

The Project Gutenberg eBook, The Gold Horns, by Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger, Edited by Edmund Gosse, Translated by George Borrow

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\*\*\*START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GOLD HORNS\*\*\*

Transcribed from the 1913 Thomas J. Wise pamphlet by David Price, email [ccx074@pglaf.org](mailto:ccx074@pglaf.org). Many thanks to Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, UK, for kindly supplying the images from which this transcription was made.

# THE GOLD HORNS

translated by  
GEORGE BORROW

*from the Danish of*  
ADAM GOTTLÖB OEHLENSCHLÄGER

Edited  
*with an Introduction by*  
EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

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1913

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## INTRODUCTION

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Early in the present year Mr. Thos. J. Wise discovered among the miscellaneous MSS. of Borrow a fragment which proved to be part of a version of Oehlenschläger's *Gold Horns*. His attention being drawn to the fact, hitherto unknown, that Borrow had translated this famous poem, he sought for, and presently found, a complete MS. of the poem, and from this copy the present text has been printed. The paper on which it is written is watermarked 1824, and it is probable that the version was composed in 1826. The hand-writing coincides with that of several of the pieces included in the *Romantic Ballads* of that year, and there can be little doubt that Borrow intended *The Gold Horns* for that volume, and rejected it at last. He was conscious, perhaps, that his hand had lacked the skill needful to reproduce a lyric the melody of which would have taxed the powers of Coleridge or of Shelley. Nevertheless, his attempt seems worthy of preservation.

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*The Gold Horns* marks one of the most important stages in the history of Scandinavian literature. It is the earliest, and the freshest, specimen of the Romantic Revival in its definite form. In this way, it takes in Danish

poetry a place analogous to that taken by *The Ancient Mariner* in English poetry.

The story of the events which led to the composition of *The Gold Horns* is told independently, by Steffens and by Oehlenschläger in their respective Memoirs, and the two accounts tally completely. Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger (1779–1850), the greatest poet whom the North of Europe has produced, had already attracted considerable renown and even profit by his writings, which were in the classic-sentimental manner of the late 18th century, when, in the summer of 1802, the young Norwegian philosopher, Henrik Steffens, arrived in Copenhagen from Germany, where he had imbibed the new romantic ideas. He began to give lectures on æsthetics, and these awakened a turmoil of opposition. Among those who heard him, no one was more scandalised than Oehlenschläger, then in his twenty-third year. He was not acquainted with Steffens, but in the course of the autumn they happened to meet at a restaurant in Copenhagen, when they instantly experienced a violent mutual attraction. Steffens has described how deep an impression was made upon him by the handsome head, flashing eyes, and graceful vivacity of the poet, while Oehlenschläger bears witness to being no less fascinated by the gravity and enthusiasm of the philosopher. The new friends found it impossible to part, and sixteen hours had gone by, and 3 a.m. had struck, before Oehlenschläger could tear himself away from the company of Steffens.

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He scarcely slept that night, and rose in a condition of bewilderment and rapture. His first act, after breakfast, was to destroy a whole volume of his own MS. poetry, which was ready for press, and for which a publisher had promised him a handsome sum of money. His next was to sit down and write *The Gold Horns*, a manifesto of his complete conversion to the principles of romanticism. Later in the day he presented himself again at Steffens' lodgings, bringing the lyric with him, "to prove," as he says, "to Steffens that I was a poet at last beyond all doubt or question." His new friend received him with solemn exultation. "Now you are indeed a poet," he said, and folded him in his arms. The conversion of Oehlenschläger to romanticism meant the conquest of Danish literature by the new order of thought.

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Oehlenschläger has explained what it was that suggested to him the leading idea of his poem. Two antique horns of gold, discovered some time before in the bogs of Slesvig, had been recently stolen from the national collection at Rosenborg, and the thieves had melted down the inestimable treasures. Oehlenschläger treats these horns as the reward for genuine antiquarian enthusiasm, shown in a sincere and tender passion for the ancient relics of Scandinavian history. From a generation unworthy to appreciate them, the *Horns* had been withdrawn, to be mysteriously restored at the due romantic hour. He was, when he came under the influence of Steffens, absolutely ripe for conversion, filled with the results of his Icelandic studies, and with an imagination redolent of *Edda* and the Sagas. To this inflammable material, Henrik Steffens merely laid the torch of his intelligence.

