

When the folk heard how in the minster they sang the requiem,  
And that Siegfried lay in his coffin, there came vast throngs of them  
With their offerings—ah, how freely!—to buy his soul's repose.  
Good friends had he without number in the very house of his foes.  
Kriemhild the hapless woman to her treasure-keeper spake:  
"Now sorrow ye all in my sorrow, and suffer dole for my sake,  
All ye whose hearts have loved him, all ye that be true unto me.  
For the rest of the soul of Siegfried gold to the poor give ye."  
There was no child so little, so it had understanding at all,  
But something it brought for the masses for him who lay stark under pall.  
Yea, full one hundred masses on that one day did they sing.  
Ah, there was a mighty concourse of lovers of that dead king!

When ended was all the mass-chant, the vast crowd melted away.  
But again to her friends spake Kriemhild: "Leave me not this day  
To keep vigil alone o'er the hero, the hope of the world and its pride;  
Now all the joy of my life-days is buried by his side.  
Three days, three nights unceasing will I keep vigil here  
Till my soul is filled with lamenting for him, my lord most dear.  
Peradventure His white Death-angel for me too God will send;  
So the sorrow of Kriemhild the hapless should find a blessed end."

Now homeward the folk of the city were gone to their rest and their sleep:  
But the priests and the monks aye chanting that vigil with her must keep;  
And his vassals and leal retainers that served that gallant chief—  
Ah, weariful nights were appointed to these, and days of grief.  
Through the days of their mourning many drank not, nor tasted of bread:  
But, for such as could not endure it, to these was it plainly said:  
"Eat, drink, for we give to you freely." King Siegmund cared therefor.  
Then fell on the faithful Niblungs trouble and travail sore.

As telleth the olden story, through three days weary-long  
Never an hour of respite from holy chant and song

Had any singer of masses. What wealth of offerings  
Poured in! Then even the poorest could give like very kings.  
For they sought out the poor and needy, and into their hands was poured  
By Kriemhild's treasure-warders gold from the dead king's hoard;  
So brought they of their abundance—ay, now that he lived no more,  
Thousands of marks for his soul's rest were given from a fathomless store.  
Lands and their revenues gave she through the whole land everywhere  
Unto many a hallowed cloister, unto many a man of prayer.  
Silver they gave unstinted, and raiment unto the poor.  
So showed she before all people what love to the dead she bore.  
When rang the bells unto high-mass on that third morning-tide,  
There were seen all round the minster in the churchyard great and wide  
The folk of the country weeping; they thronged it from end to end.  
Yea, in death did they do him service, as unto a dear-loved friend.  
In these four days of their mourning, as the old bards sang unto me,  
Marks full thirty thousand, yea, more, it well may be,  
To the poor were freely given, that all for his soul might pray,  
Now that all his life and his beauty as a shadow had passed away.

The service of God was ended, into silence sank the song.  
With a storm of weeping shaken was all that mighty throng.  
Then out of the dim-lit minster forth to the grave was he borne—  
Oh wail of the hungry-hearted, oh voice of them that mourn!  
On moved that endless procession with cries of lamenting loud;  
No face that was glad, or of woman or man, was in all that crowd.  
Ere earth to earth they committed, once more did they pray and sing.  
What countless holy fathers were seen at his burying!

Or ever the true and faithful, the wife, to the grave-side came,  
With such fierce throes of anguish shaken was all her frame,  
That they needs must with cool spring-water besprinkle her once and again,  
So racked was her heart overmeasure with agonies of pain.  
In sooth, 'twas a marvel exceeding that she died not there outright.  
Weeping her women upbare her with their hands on the left and the right.



"O ye true men of Siegfried," thus did the sad Queen cry,  
"I pray you of your compassion, and of your fealty,  
Vouchsafe unto me in my sorrow this one little grace  
That once more and for the last time I may look on his lovely face!"  
So long in her anguish she pleaded, so earnestly she besought,  
That they needs must at last wrench open the coffin richly wrought.  
The Queen then thitherward led they, and she bowed her over her dead.  
In her white hands she enfolded and lifted his comely head;  
And she kissed that faded glory, that noble knight and good.  
Her starry eyes for sorrow wept very tears of blood.  
An exceeding pitiful parting saw all men in that hour.  
Then softly thence they bare her in whose limbs was left no power.  
Senseless and stirless lay she in their arms, that stricken wife.  
It seemed that for very sorrow from her body would fleet her life.

When thus in his grave lay buried that noble and princely thane,  
Then bowed in measureless sorrow sat all his warrior-train,  
Even all from the land of the Niblungs that led of his banner had come.  
Yea, and the old King Siegmund was whelmed in morningless gloom.  
There was many a man among them that for three days long made moan,  
And the tears of his bitter anguish were his meat and his drink alone,  
Till their bodily frames no longer could so endure and live:  
So they took up the burden of living, and a little they ceased to grieve.  
c But lost unto all things Kriemhild in a deathlike swoon still lay  
Through the hours of the day and the darkness, even till the second day.  
Whatsoe'er in her ears they whispered, she knew not anything:  
And no less stricken of sorrow lay grey-haired Siegmund the King.  
c Scarce to the mind's re-dawning he slowly won at the last:  
From his limbs by reason of anguish all bodily strength had passed.  
No marvel that weak was Siegmund! At last drew his liegemen near,  
Saying: "Lord, let us fare hence homeward: boots not that we linger here!"



## XVIII

## HOW KRIEMHILD WOULD NOT RETURN TO THE LOWLAND WITH SIEGMUND

Then went the old King Siegmund where Kriemhild sat in her woe,  
And he spake to the Queen: "To our own land homeward now let us go.  
Guests are we all-unwelcome, I trow well, here by the Rhine.  
Come with us, Kriemhild beloved, to our country, thine and mine.  
That thy kin in the land Burgundian have so evil entreated us  
In slaying thy noble husband by murder most treacherous,  
It shall not be remembered against thee: my love shall cherish thy life,  
For the sake of my son and the noble child he hath left to his wife.  
Thou, Lady, shalt have dominion, shalt have over all the control  
That Siegfried gave to thee ever, that lord of the noble soul.  
The crown shalt thou wear, and the kingdom shall bow beneath thy sway.  
Thee shall the vassals of Siegfried with willing heart obey."  
Then the word to the squires was given, "Home ride we ere eventide!"  
Out of the field they gathered in haste the steeds they should ride.  
To dwell mid their deadly foemen was now to their souls as gall.  
For the journey prepared was raiment of the dames and the handmaids all.

But now when the old King Siegmund was at point to ride away,  
Drew nigh the kinsmen of Kriemhild to plead with her and to pray  
That still she would stay with her mother in the land of Burgundy.  
Made answer the joyless-hearted: "Now nay, it can never be!  
How could I endure it, that ever I should look upon him with mine eyes  
Who hath dealt with me, the hapless, in such spiteful wise?"  
But the young Prince Giselher answered: "Sister beloved, now  
By a child's true love I adjure thee, abide with thy mother thou!  
For them which have darkened thy spirit, for them which have wounded thine  
heart,  
No need hast thou of their service; in all that is mine thou hast part."



But she to the knight made answer: "How can it be? Ah no!  
If I look on the face of Hagen, I must die for utter woe."  
"Now nay, O sister belovèd, from this will I guard thee well.  
With Giselher thy brother here sheltered shalt thou dwell.  
My love for the death of thy dear lord shall atone in very deed."  
And the joyless made answer: "Kriemhild thereof hath bitter need!"  
Now when in such loving fashion pleaded with her the lad,  
Their prayers unto his supplication did Uta and Gernot add.  
Yea, all her loyal kinsfolk entreated her there to stay,  
"Among all the people of Siegfried no kinsman thou hast," said they.  
"They be all unto thee as strangers, as aliens," Gernot said.  
"Though the living may love thee, the strongest must needs at the last lie  
dead.  
Bethink thee thereof, dear sister: to thine heart speak comfortably.  
Here tarry with thine own kinsfolk: so shall it be well with thee."

So she gave to her brother the promise, to abide with them in the land.  
Now by this were the horses gathered for the men of Siegmund's band;  
And all to the land of the Niblungs were ready to ride away,  
And laden upon the horses was the good knights' war-array.  
Then unto the bower of Kriemhild went grey-haired Siegmund the King,  
And he spake to the Lady: "The warriors of Siegfried's following  
Stand waiting beside their horses. Forth and away let us ride.  
The hours unto me are bitter while with Burgundy's folk I abide."  
But the Lady Kriemhild made answer: "My kinsmen have wrought on my  
will,  
Even my nearest and dearest, here to abide with them still.  
None in the land of the Niblungs, say they, of my blood can I find."  
Then sore aggrieved was Siegmund that such should be Kriemhild's mind.  
And answered and spake the old King: "Lest any deceive thee beware.  
Thou before all my kinsfolk the royal crown shalt wear,  
Yea, wear it by right of kingship, even as heretofore.  
For this shalt thou nowise suffer, that thy lord is beside thee no more.



Nay, forth with us do thou journey unto thine home and thy child;  
Let him not be an orphan, his father dead, his mother exiled.  
When thy son is grown unto manhood, thy comfort shall he be then:  
Till then shalt thou have true service of many valiant men."

But she answered: "My dear lord Siegmund, with thee I may not ride.  
Nay, here with mine own must I tarry, what issue soever betide.  
In my grief and my wrong to my kinsfolk for comfort and help must I look."  
When this was told them, the tidings ill could the good knights brook.  
With one voice cried they against it: "Our plight may we surely deplore  
That on us hath affliction lighted now as never before!  
If here in the land Burgundian thou with our foes wilt abide,  
Never have heroes ridden to an eviller festal-tide!"  
But she answered: "In God's good keeping shall ye fearlessly journey home.  
I will get for you trusty escort for your warding until ye be come  
Unto your own dear country. Good knights, farewell each one.  
Unto your love and compassion I commend my little son."

So when they knew of a surety that they could not in any wise shake  
Her purpose, the men of Siegfried into bitter weeping brake.  
Ah, with what deep heart-anguish King Siegmund took farewell  
Of Kriemhild! Renewal of sorrow on the childless father fell.  
"A curse on that festal high-day!" the King in bitterness cried:  
"Never to king and his dear ones did such foul fortune betide  
As here upon us hath fallen—and that at a feast, good sooth!  
In Burgundy here shall they see us never again, of a truth!"  
Then in fierce anger shouted the thanes of Siegfried's band:  
"Nay, once more yet may we journey unto this accursèd land,  
If we find, if we prove of a surety who laid our dear lord low.  
Amidst his friends have they won them deadly foes enow!"  
For the last time kissed he Kriemhild. He spake in sorrow's despair,  
When he saw her steadfastly purposed to abide with her people there:  
"Now ride we forth all joyless, as home to our people we go!  
Now first my depth of affliction and all my sorrow I know!"



