

THE LAY
OF
THE NIBELUNG MEN

ARTHUR S. WAY

Fernando Ponce

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TRANSLATED FROM THE OLD GERMAN TEXT

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INTRODUCTION

IF we accept as our definition of an Epic :—(a) A long poem, (b) of an interest not less than national¹, describing (c) in noble language (d) a series of naturally and organically connected actions (e) of heroic actors, we shall find that, while we must deny the name to some so-called epics², we have to thank the spirit, the imagination, the genius, of the Middle Ages for two great epics. If some critics are inclined to place these on a lower plane, for the alleged reason that the language is lacking in nobility, we may reply that it is a rash literary judgment which appraises the language and style of a far-off time by the standards either of a later civilization and culture, or by those of a quite different race, as of Greece. That is entitled to be called noble language which stirred with heroic impulses, and lifted above themselves, the hearers to whom it was addressed, and this great essential was, we know, amply fulfilled by the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Nibelungenlied*. These are both Primitive Epics, as distinguished from the epics of the study. They are National Epics, in the same sense in which the *Iliad* is, and in a sense in which the *Aeneid* is not one. By a strange coincidence, the great national epics of the world are unfathered. Of the authorship of the epics of the study, as of Virgil, Milton, Tasso, in which the imagination of a poet bodied forth the life of a long-past age, the scenes of a far-off world, there has never been the shadow of a doubt; but those which paint in everlasting colours the life, the stir of action, the thrill of passion, of an age in which the poet lived and moved and had his being, these songs which pulsate with the very life-blood of the past—when we ask, “Who was the singer?” there comes back only a muffled voice from

¹ The interest may be more than national, as in *Paradise Lost*.

² The *Epic of Hades* falls short of the requirements of this definition in (b) and (d); Bulwer Lytton's *King Arthur* in (c); such poems as Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* in (a) and (d); Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was felt by its author to fall so far short of answering to condition (d), that he would not claim for it the title *Epic of Arthur*.

behind a veil. In India, in France, in Germany, stand thrones waiting for ever empty of the kings of song, and in Greece upon the most imperial of all sits only a featureless shadow, to whose very name is denied by some the attribute of personality.

For this obscurity of authorship there is, in the case of the *Nibelungenlied*, more reason than with the other epics. What is conjectural with respect to the *Iliad* and the *Chanson*, is indubitable with respect to the *Lied*, viz. that both in its origin and in its construction it was composite, that the elements of which it is a union are in date, perhaps in place of origin, widely remote from each other. The Saga of the Niblungs, of which the *Nibelungenlied* is the finished poetical development, is a union of mythical and historical elements.

1. *The Mythical Element.* The groundwork of this is the Saga of Siegfried, or Sigurd, as he is named in the Northern versions of the myth. In the old heroic age of the Teuton tribes, perhaps during the period of the Migrations of the Peoples, in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries, there took shape this legend of a demigod hero¹. The supernatural pervades the whole atmosphere of this primitive form of the myth. The Gods still walk the earth, the hero is descended from a God, he woos a cloud-maiden, there is something more than earthly in his sword, in his horse, in the glance of his eyes. But as the Germanic tribes to whom this myth was a common inheritance broke up and wandered far apart, it came to pass that it was just with those who remained in the ancient home, the birth-land of the myth, that it became most modified, and that its supernatural elements were removed or toned down, as the result of admixture with more civilized peoples, and, still more, of the acceptance of Christianity by the Germans themselves. Christian teachers were too grimly in earnest to tolerate poems which assumed the existence of heathen deities, and glorified non-Christian virtues. Hence it came

¹ For the origin of the conception of such a hero there are two theories. One is that of the nature-myth, according to which the hero is the personification of some natural force or phenomenon, as Achilles has been said to personify the Sun in his course. According to this, Sigurd represents the Day, or the Light, or the Spring. The other is that of an actual tribal chief, whose exploits are glorified and exaggerated in the folk-songs of after days. According to this, the genesis of an epic poem proceeds somewhat thus:—(1) a warrior vaunts his own and his ancestors' exploits as a preliminary to fight, as Glaucus does in *Il.* VI, and as savage chiefs have done in all ages and countries; (2) his followers sing the prowess of the chief and his ancestors; (3) the specially gifted bard chants them at a feast like the Highland sennachie, or before a battle, like Taillefer.

to pass that the tribes of Teutonic origin which longest preserved the original form of the myth were those which wandered farthest from the old home-land, and which were the last to abandon the old faith.

The Norse form of the legend, which is most fully preserved for us in the Eddas, or prose epics of Iceland, presents us with the original story, transfigured with all gleams of fancy and splendours of imagination which had gathered round it as it was handed down through generations of bards. There is no need here to tell the story of this Northern version of the Saga, since it has been told for all English lovers of noble poetry by William Morris in his *Story of Sigurd*, which has well been characterized as "the one great English epic of the nineteenth century," and which is the most Homeric-spirited poem since Homer. It is an expanded verse-rendering of the Volsunga-saga of the prose Edda, a literal prose version of which is also accessible to all readers, executed by the same author¹.

We will confine ourselves to indicating the features which reappear, under some form or other, in the *Nibelungenlied*². Sigurd, son of Sigmund, slays Fafnir, the man who had been transformed into a dragon, and takes the dragon-guarded treasure, three horse-loads of gold, with a magic ring, the begetter of gold. But to this Hoard cleaves the curse pronounced by the Dwarf Andvari, from whom it had been taken, that it should prove the destruction of every possessor. With this he rides away, and comes to a hill-top begirt with a wall of fire. He rides through the fire, and finds Brynhild, a Valkyr-maid, who had been cast into a trance-sleep by Odin for transgressing his behests. He awakens her; they love, and plight their troth. But Sigurd, to fulfil his destiny, has to ride on, and so comes to the realm of the Niblungs (people of Mistland), who dwell by the Rhine. Here Grimhild, mother of King Gunnar, gives him a drugged wine-cup which makes him forget Brynhild, and so he weds Gudrun, the sister of the King. He goes with Gunnar to help him to win Brynhild, who is again begirt with the wall of fire. Gunnar cannot ride through it;

¹ *The Story of the Volsungs*, Camelot Series, Walter Scott, 12.

² The differences in the names in the two stories are mainly due to the fact that in the Volsunga-saga they assume a Norse form, in the *Nibelungenlied* a German one. Thus, *Sigurd* becomes *Siegfried*; *Gunnar* becomes *Gunther*; *Hogni*, Gunnar's brother, becomes *Hagen*, Gunther's uncle; *Gudrun*, as a character, becomes *Kriemhild*, whose name, however, is taken from *Grimhild*, a very different personage from the kindly and pious mother of Kriemhild. The Hun-king, *Atli*, becomes *Etzel*; *Andvari*, the dwarf who was robbed of the Hoard, appears as *Alberich*.

so Sigurd, transformed by a spell into Gunnar's semblance, does so, and, still in his shape, lies three nights by Brynhild, but lays his sword between them. Gunnar is wedded to Brynhild, who sees at his palace Sigurd wedded to Gudrun, while Sigurd at the same time recovers memory of the past, and knows how he has been beguiled into proving false to his first love. The queens in their jealousy quarrel, and Gudrun tells Brynhild the truth about her wooing. The latter insists upon having vengeance in Sigurd's death, and he is murdered in his sleep. Brynhild, after brief exultation in her revenge, slays herself to be united in her death to the only man she has ever loved: her body is burnt with his, and together they enter Valhalla. After this, the story, though with many differences of detail, follows substantially the same broad lines as the *Nibelungenlied*, in the second marriage of Gudrun, and the great vengeance wreaked in the hall of the Hun-king.

Now this older version was a tale of a dateless past, when men lived who were near in birth to Gods, and when Gods came down to earth as freely as they do in Homer. It is suffused with a glamour of the supernatural, with a weird magnificence, both of nature and of man. Its actors are led on, or thrust on, by inevitable doom, their fates are foretold to them, and they go clear-eyed to the consummation of all. There is no pettiness about any of them, they are all moulded on the heroic scale, and the light about them is not the light of common day. But the poet of the *Nibelungenlied*, as we have it (however it may have been with the lost original form of the lay), essayed a practically impossible task, namely, to bring the essential characters of the old Saga into the scenes and social atmosphere of the twelfth century, with the supernatural elements left out. Hence he makes a different story of the early life of Siegfried, which has the effect of making his parents' fears for his safety, on his departure for Burgundy, unreasonable in the light of his past exploits. He makes a different tale of the slaying of the dragon, and of the winning of the Hoard, the amount of which he enormously exaggerates, while omitting all mention of the curse attached to it, though it does work in the poem. He has to construct a different Brynhild, and a different wooing, while he leaves unexplained Siegfried's previous acquaintance with her, and her antipathy to him from the beginning. These flaws in construction are not all; the characters also suffer. Deeds of violence and wrong, which are accepted in the old Saga much as we accept the incidents of a fairy-tale,

especially as the actors are not masters of their own fate, are now transferred to men and women who are made as amenable to our judgment as, say, our early Norman Kings, and who, moreover, live in a Christian land of minsters, monasteries and priests. Hence they cannot but lose in moral dignity; and it needs a mediaevally constituted mind to admire or respect a man simply on the score of his unflinching courage and fidelity to a cause which he has made a tainted cause. This weakness of treatment, which we may fairly say was inevitable for any poet, however great, who undertook to transfer the original story into so alien a setting, is confined to the first half of the poem, which ends with the death of Siegfried and its immediate sequel. In this first part he redeems his work from failure, and (with its inevitable limitations) makes it a triumphant success, by his charm of description, his beauty of execution, his fertility in the invention of incident, and the unfailing vivacity and energy with which it is described, and by his command of pathos and power to stir the deepest springs of sympathy. In the second part, where the poet has no longer to mutilate an old-world giant, in order to fit him to a latter-day bed of Procrustes, he treads surely and strongly, and proceeds unfalteringly to his goal, steadily rising with his theme to its magnificent climax. It is in this second part that the mythical element is largely superseded by the historical.

2. *The Historical Element.* The Siegfried myth is supposed to have taken shape as a connected story, as a sort of primitive epic, somewhere about the fifth century, among that German tribe known as the Rhine Franks, who lived between the east of Belgium and the Rhine and Moselle, Cologne being about the middle of their territory. Their next neighbours up the Rhine were another Germanic tribe, the Burgundians, dwelling in a more mountainous district, of which Worms may have been the middle point. Among these the Niblungs of the original story seem to have been located; and it is curious that in ancient Burgundian records may be found the names of three kings, Gundahar, Godomer and Gislahar, the resemblance of whose names to those in the *Lied* is sufficiently suggestive. In the year 437 A.D. this Burgundian tribe, with its king, whose name (as latinized by the chronicler) was Gundicarius, was utterly defeated and practically annihilated by an invasion of the Huns in the reign of Attila. This disaster preceded, and perhaps gave the most powerful impulse to, that general break-up of the old

Germanic settlements, and the period of stormy wanderings and wars, which lasted through nearly two hundred years, and is known as the Migration of the Peoples. The destruction of the Burgundians by Attila's host became incorporated with the story as the destruction of the Niblungs by Atli. Its locality was shifted (perhaps for the honour of the race) from a German district invaded by Huns to the capital of Hunland into which the heroes are entrapped by treachery.

The story had reached this stage of development when the northward-wandering tribes carried it to Norway, and in due course to Iceland, where it underwent much less modification than it did among those who remained, or who finally settled down, in central Europe. What changes it underwent during the wanderings of the tribes, by what influences and by what steps a legend originally heathen and tribal was modified by Christianity and feudalism, till after some six hundred years it emerges to view in something approaching its present form—of all this we have no real knowledge, and no subject of literary criticism has been more fruitful of conjecture. We may assume that it was handed down by oral tradition until, with the development of chivalry, with its natural affinity for romance and poetry, there came in the 12th and 13th centuries a great revival of interest in the old heroic literature. Its cultivation became a passion with the nobility, who followed it on two main lines, leading to the production (or revival) of epic poetry of two classes:—(1) the Court Epic, which took for its subject the romance of knight-errantry, and (2) the National Epic, which took the old popular heroic tradition, and gave it permanence in a metrical form peculiar to itself. The *Nibelungenlied* is essentially, in its subject and spirit, a national epic; but, as it was remodelled by courtier-poets, their treatment of it made it approximate in some respects very closely to the court epic, especially in what we may call the veneer of chivalrous refinement laid over the more elemental characters of the original story. Hence it bears throughout, both in characters and incidents, evidences of the influence of feudalism and chivalry, on the one hand, and of Christianity on the other.

It is curious to note how the poet, having undertaken to shape a credible, intelligible story, the actors of which have a known geographical position, out of a tale of wonders wrought in some misty land the gate to which has been lost, is sometimes confused by the consequent contradictions, and sometimes triumphantly

surmounts them. Thus, the Nibelungs are, in the first part of the story, quite distinct from the Burgundians: they seem to be a tribe of warriors dwelling by themselves on some uncharted shore. But, after the Kings have got the Nibelung Hoard into their possession, and have set out with their followers for Hunland, with a contingent of these Nibelungs in their train, we find that the names Nibelung and Burgundian have become interchangeable. For this no reason is given: the possession of the Hoard does not of itself confer its name on the owner, for that title is never applied to Siegfried, nor is it applied to the Burgundians during all the years that it remains in their hands before they set out for Hunland. The real explanation may be, that there were still extant old folk-songs, familiar to all, which gave all the information required to fill gaps in the *Nibelungenlied*, and which also gave a full account of Siegfried's early life and exploits¹, so that the poet felt himself emancipated from the necessity of "beginning at the beginning," which has been a rock steadily avoided by great epic poets from Homer downwards.

In his treatment of the supernatural, which so dominates the action of the old Saga, but which was based wholly upon that faith in the old Gods which the Christian poet not merely rejected, but ignored, he was far more successful. As Carlyle expresses it:

"Yet neither is the *Nibelungen* without its wonders; for it is poetry and not prose; here too a supernatural world encompasses the natural, and, though at rare intervals and in calm manner, reveals itself there. It is truly wonderful with what skill our simple untaught poet deals with the marvellous, admitting it without reluctance or criticism, yet precisely in the degree and shape that will best avail him. Here, if in no other respect, we should say that he has a decided superiority to Homer himself. The whole story of the *Nibelungen* is fateful, mysterious, guided on by unseen influences; yet the actual marvels are few, and done in the far distance: those Dwarfs, and Cloaks of Darkness, and charmed Treasure-caves, are heard of rather than beheld; the tidings of them seem to issue from unknown space. Vain were it to inquire where that *Nibelungen-land* specially is: its very

¹ An example of such is the *Gehörnte Siegfried* (Horn-skinned Siegfried), which did this in detail, and (in Carlyle's words) "under a rude prose dress, is to this day a real child's book and people's book among the Germans."

name is Nebel-land or Nifl-land, the land of Darkness, of Invisibility. The Nibelungen Heroes, that muster in thousands and tens of thousands, though they march to the Rhine or Danube, and we see their strong limbs and shining armour, we could almost fancy to be children of the air. Far beyond the firm horizon, that wonder-bearing region swims on the infinite waters, unseen by bodily eye, or at most discerned as a faint streak, hanging in the blue depths, uncertain whether island or cloud. And thus the Nibelungen Song, though based on the bottomless foundations of Spirit, and not unvisited of skyey messengers, is a real, rounded, habitable earth, where we find firm footing, and the wondrous and the common live amicably together. Perhaps it would be difficult to find any poet, of ancient or modern times, who in this trying problem has steered his way with greater delicacy and success."

As a drama of action and of destiny, the poem rises to real greatness. To quote Carlyle again :

"The *Nibelungen* has been called the Northern Epos ; yet it has, in great part, a dramatic character : those thirty-nine *Aventiuren* (Adventures) which it consists of, might be so many scenes in a Tragedy. The catastrophe is dimly prophesied from the beginning ; and, at every fresh step, rises more and more clearly into view. A shadow of coming Fate, as it were, a low inarticulate voice of Doom falls, from the first, out of that charmed Nibelungen-land : the discord of two women is as a little spark of evil passion, which ere long enlarges itself into a crime : foul murder is done ; and now the Sin rolls on like a devouring fire, till the guilty and the innocent are alike encircled with it, and a whole land is ashes and a whole race is swept away."

It is in the delineation of character that the poet is most embarrassed by the intractable nature of the old material which he must needs work up with the new. He had the same difficulty as Homer had in dealing with Achilles' revenge on the body of Hector, or with Odysseus' revenge on the faithless servants ; and, if he made the best of a bad case, it must be admitted that in his best there is somewhat jarring. The poem has been called the Northern Iliad, but the all-round nobility of the heroes of Homer, and, indeed, of epics generally (in intention at least), is strangely lacking in the chief Nibelungs. Hagen is a treacherous murderer of his niece's husband, whom he assassinates in expiation of an offence of which the

victim has proved himself innocent; and he is a thief who robs the same helpless woman twice. Gunther is an accomplice and an ingrate. The other champions are fully conscious of the iniquity of those whose cause they support: their merit is that which in those times covered a multitude of sins—unflinching bravery and fidelity to their cause and to each other. Hagen shows a cynical disregard of righteousness and of honesty: he faces the consequences of his sin without a tremor: his callous contempt for the hearts he tramples on is matched by his reckless defiance of the retribution which involves a nation with himself. There is no word of repentance, no hint of remorse; and it is characteristic that none of his companions reproach him amid their ruin, and that even Rüdiger, the flower of chivalry, receives him as his most honoured guest, confers on him the most distinguished tokens of regard, and sympathizes with him to the end. The author shows less consideration for Kriemhild than for him in the final catastrophe; for, while the King and the stainless heroes lament his fall, no hand is raised to stay the vengeance upon Kriemhild that swiftly follows, no word of regret is uttered over her. This recalls to our mind certain characteristics of that period: first, the supreme importance of a great warrior and leader of men, whose life is held of more account, not merely to his party, but to the world, than that of many women. Secondly, we are reminded how thin was the veneer of courtesy to women in the so-called age of chivalry. It is significant that in the Volsunga-saga, which is instinct with the old unalloyed Teutonic spirit, no man thinks of taking vengeance on a woman: they may poison, betray, or assassinate, but they are always immune from the last penalty. The third characteristic here exemplified is well set forth by Dr Arnold:

“ Philip de Comines praises his master Louis XI as one of the best of princes, though he witnessed not only the crimes of his life, but the miserable fears and suspicions of his latter end, and has even faithfully recorded them. In this respect Philip de Comines is in no respect superior to Froissart, with whom the crimes committed by his knights and great lords never interfere with his general eulogies of them: the habit of deference and respect was too strong to be broken, and the facts which he himself relates to their discredit, appear to have produced on his mind no impression” (*Lectures on Modern History*, II).

In the historical characters which he introduced, the poet probably meant to

adhere to historic truth, as he apprehended it; but we have to make large allowances for the utterly uncritical historic lore of the time, and for the probability, we might say the certainty, that some of the history was based on popular tradition, which is fruitful in confusion of personalities and in anachronisms. These characters are three:—

1. Attila, called Etzel in the *Lied*. The Atli of the Volsunga-saga much more nearly resembles the Attila of the historians of Rome and Constantinople than does Etzel. He here appears as a just and generous king, whose court is a rendezvous of foreign knights from every land, proud to enlist in his service. Not only is he no party to the treacherous entrapping of the Nibelungs, but he is utterly ignorant of it; and is only driven to countenance hostilities against them by their slaughter of his child and the intolerable insults they hurl at himself. The reason for this presentment of him may be, that Attila really was just, generous, and merciful to his own subjects, and to the large numbers of foreign mercenaries, many of them Germans, who took service under him. Some of these, on their return home, would always speak of him as a great king and a good master, whose court was magnificent; and this character of him might well persist in tradition through the generations, and be an essential part of the popular lays which formed the groundwork of the finished epic.

2. Theodoric, called in the *Lied* Dietrich of Bern, where Bern has nothing to do with Switzerland, but is the German form of Verona. The poet no doubt meant the great Theodoric the Ostrogoth, conqueror of Italy. But he (born 455 A.D.) lived a generation after Attila (died 453). Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, was indeed a contemporary of Attila, but he was an enemy, and died fighting against him in the great battle of Châlons, in 451. In Carlyle's words, "some commentators have fished out another Theodoric, eighty years prior to him of Verona, and who actually served in Attila's hosts with a retinue of Goths and Germans." If this last be really historical, or was even traditional, he might have been the original Dietrich of the old lays who in the *Lied* serves in proud independence in Attila's palace-guard. But popular tradition and the poets knew as their only Dietrich the great Theodoric, and were serenely unconscious that for him it was, on every ground, as possible to have served under Attila, as for our Alfred the Great to have served under Charlemagne.

3. Bishop Pilgrim. His introduction is a gross anachronism indeed, for he lived more than 500 years after Attila's time. He owes his inclusion, or intrusion, to the fact that he had the Saga rendered into Latin verse by his secretary, Konrad, as he heard it from the lips of bards, some two hundred years before the poem took shape as a German epic. No doubt this Latin poem was used by the composers of the epic; and, if they were conscious at all of the anachronism, it would have troubled them as little as Walter Scott was troubled by the anachronisms, of which he cheerfully makes confession, in *Ivanhoe*.

We have spoken of a "poet"; but in truth there was a long succession of them. While the names of the authors of several of those trivial romances, the Court Epics, have been carefully handed down, there is no record of the authorship of the great National Epic; and this is the more remarkable, as, during the period of the Literary Revival, successive remodellings of it by different hands were produced, each, we may presume, regarded as an improvement on its predecessor; yet no trustworthy clue survives to the name of the composer of any one of them.

The following would appear to have been the different stages through which the *Nibelungenlied*, as a distinct poem, passed:—

I. The original form, in alliterative verse. (Not extant.) If we could recover this, we might find it, both in metrical form and in literary style, more like our Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf* than the existing versions of the *Lied*.

II. The first 12th century version, cir. 1140, by an Austrian court poet (the *Kürnberg Knight* for whom Bartsch argues), in four-line stanzas, or "strophes," of iambic basis, with assonant endings. (Not extant.)

III. The second 12th century version, cir. 1170, in which rhyme was partially substituted for assonance. (Not extant.)

IV. The third 12th century versions, of two contemporaneous poets, cir. 1190—1200, in which assonances are almost entirely superseded by rhymes. Extant in several MSS. which fall under two heads:—

i. MS. A. The Munich manuscript, of which only one single copy exists; this perhaps represents the poem just as this *rédacteur* left it. It is based on a good and ancient original, but is very carelessly written, and omits (apparently through oversight) a number of strophes. This, the shortest version, was adopted by Lachmann as the basis of his edition.

2. MS. B. The St Gall manuscript. This represents the text as modified by later hands in the 13th and 14th centuries. Of this there are numerous copies. It was adopted by Bartsch as the basis of his edition.

V. MS. C. The fourth 12th century version, of about the same date as the preceding. It presents the same metrical characteristics, but aims

1. In its matter, at reconciling contradictions and inconsistencies in the original Saga ;

2. At establishing a connexion between the *Lied* and *Lament for the Nibelungs* (a poetically inferior continuation), which it does by a reference in the concluding strophe, and more especially by the insertion of a series of strophes at various points in the text, the tendency of which is to excite and maintain sympathy with Kriemhild, and to present her in the light of a righteous avenger. The author also, in the last line of the poem, changes the title from the original *Nibelungen-nôt* to *Nibelungen-lied*. Extant in the Donaueschingen manuscript, the additional strophes of which are included in Simrock's modern German version.

The poem, after the Revival of Learning, suffered the same eclipse through the fascination and superior literary finish of classical literature, as did the *Chanson de Roland* in France. Its rescue from oblivion dates from the year 1757, when the first imperfect edition of it was published from an old manuscript by Prof. Bodmer. The labours of later scholars and critics produced more and more perfect editions ; and the interest of the German public in it was gradually awakened, till it grew to an enthusiasm for what was at last recognised as a great national epic. It was not only a subject for patriotic pride, but, from its memories of old-time greatness, from its heroic spirit, and, from that soul of loyalty to fatherland and king which pervades it, and which is a fundamental trait of the German character, it became an inspiration to great effort and noble sacrifice, coming just at the time when these were pre-eminently called for. It was when the old spirit of freedom awoke with tenfold strength, and all Germany rose as one man against the Titanic tyranny of Napoleon, that this book became for Germans what the *Iliad* was for Greeks. It helped to fan patriotism into a flame of heroism ; it was a voice crying from the past, a great battle-call that blended with the voices of such soldier-singers as Körner. In the year of Waterloo a cheap edition for the use of soldiers

was issued—which reminds us of the claim Aeschylus (in Aristophanes' *Frogs*) puts forth for his two dramas of war, that they made every spectator long to be a warrior, and nerved him to resolve to conquer or die. And the national instinct which then recognised and claimed for its own that spirit of loyalty to king and country, through evil report and good report, which takes for its watchword, "My country!—may she always be in the right; but my country, right or wrong!" is fundamentally sound. It recognises that he who sets up his private conscience against that of his country in the hour of her need, must himself beware lest he make himself a traitor in sinning against those to whom he owes the greatest earthly debt a man can owe. It recognises that a man may be committing a far deeper wrong by refusing to help his country in a cause in which he thinks he detects some flaw, still more by striving with word or pen to paralyse the efforts of those who are fighting for her, than if he fought in a cause of which his conscience disapproves. Hence United Germany has been no congenial foster-mother for "the friends of every country save their own"; and her scholars are not wrong in claiming for their great epic its share in thus moulding the patriotic conscience.

This translation is based on the text of Bartsch (edit. 1886), but the strophes of MS. C have been incorporated with it, so that it thus corresponds with the widely read modern German version of Simrock. For the English reader it may be explained that a marginal C denotes that the four lines which follow are taken from that source, and he will note that their ethical tendency is designed to be cumulative, to excite and maintain sympathy for the murdered hero and his widow, and to supply what justification can be found for her revenge. They appeal to the modern reader's sense of justice, and are in themselves poetically not unworthy of being included, as they often elaborate a picturesque or stirring scene, and add touches of beauty, tenderness, or pathos which we could not wish away.

The metre adopted is that on which William Morris fixed, with true poetic instinct, for his *Story of Sigurd*, the great sister-poem to the *Nibelungenlied*, from which, indeed, he really seems to have taken it, as it preserves the "ringing caesura" of that original, and, accentually, the same measure. It is not in essentials different from that of the Middle High German text, for the basis of that is accentual and not numerical, though other translators have thought that it was

best reproduced by rigidly adhering to an iambic structure. This, in a long poem, is apt to have a somewhat heavy, monotonous effect, whereas the anapaestic-iambic measure not only secures something of the lightness of the movement of the original, but has for English readers a variety, freedom and swiftness, a "lilt," which has made it of late years widely popular.

The old division into "strophes" has been discarded. It has always seemed to me a literary offence so to print an epic as to convey the suggestion that it is but a long ballad. I cannot help thinking that this device was one adopted for convenience' sake by the mediaeval reciters or chanters of the *Lied*, as was the gap in the line after the caesura, to mark artificially the cadence of the line. These, however, have a somewhat pedantic, formal, and so irritating effect on the modern reader who wants to enter into the spirit of an epic. The literary argument against the division into strophes is well stated by Bartsch: "I do not think that, fine as the Nibelungen strophe is in itself, and admirably as it lends itself to lyric treatment, its employment for the epic was a happy inspiration. A division into regular strophes is altogether antagonistic to the Epic: the even flow of the epic narrative does indeed require pauses, not, however, at prescribed, but at free intervals. And this principle we see invariably adhered to wherever a true epic has developed itself, in India, in Greece, in France."

In dropping the strophic arrangement, I have of course dropped the extra two syllables which lengthened the fourth line of each strophe. I incline to think that their presence is another indication that the *Lied* was originally intended, not for reading, but for chanting or recitative, like the older lays on which it was founded. It is a common device of singers thus to lengthen the last line of a verse; it helps to the satisfaction of the ear: but the effect is quite different in reading. As a reviewer in the *Athenæum* says: "No doubt it is theoretically proper to follow the original form with absolute fidelity, but unfortunately the line in English, or even, for that matter, in Modern German, is very different from the line in Middle High German. It drags grievously, and though it breaks the monotony to a certain extent, and occasionally produces a fine effect, yet more often it is merely irritating." The adoption of the principle laid down by the only English translator who has preserved this peculiarity, that "the very essence of a poem is its exact metrical quality," would at once condemn all translations of

Homer and Virgil into blank or heroic verse, or indeed, into anything but English hexameters, and all translations of the classical drama into anything but trimeter iambs and unrhymed choruses in the impossible metres of the originals—a theory which surely needs only to be stated to expose its untenability. The essence of a poem lies in its spirit more than its formal structure; and whatever jars on the reader, and puts a drag on the swift and easy movement of the verse, so far interferes with his entering into the spirit of that poem.

A. S. W.

October, 1911.

THE LAY OF THE NIBELUNG MEN

I

OF KRIEMHILD, AND OF HER DREAM

Many a marvellous story have the ancient singers told
Of heroes and their glory and their travail manifold,
Of great feasts splendour-flashing that with weeping and wailing ended,
Of the thunder of war-waves clashing—in the Lay shall ye hear all blended.

In the Land Burgundian nurtured was a maiden princely of birth ;
Though ye searched, ye should find none fairer to the uttermost ends of the earth ;
And her name far-sung was Kriemhild, she was sweeter than speech may tell.
Ah, many a valiant champion in battle for her sake fell !
There was no man whose pride had warded his breast against love's dart
Shot from the eyes victorious, from the snare of many a heart :
She was lovely beyond all measure that speech or thought may find,
Yea, queenly withal and gracious, a glory of womankind.

Three high-born Kings and wealthy guarded and held her dear ;
Gunther and Gernot, heroes in prowess without a peer,
And Giselher the youngest, unmatched in foughten field :
Their sister was she and their glory, and her sword were they and her shield.
Lords were they of noble lineage, and of courtesy the crown,
And their aweless might was matchless, and limitless their renown ;
And over the Land Burgundian they stretched the sceptred hand,
Ere the strange, grim end of their story was told in Etzel's land.

In the City of Worms by the Rhine-flood these Kings in their might abode,
And the best in the whole land served them, the proudest knights that rode,
With glory of homage served them through their life's triumphant tide—
Till the day when in woeful battle through the Feud of the Queens they died.
And the mother that bare them was Uta, and the treasures of queens were hers,
And their father the old king Dankart, and he made them heritors
Of his realm in the hour of his dying, a champion mighty of old,
Who in days of his youth reaped harvest of glory manifold.

As the tale of their goodlihead telleth, such kings were they, these three,
Strong, fearless lords; and the vassals that bent before them the knee
Were the best of all of whose doings their songs have the minstrels made,
Stalwart and aweless of spirit, in battle unafraid.

For these were Hagen of Troneg, and Dankwart his brother withal
The battle-eager, and Ortwein the warder of Metz's wall;
And with these stood Gere and Eckwart, lords of the marches twain,
And Volker the Knight Alsatian, the name without a stain;
And Rumold the feast-arrayer, a worship-worthy lord;
Sindold and Hunold, which ever kept heedful watch and ward
For the state of the palace royal, that all should be ordered well;
And with these were there knightly vassals whose tale no bard may tell.
Dankwart was their palace-marshal, and beside the feastful board
Waited his nephew Ortwein, of Metz was he overlord;
And Sindold bare them the wine-cup, a goodly baron he;
And Hunold was chamberlain, perfect in utterest courtesy.
But of all their palace-splendour, and their might renowned afar,
And the majesty of their worship, and their knightly deeds of war,
And the joy that the kingly heroes therein had all their days—
No minstrel hath wholly told it, no harp sung all their praise.

Now it fell, in the midst of their glory, that a dream unto Kriemhild appeared:
A strong, fair, tameless falcon in a bower of dreams she reared.
But before her eyes two eagles swooped upon him and slew—
Never a bitterer sorrow the heart of the maiden knew!

So she told to her mother the vision; but from Lady Uta's eyes
Was it hid, that she could not interpret the dream save in halting wise:
"The falcon reared in thy dream-bower, a princely husband is this—
Now God from evil defend him, else swift dark doom shall be his!"
"What is this that thou talkest of husbands, heart's dearest, mother, to me?
In the net of love untangled will I for ever be.
Unto my death in the beauty of maidenhood I will abide,
That I taste not the manifold sorrows that from love of man betide."
But she answered: "Not wholly renounce it, for thy vow hath been spoken amiss:
For if ever on earth thou knowest a heart full-brimmed with bliss,
Of the love of a man shall this come; and a fair and happy bride
Shalt thou be, if a noble baron by God's grace stand by thy side."
"Let be, let be vain talking, heart's dearest, mother mine.
In many a wife's repentance have I read the warning sign,
How love hath sorrow for guerdon when the end of its journey is won:—
I will none of love nor of sorrow, I abide in my bliss alone."

So Kriemhild in pride of her spirit was a rebel to Lord Love's sway;
And her heart-peace flowed as a river through many a sunlit day;
And she looked upon earls and champions, but none might the heart of her move:
Yet her hour drew near, and the breaking of the glory-dawn of love.
For in flight even now was the Falcon, the fulfilment drew nigh and nigher
Of the dream half read of her mother—but woe for the vengeance-hire
That she paid to the eagles that slew him, her own blood-brethren they!
Woe for the sons of women untold whom his death should slay!

II

OF THE FOSTERING AND THE KNIGHTING OF SIEGFRIED

Now grew unto man in the Low Land the child of a line world-famed.
For Siegmund the King begat him, his mother was Siegelind named,
In a tower-engirdled stronghold renowned through the earth afar,
Where the Rhine and the sea meet: Xanten men named that burg of war.

Now telleth the tale of a hero, how fair and stately he grew,
How the shield of his heart was honour, nor taint of shame he knew,
How shone the star of his glory, how strong was that fearless lord:—
Ho for the harvest of honour that earth's field gave to his sword!
And his far-sung name was Siegfried, the name of a noble Knight;
And he proved in his strength great-hearted full many a champion's might,
And through many a strange land cleft he a path by his own right hand:—
Ho for the fiery warriors he found in Burgundia-land!

c Or ever this valiant champion to man was fully grown,
By deeds of such marvellous prowess had the might of his hands been shown
That the minstrel's voice and the harpstrings rang ever with his praise:
Not a tithe thereof is remembered in these the latter days.
But the noontide of his glory, but the spring of his goodlihead—
How marvelled the world at his story, what things were of Siegfried said,
How bloomed as a bower his honour, how goodly he was to behold,
How dreamed of his love fair women, how their eyes the heart's dream told!
As beseems that a hero be fostered was he nurtured with diligent heed;
But his own heart still was a wellspring of faith and of knightly deed,
That by him was the land of his father as with gold of a diadem crowned,
For in all the deeds of kingfolk all-kingly was he found.
And by this so great was he waxen that to halls of kings must he fare:
Glad-faced did the earls look on him, and dame and damsel there
Sore longed to behold him wending thitherward evermore,
And their eyes unto his shone welcome, and he knew the love they bore.
Ever that child of princes rode girt by a henchman-ring,
And in lovely-woven raiment of his mother's fashioning;
And the wise and the lessoned in honour must teach him their lore, as one
For whom there waited a kingdom and a nation's heart to be won.
So waxed he to strength of manhood, till sword and shield he swayed,
And in goodliest harness of battle were his mighty limbs arrayed.
Then his thoughts after fair dream-faces of maids flew questing wide—
And O for the bliss and the honour of her that should be his bride!

