.
Our nest of love of grinning skulls is built,
With coffin-staves to form our lovers' bow'r.
As distant bells the hours of darkness toll,
We whisper softly in our dusty tomb.
Then dawn the morning's glory doth unfold
Impatient that night's secrets be consumed.
By day our love must hide from mortal sight
'Til, blest at last, we meet in Death's long night.

A Poet's Doom.

From mists of grey that roiled in vap'rous skeins,
His silvered braids bejewelled by the dew,
In sudden pause of marsh bird's sweet refrain,
The wandering poet came into my view.
Out from a weathered face his bright gaze shone,
To linger here and there on web or bud.
His journey-staff was capped by carven bone,
And thumped a steady beat upon the road.
All swathed he was in homespun woollen cloth,
It kilted up about his naked knees.
In sooth, 'twas fey he looked, and wild enough.
On seeing me, he stopped before my tree.
With phrases spake in rolling tones, and measured,
He offered me a skin hung on his back,
"Tae gie tae ye this porridge is mae plaisure."
So, taking it, I raised his leathern sack.
The liquor that flowed out upon my tongue
Then slipped so swiftly down my tunnel'd gorge,
Was mixed by gods when still the world was young,
And quenched the mighty Vulcan at his forge.
My inner ear rang with the poet's words
Of ancient battles fought for mountain forts.
My sight was filled by spears and helms and swords,
And storied Kings with heroes in their courts.
'Mid forests, deep and drear, I found my way;
In sorc'rous caverns filled with fire and steam.
On deserts I was parched through cruel day;
The night air glittered, gilt with fabled scenes.
I met an old man, tall he was, and grim.
His shadow crouched, or flapped - a creature fell.
A stony glare from 'neath his hat's broad rim,
"By rune, bind misty thought into the spell..."
An earnest grip I felt upon my arm;
The poet's eyes looked deep into my own,
"Och, aye, young lad, ye've nary come tae harm,"
I turned to him, my face creased into frown.
My mouth I ope'd, to ask the question, "Why?"
But thick my tongue was, and my throat so tight.
When I had thought to make a second try,
The grey-beard bard was nowhere in my sight.

I carry with me, still, the porridge bag,
And sip, or sup, when need I feel so fierce,
While lines and words from stubborn thoughts I drag:
In verse, to woo the Muse is now my curse.

In Old Norse, the colour of black, or blue, is the same word - "blakkr."
This suggests a certain opportunity for Loki, the Master of Mischief,
to put his two silver pieces' worth in:

A Norse Dilemma.

I am an old Icelfander, and I'm wondering what to do,
For every time I speak I get confused by black and blue.
My lover is a black-eyed lass, black as the Summer's sky;
'Though charcoal's blue, and jet is too, and ravens flying by.
I've fought the most blue-hearted men, blue as the night in Winter;
And seen men daubed all black with woad, and cornflowers, black, at Easter.
In the East they talk of blackbirds, that can bring you happiness.
I'm sure they mean the peacock, sitting on a sapphire nest.
I've often used blue, glassy chips, found on volcanos' sides,
To flay the little, fleshy bits from fresh, blue sable hides.
So, if I'm not a cheery sort, please do not think me rude...
P'raps I'm only singing the blacks, or in the bluest mood.