So rode they without all escort from Worms on Rhine away.  
Well might they go all-fearless: so stern of mood were they,  
That if haply foemen in malice had set upon them then,  
Their heads had their own hands warded, those aweless Niblung men.  
No leave would they take of any: they shook off the dust of their feet.  
Yet Giselher and Gernot full lovingly came to greet  
The old king at his departing; for they sorrowed in his heart-pain,  
And thereof did they give clear witness, those valiant heroes twain.  
For to Siegmund spake Prince Gernot exceeding courteously:  
"Now God in Heaven be witness, of the death of Siegfried am I  
Wholly and utterly guiltless! Never I heard this said,  
That any bare him malice. From mine heart do I mourn for thy dead."  
Then Giselher the young prince provided them escort fair.  
So led he unvexed of any the hearts overburdened with care,  
Even the King and his good knights, back to their Netherland home.  
Ah, with how little rejoicing their kinsmen beheld them come!

Touching all that befell them thereafter the old song holdeth its peace:  
But at Worms was the plaining of Kriemhild heard without surcease  
That her heart and her wounded spirit had no comforter,  
Save one, the loving and faithful, her brother Giselher.  
But there sat Brunhild the lovely enthroned in her arrogant pride.  
Little she recked of Kriemhild as from depths of despair she cried.  
Never in kindness or pity she stooped to the stricken again.  
But the years stole on, till Kriemhild wrung her heart too with pain.

## XIX

### HOW THE HOARD OF THE NIBLUNGS CAME TO WORMS

While sat the noble Kriemhild a watcher by Siegfried's grave,  
Eckwart, Lord of the Marches, unto her with his war-band clave,  
In Burgundia-land abiding constrained by his fealty;  
And aye for the dead with his mistress he mourned right bitterly.



At Worms hard by the minster they reared her a palace-hall  
Wide and stately-built, and royally-dight withal:  
And there with her handmaids round her that joyless one abode,  
And oft she fared to the minster, for she loved the house of God.  
There, where her belovèd was buried, full seldom her presence failed;  
Day after day did she enter with spirit that inly wailed,  
And prayed unto God the Almighty to take to his mercy his soul:  
Ay, ever the faithful-hearted made for the knight great dole.  
Came Uta and all her women to comfort her day by day;  
But Kriemhild's wounded spirit so crushed 'neath affliction lay,  
That nothing availed consolation that the lips of the loving spake,  
Forasmuch as with sharper anguish did her heart for her lost love ache  
Than wife felt ever for husband, were her sorrow never so keen;  
And the love of the true and faithful herein was of all men seen  
That on to the end she mourned him, long as endured her life,  
Till that great vengeance for Siegfried was wreaked at last by the wife.

So sat she sorrow-shrouded—truth is it the minstrel saith—  
On till the fourth year's dawning after her dear lord's death;  
And never a word unto Gunther her lips had uttered yet,  
Never her eyes upon Hagen her mortal foe had she set.  
Then Hagen spake unto Gunther: "If haply this might be done  
That thou so couldst appease thy sister that again ye were set at one,  
Then the gold of the Hoard of the Niblungs might unto thy kingdom be brought:  
And how much might be thine, if Kriemhild unto lovingkindness were wrought!  
Said Gunther: "We will essay it. By my brethren may she be beguiled:  
These shall beset her with pleading that now she be reconciled.  
We may win her to bring that treasure—yea, share it willingly."  
"Nay, sooth I misdoubt me," said Hagen, "that *this* may ever be."

Then the King sent word unto Ortwein unto the palace to fare,  
And the Lord of the Marches, Gere: when these were gotten there,  
Gernot withal, and the young Prince Giselher, they brought.  
And these with words of kindness on their lips unto Kriemhild sought.



Then spake the Prince Burgundian Gernot the first, and he said:  
"Behold, overlong thou mournest, Lady, for Siegfried dead.  
Sure proof shall of Gunther be given that he had no part in his death.  
Yet for him folk hear thee mourning evermore with passionate breath."  
She said: "Him no man accuseth: it was Hagen who struck the blow.  
Where only my lord could be wounded through me, through me did he know!  
Whence should I have had misgivings of the hate unto him that he bare?  
Else," cried the Queen, "I had guarded my lips with jealous care  
From the horror of such betrayal of my lord's beloved life,  
And had had no cause for weeping—oh wretched, wretched wife!  
Never will I forgive him who wrought that dastard deed!"  
Then for the King his brother did Giseler intercede.

C "Yea," said she, "I needs must greet him, ye urge me so cruelly:  
Yet so do ye make you partakers in Gunther's sin against me.  
He hath wrung my soul with anguish, who never wronged him yet!  
My lips may grant him forgiveness, mine heart will never forget."

C "Yet hereafter shall this be bettered," whispered her kinsmen then.  
If only the King by kindness may win her to smile again,  
"He may yet by his love," said Gernot, "fill all that void in her breast."  
Then again said the sorrow-burdened: "Behold, I grant your request:  
I will meet the King, I will greet him." The word unto Gunther they bring,  
And to her with the best of his kinsfolk straightway cometh the King.  
But Hagen the murderer dared not in the presence of Kriemhild be seen:  
Too well did he know his vileness, the wrong he had done to the Queen.  
Yet, seeing her hatred of Gunther was in semblance so put by,  
With the kiss of reconciliation might he too have drawn nigh;  
Yea, but for the felon plotting, the inexpiable wrong,  
Even he might have stood unshrinking mid that false courtier-throng.  
Never was reconciliation 'twixt sundered friend and friend  
Made with such weeping. Rankled the wound in her heart without end.  
Yet unto all forgiveness she granted—save that one.  
No man would have slain him, had Hagen the wicked deed not done.



Not long thereafter the plotters brought to pass their intent  
That Kriemhild the Daughter of Princes for the Hoard of the Treasure sent  
To the land of the Niblungs: to Rhineland she caused them to bring the  
same.

'Twas her morning-gift, nor its warders might hold it against her claim,  
So Giselher and Gernot to bring that Hoard must wend;  
And armed men eighty hundred did the Lady Kriemhild send  
To bring that hidden treasure from the caverns wherein it lay,  
And Alberich the Dwarf-knight and his stout friends warded it aye.  
When they saw these men from the Rhineland which had come for the  
Treasure's sake,

Then Alberich the valiant to his mighty kinsmen spake:  
"We may nowise refuse this treasure, to yield it to her desire;  
'Tis her Gift of the Marriage-morning, and the Queen doth her own require.  
Howbeit," said Alberich, "never had this befallen thus,  
Except by chance most evil this too had been lost unto us,  
The potent Hood of Darkness, which vanished when Siegfried died,  
Which the lord of Kriemhild the lovely had ever by his side.  
In an evil hour for Siegfried did the Hero win that prey,  
And pluck the Hood of Darkness from the hands of its keepers away,  
And therewithal the lordship of all this land did he seize."

Then the seneschal went to the chambers where lay that cavern's keys.  
There stood those sent of Kriemhild in front of the mountain's door,  
And divers withal of her kinsmen. So all that treasure-store  
Brought they down to the sea-flood, and the ships therewith were fraught.  
So over the rolling waters and on to the Rhine was it brought.  
Now of the Hoard of the Niblungs shall ye hear the marvel told:  
Twelve wains to the utmost laden down from that mountain-hold  
Must bear that treasure seaward: four days and nights toiled they,  
Each going and each returning three times each several day.  
Therein was there nothing meaner than precious stones and gold,  
And if one therewith had purchased all wealth that the world could hold,



"By not one mark is it minished!" whoso had seen it had said.  
 Not without cause that treasure was of Hagen coveted!  
 In its midst was the Wishing-rod lying, a little golden wand.  
 Whoso divined its virtue could stretch his sovereign hand  
 Over all the wide earth's compass and all the folk therein.  
 Back to the Rhine with Gernot went many of Albrich's kin.

c So then when the strong knight Gernot and the young prince Giselher  
 Had gotten the Hoard in possession, lords thereby they were  
 Of the Niblung land and its castles, and of many a noble knight:  
 Unto these came all in subjection through fear and awe of their might.  
 When in the land of Gunther that Hoard at last was seen,  
 And thereof was all the lordship laid in the hands of the Queen,  
 Therewith unto overflowing were towers and chambers stored.  
 Never since have been told such marvels of any treasure-hoard.  
 Ah, but had that great Treasure been greater a thousand-fold,  
 In its stead might she have but regiven from the grave her Siegfried the bold,  
 O gladly empty-handed had Kriemhild stood by his side!  
 Never was wife unto hero in love so true and tried.

When now that Hoard was Kriemhild's, as a lode-star it drew to the land  
 Knights many from alien kingdoms: so freely bestowed her hand  
 That never such bounteous giving was seen in the olden days.  
 Unto all was she open-handed, and all men spoke her praise.  
 So freely thereof did she lavish on rich alike and on poor,  
 That Hagen spake unto Gunther: "Lo now, if this woman endure  
 In life but a little longer, she shall win to her fealty  
 So great an array of champions, that in evil case shall we be."  
 Answered and spake King Gunther: "Her own is the treasure, I trow.  
 What have I to do to hinder? Let her hands as she will bestow.  
 Hardly I won her pardon for that first wrong that I wrought.  
 Let her share as she will her silver and her gold; unto me is it nought."  
 To the King made answer Hagen: "Who suffers a woman to rule—  
 Be she who she may—such a treasure, of a surety he is but a fool.



She shall bring with all this largess a day upon us at the last  
When all we bold Burgundians shall rue deeds overpast."  
Answered and spake King Gunther: "An oath unto her I swore  
That sorrow or scathe would I visit upon her never more.  
And thereunto will I hold me. My sister withal is she."  
Said Hagen: "Do thou nothing: be all the guilt upon me."