Then sent King Siegmund the bidding-word to his vassals all,
And to all friends loyal-hearted, for a high-tide festival;
And the tale thereof into kingdoms of other lords they bare
With gifts for the friend and the stranger, even steeds and raiment fair.
Wheresoever a strong young warrior high-born longed sore for the day
That should bring to him knighthood's golden spurs, all such bade they
To come to the land of Siegmund, to Siegfried's festal tide,
To be girt with the sword of knighthood, standing by Siegfried's side.
Long shall men sing of the wonder of that crown of festal days,
How Siegmund and Siegelind won them the treasure-giver's praise
For the gifts of cost uncounted that they gave with stintless hand,
How the rumour thereof drew strangers from afar into Siegmund's land.
Came thither squires four hundred in knighthood's vesture to be
Arrayed with the young prince Siegfried; and maidens comely to see
Sat fashioning goodly raiment, and their love with the threads was enwound,
As they laid the priceless gemstones thereon with the gold set round,
As their broidery-work on the robe-hems gleamed fair in coil on coil
For the strong young knights high-hearted—they were worthy the love-spel toil.

And the King bade dight the high-seats for the guests, for the thanes of pride,
At the feast of the knighting of Siegfried in the heart of the summer-tide.
Then fared they on to the minster, young squires of high degree
And noble knights full many; and in proud humility
Did the elder serve the younger, by the law that from old time came.
On their lips was mirth and laughter, in their eyes the hope of fame.
When they chanted the Mass to the honour of God in the highest height,
The mighty throngs surged inward to gaze on that gallant sight,
When after the ancient custom those squires with spur and brand
Were arrayed, and with honour never since seen in any land.
Then hasted they where harnessed were the steeds abiding their lords:
Then rose in the lists of Siegmund the clash of spears and swords:
Then the halls of the palace re-echoed, as in joyous combat they crashed,
When the mighty-hearted champions forth to the onset flashed.

From old knight and young warrior the clash and the clang rose high:
The splintered spear-shafts flying leapt up to the laughing sky,
The shards of the lances upsoaring to the roof of the palace-hall.
And the earls and the high-born ladies sat throned beholding all.
Then the King bade stay the combat, and they led the war-steeds thence,
From the field wide-strewn with the strong shields, the brave heart's rifted fence,
Strewn with the costly gemstones wherewith was the grass bestarred
From the glittering shield-bands fallen in the grapple bitter-hard.
Then sat those guests in the feast-hall in their own ordained high-seats;
And the war-toil's ache was banished like a dream by the goodly meats
And the wines of noble vintage that flowed as a fountain free.
There homeland guest and stranger had honour plenteously.
In gentle sports and joyous had they worn the long day out;
And now the song of the minstrels through the feast-hall went about;
And their singing had goodly guerdon of the ever-bounteous hand,
And their praise was a crown of glory upon all King Siegmund's land.
Then the King bade Siegfried deliver in fee to his vassals true
Broad lands and stately castles, as himself had been wont to do.
And he gave with hand ungrudging to his fellows of the sword,
That their hearts were glad for his presence, for their coming thitherward.

So the feast sped on and the mirth-tide, till they saw the seventh sun rise;
And all in the olden fashion did the Queen give gifts of price;
Red gold for the love of Siegfried, and in Siegfried's name she gave,
That to him as the giver of bounty the hearts of all men clave.
Not a wandering bard thereafter in need in the land abode:
Steeds, raiment on these were showered as though with gifts it snowed,
As though there should come no morrow, and men's lives lack nothing more:
Never were palace-stewards that lavished so of their store.
So filled with the winning of honour that feast-tide fled by,
That whiles one heard the earl-folk each unto other cry:
"Well were we if but Prince Siegfried in his father's stead were our lord!"
But a grief unto him was their longing, and his true heart loathed the word.

While endured the days of Siegmund and Siegelind, their son
Siegfried, the loved and the loving, would in no wise sit on the throne.
But he yearned in his fearless spirit to break the oppressor's yoke,
And to rid of the fear of the spoiler the hearth of the lowly folk.
c No man might make him a mocking: since first the sword he drew,
The praise of the brave was his lodestar; but little rest he knew:
Ever he wooed war-perils, and his battle-triumphant hand
Bare the banner of his glory through many a far-off land.

III

HOW SIEGFRIED RODE TO THE CITY OF WORMS

Not often the heart of the hero had ache or sorrow known,
Till the tidings came of a fair-one on a wind of rumour blown.
Fair past all heart's desiring was the Star of Burgundy—
She was doomed to be joy and anguish unto him in the days to be!
With the fame of her glorious beauty there flew forth far and wide
The tale of the queenly spirit, of the heart of tameless pride;
And the souls of princely champions were set on fire of the word,
That from lands afar to the guest-hall of Gunther the King they spurred.
But for all the love of the wooers, and their burning words thereof,
No whit were Kriemhild's heart-strings once swept by the finger of love,
That she deigned to take of them any for the love of her life and her king.
In a strange land yet was her Falcon with the victory in his wing.

When borne down love's dream-river was the heart of Siegelind's son,
As an idle wind was the wooing of all save him alone.
Above all men was Siegfried worthy the chosen of women to wed:—
Now soon to the fair shall the fearless by the hand of love be led.
Then his friends took thought for Siegfried, and the wise in council met,
When they knew the heart of the hero on the love of woman set.

"Seek her for thy bride," they counselled, "whose birth shall shame not thee."
Answered the prince: "None other than Kriemhild this shall be!
Lo, she is a great king's daughter, and the Star of Burgundia she is,
And she is the Queen of Beauty, and my heart knoweth certainly this—
Never Kaiser nor King is so mighty, but, if he would choose him a bride,
Kriemhild, the glory of women, for him were a crown of pride."

Then was told the tale of his purpose unto Siegmund the ancient King,
For his people brought him the tidings, and so was he ware of the thing
Whereunto was his son's mind steadfast; and the King was sore afraid
For the peril of Siegfried's wooing of the haughty-hearted maid.
Yea also the selfsame rumour did the lady Siegelind hear;
And her heart was exceeding heavy with a burden of sorrow and fear;
For she wotted how grim was Gunther and the earls of his war-array:
And they laboured to turn Prince Siegfried from the perilous quest away.
Then answered the aweless Siegfried: "Heart's dearest, father mine,
Never to love of woman shall the soul of me incline,
Except I may woo untrammelled where love leads forth mine heart!"
And never, for all their pleading, would he from the word depart.
"If thus thou abide unshaken," the King made answer again,
"Know thou, of thine high-wrought purpose my soul is exceeding fain;
And with heart and hand will I aid thee to the uttermost of my might.
Yet mid King Gunther's vassals is many a haughty knight:
Yea, had he none other than Hagen the stalwart to stand at his side,
That champion is so uplifted with overweening pride,
That I fear, I fear me sorely lest his malice bring us to bane
If we woo that high-born maiden, the Lady of Disdain."
"Shall the pride of the haughty thwart us?" hot-hearted Siegfried cried.
"If they mock at the speech of friendship, if I be with scorn denied,
Then will I do my wooing with the strength of mine own right hand;
Yea, I will wrest from the proud ones their vassals and their land!"
Then answered and spake King Siegmund: "Woe's me for this word of thine!
For if haply this thy defiance should be told by the waters of Rhine,

Never couldst thou thereafter to the land of Gunther ride;—
Long time have I known them, Gunther and Gernot, the children of pride.
By violence may no man win her, that the maiden should stoop to his love,"
Spake Siegmund the King, "assurance most utter have I thereof.
Yet if thou with a host of warriors wouldst thitherward spur the steed,
Lo, all our battle-helpers shall with thee into Rhineland speed."
"Now nay, it shall nowise please me," the son of Siegmund said,
"That a host of knights into Rhineland by my banner should be led
Arrayed in the ranks of battle; for my sorrow should it be
To constrain that daughter of princes to yield her love unto me.
I will woo her alone, unholpen of aught but mine own right hand:
With none save with twelve companions will I unto Gunther's land.
Thus far and no further, my father, mine emprise shall ye aid,
That my knights be in bright-hued vesture and grey furs costly arrayed."

Unto Siegelind his mother were the tidings borne anon,
And the queen brake forth into weeping for her well-beloved son:
"If he meet the hosts of Gunther, he is lost unto me!" she said.
Then wept that daughter of princes as women weep for the dead.
But Siegfried the knight beheld her weeping, and came to her side
With speech of loving comfort, and blithe of heart he cried:
"Nought hast thou to do with weeping, dear lady and queen, for my sake.
Though a host should arise against me, mine heart should in no wise quake.
Nay, help me thou on my journey when to Burgundy I fare,
And for me and my war-fellows fashion such goodly raiment to wear
As shall be for the praise and the honour of knights so gallant as they;
And so shall mine heart go singing its thanks unto thee alway."
"If in sooth thou abidest unshaken," the lady Siegelind said,
"Then, O my child, my beloved, of me shall thy journey be sped;
For the costliest raiment and fairest that ever good knight wore
Shall ye have, even thou and thy war-thanes, an exceeding plenteous store."
Then lowly in thanks he bent him, Siegfried the fair and young;
And he spake: "For my journeying-fellows shall I take no mighty throng,

But only twelve of my champions: make ready their raiment thou;—
I am longing to learn, O mother, how fares it with Kriemhild now.”

Then nightlong, daylong toiling sat ladies lovely-eyed:
Was none that for rest or for pastime would lay her labour aside
Till the fingers of love had fashioned all Siegfried's goodly gear:
For his heart was set on the journey, none other rede would he hear.
And his father bade make ready for the prince his knightly array
Wherein he should go forth riding from Siegmund's land away;
And the warriors' glittering hauberks withal were ready dight,
And their strong-knit helms and their war-shields broad and gleaming bright.

Now by this was the hour of their faring unto Burgundy drawn full near;
And the hearts of man and woman were heavy with boding fear
Lest never the cherished faces should be seen in the land again.
And they bade lade armour and raiment on the beasts of the sumpter-train.
Goodly to see were the horses in their trappings of ruddy gold.
Long should ye search and vainly more gallant sight to behold
Than Siegfried the knight and the warrior-henchmen ranged at his side.
Now for nought but the parting-blessing his feet for a space abide.
And the King and the Queen there mingled their blessing with many a tear;
But he spake to them words of comfort, and cried with loving cheer:
“Nought have ye to do with weeping for my peril in any strife:
Banish for aye foreboding as touching Siegfried's life!”
Yet the earls were heavy-hearted, the maidens' tears ran free;
Yea, the fear on their souls lay darkly that yet in the days to be
For the dear ones unreturning they should sorrow with hearts bowed low:—
Ah me, for their lamentation at the last was there cause enow!

So it fell on the seventh morning that to Worms by the Rhine-river shore
Those fearless knights came riding. What raiment soever they wore
Was all with the red gold broidered, and the harness glinted and shone
As their steeds went softly pacing as they followed Siegfried on.

New-wrought were the knights' broad bucklers, bright without fleck or stain,
And their helms were a flashing splendour, as rode that gallant train
After the aweless Siegfried through the heart of Burgundia-land;
Never therein did heroes so goodly-apparelled stand.
Low as the spurs all-golden their mighty sword-points hung;
Sharp battle-spears those champions in their strong hands lightly swung.
Of two full spans was the blue blade of the lance that Siegfried bare;
Keen were the long cold edges, and the lightning of death slept there.
Starred reins all gold-embroidered swung light in the rider's hand,
And the steeds' breast-bands were silken: so rode they through the land;
And with parted lips of wonder around them all folk pressed.

Then Gunther's palace-marshals sped forth to meet the guest.
They ran, the earls high-hearted; they hasted, henchman and knight,
Toward these of the lordly presence, even as was meet and right;
And they gave those guests fair greeting unto their liege-lord's land;
And they grasped the good steed's bridle, and would take the shield from the hand.
And they made as to lead the horses to the, crib and the stall for their rest:
Then stayed them the voice of Siegfried, that dauntless warrior-guest:
"Let be the steeds; for a season still harnessed shall they stand,
For yet am I girt for the journey, and I ride full soon from your land.
Now if any man certainly knoweth, let him nowise hide the thing,
For this would I have one tell me, where may I light on your King,
Even Gunther the treasure-wealthy, Burgundia's mighty lord."
Then one that thereof well wotted spake out the answering word:
"If ye fain would behold that war-king, the wish may be lightly won.
In the wide fair hall of his palace I marked him a little ago
Begirt with his hero-vassals: thither to him go ye.
There many a noble warrior beside him shall ye see."

But by this within his palace had the tale to the King been told
How there waited without by the gateway strange warriors aweless-bold
All-armed in sunbright hauberks and in royal-rich array,
Whose names and whose kindred no man in Burgundy might say.

Thereat was the King astonished, and he marvelled whence they came,
These lordly knights from whose raiment so shone the splendour-flame,
These wielders of goodly bucklers, broad shields and stainless-fair:
Yea, it misliked him that no man could say what folk they were.
Then to the King made answer Ortwein, Metz's lord—
Stalwart he was, and a dauntless wielder of spear and sword:
"Forasmuch as in no wise we know them, bid one bring hither to thee
Mine uncle, even Hagen: let him look on their company.
Known unto him are kingdoms and strange lands far and wide.
Of him, if he know yon chieftains, shall we surely be certified."

Then the King bade bring that baron and his knightly train therewithal.
Full soon was his lordly presence beheld in Gunther's hall.
"For what cause," then spake Hagen, "am I hitherward called of the King?"
"Lo, yonder unknown heroes to mine halls come journeying;
And no man knoweth to name them. Hast thou haply far away
In a strange land looked on their faces? I pray thee, Hagen, say."
"That will I," made answer Hagen. To the casement straight did he go,
And his glance like the swoop of an eagle flashed o'er those guests below.
With the warrior's joy their war-gear and their goodly array he scanned;
Howbeit their faces he knew not: they were strangers in the land.
And he spake: "Whencesoever the warriors to Rhineflood hitherward fare,
Princes are they of a surety, or a message of princes they bear,
So goodly are their war-steeds, so royal is their array.
Sooth, whencesoe'er they have ridden, great-hearted heroes be they."
Then a little pondered Hagen, and he spake: "It is sooth to say,
Upon Siegfried's bodily presence have I looked not unto this day:
Yet indeed and in truth meseemeth, howsoever the thing may be,
That the knight who yonder beareth so princely a port, is he.
Great tales shall be told, if it be so, of his coming to this our land.
The lion-hearted Niblungs were slain by the hero's hand,
Schilbung and Nibelung, scions of the King of the Golden Hoard;—
Marvels he wrought against them when his strong arm swung the sword!

For it chanced, when the hero was riding alone with no helpers near,
That he found by a misty mountain, as the tale hath been told in mine ear,
Enringing the Hoard of King Niblung a throng of fierce-eyed men:
He had seen not those strange faces till he lighted on them then.
There lay King Niblung's Gold-hoard, haled forth from the dark abyss
Of the rifted heart of the mountain—a strange, wild tale is this
How the Niblung men were wrangling o'er the treasure's portioning!
So came Knight Siegfried upon them, and he marvelled at that strange thing.
So nigh he drew unhindered that he saw each battle-lord,
And on him looked they: to his fellow a prince spake straightway the
word:

'Lo, here cometh Siegfried the stalwart, the Low Land's hero renowned!—
Good sooth, a weird adventure mid the Niblung men he found!
Then Schilbung and Nibelung greeted the hero with courteous speech;
And now do the high-born princes that stranger knight beseech
That himself would consent between them that mighty treasure to share;
And they hung so sore upon him that he yielded at last to their prayer.
Such wealth of precious gemstones he beheld, as telleth the tale,
That fivescore wains had sufficed not that treasure thence to hale:
There were heaps yet huger of red gold, the wealth of the Niblung land;
And all that hoard must be portioned by the aweless Siegfried's hand.
And for hire did they give to the hero King Niblung's dwarf-wrought sword—
But, ere all was done, for their guerdon they won them an evil reward;
Yea, enforced was Siegfried to deal them therewith great slaughter and grim;
For his sharing might nowise content them, and they turned their fury on him.
c So there in the midst that treasure yet all unportioned lay;
And fell on the hero the war-thanes of either king's array.
But he thrust and he hewed with Balmung, their sire's enchanted sword,
Nor stayed, till his might had wrested from the Niblung men the Hoard.
Twelve fearful battle-helpers 'gainst that lone warrior fought,
Strong men, and in stature giants; but their might availed them nought,
For the hand of Siegfried smote them in his fury of battle-just.
Seven hundred knights of the Niblung land he laid in the dust

With the Sword, the good sword Balmung of the world-renowned name.
And the heart of many a champion for terror as water became,
Quelled by the lightning-flasher and its lord's undaunted mood.
Yea, the Niblung land and her castles were under his might subdued.
Yea, those two kings in the battle he met, and he smote them dead ;
Yet himself through the might of Albrich the Dwarf was sorely bestead ;
For the vassal dwarf burned fiercely to avenge his liege-lords slain,
Till quelled by the might of Siegfried his purpose he needs must refrain.
That demon-dwarf all vainly strove with the hero's might :
Like the grapple of raging lions round the mountain stormed their fight,
Till the Hood of Darkness was yielded by Albrich to this new lord,
And Siegfried the Terrible master was left of the Niblung Hoard,
For all which had dared to withstand him on that stricken field lay slain.
Then bade he bear that treasure to the mountain-fastness again
Whence the Niblung vassals had haled it forth as the dead kings bade ;
And the warder of the treasure strong Alberich he made.
By an oath most mighty he bound him his thrall, to be faithful and true,
And ever in loyal service his uttermost bidding to do."

So ended Hagen of Troneg—" All this hath the hero done :
Through the world in battle-prowess peer unto him is there none.
Men tell of another emprise—as I heard it, I tell it to you—
A Worm, a winged fen-dragon, the hand of the hero slew :
Then he bathed in the blood of the monster, and his skin became as horn,
That no weapon may wound him : witness thereof full many have borne.
Now wisely and well do I rede you—receive him in courteous wise,
That the fiery wrath of the hero by no deed of ours may arise.
Since utterly aweless his heart is, let no man do him despite.
Bethink you how many a marvel hath been wrought by his quenchless might."
And the King of the land made answer : " Thy counsel is meet and right.
Mark ye how proudly he standeth, as defying peril of fight !
Dauntless they be, yon warrior and the vassals that follow him.
We will fare down unto the gateway, and greet yon champion grim."

"Yea, greet him with worship and honour," spake Hagen answering;
"For he cometh of noble lineage, and is son of a mighty king;
And his port, meseemeth, is princely—yea, by Christ the Lord!
Great tales shall be told of the issues of his riding hitherward."

Then the lord of the land made answer: "Right welcome to us be he!
Valiant he is and noble, as well may mine own eyes see.
Yea, Burgundy-land shall hold him for a guest of passing worth."
Unto where Prince Siegfried tarried then Gunther the King passed forth.
And the lord of the land and his earlfolk bade the hero welcome there
With greeting exceeding gracious, with courtesy passing fair;
And before them the Knight all-peerless bowed him in courtly wise
In thanks for their lovingkindness, and the worship in their eyes.
Spake Gunther the king: "I marvel, and fain would be certified,
Whence, O most noble Siegfried, unto this our land ye ride,
And what thing come ye seeking at Worms by the waters of Rhine."
And the guest to the King made answer: "I hide no purpose of mine.
Afar in the land of my fathers the tidings have I heard
How that here, O King, in thy palace—and fain would I prove the word—
Be the knights in the world most valiant—yea, oft have I hearkened their fame—
And the best that king gat ever: and for this cause hither I came.
Yea, and I hear men praise thee for the Star of Chivalry.
'Never was king so valiant unto this day seen,' they cry.
Through all my land thy glory is blown upon rumour's wind.
No rest may my spirit give me till the truth hereof I find.
Lo, I withal am a warrior; a crown must I wear one day;
And fain am I that all men of me in that hour should say
That I take the folk and the kingdom of right for mine heritage.
Lo, mine head and mine honour, I lay them in the lists for battle's gage.
Thou then, if thou be so valiant as is sung by the lips of fame—
I ask no man of my challenge, if he joy or chafe at the same—
I challenge thee here, do battle for all thou accountest thine!
Thy land and thy castles, I claim them for spoil of this sword of mine!"

Then the King was exceeding astonished, amazed did the earl-folk stand,
As they hearkened to that strange challenge, to the champion's haughty demand,
As he claimed for his victory-guerdon the people and land of their lord;
And as flame burst forth their anger to hear that arrogant word.
"Nay, how should it be for mine honour," answered the King thereto,
"If I staked the realm that my father ruled nobly his whole life through
On a combat's issue, to lose it or hold it by bodily might?
Sooth, this were a sorry maintaining of the name and the fame of a knight!"
"Nay, nought I abate of my challenge," that aweless champion cried;
"If the peace of thy land safe warded by the strength of thine arm abide,
Now from thy grasp will I wrest it; and mine heritage withal,
If thou win it by battle-prowess, shall be held of thee in thrall.
Let thou and I stake straightway our land and throne and crown;
And whichsoever in combat shall strike the other down,
Unto him shall all be subject, the lands of twain and the folk."
Then against it Hagen the mighty and Gernot the valiant spoke.
"Of a surety not so are we minded," spake Gernot proudly and high,
"That for winning of new possessions should any good knights die
In the strife of warring heroes: lo, fair our heritage is,
And of right is it ours; and no man hath claim more righteous to this."

In burning indignation there stood they, the friends of the King;
And the Lord of Metz, Knight Ortwein, stepped forth from the warrior-ring,
Crying, "Out upon these soft answers! My very heart have they wrung!
Lo, a causeless challenge Siegfried the strong at you all hath flung!
Though thou and thy brothers before him were standing with none to aid,
Though he brought a kingdom's army against thee, my King, arrayed,
Yet would I maintain, I only, thy right against yon foe:
I would still his malapert vaunting, I would bring his high heart low!"
Outflamed the wrath of the hero, the lord of the Nether Land:
"Not against me may be measured the might of thy low-born hand!
I am the heir to a kingdom, a king's mere vassal thou;
Yet twelve such as thou should vainly withstand me in battle, I trow!"

Then the Lord of Metz, Knight Ortwein, cried hotly, "Bring me a sword!"—
 True son was he of the sister of Hagen Troneg's lord!—
 Sore vexed was the King that Hagen so long should silent stand.
 Then for peace yet again spake Gernot, bold-hearted and ready of hand:
 "Now nay, rein in thine anger"—with Ortwein so did he plead—
 "Not yet hath the noble Siegfried done us any despiteful deed.
 For kindness and reconciling still all my counsel is,
 And for winning of his friendship: yea, more for our honour were this."

At the last spake Hagen the stalwart: "There were reason enow for our
 wrath

And the good knights' indignation, if he rode on the Rhineward path
 For nought but for this defiance—what ailed him to do this thing?
 Never so evil-entreated had he been of our lord the King."
 Then Siegfried the mighty hero flashed out all scornfully:
 "If that I have said, Lord Hagen, in aught misliketh thee,
 I will let it be seen of all men how ready is this mine hand
 To maintain my words to the utmost in the face of Burgundia-land."
 "Nay, this thing, I trust, shall I hinder," spake Gernot yet again;
 And he gave command to be silent unto all his mighty men,
 Howsoever they chafed, from saying one word that should chafe their guest.
 Mid the hush flew a peace-dove, a vision of Kriemhild, to Siegfried's breast.

"For what cause should we battle against thee?" yet again did Gernot cry:
 "Yea, though a host of the good knights in the grapple of fight should die,
 Small honour were ours, small profit were thine, of such strife unmeet!"
 Yet again did the son of Siegmund, Siegfried, his challenge repeat:
 "Why linger they, Hagen and Ortwein?—why hang they yet aback,
 They and their friends, their champions, from the storm of the battle-wrack?
 And of all Burgundia's chosen is none to the combat stirred?"
 But they heeded Gernot's counsel, and they answered him not a word.
 "Our guest shalt thou be full welcome," the young lad Giselher cried,
 "Thou and thy valiant champions which wait hereby at thy side.

We will joyfully do thee service, even all these friends of mine."

Then they cried to the cupbearers, "Pour ye for the guests of King Gunther the wine!"

Spake the lord of the land yet further, "Lo, all that was ours hitherto, Is yours, so in honour ye ask it; we will hold back nought from you. Yea, ye shall with us be partners in our goods and our very blood!" Then soft grew the eyes of Siegfried, and melted his angry mood.

Then they took from the warriors their war-gear, and heedfully laid it by; And they sought for them stately chambers, and lodged them royally: Yea, even Siegfried's henchmen were housed in noble wise. And in Burgundy nought met Siegfried thereafter save welcoming eyes. All rendered to him high worship and honour day by day, Yea, a thousandfold more richly than minstrel's tongue may say. All this was his valour's guerdon—no marvel that so it should be, For the hero was passing winsome, and sweet were his eyes to see. Whensoever the kings and their vassals in knightly pastime strove, Evermore was Siegfried the foremost, howsoever his strength they might prove. There was none that with Siegfried could match him, so passing great was his
might,

Or in hurling the massy rock-shard, or in speeding the lance's flight. In presence of high-born ladies full oft was their prowess tried, And proved was the strength of the valiant before the lovely-eyed; And the Netherland's knight found favour still with the passing-fair: But his love was set on the highest, his heart was elsewhere. C Yea, lovely palace-ladies, as the knights rode flashing by, Would ask of the warrior-stranger of bearing proud and high— "How stately is his stature, how rich his arraying!" they cried. "Tis the hero of the Low Land!" full many a voice replied.

What deeds they essayed soever, still foremost Siegfried pressed: But ever a lovely vision, a dream-face, haunted his breast; And the eyes of his soul were yearning on an unbeholden face: And she—her heart had received him, her lips low murmured his praise.

What time in the lists of the palace the good knights ran the course,
And the squires, and shivered the spear-shafts, ever on rider and horse
Unseen from the casement gazing was the daughter of kings, Kriemhild:
She craved none other pastime, in this was her joy fulfilled.
Had he known, had he known that she watched him, whom shined in his
heart he bore,

Content in those lists enchanted had he ridden evermore;
But ah, had his eyes but beheld her!—I know of a surety this,
Nought else upon earth had he longed for, whose soul had won to its bliss.
Whensoe'er in the castle-courtyard he chanced mid the knights to stand,
As amidst of their gallant pastime they are wont in every land,
How winsome then and how graceful he stood, Queen Siegelind's child!
Ah, the heart of many a maiden unwares was love-beguiled.
But he, he was thinking, thinking, "Shall the day-dawn ever arise
In mine heart?—shall the Queen of women be ever beheld of mine eyes,
The love of my soul, my darling, my dream of long ago?
She is far from me, far; and with anguish of spirit I muse thereon!"

Whensoe'er those mighty war-kings rode through Burgundia-land,
Still did their knights attend them arrayed on either hand;
Rode Siegfried with these: at his going that lovely lady sighed;
And his heart the while was aching for her through a weary tide.
So abode he with those three war-lords—true is it, how strange soe'er—
In the land of Gunther the royal through all the space of a year;
Yet in all that season his heart's love not once did he behold,
Of whom he should yet have gladness and sorrow manifold.

IV

HOW SIEGFRIED WARRED AGAINST THE SAXONS

Then came to the land of Gunther tidings strange and dread;
For out of a far, far country were heralds to Burgundy sped
With a tale of unknown warriors and the hate they bare to the king;
And in passing great disquiet the brethren heard that thing.
Now these were they that had sent them:—the lord of the Saxon land,
King Lüdiger mighty in war-hosts, mighty in strength of hand;
And Lüdegast for his helper, the lord of the land of the Dane;
And warriors marched unnumbered 'neath the banners of these twain.

So they came to the land of Gunther, those bearers of threats of war,
Even they whom his adversaries had sent forth from afar.
And men looked on the unknown faces, and asked, "What tale do ye bring?"
And they led the heralds of war-storm to the presence of the King.
And he gave to them courteous greeting: "Welcome to me be ye.
What man hath sent you hither not yet hath been told unto me:
Speak out and utter your message," said the noble king war-wise.
Then sank their hearts, as they looked on the flame in Gunther's eyes.
"If thou, O King, wilt suffer that we speak"—the heralds replied—
"Unhindered all our message, no word from thee will we hide.
So name we to you the princes who have laid on us this command:
Lo, Lüdegast hitherward marcheth with Lüdiger unto your land.
Ye twain have provoked their anger: in our ears was spoken the word,
How that ye in the hearts of our liege-lords deadliest hate have stirred;
And they purpose to lead their battles unto Worms beside the Rhine.
See ye that your war-thanes help you! Lo, this is the warning-sign.
Within twelve weeks shall the thunder of the tramp of their hosts draw near.
If then ye have loyal vassals, let their fealty now appear:
Let them ward the peace of the castle, let them keep unharried the field.
Ha, here shall be fearful hewing of many a helm and shield!

Or if haply for peace ye will pray them, now let us be certified,
Or ever their ranks of battle across your marches ride,
Or ever your strong foes bow you in bitterness of soul.
Ha, many a champion shall perish when hither the war-waves roll!"
"Ye shall tarry a little season—my mind shall ye know ere long—
While I ponder upon this matter," spake Gunther the valiant and strong.
"O yea, I have loyal vassals; to them will I bear this word,
And the tale of your war-defiance shall of all my friends be heard."

Of a truth unto Gunther the mighty full heavy the tidings were,
And his innermost heart was burdened by the message that it bare;
And he bade to his presence Hagen and other his liegemen withal,
And he sent to summon Gernot in haste to his council-hall:
So gathered his best, all vassals unto whom came that command;
And he spake: "Lo, our foes be minded to march into Burgundy-land
With a mighty array—ye may well be indignation-stung
At the unprovoked defiance that these in our faces have flung!"
"From these shall our swords defend us!" Prince Gernot's voice rang high.
"Men must die in the day of their dooming: in death e'en let them lie!
I will never forget mine honour for dread of what may befall!
We will welcome our adversaries to the War-god's festival!"
Then answered Hagen of Troneg: "O'er-hasty, I trow, are thy words;
For the kings of the Danes and the Saxons be exceeding arrogant lords;
And so few days cannot suffice us for our war-host's mustering.
It were good," said the valiant warrior, "that we told unto Siegfried the thing."
So they gave those war-denouncers for dwellings their city's best,
How hateful they were soever, for such was the knightly hest
Of Gunther the noble-hearted—since thus fair honour bade—
Till the friends should be known who would fail not to bring their battle-aid.

Now the King in his heart was bearing a burden of sorrow and fear;
Then the hero, the swift war-helper, beheld him heavy of cheer,
And he marvelled thereat, for he knew not why he went 'neath a load of care,
And he spake, and he prayed King Gunther the cause thereof to declare.

"Exceeding sorely I marvel," the hero Siegfried said,
"Wherefore thine olden joyance this day is utterly fled,
The gracious cheer that aforetime made the hearts that love thee light."
Answered and spake to him Gunther, that royal-goodly knight:
"In sooth may I suffer not all men in my sorrow of soul to have part:
I must keep my grief deep-hidden, I must bear it alone in mine heart:
Unto tried friends only and steadfast may a man unveil his pain."
Then pale grew the face of Siegfried, and anon waxed crimson again.
He spake to the King, and he answered: "Have I ever denied thee
aught?

I will help thee to cast the burden of thy spirit sorrow-fraught.
If ye seek for friends true-hearted, lo, such an one even am I:
I will cleave unto thee and aid thee in honour till I die."
"Now God requite thee, Siegfried, for thy words as music ring!
Yea, though thy might and thy valour no help unto me could bring,
Even so should thy love's assurance make glad mine heart this day.
If I live on yet for a season, of a surety I will repay.
Thou therefore shalt hear the trouble wherewith mine heart is stirred:
Mine adversaries' heralds have brought unto me this word,
That their kings be marching to seek us here with their war-array;—
Such outrage never warriors have dealt to us unto this day!"
"Let this not disquiet thy spirit," spake the hero in answer thereto;
"Speak peace to thine heart, and according to this my counsel do:
Suffer me, even me, to win thee honour and goodly gain
Or ever thy foes to the marches of this thy land attain.
Yea, had those thy mighty foemen of battle-helpers arrayed
So many as thrice ten thousand, by me should their onset be stayed,
Had I at my side but a thousand. Commit thy cause unto me."
Then spake unto him King Gunther: "I am bounden for ever to thee!"
"Give charge that a thousand riders shall follow me forth to the fray,
Inasmuch as of mine own warriors no more can I set in array
Here, than my twelve war-fellows: so will I ward your land,
And loyal service ever shall be done you by Siegfried's hand.

Yea also let Hagen help us, and Ortwein fare to the fight,
Dankwart and Sindold, each man a well-belovèd knight,
Therewithal shall ride in our war-host Volker the aweless one,
And he shall be banner-bearer: better than he is none.
And let those war-denouncers to their own lords' land ride back,
And cause them to bear this message, that we follow hard on their track:
So safe shall our castles be warded, and their peace no foe shall mar."
Then the king bade summon the muster of his friends and his men of war.

So back to their lord went the bearers of Lüdiger's command:
They were well content to be faring thence to their own home-land.
And Gunther the royal-hearted rich gifts on the men bestowed,
And therewithal safe-conduct; and with blithe hearts thence they rode.
"Say ye to my mighty foemen," thus spake Burgundia's Lord,
"Better for them unventured were their journey hitherward.
Howbeit, if here in mine own land to seek my face they be fain,
So my battle-helpers fail not, they shall find their bitter bane."
Then goodly gifts to the heralds his treasure-warders bare;—
Good sooth, of the same had Gunther enow and withal to spare!—
Neither dared they refuse them, the bearers of Lüdiger's command.
So took they their leave, and they journeyed with glad hearts forth of the land.

So then when the heralds to Denmark from Burgundy had passed,
And had spoken the tidings unlooked-for to their lord, King Lüdegast,
Had told him the word of the dwellers by Rhine, that message grim,
For that haughty-hearted defiance was the soul made bitter in him.
For they told him of many a valiant knight in the King's war-band:—
"Yea, one we beheld with Gunther, and he stood at the king's right hand,
And Siegfried they named him, a hero of Netherland." Thus spake they.
Then Lüdegast's heart at the tidings was filled with strange dismay.
So then when the tale of their message was heard all Denmark o'er,
They hasted to win war-helpers, yea, more than theretofore,
Till their lord, King Lüdegast, under his banner beheld enrolled
Warriors twice ten thousand, all war-thanes dauntless-souled.

