

## A LEGEND OF BORAY ISLAND.\*

IN the far-off Northern Islands,  
Where the wild waves ever flow,  
I have heard a wondrous legend  
Of the days of long ago.

There, amid the circling waters,  
Boray Isle lies all alone,  
Silent ever, save at nightfall  
On the eve of good St. John.†

Those who in the faith of Odin  
'Neath the waves have sunk for aye,  
Are as sea-beasts doomed to wander  
Till the dawn of Judgment Day.‡

Once a year on Boray Island  
They revisit scenes of earth,  
And, their ancient forms resuming,  
Hold their wild unhallowed mirth.

On the shore their sealskins leaving,  
They in revels pass the time,  
Till the midnight hour resoundeth  
From St. Magnus' distant chime.

Boray Island, or Holm of Boray, off Millburn Bay in Gairsay.

† Midsummer Eve.

## A Legend of Boray Island.

At the solemn knell the dancers  
In wild haste their guise regain,  
And as seals once more appearing  
Plunge below the waves again.

Long ago a Northern fisher  
In a storm was left alone,  
And to Boray Isle was driven  
On the eve of good St. John.

There he saw the ghostly revels—  
Music wild fell on his ear ;  
And he snatched a cast-off sealskin,  
And he hid in mortal fear.

All the evening long he watched them,  
Till he heard St. Magnus' chime—  
Twelve deep tones proclaimed the hour  
When was o'er the fated time.

At the solemn knell the dancers  
In wild haste their guise regain—  
All save one ; a fair sea-maiden,  
Seeking for her robe in vain.

All the others plunged and left her,  
And no more could Eric bide,  
But his friendly shelter leaving,  
Hurried to the maiden's side.

Flung his fisher mantle round her ;  
With the Cross he signed her o'er ;  
And with loving words addressed her,  
Bidding her to fear no more.

“ Fairest one ! no longer fated  
As a wild sea-beast to roam,  
Come and be my bride, my treasure,  
Mistress of my hearth and home.

“ Thou shalt be a christened woman  
By the help of good St. John,  
And at blessed Magnus’ altar  
Holy Church shall make us one.”

So he spake, and so he won her,  
And he took her to his home ;  
‘ Margaret ’ was the name they gave her,  
‘ Pearl ’ cast up from Ocean’s foam.

Three bright years they dwelt together,  
Love and joy around her grew ;  
Every day he blessed the tempest  
That his bark on Boray threw.

But when spring three times had circled,  
Margaret’s cheek was thin and white ;  
Day by day her strength departed,  
And she faded in his sight.

Then she spoke, and thus she bade him :  
“ Death’s cold touch is on my heart,  
But in peace from this dear homestead  
Soul and body cannot part

“ Till I know my fate for certain—  
If the holy water shed  
On my christened brow will save me  
From the doom of Odin’s dead.

## A Legend of Boray Island.

“ Row me in your skiff, my husband,  
 On the eve of good St. John ;  
 Take me back to Boray Island,  
 Lay me on the sands adown.

“ Claspings fast the Cross of Jesus,  
 I must meet the dead alone ;  
 If they still have power o'er me,  
 Ere day breaks I shall be gone.

“ All alone you needs must leave me ;  
 Pass in fast and prayer the time ;  
 And return when o'er the waters  
 Peals St. Magnus' midnight chime.

“ And if Cross and Chrism guard me  
 From the sway of spirits foul,  
 Then, my husband, know for certain  
 Christ will save my ransomed soul.”

All her bidding he accomplished,  
 Though his heart was sad and sore :  
 On the fated eve he took her,  
 Laid her down on Boray shore ;

Went where he no more could see her,  
 To the islet's farthest bound.  
 Soon he heard the ghostly dancers  
 With wild cries his wife surround.

All the evening long they tried her,  
 Tempting her to turn again,  
 With weird strains of love or threatening,  
 To her life below the main.

Sadly Eric watched and waited,  
Passed in fast and prayer the time,  
Till at last, o'er rippling water,  
Pealed St. Magnus' midnight chime.

Then he rose, and hastened to her ;  
Found her on the lonely sands,  
Lying with the Cross of Jesus  
Clasped in her folded hands.

To the Islands of the Blessed  
Margaret's ransomed soul had fled,  
And a smile of victory lingered  
On her lips, though cold and dead.

ALICE L. DUNDAS

(The Honourable Mrs. John Dundas).