So divers of her kinsmen were traitors again: they brake  
Their oath; they robbed the widow, and her mighty wealth did they take.  
Seized by the hand of Hagen were the keys that warded the same.  
Wroth was her brother Gernot, when he knew that deed of shame.  
Spake Giselher the young Prince: "Foul wrong hath been done herein  
By Hagen unto my sister: I will none of the shame and the sin!  
Yea, he, were he not my blood-kin, should forfeit for this his life!"  
Brake forth afresh into weeping Siegfried's unhappy wife.  
Then spake again Prince Gernot: "Or ever such mischief befall  
Unto us for the sake of the Treasure, it were well that we sank it all  
In the waters of Rhine, to the end that the curse may cleave unto none!"  
Unto Giselher came the forlorn one, and to him she made her moan.  
She cried: "O brother belovèd, thou shouldst take thought for me:  
A warder and protector of my life and my wealth shouldst thou be!"  
He answered: "Yea, of a surety thy right shall of me be maintained  
When we return—for a journey hath been for thy brethren ordained."

Then Gunther the King and his kinsmen rode forth of Burgundia-land,  
Even all that were best and noblest among them, a princely band.  
But to work the will of his hatred Hagen tarried alone,  
His undying hatred of Kriemhild: that he did, for her hurt was it done.  
For ere that the great King Gunther homeward returned again,  
In those days all that treasure Hagen by force had ta'en.  
In the river-mere at Lochheim 'neath Rhine he sank it deep.  
He sowed unto greed—but destruction was the fruit that his hands were to reap.  
Now before that Hagen of Troneg thus hid the Treasure from sight,  
Those kinsmen had sworn to each other an oath of awful might,



That, while in the land of the living they were, it should hidden abide;  
So these could not use it, nor give it to any other beside.

Thereafter returned those princes with many a noble thane.  
Then Kriemhild came before them of her grievous wrong to complain:  
With her ladies she came and her maidens. The wrath of the earls flamed high:  
They arrayed them against the traitor, and said, "He shall surely die!"  
With one voice cried they together: "A wicked deed hath he done!"  
From their anger he needs must hide him for a space, till again he won  
The princes' pardon and favour, and they yielded to let him live.  
But henceforth was he hated of Kriemhild with the hate that will never forgive.  
For now with a new affliction her heart was wrung once more:—  
First took they the life of her husband, and now these traitors tore  
From her hands her possessions! Her mourning was never at a stay  
Through all the space of her life-tide unto her latest day.  
From the hour of the death of Siegfried—behold, this witness is true—  
Wearily lived she thirteen years of sorrow through,  
And ever the death of the Hero unto her spirit clung.  
Unto him was she true and faithful, as many a bard hath sung.

- c A wealthy and princely abbey had Uta builded high  
After the death of Dankrat with the wealth of her treasury,  
And with revenues richly endowed it, which it draweth unto this day.  
By Lorsch that cloister standeth in honour abiding aye.
- c Unto this were given thereafter of Kriemhild unstinted doles  
For the peace of the soul of Siegfried, and for all Christian souls.  
Gold gave she with hand ungrudging, and many a precious stone.  
More faithful wife hath never on earth unto us been known.
- c Since Kriemhild had granted forgiveness to the King for her lord's blood spilt,  
And of that great hoard thereafter had been spoiled through Gunther's guilt,  
Then higher swelled than ever the tide of her anguish of heart,  
And the noble lady and royal from his city was fain to depart.
- c Now it was so, that Lady Uta had builded a mansion beside  
That cloister of Lorsch, a palace goodly and great and wide.



Thither went she leaving her children, and hid her from all men's eyes ;  
And there to this day in her coffin the great queen buried lies.

- c Then spake the old king's widow: "Belovèd daughter, come ;  
No longer here shalt thou tarry ; with me shall be thine home  
At Lorsch in mine own palace: from weeping thou there shalt refrain."  
"Nay, where then," answered Kriemhild, "shall I leave my lord who was slain?"
- c "Even here," said the Lady Uta, "by the minster in peace let him lie."  
"Now God in Heaven forbid it!" that true wife made reply.  
"Nay, mother belovèd, never will I suffer it so to be.  
Hence of a truth must mine husband be taken thither with me."
- c Therefore the sorrowful-hearted bade them unseal his grave.  
To the noble bones of the Hero a resting-place they gave  
At Lorsch beside the minster with honour manifold.  
There still in a giant coffin lies the Hero chivalrous-souled.
- c But it came to pass at the season when Kriemhild should have gone  
To dwell with her mother, even as her will was to have done,  
In Worms must she tarry, forbidden to rest by the hallowed shrine.  
So was it by reason of tidings that came from afar over Rhine.

## XX

### HOW QUEEN KRIEMHILD WAS WOOED FOR THE KING OF THE HUNS

It befell in the selfsame season, when the Lady Helka had died,  
And Etzel the King would be wooing another woman for bride,  
That his kinsmen in council assembled spake unto him of the fame  
Of a certain proud queen widowed, that Kriemhild had to name,  
Since Helka the Queen, the lovely, was taken from him and from life,  
They said: "If haply thou thinkest on another noble wife,  
In blood and in virtue the highest that ever prince hath won,  
Take Kriemhild: Siegfried the Hero was her lord in days bygone."



But the mighty King made answer: "Nay, how may this thing be?  
A heathen am I; baptismal waters have touched not me;  
And she is a Christian woman—the thing may never befall.  
If ever she came, this surely a miracle might one call!"  
But the valiant knights made answer: "Perchance may she do that same  
For the sake of thy great dominions, for the sake of thy glorious name.  
In any wise might one seek her to be thy noble queen.  
She is worthy, O King, thy wooing; never lovelier woman was seen."

And the noble King made answer: "Unto whom of you all be known  
The people that dwell in Rhineland, and the realm their princes own?"  
Answered the Lord of Bechlaren, the knightly Rüdiger:  
"Known be its princely rulers unto me from my birth-tide year.  
Lo, these be Gunther and Gernot, valiant knights and true,  
And of these is Giseler youngest, and ever the Princes do  
What sorteth wholly with honour and chivalry high-souled:  
Yea, they walk in the steps of their fathers, the stainless heroes of old."  
Answered and spake King Etzel: "Friend, unto me declare  
If indeed it well beseemeth that the crown at my side she wear.  
If indeed she hath such beauty as flieth on rumour's wing,  
Mine high-born kinsmen shall never repent their counselling."  
"She is such as was once my Lady: in beauty is she no less  
Than thy Queen the noble Helka; she is peerless in loveliness  
Through all the wide world's compass, a bride for a king to wed.  
Who winneth her love, of a surety may his heart be comforted."

Said the King: "By my love I charge thee, Rüdiger, win me this bride;  
And if ever to me fair Kriemhild shall be joined at the marriage-tide,  
To the uttermost of my power shalt thou have guerdon of me;  
And thou shalt have fulfilled my pleasure in faith and in fealty.  
I will bid my treasure-keepers freely to give unto thee  
Horses and goodly raiment, whatsoever thy need shall be,  
That thou and thy journeying-fellows in joyance ever may live.  
Yea, as a great king giveth, for thine ambassage so will I give."



Answered the Lord of the Marches, the mighty Rüdiger:  
"If I sought of thee aught of thy bounty, not for mine honour it were:  
Blithe will I go unto Rhineland at my good Lord's command,  
Of mine own wealth full-furnished: I received it all of thine hand."

Made answer the great King Etzel: "When think ye forth to fare  
To the wooing of the winsome? God take you into his care,  
And crown with honour mine envoys unto her, my wife that shall be,  
Let fortune but aid us, and Kriemhild incline to us graciously."  
And Rüdiger made answer: "Ere we ride from thy land away,  
We must needs provide us with armour and royal-rich array,  
To stand in the presence of princes with honour worthy of thee.  
I think to lead into Rhineland five hundred knights with me;  
So when in the realm Burgundian men look on me and mine,  
With one voice all the people shall cry in the land of Rhine:  
'Never so far from his kingdom was such a goodly band  
Sent forth by a king, as Etzel hath sent to Burgundia-land!'  
Know thou, O King most mighty,—let the thing not give thee pause—  
The wife of the chiefest hero on earth, of Siegfried, she was,  
Of Siegmund's son: that champion aforetime here didst thou see.  
Right worship-worthy might all men account him verily."  
Answered and spake King Etzel: "If she was his worthy mate,  
That noble prince's glory is so exceeding great  
That wholly it were for mine honour to call her my queen, I trow.  
So great is the fame of her beauty that mine heart goeth out to her now."  
Answered the Lord of the Marches: "This then remaineth to say—  
Hence will we take our departing on the four-and-twentieth day.  
Unto Gotlind the well-belovèd, my wife, will I send the word  
That I for the wooing of Kriemhild am on ambassage sent of my Lord."

To his wife at Bechlaren tidings sent that knightly thane.  
Joyful at once and sorry was that high-born chatelaine  
That her lord should be sent forth seeking another bride for his King;  
For unto the dear dead Helka did the love of her heart still cling.



So when the messengers' tidings to the Margravine were told,  
Unwelcome it came in a measure, and the Lady was sorrowful-souled;  
For she feared she should see no mistress like her of the days of yore.  
Ever she thought on Helka, and her heart within her was sore.

Seven days had passed, and the Margrave rode from the land of the Hun.  
Greatly rejoiced King Etzel that his hest so swiftly was done.  
In the city Vienna already was prepared their festal array,  
And from setting forth on his journey would the knight no longer delay.  
Gotlind his wife in Bechlaren for his coming eagerly stayed;  
And the Margravine, Rüdiger's daughter, a young and winsome maid,  
Was fain to behold her father and them of his vassal-throng.  
Sooth, that was a loving waiting of ladies fair and young.

Ere Rüdiger the noble forth of Vienna's gate  
Rode to Bechlaren, ready for him did all things wait  
On the sumpter-beasts full laden, the raiment and warrior-gear.  
So strongly guarded they journeyed, no spoiler dared draw near.  
So when they were come to Bechlaren, and had passed through the gates thereof,  
For all his warrior-fellows that knightly host of his love  
Bade lodging fair be provided, and all was done as he willed.  
And the Lady Gotlind hailed him with eyes with gladness filled,  
Even she and her dear-loved daughter, the fair young Margravine.  
No sweeter sight than the coming of her father had she seen.  
When came out of Hunland the heroes, she saw them joyful-eyed,  
And with smiling lips of greeting the high-born maiden cried:  
"Welcome be now my father, and ye his vassal-train!"  
Thereat to their lord's young daughter many a gallant thane  
In knightly courtesy bent him, and rendered thank unto her.