Then Lüdiger, lord of the Saxons, gathered his war-array,
Till his battle-muster was two-score thousand, yea, more than they,
Who should join them with Denmark's war-host, unto Burgundy to ride.

But in that land also had Gunther the King sent far and wide;
To his kinsmen-friends and the war-host of his brethren he sent his hest
To the end they should follow his banner as battleward he pressed;
And with these came the knights of Hagen: yea, sore was their need that day;
And the shadow of death already over many a warrior lay.
They addressed them unto their journey; for nought was their march delayed;
And Volker was banner-bearer, Volker the unafraid,
On the day that they went forth riding from Worms by the waters of Rhine;
And Hagen of Troneg marshalled Burgundia's battle-line.
There in the ranks rode Sindold and Hunold the dauntless-souled,
Such warriors as earn rich guerdon when war-kings lavish their gold;
Rode Dankwart the brother of Hagen, and with these was Ortwein found.
So they marched on the path of honour, they marched to be glory-crowned.
"Lord King," spake Siegfried, "I pray thee, at home do thou abide,
While the good knights after my banner forth to the battle shall ride;
Stay thou, that the hearts of the weak ones may be strong in thy fearlessness;
And I will guard thine honour and thy wealth in the battle's stress.
And they that were fain to seek thee at Worms by the waters of Rhine,
With them will I take such order, that nought shall they harm that is thine.
Yea, we into their own homeland so far will ride in our raid,
That soon shall the overweening be with sorrow sore dismayed."

From Rhine through the land of Hesse rode on that hero-host,
And over the Saxon marches, where the fight should be won and lost;
And they drave the spoil, and they harried with flame the land of the foe:
Ha, bitter straits and anguish did the robber war-kings know!
So they came to the Saxon marches, and the vanguard pressed on still.
Then Siegfried the mighty champion asked of the chieftains' will:
"Whom now shall we make our warder of camp and of sumpter-train?"
—Ha, never of war-raid the Saxons suffered deadlier bane!

So they said, "Let the henchmen that follow the wielders of spear and brand
Be warded of Dankwart the valiant, of the swift death-dealing hand;
So shall our loss be the lesser from Lüdiger's plundering horde.
Yea, leave with him Ortwein: our rear-guard shall these twain safely ward."
"Then will myself ride onward," spake Siegfried the knight straightway,
"To watch for the foe's on-coming, and to spy out their array,
Until I shall know of a surety where now their warriors are."
And with speed fair Siegelind's scion stood sheathed in his harness of war.

So the host he committed to Hagen, or ever he rode on the quest,
Even to him and to Gernot, the knight of the dauntless breast.
So into the land of the Saxons rode he forward alone—
Yea, to fashion a tale for the minstrels, a tale of glory won!
Then spied he onward-surgin' o'er the plain a host of war,
So huge that Burgundia's warriors by these were outnumbered far;
For their tale was two-score thousand, yea, more than this, I trow.
Then leapt his heart and lightened his eyes with the battle-glow.

Now afront of the host of the foemen there rode a goodly knight,
To watch for a battle-token, in shining harness dight.
And Siegfried the hero beheld him, and on him that champion gazed,
And the eyes of each upon other with the fury of battle blazed.
Now who was the keen war-eagle that on watching pinions hung?
A gleaming shield all-golden from his leftward shoulder was slung.
King Lüdegast was the warrior that thus o'er the host kept ward.
Lo, the noble stranger-hero against him is spurring hard!
And the wrath of the lord of the Danefolk by the battle-challenge is stirred,
And the mighty steeds to the onset are racing fierily spurred.
In their strong grip over the shield-rims they couched their lances low—
Ha, but the proud king knew not that he rode to his shame and his woe!
The war-steeds hearkened the spur-sting, and swift as arrows they leapt,
And the kings clashed like unto breakers by a tempest-blast on-swept;
And knightly they wheeled to the onset their reeling steeds with the rein,
And with swords they essayed the decision of strife, that terrible twain.

At each stroke of the hero Siegfried far round the whole plain rung,
And the helmet was flashing and flaming as with fire from a torch outflung;
Even so were the red sparks leaping 'neath the sword in the hero's hand.
Lions both were the Dane-king and the Lord of the Nether Land,
For with many a furious sword-stroke did the king of the Daneland smite;
Yea, this one and that at the bucklers hewed with his uttermost might.
Now their strife was beheld of thirty knights of the king's war-band:
But or ever these might reach him victor did Siegfried stand.
For with three wide-gaping gashes he made that war-king reel;
They sundered the shining harness, the welded links of steel;
On the great sword's cleaving lightning swift followed the rain of blood;
Then groaned the king of the Danefolk in bitterness of mood.
For his life must he make supplication: "I will pay for my ransoming,"
He cried, "the land of Denmark! I am Lüdegast the king!"

But by this full nigh were his war-band, the knights that from far had seen
Betwixt these two fore-scouters what deadly strife had been.
Then Siegfried would lead the vanquished away; but they fell forthright
Upon him, those thirty warriors, yet his hand by its single might
Aye guarded his princely captive with strokes that fell like hail;
And soon to that king's defenders had he dealt yet deadlier bale.
For he smote, that captive-warder, the thirty, till dead they lay,
Save one that turned his horse-rein, and swiftly fled away,
And bare the bitter tidings of all to the host of the Danes,
And his shattered helmet witnessed thereto with its bloody stains.
Then were the knights of Daneland shame-stricken and bitter-souled,
When the tale how their king was a captive that day in their ears was told.
And they bare to his brother the tidings, and the storm of his wrath outbrake
In madness of fury and anguish for his captive brother's sake.

Now by this had the king of the Danefolk been led from the field of fight
Back to the host of Gunther by Siegfried's resistless might;
And to Hagen's hand did he give him: glad were his friends for the word
That the King of the land of Denmark was the spoil of Siegfried's sword!

Then they cried through the host, "To the spear-staves bind ye the banners on!"
"Forward!" rang Siegfried's war-cry: "great deeds this day shall be done
Ere the evenfall, if my sinews fail not, if I lose not life!
This day through the land of the Saxons shall be rued by many a wife!
Heroes of Rhineland, whither I press before, take heed!
To the heart of Lüdiger's war-host cleaving your path will I lead:
Ye shall see brave hewing of helmets by many a hero's hand!
Ere back from the battle we turn us, shall sorrow o'ercloud this land."
Now on their steeds have Gernot and the men of his war-band sprung;
In the grasp of the warrior-minstrel is the battle-flag upflung;
Volker is bearing the banner afront of them all to the fray:—
Yea, the very hearts of the camp-folk leap to the onset to-day!

Now the host that they led to the war-shock in no more than a thousand was told,
Save for those twelve knights of Siegfried. In clouds was the dust uprolled
From the tramp of the mighty horse-hoofs as they charged across the field:
Ever gleamed through the eddying darkness the glint of many a shield.
Now nearer and nearer the Saxons drew, and the flashing was seen
Of the tossing sea of their broadswords—O, the edges thereof were keen!—
Swung up, as telleth the story, in many a champion's hand.
They were fain to thrust back the aliens from castle and from land.
Onward the battle-marshals the ranks to the war-shock led,
Onward withal Prince Siegfried with those his twelve knights sped
Which companioning his journey afar from the Low Land went.
Many a hand in the war-storm that day saw blood-besprent.
Now Sindold and Hunold and Gernot in the forefront of battle smite,
And many a hero falleth before them dead in the fight;
Ere they could prove their valour they slept the iron sleep:—
Ah, for their fate must many a lovely lady weep!
Volker and Hagen and Ortwein with shattering strokes made dim
The splendour of many a helmet in the battle bitter-grim;
For the blood streamed over the morions where the aweless heroes fought:
Yea, many a marvel of prowess the hand of Dankwart wrought,

Now the Danes are essaying how mighty are the broadswords that they wield :
Loud rang the clashing and clanging of shield that shocked on shield ;
And the griding glaives keen-whetted made the hot blood spurt through the mail ;
Nor for nought did the battle-fearless Saxons their foes assail.
Onward the fierce Burgundians through that war-thicket clave,
And many a wound wide-gaping they dealt with the deadly glaive.
All over the saddle-housings the blood ran streaming down :
So strove those dauntless champions for the winning of renown.
Far afront rang out the clashing of the helmet-sundering brand
In the grasp of the mightiest champions, where the knights of Netherland
Pressed after their lord on-charging through the heart of the battle-din :
Those Twelve in knightly fashion, where Siegfried led, burst in.
No man of the warriors of Rhineland could follow where these rode :
From far they beheld the blood-streams as in sudden crimson they flowed
Through the bright helms riven asunder by Siegfried's smiting hand,
Till he found where Lüdiger battled afront of his own war-band.
Three times through their reeling squadrons did the Son of Siegmund ride
From end to end of their war-host—now Hagen fights at his side ;
Yea, mightily now doth he help him to accomplish his will in the fight.
Borne down by their onset perished full many a valiant knight.

But face to face with Siegfried at last strong Lüdiger came,
And saw in his hand upleaping the great sword's battle-flame,
Saw the edges of Balmung cleaving through his knights a death-strewn path.
Then the heart of the dauntless Saxon was swept by a storm of wrath.
Then hurled were the surges of battle together with clash of swords,
As the war-bands closed in the grapple of fight around their lords,
And the two kings sought each other with uttermost desire.
Reeled squadrons sundered before them till they met, for their hate was as fire.
To the Lord of the land of the Saxons long since the tidings came
How his brother was taken captive, and for this was his wrath aflame ;
But he wotted not who had achieved it : nought knew he of Siegelind's son,
For the deed had been told for Gernot's—but of him was the truth soon known !

Then rained from Lüdiger's war-glaive such storm of blow on blow
That Siegfried's steed 'neath the saddle sank on his haunches low;
But he sprang to his full height straightway, and the dauntless Siegfried's
might

Flashed forth in terrible lightnings through the tempest of that fight.
There beside him was Hagen smiting, and Gernot bare him well,
And Dankwart and Volker; before them the swaths of battle fell:
Hewed Sindold and Hunold and Ortwein, the war-triumphant lords:
Before them many a champion slept the sleep of swords.
In the battle's heart close-grappling were Saxon and Lowland king,
And over their helm-crests ever did many a javelin sing;
Through glittering bucklers pierced they from the hands of heroes sped,
Till many a goodly shield-rim dripped with the life-stream red.
Mid the surges of battle-tempest sank many a good knight slain
From his steed to the earth: yet ever they clashed, those terrible twain
Hurling together, Siegfried and Lüdiger the king,
'Neath the splintered staves upsoaring and the javelins' eager wing.
Lo, the sweep of the sword of Siegfried hath severed the King's shield-band!
Now seeth the Netherland hero the victory hard at hand
Over the valiant Saxons—nigh these was the bitter end.
—Ha, how did the dauntless Dankwart the glittering mail-rings rend!—
Even then the King of the Saxons with sudden-cold despair
Beheld a crown emblazoned on the shield that Siegfried bare.
He saw it, he knew it—"None other than the Hero resistless is here!"
And he lifted his voice, through the clangour of battle his shout rang clear:
"Refrain you from fight, refrain you, all ye of my battle-aid!
Lo, here is the Son of Siegmund in the strife against us arrayed!
I have seen, I have known him, Siegfried, the all-resistless lord:
Of a truth hath the Foul Fiend sent him against us hitherward!
Let sink my battle-banners," he cried, "the fight is done!"
For peace he made entreaty; peace was vouchsafed anon.
Yet himself must fare as hostage afar to Gunther's land
Beneath the hard constraining of dauntless Siegfried's hand.

So ceased the weary warriors with one consent from the fight;
And many a shattered helmet and shield to left and to right
Did they cast from their hands; nor any of all on the field that lay,
But blood-besprent from the hewing of Burgundia's swords were they.
From the field, by the right of the victor, what captives they would did they
lead:

And the swift war-helpers, Gernot and Hagen, took order with heed
That the wounded men upon litters be borne: so led they away,
Captives unto the Rhine-flood, five hundred men from the fray.
All empty-handed of triumph home rode each Danish knight,
Nor yet had the Saxons borne them so stoutly in that fight
That their people should sing their praises: in sorrow and shame went they
Mid wailing for dear ones fallen in the slaughter of that day.
Now their needless armour Rhineward the sumpter-beasts might bear,
For Siegfried the strong and his helpers had rid the land of the fear
Of foes from border to border: so had he accomplished this
That all King Gunther's war-host must acclaim the deed for his.

Straightway to Worms Prince Gernot hasted the messengers' feet
To bear unto friends in the homeland the tidings passing sweet,
That tale of the might triumphant of the Kings and their war-array,
The tale of the deeds of the valiant, of the dawn of glory's day.
Fast, fast those victory-heralds sped, and the tale was told.
How leap their hearts for gladness that of late were sorrowful-souled,
For all those joyful tidings through the jubilant land that ring!
How instant are high-born ladies with eager questioning
How had it fared with their dear lords in the King's war-host who fought!
Yea, into the presence of Kriemhild was a messenger straightway brought:
Yet the thing was done as in secret, and she would not that folk should know,
For the Hero's sake in whose keeping was her heart from long ago.

When stood that victory-bringer in her bower before her eyes,
Kriemhild the lovely bespake him in exceeding gracious wise:

"Now tell me thy joyful tidings, and my gold shall thy guerdon be;
And, so nought of the truth be hidden, thou hast ever a friend in me.
Tell how hath my brother Gernot come forth of the battle-strife,
And other my friends and kinsmen. Be there many that lost their life?
Who in that day triumphant was in prowess chief?—say on!"

Spake the messenger true-hearted: "Sooth, battle-blencher was none;
But in that stern warrior-onset no champion rode so well,
O noble Daughter of Princes, if the truth my tongue must tell,
As the princely stranger-hero, which came from the Netherland;—
O the marvels of battle-prowess that were wrought by Siegfried's hand!
What deeds soever the champions achieved in the battle-play,
Even Dankwart and Hagen, and other of Gunther's war-array—
Their glory, their prowess, were even as an idle wind should sing,
Set by the deeds of Siegfried, the son of Siegmund the King.
O yea, in the storm of battle full many a hero they slew:
But whoso essayed could never tell all the marvels through
That were wrought by the arm of Siegfried as he rode the surges of fight—
Ah, many a lady for dear ones slain shall bewail his might!
Went down before his onset the beloved of many a bride;
His giant strokes on the helmets o'er the field rang far and wide,
And forth of the gaping gashes the blood flowed fast and free:—
O yea, in all achievement the glory of knighthood is he!
Sooth, many a deed of valour wrought Ortwein, Metz's Lord;
Whosoever was touched in the war-storm by the lightning of his sword
Fell back from his face sore wounded—yea, for the more part slain:
And thy brother withal to the foemen dealt the deadliest bane
That ever in battle-tempest hath any champion wrought.
True witness were this of the chosen warriors there that fought,
That so mighty in war-achievement were our proud Burgundians found,
That shame shall touch them never: for aye are they glory-crowned.
For they smote, and they saw before them many a riderless selle:
O'er the echoing field their war-glaives rang many a foeman's knell.

O yea, the knights of Rhineland rode through that stormy day
In such wise that their foes repent them that ever they dared the fray.
And the valiant brethren of Troneg withal dealt deadly bane
When the war-hosts clashed, when the nations wrestled with desperate strain:
So many were then hurled earthward by dauntless Hagen's hand,
That thereof might a goodly story be told in Burgundia-land.
Sindold withal and Hunold, 'neath Gernot's banner who warred,
These wrought such deeds of prowess, with Rumold the dauntless lord,
That Lüdiger, king of the Saxons, to his latest hour shall repent
The folly of that war-challenge to the Lords of Rhineland sent.
Yet of all the mightiest war-deeds that ever on earth have been,
From the least even unto the greatest that ever eye hath seen,
Never were such as Siegfried hath wrought with resistless hand.
And he bringeth royal captives hither to Gunther's land;
Even these with his might overmastering the warrior-prince subdued.
Of a truth his self-sought evils hath Lüdegast bitterly rued,
And Lüdiger his brother, the lord of the Saxons, withal!
O noble Daughter of Princes, not yet have I told thee all;
For behold, these twain were captive taken by Siegfried's hand.
Never so many war-thralls have come into this our land
As now his valour haleth hitherward unto the Rhine."

—More welcome words had she hearkened never, ye well may divine—
"Five hundred barons unwounded, nay more, be hitherward led,
O Queen, and of men sore stricken in fight, yea, well-nigh dead,
Full fourscore blood-stained litters come softly through the land;
And of these were the more part smitten by dauntless Siegfried's hand.
They whose pride overweening challenged the Lords of Rhine to the war
Now captives of King Gunther by sore constraint they are.
With joy to thy land that goodly prey do our warriors hale."

Then flushed into rose the lily at the telling of that tale.
Yea, over her lovely visage for rapture the roses burned
That out of the imminent peril alive and whole had returned

Her knight, her winsome Siegfried, of the young, heart-conquering eyes—
Yea, she rejoiced for her kinsfolk withal in sisterly wise.
Then spake that Queen of Beauty: "Glad tidings to me hast thou brought.
I will give thee for thy guerdon bright raiment richly wrought;
And my treasurer shall count thee withal ten marks of gold."
He is happy of whom such tidings unto noble dames be told!

They gave him for his guerdon the gold and the costly array.
Many a lovely maiden from her casement leaned that day,
And gazed o'er the city highway, and saw go riding by
Many a thane high-hearted of the land of Burgundy.
First rode the knights unwounded, then the train of the stricken came,—
Well might these hearken the greeting of friends with nought of shame!
And the King rode forth glad-hearted to meet them, kinsman and guest:
From all his care in rejoicing his soul had gotten rest.
Then greeted he well his kinsfolk, and hailed each stranger knight,
As for kings of men so mighty is ever meet and right
With thanks and with lovingkindness to meet men faring back
From plucking the flower of glory from the field of the battle-wrack.
Now touching his friends and his kinsmen King Gunther questioneth,
Even who in the highways of battle had been stricken unto death:
And behold, in heroes fourscore the tale of their slain is told!—
But the brave dead none bewaileth, and so hath it been from of old.
Yea, even the knights unwounded brought many a sword-hacked shield,
And many a rifted helmet, home from that stricken field.
And the riders sprang from their horses at the gates of the hall of the King;
And with shouts of salutation did the very heavens ring.

Fair harbourage unto the good knights they gave that city through;
And the King commanded to honour his guests with tendance due;
And they bound up the hurts of the wounded, and with diligent heed did they
tend:
Yea, that knightly King was gracious unto foe no less than friend.

Then unto Lüdegast spake he: "Welcome to me be thou!
Through thy misdeed to my kingdom hath mischief been wrought enow,
For the which thou must make atonement, if this may be compassed of me.
God look on my friends and reward them: right well have they holpen me!"
"Well mayst thou thank thine helpers," spake Lüdiger answering:
"In sooth such high-born captives had never earthly king!
And now for knightly warding we tender thee goodly fee,
And pray thee for gracious dealing with them that were foes unto thee."
"Unto both of you freedom from fetters," he answered, "will I accord,
So all which have fought against me abide here still in ward:
And for this shall ye give me pledges that none shall leave my land,
Except as I give them licence." To the covenant gave they the hand.

Then they led to their rest the weary, where all things ready were made.
Full soon upon easeful couches were the wounded warriors laid.
And they poured for the knights unwounded bright wine and mead good store:
Never in mirth and joyance were hearts uplifted more.
The bucklers battle-riven took they, and they laid them by,
And saddles blood-empurpled might one see plenteously;
But these caused they to be hidden, lest women should weep at the sight:—
Ah, the sun went down that even upon many a wayworn knight!
"Give kindest entertainment to my guests," did the King command:—
With the native-born and with strangers now thronged was all the land:—
He took thought for the heedful tendance of each sore-wounded foe:
Ha, how was their haughty defiance in humility brought low!
Whosoever were cunning in leechcraft, rich guerdon their skill repaid,
Bright gold unstinted and silver outlavished, yea, unweighed,
So they would but heal those heroes who had gotten hurt in the war.
And with gifts the King still loaded his guests that came from far.
And whoso of these was minded homeward to turn again,
As one should entreat a dear friend, so prayed they him to remain.
Nor forgot the King his liegemen, but devised for them rich reward,
Even all whose labour of glory had accomplished the will of their lord.

Then spake Prince Gernot his counsel: "Let our guests depart as now:
And in forty days—proclaim it, and to all men publish it thou—
Unto a festal high-tide shall all return once more;
For healed by then shall be many that now lie wounded sore."
Then made his request Prince Siegfried: "I pray you, let me depart."
But when to the Rhine-lord Gernot was known the desire of his heart,
He besought him in loving fashion for a season to tarry still:—
Sooth, but for the love of his sister, he had swayed him not to his will!
To a prince so royal might no man for his measureless desert
Proffer reward; but his guerdon was the love of Gunther's heart,
And of all his friends and kinsfolk; for alway in their sight
Fair shone the mighty achievements that his hand had wrought in fight.
He said to his heart: "I will linger for the sake of Beauty's Queen,
If at last I may haply behold her." And so was his heart's dream seen
At the last: after long, long waiting he beheld her, his love and his star;
Then with heart all love-overflowing he rode to his home afar.
Now the King had given commandment for tourneys day by day,
And strong young knights rode gladly in the gentle and joyous fray.
And he bade make ready the high-seats in the city beside Rhine-strand
For the noble guests who were bidden to the feast in Burgundia-land.

Now as near drew the day and nearer when the guests from afar should be there,
Told was the tale of their coming unto Kriemhild the passing-fair,
And of that great festal high-tide with dear-loved friends she heard—
Lo, the heart of each winsome lady to beauty's arraying is stirred;
And they seek out wimples to deck them, and the lovely robes unfold.
And now to the lady Uta the tidings moreover are told
Of the coming of those proud warriors which unto the feast are bidden.
Forth drawn is the costly raiment in the cedar caskets hidden;
And she bade for her sons' sake fashion bright mantle and vest straightway
For the clothing of maid and matron in royal-rich array;
Yea, doublet and cloak for vesture of the knights of Burgundy,
And withal for many a stranger much goodly bravery.

V

HOW SIEGFRIED FIRST SAW KRIEMHILD

Now day by day the watchers saw heroes Rhineward ride,
Warriors fain of the joyance of that great festal-tide,
Knights that for love of the Rhine-lords into the Rhineland pressed ;
And ever with gifts were they greeted, swift steed and goodly vest.
Fair-dight by this were the high-seats with purple and gleam of gold
For the noblest and the bravest, as the ancient tale hath told,
For the princes two-and-thirty that thronged to the festival.
And in rivalry of beauty fair women arrayed them withal.
There Giselher the stripling all-eager might ye see,
As he welcomed the homeland-dweller and the stranger courteously ;
And with him stood Gernot his brother and all their knightly train :
With the honour of ancient custom they greeted each noble thane.

Through the Rhineland highways rode they on saddles with gold red-glowing ;
Great shields all splendour-blazoned, rich mantles lordly-flowing
Went flashing up the city to that glorious festal-tide :—
Yea, men unhealed blithe-hearted looked forth on their knightly pride ;
Ay, the battle-stricken tossing on beds of pain all day
Forgot how near to the shadow of bitter death they lay :
For the sick and the fever-blasted love's lips forgot to sigh,
So glad were they all for the dawning of the festal days so nigh ;
For they thought, "In such royal bounty shall we live and see good days!"
There were murmurs of mirth unmeasured through all the city's ways ;
There were overflowings of gladness—more bliss no man hath beheld :
High through the land of Gunther the tides of joyance swelled.
All on a merry morning of Whitsuntide rode they,
Those splendour-vestured chosen brave knights in long array,

Five thousand men—nay, haply yet more, to the King's feast bound:
To and fro were flashing the light jests, and the laughter echoed round.

Now on this was the King still musing—thereof had he long been ware—
How the heart of the Netherland hero lay tangled in love's snare
Spell-drawn unto his sister, whom yet he had ne'er looked on,
The lady by whom all maidens were in loveliness outshone.

C And he spake: "Now all give counsel, both kinsman and vassal true,
What thing to make all-perfect this feast-tide shall we do,
That no man may chide us for failing in aught in the coming days;
For in sooth by our deeds men judge us at the last, to blame us or
praise."

Then the Lord of Metz, knight Ortwein, spake to that kingly host:
"If thy festival with honour shall be crowned to the uttermost,
Thou suffer thy guests to look on the maidens peerless-fair
Whose praise through the land Burgundian is rumoured everywhere.
Wherein is a man's heart-pleasure, and his eyes' most dear delight,
Save in loveliness of a maiden, in the beauty of lady bright?
Thou suffer then that thy sister before thy guests appear."
Leapt the heart of many a hero that welcome word to hear.

"Full fain will I heed thy counsel," was Gunther's answering word,
And thereat were the hearts of all men exultation-stirred;
And he spake to the Lady Uta, and to Kriemhild the lovely-eyed,
To come with all their maidens to the King's high festal-tide.
Then in the cedar-caskets for fair attire sought they,
And unfolded the flashing splendour of royal-rich array,
And the cloudy lace and the bracelets, whereof good store they had.
So with loveliest adorning were the winsome maidens clad.
There was many a young knight yearning that day in eager wise
That he might be found well-pleasing in the high-born ladies' eyes.
That hope would he not have bartered, no, not for a kingdom's fee.
The fair forms un beholden ere this it was joy to see.

Then the great King gave commandment that a guard of honour should go
With his sister and his mother, in their farings to and fro,
Of a hundred of his good knights, each man with sword in hand,
As was ever the royal custom in fair Burgundia-land.
Beside her princess-daughter Uta the queenly came,
And a bright train followed after of many a lovely dame,
Five score, yea more peradventure, in costly raiment arrayed;
And paced behind fair Kriemhild many a winsome maid.
From a stately tiring-bower those daintiest feet forth paced:
Then surged the great press forward of heroes eager-faced
Which had stood there long-expectant, if haply their lot might be
To look glad-eyed on the Fairest, on the Star of Burgundy.

Now forth of the doors the Loveliest came, as the morning-red
From lowering clouds forth breaketh;—lo, how his heart-ache fled,
His, who in his soul had shrined her through all that weary tide!
For he saw that glory of women stand there in her beauty's pride.
Flashed many a priceless gemstone from the folds of her attire,
And the roses flushed through the lilies, a snare of hearts' desire.
Howso'er 'gainst the spell of her beauty one strove, he needs must own
That nothing so passing lovely in the wide world yet had he known.
As the full moon in her glory swims on before the stars,
And the brightness of her splendour floats forth of the cloudy bars,
So before all other women shone out that Queen of Love.
Well might the hearts of the heroes be uplifted for joy thereof!

Paced onward before the maidens the stately chamberlains.
Now could they forbear no longer, those noble-hearted thanes,
But to gaze on her winsome sweetness forward still did they press.
Then was Siegfried's heart joy-ravished, and anon in heaviness.
In his inmost soul was he musing: "How dared I dream such bliss
That I, I ever should woo thee?—an idle dream was this!
Yet must I for aye be a stranger? Better that I lay dead!"
And oft in his thoughts' wild tumult he paled, and anon flushed red.

There Siegelind's son stood moveless, and so winsome did he seem
As though by the hand of a master were the angel of his dream
Limned on the missal-parchment: none looked on him, and forbore
To own that so comely a hero had none seen theretofore.
Then the knights that attended Kriemhild bade all to left and to right
Avoid from the path, and obedient to the word was many a knight.
What joy it was to behold them, that heart-uplifted throng,
As the gentle-nurtured ladies all queenlike swept along!

Then spake the Prince Burgundian, and Gernot uttered his rede:
"The hero who did thee service ungrudging in thy need,
Gunther, beloved brother, thou guerdon him for the same
Before all these: of my counsel shall no man dare think shame.
Bid Siegfried unto my sister, that he meet her face to face,
That the maiden may greet him: of the honour shall we win us enduring grace.
If to him be accorded her greeting, who on knight smiled never before,
We have gotten this goodly war-thane to our friend for evermore."
Hasted the kinsmen of Gunther unto where did Siegfried stand,
And they bare that courteous bidding to the knight of Netherland:
"This is the King's good pleasure, that thou come where the seed-royal be,
To the end that his sister may greet thee for especial honour to thee."

How thrilled the soul of Siegfried to hear that gracious word!
Passed as a dream his heart-ache, his spirit with rapture was stirred
That on Uta's lovely daughter he should look with unhindered eyes:
And she, she received Prince Siegfried in courtly-winsome wise.
When she saw him stand before her, that hero-hearted lord,
Her cheeks were aflame with the love-light, her sweet lips spake the word:
"Welcome to thee, Lord Siegfried, to a good and noble knight!"
Then the wings of his soul at her greeting soared to the heaven's height
Love-lowly he bent before her: she laid her hand in his;
And each moved on by other in a yearning trance of bliss.
From their eyes the soft love-lightning flashed those twain away
Strong hero and fair maiden—yet stolen glances were they.

Ask ye, were those white fingers by him pressed lovingly
For speech of the heart?—such knowledge is all too high for me;
Yet—yet I may nowise believe it, that he spared to do this thing.
Soon came sweet self-betrayal of the heart that had found its king.

It was all in the summer season, in the very glory of May.
Never his heart had tasted such bliss as on that glad day,
Never such soul-uplifting, as in that hour he knew
When walked that maiden beside him, whom the hero fain would woo.
Then many a knight was thinking: "Ah me, that my bliss it were
Even so to be pacing beside her, as he is pacing there!
And O in mine arms to clasp her!—how fain thereof had I been!"
Yet who might begrudge?—never hero was so worthy to win a queen.
From what far land soever those guests had come, each thane
Had eyes, in all that feast-tide, for nothing save these twain.
Then suffered was the maiden to kiss that goodly knight:
Never in all his life-days had he known such dear delight.
But the King of the Danefolk murmured under his breath straightway:
"Ah, many for this high greeting lie sorely hurt this day
By the hand of Siegfried stricken—for witness stand I here:—
God grant his face in Daneland may never more appear!"

Then the heralds cried that all folk should avoid to left and right
From the path of Kriemhild the lovely; and many a gallant knight
And warrior gently-nurtured in her train to the minster hied:
So for a space was parted the hero from her side.
So passed she into the minster with her maiden-company;
And the dim aisles shone with beauty so glorious to see,
That many a prayer dropped earthward that should to heaven aspire,
For of all those chosen champions was she the eyes' desire.
Now scarce could Siegfried tarry till the mass was brought to an end,
And his heart still sang thanksgiving unto Fortune, unto the friend
Which had bowed unto him her favour whom shrined in his heart he bare:
Fast bound in loyal service was he to the Fairest Fair.

When again forth out of the minster after the mass she came,
Again to her presence was bidden that hero of far-sung fame.
Then the winsome-lovely maiden her thanks unto him outpoured
That so bravely beyond all others he helped when her brethren warred:
"Lord Siegfried, now God reward thee," that Queen of Beauty said:
"The good knights' loyal homage this day hast thou merited;
All true hearts' love-avowal right nobly hast thou earned!"
Then the love in the eyes of Siegfried on the eyes of Kriemhild burned.
"For ever and aye will I serve thee!" Siegfried the hero said:
"Never to rest or slumber will I lay down mine head
Till thine every wish be accomplished, while life shall endure in me!
And this do I, O Kriemhild, Kriemhild, for love of thee!"
So it fell that through twelve days, ever as dawned each new day's light,
By the witchery-winsome maiden lingereth still the knight
Oft as in kingfolk's presence her feet through the fair halls pace,
For mighty love hath constrained her to yield unto him this grace.

Glad noise of jubilation and the merry tourney's clang,
Still as the days on-fleeted, round Gunther's palace rang,
Within, without, as in feast-hall and in lists the valiant vied;
And by marvels of prowess were Ortwein and Hagen magnified.
In what manly sport soever men strove, these twain evermore,
These champions keen in the onset, their part to the uttermost bore.
In the eyes of the guests of the kingdom bright made they their renown:
Of the whole land of King Gunther the glory were they and the crown.
They which had long lain wounded now to the sun forth came:
They were fain with Gunther's liegemen to share each knightly game,
Would wield the fence of the buckler and hurl the lance afar:
No lack had they of companions in the merry mimic war.
And ever in the feast-hall that kingly host took heed
That his guests should be served of the choicest, that no least word should proceed
Of blame from the lips of any, such as smircheth the name of a king;
And aye mid his guests was he passing with gracious welcoming.

And he spake in the midst: "Ye good knights, or ever ye ride from my land,
Accept ye the gifts of my giving, for so doth mine heart's wish stand,
And to you will I aye be beholden: then think not scorn thereof,
For with that which I share among you is given mine heart's whole love."

Then answered the lords of Daneland there as they stood in hall:
"Or ever aback to the homeland we ride delivered from thrall,
Assure to us peace abiding: thereof is our need full sore,
Seeing many our friends down-stricken by your friends shall rise no more."
Now by this from his hurts recovered was Lüdegast the Dane,
And the Lord of the land of the Saxons was whole from the battle again,
Albeit some of their warriors must they leave in a strange land dead.
Then went King Gunther to Siegfried, and drew him apart, and he said:
"Now give me herein thy counsel"—thus spake he unto the knight—
"Our captive guests would ride hence with the first of the morrow's light,
And petition for reconciling long-lasting with mine and me.
O valiant knight, give counsel how best it seemeth to thee.
Now what these two kings proffer, unto thee shall it now be told:
Five hundred horses' burden they tender of red gold.
This willingly give they for ransom, so I will set them free."
Spake Siegfried the strong: "For thine honour this thing shall nowise be.
Nay, freely, without all ransom, let them fare forth hence, these twain,
If so be that these noble war-lords will swear henceforth to refrain
From riding the raid of the foeman hitherward unto your land:
And for pledge hereunto be given a king's unsullied hand."
"I will do even after thy counsel," he said. So parted they:
And unto their adversaries was answer made straightway
That the gold was desired of no man that was proffered of them at the first.
Ah, sick were their hearts with longing for dear ones, and home-athirst!

Shields many treasure-laden his henchmen thitherward bare,
And therefrom to his friends bright silver unweighed did the knight-king share,
Five hundred marks unto each one—unto many an one yet more:
So was Gunther advised of Gernot, that noble counsellor.

Then prayed all, "Let us depart hence"; for now would they fain ride home;
And into the presence of Kriemhild did the guests for farewell come,
And unto the foot of the high-seat whereon sat Uta the Queen.
Ne'er in such gracious fashion were guests sped forth, I wéen.
Now void were the city's hostels, as forth of the gates they rode;
Yet still in the land Burgundian in royal state abode
The King with all his kinsfolk in the midst of a knightly train,
And each day in the presence of Kriemhild appeared each noble thane.