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It is impossible to pretend that Borrow has caught the enchanting beauty and delicacy of the Danish poem. But he has made a gallant effort to reproduce the form and language of Oehlenschläger, and we have thought it not without interest to print opposite his version the whole of the original Danish.

Edmund Gosse.

<b>GULDHORNENE</b> <sup>[10]</sup>	<b>THE GOLD HORNS</b>
De higer og søger I gamle Böger, I oplukte Höie, Med speidende Öie, Paa Sværd og Skjolde, I mulne Volde, Paa Runestene, Blandt smuldnede Bene.	Upon the pages Of the olden ages, And in hills where are lying The dead, they are prying; On armour rusty, In ruins musty, On Rune-stones jumbled, With bones long crumbled.
Oldtids Bedrifter Anede trylle, Men i Mulm de sig hylle, De gamle Skrifter. Blikket stirrer, Sig Tanken forvirrer, I Taage de famle. "I gamle, gamle, Forsvundne Dage! Da det straalte paa Jorden, Da Östen var i Norden, Giver Glimt tilbage!"	Eld's deeds, through guesses Beheld, are delighting, But mist possesses The ancient writing. The eye-ball fixed is, The thought perplexed is; In darkness they're groping Their mouths they're op'ing: "Ye days long past, When the North was uplighted, And with earth heav'n united, A glimpse back cast."

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<p>Skyen suser, Natten bryser, Gravhöien sukker, Rosen sig lukker. De sig möde, de sig möde, De forklarede Höie, Kampfarvede, röde, Med Stjerneglands i Öie.</p>	<p>The clouds are bustling, The night blasts rustling, Sighs are breaking, From grave-hills quaking, The regions were under Thunder. Of the mighty and daring, The ghosts there muster, Stains of war bearing, In their eye star lustre.</p>
<p>“I, som rave iblinde, Skal finde Et ældgammelt Minde, Der skal komme og svinde! Dets gyldne Sider Skal Præget bære, Afældste Tider.</p>	<p>“Ye who blind are straying, And praying, Shall an ag'd relic meet, Which shall come and shall fleet, Its red sides golden, The stamp displaying Of the times most olden.</p>
<p>Af det kan I lære, Med andagtsfuld Ære I vor Gave belønne! Det skjønneste Skjønne, En Mö Skal Helligdommen finde!”</p>	<p>That shall give ye a notion To hold in devotion Our gift, is your duty! A maiden, of beauty Most rare. Shall find the token!”</p>
<p>Saa sjunge de og svinde, Lufttonerne döe.</p>	<p>They vanished; this spoken Their tones die in air.</p>
<p>Hrymfaxe, den sorte, Puster og dukker Og i Havet sig begraver; Morgenens Porte Delling oplukker, Og Skinfxe traver I straalende Lue Paa Himmelens Bue.</p>	<p>Black Hrymfax, weary, Panteth and bloweth, And in sea himself burieth; Belling, cheery, Morn's gates ope throweth; Forth Skinfax hurrieth, On heaven's bridge prancing, And with lustre glancing.</p>
<p>Og Fuglene synge; Dugperler bade Blomsterblade, Som Vindene gyng; Og med svævende Fjed En Mö hendandser Til Marken afsted. Violer hende krands, Hendes Rosenkind brænder, Hun har Liljehænder; Let som et Hind, Med muntert Sind Hun svæver og smiler; Og som hun iler Og paa Elskov grubler, Hun snubler— Og stirrer og skuer Gyldne Luer Og rødmer og bæver Og skjælvende hæver Med undrende Aand Udaf sorten Muld Med snehvide Haand, Det röde Guld. En sagte Torden Dundrer; Hele Norden Undrer.</p>	<p>The little birds quaver, Pearls from night's weeping; The flowers are steeping In the winds which waver; To the meadows, fleet A maiden boundeth; Violet fillet neat Her brows surroundeth; Her cheeks are glowing, Lilly hands she's showing; Light as a hind, With sportive mind She smiling frisketh. And as on she whisketh, And thinks on her lover, She trips something over; And, her eyes declining, Beholds a shining, And red'neth and shaketh, And trembling uptaketh With wondering sprite From the dingy mould, With hand snow-white, The ruddy gold. A gentle thunder Pealeth; The whole North wonder Feeleth.</p>