Well knew the Lady Gotlind the mind of Rüdiger;  
For when in the hush of the night-tide by Rüdiger's side she lay,  
With loving speech she questioned, and the Margravine bade him say



Whither away from Hunland by his lord the King he was sent.  
"Gotlind my wife," he answered, "I will tell to thee all his intent:  
This charge my lord hath given, that I woo him another bride,  
Inasmuch as Helka the lovely, the wife of his youth, hath died.  
Therefore to win for him Kriemhild now to the Rhine ride I;  
And she, if she will, mid the Hunfolk shall be throned in empery."  
"God grant it may fall," said Gotlind, "according to this thy word!  
A tale of such glory and honour of that lady have we heard,  
She might comfort our hearts for Helka whom we lost in the days bygone:  
We might well mid the Hunfolk gladly behold her set on the throne."

Answered the Lord of the Marches: "Heart's dearest, lady mine,  
These friends that with me be riding from this land on to the Rhine—  
I would have thee with hand all-bounteous on these of thy wealth bestow;  
For when heroes be rich-appointed, with hearts uplifted they go."  
"No man of them all," she answered, "so he at my request  
Take all that I freely offer, but shall have what suiteth him best,  
Ere thou from Bechlaren departest with all thy vassal-train."  
Answered the Lord of the Marches, "Of thy bounty am I full fain."  
O me, what costly loom-work from her treasures forth she bare!  
Thereof had the noble warriors raiment enough and to spare.  
With diligence did she array them wholly, from neck to spur.  
What vesture soever pleased him was chosen of Rüdiger.

On the seventh morning thereafter rode from Bechlaren away  
That host with his train of warriors: weapons of war had they  
And store of costly raiment, through Bavaria-land as they pressed.  
Such steel-clad strong wayfarers no spoiler dared molest.  
So then on the twelfth day's morning to the land of Rhine they came.  
Swiftly the tale of their coming flew on the wings of fame.  
Full soon to the King and his kinsmen did the city-warders show  
That guests were come from a far land. And now would Gunther know—  
"Doth any man know yon strangers? If it be so, let him declare."  
Men looked on the sumpter-horses, and the heavy loads they bare;



How rich were the alien heroes might all discern thereby:  
Then all through the wide-wayed city they lodged them royally.  
So soon as men saw these strangers through the streets of the city ride,  
They gazed on the long procession with wonder eager-eyed,  
Sore marvelling whence these barons to the land of the Rhine had come.  
"Know'st thou," the King asked Hagen, "who these shall be, and wherefrom?"  
Answered the Lord of Troneg: "Not yet have I looked on them well.  
So soon as mine eyes have marked them, doubt not but I shall tell  
From what far country hither hath ridden their knightly array.  
They must needs be far-off dwellers if I know them not straightway."

So when into many a hostel those guests of a king were brought,  
King Etzel's herald arrayed him in vesture richly wrought,  
Even he and all his fellows, and they rode to the palace thus;  
And the fashion of their raiment was exceeding glorious.  
Then spake the valiant Hagen: "As I call up things long past,—  
For in sooth many days have fleeted since I saw yon baron last,—  
Such are they in semblance, methinketh, as Rüdiger now might be,  
Out of the land of the Hunfolk, in port and in valiancy."  
"Meseems it is past believing," the King made answer again,  
"That unto this far country should journey Bechlaren's thane!"  
Yet scarce had the word of misgiving from the lips of Gunther flown,  
Than by Hagen of a surety was the knightly Rüdiger known.

Then Troneg's lord and his kinsmen to meet that stranger stept,  
As valiant thanes five hundred down from the saddle leapt.  
Courteous greeting and loving those Hunland envoys had.  
Sooth, never a great king's heralds had come so royally clad.  
Then Hagen of Troneg lifted his voice, and he cried aloud:  
"Now unto us be welcome these gallant thanes and proud!  
Welcome the Lord of Bechlaren and all his valiant ones!"  
Yea, hailed with abundant honour in truth were the warrior Huns.  
King Gunther's nearest kinsmen with welcoming hands drew nigh,  
And to Rüdiger did Ortwein, fair Metz's warder, cry:



"No guests so passing welcome to our hearts for many a day  
Have we looked upon in Rhineland: sheer truth is that I say."

Then one and all for his greeting they thanked that princely thane;  
And into the Hall of the Presence paced Rüdiger and his train.  
There they beheld King Gunther begirt with barons bold;  
And he rose from his throne to greet them, like a great king courteous-souled.  
With welcome how royal-courteous those heralds did he meet!  
How eagerly did Gunther and Gernot his brother greet  
That stately guest and his good knights! Worthy thereof they were.  
Then by the hand did Gunther the King lead Rüdiger:  
He brought him unto the high-seat whence himself had risen but now;  
And he bade pour out for his guest-friends—and with joy they obeyed, I trow—  
The sparkling mead of welcome, and the choicest of all wine  
That man might find by searching in the lands that fringe the Rhine.

Came Giselher and Gere to bid the guests all-hail;  
Dankwart withal and Volker, for these too heard the tale  
Of the strangers worship-worthy. Blithe were they all of mood  
As they greeted in Gunther's presence that noble knight and good.  
And now to his liege-lord Gunther did Hagen of Troneg say:  
"With loving service ever should these thine earls repay  
The kindness the Lord of the Marches showed unto us of old.  
Now let the husband of Gotlind be requited manifold."  
Then spake King Gunther: "From asking will I no more delay:—  
How fare thy Lord and thy Lady tell unto me straightway,  
Etzel and Queen Helka, which rule the Hunfolk's land."  
Answered the Margrave: "Gladly will I do my Lord's command."

Then rose he up from the high-seat; uprose his vassals all;  
And he answered and spake unto Gunther: "If this indeed may befall  
That thou givest me, King, free licence, without more tarrying  
With willing lips will I utter the message that I bring."



And the King said: "Whatsoever the charge of thy message be,  
With friends do I take not counsel ere I grant thee liberty  
To speak out all thy message unto me and my friends, O guest.  
All honour shall be accorded thy petition and thy request."

Spake that true-hearted herald: "Unto you by Rhine which dwell  
In all manner of loyal service my King commendeth him well  
And to all thy friends and kinsmen, the vassals of thy throne.  
In faithfulness utter-loyal is this my message done.  
The noble King requesteth that ye mourn his hapless lot;  
For his people be sitting joyless: our Lady and Queen is not.  
The wife of my good Lord, Helka the mighty, low is laid,  
Whereby are young lives orphaned, even many a tender maid,  
Children of noble princes, whom she fostered in bower and hall,  
Whereby the whole land sitteth dark-shrouded in sorrow's pall;  
For now, ah me, have they no one whose love shall bless them and ward.  
Long shall it be ere assuaging come to the grief of my Lord!"  
"God guerdon him," said Gunther, "that so graciously he commends  
His loving and courteous service unto me and these my friends!  
Gladly I hearken the greeting borne this day unto me,  
And willing service I tender from me and mine by thee."  
Outspake a Prince Burgundian, and the good knight Gernot said:  
"Well may the world sit mourning that Helka the fair is dead;  
For in her did princely virtues and the law of kindness reign."  
"This witness is true: I have seen it," said Hagen the high-born thane.

But again that noble herald, Lord Rüdiger, spake on:  
"Lord King, now suffer me further: mine errand not yet is done.  
I would utter the word of my dear Lord, the which by my mouth he saith.  
He liveth in sorrow exceeding since the Lady Helka's death.  
They have told my Lord that Kriemhild sitteth a widow alone,  
Now that Siegfried is dead. If it be so, if the truth unto him hath been shown,  
Then if thou, O King, accord it, beneath the crown shall she stand  
Before the knights of Etzel. I have spoken my Lord's command."



Answered and spake King Gunther of his princely-courteous mind:  
"She shall hear my will in the matter, if her heart be so inclined.  
Thereof will I certify you in three days from this day.  
Or ever I prove her heart's wish, why should I say thee nay?"

Thereafter they gave fair lodging unto all their guests straightway.  
So kindly were they entreated that Rüdiger needs must say  
That amid King Gunther's liegemen good friends had he found enow.  
Glad service did Hagen render for his kindness of long ago.  
There did the Lord of Bechlarren till the third day's dawning abide;  
And the King dealt prudently, calling his counsellors to his side;  
And he asked of his friends and his kinsmen if good in their sight this thing  
Seemed, that his sister Kriemhild should wed with Etzel the King.  
"Yea, good in our eyes it seemeth," said they with one accord  
Save Hagen alone: unto Gunther he spake, that valiant lord:  
"If thou be wise and prudent, hereof take thou good heed,  
That, be she never so willing, thou never consent to the deed."  
"Wherefore," made answer Gunther, "should I his wooing withstand?  
What kindness soever or blessing the Queen may have of mine hand,  
That will I grant her gladly. Sister she is unto me.  
Yea, ourselves might seek such alliance, if such for her honour be."  
But again made answer Hagen: "Nay, put this counsel by!  
Did ye but know this Etzel and his might so well as I—  
If thou, as thou saidst in mine hearing, unto hers add thy consent,  
Above all men thou most surely shalt have chief cause to repent."  
"Wherefore?" said Gunther. "Lightly may I ward me against this,  
To come so nigh to his presence that through any malice of his  
Hurt I should be or imperilled, although she be wedded to him."  
"Never will I approve it!" made answer Hagen the grim.

Then the King bade summon Gernot to his presence and Giselher,  
And he asked of these two princes if good in their eyes it were  
That the Lady Kriemhild be wedded to the mighty Lord of the Hun:  
And of these, save Hagen only, there spake against it none.



Then answered the Prince Burgundian, Giselher the knight:  
"Now surely shouldst thou, friend Hagen, deal by her according to right.  
Make good unto her that sorrow thou hast brought upon her ere now.  
Whatsoever shall be for her profit, ungrudging suffer thou.  
Yea, thou hast brought on my sister such passing bitter pain"—  
So Giselher, peerless hero, unto Hagen spake again—  
"That, how stern soe'er were her hatred, thy due hast thou but received.  
Never by man hath woman of joy been so bereaved!"  
"O yea, full well I know it: who knows it, nought care I!  
But, if she take this Etzel, and see her hour draw nigh  
Wherein she may compass her vengeance, she will do us what hurt she can:  
And verily then in her service shall be many a mighty man!"  
Made answer Gernot the dauntless, and unto Hagen he said:  
"Nay then, long time may we tarry, yea, till these twain be dead,  
Ere unto the land of Etzel the Hun-king journey we.  
Let us deal with my sister truly: for our honour this shall be."  
Thereto made answer Hagen: "I say—gainsay it who dare—  
If once the high-born Kriemhild the crown of Helka wear,  
Whatsoever she may of mischief, that unto us will she do.  
Ye knights, let be, I counsel: better shall this be for you."