Then Siegfried the hero petitioned, "I pray you, let me depart";
For his hope waxed faint of winning her who was queen of his heart:
And the King heard tell of his purpose, that thence he would fare straightway.
But the young lad Giselher pleaded, and wrought on him to delay:
"Whither away, O Siegfried, is thine heart on journeying set?
Nay, hearken to my petition, abide with the good knights yet;
Abide thou with King Gunther and his loyal liegemen still.
Lo, here be lovely ladies: thou mayst see them at thy will."
Made answer Siegfried the mighty: "Nay then, let the steeds abide.
Lo, I have foregone my purpose, and hence not yet will I ride.
Bear hence the shields and uphang them—albeit I long for mine home,
Lord Giselher's love true-hearted hath turned my mind therefrom."
So tarried the valiant warrior there by a friend's love won.
In all the rest of the wide world other place was there none
Wherein he had rested so gladly; and now none said him nay,
But he looked on the beauty of Kriemhild ever day by day;
For the sake of her measureless fairness he could not choose but stay.
In many a pleasant pastime they wore the hours away.
Only he felt love's torment, he knew none other care.
—Ah me, but the days were coming when she should be his death-snare!

VI

HOW THEY VOYAGED ON LOVE-QUEST TO ISEN-LAND

Now over the Rhine came a story of none heard theretofore,
A tale of the marvellous beauty of maids on a far-away shore.
Then stirred was the spirit of Gunther to win such an one for his bride:
In the hope thereof uplifted was his heart in kingly pride.
There was a Queen of Beauty enthroned beyond the sea;
Through all the world's wide compass was none so fair as she.
In loveliness was she peerless, and of measureless bodily might;
For she matched her with champions that wooed her in speeding the lance's
flight,
And in hurling the stone, and in leaping far as it flew through the air.
Whosoever to wife would win her, that terrible test must dare,
And in contests three overcome her, that champion-maid high-born.
Let him fail in but one of the trials, and his head from his shoulders was shorn.
Full oft that Daughter of Princes had done this ruthless thing:
But now by the Rhine her rumour came to a knightly king,
And he turned his whole heart's longing to win that fair one to wife.
—Ah, many a knight thereafter for her sake lost his life!

- C As once in the midst of his people the noble Gunther sat,
Much question arose, as the speech-tide flowed swiftly this way and that,
What queen among women was worthy that the King should choose her for
bride,
Who should be Queen of Burgundia, and sit enthroned at his side.
Then spake the Lord of Rhineland: "I will take ship down to the sea,
And will sail to the Lady Brunhild, howsoever it fare with me.
For the love of that Queen of Women will I venture limb and life:
Yea, ready I stand to lose them, an I win her not to my wife."

"I give my counsel against it," cried Siegfried with earnest mien;

"Such deadly-ruthless customs be practised of that dread queen,
That whoever is her love's suitor, his head he imperilleth.

Well mayst thou advise thee rather to turn from this path of death."

c Answered and spake King Gunther: "Never was woman born
So strong and so fierce of spirit, but her might were by mine outworn
Lightly, in any contest, by my single hand alone!"

"Ah hush!" made answer Siegfried, "unto thee is this woman unknown.

c Though four such as thou withstood her, the strength of them all were as nought
Against her terrible fury: thou therefore renounce that thought;
In loyal faith I advise thee. If with death thou be not in love,
Travail not thou to win her, for nought can come thereof."

c "Be she as strong as she may be, on that journey I needs must fare
Hence unto Brunhild, befall me what may befall me there!
For the sake of her peerless beauty no peril will I decline.
Peradventure may God yet move her to follow us to the Rhine."

"Then will I counsel," made answer Hagen, "if this must be,
That thou make thy request unto Siegfried, that he will bear with thee
The burden of this sore travail: this rede remaineth the best,
Seeing he hath alone clear knowledge of Brunhild's perilous test."

Said the King, "O Siegfried beloved, mine helper wilt thou fare
In my wooing of Brunhild the lovely? Do according to this my prayer,
And if for my bride I win her, and crown her my queenly wife,
For thee at all times will I venture honour and limb and life."

Answered him Siegfried, the scion of Siegmund the Lowland's lord:

"This will I do, if thou promise to give me for reward
The Lovely, the Queen of Women, Kriemhild thy sister, for bride:
For my toil for thee nor guerdon nor thank I desire beside."

"Even this do I promise," said Gunther, "O Siegfried, on thine hand;
And if Brunhild the lovely cometh hither to this my land,
Then will I give thee my sister to wife in requital for this;
So mayest thou with thy fair one for ever live in bliss."

Then by an oath did they pledge them, those noble warriors twain;
But thereof unto both was begotten exceeding toil and strain.
Or ever they brought into Rhineland that lady of princely blood,
In peril exceeding grievous those valiant heroes stood.

- C Now concerning the tameless Earth-dwarfs this thing have I heard folk say,
That they dwell in the mountain-caverns, and about their heads they lay
For helmets the Hoods of Darkness, and a strange power floweth thence;
For who weareth such on his body, therein hath perfect defence
- C From stroke of sword and from spear-thrust; while resteth on him this pall,
No man may in any wise see him, but he heareth and seeth all
So much as his soul desireth, yet himself may none behold;
And his strength to a giant's waxeth, as the tale in our ears hath been told.
Now the Hood of Darkness Siegfried for their help at need hath ta'en,
Even that which the valiant warrior had wrested with toil and strain
From Alberich, Dwarf of the Mountain, in the stormy days gone by.
So these to their journey addressed them in their fearless chivalry.
Now whene'er the stalwart Siegfried had donned that Hood of Night,
He gat from its overscreening exceeding fulness of might;
In twelve men's strength he clad him, as the runes of the old songs run.
So it fell, by the Dwarf-lords' cunning that glorious bride was won.
Yea, and so wondrous-shapen was that strange cloudy Hood,
That a man overpalled by its shrouding might do even that which he would,
Yea, after his heart's good pleasure, for of none was he espied:
Therewith did he win Queen Brunhild—and through her at the last he died.

"Now, ere we set forth on our journey, unto me, O Siegfried, declare
How best for our honour and glory over the sea we may fare.
Shall we lead 'neath our banners a war-host of knights unto Brunhild's land?
Swiftly may thrice ten thousand be arrayed in our warrior-band."
"How great soever the war-host that we take," spake Siegfried to him,
"The might of that queen and her fury be so exceeding grim,
That all our array should be blasted 'neath the storm of her battle-mood.
I will give to you better counsel, O valiant thanes and good:

In guise as of lone knights-errant let us sail adown the Rhine.
Touching who in our band shall be numbered, hear this counsel of mine:
With thee and with me two only let there go, none other beside,
That with these we may woo this lady, whatsoever thereafter betide.
Even I am one in the venture, the second must needs be thou,
And let the third be Hagen—fear not, we shall prosper now;—
For the fourth be chosen Dankwart, that lord of battle-might;
Then not a thousand aliens shall ever withstand us in fight.”

“Of this too,” spake King Gunther, “would I fain be certified—
For thereof should mine heart be gladdened—or ever forth we ride,
What manner of raiment in presence of Brunhild befits that we wear
Such as shall meetly beseem us: this, O Siegfried, declare.”
“In the richest of all rich vesture that is found in any land
Be arrayed evermore the people that in Brunhild’s presence stand.
Let us therefore appear before her in silk and in ermine and gold,
That none think scorn of our splendour when the tale thereafter is told.”
Answered the good thane Gunther: “Myself will go forthright
To my well-belovèd mother, if haply good in her sight
It shall be that her comely maidens may fashion attire so fair
As before that queenly lady with honour we may wear.”
Then out spake Hagen of Troneg, that lord of stately port:
“What boots it to trouble thy mother for service in such a sort?
Breathe but a word to thy sister of thy thought and thy desire,
And cunning fingers shall frame you exceeding rich attire.”

Then the King sent word to his sister that fain would he confer
With her, even he and Siegfried. But, or ever they came unto her,
That lovely one had adorned her in such royal-rich array
That with right scant heart-misgivings their coming did she stay.
Stood the ladies that waited upon her clad richly in their degree:
Then came to her bower the Princes: at their entering-in rose she
To meet them, from her high seat: ah, with what queenly grace
She greeted the noble stranger and her brother with radiant face!

"Blithe welcome unto my brother, and welcome to his friend!
I am fain," spake on that sweet one, "I am fain to know the end
Of your coming to this bower royal, what thing your hearts would crave.
I beseech you, let me hearken what the noble knights would have."

Then spake King Gunther: "Lady, this will I tell:—we bear,
For all our knightly courage, the burden of a care.
We be minded to ride a-wooing to a strange land far away,
And fain would we have for our journey exceeding goodly array."
"Now seat thee, belovèd brother," that child of kings 'gan say,
"And of this thing first instruct me, what fairest of fair ones be they
Whom ye are so fain to be wooing in a strange king's far-off land."
And therewith those chosen chieftains did the maiden take by the hand,
And with these twain onward paced she, and seated them royally
On splendour-gleaming couches—nought passing the truth tell I—
With imagery fair-fashioned with the red gold threads entwined:
Of a truth, in that bower of ladies fair pleasure might they find!
Flashes of swift love-lightning and of yearning of the heart,
From the eyes of each unto other, well might they oft-times dart!
For shrined in his soul he bare her; she was more unto him than life,
And ere long by noble service he won her to be his wife.

Then spake that goodly war-king: "Belovèd sister mine,
Our desire may be nowise accomplished saving with help of thine.
We would fare forth pleasure-questing to the Lady Brunhild's land,
And knights need fair arrayal that in presence of ladies stand."
Then spake that Daughter of Princes: "Belovèd brother mine,
If aught mine help may avail you to compass your design,
Hereof have utter assurance, I am ready to bear my part.
Yea, if another denied thee, it were pain unto Kriemhild's heart.
O noble knight, it needs not that ye ask as in fear and doubt:
What hest ye bring soever in lordly wise tell out.
Whatsoever may do you a pleasure, ready awaiteth mine aid,
And with all mine heart I do it." So spake that winsome maid.

"Our will is, sister belovèd, to array us in vesture fair,
And we pray that thine own white fingers may this our apparel prepare.
And let these thy maidens be heedful that each man be arrayed like a king;
For no gainsaying shall turn us from this our journeying."

Answered and spake that Fair One: "To this my request give heed:
Silks have we beside us in plenty; command that one bring for our need
The gemstones that gleam on your bucklers; these on the silk will we lay."
Thereunto Gunther and Siegfried glad-hearted answered yea.
"Now who be the journeying-fellows," the Princess asked again,
"Who shall wend so goodly-apparelled unto where this queen doth reign?"
"Myself am the fourth: first Siegfried; two of my liegemen withal,
Dankwart and Hagen, shall journey with us to her palace-hall.
Heed well, O sister belovèd, what now unto thee we say:—
See to it, that we four comrades three several times a day
May through four days change our raiment, and still go gorgeously,
So that none, when we pass from her country, may scoff at our bravery."
With outpouring of thanks, from her chamber then passed they in knightly wise.
Then to seek help of her women did Kriemhild the princess arise,
And of all her bower-maidens thirty summoned she
Which above all others were cunning in needle-mastery.
On white Arabian samite—as the snow was its pearly sheen—
And on far-fetched velvet of Orient, as the springtide clover green,
Laid they the flashing gemstones,—O rich was the vesture and rare,
For by hands of Kriemhild the lovely were the garments shapen fair.
Sea-otter furs and sealskins for lining thereof chose they,
A marvel to all beholders—was never such rich array!—
And with silk did they overlay them, and drew the seams with gold.
Sooth, many a marvellous story of the splendour thereof hath been told.
Out of the land of the Morians came the goodliest silk on earth,
And from sun-smitten plains of Libya: on children of royal birth
Was ne'er seen costlier vesture; and of these was enough and to spare.
And through all the threadwork woven was the love that Kriemhild bare.

For the costly raiment craved for by those far-voyagers
She lavished with love ungrudging the ermine's argent furs—
Soft whiteness gleaming whiter for its flecks of coal-black hue—
Such as valorous knights wear proudly in a great king's retinue.
Out of bezels of gold of Arabia the glorious gemstones gleamed:
For those watchful eyes no smallest pearl too tiny seemed.
So fashioned they all that raiment ere seven weeks fled away:
And withal for the good knights ready by this was their war-array.

Now when all at the last lay ready, men saw by the Rhine-river strand
A galley of stout oak builded by the cunning craftsman's hand,
Wherein down Rhine-flood the heroes on to the sea should be borne.
And by this were the noble maidens by their labour of love outworn.
Then they sent to the knights the message that ready all things were
In the which they would fain go bravely, that raiment passing-fair;
Accomplished was all they had prayed for, and the labour of love was done.
Now therefore beside Rhine-river no more would they linger on.
So then to those gallant comrades was a message from Kriemhild brought
To come and behold the apparel that her hands had newly wrought,
If perchance for the heroes' wearing it were over short or long:
And behold, it was all just measure, and they thanked that maiden-throng.
Into whosoever presence they came, all men must say
That never on earth had they looked on more passing-fair array.
Blithe-hearted might they wear it in the palace of proudest queen,
For of goodlier knights' apparel had none or heard or seen.

So then to these noble maidens all-courteous thanks they gave.
And now must the bold knights-errant for leave of parting crave.
With courtesy right gentle they spake their last farewell:
Ah, then were there bright eyes troubled and dim as the tears fast fell.
She spake: "O brother beloved, 'twere better that here ye stayed—
Yea, wiselier done I account it—and wooed some other maid
Where ye should not thus be enforced to hazard limb and life:
Ye should find in a land near-lying no less a high-born wife.

Already their hearts foreboded* the trouble darkening near.
All needs must weep, whatsoever words were spoken of cheer:
The gold on their bosoms gleaming grew dim with the hot tears stained,
With the tears that aye fell earthward from sorrowing eyes down-rained.
Then spake she: "O Lord Siegfried, to thy love and thy loyalty
Hereby do I commit him, this brother beloved of me,
That nothing of peril harm him afar in Brunhild's land."
And the hero pledged him, and swore it on the Lady Kriemhild's hand.
And he spake, that noble war-thane: "So long as endure my days,
No shadow of trouble, Princess, shall fall across thy ways.
I will bring him back into Rhineland—I swear it by life and limb!—
By peril unscathed." Low bowed she with soft eyes thanking him.

Their shields with the red gold gleaming down to the shore bare they;
And they laid withal in the galley their goodly war-array;
And aboard men led their horses: on the decks now stand their feet—
O me, what bitter weeping brake forth from maidens sweet!
Now thronged was many a casement with ladies lovely-eyed,
And a great wind lifted the galley as they shook the white sails wide.
So out on the Rhine they floated, those proud hearts, bound for the sea.
Then answered and spake King Gunther: "Our pilot, who shall he be?"
"Even that will I," said Siegfried: "from hence on can I steer
Your ship on the flood, stout heroes; thereof have ye no fear;
For the printless paths of the waters unto me be throughly known."
So are these from the land Burgundian with hearts exultant gone.

Then Siegfried set hand to a massy staff such as shipmen wield,
And the ship at his mighty thrusting out from the wharf-side reeled.
Gunther the dauntless hero on the tiller hath laid his hand:
So the glorious war-swift champions swung out clear from the land.
Of meats they bare rich plenty, and therewithal good wine,
The best that from foaming wine-fats was pressed beside the Rhine;
The while their horses rested each tethered safe in stall:
The keel slid onward so smoothly, no hurt might to these befall.

The wind in the strong-twined sail-ropes drew with unresting might :
Twice ten miles onward they fleted ere sank over earth the night ;
Down stream so slid they seaward with a breeze that followed fast.
—Ah me, but their stalwart labour brought sorrow enow at the last !

And now with the twelfth day's dawning, as singeth the ancient lay,
The wind in the white sails straining had borne them far on their way
Unto Isenstein the fortress, the hold in Brunhild's land.
All strange, save only to Siegfried, it seemed to that warrior-band.
When its coronal of towers was beheld of Gunther the King,
And the land's wide-sweeping marches, he spake sore marvelling :
"Make answer to me, friend Siegfried, dost thou know yonder strand?
Unto whom appertain these castles, unto whom that lordly land?
Never in all my life-days—this thing I needs must own—
Fortress so goodly-built mine eyes unto me have shown,
No, not in any country, as this that here we see.
He which could rear it skyward, a mighty man was he!"

Answered and spake to him Siegfried : "Yea, well do I know all these :
The land and its diadem fortress, they be Brunhild's seignories,
And Isenstein yon fortress, even that whereof I have told :
There many a lovely lady this day shall your eyes behold.
Now hearken my counsel, ye heroes : be ye one and all in a tale,
And with one accord affirm ye—this only, I trow, shall avail :
For if to the presence of Brunhild this day we go, I ween,
We must needs be exceeding wary who stand before that queen.
When we see that lovely lady amidst her knightly train,
One thing, O far-famed heroes, must ye for truth maintain,
How that Gunther is my liege-lord, and I his vassal alone :
So that which his heart hath longed for shall by this device be won¹."

¹ Siegfried's reason, which critics and translators, from Carlyle downward, have left unexplained, seems to be this :—Siegfried was already known to Brunhild, and was the mightiest man she knew. Hence, if she saw him acting as a mere vassal to Gunther, she would infer that the latter was yet mightier, an impression to be confirmed by his apparent victory in the test ; and so her reluctance to abide by the result, which, had she resisted, would have proved insuperable, would be more likely to be overcome.

Then the heroes all consented, even as he counselled, to do.
Was none so proud of spirit that he dared say nay thereto.
So they spake even after his bidding; and for them full well was it done,
When Gunther the King beheld her, Brunhild the lovely one.
"Thus I abase me," said Siegfried, "not for thy love alone,
But to win thy sister, the fairest of maidens, for mine own.
She is unto me as mine own soul, she is dear unto me as my life.
Blithe am I to render service that shall get her to me for wife."

VII

HOW THE WARRIOR-MAID WAS WON TO BE GUNTHER'S BRIDE

Now while thus they communed, their galley fled onward, and drew nigh
To that seaward-fronting castle; and now did the King espy
High up at the open casements full many a maiden fair,
And his spirit within him was troubled that he wist not who they were.
Then of his comrade Siegfried straightway questioned he:
"Look upon yonder maidens, and say, be they known unto thee,
Even they which be downward gazing o'er the sea as we draw anigh?
Whosoe'er be their lord, of a surety is their bearing proud and high."
Then spake the valiant Siegfried: "Look keenly and closely now
On the faces of yonder maidens, and then confess to me thou
Which wouldst thou take, were the choosing accorded to thee as of right."
"Yea, that will I," answered Gunther, that keen and valiant knight.
"I mark, of all those fair ones, at yonder casement one;
It is she in the snow-white raiment: like unto her is there none.
She of mine eyes is the chosen: so sweet is her beauty's pride,
That, an I might have the decision, it is she that should be my bride."
"By the sight of the eyes hast thou chosen, and a fair choice have they
found!
Even she is the noble Brunhild, of the beauty world-renowned,

The Star of thine heart's strong yearning, the choice of thy mind and thy will."

King Gunther gazed, and he deemed her ever sweeter and fairer still.

Then that Daughter of Kings commanded that her winsome maidens should go
From the casements: she would not suffer that there they stand for a show
And a feast for the eyes of strangers. Was none dared disobey;
Yet that which they did thereafter is told in the ancient lay.
They arrayed them in fairest adorning for the stranger knights to see—
As fair maids have done ever, since time began to be;—
Thereafter through half-drawn curtains they peered, those dainty spies,
At the heroes, to feed fair woman's immemorial desire of the eyes.

There were four, and none other heroes which came unto that land.
Bold Siegfried led a war-steed from the galley's side to the strand.
And the lovely ladies peering through the casements saw that thing,
And they deemed that exceeding worship was rendered to the King.
There in their sight was he holding that gallant steed by the rein,
That stately battle-trampler, strong and of noble strain;
Yea, he held it till King Gunther firm in the saddle sat.
So served him Siegfried—service that thereafter he wholly forgot!
Then brought he forth of the galley his own good steed withal.
Never ere then had he rendered the service done by a thrall,
That he should stand by the stirrup while heroes mounted the selle!
And those fair ones from the casements that gazed saw all full well.
In the selfsame fashion accoutred were those princely heroes twain;
For white as snow were their horses, and their raiment white without stain.
As the one was, so was the other; and lovely the shield-rims shone
On the arms of the heroes hanging, flashing brightness like to the sun.
Gleaming with precious gemstones were saddle and breast-band strait.
So rode they in princely fashion before Brunhild's palace-gate;
And a chiming of bells all-golden that hung from their trappings was heard
As they came into that far country by their princely hearts on-stirred.

With spear-head newly-whetted, with goodly-fashioned sword
Which hung even down to the spur-tips, on rode each kingly lord.
Yea, the glaives of the mighty-hearted were broad of blade and keen.
And all was marked of Brunhild, that noble maiden-queen.
And with these two princes Dankwart and his brother Hagen came;
And these were arrayed, as telleth the tale of olden fame,
In raiment of raven blackness, with rich work broidered o'er.
New, long and broad and goodly withal were the shields that they bore.
From the far land of India came many a precious stone
From the which up and down their vesture was a starry splendour thrown.
Their galley all unwarded they left, in the surf as it swayed.
So they rode to the castle-porchway, those heroes unafraid.

They marked towers six and eighty that crowned that fortress-wall,
Three palaces wide-builed, and a goodly feasting-hall:
It was wrought of the lordly marble, as the lealand grass it was green;
And therein amidst of her people sat a child of kings, the Queen.
Bars clanged and bolts shot backward, the gates of the burg swung wide.
Forth running to meet the strangers the knights of Brunhild hied,
And received them as guests be welcomed, into their Lady's land;
And they took in charge the war-steed, and received the shield from the hand.
And a chamberlain bespake them: "Yield up your swords unto us,
And withal your gleaming hauberks." "We will nowise suffer it thus;
Ourselves be minded to bear them!" cried Hagen of Troneg the grim.
Then Siegfried turned, and the manner of the kingdom set forth unto him:
"In this burg is it ever the custom according to that I say,
That the Queen's guests go unweaponed within her courts alway.
Hence from our hands let them bear them, so all shall be done aright."
Grudging and loth was the yielding of Hagen, Gunther's knight.
They poured them the wine of welcome, they led them to chambers fair.
Knights many swift in service in the halls of the palace there were
That to and fro were hasting clad all in goodly array;
Yet, for all their splendour, their glances to those goodlier four would stray.

Now word is brought unto Brunhild, and the tale to her ears hath come
Of those unknown knights-errant which have fared to her island-home
Sailing over the sea-flood, and attired each man like a king.
Then the Maiden royal and lovely fell to questioning:
And thus spake the Maid-queen Brunhild: "Now shall ye tell unto me
Who the unknown knights-errant may peradventure be
Whom yonder I see in my castle, each man like a kingdom's lord;
And for love of whom these heroes have journeyed hitherward."

Then of her train one answered: "I needs must own, O Queen,
That of yonder company no man heretofore have I seen;
Yet amidst them is one man standing who beareth Siegfried's guise;
And in loyal love I counsel, receive him in gracious wise.
And the second his comrade appeareth so worship-worthy to me,
That if haply he wield power royal, a king may he verily be
Over princely domains far-stretching, if he hold such sway indeed;
For he stands mid the rest, meseemeth, as one of royal seed.
For the third of these faring-fellows, he seemeth stern of mien,
Yet none the less of stateliest stature, O mighty Queen.
Swift, keen be his glances as lightning, and flash still to and fro:
Dour and quick unto anger his spirit shall be, I trow.
For the youngest, of all praise worthy he seemeth in mine eyes.
A gallant knight we account him, yet withal of such winsome guise
That the grace of a maiden shineth through all his mien high-born;
Yet verily might all tremble to deal to him scathe or scorn.
For all his gentle bearing and his goodlihead withal,
Yet many a comely woman should weep for her lover's fall,
If his wrath to the battle were kindled: right sinewy-shapen is he,
In all manner of knightly virtues a flower of chivalry."

Then spake that Daughter of Princes: "Bring royal raiment to me.
Now if yon mighty Siegfried to my country be come oversea
To seek my love in his wooing, he imperilleth his life.
Nowise I dread him so sorely as to stoop to be his wife!"

So Brunhild the passing lovely full soon was splendour-arrayed ;
 And there in her train paced hallward many a winsome maid :
 Five-score, nay more peradventure, all costly-vestured came :
 And to look on the guests with Brunhild went many a noble dame.
 To right and to left went marching strong thanes of Isenland,
 Vassal-knights of Brunhild, each man with his sword in his hand,
 Five hundred, yea more, it may be—for the guests an evil sight !
 Then rose from their seats at her coming the Four, those men of might.

Now when that Daughter of Princes looked upon Siegfried's face—
 Would ye know of her greeting?—she bespake him with cold and stately grace :
 "Now welcome be thou, O Siegfried, in thy coming to this my land.
 What meaneth this your journey?—prithee, cause me to understand."
 "Exceeding thank do I render, O Daughter of Princes, to thee,
 That thou deignest to greet me, Brunhild, Lady of Courtesy,
 Before this knight hath been greeted, who standeth before me in place,
 For that he is my liege-lord :—Siegfried could well have foregone such grace !
 He is the King of Rhineland—what need I say of him more ?
 All for thy love have we voyaged far overseas to thy shore.
 Fixed is his heart to woo thee, whatsoever thereof betide.
 While yet there is time, bethink thee :—my lord turns never aside.
 He hath to name King Gunther ; wide is his royal domain.
 For thy love he comes hitherward wooing ; nought else he desireth to gain.
 Forasmuch as he hath commanded, on this journey have I too come.
 If so be he were not my liege-lord, sooth, I had forborne therefrom."

She answered : "If thou be his vassal, and he thy suzerain,
 Then must he abide the trial, the tests that I ever ordain.
 If he stand at the end the victor, I yield myself his wife ;
 But if I overcome—bethink you, ye all have staked your life."
 Then out spake Hagen of Troneg : "Suffer us, Queen, to see
 To what manner of play thou dost challenge. Ere Gunther my lord unto thee
 Shall yield up the mastery, surely he shall strive with bitter strain.
 A maiden so passing lovely full well to his wife might he gain."

"He shall cast the massy quoit-stone, and far as it flies shall he leap,
And shall hurl against me the javelin—hold not this trial cheap!
Ye may lose not honour only: your life and limb be at stake.
Therefore, I rede you, bethink you!" So that fair woman spake.

Then Siegfried the battle-helper drew the King apart,
And he prayed him to speak out boldly all that was in his heart
Unto the Queen replying—"Fear not for the end," he said;
"By my cunning devices against her full well will I shield thine head."
Then answered and spake King Gunther: "O child of a royal line,
Lay on me what task thou pleasest: were it harder than this of thine,
Yet for the sake of thy beauty I abide all willingly.
If thou be not won by my wooing, then smite mine head from me."

So soon as the words had been spoken, straightway that Amazon-maid
Commanded, as meet she deemed it, that the trial be not delayed;
And she caused them to bring her armour, and array for the contest grim,
Even a golden hauberk and a shield of ample rim.
A silk-lined battle-tunic about her that maiden drew—
Nor point nor edge of weapon in fight might pierce it through—
Of fine-dressed fells of lions from the land of Libya brought,
With broidery round its borders flashing radiant-wrought.
Meanwhile her knights were galling those guests with threat and jeer:
And there stood Dankwart and Hagen exceeding heavy of cheer;
For their souls foreboded the issue that might to their lord betide;
And they said in their hearts: "This journey shall we knights dearly abide!"

But Siegfried the while, the resourceful, hath hasted swiftly away,
Ere any was ware of his going, unto where the galley lay;
And he found the Hood of Darkness in its secret hiding-place there,
And with speed he did it upon him, and none thereof was ware.
With speed he returned: of her warriors found he a great array
In the place by the Queen appointed for the wooer's perilous play:

But he passed through the midst of them stealthwise, and still was beheld
of none

Of the multitude there thronging: by magic thus was it done.
For the lists a wide ring drew they where that grim sport should be
In the presence of knights of Brunhild, that the trial all might see,
Bold warriors full seven hundred; and their weapons of war all bare;
And whoso prevailed in the contest, the truth should these declare.

Now in the lists stood Brunhild, in her mail of the adamant rings,
As though she would straight do battle for the land of all earth's kings.
And all her silken vesture was with gold bands lapped about;
But thereunder the lilies and roses of her lovely flesh shone out.
Now came to the lists her henchmen, and unto her hands they brought
A goodly shield of battle: of the ruddy gold was it wrought
With bands of steel hard-welded, a thing for a giant to sway:
And under that mighty heart-fence would the fair one play the play.
From left unto right within it did a goodly arm-brace pass
With emeralds set thereover, green as the lealand grass;
And their sight-bewildering sparklings flashed o'er the gold thereof.
Sooth, valour he needed and prowess who would win that maiden's love!
Stood a boss out in front of the buckler, as the olden bard hath sung;
It was three whole spans in thickness, yet lightly its mass she swung.
With burnished steel and with gleaming gold full rich was the shield;
And scarce could her chamberlain, holpen of three, bear this to the field.
Now soon as Hagen the stalwart beheld that Targe of Dread,
Muttered the Lord of Troneg sorely disquieted:
"How is it with thee, King Gunther?—thou hazardest limb and life!
She whom thou fain wouldst be wooing were a very demon-wife!"

Now telleth the song of the raiment of that fair-clad Amazon.
With glistening silk of the Orient her battle-doublet shone—
Ah, it was costly and queenly!—flashed in beholders' eyes
From the vest of that Daughter of Princes full many a stone of price.

A mighty spear broad-headed then brought they unto the Queen,
Which she hurled evermore in the Contest of Wooers, a javelin keen,
Gigantic, stubborn-shafted, heavy and long, and wide
Were the fierce death-whetted edges thereof on either side.
Of the weight of that fearful javelin be marvellous stories told.
Of five-score pounds of iron was forged its massy mould:
Three of the warriors of Brunhild staggering bare that spear.
Then the heart of the noble Gunther grew heavy with his fear.
Under his breath he whispered: "What task have I now in hand?
Though the Foul Fiend rose out of Hell's Pit, against her how should he stand?
Were I, with my life delivered, once more beside the Rhine,
Long should she bide untroubled by any wooing of mine!"

C Well may ye deem what burden of disquiet his spirit bare.
Then all his harness of battle they set before him there:
And soon the mighty Rhine-lord lapped in his war-mail stood.
But the spirit of Hagen was darkened, and he chafed in bitter mood.

Then out spake Hagen's brother, Dankwart the valiant: "I rue—
Yea, my inmost soul repenteth that hither we came to woo!
Good knights, time was, men called us! Shall we tamely yield our breath?
Here in the land of the stranger shall a woman do us to death?
Sore vexed am I for our folly, that ever we came to her land!
Ha, if that my brother Hagen but grasped his sword in hand,
And I had also my war-glaive, soon these should abate their pride,
And should droop the eyes of scorning, yon vassals at Brunhild's side!
I would teach them to go softly, full well I ween!—O yea,
Though oaths had I sworn a thousand to keep the peace this day!—
Ere I saw my beloved liege-lord lie trapped in a foul death-snare,
Doomed to forsake life—quotha!—because this woman is fair!"
"Ay, and we would unshackled from this land win forth clear,"
Answered his brother Hagen, "had we but the armour here
That we lack for the clash of the onset, and the trusty battle-blade;
Then soon should the pride be humbled of yonder stalwart maid!"

Full well overheard were his murmurs of the Lady royally born.
 She cast back over her shoulder a smile of careless scorn:—
 "And he deemeth himself so valiant?—e'en bring them hitherward
 Their armour, and give to the heroes each his keen-edged sword!
 C As little I reckon of them whether their harness and swords they bear,"
 Spake that Daughter of Princes, "or weaponless stand there.
 I fear the strength of no man that is known of me unto this day;
 Yea, and I look to o'ermaster yon king in the battle-play."
 When, after the Maid's commandment, unto these were their weapons brought,
 The face of the valiant Dankwart for very joy flushed hot.
 "Play now what play ye be minded!" he cried, that goodly thane;
 "Unfettered now is Gunther: we have our swords again!"

Once more of the might of Brunhild terrible proof is shown:
 Men into the ring come bearing an exceeding massy stone,
 Most huge, a quoit for a Titan, broad withal and round.
 Scarce twelve of her thanes could bear it into love's strange battle-ground.
 Even this ever hurled she in contest, when the flight had been sped of the spear.
 Thereat were the lords Burgundian thrilled with foreboding fear.
 'Who is this that my lord would be wooing?—Beshrew her!" Hagen cried:
 "In the nethermost hell might she fitly be plighted the Foul Fiend's bride!"

On her snow-white arms the Maiden her tunic-sleeves uprolled,
 And she stretched forth her hand to the arm-brace of the shield, and took fast
 hold:
 She hath swung up on high the javelin—lo, the banners of battle unfold!—
 Then the hearts of those two heroes at the fire in her eyes waxed cold.
 And except in that moment Siegfried to his friend's help had drawn nigh,
 She had reft the life from Gunther the King right certainly:
 But he stole to his side all viewless, and softly touched his hand;
 Then, as at a spirit's presence, well-nigh was the King unmanned;
 For the bold knight thought: "Who touched me?—do I stand on enchanted
 ground?"
 For, look as he would all round him, no man thereby he found.

Then a whisper came—"It is Siegfried: I, thy companion, am here.
Thou therefore in yon Queen's presence be wholly void of fear.
Yield up from thy grasp the buckler, and let me bear it for thee,
And lay up in thine heart the counsel which now thou hearest of me:—
Be thine all feigning of action, by me shall the work be done."
Then leapt his heart for gladness, when he knew it was Siegmund's son.
"Ever hide thou my cunning devices, speak word thereof unto none:
So by the proud King's Daughter shall little enow be won,
Through thee and thine overthrowing, of the glory she thinketh to glean.
Behold her, how yonder she standeth with scornful-arrogant mien!"

Then, then that royal maiden hurled across the field
With her uttermost strength the javelin at the mighty and broad new shield
Which braced on his left arm firmly the son of Siegelind bore:
Leapt sparks from the steel, as the wind-blast sweepeth the chaff from a floor.
The fang of the mighty javelin through the shield's whole thickness crashed;
And it glanced from the warrior's armour, that the fire from the ring-mail
flashed.

Back from the shock went reeling either stalwart thane:—
Except for the Hood of Darkness, of a surety had both been slain!
Yea, from the mouth of Siegfried the valiant burst forth blood;
But he sprang full-height in a moment; then gripped that war-thane good
The selfsame spear which the maiden through the rim of the shield had
sped.

Then Siegfried's strong hand backward swung it above his head.
But he said in his heart: "I will pierce not the maiden sweet to see."
Backward therefore the deadly point of the lance turned he;
Then hurled he the spear butt-foremost full at the rings of her mail:
Loudly they rang at the smiting of the hand that was strong to prevail.
Flashed out the fire from her hauberk, as flies dust caught by the wind.
Ha, that was a cast most mighty of the son of Siegelind!
For all her strength, she prevailed not against that shock to stand.
In veriest truth, such spear-cast came never from Gunther's hand!