Og hen de stimle I store Vrimle; De grave, de søge Skatten at forøge. Men intet Guld! Deres Haab har bedraget: De see kun det Muld, Hvoraf det er taget.	Forth rush with gabble A countless rabble; The earth they're upturning, For the treasure burning. But there's no gold! Their hope is mistaken; They see but the mould, From whence it is taken.
Et Sekel svinder!	An age by rolleth.
Over Klippetinder Det atter bruser. Stormens Sluser Bryde med Vælde Over Norges Fjelde Til Danmarks Dale. I Skyernes Sale De forklarede Gamle Sig atter samle.	Again it howleth O'er the tops of the mountains. Of the rain the fountains Burst with fury; The spirits of glory From Norge's highlands, To Denmark's islands, In the halls of ether Again meet together.
“For de sjeldne Faa, Som vor Gave forstaae, Som ei Jordlænker binde Men hvis Sjæle sig hæve Til det Eviges Tinde; Som ane det Höie I Naturens Öie; Som tilbedende bæve For Guddommens Straaler I Sole, Violer, I det Mindste, det Største, Som brændende törste Efter Livets Liv; Som, o store Aand For de svundne Tider! Se dit Guddomsblik Paa Helligdommens Sider: For <i>dem</i> lyder atter vort Bliv.	“For the few there below Who our gift's worth know, Who earth's fetters spurn all, And whose souls are soaring To the throne of th' Eternal; Who in eye of Nature Behold the Creator; And tremble adoring, 'Fore the rays of his power In the sun, in the flower, In the greatest and least, And with thirst are possest For of life the spring; Who, O powerful sprite Of the times departed! See thy look bright From the relic's sides darted: For them our Be once more shall ring.
“Naturens Sön, Ukjændt i Lön, Men som sine Fædre Kraftig og stor, Dyrkende sin Jord, Ham vil vi hædre, Han skal atter finde!” Saa syngende de svinde.	“Nature's son, whose name Is unknown to fame, But his acre tilling, Strong-armed and tall, Like his forefathers all, Him to honour we're willing, He shall find the second token!” They vanished, this spoken.
Hrymfaxe, den sorte, Puster og dukker Og i Havet sig begraver: Morgenens Porte Delling oplukker; Skinfaxe traver I straalende Lue Paa Himmelens Bue.	Black Hrymfax weary Panteth and bloweth, And in sea himself buried; And Belling cheery Morn's gates ope throweth; Forth Skinfax hurrieth, On heaven's bridge prancing, And with lustre glancing.
Ved lune Skov Öxnene trække Den tunge Plov Over sorten Dække.	By the bright green shaw The oxen striding The heavy plough draw, The soil dividing.
Da standser Ploven En Gysen farer Igennem Skoven; Fugleskaren Pludsclig tier; Hellig Taushed Alt indvier.	The plough stops; sorest Of shudders rushes Right through the forest; The bird-quire hushes Sudden its strains; Holy silence O'er all reigns.

Da klinger i Muld Det gamle Guld.	Then rings in the mould The ancient gold.
Tvende Glimt fra Oldtidsdage Funkle i de nye Tider; Selsomt vendte de tilbage, Gaadefyldt paa blanke Sider.	Glimpses two from period olden Lo! in modern time appearing; Strange returned those glimpses golden, On their sides enigmas bearing.
Skjulte Helligdom omsvæver Deres gamle Tegn og mærker; Guddomsglorien ombæver Evighedens Underværker.	Holiness mysterious hovers O'er their signs, of meaning pond'rous; Glory of the Godhead covers These eternal works so wondrous.
Hædre dem ved Bön og Psalter; Snart maaske er hver forsvunden. Jesu Blod paa Herrens Alter Fylde dem, som Blod i Lunden.	Reverence them, for nought is stable; They may vanish, past all seeking. Let Christ's blood on Christ's own table Fill them, once with red blood reeking.
Men I see kun Guldets Lue, Ikke de Ærværdighöie! Sæte dem som Pragt tilskue For et mat, nysgjerrigt Öie!	But their majesty unviewing, And their lustre but descreying, Them as spectacles ye're shewing To the silly and the prying.
Himlen sortner, Storme brage! Visse Time, du er kommen. Hvad de gav, de tog tilbage— Evig bortsvandt Helligdommen.	Storm-winds bellow, blackens heaven! Comes the hour of melancholy; Back is taken what was given,— Vanished is the relic holy.

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## Footnotes:

[10] The left-hand column contains the even pages of the printed pamphlet, and the right-hand column the corresponding odd pages which appear opposite them.—DP.

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