Then Giselher spake in his anger, the fair Queen Uta's son:  
"We be not in any wise minded to be traitors every one!  
Whatsoe'er may befall her of honour, let us be glad thereof.  
Whatsoever thou sayest, Hagen, I serve her in faith and love."  
When Hagen heard that saying, he was wroth and bitter of mood.  
But Giselher and Gernot, the haughty knights and good,  
And the King, the mighty Gunther—in one mind stood these three:  
If this should be Kriemhild's pleasure, they would grant it ungrudgingly.  
Spake Gere, Lord of the Marches: "This word unto her will I bring  
That none shall let her from yielding her love unto Etzel the King  
Unto whom in fear and in homage many a good knight bends.  
For all her past wrongs suffered unto her may he make amends."



Then into the presence of Kriemhild passed that gallant knight.  
She gave to him gracious welcome, and he spake the word forthright:  
"Well mayst thou blithely greet me, and give me the messenger's meed  
For tidings of good fortune and days from sorrow freed!  
One seeketh thy love, O Lady: lo, here his heralds be.  
He is noble among the noblest that in honour and majesty  
Have ruled over royal dominions, or a knightly crown have worn.  
Proud knights be his suitors. This message from thy brother to thee have I  
borne."

Then answered the sorrow-burdened: "Now God forbid that ye,  
Even thou and all my kinsmen, should make a mockery  
Of me in mine affliction! How should I shadow the life  
Of a man that hath known the heart's love of a true and faithful wife?"  
Earnestly she gainsaid it. Then came in twain unto her,  
Gernot the knight her brother, and the young prince Giselher;  
And lovingly did they pray her to be comforted from her woe,  
And to take the King to her husband, for that this to her profit should grow.

Yet howsoever they pleaded, was none could turn aside  
The heart of that Queen of Sorrow to be another's bride.  
So they ceased, but they prayed her, "Suffer in any wise this thing,  
An thou wilt nought else, to look on the herald of Etzel the King."  
"Yea," answered the noble Lady, "this thing will I not deny.  
Upon Rüdiger the knightly, the flower of chivalry,  
Will I look with heart ungrudging: had another the messenger been,  
Yea, any save this man only, my face should he ne'er have seen."  
And she said: "Unto this my bower let the friend of the King draw near  
At morning-tide to-morrow; mine answer then shall he hear:  
Yea, all that mine heart hath determined with mine own lips will I tell."  
Then she turned her again to her mourning, and the tears of her sorrow fell.

Now Rüdiger the noble desired none other grace  
So much as this, to be suffered to see her face to face;



For he knew the all-prevailing power of a wise man's tongue;  
And he thought, "If the thing may be compassed, the Queen shall consent  
ere long."

At early morn scarce ended was holy prayer and song,  
When the heralds drew near: around them pressed a mighty throng  
To gaze on the knights to the palace which rode with Rüdiger there:  
In the splendour of their raiment right gallant thanes they were.

Kriemhild the while, the high-born, in sorrow-stricken mood  
For Rüdiger sat waiting, that noble knight and good,  
Not decked as a queen, but in raiment that served her day by day;  
But clad were her bower-maidens in royal-rich array.  
At his coming she rose, and to meet him to the bower-door she went,  
And with gracious greeting welcomed the herald of Etzel sent.  
With none save comrades eleven he came before the Queen,  
And with worshipful honour was welcomed: never princelier envoys were seen.  
They bade them unto the high-seats, even him and his knightly train,  
The while in the presence of Kriemhild stood the margraves twain,  
The noble knights and valiant, Eckwart and Gere withal.  
But by reason of Kriemhild's sorrow heavy of cheer were they all.  
Sat in their Lady's presence many a comely maid;  
But never the flood of the weeping and mourning of Kriemhild was stayed.  
Her raiment over her bosom was wet with the hot tears' flow.  
And the noble Lord of the Marches beheld, and grieved in her woe.

Then spake that courteous herald: "O Daughter of Kings, I pray  
For myself and my fellow-farers which have come from far away,  
That thou of thy grace wilt suffer that now in thy presence we stand  
And utter to thee the message that we bring from our fatherland."  
"This grace do I freely accord thee," the sad Queen made reply;  
"Speak whatsoe'er thou desirest, for purposed now am I  
Gladly to hear that message: good herald and true thou art."  
Yet all through the courteous bidding discerned the reluctant heart.



Then the Knight of Bechlaren, the Margrave Rüdiger, spake the word:  
"Unto thee, O Lady, Etzel the mighty King my Lord  
In love and in faith doth commend him; his greeting I bear to thy land;  
And good knights many he sendeth, his suitors for thine hand.  
He maketh thee faithful proffer of love that shall banish pain;  
All constancy of affection from his true heart shalt thou gain,  
Even such as had Helka, who nearest lay to his heart of old—  
The heart that remembers her goodness in lone grief manifold."

Then spake unto him Queen Kriemhild: "Lord Margrave Rüdiger,  
If of mine heart's affliction any man were ware,  
He would counsel me never to hearken if another man should woo,  
Who have lost the best and the dearest that ever woman knew."  
"Wherein is there comfort for sorrow," answered the valiant thane,  
"More than in love of a true heart? Whoso this treasure may gain,  
And hath won whom his heart hath chosen, and filled the void thereof,  
He proveth that for sorrow there is no salve like unto love.  
And if thou to my noble master wilt yield thy love, and wed,  
Twelve crowns of mighty kingdoms will he set upon thine head,  
Yea, and of thirty princes my Lord shall give thee the lands;  
Subject are they, overmastered by his all-conquering hands.  
Thou shalt be withal liege-lady of many a warrior bold  
Which were vassals to my mistress Helka in days of old,  
And of many a high-born lady from princely lineage sprung  
That to her once rendered service"—spake on that winning tongue—  
"This also the King shall give thee, he bade me say unto thee,  
So thou yield to wear beside him the crown of royalty,  
Power, even the highest that ever in the hands of Helka lay;  
All the warrior-vassals of Etzel thee also shall obey."

"Ah me! how could I ever," Queen Kriemhild mournfully cried,  
"Incline mine heart hereafter to be any hero's bride,  
Even I, whom death hath stricken through one with such bitter grief  
That unto my life's end never from pain shall I find relief?"



"O mighty Queen," the Hunfolk unto Kriemhild made reply,  
"Their life who dwell with Etzel so royally fleeteth by,  
That a dream of delight shall thy days be, if thou hearken our counselling.  
O, many a gallant baron doeth homage to Etzel the King.  
And the bower-maidens of Helka and they that be here with thee  
Shall wait upon thy pleasure in one bright company;  
And many a knight beholding these shall be glad of heart.  
For thy good shall it fall, O Lady, if thou choose the better part."  
Then she spake like a courteous lady: "Awhile from speech refrain  
Till the morning-tide of to-morrow; then come ye to me again.  
So touching this your petition will I tell you mine intent."  
And the valiant barons of Hunland thereto must needs consent.

So when in hall and hostel lodged and feasted they were,  
That noble Lady commanded to send to her Giselher,  
And withal her mother Uta; and to these twain did she say:  
"No life save weeping and mourning remaineth to me for aye!"  
Spake Giselher her brother: "Sister, mine heart foresees—  
And I count it herein true prophet—that thy pangs and thy miseries  
In King Etzel's love shall vanish: if thou share his life and his throne,  
Let who will speak against it, meseems it shall well be done.  
For all thou hast lost," said her brother, "can he make amends unto thee.  
From the River Rhone to the Rhine-stream, from the Elbe to the uttermost sea,  
There is no king so mighty that men have known or seen.  
Well might thine heart be gladdened that he chooseth thee for his Queen."  
She answered: "O brother beloved, counsel not this, I implore!  
Meeter for me are weeping and wailing evermore.  
What have I to do with a palace, in the presence of knights to shine?  
Long since my beauty hath faded, if beauty ever was mine."  
Now speaketh the Lady Uta to the daughter she loveth, and saith:  
"Nay, do thou, daughter beloved, as thy brother counselleth.  
Hearken the voice of thy kinsfolk, and good days so shalt thou know.  
Too long have I seen thee sitting in lamentation and woe."



Unto God then earnestly prayed she the path of her feet to show;  
For, albeit hers should be raiment and silver and gold to bestow,  
As of yore when she dwelt with her husband, when his life within him was whole,  
The glorious hours of the old time could no more gladden her soul.  
Aye in her heart was she musing: "And can I link my life  
With a husband that is a heathen—and I, a Christian wife?  
Reproach must then be my portion through all the earth, and shame.  
Though he gave the whole world's riches, not so could I stain my name!"  
So even there did she leave it. The livelong night till the day  
With deep heart-searchings haunted on her bed that lady lay;  
And her eyes, the starry-shining, from tears were never dry,  
Till she rose, and passed to the mass-tide when the morning sun was high.  
Now also unto the mass-tide were come those princes three;  
And they took the hand of their sister, and spake to her lovingly,  
Still counselling her unto marriage with the Lord of the Hunland folk:  
But never the light of smiling o'er the face of sadness broke.

Then sent they for Etzel's heralds once more to her presence to come—  
For now from the land of Gunther would they fain be faring home  
Bearing consent or denial, as Kriemhild's mind might be.  
Then Rüdiger came to the palace. Now his fellows instantly  
Urged him to seek decision of the mind of the noble King,  
And betimes to end their doubting: such was the counselling  
Of all; for a weary journey to their land before them lay.  
So into the presence of Kriemhild Rüdiger brought they.  
With words exceeding courteous that gallant knight drew nigh  
To the lady sorrow-stricken, and prayed her to make reply  
For the message wherewith she would charge him, to bear to the land of the Hun.  
But the herald with all his pleading nought but denial won:—  
"Never man will I love hereafter, nor another husband wed!"  
"Nay, Lady," answered the Margrave, "is the word so wisely said?  
Wherefore to sorrow's blasting this glory of beauty ban,  
When thou mayest become with honour the bride of a good true man?"