But the Fairest of fair ones, Brunhild, leapt to her feet forthright:—
“For thy good spear-cast I thank thee, O Gunther, noble knight!”
She cried; for she weened that the hero by his own strength this had done,
Nor dreamed she how that behind him had stolen a mightier one.
Sped she from that place swiftly, for her fury stung her as flame:
She grasped the stone, she upheaved it, that royal Amazon dame.
Far thence from her hand that boulder with her uttermost might she swung,
Then after the cast far leapt she, that her mail-rings clashed and rung.
Twelve fathoms away from the caster crashed that stone to the ground;
But farther yet than the quoit-flight did the high-born maiden bound.
Then strode that swift war-helper, Siegfried, where lay the stone:—
Men saw but the arm of Gunther, the speeder thereof saw none.
Mighty of limb was Siegfried, valiant and tall was he;
Farther than Brunhild he hurled it, he leapt yet farther than she;
And he added thereto a marvel, a deed of magic might,
That he bore in his leap King Gunther, by the power of the Hood of Night.
Lo, now is the great leap taken; behind on the earth lay the stone.
Gunther it was, the war-thane, whom men saw there alone.
Then the face of Brunhild the lovely with helpless anger burned.
—Lo, Siegfried from King Gunther the imminent death hath turned!

Then unto the host of her vassals Queen Brunhild looked, and she cried,
When she saw that hero standing safe on the lists' far side:
“O ye my friends and liegemen, hitherward come straightway!
Ye be all unto this King Gunther vassals from this day.”
Down laid each valiant warrior his weapons from his hand,
And low at the feet they bowed them of the Lord of Burgundia-land;
Yea, unto Gunther the mighty bent many a valiant knight,
For they weened he had won that contest by his own unaided might.
With chivalrous grace and in loving wise he greeted the maid;
And now that Queen of Beauty her hand in his hath laid,
And to him all rule she yielded over all her wide domain.
Then glad in his heart was Hagen, that bold and knightly thane.

She besought that noble chieftain to her palace builded wide
With her to return, and thither strode Gunther at her side.
There all men fearing before him in homage lowly bent.
So the brethren, Dankwart and Hagen, thereat were well content.

Now Siegfried, the swift war-helper, in all deep craft was wise:
Back bare he the Hood of Darkness, and hid it from all men's eyes.
Then he passed to the hall, where fair ones sat in their bravery;
And he spake unto King Gunther, and cunningly dealt he:—
“Now why, Lord King, dost thou tarry, that the games not yet begin
Whereof this Queen made promise, and challenged thee herein?
Let us now full soon behold them, and know of the trial's stress.”
—As nothing knowing of all things he spake in his wiliness.
Then spake that Daughter of Princes: “How might this marvel befall
That thou of the games, Lord Siegfried, hast witnessed nought at all,
Wherein was the victory given unto this King Gunther's hand?”
Out spake and answered Hagen, the knight of Burgundia-land:
“Thou, Queen,” he said, “didst trouble our spirit exceedingly:
Therefore was Siegfried the good knight abiding by ship and sea
In the hour when the Lord of Rhineland overcame in the wooer's play;
So nought thereof he knoweth,” did Gunther's liegeman say.
“Now welcome to me be the tidings,” Siegfried the hero replied,
“That here in such wise a wooer hath humbled thy tameless pride,
And that some one lives to be master at last over thee and thine!
Now shalt thou, noble maiden, fare with us to the Rhine.”

Made answer that high-born Lady: “Not yet may this thing be,
Ere I have summoned my kinsmen and them of my vassalry.
It is all unmeet that so lightly I depart from this my land:
Ere then must my nearest and dearest be bidden from every hand.”
Through the length and the breadth of her kingdom she made her messengers
ride;
And all her friends and her vassals she gathered from every side.

Wherefore in swift obedience unto Isenstein came they ;
And to each and to all of them gave she most royal-rich array.
Yea, day after day came riding from far, came early and late,
The best of the folk of Brunhild in throngs to her fortress-gate.
"Beshrew our folly," cried Hagen, "in consenting to this thing!
To our own undoing await we Queen Brunhild's following.
If these with all their war-might throng into this land thus—
Queen Brunhild's secret purpose is all unknown unto us,—
What if she be wroth against us? Then were our plight forlorn:
So were the noble maiden for our utter discomfiture born!"

Then answered Siegfried the mighty: "This will I countervail.
So will I deal, that the purpose that disquieteth you shall fail.
Them that shall help I will bring you hitherward unto this shore,
Even chosen knights, such a war-host as ye have not seen heretofore.
Ye shall ask not concerning mine absence: I will journey away from this place.
God have your honour in keeping, and guard it safe for a space!
Soon shall ye see me returning: a thousand men will I bring,
And these the mightiest war-thanes that ever followed king."
"Only not long do thou linger," the King made answer again,
"Forasmuch as we of thine helping be most exceeding fain."
He said, "Ere ye see me returning of a truth shall the days be few:
And this shall ye tell Queen Brunhild, that hence I was sent of you."

VIII

HOW SIEGFRIED WENT TO THE NIBLUNG LAND FOR HIS KNIGHTS

So thence to the strand and the haven Siegfried hied him away
In the Hood of Darkness shrouded. Now a boat by the wharf-side lay,
And thereinto from men's eyes hidden stepped Siegfried Siegmund's son,
And he thrust it forth o'er the waters, as it were by a wind driven on.

Now no one beheld that steersman, though swift was the barge's flight
Sped on by the strength of Siegfried, so passing-great was his might.
Who marked it, deemed that it drifted before a strange strong wind:
None dreamed it was driven of Siegfried the child of Siegelind.
In the space of that day and the night-tide that followed was he brought
To a certain land, by the mighty strength wherewithal he wrought.
It was leagues full three-and-thirty, yea, more peradventure, away.
This was the Land of the Niblungs, where he won the Hoard for a prey.
Alone stepped forth the hero on to an eyot wide;
And he fastened, that knight resourceful, the boat to the river-side.
Then he passed unto where a castle stood on a craggy bent,
And therein sought harbourage, even as a wayfarer toil-forspent.

So he came before that burg-gate: fast locked and barred did it stand;
For jealous aye for their honour were the warders of that land.
On the massy door 'neath the gate-tower did the unknown one begin
Straightway to beat, and his smiting roused up therewithin
A mighty one and a giant, that there kept watch and ward,
And night and day beside him his armour lay and his sword:
And he spake: "Who knocketh so roughly on the burg-gate therewithout?"
In a feigned voice Siegfried the valiant sent back the answering shout:
"Up! I am a knight belated. Knave, open to me forthright,
Else I with strokes heavy-handed shall gall a laggard wight
Who loveth to keep his chamber and lie in the sluggard's bed!"
Then exceeding wrath was the warder for the word that Siegfried said.
His armour hath that fierce giant in haste on his huge limbs done,
And his helmet hath he settled on his head, that mighty one.
In haste hath he snatched his buckler and the castle gate swung wide:
In a fury of rage against Siegfried forth did he swiftly stride.
"How dar'st thou wake," he shouted, "all these of our gallant band?"
Then fell fast-raining buffets, dealt by his mighty hand:
From the shield of the noble stranger glanced fierce blows many and rude,
Yet the steel shards flew from his shield-rim as the giant warder hewed

With a massy mace of iron, that the thane was hard-bestead.
Well-nigh began the hero the very death to dread
At the smiting of that huge porter, as the lightning vehement.
Yet was his liege-lord Siegfried with his faithfulness well content.
So furious was their battling, the keep rang echoing round,
And afar in the hall of King Niblung was heard the tempest-sound:
Yet at last he o'ermastered the warder, and bound him foot and hand.
—Ere long men laughed at the story through all the Niblung land.

As the thunder of that conflict through the mountain's heart far rolled,
It was heard of the Dwarf, the dauntless Albrich, the tameless-souled.
In haste he armed him, and thither he ran, and behold, he found
That noble stranger-warrior, and the giant warder bound.
Of fiery mood was Albrich, and mighty strength he had:
In hauberk-rings and in helmet was his body for battle clad;
And a morning-star huge-headed of gold had he gripped in his hand.
With swift feet rushed he onward unto where did Siegfried stand.
Seven balls spike-studded and massy by chains from the mace-head swung,
Wherewith on the shield that the hero's arm before him flung
He hailed down blows so bitter that in fragments all it flew,
So that somewhat adread that noble guest for his own life grew.
The shield by that flail of battle shattered he flung from his hand,
And he thrust back into the scabbard Balmung, the long keen brand:
He would smite not therewith, lest his faithful seneschal should die;
For aye was he noble-hearted, and the flower of chivalry.
But the hero leapt upon Albrich with his strong bare hands alone,
And fast by the beard he gripped him, that hoary-headed one,
And he mightily plucked, that the Earth-dwarf shrieked for very pain,
As the hero-knight tamed Albrich with his fingers' bitter strain.
Loud cried the erstwhile aweless: "Ah, leave my life unto me!
Had I not to another hero sworn true fealty,
And bowed myself in homage to be vassal to him for aye,
Thee would I serve to my death-day," did the crafty-wise one say.

Then bound he Albrich, even as he bound that giant before :
Of a truth the prowess of Siegfried galled him exceeding sore !
Then asked the Dwarf of the hero : " I pray thee, how named art thou ? "
And he answered : " My name is Siegfried : thou hast heard that name, I trow. "
Spake Albrich : " For these tidings of a truth mine heart is fain !
Of thy strength, the strength of a hero, hast thou given proof again,
Hast shown how well thou art worthy to be lord of the Niblung Land.
So thou spare me for that I withstood thee, will I do all thy command. "
Answered the good knight Siegfried : " Up then, and speedily
Bring thou unto me my bravest which here in the fortress be,
A thousand Niblungs : before me now would I see them brought. "
But the cause for the which he desired them thus, he told him not.

Then Albrich and the giant from their bonds the hero unbound ;
And the Dwarf to the place ran swiftly where the Niblung knights slept
 sound ;
And in eager haste he uproused them, the men of the Niblung array,
Crying, " Up, ye heroes ! to Siegfried your lord must ye go straightway. "
Upsprang they from their couches, and they clad themselves with speed ;
And a thousand eager warriors stood arrayed in battle-weed ;
And he led them to where Prince Siegfried abode them in that great hall ;
And they gave to him loving greeting by word and by deed withal.
They have kindled a hundred torches, they have poured the wine for their lord ;
And for that their speedy coming he thanked them with gracious word ;
And he said to them : " Now shall ye follow with me far hence oversea. "
And those valiant knights and loyal consented willingly.

Stout vassal-knights three thousand had gathered at his call,
And of these he chose a thousand, the goodliest of them all ;
And their helmets were brought to the chosen, and all their harness of war,
Forasmuch as their lord would lead them unto Brunhild's land afar.
And he spake : " O knights true-hearted, I would say unto you this thing :
Ye must take rich raiment for wearing in the presence of Queen and King ;

For there shall ye look upon many a maiden fair to see:
Therefore ye needs must adorn you with seemly bravery.”
C Now perchance might a simple-one chide me—“Not sooth is this thy song!
How might in the castle be gathered so vast a knightly throng?
Wherewithal should all these be nourished, and whence purvey them attire?
Though realms he had thirty, never had he brought to pass his desire.”
C Tush!—surely ye know this—Siegfried was a passing-wealthy lord:
He had that realm in possession, and his was the Niblung Hoard.
So he gave to his war-thanes freely so much as they lacked, nay, more.
How much he lavished soever, unminished still was his store.

Lo, in the dimness of dawning forth on the sea they fare:
—Ho for the eager warriors that Siegfried had gathered there!—
With goodly battle-horses and lordly attire sailed they:
So unto the land of Brunhild they came, a knightly array.
On her battlements many a fair one stood gazing over the sea.
Then spake that Daughter of Princes: “Knoweth any man who they be
Whom yonder I see far fleeting o’er the waters in gallant show?
How rich be the sails that waft them!—they be whiter than driven snow!”
Then spake the Lord of Rhineland: “My royal train be these
Whom I left as I journeyed hither not far behind overseas.
I have sent to speed them hither: lo, now be they come, O Queen.”
With wondering eyes the coming of those knightly guests was seen.
Men saw on a ship’s prow Siegfried standing foremost of all
In princely vesture: beside him was many a warrior tall.
Then spake that Daughter of Princes: “Lord King, I pray thee, declare:
Shall I greet these guests at their coming, or shall I from greeting forbear?”
He said: “Thou shalt go to meet them with welcome in thy face
Forth of thy palace-portals, that none may doubt of thy grace.”
So did that Daughter of Princes according as Gunther bade:
But cold and haughty greeting from Brunhild Siegfried had.
So they gave them lodging, and safely laid by their battle-gear.
And by this were guests so many there gathered from far and near,

That for these too strait was the city as they thronged on every hand.
And now would the valiant heroes fare home to Burgundia-land.

Then spake that Daughter of Princes: "Unto him were I thankful-souled
Who for me would deal out my bounty of my silver and my gold
Unto my guests and King Gunther's; for full is my treasury."
Then Dankwart, Giselher's liegeman, made answer gallantly:
"O noble Daughter of Princes, unto me commit the key,
And I will deal forth thy treasure," said the valiant thane, "for thee.
If any cry out on the niggard, on me be all blame thrown!"
—That Dankwart was open-handed, full soon was to all men known.
When to Hagen's brother committed was the key of her treasury,
The hand of the hero scattered rich gifts all lavishly.
Who craved but one mark only, on him was so much showered
That the poor of the land through their life-days might aye live gladness-
dowered.
Pounds of silver uncounted by hundreds lavished he;
And forth of her halls passed many in goodly bravery
Who never before in their life-tide clad in such splendour went.
But when Queen Brunhild heard it, was she passing ill-content.

She arose and she spake unto Gunther the King: "I dare well say
That nought is like to be left me of all my fair array
Through your chamberlain's reckless dealing: he squandereth all my gold!
Whosoever should bridle his folly, to him were I thankful-souled.
Yon thane, he dreameth, quotha!—such rich gifts doth he give—
I have sent unto Death to take me! Nay, still am I minded to live.
And as for the gold of my fathers, myself can waste it, I trow.
Steward so open-handed never had queen ere now!"
Then answered Hagen of Troneg: "Be it known, O Lady, to thee,
Gold hath the King of Rhineland and raiment fair to see
To bestow in such rich abundance, that in sooth he needeth not
Of all the treasure of Brunhild to carry hence one jot."

"Now nay, by your love I charge you," that Queen to the Rhine-lords spake,
"With gold and with silken raiment coffers filled would I take
Twice ten with me for my journey: myself with mine own hand
Will bestow my royal bounty, when we come to Burgundia-land."
For the Queen then stored they the coffers with many a precious gem;
And the chamberlains of Brunhild the while must be watching them:
She would suffer not Gunther's liegeman in the storing thereof to partake;
And thereover Gunther and Hagen into merry laughter brake.

"Now to whom," said that Daughter of Princes, "shall I commit my land
Ere we go? Be a warder appointed by mine and by thine hand."
Made answer Gunther the noble: "Summon thou hitherward
Whomsoever thou pleasest: appoint him its governor and lord."
Then the Lady looked on her kinsmen, and beheld one nigh at hand,
And the man was her mother's brother; and to him gave she her command:
"Now let my land and my castles be given in charge from this day
Unto thee, till it please King Gunther to take them under his sway."

Out of the train of her vassals two thousand men chose she
For them which should fare on the journey with her unto Burgundy
With the thousand knights of the Niblungs that with Siegfried voyaged o'er.
For the journey they made them ready: men saw them ride to the shore.
Four-score and six fair ladies did she lead with her overseas,
And withal a hundred maidens, and sweet to see were these.
Now forth and away would they hasten; they would linger there no more;
But of such as they took not with them many an one wept sore.
In fashion as well befitteth a queen, so left she the land:
She kissed her nearest and dearest at the last farewell by the strand.
And so with fair leave-taking they launched on the northern main;
And the ancient land of her fathers the maid saw never again.

Still as they voyaged, joyance made music through all the way:
With manifold merry pastime they whiled the hours away.

They were wafted on to the outsea by a breeze that followed fast;
And so with mirth and laughter from land unto land they passed.
Yet not upon that voyage would she be King Gunther's bride;
But his bliss awhile must tarry until the bridal-tide
In the Castle of Worms, at the stately marriage-festival,
When with joy they should come with their heroes unto Gunther's royal hall.

IX

HOW SIEGFRIED BARE TIDINGS TO THE ROYAL CITY

Now when they had so sailed onward for nine days over the sea,
Then out spake Hagen of Troneg: "I pray you, hearken to me:
Lo, here we tarry from sending the tidings to Worms on Rhine;
Yet by this in the land Burgundian should they be, those heralds of thine."
Made answer to him King Gunther: "Of a truth good counsel is this;
And to send as our tidings-bearer were none so meet, I wis,
As thou thyself, friend Hagen; thou unto my land ride on.
Our royal journey may no man better than thou make known."
"Now nay, Lord King, of heralds nowise the best should I be.
Let me as thy treasure-warder tarry still on the sea:
Here will I bide with the women, and guard their costly array
Till unto the land Burgundian we have brought them on their way.
Not so; pray rather Siegfried to bear this message for thee:
Well can he do thine errand with wisdom and courtesy.
If he haply be loth for the journey, in kingly-courteous wise
Entreat him in kindly fashion by the love in thy sister's eyes."

Then unto the knight sent Gunther, and he came before the King;
And he said to him: "Nigh are we gotten to my land in our journeying;
And now to my dear-loved sister would I send a messenger,
And withal to my mother, to tell them who to the land draw near.

So then, Lord Siegfried, I pray thee that thou wouldst bear this word,
And so will I aye be beholden to thee," said the Rhineland's lord.
Yet loth was Siegfried the valiant, and fain would have said him nay,
Until the King besought him, and thus did Gunther pray:
He said unto him: "For my love's sake thitherward shouldst thou ride,
And withal for the sake of Kriemhild, the maiden lovely-eyed,
To the end that the royal maiden with me may requite thy pain."
When heard was her name of Siegfried, the knight was exceeding fain.
"Lay on me what charge thou pleasest," he answered, "all shall be done:
With joy shall it be accomplished for the sake of that lovely one
Whom I bear in my heart enshrined!—who am I, to deny or defer?
Even all that thou requirest will I perform for her."

"So then to my mother Uta the Queen of the land say thou
That with heart uplifted and joyous I am faring homeward now.
And how we have sped in our wooing do thou to my brethren unfold:
And to all our nearest and dearest withal be the story told.
Yea, from my sister, the fair one, nought shalt thou hide thereof:
Commend unto her Queen Brunhild and me in service of love.
And unto all my servants and to all my vassals say,
Whatsoever mine heart hath longed for, all have I gained this day.
And to Ortwein, my nephew beloved, bear this hest of mine,
That he shall prepare us high-seats in the city beside the Rhine.
Tell also my vassals and kinsfolk this—be it known to them all
That I purpose for Brunhild's bridal a high-tide festival.
And make my request to my sister, that now that she hath learned
How that I to the land Burgundian with these my guests have returned,
She receive with loving welcome this my beloved bride:
So bound evermore unto Kriemhild shall my love and my service abide."

Then of the Lady Brunhild and of all her following
Fair leave was taken of Siegfried, the child of Siegmund the King,
Even as was meet and seemly: then on to the Rhine rode he.
No better herald than Siegfried in all the world might be!

With good knights four-and-twenty to the city of Worms he came.
"Without Gunther he cometh!"—the rumour through the city ran like flame.
Then all the thanes were troubled, and a wailing moaned all round.
They foreboded that in that far land his death the King had found.
But the knights with hearts uplifted sprang each from his gallant steed.
Then Giselher to meet them, the young Prince, hied him with speed:
Came Gernot beside him, his brother, and in eager haste he cried,
When he marked how no King Gunther was there by Siegfried's side:
"Now welcome to thee, Lord Siegfried! I beseech thee, tell this thing,
Where left ye in your departing my brother, Gunther the King?
The mighty strength of Brunhild, I fear me, hath reft him from us;
So for us should his princely wooing have issue dolorous."

"Cast to the winds your foreboding: to you and to all true friends
My noble comrade in emprise his loving service sends.
Whole and unharmed I left him: unto you was I sent of your Lord
That I should come with the tidings his messenger hitherward.
Now lend me your aid, to the end that this grace unto me may fall
That I may see Queen Uta, and the Lady your sister withal,
That now I may bear them the story that I was bidden to tell
Of Gunther and Lady Brunhild, that with these twain all is well."
Then the young Prince Giselher answered: "Speak thou unto them thereof,
So shalt thou unto my sister render a service of love.
For the sake of my brother Gunther in exceeding sorrow she is.
Full gladly the maiden will see thee: lo, I will be surety for this."
Spake Siegfried: "What service soever unto her may be rendered of me,
Faithfully will I perform it ever and willingly.
Now who beareth word of my coming to the noble Ladies twain?"
So Giselher was herald, that young and comely thane.
Blithely Giselher hasted, and the lad to his mother cried
And his sister, where in their bower these twain sat side by side:
"Siegfried the Netherland hero hither to us is come!
Gunther my brother hath sent him to us in our Rhineland home!

Tidings to us he bringeth of the King your brother's plight.
Now send him word of your pleasure that he come into your sight.
The story of all that in Iceland was done unto us he brings."
—But he left to another to comfort those sorrowing Daughters of Kings.

They ran to their tiring-bower, they donned their richest array,
And they sent word praying Siegfried to come unto them straightway.
Full fain did he come at their summons, and he met them with joyful eyes.
Then spake Kriemhild the queenly to the hero in gracious wise:
"Now welcome, Lord Knight Siegfried, peer unto whom is none!
Where bideth my brother Gunther, that noble kingly one?
Through the might of Brunhild, I fear me, are we left of his love forlorn!
Woe for me, hapless maiden, that ever I was born!"
But the bold knight smiled in answer—"My good-news' guerdon pay!
Ye be weeping, O lovely Ladies, without a cause this day.
Whole and unharmed I left him: this know ye in very deed.
Unto you twain by their bidding with tidings hither I speed.
With all heart's love and kindness, O Lady of queenly pride,
In service to you he commends him, he and his new-won bride.
Now let your weeping have ending; soon will themselves be here."
Long, long had it been ere she hearkened a tale to her heart so dear!

Then dried she the tears of her weeping with her vesture's snow-white fold
From her lovely eyes, and she poured forth the thanks of the happy-souled
To the bearer of these glad tidings that made music in her ears.
Past was all her affliction, and banished were all her tears.
She prayed her herald to seat him; that did he willingly;
Then spake that winsome lady: "Exceeding glad were I
If I dared but give unto Siegfried my gold for his herald's fee;
But for this art thou too exalted—I have left but love for thee."
But he said, "Though thirty kingdoms were each and all named mine,
Gifts would I take glad-hearted from this fair hand of thine."
Answered the high-born Lady, "My desire shall become my deed."
And her chamberlain she commanded to bring her the herald's meed.

Four-and-twenty armlets that flashed with many a gem
Gave she to him for guerdon: for himself he kept not them;
Of his knightly and courteous spirit he dealt them in that same hour
To her comely maidens which waited on their Lady in her bower.

Then her most loving service graciously tendered the Queen.
"Lo, this of my message remaineth," spake on that warrior keen,
"Touching that which the King desireth when he meets you by Rhine-flood's
side:

If herein ye will do his pleasure, in his love shall ye ever abide.
His noble guests receive ye—for this his petition is—
With loving and courteous welcome; and he earnestly asketh this,
That ye ride forth all to meet him from Worms by the Rhine-stream shore.
This is the kindness that Gunther by your love and your faith doth implore."
"Even that will I do right gladly," the Fair One made reply:
"Of all wherein I can serve him nothing will I deny.
In loyallest love and kindness shall his every wish be fulfilled."
And the blood in her fair cheeks mantled from the heart with rapture thrilled.
Never had herald of princes more gracious welcome than he:
An she dared but have kissed him, kissed him with all her heart had she.
And so with sweet leave-taking from those ladies forth he went.

Now Burgundy's thanes were fulfilling the commands by Siegfried sent.
There Sindold and Hunold bestirred them, and Rumold the noble thane;
With all their hearts they laboured, and in love they toiled amain
Making ready the festal high-seats in Worms beside the river:
Early and late those craftsmen of the King were toiling ever.
Ortwein withal and Gere were nowise slack of hand,
For they sent forth word unto kinsmen through the length and the breadth of
the land
To bid those guests to the feast-tide that soon should be holden there;
And ready was made her adorning by many a maiden fair.
Splendour-arrayed was the palace, and with tapestries each wall
Was hung in the great guests' honour: King Gunther's royal hall

Was adorned in princely fashion to greet the strangers' eyes:
And thus did the stately feast-tide begin in gladsome wise.

Now did the three Kings' kinsmen down many a highway ride
Through all the land to the city, which were summoned from every side
To the end that these with honour might welcome the bidden guests.
Then drawn from their cedar coffers were many costly vests.
Now heard are the tidings that watchers have spied the far-off gleam
Of the knights of the train of Brunhild. Lo, how the great throngs stream
As all the multitudes gather and flock through Burgundia-land!
What gallant knights went riding in either princely band!

Then spake she, Kriemhild the Lovely: "O my bower-maidens, ye
Which forth unto this guest-welcome this day will ride with me,
Out of the coffers take ye attire most glorious,
And so shall praise and honour by the guests be rendered to us."
Then also hasted the good knights, and bade their squires bring out
Goodly saddles with red gold all richly set about.
Mounting-blocks gold-gleaming upon foot-cloths spread on the earth
They set for the feet of the ladies on that day of gladness and mirth.
There in the court stood waiting the palfreys richly dight,
Prepared, as the old song telleth, for many a lady bright.
On the breast of each horse gleaming was the dainty martingale
Of the richest silk threads woven ever sung in minstrel's tale.

Fourscore-and-six fair ladies came pacing forth in state
With their bright hair wimple-hooded: gather now to the palace-gate
Kriemhild's own bower-maidens in lovely vesture arrayed;
Decked with their jewels came they, many a winsome maid.
Fifty-and-four were her fair ones, the maids of Burgundia-land;
There were none of such high-born lineage as they of her queenly band:
The silken snoods fair-jewelled mid their golden tresses shone.
Sooth, all that the King had prayed for, with right good will was it done.

All of the costliest loom-work and the best that earth bestowed
Was the vesture of their arrayal as to meet those guests they rode;
With the lily and rose of their faces it blended in harmony.
Whosoe'er had been ill-contented, a witless wight were he!
Mantles of ermine and sable over the housings flowed;
On lovely arm and white wrist many a bracelet glowed.
Clasps gathered the silk in many a softly-floating fold:—
But of all their splendour-devising the end can ne'er be told.

Full many a rich-wrought girdle with tassels swinging low
Over their shining raiment did hands of ladies throw,
Coiled round the silken loom-work far-fetched from Araby.
—O, the hearts of the noble maidens with joy and hope beat high!
There too did many a fair one over her bosom lace
The bodice clasped with jewels:—yet she whose lovely face
Outshone not all the splendour of her raiment might well be sad!
So fair a train of ladies never queen in the whole world had.
So when all those winsome ladies were arrayed in their bravery,
Then did the knights of their escort in eager haste draw nigh;
Yea, thither the thanes high-hearted came in a mighty throng
All bearing their shining bucklers and their ashen lances long.

X

OF THE STRANGE BRIDAL OF GUNTHER AND BRUNHILD

Then gazed they across the Rhine-stream, and beheld on the farther shore
The King with his guests around him, which had drawn nigh theretofore;
And they saw the good knights standing by the bridle of many a maid,
Even them that they looked to welcome, who now for their coming stayed.
So passed they down to the galleys, that host from the Northern Land,
They and the Niblung thousand, even Siegfried's own war-band,

And adown the bank they hasted: their toil the rowers plied,
Till all these friends of Gunther had won to the farther side.

Now list ye withal, how the story of the Queen of Burgundy
Telleth, how Uta the stately with her maiden-company
Went forth of the castle riding with that bright cavalcade:
Then were made known to each other many a knight and maid.
The Lord of the Marches, Gere, led Kriemhild's steed by the rein
To the fortress-gate, no farther: Siegfried the noble thane
Should render her service thereafter—how queenly and lovely she shone!
Well was his service requited by the maiden's love anon.
Ortwein the noble, the dauntless, led onward Uta the Queen,
And, each by a lady riding, was many a knight there seen.
Unto festal welcoming rode they, plain for all folk to see.
Never was seen of ladies so goodly a company!
In front of Kriemhild the lovely, through all the merry way
Those far-famed heroes jousted in gentle and joyous play:
'Twas the ancient and honoured custom. So when to the ships they came,
Then lifted they from their palfreys full many a noble dame.
Now the King had by this crossed over with many a stranger knight;
But in jousting still they shivered strong spears in ladies' sight.
Ever the shields were ringing with echoing clash and clang;
In the press of the warriors charging rich bosses mightily rang.

So there these winsome ladies stood by the river-side;
And forth of the ships came Gunther with his guests, the folk of his bride;
And himself forth out of the galley by the hand led Brunhild the Queen.
As they met, bright raiment to raiment and stone unto stone flashed sheen.
Then stepped the Lady Kriemhild forward with queenly grace,
And she greeted the Lady Brunhild and her train with loving face.
Men saw white hands from their foreheads the coronals softly move,
As each fair queen kissed other in token of knitting of love.
Then sweet spake Kriemhild the maiden, the child of a royal line:
"Into this our land Burgundian welcome be thou and thine

Unto me and to my mother, and to all this loyal crowd
Of liegemen and kinsfolk." With stately grace Queen Brunhild bowed.
Ofttimes with arms enfolding those lovely ladies clung;—
Of such loving welcome aforetime hath never minstrel sung
As now to the bride was rendered of those noble ladies twain
Uta and Kriemhild: her sweet lips kissed they once and again.
Now as the ladies of Brunhild beside the river stand,
The goodly knights step forward, and they take them by the hand
In token of loving greeting to those fair ones lovely-eyed—
Ah, comely were they, the maidens at the Lady Brunhild's side!

Ere all that greeting was ended, long time had fled by:
On rosebud lips full many fell kisses lovingly.
Long face to face communing those Daughters of Kings abode;
And the peerless knights looked on them with hearts that for gladness glowed.
With their own eyes then beheld they, who oft had heard it told
That so glorious beauty might no man in all the world behold
As the beauty of these two fair ones; and the rumour's truth they learned;
For in all their lovely bodies might no blemish be discerned.
Of such as could weigh the fairness of form and winsome face,
Some to the bride of Gunther gave beauty's chiefest praise;
But they that were more discerning, that wiselier looked thereon,
Said, "Nay, ye must own that Brunhild by Kriemhild is outshone."

Now mingled they, home-abiders and strangers, matron and maid:
There many a comely woman was seen all costly-arrayed.
Rich tents and silken pavilions all round lay far and wide,
Wherewith were the green meads covered from Worms to the river-side.
Then nigher pressed to behold them King Gunther's friends and kin.
Then prayed they the Lady Brunhild and Kriemhild to pass within,
And all their handmaids with them, 'neath the wavering silken shade.
Thither the knights Burgundian their noble guests conveyed.
Now by this upon their horses those knightly guests had sprung,
And with sport of the breaking of lances the shining bucklers rung.

Over the field upsoaring was the dust, as though all the land
Were flame-devoured, as the heroes made proof of their might of hand.
To the eyes of the watching maidens those knights their prowess showed:
Right well with the host of his warriors Siegfried the valiant rode;
In tourney before the pavilion aye to and fro he wheeled:
With the hero a thousand Niblungs went sweeping across the field.

Then strode forth Hagen of Troneg at Gunther the King's behest,
And courteously the hero bade the knights from their jousting rest,
That they should not o'erpass with the dust-cloud the maidens fair and sweet;
And the knightly guests blithe-hearted rendered obedience meet.
Then out spake Gernot the noble: "Awhile let the horses abide
Till the day on-draweth to coolness, and so shall our escort ride
Beside the lovely ladies to the wide-roofed palace-hall.
When the word of the King shall be given, 'To horse!' be ye ready all."
Through the length and the breadth of the lealand stayed was the tournament;
Then the knights sought unto the ladies in many a stately tent
To while the hours in converse, and to make them merry of heart:
So fled fast the moments, till time was thence to depart.

Before the falling of even, when sank the light of the sun,
And came thereafter the coolness, no more would they linger on.
Then cityward knight and lady rode the summer ways,
And on many a form most winsome fell warrior's loving gaze.
As they rode, were there tourney-courses; oft mantles with sudden hand¹
Were twitched from the gallant riders, after the wont of the land,
Till afront of the gate of the palace the King his war-horse stayed:
So by the knights to the ladies was honour-service paid.

Then from the throng departed those Queens in their royal pride;
And the Lady Uta and Kriemhild straightway turned aside

¹ One rider dashing at full speed past another, would snatch his cloak from his shoulders: the latter then gave chase to recover his property. Opportunity for display of fine horsemanship, and much amusement to the spectators, were thus afforded.

With all the train of their handmaids into a fair wide hall:
There did bright tides of laughter and of voices rise and fall.
Now set they in order the high-seats, and on King Gunther passed
Leading his guests to the banquet. Then saw they beside him at last
A Queen!—it was Brunhild the lovely. A crown on her brow she bare
As a queen in her king's dominions—ah, stately she was and fair!

For the banquet were seats rich-carven, broad tables goodly to see
Laden with plenty, as singeth the ancient minstrelsy.
Of all the due of the feasters there lacked not anything.
Sat many a noble baron in the presence of the King.
Then entered the chamberlains bringing in basons golden-red
For the hands of the guests bright water—all vainly his labour were sped
Who would say that courtlier service was rendered ever on earth
At a prince's feast—I would reckon his word as nothing-worth.

But or ever the Lord of the Rhineland set hand to the water clear,
Siegfried—unshamed might he do it—unto Gunther the King drew near:
"Bethink thee of that faith royal and the pledge thou gavest me,"
He said, "ere thou sawest Brunhild in Iceland far oversea."
Yea, he added and said, "Remember how thou swarest by thy right hand,
In the day we should bring Queen Brunhild home unto this your land,
Thou wouldst give me to wife thy sister—doth the oath unbroken remain?
Thou knowest, for that thy journey I begrudged nor travail nor pain."
The host to the guest made answer: "Well dost thou to call it to mind.
I will break not the oath that with hand-clasp close to my soul did I bind.
Lo, I help thee to its fulfilment—may blessing thereof befall!"
Then sent he his word unto Kriemhild to come to the King in the hall¹.

With the train of her lovely maidens on to the hall she swept;
Then from the dais of honour Giseler lightly stept:—

¹ The scene which follows will be more intelligible if we understand that it took place in the Reception-hall or Presence-hall, through which Brunhild passes with her train while the king is waiting there for his sister.

"Now give ye command to the handmaids that backward they turn to their bower:

It befits that alone my sister commune with the King in this hour."

Thither bring they the Lady Kriemhild where waiting doth Gunther stand,
And noble knights stood round him, and princes of many a land.

And now proclaimed they silence through the Hall of the Presence vast.

—In the midst of the hush Queen Brunhild to the feast-hall proudly passed.

C So entered the maid, nothing wotting of work whose fulfilment was nigh.

