"Speak! speak I thou fearful guest   
Who, with thy hollow breast   
Still in rude armor drest,   
    Comest to daunt me!   
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,   
Bat with thy fleshless palms   
Stretched, as if asking alms,   
    Why dost thou haunt me?"

Then, from those cavernous eyes   
Pale flashes seemed to rise,   
As when the Northern skies   
    Gleam in December;   
And, like the water's flow   
Under December's snow,   
Came a dull voice of woe   
    From the heart's chamber.

"I was a Viking old!   
My deeds, though manifold,   
No Skald in song has told,   
    No Saga taught thee!   
Take heed, that in thy verse   
Thou dost the tale rehearse,   
Else dread a dead man's curse;   
    For this I sought thee.

"Far in the Northern Land,   
By the wild Baltic's strand,   
I, with my childish hand,   
    Tamed the gerfalcon;   
And, with my skates fast-bound,   
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,   
    That the poor whimpering hound   
Trembled to walk on.

"Oft to his frozen lair   
Tracked I the grisly bear,   
While from my path the hare   
    Fled like a shadow;   
Oft through the forest dark   
Followed the were-wolf's bark,   
Until the soaring lark   
   Sang from the meadow.

"But when I older grew,   
Joining a corsair's crew,   
O'er the dark sea I flew   
    With the marauders.   
Wild was the life we led;   
Many the souls that sped,   
Many the hearts that bled,   
   By our stern orders.

"Many a wassail-bout   
Wore the long Winter out;   
Often our midnight shout   
   Set the cocks crowing,   
As we the Berserk's tale   
Measured in cups of ale,   
Draining the oaken pail,   
   Filled to o'erflowing.

"Once as I told in glee   
Tales of the stormy sea,   
Soft eyes did gaze on me,   
   Burning yet tender;   
And as the white stars shine   
On the dark Norway pine,   
On that dark heart of mine   
   Fell their soft splendor.

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,   
Yielding, yet half afraid,   
And in the forest's shade   
   Our vows were plighted.   
Under its loosened vest   
Fluttered her little breast   
Like birds within their nest   
   By the hawk frighted.

"Bright in her father's hall   
Shields gleamed upon the wall,   
Loud sang the minstrels all,   
   Chanting his glory;   
When of old Hildebrand   
I asked his daughter's hand,   
Mute did the minstrels stand   
   To hear my story.

"While the brown ale he quaffed,   
Loud then the champion laughed,   
And as the wind-gusts waft   
   The sea-foam brightly,   
So the loud laugh of scorn,   
Out of those lips unshorn,   
From the deep drinking-horn   
   Blew the foam lightly.

"She was a Prince's child,   
I but a Viking wild,   
And though she blushed and smiled,   
   I was discarded!   
Should not the dove so white   
Follow the sea-mew's flight,   
Why did they leave that night   
   Her nest unguarded?

"Scarce had I put to sea,   
Bearing the maid with me,   
Fairest of all was she   
   Among the Norsemen!   
When on the white sea-strand,   
Waving his armed hand,   
Saw we old Hildebrand,   
   With twenty horsemen.

"Then launched they to the blast,   
Bent like a reed each mast,   
Yet we were gaining fast,   
   When the wind failed us;   
And with a sudden flaw   
Came round the gusty Skaw,   
So that our foe we saw   
   Laugh as he hailed us.

"And as to catch the gale   
Round veered the flapping sail,   
Death I was the helmsman's hail,   
   Death without quarter!   
Mid-ships with iron keel   
Struck we her ribs of steel   
Down her black hulk did reel   
   Through the black water!

"As with his wings aslant,   
Sails the fierce cormorant,   
Seeking some rocky haunt   
   With his prey laden,   
So toward the open main,   
Beating to sea again,   
Through the wild hurricane,   
   Bore I the maiden.

"Three weeks we westward bore,   
And when the storm was o'er,   
Cloud-like we saw the shore   
   Stretching to leeward;   
There for my lady's bower   
Built I the lofty tower,   
Which, to this very hour,   
   Stands looking seaward.

"There lived we many years;   
Time dried the maiden's tears   
She had forgot her fears,   
   She was a mother.   
Death closed her mild blue eyes,   
Under that tower she lies;   
Ne'er shall the sun arise   
   On such another!

"Still grew my bosom then.   
Still as a stagnant fen!   
Hateful to me were men,   
   The sunlight hateful!   
In the vast forest here,   
Clad in my warlike gear,   
Fell I upon my spear,   
   O, death was grateful!

"Thus, seamed with many scars,   
Bursting these prison bars,   
Up to its native stars   
   My soul ascended!   
There from the flowing bowl   
Deep drinks the warrior's soul,   
Skoal! to the Northland! skoal!"   
   Thus the tale ended.