Yet nothing availed their pleading, till Rüdiger drew near,  
And murmured a word in secret in the Lady Kriemhild's ear  
That for all the wrongs she had suffered should requital be made unto her.  
Now sinketh the storm of her sorrow as the new thoughts inly stir.  
Yet again to the Queen he whispered: "Let be thy mourning and moan;  
For, though thou hadst mid the Hunfolk none save me alone,  
Even me and my loyal kinsmen, and my vassals stout and true,  
Whosoever had wronged thee, Lady, we would make him bitterly rue."  
Then the face of the lady lightened, her eyes like steel flashed keen—  
"Swear unto me," she answered, "whatsoever my wrong hath been,  
That, Rüdiger, thou wilt be foremost to avenge me with heart and hand."  
Made answer to her the Margrave: "Unto this, Queen, will I stand."  
For himself and for all his vassals Rüdiger sware to her then  
To the death evermore to serve her, and that he and his mighty men  
Would deny or delay her nothing afar in Etzel's land,  
Whatsoever her honour demanded; and to this he gave his hand.

Then thought the Faithful-hearted: "Since I thus lightly have won  
Friends so many and steadfast, I will e'en let folk say on  
What things they list of 'the Heathen'! O sorrow-laden wife!—  
What and if I at last win vengeance for my lost beloved's life?"  
She thought: "Since this King Etzel is served of many a knight  
Over whom shall I be mistress, I may do as seemeth me right.  
He hath such stintless treasures, I may yet give bounteously:—  
All that was mine hath Hagen the ruthless torn from me!"  
Again unto Rüdiger spake she: "Except I had heard folk say  
That the King is a heathen, gladly my feet should tread the way  
Whither the great King biddeth, and him for my lord would I take."  
"Fret not thyself, O Lady," he answered, "for such words' sake.  
c Not wholly is he a heathen; this know thou for very sooth.  
For my beloved master was indeed baptized in his youth,  
Though haply he since have turned him unto ancient altar and fane.  
But, Lady, if thou wilt wed him, his heart may be turned yet again.



So many good knights serve him which be thanes of Christ the Lord,  
That no ill may betide thee with the King, or in deed or word.  
And what if thine holy converse thy lord to the font should bring?  
Then proud wert thou and happy to be wife of Etzel the King!"

Then spake unto her her brethren: "Belovèd sister, consent,  
And all thy tribulation shall be swallowed up in content."  
So long and so instantly prayed they, that the Queen of the Sorrowful Life  
Pledged her at last to the heroes to be King Etzel's wife.  
She spake: "I needs must yield me, a crown of sorrow who wear,  
With you to go to the Hunfolk when ye bid me thither to fare,  
If I find friends trusty and loyal to lead me hence to your land."  
And thereto in the heroes' presence fair Kriemhild gave her hand.

Answered the Lord of the Marches: "Though thou have but liegemen twain,  
Thereto can I add full many. With all these in thy train  
Of a surety in safety and honour shalt thou be brought over Rhine.  
O Lady, tarry no longer in the land that is no more thine!  
Knights have I here five hundred, and kinsmen, a warrior-band.  
Lo, these be all thy servants, both here and in Etzel's land,  
Sworn to do all thy bidding. I stand by my plighted troth.  
I will shame mine honour never when thou biddest remember mine oath.  
Prepare then journeying-raiment and the trappings of the steed.  
As touching Rüdiger's counsel, thou never shalt rue his rede.  
And bid thy maidens who journey with thee that they swiftly prepare.  
Many a chosen hero shall meet us as onward we fare."

Still had they the trappings and housings wherewith they went to ride  
In Siegfried's days, so that maidens many in pomp and pride  
Might fare in the train of Kriemhild, what time she would be gone.  
How goodly the jewelled saddles for those fair ladies shone!  
What lovely raiment soever they had e'er worn theretofore,  
Thereof for this wondrous journey they brought forth all their store.



From casket and bolted coffer they drew forth vesture and gem—  
Such marvels of the splendour of Etzel were told unto them.  
Busy they were and eager till the eve of the fifth bright day.  
Out of the presses sought they all things therein that lay.

And Kriemhild now bestirred her to unlock her treasury  
Of purpose to load with riches all Rüdiger's company.  
Still had she somewhat remaining of the gold of the Niblung Land;  
And this to the Hunnish heroes would she deal with lavish hand.  
Scarce could a hundred horses bear thence that precious load.  
But some talebearer to Hagen the purpose of Kriemhild showed.  
"Never," he said, "will Kriemhild forgive me that ancient wrong:  
Therefore the gold of Siegfried must needs here bide full long.  
Should I leave so mighty a treasure to my bitterest foes, and rue?  
Right well do I know what Kriemhild with all this wealth would do!  
If forth of the land she convey it, I know this certainly  
That with champions she will but share it, to stir up foes against me:—  
And she hath not so much as horses of number to bear it away!  
Hagen for her will keep it: to Kriemhild thus let them say."

When the thing was told unto Kriemhild, she was stung with indignant pain.  
Of the tyrannous wrong of Hagen to the three Kings did she complain.  
His will were they fain to have thwarted, but his purpose none could shake.  
Then Rüdiger the noble lightly to Kriemhild spake:  
"O high-born Daughter of Princes, wherefore lament for the gold?  
Unto thee is my Lord King Etzel so loving and bounteous-souled,  
That, soon as his eyes have beheld thee, he will give thee such rich store  
That never thine hands may spend it: I pledge my faith therefor."  
Unto him the Queen made answer: "O noble Rüdiger,  
Never had Daughter of Princes such treasure bequeathed unto her  
As that whereof Hagen hath stripped me with neither ruth nor shame!"  
Then to the treasury royal her brother Gernot came:  
In the door did he set the great key with authority as of a king,  
And all the treasure of Kriemhild forth of the place did they bring,



Marks full thirty thousand—yea, more, it may haply be—  
That the guests might take it; and Gunther rejoiced that deed to see.  
But out spake he of Bechlaren, the fair Gotlinda's lord:  
"Nay, though 'neath the hand of Kriemhild lay all the treasure-ward  
That ever was brought aforetime out of the Niblungs' land,  
Nor I nor the Queen my Lady would touch the same with a hand.  
Back let them take, let them keep it; for I thereof will naught.  
Of mine own wealth out of my country such plenty have I brought,  
That of this no whit for our journey shall we need, through the land as we  
fare.

Even we for our own wayfaring have gotten enough and to spare."

Yet had her maidens already therefrom filled coffers twelve  
Of gold the finest and purest that miner ever may delve.  
And with these they bare from the city many a precious thing,  
Even jewels and gems, that the maidens would wear in their journeying;  
—Yet still by the dread overshadowed of Hagen's might were they;—  
And a thousand marks for masses yet by Kriemhild lay:  
For the peace of the soul of Siegfried she gave them as love's last due.  
And Rüdiger thought: "This woman is faithful and loving and true."

Then spake that Lady of Sorrows: "Who love me yet so well  
That for me they be willing as strangers in a strange land to dwell?  
Who now will companion my journey, unto Etzel's land as I ride?  
Let them take of my gold, and purvey them horses, and raiment provide."  
Then Eckwart, Lord of the Marches, drew nigh, and thus spake he:  
"Since the day when I was appointed to wait, O Queen, upon thee,  
Faithfully and truly have I served thee," said that thane;  
"Now also to my life's ending in my fealty will I remain.  
Good knights withal five hundred of mine own will I take with me,  
And I tender to thee their service in faith and fealty.  
We will ever abide unsundered, except death make an end."  
Low bowed her Kriemhild, and thanked him, that loving and loyal friend.



Then led they out the horses, since forth of the land they must fare.  
Then brake forth bitter weeping of dear friends gathered there.  
There was the great Queen Uta, with many a comely maid;  
And they showed what burden of sorrow upon their hearts was laid.  
With a hundred high-born maidens she rode from the land away,  
All as beseemed their station attired in costly array.  
Ah then with tears upwelling were many bright eyes drowned:  
Yet many a day of joyance in Etzel's land they found.  
Lord Giselher, and Gernot, with their vassal-company,  
Came on that parting-morning, as bidden of courtesy,  
To escort their beloved sister to the uttermost part of the land,  
And they led a thousand warriors in that their gallant band.  
Came Gere the swift war-helper, came Ortwein therewithal,  
Nor tarried behind them Rumold, arrayer of feasts in hall<sup>1</sup>;  
And of these was prepared night-lodging for the ladies all through the way:  
And Volker was marshal, and hostels he found for the knights' array.  
C When they kissed at that last leave-taking, the hot tears fell like rain  
Ere they won through the gates of the castle to the highway through the plain.  
Unbidden did many escort them afar on Burgundia's ways:  
But beside them rode King Gunther from the town but a little space.

Ere from the Rhine they departed, they had sent on far before  
Swift messengers unto Hunland that joyful tidings bore,  
Even to tell King Etzel that Rüdiger would bring  
The noble Lady Kriemhild, won to be wife to the King.  
C Swiftly the heralds onward rode; ay, well was their need,  
Alike for the winning of honour and the good-news' bearer's meed;  
And when they came to the home-land, and that glad word was told,  
Never, I ween, had Etzel been so joyful-souled.  
C In guerdon for these fair tidings Etzel the King bade give  
Such costly gifts to the heralds, that they might thereafter live  
Through all their days in joyance, yea, to the hour of their death,  
For afar had his trouble and anguish been driven upon love's breath.

<sup>1</sup> For the six lines which follow, Simrock's reading is adopted.



## XXI

## OF KRIEMHILD'S JOURNEYING TO THE LAND OF THE HUNS

Let us suffer those heralds onward to ride:—let the minstrel sing  
How rode that Daughter of Princes through the land far-journeying,  
And where at the last she parted from Gernot and Giselher.  
In loyalty and honour had these twain holpen her.  
When they came where looks over Danube Bergen's citadel,  
Then at the last those heroes must bid the Queen farewell,  
For that backward unto the Rhineland now must they turn the rein.  
When the near and dear so parted could none from tears refrain.  
Then Giselher to his sister spake one parting word:  
"Sister, if ever thou needest help of my counsel or sword,  
What peril soever threatens, send thou word unto me;  
Into the land of Etzel will I straightway ride unto thee."  
Then kissed she the lips of her kinsfolk, and they parted in love and grief;  
And with kindly word and with hand-clasp friend of friend took leave,  
The valiant men of Burgundia and Rüdiger's cavalcade.  
Then with the Queen rode onward many a high-born maid,  
Even four and a hundred fair ones: in bright hues rainbow-dyed  
Glistened their lovely vesture: broad shields upon either side  
Went flashing down the highways on the arms of the Hun-queen's train.  
Then turned, after fair leave-taking, Volker the valiant thane.