But first spake the son of Dankrat to his knights that stood thereby:

"Help me at need, that my sister may take for her lord Siegfried."

With one accord they answered: "In sooth 'twere a goodly deed!"

Then spake unto her King Gunther: "My sister, noble maid,
Let thy queenly blood and thine heart's love for mine oath's redemption aid.
I have pledged thine hand to a warrior; if thou take him for thy lord,
Then thou by thy loyal obedience hast redeemed my plighted word."

Answered the noble maiden: "Heart's dearest, brother mine,

Needs not that thou supplicate me: my will shall be even as thine.

What thing thou commandest soever, of a surety shall that be done:

Whom thou, Lord, appointest my bridegroom, I will wed that noble one."

As a fire was the face of Siegfried, his eyes were rapture-ablaze

As the knight unto Kriemhild tendered love-service through all his days.

Then hand in hand they set them in the midst of the great hushed ring,

And they asked, "Wilt thou take this hero for thy lord and for thine heart's
king?"

A little she hung in the balance in maiden shamefastness;

But the Fortune of Siegfried whispered to her heart's love, "Answer 'Yes!'"

That she could not, and ah, she would not, deny unto him her hand;

And he plighted him her husband, the Hero of Netherland.

And so soon as his troth was spoken, and her troth unto his had replied,

Swiftly in arms enfolding he drew unto him his bride.

There in the arms of Siegfried that tender maiden lay,

And he kissed the noble princess in the midst of that knightly array.

As parted the throngs asunder, and the banquet's order was seen,
Lo, in the place of honour, facing the King and the Queen,
Was Siegfried by Kriemhild seated, with service of many a knight;
And there were the Niblung warriors beside him to left and to right.
Beside the King at the banquet sat Brunhild the maiden Queen:
Then Kriemhild she saw—no dagger to her heart had stabbed more keen—
By the side of Siegfried seated; and from weeping she could not refrain,
So that adown her fair cheeks fast did the hot tears rain.
Then spake the Lord of Rhineland: "What aileth thee, lady mine,
That thou drawest a cloud of grieving o'er the brightness of thine eyne?
Thou shouldst rather be heart-uptifted, for bowed in subjection to thee
This day are my land and my castles and all her chivalry."
"Nay, I do well to be weeping," unto him did the maid-queen say;
"My heart for the sake of thy sister is in bitterness this day,
That I see her beside one sitting who is nought but thy vassal, thy thrall!
Well may I weep unceasing that she unto this should fall."
Answered and spake King Gunther: "Thy peace as now do thou hold.
Unto thee at a fitting season shall all the tale be told,
For what cause unto this Siegfried I have given my sister to wife.
A blessing on them! With the hero be hers a happy life!"

She answered: "I cease not to pity her fairness, her royal birth.
Of a truth would I flee hence, knew I a place of refuge on earth!
—Never, I tell thee, never will I couch me by thy side,
Or ever I know cause wherefore is Kriemhild Siegfried's bride!"
Answered and spake King Gunther to her: "Unto thee be it known,
He hath in possession castles and lands as wide as mine own.
Yea, I tell thee this of a surety, a mighty king is he,
And I give him my comely sister with a glad heart and free."

Yet, how pleaded the King soever, she sat with lowering eyes.
But by this from the banquet-table doth many a good knight rise,
And they clash so hotly in tourney that the courts of the castle ring.
—But amidst of his guests for the host-king time traileth a broken wing.

“By the side of my love, my fair one,” he thought, “how sweet to lie!”
His heart to the dream was captive, he could not thrust it by,
The dream of her lovingkindness, and all the joy thereof.
And ever on Lady Brunhild he glanced with eyes of love.
So they gave command to the good knights from tourney-sport to refrain,
For that now for the peace of the night-tide the King and his bride were fain.
And before the great hall-stairway face to face they met,
Kriemhild and Brunhild—nothing had sundered their love as yet.
Followed the train of the handmaids; they lingered there no more
As on to the bridal-chamber the torches led before.
Now came the Kings, and parted the knights of either’s train.
Then followed after Siegfried full many a noble thane.

Now over the bridal threshold are King and Hero gone,
And the heart of either was leaping at the thought of a winsome one,
And of Love the Overcomer—how glad were their souls for this!
And for Siegfried the arms of the loving were a haven of infinite bliss.
As Siegfried the hero gathered Kriemhild unto his breast,
And poured out his love upon her in the glory of love’s twin-rest,
As a knight all-courteous, his darling became unto him as his life.
Not for a thousand fair ones had he given his beloved—his wife!

Now no more singeth the minstrel of his joy in that lady bright;
But thereafter the story telleth how Gunther fared that night
In the bride-bower of Queen Brunhild—O me, that gentle thane
By any other woman in easier plight had lain!
All folk were gone out from before him, maid and man were gone:
Fast shut was the door of the bridal bower; they twain were alone.
He looked that in arms fond-clasping he should fold her loveliness—
Ah, not but through weary waiting he won her and bitter stress!
Vestured in fair white linen to the couch that Lady passed;
And the noble knight to his heart cried—“Now all is mine at last,
Even all that mine heart hath longed for my life through unto this hour!”
Well might she to him be delightful for her beauty’s priceless dower.

Then the hand of the King in a darkling nook set the lamp aside ;
And he turned him, the valiant warrior, to the bed of the maiden bride,
And he laid himself anear her, and the tide of his joy was at flood,
As he stretched arms fain of embracing to that glory of womanhood.

Upon nought but gentle dalliance the King in that sweet hour thought,
Had the noble lady but suffered the will of love to be wrought.
But she raged with exceeding fury, that the heart of the King was stung :
He looked but for lovingkindness, and hate in his face was flung.
For she said to him, "Noble warrior, I say unto thee, refrain !
That which thine heart desireth in no wise shalt thou attain.
I still will abide a maiden, Sir King, I do thee to wit,
Till I know truth touching Siegfried." Then the flame of his wrath was lit.
By force he essayed to embrace her, that her fair white vesture was torn.
Then the proud maid caught at her girdle in her terrible anger and scorn,
Wherewithal was her waist encompassed—it was strong as an iron chain—
Therewith did she deal King Gunther exceeding bitter pain.
For she gripped him, she bound together his feet and his hands withal :
To a staple of iron she bare him, and hung him thence by the wall.
"Thy love shall not trouble my slumber!" she laughed with bitter breath.
Her terrible strength had thrust him well-nigh through the gates of death.
Then fell he to make supplication—he who should be her lord!—
"O noble Queen, I beseech thee, loose from the captive the cord!
Fair Lady, I pledge me never to essay thy will to constrain.
Long shall it be of a surety ere I couch me nigh thee again."

She recked not how fared it with Gunther, so she all restfully lay.
There must he hang in torment through the weary night till the day,
Yea, until shot through the casement were the shafts of the dawning light.
—Had he ever been stalwart of body, now passing faint was his might!
"Make answer to me, Lord Gunther, wouldst haply be sore dismayed
If thy chamberlains entered and found thee," spake that lovely maid,
"Hanging a shackled captive, by a woman's hand so bound?"
But he answered, "Therein thy dishonour and thine own hurt should be found.

Yea also, and little honour," said the King, "were this for me.
By thy queenly heart and thy kindness, let me now draw nigh unto thee!
And if thou dost abhor my embraces, and my love dost wholly contemn,
This hand of mine shall touch not so much as thy vesture's hem."
Then loosed she the King, that hanging he should not longer abide;
And he went to the couch, and he laid him in sooth by that fair one's side,
Yet so far off, and he bare him so fearful-reverent,
That he stirred not her fine-spun vesture; nor once did her heart relent.

Then came who waited upon them, which bare to them fresh attire
Whereof upon such a morning was more than heart could desire.
But, how blithe soe'er were his people, in bitter heaviness
Went the Lord of the land: on his forehead did the crown royal heavily press.
After the land's old custom, whereunto bound are kings,
Gunther and Brunhild forbore not from observance of holy things.
So passed they on to the minster, and the mass-chant rolled along
The aisles: thither also Siegfried came, and a mighty throng.
As beseemeth the honour of kingfolk, ready were all things found
Which were meet for their arraying, wherein to be robed and crowned,
And the oil of consecration. Now all hath been done aright,
And they four, joy-triumphant, stand crowned in all men's sight.
Unto squires was the accolade given in honour of the King,
To six hundred, yea, more it may be, as the olden minstrels sing.
High swelled the tides of joyance through all Burgundia-land
As the lances crashed and splintered in the sworded warrior's hand.
There sat on high at the casements the lovely maidens arow;
Lightened before them ever the shield-flash to and fro.
But the King the while had sundered himself from his vassal-train:
What sport they devised soever, it could not salve his pain.

Far other than Gunther's anguish was Siegfried's happy mood;
Well he divined what ailed him, that noble knight and good.
So to the King hath he hied him, and questioneth lovingly:
"How fared with you twain the night-tide? I pray thee tell unto me."

And the host to the guest made answer: "My portion is scathe and shame!
 To mine house a very demon have I brought for wedded dame!
 When I thought to embrace her, swiftly my limbs into bonds she flung:
 To an iron staple she bare me, and against the wall she hung.
 There swung I sore in torment the long night through till the day
 Or ever she deigned to unbind me—and she all restfully lay!
 Lo, this is my bitter secret—O true friend, pity thou me!"

Made answer Siegfried the mighty: "Of a truth I sorrow for thee.
 Yea, this will I prove, if for thy part thou count not the deed for despite.
 I will bring to pass her submission to couch by thy side this night;
 And she shall not spurn thine embraces from this time forth again."
 After all his anguish the war-king for the word was exceeding fain.

C "Look on mine hands, and mark them, how bruised and swollen are they:
 Her grip thereon was so mighty, as a babe in her arms I lay:
 From beneath my nails was bursting the blood, and earthward dripped.
 No whit in that hour I doubted that my throat by death was gripped."

Answered him Siegfried the stalwart: "Fear not, all yet shall be well.
 Far other was my well-faring from thine when the darkness fell.
 Unto me is Kriemhild thy sister dear as limb and life!
 Yea, also to-night must Brunhild become in truth thy wife.
 I will come when the daylight endeth unto thy bridal bower
 So veiled in my Hood of Darkness, the screen of magic power,
 That of these my cunning devices no man on earth may be ware.
 First bid thou thy lords of the chamber that unto their lodging they fare.
 The lights in the hands of the pages will I darken suddenly,
 And that same manifest token shall then be a sign unto thee
 That I have entered the chamber. I will surely tame thy wife:
 'Neath the yoke of love shall she bow her—or forfeited be my life!"
 "But not 'neath the yoke of *thy* love!" cried the King in sudden fear.
 "Be all the rest as thou sayest; but she still is my wife most dear.
 Yet—though in the grapple thou slay her, if it may not better be,
 Even so could I hold thee guiltless, for a fearful bride is she!"

"Thereunto I plight me," said Siegfried; "be mine honour the pledge thereof.
For me shall she still be virgin. Thy sister hath all my love:
She far above all earth's daughters that mine eyes have seen is preferred."
Then with all his heart King Gunther gave credence to Siegfried's word.

The rapture and travail of jousting went on without surcease,
Till over the clangour and clamour the marshal's voice cried "Peace!"
For now would the ladies be passing to the hall where the feast was dight:
And the chamberlains bade all people avoid from their path forthright.
Cleared was the castle courtyard of armed knight and steed.
Then each fair Queen to the feast-hall did the hand of a bishop lead,
As these passed in to the banquet before those war-kings twain:
And after them thronged to the high-seats many a chosen thane.

In high-wrought expectation by his wife's side sat the King,
For aye did the promise of Siegfried within the heart of him sing.
Unto him that one day's evening was as thirty days by seeming,
For still on the love of Brunhild his tranced soul was dreaming.
Scarce could he tarry till ended was the banquet-festival;
But at last rose Brunhild the lovely, and passed forth out of the hall,
And forth of the feast went Kriemhild; for the slumber-tide was nigh.
What throngs of valiant barons stood up as the Queens swept by!

Now a little while thereafter, as, with Siegfried at her side,
In the joy and trust of the wedded sat Kriemhild his fair bride,
His hands she lovingly folded in her fingers snowy-fair;—
He was gone from her—how, she knew not; but she saw him no more there!
Even now his hand was she fondling—and now she saw him no more!
Then to the train of her handmaids the Queen spake wondering sore:
"Exceedingly do I marvel whither my lord is gone,
Who out of my clasping fingers his hands even now hath drawn!"
Then her wonder fell to silence. But he hasted to Gunther's door,
And bearing the lamps the pages were standing therebefore.

In their hands all suddenly quenched he the lights that the chamberlains bare;

And Gunther knew by the token that now was Siegfried there.
Well knew he what was his purpose: he sent forth thence each one,
Each handmaid and dame of the chamber: so soon as his hest was done,
That noble King with his own hand shut the bower-door fast,
And strong bolts twain right swiftly through the iron staples passed.

The hand of the King in a darkling nook set the lamp aside.
Now a trial of strength beginneth which of sore need must betide
Of strong hero and lovely maiden, a strife of bitter strain;
And the same was for King Gunther full fraught with joy and pain.
For now to the couch stole Siegfried, and laid him down by the Queen;
And she said, "Refrain thee, Gunther—ay, though thy longing be keen!—
Lest thou get to thyself sore anguish, even as yesternight."
—Of a truth, ere all was ended, he was oft in desperate plight.
He locked his lips from speaking, he uttered never a word;
And, albeit he said nought, Gunther full keenly hearkened and heard
That by word or by deed in secret nothing by them was done.
—Good sooth, it was no soft lying that these on the bride-bed won!

He made as though he were Gunther, Burgundia's mighty King;
And around that peerless maiden a sudden arm did he fling.
But forth of the couch she hurled him, and against a high-seat dashed,
That his brows against the footstool thereof full heavily crashed.
Then leapt to his feet the hero, and he summoned up all his might
To essay it with better fortune; and these twain closed in a fight
Wherein he strove to tame her, and bitter she made it for him.
—Never, I ween, of woman was made a defence so grim!
Forasmuch as he would not refrain him, the Maiden sprang full-height—
"How dar'st thou so much as ruffle the hem of my vesture white,
Thou insolent knave, thou ruffian? The deed shalt thou dearly abide!
Yea, now will I make thee to know it!" that warrior maiden cried.

Arms like unto bands of iron she locked round the valiant thane.
 She was minded in fetters to lay him even as the King had lain,
 That still she might lie untroubled in the peace of her maiden sleep.
 That he touched but her vesture, how fiercely did the flame of her fury upleap!
 Despite his brawny sinews, in his magic power's despite,
 She gave dread proof to the hero of her matchless bodily might:
 She bare him resistlessly backward with overmastering stress.
 As in vice of steel she crushed him 'twixt the bed and an oaken press.
 "Out on it!" his heart indignant cried; "if my limb and life
 Be lost at the hands of a maiden, then every shrewish wife—
 Who had dreamed not else of rebellion—against her lord shall upraise
 Malapert brows of defiance through all earth's coming days!"

Now the King heard all: for his champion with exceeding fear was he filled.
 Then swift through the heart of Siegfried fierce shame and anger thrilled.
 With the might of the Dwarfs and the Giants he hurled himself on his foe,
 And strained his strength against Brunhild as in fury of madness-throe.
 c Yea, even as she thrust him backward, it spurred his fury on,
 So stinging each mighty sinew, that, spite of her vantage won,
 He upwrieth himself against her: the flame of his rage outflashed,
 And from wall unto wall of the chamber those wrestlers hurtled and crashed.
 c Great fear and tribulation the King endured in that hour:
 Oft must he flee before them to this side and that of the bower.
 So furiously they grappled and strained, that a marvel it seemed
 That out of the hands of each other their very lives were redeemed.
 c In anguish of dread King Gunther trembled for each of twain;
 But most was his spirit quaking lest Siegfried should be slain.
 Oft thought he, "The life of the hero is well nigh reft by the maid!"
 Had he but dared to essay it, he would fain have gone to his aid.
 c Long, long between those wrestlers endured that desperate strife:
 But he slowly at last bare backward to the couch that maiden-wife.
 How grimly she fought soever, her strength waxed faint at the last:
 But aye through the heart of Gunther a tumult of wild thoughts passed.

Long, long it seemed unto Gunther ere Siegfried tamed her mood.
Her grip on his hands was so mighty that from 'neath his nails the blood
At her terrible crushing spirted, that his soul was wrung with pain:
Yet he wore her down by his stubborn endurance, and forced to refrain
From the fury of eager onset, from the erstwhile tiger-leap.
—Ware of all this was Gunther, though he hearkened in silence deep.
He crushed her against the bed-beam, that for pain aloud she cried;
For the strength of Siegfried the mighty tortured at last the bride.
In a desperate hope, at the girdle that around her sides she wore
She snatched, if she haply might bind him; but this from her grasp he tore.
Her joints are strained unto breaking, on the rack is her fainting frame—
Lo, now is the strife's decision: wife to the King is the dame.
She moaned, "O king and hero, take not my life from me!
Atoned for in wifely duty shall be all scathe done unto thee!
Against thy noble embraces myself no more do I ward.
At last have I throughly proved it, that thou art master and lord."

Uprose from the grapple Siegfried—while faint lay the panting bride—
Back drew he as though he were minded to put but his raiment aside:
Yet first did he draw from her finger a little golden ring;
But thereof the Queen outwearied knew not anything.
That silken marvel, her girdle, for a trophy withal took he:
I know not if haply he did it in pride of victory.
To his wife he gave them thereafter—his own bane came thereof!
He is gone; and the King and Brunhild are alone in the bed of love.

All in the old sweet fashion he gathered her unto his breast:
The erstwhile shame and the anger are for ever laid to rest.
As Love the Overcomer prevailed, her cheek waxed wan—
There is no more Brunhild the Maiden, and her might as a dream is gone!
O yea, she is now no stronger than any woman beside!
He poured out his love upon her, he cherished his winsome bride.
Ay, though she now should withstand him, what were her strength made frail?
Unto Gunther is victory given by Love who is strong to prevail.

Ah, in what lovingkindness the knight and the lady lay
Through the glory-litten darkness till the shadows fled away!

But long since had the hero Siegfried from the Bower of Slain Hate hied
To the welcoming arms of the lovely, to the lips of a waiting bride.
Lightly he put by questions that trembled on her tongue;
And he kept those victory-trophies hidden from sight full long,
Until to his Queen in his kingdom he gave, afar and late,
The Gifts of Doom—how little availeth to strive with fate!

That King on the morrow's dawning far blither was of cheer
Than yestermorn: through the marches of his kingdom far and near
High swelled the tides of joyance in stately homes and fair;
And the guests to the palace bidden rendered him homage there.
Through days twice seven lasted the joy of the bridal-feast,
So that in all that season never the music ceased
Of all manner of mirth and pastime that the wit of man may devise:
And all was at Gunther's charges at his marriage-solemnities.
The noble Gunther's kinsmen, according to his behest,
Gave gifts of gold in his honour, and many a rich-wrought vest.
Silver withal and horses on the wandering bard they bestowed:
All lovers of royal bounty from Worms glad-hearted rode.

Yea, also Siegfried the Hero, the Prince of the Nether Land,
Caused all the goodly raiment that was brought by his Niblung band,
His thousand, to Rhine, to be given to whosoever might crave,
Fair horses withal, and saddles: like kings his vassals gave.
Ere the giving of costly presents to an end had wholly come,
Long seemed the time to the sated guests that yearned for home.
Ne'er with such royal bounty were desires of guests fulfilled.
So ended the marriage high-tide, and all was as Gunther willed.

XI

HOW SIEGFRIED AND HIS WIFE JOURNEYED HOME

Now so soon as the guests of Gunther had wended all away,
Then spake the Son of Siegmund unto them of his vassal-array:
"Time is it we made us ready to our fatherland to ride."
Right glad to hear that saying was the heart of Kriemhild the bride.
Then spake she unto her husband: "How soon is thy mind to depart?
So hastily hence to be faring is nowise after mine heart,
Ere my brethren divide me my portion of the land of Burgundy."
But vexed was the soul of Siegfried that such her desire should be.
Then came unto him the Princes, and with one voice spake all three:
"We do thee to wit, Lord Siegfried, that for aye are we bound unto thee
In loyalty of service, so long as life shall remain."
Unto this their gracious tender low bowed that royal thane.
"We will give thee withal thy portion," the young lord Giseler cried,
"Of all that we hold in possession, of our castles and manors wide,
And of all this mighty kingdom the rule whereof we claim.
Yea, thou receivest with Kriemhild thine own full share of the same."
Made answer then to the Princes the son of Siegmund the King,
When he heard the speech of their kindness and their royal offering:
"God seal unto you by His blessing your heritage all your life,
And therewithal its people: but this my beloved wife,
No need hath she of the portion that ye so freely would give.
Where she shall reign a crowned queen—if to see that day we live—
There shall she be far richer than any the wide world through.
For all that beside ye have proffered I am ever beholden to you."
Then answered the Lady Kriemhild: "Though lightly thou reckon of my land,
As touching the thanes Burgundian not so doth the matter stand:
For the escort-royal homeward these may no king disdain.
Let my loving brethren give me of these for my princely train."

Answered and spake Lord Gernot: "Whomsoever thou wilt, take thou. Thou shalt find here many that gladly will ride with thee, I trow. There be good knights thirty hundred; take thee a thousand of these For thy palace-retainers." Kriemhild 'gan send forth messages Unto Hagen of Troneg and Ortwein, and asked that mighty twain If they and their kinsmen accepted Kriemhild for suzerain. But an answer of scornful anger from Hagen her message won: "Unto no one on earth can Gunther pass us as chattels on! Let other escort-vassals with you on your journey go. The Law of the Men of Troneg full well by this should ye know: We be bound to abide with our liege-lord the King in hall and field, And to them which have had our homage, our homage ever to yield."

So they spake no more of the matter, but they dight them for the way; And Kriemhild took for escort of her noble palace-array Two-and-thirty maidens, and of knights five hundred men; And Eckwart Lord of the Marches went forth with Kriemhild then. All these took leave of their people, from the henchman unto the knight, The stately dame and the handmaid, even as was meet and right: With manifold clasping and kissing was wrought that sundering. So fared they forth blithe-hearted from the land of Gunther the King.

Far on the way with them kinsfolk for friendship and honour fared. Unto Burgundy's uttermost marches for their resting was lodging prepared Wheresoe'er in the land of Gunther they chose to abide for the night. Therewithal to the old king Siegmund were messengers sent forthright, To bear unto him the tidings and to Siegelind the Queen That his son and the Daughter of Uta full soon at his gates should be seen, Kriemhild the Fair, from the City of Worms, from the Rhine-stronghold. Never could welcomer tidings in the ears of these be told. "Happy am I," cried Siegmund, "that I live to see the day When in this land Kriemhild the Lovely shall be crowned for royal sway! Henceforth shall my father's kingdom yet higher in honour stand, For now shall my son, my Siegfried, himself be king of the land."

Then Siegelind gave to the heralds for vesture the velvet red
And the massy gold and the silver, their guerdon for tidings sped.
She joyed beyond words for the story, she had gotten her heart's desire.
And all her palace-maidens made ready their fairest attire.
Each told unto other what escort drew with Siegfried near;
And they gave command that the craftsmen should the ranks of the high-seats
rear

Wherefrom all friends should behold him crowned their king ere long.
Then rode forth onward to meet them King Siegmund's vassal-throng.

If ever was royaller welcome, thereof have I heard not yet
Than this wherewith were the heroes in the land of Siegmund met.
Forth to the meeting with Kriemhild did Siegfried's mother ride
With many a lovely lady and valiant knight at her side.
A day's march rode they, or ever those guests they might behold.
Home-dwellers and far-comers alike were restless-souled
Till they met at the last by a fortress with towers encompassed round,
Xanten its name, where Siegfried and Kriemhild ere long should be crowned.
With smiling lips King Siegmund and Siegelind greeted there
With kisses on loving kisses Queen Uta's daughter fair
And Siegfried the Knight—for his safety had their hearts been long in pain;—
And they gave withal glad welcome unto all his escort-train.

Into the hall of Siegmund the long-desired led they;
And unto the winsome handmaids was many a hand straightway
Upreached, from the palfreys to lift them: knights many of high degree
Waited on those fair ladies with eager courtesy.
How splendid soever the bridal had been where Rhine-river flowed,
This day far goodlier raiment on the hero-guests they bestowed
For the marriage-feast, than ever had arrayed them in all their days.
Of the wealth of their kingdom marvels are sung in the minstrels' praise.
So sat they high in honour amid all that heart desired.
In what gold-broidered vesture were the palace-pages attired!

With needlework laid were their garments and the gemstone's starry sheen
By the heedful care provided of Siegelind the Queen.

Then in his leal friends' presence did Siegmund rise and say:
"Be it known unto all my lovers and all my folk this day
That from this hour forward Siegfried the crown of my lordship shall wear."
And with joy that proclamation did the men of the Netherland hear.
Unto Siegfried his crown he committed, his land, and the power of the sword.
Henceforth was he lord and master: as he spake in judgment's award,
As he visited for transgression, his word was the whole land's law,
So that under the lord of Kriemhild all men bowed down in awe.

In the midst of such high honour he lived—this witness is true—
Doing crowned kings' judgment and justice, till onward the tenth year drew.
And now to the fair Queen Kriemhild was born at the last a son
In whom for the kinsmen of Siegfried all hope and desire were won.
They bare to the font baptismal the babe, and they chose him a name,
The name of his uncle Gunther—thereof could he take no shame.
So he grew unto man like his kinsman, a valiant lord should he be.
And with watchful love, as behoved them, they nurtured him heedfully.
Now it came to pass that in those days did the Lady Siegelind die,
And to Uta's noble daughter passed all her majesty,
As beseemed so royal a lady in the land where her lord bare sway:
Yet sorely for her they lamented whom death had taken away.

Now also beside Rhine-river, as the olden minstrels sing,
In that fair land Burgundian unto Gunther the mighty king
The Queen, even Brunhild the lovely, had also borne a son.
Siegfried, for love of the Hero, they named that little one.
Ah, with what care exceeding they watched his childhood-days!
Wise warders Gunther appointed to rear him in wisdom's ways,
Even all that for noble manhood and knightly should stand him in stead.
—Ah me, what woes from his kinsfolk lighted on that child's head!

Through the golden years was the story aye published far and wide
In what fashion those valiant barons in princely pomp and pride
Lived in the land of Siegmund through the happy-fleeting days.
Yea, Gunther withal with his kinsfolk dwelt amid all men's praise.
All the land of the Niblungs was bowed under Siegfried's sway,
—Such wealth had none of his kinsfolk as gathered in that Hoard lay—
With all the knights of Schilbung and the slain kings' treasure-store ;
And for this cause heart-uplifted was the hero yet the more.
Yea, a Hoard, of treasures the hugest that ever hero won,
Save the lords that of old possessed it, had Siegfried gained for his own,
The which by the Misty Mountain his right hand took in fight,
When he dealt for its sake the death-stroke unto many a stalwart knight.
He was crowned with the fulness of honour—yea, had his portion been less,
Yet of that noble warrior all men must needs confess
That of all knights this was the chiefest that ever backed a steed.
Men dreaded his might—and reason had they in veriest deed!

XII

HOW GUNTHER BADE SIEGFRIED TO A FESTIVAL

Now through all these years ever Brunhild the Queen to her own heart said :
“How comes it that Lady Kriemhild beareth so proudly her head?
And yet is her husband Siegfried nought but our vassal, I trow ;
Yet for long hath he rendered homage or service little enow !”
So bare she in secret a burden of brooding and heart's unrest,
And that these in a far land tarried was ever a thorn in her breast,
Yea also, that none brought tribute to her out of Siegfried's land ;
How it befell she knew not, and she wearied to understand.

Then made she trial of Gunther, if haply she might attain
Her purpose, to meet Queen Kriemhild face to face again ;

And she took with him secret counsel for that whereon aye did she brood.
But the word of the Queen unto Gunther seemed in no wise good.
"How might we bring them hither?" that noble King replied,
"Even to this our kingdom? The thing can never betide.
Too far is their dwelling: I dare not ask that this might be!"
But Brunhild to him made answer with speech of subtlety:
"And be he never so mighty, who is vassal still to a King,
Whatsoever his liege-lord biddeth, of force must he do the thing."
Smiled Gunther for this delusion that in her heart had place—
Little he thought on homage when he looked upon Siegfried's face.
"Nay, dear my lord," she made answer, "I pray thee, help me herein—
By my love I beseech thee—that Siegfried and thy sister Kriemhild the Queen
May come unto this thy kingdom, that we may behold them here.
In all this world could be given no joy to mine heart more dear.
That gracious mien of thy sister, and her queenly courtesy,
Still as I muse thereover, how sweet is the memory,
How we sat at the feast of my bridal side by side at the board!
In sooth hath she chosen with honour Siegfried the brave for her lord."
She lay on him sore in entreaty, that at last King Gunther said:
"Now know, that no guests more welcome my feast-hall floor could tread.
Lightly is gained thy petition: swift messengers of mine
Shall be sent unto them, to bid them come unto us by Rhine."
Then spake that Daughter of Princes: "Now shalt thou tell unto me
When thou wilt send to bid them, and how many days shall it be
Ere come into this our kingdom the friends we love so well.
And whom thou wilt send to bid them unto me beforehand tell."

"Yea," answered the King, "that will I: There shall go of my knightly array
Thirty thitherward riding." For these did he send straightway;
And with that message he charged them, to bear it to Siegfried's land.
Rich raiment to gladden their spirits received they of Brunhild's hand.
"My knights, ye shall take this message from me"; thus spake the King;
"And of all wherewith I have charged you withhold not anything."

Say unto Siegfried the mighty, and unto my sister say,
That in all this world may no one be dearer to me than they.
And pray them to come to their kinsfolk here beside Rhine-river:
And for this unto them shall Brunhild and I be beholden ever.
Ere summer to autumn waneth full many shall he see here,
Even he and his men, that in honour hold him passing dear.
And bear ye to King Siegmund my service in courtesy,
And say that to him aye bounden my friends and I shall be:
And pray ye also my sister that she tarry not to ride
To her friends—she hath lighted never on so worthy a festal-tide.”

Brunhild withal, and Uta, yea, every high-born dame
Unto the land of Siegfried fair greeting sent by name
To their kinsfolk and their acquaintance, fair lady and valiant knight.
So, sped by King and Council, they hasted thence forthright;
For they stood all girt for the journey, seeing all things ready to hand
Had they, their horses, their raiment: so rode they forth of the land.
On to the goal they hasted whereunto their hearts were bent.
Strong escort on that wayfaring to guard them the King had sent.

So it was, on the twelfth day's dawning they came to the Niblung land,
To the fenced city, whither they were sent by the King's command.
Afar on the marches of Norway that hero-thane found they:
And by this were steed and rider forwearied with all the way.
Unto Siegfried and unto Kriemhild were tidings borne with speed
That knights were come to their castle arrayed in suchlike weed
As folk in the land Burgundian were wont to wear away.
Then leapt from the couch that lady, where resting yet she lay;
And a certain one of her handmaids she bade to the casement go,
Who beheld the valiant Gere in the court stand therebelow,
Even him and his fellow-farers which thither from far had sped.
All heart-ache of the exile like a dream at the tidings fled.
And she cried aloud unto Siegfried: “Behold how there they wait,
These that with Gere the stalwart have ridden through our gate,

These whom my brother Gunther unto us down Rhine-flood sends!"
Made answer Siegfried the mighty, "Welcome to us be our friends!"
Straightway beholding them hasted to greet them squire and knight,
And this one and that with welcome hailed them, and, each as he might,
They paid to the heralds royal all loving courtesies.
Yea, also the old King Siegmund rejoiced for the coming of these.

So when they had given fair lodging to Gere and all his men,
And had stabled in stall their horses, they led those messengers then
To the place where sat King Siegfried with Kriemhild at his side,
Even the Hall of the Presence, when his pleasure was signified.
Then the King and the Queen from their high-seats rose up at their
entering-in,
And they graciously greeted the envoys of their far Burgundian kin,
Even these and their fellow-farers, King Gunther's liegemen all,
And entreated Gere the noble, "Sit thou with us in the hall."
"Let us first of our message acquit us, ere we sit down to rest:
So long let him stand in thy presence, thy travel-weary guest;
And so shall the word be spoken which is sent unto you of the King,
Of Gunther, and of Queen Brunhild. In bliss be they prospering.
From the Lady Uta thy mother, O Queen, have we also a word,
And from Giselher the stripling, and from Gernot the royal lord,
And from all your nearest kinsfolk: hither have these sent us
From Burgundia-land with greetings exceeding courteous."

"God guerdon them!" said Siegfried; "I put my trust always
In their love and their faith true-hearted, as friend with friend doth aye:
This doth withal their sister. Now shall ye further tell
If our friends in their far-off homeland be merry, and all go well.
Since the day that we parted from them, hath any evil been done
By a foe to my Lady's brethren? Concerning this say on.
In loyal faith will I help them aye to the uttermost.
Of my service to these shall foemen learn to their bitter cost."

Answered the Lord of the Marches, Gere, a right good knight:
"In chivalry and in joyance be all things going aright;
And they bid you now unto Rhineland to a glorious festal-tide.
Glad shall they be to behold you, hereof be ye certified.
They beseech my Lady Kriemhild withal that she come with thee
So soon as the feet of the winter from the face of the spring shall flee.
Or ever the summer waneth full fain would they look upon you."
Answered Siegfried the mighty, "Not lightly this may I do!"

But Gere the earl Burgundian spake on furthermore:
"Nay also Uta your mother beseecheth you very sore,
And Giselher and Gernot: ye may not say them nay.
That ye dwell so far from their faces is their sorrow day by day.
Brunhild withal my Lady and her maidens in bower and hall
Rejoice over this my message; and if haply it might befall
That they look once more on your faces, heart-uplifted they were."
Then exceeding glad for the tidings was Kriemhild the loving and fair.

Now the Queen's near kinsman was Gere, and the King bade seat him on
high,
And pour them the wine of welcome; no more might they put it by.
Thither withal came Siegmund, and rejoiced their faces to see;
And the old king lovingly greeted the heralds of Burgundy:
"Welcome to us, ye liegemen of Gunther, knight and thane!
Behold, forasmuch as Siegfried my son to wife hath ta'en
Kriemhild, the great King's sister, more oft should we see you thus
Guests in our land, if closer ye would knit up friendship with us."
And they cried, whensoever it should please him, with joyful hearts would they
come.
From their limbs was weariness banished, by gladness stolen therefrom.
Then the horns blew up to the banquet, and they feasted with all good
cheer,
For Siegfried had bidden lavish the best upon friends so dear.