Into the land of Bavaria over the Danube they won,  
And fast and far went the tidings of the long lines riding on,  
And the many unknown faces. Where stand a cloister's walls,  
And where the broad Inn-river into the Danube falls,  
There in the city of Passau a great prince-bishop abode.  
From their homes, yea, forth from the palace the folk streamed out to the road



Whereby those guests through Bavaria-land came riding in.  
There met was Kriemhild the lovely by the bishop Pilgerin.  
Glad were the knights Bavarian to look on that winsome sight,  
That Queen of Beauty followed by many a maiden bright;  
And with loving glances and longing those daughters of earls did they greet.  
Fair harbourage full swiftly was found for guests so sweet.  
C At Pledeling resting-places were prepared for the slumber-tide.  
All people came forth riding to meet them from every side;  
And they gave to them whatso they needed with willing hands and free  
There and elsewhere, and they took it with princely courtesy.  
Back rode the bishop to Passau with his niece the royal dame;  
And so soon as unto the burghers of the city the tidings came,  
That the child of their prince's sister, Kriemhild the Queen, drew nigh,  
The merchants greeted her entry with stately pageantry.  
Now the bishop had looked that a little there should his guests stay on;  
But Eckwart, Lord of the Marches, said: "Nay, it may nowise be done.  
We needs must still ride onward to the land of Rüdiger:  
Many knights unto whom our coming hath been heralded wait for us there."

Now by this known too unto Gotlind the fair one the tidings were;  
And with diligent haste did the lady and her high-born daughter prepare:  
For a message had Rüdiger sent her that he held it a seemly thing  
That to cheer the heart of Kriemhild she should ride to meet her, and bring  
With her for a guard of honour all her vassal-array  
So far as Ems the river. Then hasted she to obey;  
And straightway thronged were the highways with folk that onward pressed,  
Afoot, or riding, eager to meet that queenly guest.

Now was the Queen in her journey come unto Everding.  
They had passed through the land Bavarian unvexed of the plundering  
Of the robber barons which haunted the ways, as their wont was aye.  
Well might they have done a mischief unto so rich a prey;  
But Rüdiger the noble from peril warded them still:  
With a thousand knights, yea, haply yet more, had he fenced them from ill.



And now was the Lady Gotlind, Rüdiger's wife, at hand,  
And with her a host of good knights, a great and gallant band.

Now when they had crossed Traun-river by Ems, in the river-mead green,  
There many a booth fair-builded and many a tent was seen  
Wherein those guests through the night-tide sweet rest and slumber should win,  
Ready-reared at the Margrave's charges to honour his guests therein.  
From the palace prepared for the lodging of those guests Gotlind the fair  
Rode forward to meet her Lady: along the highways were  
Long lines of goodly horses with jingling bridle-reins:—  
Fair welcome! Fain was the Margrave of all their loving pains.

The knights that from eastward and westward along the highway rode  
Spurred gallantly forth to the meeting: brave horsemanship they showed,  
Those charging ranks of heroes of many a fair maid seen!  
In sooth was the good knights' service well-pleasing to the Queen.  
When clashed Lord Rüdiger's vassals with the guests in the mimic war,  
Many a splintered lance-shaft went upward soaring far  
From the hands of the gallant heroes as they tilted in knightly wise;  
And ladies' smiles were their guerdon, and the light in ladies' eyes.  
Now stayed is the tide of combat, and the laughing warriors greet  
Right courteously the strangers; and forward riding, to meet  
The Queen, the glorious Kriemhild, doth the Lady Gotlind go.  
Now knights that in ladies' service be perfect, have work enow.

To meet and to greet his lady rode on Bechlaren's Lord:  
Right glad was the noble Gotlind to hail the lost restored  
Whole and unharmed from the Rhineland and from peril of the way.  
Vanished her fear and her sorrow as a dream at the dawning of day.  
So when she had given him welcome, "I pray thee light," said he,  
"On the grass with thy bower-maidens, all these which have followed thee."  
Then in knightly courtesy busy was many a high-born thane  
Which waited with eager service on the ladies of her train.



Then looked the Lady Kriemhild, and beheld the Margravine  
Stand in the midst of her ladies. No further rode the Queen;  
But she checked with bit and bridle the onward-pacing steed,  
And she bade them from the saddle lift her to earth with speed.  
Leading the child of his sister the princely bishop strode,  
With Eckwart beside him, where Lady Gotlind their coming abode.  
To right and to left all people fell back as onward they came;  
And the stranger Queen kissed sweetly the lips of the noble dame.  
With words all lowly-loving did the wife of Rüdiger say:  
"Now happy am I, dear mistress, and a blessing on this day  
That in this our land hath given to mine eyes thy face to see!  
No sight so heart-rejoicing could now have appeared unto me."  
"O noble Gotlind," said Kriemhild, "God guerdon thee for this!  
If I with the son of Botlung see days of weal and bliss,  
Well may it be for thee truly that I have been seen of thee."  
—Ah, neither of these foreboded the things that were yet to be!

Then met with courteous greeting the maidens of either land,  
And around them tendering service did many a good knight stand;  
And they sat down after the greeting on earth's clover-mantled floor.  
So were they made acquainted which were strangers theretofore,  
As they poured the wine for the ladies. By this the sun was high,  
Nor longer lingered thereafter that noble company.  
On rode they, and came to pavilions broad and fair-arrayed  
Wherein might perfect service to the noble guests be paid.  
There till the new day's dawning they rested through the night.  
Now the folk of Bechlaren bestirred them that all should be ordered aright,  
That guests so many and worthy should be welcomed with honour due:  
Such heed had Rüdiger taken, that nothing lacked thereto.  
There thrown wide open for welcome were the windows in the walls;  
Through the castle of Bechlaren flung wide were the doors of her halls.  
There amid welcoming faces the guests through the gateway rode,  
And in many a fair-dight chamber by Rüdiger were they bestowed.



The Margravine's fair daughter drew with her maidens nigh  
To the palace-portal, and welcomed the Queen right lovingly,  
And there by her side did her mother, the wife of Rüdiger, stand;  
And maidens to bower-maidens outstretched the welcoming hand,  
And two by two they drew them with fingers that lovingly clung  
To a wide hall stately-builded, with tapestries fair-hung.  
Afront of the windows the Danube-river flowed below.  
There sat they in merry converse, and felt the cool breeze blow.

Of all that befell as they tarried the minstrel may not sing:  
Yet certes the knights of Kriemhild at such long tarrying  
Murmured, for now were they chafing that so slowly the goal was won.  
What gallant knights from Bechlaren thereafter escorted them on!  
Service the Margrave tendered most loving and manifold.  
Then gave that Daughter of Princes twelve armlets of red gold  
Unto the daughter of Gotlind, and raiment lovely-wrought.  
Into the land of Etzel none fairer had Kriemhild brought.  
Albeit the gold of the Niblungs out of her hand had been reft,  
Yet with the little treasure that still unto her was left  
She won the hearts of all folk that looked upon her face.  
Great gifts unto Rüdiger's household she gave of her royal grace.  
And for her part Lady Gotlind to the guests from Rhineland showed  
Such high and bounteous honour in the gifts that she bestowed,  
That hard had it been mid the strangers to find so much as one  
Who had not of her hands fair-woven vesture or precious stone.

So when these guests had eaten, and would forth on their journey again,  
Her loyal service commended that noble chatelaine  
In speech most lowly-loving unto great Etzel's Queen;  
And Kriemhild embraced at parting the fair young Margravine.  
Then spake unto Kriemhild the damsel: "If this my Queen content,  
Well know I, my dear-loved father thereto would gladly consent  
To send me to thee into Hunland, to wait on my Lady there."  
How loyal could be that maiden, full well was Kriemhild ware.



All bridled waited the horses before the castle-port,  
When the noble Queen had taken her leave in gracious sort  
Of the wife of the Lord of the Marches and the fair young child at her side;  
And with many a farewell spoken thence did the maidens ride.  
Seldom indeed thereafter from that day forth met they!  
Out of Medelick came the people, and stood beside the way  
With many a golden goblet rich-wrought filled high with wine  
That the guests might drink, and "Welcome!" they bade them by word and sign.  
The Lord of the place in his castle dwelt there, Astolf hight:  
On the road to the Easterlings' country he set their feet aright:  
Over against Mautaren by the Danube runs that road.  
There worshipful observance to the great Queen all folk showed.  
Of his sister's daughter the bishop took loving farewell there.  
That long she might live and prosper how earnest was his prayer,  
And might for herself earn honour as Helka of yore had done!  
Ha, what high honour and worship in the hearts of the Huns she won!

So they came in a little season unto the Traisem's flow,  
And still did the knights of the Margrave heedfully guarding them go,  
Till far off riding to meet them was a host of the Hunfolk seen.  
Ha, then was fulness of honour rendered unto the Queen!  
On the Traisem's bank did a castle of the Lord of the Hunfolk stand,  
A passing-stately fortress, well known through all the land;  
And the same hight Traisenmauer: there Helka dwelt of old,  
A lady beyond all other exceeding bounteous-souled,  
Except that other were Kriemhild, for her bounty withal was free.  
Well might she be henceforth happy after all her misery,  
For all the people of Etzel her kindness extolled and her grace;  
Yea, in abundant measure she won the heroes' praise.

Now the majesty of King Etzel was grown so world-renowned,  
That at every time and season about his court were found  
All knights on earth most valiant that ever man had known  
Mid Christian nations and heathen: all gathered round his throne.



Year in, year out, around him—such sight none now may see—  
Were Christian knights and heathen dwelling in amity,  
Each after his own land's custom, even as such might fall.  
So full and so free was his bounty, that aye it sufficed for all.

## XXII

## HOW KING ETZEL WEDDED KRIEMHILD

At Traisenmauer she tarried till four days were fulfilled;  
And all that time on the highways for never an hour was stilled  
The uprolling of dust on all sides like smoke from a forest aflame  
As the riders of Etzel thither through the land of the Easterlings came.  
For by this had the joyful tidings been told unto Etzel the King  
How royally Lady Kriemhild through the land was journeying.  
By that sweet expectation slain, was the old pain gone,  
And arose the King, and hastened to meet that loveliest one.

Streamed far along the highways warriors of many a tongue.  
To herald the coming of Etzel came knights in a valiant throng;  
Christian knights and heathen, in one vast host came they,  
And they saw their Queen, and forward they swept in a stately array.  
Warriors many of Russia and many of Greece were there;  
On flew they, Poles and Wallachs, swiftly as birds of the air;  
Horsemen on goodly horses, kings of the saddle they rode;  
Each after his own land's fashion their knightly prowess they showed.  
From the land of Kiev came riding thitherward many a thane:  
On came the wild Petschnegers; the great bow did they strain  
Against the fowl of the heaven as flickered their wings in the blue.  
Up to the head the arrow with marvellous might they drew.