Till nine full days were accomplished, they constrained them there to abide,
Till the eager knights uplifted a voice of complaining, and cried:
"Will ye aye withhold us from riding back to our land at all?"
Then to a council did Siegfried his friends and his kinsmen call.
He prayed them to give their counsel, should he go to the Rhine or forbear:
"Gunther, my fair Queen's brother, entreateth me to fare
To the land where he and his brethren a mighty feast will array;
And fain would I go, but his kingdom is exceeding far away.
And they make request that Kriemhild shall thitherward fare with me.
Give counsel, friends and kinsmen, shall this her journey be?
Were it but to lead through kingdoms thrice ten a warrior-band,
Glad help and willing service should they have of Siegfried's hand."
Unto him did the knights make answer: "If thy will and thy pleasure it is
To journey to this high feast-tide, our rede unto thee is this:
With good knights twice five hundred hence shalt thou ride to the Rhine,
So through all thy stay in Burgundia shall royal honour be thine."

Then spake the old king Siegmund, erewhile the Netherland's Lord:
"Wouldst thou to a feast-tide, and tellest to me thereof no word!
Even I will be your companion, if this content you well,
And thanes of my train a hundred your guard-array shall swell."
"If thou, O father beloved, wilt ride in our company,"
Made answer Siegfried the dauntless, "a joy shall it be unto me.
Ere twelve days have passed over, I ride forth out of our land."
Then gave they horses and raiment unto all that should be of their band.

When therefore set on the journey was the heart of that king of men,
They suffered the eager envoys to ride thence homeward again;
And he charged them to say to the brethren of Kriemhild, by Rhine-river side,
That Siegfried joyful-hearted would come to their festival-tide.
Siegfried the hero and Kriemhild, as telleth the minstrel's tale,
So laded with presents the heralds, that their own steeds could not avail
To bear all the guerdon homeward, so wealthy a lord was he:
So they drove it on sumpter-horses, journeying joyfully.

To their people was raiment given by Siegfried and Siegmund his sire;
And Eckwart, Lord of the Marches, bade seek out splendid attire
For the ladies of Kriemhild, the richest vesture that might be found
Or be won by diligent searching in all the land around.
Goodly saddles and bucklers they bade the craftsmen prepare
For the noble knights and ladies that with him were bidden to fare.
Nought lacked they; all that they asked for was given with open hand.
So brought he guests most princely to his friends in the far-off land.

Meanwhile are the envoys returning, and ever they speed on fast.
So cometh the proud thane Gere to Burgundia-land at last,
And with honour there is he welcomed. Down to the earth they spring
From saddle of steed and palfrey in front of the hall of the King.
Forth poured the youths and the elders, as folk be wont to do,
And asked of him touching his tidings. Made answer the knight thereto:
"When I speak to the King my message, unto you shall the same be known."
So entered he in with his comrades where Gunther sat on his throne.

Upleapt the King from the high-seat, and bright for joy was his face.
Brunhild withal the lovely thanked them with queenly grace
For this their speedy returning, and the King to the messengers spake:
"How fareth Siegfried, who oftentimes hath ventured his life for my sake?"
Made answer Gere the valiant: "For joy was his face aflame,
Even his and thy sister's. Message so gracious never came
From any man aforetime that would greet far-sundered friends,
As now unto you with his father the noble Siegfried sends."
Then of the Lord of the Marches the King's wife questioned and cried:
"Answer me, cometh Kriemhild? As of old is her beauty's pride
And the grace of the queenly bearing that to her did of yore appertain?"
"O yea, of a surety she cometh," made answer Gere the thane.
Then the herald at Uta's bidding came before that Queen,
And now by her eager asking all in a moment was seen
Whereunto was her whole heart yearning—"How hath my child's weal sped?
And he said, "She is well, and she cometh ere many days be fled."

Then showed they the herald's guerdon in the palace for all to behold,
The gifts of the hand of Siegfried, the raiment and the gold:
Nothing thereof was hidden from the three Kings' vassalry.
All rendered the hero honour for his bounty and courtesy.
"Ha! well may the man," cried Hagen, "with full hand give away.
Ne'er could he spend his treasure, not though he should live for aye.
The Hoard of the Niblungs lieth in the hollow of his hand!
—Ha, if the same came ever hither to Burgundy-land!"

Right glad in court and castle were all the thanes when they heard
Of the friends that should come; and a spirit of diligent toiling stirred
In all men late and early, yea, in all the Kings' array.
Long ranks of stately high-seats afront of the burg reared they.
There toiling was Hunold the valiant, there toiling was Sindold the thane:
Full little rest they tasted, in their office as laboured the twain,
Steward and cupbearer-royal, as the seats rose rank on rank:
There daily was Ortwein helping; and Gunther rendered them thank,
Rumold the feast-arrayer, how urged he on at that tide
The vassalry of the kitchen!—full many a caldron wide,
Skillet and seething-vessel—how shone they in line on line
For the ordering of the feasting of the guests of the Land of Rhine!
C Toiled also the palace-maidens in many a fair device:
They broidered the costly loomwork, and many a gem of price
They set in the midst of the gold thread, that far its splendour shone.
Was none but thanked them and praised them as they cunningly laid them
thereon.

XIII

HOW THEY FARED TO THE FEAST-TIDE

From the tale of their diligent toiling awhile refraineth the song,
And telleth how Lady Kriemhild and all her handmaid-throng
Set forth from the land of the Niblungs to the realms by Rhine to fare.
Never such wealth of royal vesture did horses bear:
For with many a casket and coffer they laded the sumpter-train.
Amidst of friends and kinsmen rode Siegfried the hero-thane;
And beside him the Daughter of Princes mid dreams of gladness rode:
—Ah me, sore grief lay ambushed by the path that their horses trode!

But the little child of Siegfried, but Kriemhild's darling one,
Safe in the home-land left they; of need must it so be done.
Begotten for him of their journey was bitter affliction and sore.
Strong father and lovely mother that child saw never more!
Beside them went forth riding Siegmund the ancient king.
Ah, had his heart foreboded what sorrow was doomed to spring
For him of that festal high-tide, he had never looked thereon!
Never from wrongs of kindred such bitter grief had he won!

Forerunners to tell of their coming betimes far onward they sent:
Then riding forth to meet them all splendour-gleaming went
Many a friend of Uta and vassal of Gunther the King:
With looking for that guest-meeting his heart was hungering.
Then went he and spake unto Brunhild, where sat the Queen in her bower:—
“When hither thou camest, how welcomed my sister thee in that hour?
So will I the wife of Siegfried should be welcomed now of thee.”
“That will I gladly,” she answered, “of right is she dear unto me.”
Thereunto the great King answered: “To-morrow betimes come they.
If thou wilt fitly receive them, lay to thine hand straightway,

Lest they peradventure prevent us ere we ride from our towered home;
For guests so well-belovèd never to me have come."
Forthwith she gave to the maidens and palace-dames her behest
To search out goodly raiment, of all their attire the best,
Wherein her retinue-royal in the presence of guests might shine:
And the same did they blithe-hearted, lightly may one divine.

Forth to the welcoming hasted all Gunther's liegemen withal;
Yea, to ride with him to the greeting each man of his knights did he call.
There rode that Daughter of Princes in royal pomp to meet
Those dear-loved guests far-travelled, and with gracious lips to greet.
What heaped-up measure of honour in their hands to their guests did they
bring!

Men thought that the Lady Brunhild had scarce such welcoming
At the hands of the Princess Kriemhild when she came to Burgundia-land.
Friends became some, that were erstwhile strangers, by clasp of hand.
By this came the band of warriors that rode at Siegfried's side.
Men saw those ranks of heroes hitherward, thitherward ride
Through all the breadth of the lealand, a warrior-host untold:
There was no space clear from their thronging, and the clouds of dust uprolled.

When the Lord of the Land Burgundian looked upon Siegfried's face
And the eyes of the old king Siegmund, what courtly and loving grace
Was his as he cried, "Be welcome to me, to my friends and my kin!
Well may we be glad-hearted at this your entering-in!"
"God guerdon you!" cried Siegmund, the old king honour-athirst.
"Since the day that my dear son Siegfried was won to your friend at the first,
Ever mine heart hath whispered, 'Their faces must thou too see!'"
Spake Gunther, "Mine heart rejoiceth for that day risen on me."
Such was the welcome of Siegfried, right worthy of such a lord.
With the love thereof and the honour were all hearts in accord:
This Gernot and Giselher bettered with their knightly courtesy.
No guests were welcomed ever, I ween, so lovingly.

Unto hand-clasp and embracing the wives of the two Kings came.
Now fast were the saddles emptied, for many a comely dame
By heroes' hands down-holpen, stood on the meadow-green.
Who joyed in the service of ladies, had work enow, I ween.
To meet and to greet each other those winsome ladies stept,
And for joy of their lovely presence full many a knight's heart leapt,
And for joy of the gracious greeting of the glory of either land ;
For beside those comely maidens did many a good knight stand.
Then did the hands kind-clasping each unto other cling :
There was grace of courtly obeisance through that bright gathering,
Sweet salutations of kisses 'twixt ladies passing fair :
And the men of Gunther and Siegfried glad-hearted watched them there.

Then tarried they there no longer, but on to the city they rode.
And the folk of the Land Burgundian by command of their Lord forth-
showed
To their guests their joy of the meeting by knightly courtesies ;
And through all the way they jousted to gladden the ladies' eyes.
Hagen of Troneg and Ortwein made manifest that day
To the eyes of all beholders what stalwart knights were they :
Marshals they were of the tourney, and all men obeyed their behests ;
So of these much courtly service was rendered to those dear guests.
There might ye hear shields ringing afront of the castle-gate,
Spear-snapping and buckler-crashing : long time on his charger sate
The King mid his friends there watching, or ever within they passed.
In many a knightly pastime the bright hours fled fast.

Unto the gate of the guest-hall rode they all joyously.
Many a rich-wrought housing fashioned fair to see
From the saddles of lovely ladies swinging on either hand
Hung to the ground. There waiting did the palace-pages stand.
Unto their several chambers by these were the guests led on ;
And men marked how the eyes of Brunhild glanced ever and anon

Askance at the Lady Kriemhild;—sooth, passing-fair she showed,
As her bright cheeks' lilies and roses against the red gold glowed.
All up through the streets of the city of Worms did the glad sounds ring
Of that merry company's thronging. His hest gave Gunther the King
Unto his marshal Dankwart to provide for all their need;
And to fair-dight harbourage therefore those several guests did he lead.

Spread was the feast in the castle and all the city through.
Never were guests from a far land so ministered unto!
Whatsoever one haply craved for, with joy unto him was it brought:
So rich was the Lord of the kingdom that from none withheld they aught.
Lovingly all folk served them and ever ungrudgingly.
The King in the great hall feasted, and amidst of his guests sat he;
And to Siegfried the place of honour; even as of old, they gave,
And with him passed in to the banquet warriors many and brave.
Yea, noble knights twelve hundred in that mighty hall were seen
With him at the banquet seated. And ever Brunhild the Queen
Thought in her heart: "Never vassal hath been so wealthy as this!"
Yet still did she bear him a kindness, and she grudged him nought of his bliss.

Mid the mirth of the summer evening as sat the King mid his guests,
Dew-sprent with the ruddy wine-drops were many rich-wrought vests,
As the cupbearers brimming the goblets from table to table went
In ever-unfailing service tireless-diligent.
In the olden courteous fashion whensoever was the banquet arrayed,
From the board to their bowers of slumber escorted were matron and maid.
Whence came each guest soever, he seemed the King's chief care.
In all lovingkindness and honour had each enough and to spare.

When ended now was the night-tide, and the light of the dayspring shone,
Out of the sumpter-caskets full many a precious stone
Came flashing on rich-wrought raiment, as forth fair fingers brought
Many a royal vesture, through the scented chests as they sought.

Ere day had fully broken, to the court before the hall
Came knights and squires full many, and rang from wall to wall
The tourney-clash, ere matins before the King had been sung;
And he thanked for their gallant riding those valiant knights and young.
With strenuous blast the trumpets roared through the morning air,
With pipes and drums replying; so mighty was the blare
That Worms the wide-built fortress with clamorous echoes rang.
Then here, then there the bold knights upon their chargers sprang.
Then in the Land Burgundian a glorious tourney began
Where good knights thronged to the contest: was many a valiant man
Whose young heart with glad courage was thrilled and filled to the height:
Ha! there under shield beheld they many a gallant knight.
Adown from the casements gazing in fair adornings arrayed
Were many a noble lady and many a lovely maid:
They watched while the throngs of brave men played that knightly play.
Yea, the King himself with his kinsmen rode the lists that day.

So fled the summer morning, and the hours seemed all too short
Ere the chiming bells of the minster summoned them from the sport.
Palfreys they brought for the ladies, and a river of splendour flowed
Through the streets as the valiant warriors behind the proud Queens rode.
They lighted down on the greensward before the minster-gate.
Still to her guests did Brunhild harbour nought of hate.
Hosts, guests, passed crowned together beneath the wide-hung dome.
—Soon all that love was sundered; sprang bitter affliction therefrom.
When the chanting of mass was ended, forth of the doors again
Came they in splendour and honour. Passed that gladsome train
On to the banquet-royal: joy knew nor stint nor stay
In the flowing tide of pleasure—till dawned the eleventh day.

c Yet ever the Queen was musing: "Delay no longer will I!
In such fashion will I contrive it, that Kriemhild must needs reply
Wherefore is tribute denied us by her lord thus year after year—
Yet is the man but our vassal! From searching I cannot forbear!"

C So she bided her time till the Devil whispered to her at the last
To wither the festal glory, and pleasure with pain to blast.
The serpent of jealousy coiling round her heart to the light must come;
And therefrom through many a kingdom spread desolation and doom.

XIV

HOW THE QUEENS SPAKE BITTER WORDS EACH UNTO OTHER

It befell, ere it rang unto vespers, that the clash of joyous sport
Came up through the palace-casements from many a knight in the court
As they fell to the gallant tourney to wing with mirth the hours.
From the hall men hasted to watch them, and maidens from their bowers.
There sat those Queens together, queens famous far and near,
And of two knights still were they thinking, two knights without a peer.

Then spake Kriemhild the lovely: "My lord is such a knight
That beneath him all these kingdoms might well be bowed as of right."
Answered the Lady Brunhild: "Tush! how may such thing be?
If there lived on the earth no mortal save only thou and he,
Then haply might this kingdom be subject to Siegmund's son;
But so long as Gunther liveth, may such thing never be done."
Thereto made answer Kriemhild: "Dost mark how stands he there?
With the princely pride of his presence none other knight may compare,
As the full moon in her brightness doth all the stars outshine.
Wherefore for good cause ever glad heart and proud is mine."
But again made answer Brunhild: "Be he goodly as ye will,
And stately and noble-hearted, one standeth above him still,
Gunther, the flower of knighthood, thine high-born brother: in sooth,
High stands he above all earth-kings, and this thou knowest for truth."
But again made answer Kriemhild: "My lord is of such high worth,
That with fullest right have I praised him for the mightiest man on earth."

In many a thing is he worthy of honour's chiefest meed.
Doth thine heart not tell thee, Brunhild, he is Gunther's peer indeed?"

"Now this my word, O Kriemhild, take not as said in despite;
In that I say that my boasting is made of fullest right.
This said they both—I heard it, when first these twain I beheld
In the day when in my contests my will by the King's was quelled,
When he won my love, in fashion so knightly triumphing,
Siegfried himself said, 'Vassal am I unto Gunther the King.'
Therefore I hold him his liegeman: of himself I heard it confessed."
Made answer Kriemhild the lovely: "For me 'twere a bitter jest!
How like were my noble brethren so to have dealt with me
That they should abase me ever the bride of a vassal to be!
Therefore will I, O Brunhild, entreat thee even as a friend—
For courtesy's sake, and my love's sake, let this thy babble have end."

Made answer the Queen: "I may not refrain me from this my claim.
Am I like to renounce the service of all these knights of fame
Which, even as thine, be bounden to homage unto my lord?"
Then the anger of Kriemhild the lovely leapt into flame at the word:
"This boast, thou must needs forego it, that my lord ever on earth
Hath rendered thee aught of homage! Mine hero is more of worth
Than thy lord, my brother Gunther, be he never so noble a king.
Thou therefore shalt spare me the hearing of thy fond imagining.
Yea, needs must I marvel ever, if he be thy vassal-thane,
And thou be exalted so highly in worship above us twain,
Wherefore so long all tribute to thee hath of him been denied!
Of right I demand to be pestered no more with thine arrogant pride."
"Too high dost thou exalt thee," Queen Brunhild made reply:
"Now will I prove of a surety if folk account thee as high
In royal esteem and honour as they hold the Queen, even me!"
By this was the two Queens' anger kindled unquenchably.

Flashed out her answer Kriemhild: "Soon shall the issue be shown,
Since thou darest to claim my Siegfried for a vassal of thy throne!
By all the two Kings' barons this day shall it be seen
If I dare or dare not enter the minster before the Queen!
I will show unto thee right plainly that noble am I and free!
I will prove my lord more worthy than thine may ever be!
Yea I, even I, will brook not thy malapert insults!—know,
This day shalt thyself behold it, how thy vassal—quotha!—shall go
In royal procession leading her knights in Burgundy.
Mine head shall be higher than ever it hath happed unto any to see
The head of a Daughter of Princes—though a crown make the little great!"
By this betwixt those ladies exceeding stern was the hate.
Fiercely made answer Brunhild: "Wouldst not for a vassal be known?
Then of sore need must thou sever thyself with thy train from mine own,
When subject and Queen in procession on to the minster go."
"Of a truth," laughed scornfully Kriemhild, "doubt not but it shall be so!"

"Now array yourselves, my maidens," to her damsels Kriemhild cried.
"Let see if unshamed I may not within this land abide!
Be it seen to-day if ye have not royal-rich attire.
Soon shall the lie be given to herself by Brunhild the liar!"
Small need was to urge them: raiment they sought out rich and rare.
Swiftly radiant in splendour stood matron and maiden there.
Now with the train of her handmaids paced to the minster the Queen—
But lo, cometh Kriemhild the lovely, a very glory-sheen,
With maidens three-and-forty, which had fared with her unto Rhine:
In loveliest loomwork, woven in Araby, did they shine.
So royally swept the maidens up to the minster-door;
And for her the vassals of Siegfried were waiting therebefore.
Then looked the people, and marvelled for what cause this befell
That they saw the Queens from each other sundered, and none could tell
Wherefore they walked not together side by side as of old.
—Thence came unto many a baron affliction manifold.

Even as in front of the minster the wife of Gunther stood,
And the gallant knights Burgundian made sport in frolic mood
With them of the Queen's train-royal, fair dame and winsome maid,
Came thither the Lady Kriemhild with her troop all splendour-arrayed,
What raiment soever the daughter of a noble knight might wear,
By the gorgeous attire of her maidens had all been as empty air.
Her wealth was so all-unmeasured that wives of kings thrice ten
Never had shown such splendour as was flaunted by Kriemhild then.
How much he desired soever, no man had dared to say
That in all his days he had gazed on such royal-rich array
As shone in that hour on her maidens magnifical-bedight.
Never Kriemhild had done it, but to render to Brunhild despite for despite.

Each face to face met other at that wide minster-gate;
And thereat the wife of Gunther in her jealousy and hate
Cried out, "Stand still, thou Kriemhild!"—her rage in her voice rang keen—
"It beseems not the wife of a vassal to pass before a Queen!"
Swift answer made Kriemhild the lovely in angry and scornful mood:
"Hadst had but the grace to be silent, for thee had it been right good.
Thou!—thou hast on thy fair body brought shame by wantoning!
How might another's leman ever be wife of a King?"
"Whom hast thou here named leman?"—the cry from the Queen's lips burst.
"That have I thee!" hissed Kriemhild; "for thy fair body first
Was embraced by none other than Siegfried, mine own beloved lord.
Of a surety it was not my brother—nay, but by him wert thou whored!
How was thy wit so hoodwinked?—a cunning wile was it all!
How couldst thou let him embrace thee who is but thy vassal-thrall?
I hear thee," scoffed on Kriemhild, "complain where no cause is!"
"In veriest deed," cried Brunhild, "I will tell unto Gunther this!"
"Wherein unto me is the peril? Thyself hath thine arrogance snared!
To summon me to render homage to thee hast thou dared!
This one thing know of a surety—I grieve, but the cause art thou—
All trust and friendship is ended between us for ever now."

Brake Brunhild forth into weeping: but Kriemhild tarried no more,
And before the wife of Gunther she entered the minster-door,
She and her train. Most bitter hate did her words beget.
Therefrom bright eyes full many were grief-overclouded and wet.
For all the solemn service, and the holy chant and song,
That hour of worship to Brunhild lasted all too long;
She was heart-overclouded with anguish, and darkly did she brood;
And for this full penalty lighted on warriors brave and good.
In front of the gate of the minster with her maids did Brunhild stay;
And she said to her heart: "Now Kriemhild unto me shall the whole truth say
Of those loud-throated railings, who hath whetted her tongue like a sword.
If Siegfried thus hath vaunted, his life shall pay for the word!"

Now Kriemhild with bold knights many came forth of the holy place;
And sharply spake Queen Brunhild: "Abide thou there for a space!
Thou hast chosen to call me leman: the proof thereof will I see.
Thy word, know thou, is an evil and a loathly word to me."
Spake Kriemhild the Fair: "It were better for thee hadst thou let me go!
With the golden ring I prove it on mine hand that glittereth—lo!
Unto me did Siegfried bring this what time by thy side he lay."
Never had dawned on Brunhild such an utter-wretched day.
She cried: "This gold ring royal—even this was stolen from me!
It hath been for long years hidden by caitiff treachery!
I am now on the track of the felon, the thief that my jewel hath ta'en!"
Raging in reinless fury were now these ladies twain.

Spake Kriemhild again: "Of thy jewel the thief was nowise I.
Far better hadst thou kept silence, hadst thou held thine honour high!
Lo, I prove it again by the girdle which compasseth my waist.
Not I am the liar!—by Siegfried first was thy body embraced."
Fair-plaited of silk of the Orient was the girdle that she ware,
With precious stones thick-studded, a marvel passing fair.
That Brunhild beheld, and she brake forth into stormy weeping then,
Crying, "This shall be known of Gunther and of all his mighty men!"

Then spake the Queen of Rhineland: "Send unto me straightway
Gunther the Lord of the Kingdom, for he shall hear this day
How foully his sister hath slandered and spoken shame of the Queen.
She saith before all people that Siegfried's wife have I been."
The King came girt with his barons: he saw the grief-bowed head
And the tears of his dear wife Brunhild, and lovingly he said:
"Of whom, my wife, my beloved, hath a hurt been done unto thee?"
And she spake to the King, and she answered: "Joyless for aye must I be!
Of all my wifely honour this thy sister is fain
To strip me by shameful accusing: unto thee I must needs complain.
She saith that with Siegfried her husband I have wantoned in shame and sin."
Answered and spake King Gunther: "She hath wickedly done herein!"
"She weareth here my girdle, which long time since I lost,
And withal my ring of the red gold—O me, to my bitter cost
Was I born, and I rue it ever! If thou clear not my name
From the stain of such utter abasement, my love never more shalt thou claim."

Then spake to a lord King Gunther: "Summon him hither thou.
If he of such deed have boasted, he must make confession now,
Or must give to the lie denial, this hero of Netherland."
So unto that presence Siegfried was called by the King's command.
So then when the good knight Siegfried saw faces disquieted,
And the cause thereof divined not, straightway he spake and said:
"Now wherefore weep these ladies? This unto me make known;
And wherefore the King hath called me hither, be this too shown."
Then spake King Gunther: "Sorrow I find here bitter as death.
The Lady Brunhild hath told me a tale of venomous breath,
Even this, that thou hast vaunted that thou in bridal bed
First didst embrace her. Of Kriemhild thy wife is this thing said."

Made answer the hero Siegfried: "If Kriemhild hath said this thing,
I will take no rest or ever she rue her slandering!
Yea, and thereof will I clear me in presence of all thy lords
By the faith of my solemn oath-plight, that never I spake such words."

Answered the Lord of Rhineland: "Give that assurance thou.
Let the oath that thou hast tendered be spoken before these now.
So shalt thou of treacherous dealing be acquitted, and stand without stain."
Then made they the proud Burgundians in a ring draw round these twain.
His hand stretched Siegfried the dauntless to the hand of the King to swear;
But Gunther spake: "Thine utter guiltlessness here I declare
Out of mine heart's assurance. Thou goest of this charge free.
That whereof Kriemhild accused thee never was done of thee."

Then yet again spake Siegfried: "And if ever my wife reap joy
Of her sowing for Lady Brunhild this seed of heart-annoy,
This unto me of a surety shall be nought but measureless grief."
Then looked on each other the good knights with faces of glad relief.
"So must men's wives be governed," again spake Siegfried the thane,
"That from all such arrogant speeches they may for ever refrain.
Thou then to thy wife forbid them; this likewise to mine will I.
For such overweening railing I take shame verily."

But by reason of words once spoken fair ladies held them apart.
And the Lady Brunhild sorrowed with such sore anguish of heart
That in all her affliction afflicted were Gunther's vassal-train.
Then went in Hagen of Troneg to commune with the Queen of her pain.
And he asked of her what ailed her, that weeping he found her there;
And she told him the shameful story. A grim oath straightway he sware:
"For this shall the lord of Kriemhild to the uttermost atone,
Or never hereafter joyance by Hagen shall be known!"

Joined in their plotting were Gernot and Ortwein, Metz's lord.
"Death unto Siegfried!" the heroes counselled with one accord.
Then Giselher, child of Uta, did these into council take;
But swiftly against their sentence the lad true-hearted spake:
"Alas, good knights, now wherefore would ye do so black a deed?
Never such ruthless hatred hath Siegfried earned for meed"

That e'er he should pay you forfeit of the precious life for this!
By very nothings enkindled is the wrath of a woman, I wis."
"Shall men say that we rear his bastards?" cried Hagen savagely:
"It should bring right little honour unto good knights such as we!
The name of our Lady beloved hath he blasted with arrogant breath!
If his life for the slander atone not, myself will die the death!"

Then the King's self spake: "Nay, nothing hath he done to us unto this day
Save lovingkindness and honour: let him therefore live, I say.
What boots it that I should harbour hatred of this good knight?
Loyally aye hath he helped us, and hath had therein his delight."
Then the Knight of Metz, Lord Ortwein, made answer passion-hot:
"Though passing-great be his prowess, it shall verily help him not:
I will wreak on him deadliest vengeance, so my Lord will but suffer me."
So the heroes imagined mischief against him causelessly.

Yet further went none with the matter, save that Hagen ever and aye,
In season and out of season, still unto Gunther would say:
"If but Siegfried live no longer, lordships many shall come
Under thine hand." The spirit of the King was wrapped in gloom.
But awhile the matter rested. Men jousted even as before:
Strong spear-shafts many they shivered from afront of the minster-door
Up the broad green space to the palace, escorting Siegfried's wife.
But of Gunther's liegemen were many that lowered on the joyous strife.

Spake the King: "Put away for ever the murderous hate ye nurse.
He was born to be honour and profit to us, and nowise a curse;
Yea also, so battle-resistless is the marvellous hero's hand,
That, if aught he divined of your purpose, before him should no man stand."
"That shall he never," said Hagen. "Beware thou reveal it not!
With secrecy so deadly will I handle the matter, I wot,
That to him shall the weeping of Brunhild be Ruin's baleful breath.
Evermore unto him shall Hagen be Hate and the Shadow of Death!"

But spake unto him King Gunther: "How then may ye compass the deed?"
Thereunto answered Hagen: "Hearken to this my rede:
There shall ride into this land heralds, as it were from a land afar,
Men known unto none in thy city, denouncing against us war.
Then say thou in these guests' presence: 'Lo, I must forth to the fight
With all my warrior vassals'—then is thy goal in sight.
He will offer himself for thine helping: thereby shall he spill his life,
If I win but his woundless secret from the fearless hero's wife."
Alas and alas! and he hearkened unto Hagen's evil wile;
And these twain fell to devising of treachery and guile—
These two knights chivalrous-nurtured!—ere any divined their intent.
So through two women's wrangling to their death many heroes were sent.

XV

HOW WOVEN FOR SIEGFRIED WAS THE NET OF BETRAYAL

To the gates of the royal city men saw on the fourth day's morn
Come two-and-thirty riders. Straightway was their message borne
Unto Gunther, to wit, a defiance unto war from a far-off foe.
—That lie unto wives and mothers was a fathomless wellspring of woe.
Unto these was licence given to appear before the King.
Then said they to him: "We be liegemen of Lüdeger's following,
The King overcome in battle, time was, by Siegfried's hand,
And by him led thence as a hostage into King Gunther's land."
Then Gunther greeted the heralds, and bade them sit at the meat.
But spake of them one, and answered: "Lord King, let us stand on our feet
Till we tell out all the tidings wherewith we be sent unto thee.
Of many children of women be ye holden in enmity.
King Lüdegast bids thee defiance, and with him King Lüdeger,
Because at thine hands aforetime despitefully used they were.
They will ride now into thy kingdom with a host for battle arrayed."
Great semblance of indignation at their message Gunther made.

Then lodged they those feigned heralds, as who would take counsel awhile,
How might it be that Siegfried should beware of such deep guile—
He, yea, or any other, when the snare for his feet was cast?
Ha, in the net they had hidden were their own feet taken at last!

To and fro the King with his kinsmen whispering ever went:
Ever Hagen of Troneg was pricking the sides of his intent.
In sooth, of Gunther's liegemen was many a man for peace,
But never from dark devising of murder would Hagen cease.
Thus as they whispered, Siegfried found these thanes on a day;
And the Hero of Netherland marvelled, and questioning thus 'gan say:
"Why goeth the King with his liegemen in heaviness of heart?
In avenging your wrongs am I ever ready to bear my part."
Answered and spake King Gunther; "Good cause for trouble have I.
Me do the Dane and the Saxon again unto battle defy.
With their war-hosts now be they minded to ride into Burgundy-land."
Answered the aweless Hero: "Their onset shall Siegfried's hand,
As best befitteth your honour, meet in the battle's strain.
That I did to the kings aforetime, shall now be done yet again:
I will ravage their land and their strongholds beneath the spoiler's tread
Or ever from war I refrain me: hereon will I stake mine head.
As for thee, do thou and thy liegemen here in the homeland stay.
Let me ride forth against them with mine own war-array.
That I render you service gladly, shall ye and all men see.
Be ye sure, full evil entreated at mine hand shall your enemies be."

"Now welcome to me is thy saying," the King said joyful-voiced,
As though in the proffered helping indeed and in truth he rejoiced.
In his falseness lowly he bowed him, that King of the traitor-heart!
Yet again spake Siegfried the noble, "Let all your fears depart."
Plotters and vassals prepared them, as it were for the war-march, then;
But all was done for a semblance unto Siegfried and his men.
And the hero bade his warriors of Netherland arm for the fray;
And straightway the knights of Siegfried sought out their war-array.

To his sire spake Siegfried the mighty: "Here in the land remain,
Sigmund my father: returning soon shalt thou see us again,
So God but grant good fortune to us, to the land of the Rhine.
While thou with the King abidest fair days and glad shall be thine."

Now all were at point of departing: banners to staves they bound.
Many of Gunther's liegemen the while were standing round:
But that all was hollow semblance no man of these was ware.
Sooth, mighty was the war-host arrayed round Siegfried there.
The hauberks and the helmets on the horses laded they:
Knights many stalwart and fearless would forth of the land straightway.

Then stole thence Hagen of Troneg: to the presence of Kriemhild he came,
As who, ere they marched unto battle, would take his leave of the dame.
"Now happy am I," said Kriemhild, "to have won to myself such a lord
Who unto my friends belovèd is so mighty a battle-ward
As Siegfried is to my brethren when he aideth them in fight;
And for this am I heart-uplifted," said the Queen, "with abiding delight.
Hagen, friend well-belovèd, I pray thee, of this take thought—
I have joyed to do thee service, nor borne thee malice in aught:
Let this be requited in kindness to my belovèd lord.
Let him suffer not for my speaking to Brunhild a hasty word.
Thereof," said the noble lady, "constrained have I been to repent:
He hath visited on my body in sorest chastisement
My folly of speech in stirring the Queen unto angry mood:
He hath verily well avenged her, that noble knight and good."

"Yet a little while, and atonement shall she accept of thee,"
He said, "dear Lady Kriemhild: now I pray thee, tell unto me
In what wise I may do thee service through Siegfried thy lord and thy knight.
None living would I, O lady, for thy kindness so gladly requite."
"For him were I wholly dreadless," made answer Siegfried's wife,
"Lest any in storm of battle should imperil mine hero's life,

Were it not for his reckless defying of danger in battle's van ;
 Else would he aye go scatheless, that good and valiant man."
 "O Lady, if this thou fearest," in his subtlety Hagen replied,
 "Lest in battle he haply be wounded, then unto me confide
 How best I may devise it, such peril to withstand ;
 Then for his warding ever will I ride full near at hand."

She answered, "Thou art my kinsman, and of blood am I near unto thee.
 I commit my lord, my beloved, to thy faith and thy fealty,
 That for my sake o'er my beloved the shield of protection thou hold."
 Then to Hagen revealed she a story that had better been left untold.
 For she said, "My lord is fearless, and the strongest man of men ;
 And he slew on a day mid the mountains the Dragon of the Fen ;
 Then bathed the hero his body in the blood of the monster worm,
 Wherefore availeth to wound him no weapon that man may form.
 Yet ever mine heart is fearful when in forefront of battle he stands,
 And many a flying javelin is sped from warriors' hands,
 Lest I peradventure may lose him, mine hero of all loved best :—
 Ah me, with what fears for Siegfried tosses mine heart in unrest !
 O friend, dear friend and kinsman, on thy faithful love I lean
 That thou wilt guard thy troth-pledge given herein to a queen,
 When I tell to thee where my beloved may be wounded of the steel.
 Now shalt thou hear: the secret to thine honour and love I reveal.
 When from the wounds of the Dragon flowed the hot-reeking blood,
 And when in the red pool bathed him that fearless knight and good,
 There fell on him 'twixt the shoulders one broad lime-tree leaf.
 On that spot may he be wounded ; and this is my sorrow and grief."

Answered her Hagen of Troneg: "Thou then with thine own hand sew
 On his vesture a little token that to me that spot may show
 The which, when we stand in the war-storm, with heed evermore must I shield."
 She thought from peril to save him ; but so unto death was he sealed.
 She said, "I will sew on his garment with a silken thread spun fine
 A faintly-visible crosslet: there that strong hand of thine,

Hero, shall guard mine husband, as he presseth aye to the front,
 And standeth begirt with foemen in the battle's sternest brunt."
 "Even this will I do, dear Lady," false Hagen made reply.
 She thought in her wifely yearning to redeem him from death thereby:—
 Ah me, thereby did Kriemhild her lord unto death betray!
 Most courteous leave took Hagen, and with glad heart hasted away.

C Then asked of him King Gunther: "What secret hath Hagen learned?"
 "King, we will ride forth hunting when back is the war-march turned.
 Now have I gotten the knowledge whereby he shall surely die.
 Thou, wilt thou appoint this hunting?" Said the King, "Yea, that will I!"
 Now are the kinsmen of Gunther blithe, and their hearts are light!
 Never, I ween, thereafter to the end of time shall knight
 Devise such black betrayal as by these contrived hath been
 From the trust in knighthood's honour placed by a wife and a Queen!

On the morrow's morning early Siegfried the knight rode forth
 With a thousand men blithe-hearted, their faces set to the north.
 He weened he should take a vengeance for his friends' wrong fierce and fell.
 So nigh unto him rode Hagen that he marked his surcoat well.
 Then, when he spied the token, he sent all secretly
 To be bearers of other tidings two men of his company
 Which should say, "Let the great King's country in peace unmarred abide,
 For to make submission to Gunther hath Lüdeger bidden us ride."
 How passing loth was Siegfried to turn him back from the fight,
 From avenging friends and kinsmen on these that had done them despite!
 Scarce could the liegemen of Gunther persuade him to sheathe the sword.
 Back rode he at last to the traitor, and the King his thanks outpoured:
 "God guerdon thee, friend Siegfried, for thy good heart unto mine aid,
 That thou offeredst thee so freely what time for thine help I prayed!
 For this will I aye be beholden to thee, as well may I be.
 Beyond all friends and kinsmen do I put chief trust in thee!
 But seeing that now for a season war unto peace giveth place,
 Go to, let us hunt the wild-boar and hold the bear in chase

In the Odenwald, as ofttimes in days overpast have I done."

—By Hagen was all this plotted, the utter-treacherous one.

"Each guest of mine by my message shall straightway be certified

That tomorn we go forth hunting: whoso with me will ride,

Let him hold him early ready: if any will bide here still

Fleeting careless hours with the ladies, that doth he with my good will."

With knightly courtesy Siegfried made answer thereunto:

"If ye ride forth a-hunting, I will gladly go with you.

So ye will but lend me a huntsman who shall rouse the quarry for me,

And therewithal some sleuth-hounds, to the forest will I with thee."

"One huntsman wilt thou only?" King Gunther straightway replied.

"I will lend thee four, an it please thee, which know from side to side

The forest and all the wood-ways, and every wild thing's lair,

Lest thou err from the path unknowing when campward at even we fare."

Then rode the hero to Kriemhild, and told to her everything,

The while that the tale of Hagen was told in the ears of the King,

Even all his deadly devising against that noble thane:—

God grant such treachery never may be wrought by man again!

C So when these royal hunters had woven the dark death-snare,

Then told they the plot to their fellows. Yet Gernot and Giselher

Would not with the rest go hunting. Wherefore from warning their friend

They hardened their hearts, I know not. Fully paid was the price in the end.

XVI

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS MURDERED

Now Gunther the King and Hagen, those knights of high-born blood,
 Have contrived with treacherous purpose the hunt through the glades of the wood.
 O yea, with their spears keen-whetted will they pierce the forest-bear
 And the wild boar and the bison—what sport for the brave more fair?

Forth rode with heart exultant Siegfried amidst of the rest.
All manner of meats followed after for the feasting of host and guest.
In the wood's dark heart cool-welling is a spring—there left he his life
By the counselling of Brunhild, King Gunther's ruthless wife.
But the bold knight, ere he departed, farewell to his wife would say.
Already on sumpters laden was his goodly hunting array,
And the gear of his woodland-fellows, for over the Rhine would they now.
But behold, she wept—ah, never had she more cause, I trow!
Soft on the lips he kissed her, his well-belovèd one:
“God grant me to see thee, belovèd, safe and sound anon,
And that thy sweet eyes may behold me!—with the friends thou holdest dear
Fleet thou the time all-careless: I may not tarry here.”

Then called she to mind the story—yet durst not tell him the tale—
Told erewhile unto Hagen: bitterly 'gan she bewail,
That noble Daughter of Princes, that ever she saw the light;
And brake into measureless weeping the bride of Siegfried the knight.
And she spake to her lord: “I beseech thee, O let this hunting be!
Last night was my dream a horror: two wild boars tracking thee
Held thee in chase o'er a moorland—then flowers grew suddenly red!
Cause have I for bitter weeping; for fear is mine heart as lead.
I fear—oh, I needs must shudder at the thought of a treacherous blow,
If haply offence hath been given to an unforgetting foe,
Unto some who might visit their hatred and malice on thee and me.
Stay here, dear lord: I beseech thee in love and in loyalty!”

But he said: “My wife, my belovèd, I shall be but a few days gone.
Is there any that here bears hatred to me?—I know not one.
Lo, one and all thy kinsmen unto me are gracious-willed,
And I, I have earned no guerdon save the love wherewith they be filled.”
“Ah no, but my lord, but my Siegfried, thy very death do I dread!
For I dreamed yet again for mine anguish: crashing down on thine head
Suddenly fell two mountains—and I saw thee never again!
If now from me thou departest, it shall be for mine uttermost pain.”

Then cast he his arms about her, the utter-faithful and dear,
And essayed with loving kisses that fairest of women to cheer.
This was their last leave-taking: lo, he is gone from her bower.
Alas and alas, never living she beheld him from that hour!

So the King rode forth to the wood-lawns that the forest's arms enfold,
Seeking the hunter's pastime, and many a baron bold -
With Gunther rode and his liegemen. Two only were lacking there,
Twain in the city that tarried, Gernot and Giselher.
Many a beast full-laden before them passed over Rhine
For those blithe hunting-fellows bearing the bread and the wine,
The flesh and withal the fishes, and abundance of everything
Which beseemeth the lord of a kingdom when he goeth journeying.
Then chose they a place for their camping on the skirts of the forest green
Or ever the game brake cover, those lordly hunters keen:
Thence would they slip the sleuth-hounds—'twas a river-mead wide-spread.
And now overtook them Siegfried, and this to the King one said.

Then set they their watch of the huntsmen all round on every side
At the outlets of the wild-wood: then Siegfried the mighty cried,
And spake the valiant hero: "Now who shall show us the way,
O valiant knights and stalwart, to the lairs of the woodland prey?"
"Let us sunder each from other," spake Hagen unto the rest,
"Or ever in chase of the quarry thicket and glade we quest.
So shall I and my royal master make proof of you all, and say
Who hath most cunning in woodcraft of all this hunter-array.
Henchmen and hounds, we will part them, that each may take his share;
Then, whitherso'er each listeth, alone let each man fare.
Who taketh the goodliest quarry, to him will we give the praise."
Then short time tarried the heroes from tracking the wild-wood ways.
Again spake Siegfried the noble: "Unto hounds have I no will,
Save for one only setter so blooded by woodcraft-skill
That he tracketh the slot unerring through the tangled forest wide.
Now, ho for a fortunate hunting!" the lord of Kriemhild cried.

Then a certain grey-haired hunter in the leash a sleuth-hound led,
And he brought those barons, or ever long time in seeking had fled,
Where they came on the wildwood's children; whatsoe'er from covert burst
Was chased of those merry comrades, as huntsmen have done from the first.
Whatsoe'er his sleuth-hound started, that by the swift right hand
Was slain of Siegfried the valiant, the Hero of Netherland.
So fleet were the feet of his good steed, that nought might his speed outrun;
So the praise of cunning woodcraft before them all he won:
In all manner of hunter's prowess he stood without a peer.
The first of the forest-children that fell before his spear
Was a strong young boar, and the javelin of Siegfried drank its blood.
Not long thereafter a lion fierce-eyed before him stood.
The hound gave tongue—forth leapt he—the hero shot with the bow
Speeding the keen-tipped arrow drawn on his woodland foe.
The shot struck home, and the lion thereafter leapt but thrice;
And the hero's hunting-fellows acclaimed him with gladsome cries.
A bison he smote thereafter; a huge elk low hath he laid;
Four urochs strong, and a great stag, a giant of the glade.
So swiftly his good horse bare him, there was nought that his speed out-
sped.

Harts and hinds uncounted beneath his wood-spear bled.
And now, uproused by the sleuth-hound, a wild boar burst from his lair:
Even as to flight he turned him, behold, before him there
Was the fleet-foot Lord of the Woodland, and Siegfried barred his path.
Then charged on the gallant hero the monster foaming in wrath;
But the sword of the lord of Kriemhild with a swift thrust laid him low:
None other hunter living so featly had dealt the blow.
When dead he lay by the thicket, they leashed the hound again.
Now marvelled all Burgundians at the wealth of prey he had ta'en.
"If the thing may be asked offenceless," his huntsman merrily said,
"Leave unto us, Lord Siegfried, of the wild things some few head.
Mountain and forest thou makest of tenants dispossessed!"
Sunnily smiled the hero at the old rough woodland jest.

Then halloo of men and baying of dogs burst forth all round:
Uprose so mighty a clamour of voices of huntsman and hound
That the mountain-side and the forest rang and rang again,
For that four and twenty couples were unleashed by the hunters then.
From the hearts of many children of the wild the life was riven,
While hoped full many a hunter that unto him should be given
The chiefest prize of woodcraft; but such might ne'er have been
While yet beside the camp-fire Siegfried the mighty was seen.

By now came the hunt to an ending, but not so wholly so,
But that still were the hunters bringing to the light of the camp-fire's glow
Fells full many of wild things, and of venison good store:—
How busy now were the henchmen as the flesh to the spits they bore!
Then gave the King commandment that the hunters princely-born
Unto the supper be bidden: one long blast on the horn
Pealed far through the aisles of the forest, telling to all their band
That now at the place of the trysting waited the lord of the land.
Then spake a hunter of Siegfried: "My lord, I hear the blast
Of a horn that giveth us token that now must all we haste
Back to the place of the trysting. Now will I answer thereto."
Then long blasts crying "Where are ye?" to their fellow-hunters flew.

Made answer Siegfried the noble, "Now forth of the wood must we."
Smoothly the good steed bare him, fast followed his company.
They roused with their crashing and clamour a forest-beast fierce-eyed,
A savage bear; and the hero unto them that followed cried:
"I will show to our hunting-fellows a sport of merry glee.
Yonder a bear have I sighted: the hound from the leash slip ye.
Sir Bear to the place of the camping shall ride with us this day.
O nay, he shall not escape us, flee he as fast as he may!"
They slipped from the leash the sleuth-hound; swift turned the bear and fled,
And Kriemhild's lord hard after to ride him down on-sped.
But he won a ravine all-rocky, too rugged for hoof of steed;
And the strong beast thought: "From the hunters now am I verily freed!"

But the good knight leapt exultant from the saddle, and so on foot
Rushed through the brake pursuing, and came unwares on the brute
As slowly he threaded the tangle: his strong hands gripped straightway
And cast it to earth unwounded, and swiftly bound the prey.
Fangs, claws were all unavailing against his masterful might:
Fast to the saddle he lashed it; then mounted the gallant knight,
And on to the place of the camp-fire he bare it triumphant-souled
To make sport for his hunting-fellows, that goodly thane and bold.

Ha, in what lordly splendour he rode amidst the throng,
With the mighty hunting-javelin, of the keen broad blade and long,
With the goodly battle-broadsword that low as his spur-tip hung,
With the ruddy golden bugle from the hero's baldric slung!
Of goodlier hunting-raiment never hath story told.
His mighty frame did a doublet of the velvet black enfold:
With the sable's fur dark-lustrous his golden hair was crowned;
And ah, what rich-wrought fringes bordered his quiver round!
A panther's fell, by reason that ever about it clung
A strange sweet scent, encased it: from his shoulders a cross-bow swung
So mighty, that, save with a windlass, none but himself alone
Could bend its arch, yet lightly by his fingers was it done.
Sea-otter's skin was his mantle, the fell from a far shore brought;
From shoulder to heel with white tufts was it richly overwrought;
And all throughout the fur-gloss shone flicker and glint of gold
That over-rippled the mantle of that forest-master bold.
Girt to his side was Balmung, that broad and sunbright brand,
Of such exceeding sharpness that none might its edge withstand
When lightened through battle's tempest that helmet-sundering sword.
Well might he be heart-uplifted, that princely hunter-lord!
If I needs must tell the story from end to end all o'er,
I must sing of the goodly quiver and its plenteous arrow-store,
Whose shafts had gold bands clamping the handbreadth heads thereto.
Woe to the mark of that archer, for death on the points of them flew.

On came that stately rider forth of the forest-glade,
And the liegemen of Gunther beheld him like a king of hunters arrayed;
And they ran to meet him coming, and his bridle held they for him:—
Lo, cast across his saddle a huge bear mighty of limb!
Soon as on earth he lighted, from muzzle and shaggy paw
Loosed he the bands that bound it, and all the bandogs saw
That bear in their midst, and straightway all furiously they bayed.
Then rushed for the forest the monster: ha, many were sore afraid;
For the beast, from the tumult fleeing, through their woodland cooking-hall
Burst—how from the fires did the henchmen leap, and asunder fall!
Overturned was many a caldron, the brands hurled every way—
Woe's me for the goodly victual flung mid the ashes grey!
Up from their seats on the greensward did earl and henchman spring:
Fiercely the bear snarled fleeing: straightway commanded the King
To loose the hound-pack on him, for by this all leashed they lay.
Ah, the day had had blithe ending—had that been the end of the day!

With bows and with spears on rushed they, was none that tarried there.
Fast followed the swift pursuers on the track of the fleeing bear:
Yet no man dared loose arrow, so thronged the hounds at his heels.
So loud was the tumult, the forest rang with the echo-peals.
The brute from the host of the bandogs fled with his uttermost might:
None save the lord of Kriemhild could follow that headlong flight;
But he swooped on the maddened quarry, with his sword he smote him and
slew;
And the shaggy spoil to the camp-fire back the henchmen drew.
Then cried they all which beheld it, "Sooth, here is a stalwart lord!"
Now bade they the princely hunters to the forest banquet-board.
There in a fair green wood-lawn they sat in a great wide ring.
Unto these lordly hunters what goodly meats did they bring!

But the cupbearers far off lingered: no man with wine drew near,
Else never had feasting heroes been served with nobler cheer.

Had false hearts not thereunder been contriving treachery,
 Those royal banquet-givers from reproach had been wholly free.
 C By the wings of death overshadowed, nought knew he, the hero betrayed,
 Neither dreamed of the snares of treason that round his feet were laid.
 Yea, he was the flower of knighthood, deceit in him there was none.
 —Ah, many that gat no profit thereof for his death must atone!

Then out spake Siegfried the noble: "In sooth, I marvel sore
 That, seeing they bring from the camp-fires of meat such plenteous store,
 The cupbearers bring not also therewithal the wine!
 If this be your wont, ye are henceforth no hunting-fellows of mine.
 Yet sure might I well deserve it, that ye fairly entreat your guest."
 Then spake from his place at the table the King with guileful breast:
 "For this will we yet make atonement, this one day's oversight.
 Blameworthy is Hagen only, who would slay us with thirst outright."
 Made answer Hagen of Troneg: "My lord and master dear,
 I weened that to-day our hunting should have been afar from here
 In the forest of the Spessart, and thither the wine I sent.
 If to-day ye be wineless, hereafter shall your hearts be well content."

Made answer Siegfried the noble: "Small thank for thy promise have thou!
 Of mead and of wine of the clearest seven sumpter-loads even now
 Should have been in our midst unladen; or, if this too hard were found,
 Nigher the good Rhine-water should have been our camping-ground."
 Made answer Hagen of Troneg: "My lords, and thou, O King,
 I know where nigh to us lieth a cool-upwelling spring.
 That ye be not indignant against me, I counsel that thither we go."
 —That rede unto many a hero was fraught with bitter woe!

Now by this was the good knight Siegfried with thirst-pangs sore distressed.
 "Now thrust ye aside the table," the hero cried to the rest;
 "I will hence away to the hill-side, and drink thereby of the well."
 So all that counsel of treason as the false lords plotted befell.

The woodland spoil they laded upon wains, and bore through the land,
Even all that in that day's hunting had fallen to Siegfried's hand.
What folk soever beheld it the praise of the hero spoke
Even in the hour when Hagen his faith with Siegfried broke.

When these to the broad lime shading the spring were at point to have sped,
Even then spake Hagen of Troneg: "Oft have I heard this said,
That none with the lord of Kriemhild in fleetness of foot may vie,
If he put forth his strength in running: lo now, the truth let us try."
Then the noble thane and valiant, the Hero of Netherland, spake:
"Thereof may ye well make trial, if with me ye be minded to make
A running-match to the well-head. If this shall of us be done,
Whoso is first, account we him our fleetest one."
"Good, let us thereof make trial," made answer Hagen the thane.
Then again spake Siegfried the stalwart: "If ye pass me, either of twain,
Then on the grass my body before your feet will I fling."
How blithe to hear that promise was Gunther the traitor king!
Then spake that fearless hero: "This too unto you will I say:
I will bear on my body my raiment and all my war-array,
My boar-spear, yea, and my buckler, and all mine hunter's weed."
Therewithal with his sword and his quiver he girded himself with speed.

Then these twain stripped all raiment from their limbs, and on earth they laid,
And in nought save thin white tunics men saw their bodies arrayed.
Bounding as two wild panthers they raced o'er the clover green;
But long ere they won to the fountain, there standing was Siegfried seen.
In all manner of prowess ever men gave him the chiefest renown.
Straightway he unbuckled his war-glaive, his quiver laid he down,
And he leaned the stubborn boar-spear on the linden-tree's smooth shaft.
And the princely guest stood waiting where the dimpling ripples laughed:
Yea, Siegfried then, as ever, his knightly courtesy showed.
He laid on the earth his buckler hard by where the runnel flowed.
How sorely he thirsted soever, not yet the hero drank
Till first the King had drunken—he earned right evil thank!

Clear was the spring as crystal, pure was the water and cool.
Down on the brink bowed Gunther, and stooped his lips to the pool;
And when to the full he had drunken, again to his feet did he rise,
While still looked Siegfried the fearless on the water with longing eyes.
For his courtesy heavily paid he!—his bow and his mighty sword
Were borne away by Hagen from their noble-hearted lord.
Back swiftly sprang the traitor; on the javelin his grasp he laid,
And glared in search of the token at the vest of the man betrayed.
Even as Siegfried the noble drank of the life-giving flood,
Fair through the crosslet he stabbed him. Sprang from the wound the blood,
His heart's blood; and Hagen's tunic was besprent with murder's stain.
—Never may hand of warrior such villainy do again!

There in his heart deep-planted the murderer left the spear.
How swiftly thence did Hagen flee in his deadly fear!
Never on earth so fleetly from the face of man fled he
As when Siegfried's limbs at the death-stab leapt convulsively.
Forthright did the maddened hero up from the well-brink spring:
Stood far out 'twixt his shoulders the long shaft quivering:
Swift glanced he around, as thinking to find there bow or sword—
Good sooth, he had dealt unto Hagen a richly-earned reward!
But now when the deadly-wounded might nowhere find his brand,
No weapon save only his buckler lay ready there to his hand:
That snatched he up from the well-side, and in chase of the murderer ran.
Full soon was the fleeing Hagen outrun by the dying man.
Albeit to death he was stricken, he smote with such mighty power
That out of the shield-face started and fell to earth in a shower
The costly gemstones: rifted was the very buckler's rim—
Grim earnest of what stern vengeance he fain would have wreaked upon him!
By his hands' resistless smiting was Hagen hurled to the ground:
With the clang of that mighty buffet the wood-lawn echoed round.
Had he gripped in his hand but his war-glaive, surely had Hagen been slain.
Maddened him now that death-wound, a very torment of pain.

Now fled from his face all colour, he was reeling on tottering feet:
Fainted his strength from his body as when earth-spilt waters fleet:
Death set on his brow his token, his lips were ashen-grey.
—Ah, many a comely woman for this mourned many a day!

On flowers with red dew sprinkled the belovèd of Kriemhild fell,
With the blood from his wound outbursting as the streams from a spring out-
well.

Then he brake into bitter upbraiding from the lips by anguish wrung
Against them which had compassed his murder by the snare of a lying
tongue.

Loud cried the deadly-wounded: "Dastards, accursèd be ye!
Where now is my guerdon for service to you who have murdered me?
Your stay was I still and your helper: for all this death is my meed!
O caitiffs, that do unto kinsman and friend so evil a deed!
Accursèd for this your offspring, even all that shall see the light,
Shall be ever from this day onward! Your malice and your spite
Ruthlessly on my body have ye wreaked all causelessly!
By all good knights shunned ever for your villainy ye shall be!"

Now by this had the knights run thither, and saw where murdered he lay.
To many a man true-hearted was that a joyless day.
Who cherished faith and honour, they wailed for the glory slain:
Well of them all he deserved it, that battle-fearless thane!
The traitor king that consented to his death wept now for it:
But the death-stricken cried: "Thou needest not this, thou hypocrite!
What doth he to weep for the mischief, who the profit thereof hath won?
O'erlate the accursèd repenteth the deed best left undone!"

Spake Hagen then, the relentless: "I see not why ye should rue.
There is an end of the terror that hath haunted us hitherto.
Few now are the foes remaining that against our might shall stand.
Glad am I that this man's lordship is brought to an end by mine hand."

“Lightly enow may ye vaunt you!” did the hero of Netherland cry:
 “Had I known thy murderous purpose, thou serpent of treachery,
 Full well against this thy plotting had Siegfried warded his life!
 Ah, now is my chiefest sorrow for Kriemhild my widowed wife.
 Now God forgive it, that ever to me hath a son been born
 On whom shall be cast his life long the flouts of men and their scorn,
 Because of the man whom his kinsfolk betrayed to his death with a kiss!
 Had I but time—had I respite—well might I wail for this!
 C Never was murder compassed so with villainy fraught,”
 Unto the King said Siegfried, “as this that on me ye have wrought!
 In the day of your dread I saved you, I helped you in bitterest need:
 And for all my service rendered this is mine evil meed!”

Yet again that death-stricken hero spake with an anguished moan:
 “If it be possible, Gunther, that to any on earth can be shown
 By thee true faith hereafter, let one be commended now,
 My dear-loved wife, to thine honour as a king: protect her thou.
 May this for her profit avail her, that she is thy sister still.
 By all the honour of princes, defend her thou from ill!
 For me, for me shall my father and my liegemen tarry long.
 Ne'er from her nearest and dearest hath woman received such wrong!”
 C Then writhed he in mortal sufferance: he gasped with hard-drawn breath;
 And he groaned from a heart sore anguished: “For this my murderous death
 Through all your days hereafter shall ye bear the brand of Cain.
 Know me herein true prophet—your own selves have ye slain!”
 To right and to left were the flowers all drenched with the crimson flow.
 Now hard with death is he wrestling, but short is the agony-throe,
 For the wound that the blade death-dealing had stricken was all too sore.
 Now the peerless knight and stainless shall never speak word more.

When they saw, those lords there standing, that the noble hero was dead,
 They lifted him up, and they laid him on a golden buckler red.

Then took they counsel together that the truth might be known unto none,
 And how this thing should be hidden, that of Hagen the deed had been done.
 Spake of them many: "Evil this day is, a day of bale!
 Remaineth only concealment: ye needs must be all in a tale.
 We must say, as alone he was riding, robbers beset and slew
 The hero, the lord of Kriemhild, as he fared the wildwood through."
 Spake Hagen of Troneg: "To Rhineland will I bear him, even I.
 No whit shall it trouble Hagen, though she know all certainly,
 That woman who dared flout Brunhild, and fill her heart with woe!
 Let her weep, let her do as she listeth—I shall reckon of it little enow."

- C Now as touching that selfsame fountain—if ye peradventure be fain
 To learn where wellet the water whereby was Siegfried slain—
 On the Odenwald's fringe a village, hight Odenheim, doth lie:
 Still floweth the stream—of a surety Siegfried died thereby.

XVII

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS MOURNED AND BURIED

Till the even they waited; in darkness they crossed the Rhineflood then.
 Never from eviller hunting came heroes home again!
 That quarry was cause of lamenting unto many a noble wife:
 For his sake must many a warrior forfeit a gallant life.

Of exceeding arrogant outrage now must the minstrel sing,
 Yea, of revenge inhuman; for Hagen made them bring
 The Netherland hero Siegfried, even his murdered kin,
 Before a certain chamber—and Kriemhild lay therein!
 Secretly there he laid him, before that door to lie,
 That his wife might find his body when her feet came forth thereby
 Unto mass in the grey dawn faring ere rising of the sun;
 For thereof the Lady Kriemhild missed full seldom one.

Then heard they the bells as aforetime peal from the minster-tower;
And Kriemhild the lovely wakened the maidens of her bower;
And she bade bring lights, and the raiment withal that she should wear;
And a chamberlain bringing them stumbled on Siegfried lying there.
He beheld one blood-empurpled, with all his vesture wet;
But that this was his own lord Siegfried in no wise knew he yet.
So bare he into the chamber the torch in his hand that burned;
And from him the Lady Kriemhild a tale of horror learned.
For, even as she with her maidens would forth to the holy place,
"O Lady," the chamberlain stammered, "tarry a little space!
Behold, without the chamber a murdered knight doth lie!"
Rang out from the lips of Kriemhild an exceeding bitter cry.
Ere she had looked, ere the fearful truth was certainly known,
Back to that question of Hagen her thought had swiftly flown,
How he should shield him. Anguish she never had known till that day;
But now with his death all gladness from her life had fled away.

To the floor then sank she swooning; no word her lips could say.
There in the heavy silence the lovely and joyless lay.
Full was her cup of sorrow, sharp was her anguish-pang.
She came to herself with a wild shriek, that all the chamber rang.
Then faltered her bower-maidens, "A stranger it haply may be."
But the blood from her mouth came bursting in her heart's fierce agony—
"O nay, it is Siegfried, Siegfried, my lord, my belovèd one!
Brunhild hath plotted the murder, and Hagen the deed hath done!"
Then forth did her handmaids lead her, where lay the hero dead;
And the wife's white hands uplifted the husband's comely head.
Albeit with blood all crimsoned, he was known of love's keen sight.
There lay the Niblung hero in lamentable plight.

Then the cry of a queen's heart-anguish through the shadowy palace pealed
"Woe for my bitter affliction!—behold, how lieth thy shield
With swords unhacked! O Siegfried, thee did a murderer smite!
Him—knew I the doer—my vengeance to the uttermost should requite!"

Brake forth into wailing her maidens with lamentation loud
With her, their beloved Lady: they mourned all sorrow-bowed
For their noble King and their Master, lost unto them for aye.
Fouly avenged by Hagen was Brunhild's wrath that day!

Then spake the sorrow-stricken: "Let some one haste away,
And swiftly arouse from slumber my Siegfried's vassal-array:
Let him tell withal unto Siegmund the tale of my bitter pain.
He must bear his part in the wailing o'er valiant Siegfried slain."
Then ran a messenger, hasting where lay the warrior-band
Of the vassals of King Siegfried, the Lord of the Netherland.
That story of sore tribulation stripped bare their life of its joys.
They believed not, till came far-ringing that lamentable voice.
Hasted the messenger onward, where the old King lay on his bed;
Yet not on the eyes of Siegmund had the dews of slumber been shed,
For dimly his heart foreboded the sorrow hard by the door.
He was doomed to behold his beloved, his son, in life no more!

"Wake thee, O wake, King Siegmund! Tidings to thee I bring
From the Lady Kriemhild my mistress—there hath happed a fearful thing.
Above all woes known or imagined she hath suffered grief and wrong.
Thou must bear thy part in the wailing, for to thee doth the sorrow belong."
Uprose then Siegmund, and questioned: "For what lamenteth she,
My daughter, Kriemhild the lovely, as now thou sayest to me?"
"Sore cause hath she for lamenting," weeping the messenger said:
"Murdered is Siegfried the valiant, her lord and her love lieth dead!"
Answered and spake King Siegmund: "Jest me no jests! Have done
With a tale of such evil tidings concerning Siegfried my son!
Unto no man say thou hereafter that slain he is!—O nay,
For then could I never with wailing have done to my latest day!"
"Nay then, if thou wilt not believe me, if thou wilt not receive my tale,
Thou shalt learn for thine own self—hearken! for that is Kriemhild's wail
And the cry of all her maidens for Siegfried in death laid low!"
Sharp terror thrilled through Siegmund, and pangs of unfeigned woe.

He sprang from his bed: gathered round him a hundred men of his band.
Each man had caught up swiftly a sword keen-whetted in hand.
Forth ran they whither the woeful death-keen guided them on,
And after them knights a thousand, bold Siegfried's vassals, are gone.
Was none that bethought him of vesture, till suddenly these drew nigh
Where the long wild wail of the women went shivering up to the sky.
In their anguish had none remembered; they knew not what they did;
All thought was buried with sorrow in the grave of their hearts deep hid.

So came King Siegmund where Kriemhild crouched by Siegfried's side:
"Woe for our journey hither to this land accursèd!" he cried.
"Who hath reft from thee thine husband, hath torn this son most dear
From me by the hand of murder, when none but friends were near?"
"Ha, if I knew but the felon," in fierce grief answered the Queen,
"Never mine heart should forgive him while memory's edge is keen!
With such vengeance would I requite him, that all his friends and his kin,
Trust me, should weep for my weeping, should find their affliction therein!"
Then in his arms did Siegmund embrace that fallen chief;
Then rose from all his lovers so mighty a cry of grief
That with that wild lamentation did hall and palace ring,
And wailed up the streets of the city the shrieks wide-echoing.
Who then to the wife of Siegfried to speak of comfort dared?
They drew off the blood-stained raiment, and his goodly limbs they bared.
They washed his wounds dark-clotted, they laid him on the bier.
High swelled the tide of anguish in all that held him dear.

Then cried aloud his warriors that came from the Netherland:
"Ready and eager for vengeance waiteth ever our hand.
Here in this castle he lurketh of whom the deed was done!"
Then hasted the knights of Siegfried to gird their armour on.
With their shields those chosen heroes full-armed returned again,
Brave knights eleven hundred; they were all of the warrior-train
Now of the old King Siegmund: full fain for the death of his son
Would the father have taken vengeance; yea, honour spurred him on.

But as yet these wronged ones knew not upon whom should their vengeance
light,

Unless peradventure with Gunther and his vassals they closed in fight;
For these on that woeful hunting with Siegfried rode that day.
Then all-armed Kriemhild beheld them, and filled was her soul with dismay.
How wild was her grief soever, how tortured soever her breast,
Yet for the lives of the Niblungs she trembled terror-distressed,
Lest by the men of her brethren they be slain; and she earnestly spake,
And in love she warned them, as ever doth friend for a dear friend's sake:
And she cried from the depths of her sorrow: "My lord, O Siegmund King,
What would ye essay? Ye know not how all too hard is the thing.
For the valiant men of Gunther be a passing great array:
Ye shall perish all of a surety, if ye fall on so many as they!"

But they clashed their uptossed bucklers, with the battle-lust were they mad.
But the noble Daughter of Princes now pleaded, and now forbade
Those knights all battle-eager to rush upon their doom;
And it troubled her very sorely that they would not be turned therefrom.
Then she turned to the King—"Lord Siegmund, for this time sheathed be the
sword

Till there come a convenient season. Fear not, for my murdered lord
I will help you to wreak full vengeance. Who hath torn my love from mine hands
Shall drink of my vengeance deeply, when once convicted he stands.
But here by the Rhine so many of our haughty foes there are,
That I counsel you, I beseech you, rush not yet into war.
They can set in array full thirty where we can set but one.
May God so do to the traitors as they unto us have done!
Abide ye here in the palace, and mourn for my dead with your Queen,
Until the day beginneth, O heroes battle-keen:
Then help me to lay in a coffin the man beloved of me."
Answered the thanes: "Dear Lady, as thou wilt, so shall it be."

The marvel of that lamentation, no man can tell it o'er,
How the wail of the knights and the maidens, like the stormy tempest-roar,

Shrieked through the shuddering city till all her people heard,
And thitherward hasted the burghers, a great throng terror-stirred.
They joined to the guests' their wailing, they grieved for the glory gone.
Wherein had Siegfried offended, unto no man was it known:
Nay, none could divine cause wherefore the good knight lost his life.
So wept with the Queen's handmaidens many a burgher's wife.
Now for the silversmiths sent they, and bade them haste to mould
A great and strong-knit coffin of silver and ruddy gold;
And with burnished steel they bade them brace it in every part.
All folk were of sorrowful spirit, and exceeding heavy of heart.

By this was the night passed over: one said, "Lo, day is near."
And the noble Queen commanded to the minster-door to bear
Her royal dead, her husband for ever well-beloved;
And with her all friends sore weeping in long procession moved.
So when to the minster they brought him, tolled forth many a bell,
And the chant of the priests rose upward, and the requiem's solemn
swell.
And thitherward King Gunther and all his liegemen came.
Yea, Hagen the grim mid the mourners stood—and had no shame!

And the King said: "Sister beloved, alas for thy sore distress!
Alas for the heavy affliction that toucheth us no less!
We too for the death of Siegfried must evermore lament."
"Wrongly ye do!" cried the Lady from a heart with anguish rent.
"If ye hereby were afflicted, it had never befallen so!
Nay, me had ye wholly forgotten, and this full well I know,
In the hour when thus I was severed from my lord, my love, my one!
Oh would to God in heaven that to me this deed had been done!"
But they held to their lying story. Then did Kriemhild say:
"He that affirmeth him guiltless may prove it now straightway.
Here in the presence of all men let him go and stand by the bier!
Forthright before all people shall the very truth appear."

A marvel it is past telling, oft have we known it betide :—
When the slayer murder-polluted is seen by the dead man's side,
The wounds bleed in witness against him: so did it now befall,
And thereby was the guilt of Hagen made manifest unto all.
For the wound brake forth into bleeding, as freely as at the first.
Now they that before wept sorely into wilder weeping burst.
But answered and spake King Gunther: "Now hearken, the truth is this—
He was set on and slain of robbers: no deed of Hagen it is."
But Kriemhild replied: "These robbers but all too well I know!
God give to the hands of his kinsmen vengeance on his foe!
Thou, Gunther, and thou, Hagen, of you was the foul deed done!"
Surged forward the vassals of Siegfried, fierce-eager to fall on.

But Kriemhild spake: "Unto mourning be this hour sacred, I pray!"
Then two beside of her kinsmen drew nigh where the dead man lay,
Even her brethren, Gernot and the stripling Giselher:
And in leal faith these bewailed him with all the true souls there.
Yea, from the heart they lamented for Kriemhild's perished lord.
Now pealed the holy mass-chant: through the doors of the minster poured
On every hand young children no less than women and men.
Even they whom his death smote lightly, wept with the best for him then.
Spake Giselher and Gernot: "O sister, receive of us thou
For the death of thy lord consolation: it is past all healing now.
Thy loss by our love will we make good, so long as we both shall live."
But no one on earth could console her, of none would she comfort receive.

By this was his coffin fashioned, when the sun in the mid-heaven shone.
Loving hands from the bier uplifted the corpse that lay thereon.
But the Queen said: "Nay, I beseech you, lay him not yet in the grave;
Ere then heavy tribute of mourning from all that love him I crave."
In a pall most costly-woven that lifeless form they wound.
Of a surety none that wept not was in all that concourse found.
From her heart poured Uta the noble lamentation and mourning and woe;
Wailing were all her handmaids for the princely head brought low.