Hard by the Danube river in the land of the Easterlings lies  
A burg that men name Tulna: there seen of Kriemhild's eyes



Was many an alien custom uncouth and marvel-fraught.  
There was she welcomed of many whose doom at the last she wrought.

Forerunners of King Etzel rode a vassal-company  
Blithe-hearted, splendour-vestured, courtly and goodly to see,  
Four and twenty princes, mighty and men of renown,  
To look on their Queen: her presence of their heart's desire was the crown.  
Ramung, the great war-captain from far Wallachia-land,  
To meet her rode; seven hundred were the warriors of his band.  
On sped they all together swiftly as birds on the wing.  
Then Prince Gibèk dashed forward with a gallant following.  
Forth did the swift knight Hornbog with a thousand vassals ride  
From his place beside King Etzel, to greet that glorious bride.  
As they rode, they upraised the war-cry of their land, that it rang afar.  
On swept the princes of Hunland in magnificent pomp of war.  
Forward spurring to meet her came Hawart the dauntless Dane,  
And Iring the swift war-helper, of the honour without a stain.  
Came Irnfried the lord of Thuringia, a goodly champion he.  
Thus welcomed they Queen Kriemhild for her honour and majesty,  
With warriors wight twelve hundred, a splendid chivalry.  
Then came the war-lord Blödel followed by thousands three,  
The brother of King Etzel, and a mighty Hunland thane.  
On rode he in pomp of procession, and before the Queen drew rein.  
Last came the great King Etzel, with Lord Dietrich at his side,  
With all his heroes behind him: it was good to see them ride,  
Rank upon rank of warriors noble and faithful and bold:  
To behold them heart-uplifted was Kriemhild, and joyful-souled.

Then spake unto Queen Kriemhild the noble Rüdiger:  
"Now to the King's self welcome I give, O Lady, here.  
Of whomso I say, 'Him kiss thou,' such an one with a kiss do thou greet.  
For all the knights of Etzel like welcoming were not meet."  
Then lifted they from her palfrey that stately Queen and fair;  
And Etzel the King, the mighty, no longer tarried there,



But begirt with many a baron down from the selle he leapt,  
And with eyes for gladness shining unto Lady Kriemhild stept.

As singeth the old-time minstrel, high-born princes twain  
Followed the Lady Kriemhild, upbearing her garment's train,  
As strode the great King Etzel his Lady and Queen to meet,  
And with gracious kiss of welcome that noble Prince did she greet.  
She put back veil and headband; the roses and lilies shone  
Forth from the gold that enclosed them: then murmured many an one  
That fairer than she not even the Lady Helka had been.  
Then the brother of King Etzel, Blödel, drew nigh to the Queen.  
With the kiss of salutation, as the Margrave Rüdiger bade,  
Blödel and King Gibeke, and Dietrich welcome were made.  
Twelve kissed she, kinsmen of Etzel, and chiefs of kingly pride;  
And she bowed her in gracious greeting unto many a baron beside.

Through all that time of the meeting of Kriemhild with Etzel the King,  
All in the ancient fashion young knights were tourneying:  
With gentle and joyous jousting right gallantly they rode,  
As the Christian knights and heathen their countries' customs showed.  
With what knightly prowess the champions of Dietrich's warrior-band  
Were hurling the whizzing javelin from the strong unerring hand!  
Forth through the air far-leaping over the shields did they skim.  
By the guests from Germany shivered was many a broad shield-rim.  
With the ceaseless clashing of spear-shafts splintered loud was the air;  
For the mighty men of the Hunland all were gathered there;  
And there were the guests of Etzel, an exceeding noble array.

Now passeth the King with Kriemhild from the place of their meeting away,  
And they come where hard beside them doth a stately pavilion stand:  
All round was the whole plain covered with tents on every hand;  
There guests after toil of their travel unto sweet rest now might win;  
And many a winsome maiden the heroes led therein



Unto their Queen, where Kriemhild sat in splendour there  
On a couch all costly-broidered; for the Margrave's diligent care  
Had ordered so its arraying that the tent was splendour-dight:  
And the heart of the Hun-king Etzel was filled with deep delight.  
What of their princely converse may a simple minstrel know  
Save this?—in his right hand rested a hand like a flake of snow.  
So sat they on love's threshold; for the wise thane Rüdiger,  
For the honour of Kriemhild, left not King Etzel alone with her.

Then stayed was the clash of tourney o'er all the echoing field,  
Hushed as beseemed was the crashing of lance and the clang of shield.  
Back to the tents went trooping King Etzel's vassalage:  
And to all was there given lodging and spacious harbourage.  
So drew the day to an ending and the sleep of the summer night,  
Till fled away the shadows and they saw the breaking of light.  
Then many a gallant hero gat him again to horse,  
And ho for the honour of Etzel and the gallant tourney-course!  
For the King said: "See ye acquit you for yours and for my renown."  
Then rode they on from Tulna to Vienna the royal town:  
There splendour-attired did ladies unnumbered their coming abide  
To welcome with duteous worship King Etzel's royal bride.

In plenty to overflowing were all things ready dight,  
What things soever they needed; and many an eager knight  
With joy looked on to the feast-tide. Fair lodging was given to them all.  
Amid joyance began King Etzel's bridal-festival.  
So vast was the throng, in the city harboured they could not be;  
And Rüdiger gave commandment—"Whosoever be not guests, ye  
Without the walls find lodging in hamlet and homestead around."  
Well wot I that daily and hourly waiting on Kriemhild were found  
The noble baron Dietrich and many a knight of his host;  
In labour of love aye toiling they wrought to the uttermost  
That the hearts of their guests should be gladdened in stintless plenty and peace,  
So that Rüdiger and his kinsmen took now their disport and their ease.



Then came that royal bridal on the Feast of Whitsuntide,  
Whereon the Hun-king Etzel won Kriemhild to be his bride  
In Vienna the royal city: such hosts of men, I wot,  
In the days of her first lord Siegfried on her pleasure had waited not.  
By her gifts unto many which never had seen her she made her known,  
For which cause spake in his wonder to the guests full many an one:  
"We weened that of all wealth Kriemhild was stripped bare—so had we heard:  
And behold, she doth with her bounty marvels great beyond word!"

Seven days and ten it lasted, that marriage festival-tide.  
Ne'er was it told to the minstrel that any king beside  
A marriage-feast so glorious hath held—we have heard not his name.  
In new bright raiment vested were all to the feast that came.  
Ne'er had she sat in the Low Land in the days of long ago  
In the presence of knights so many: yea, this of a truth do I know.  
How rich soever in treasure was Siegfried, never had he  
So many knights as were bounden to Etzel in fealty.  
Never have Kings, of a surety, at their marriage-festivals  
Unto guests given mantles so ample, such splendour-woven palls,  
Never such costly vesture as was freely lavished here.  
It was all for the sake of Kriemhild, for the honour of one most dear.  
In all—were they guests, were they home-folk—one mind in them all abode,  
Nought to begrudge in their giving, not the dearest thing they owed:  
Whatsoe'er was desired of any, given it was forthright,  
So that stripped bare even of vesture stood many a generous knight.

When she thought on the days passed over, how she dwelt on the green  
Rhine-shore  
With her noble murdered husband, her eyes with tears brimmed o'er.  
Yet the ghost of the past aye banned she, that her sorrow none might know,  
That she might not shadow the honour which had come after all her woe.

Whatsoe'er was the bounty of others, as an idle wind would it seem  
By the lavish giving of Dietrich: all wealth bestowed upon him



By the King, the son of Botlung, was as water spilt on the sand.  
Withal were there marvels of bounty from Rüdiger's open hand.  
Yea, also the good knight Blödel, the Lord of Hungary,  
Bade open his treasure-coffers, and empty them utterly  
Of the gold therein and the silver—all, all was given away.  
The heroes of King Etzel in joy lived day by day.  
Yea, also Werbel and Schwemmel—King Etzel's minstrels they—  
Each of them with marks a thousand was guerdoned for harp and lay,  
Yea, even with more peradventure, at the marriage-festival  
When by Etzel Kriemhild the lovely sat crowned in the sight of all.

Forth on the eighteenth morning from Vienna rode their array.  
Once more were the bucklers rifted in the gentle and joyous play  
By the spears that were couched for the onset in many a good knight's hand.  
So came at the last King Etzel with joy to the Hunfolk's land.  
At Heimburg the ancient city did the wayfarers rest that night.  
How vast was the tale of their army none could number aright,  
Nor say with what countless legions on through the land they rode.  
Ha, what fair dames in the home-land the coming of these abode!

At Misenburg the wealthy aboard of ships did they go.  
'Neath the host of the men and the horses did the waters hidden flow;  
It seemed as the dry land fledged away in one long stream!  
Now journeyed the way-worn women lulled in a restful dream.  
Galley to goodly galley was lashed with hawsers taut  
To the end that by wave and current might no disarray be wrought;  
And awnings of costly loomwork were wide outstretched overhead,  
That it seemed as if plain and meadow around them still were spread.

Now also in Etzel's castle was the tale of their coming told,  
And all therein, both women and men, were joyful-souled,  
The household of Queen Helka, whom she graciously ruled of yore,  
And for whom with Kriemhild were many happy days in store.



In its hall did high-born maidens in hope her coming abide  
Whose hearts had carried a burden of grief since Helka died.  
Yea, seven kings' daughters Kriemhild in the castle fostered found;  
And all the land of Etzel through these was far-renowned.  
Of all these Herrat the princess had overcharge and control,  
Daughter of Helka's sister, a maiden pure of soul,  
Betrothed unto Dietrich: daughter of a noble prince was she,  
The child of the great king Nantwein, high-honoured in days to be.  
Expectant of their coming her heart was filled with delight,  
And with goodly preparation was the palace richly dight.  
How blissfully there King Etzel abode what tongue may tell?  
Under no queen ever the Hunfolk thereafter fared so well.

When the King with his wife came riding up from the river-bank,  
As maid after maid was presented, named was each, and her rank,  
By Herrat, and Kriemhild greeted each as a friend long known.  
In what might she sat and what honour soon upon Helka's throne!  
Duteous service and loyal waited upon her eye;  
And ever the Queen was giving: gold, lovely-woven array,  
Silver and costly gemstones—all goodly things soe'er  
That she brought over Rhine into Hunland; for her bounty was free as air.  
Vowed evermore to serve her, and proud withal to obey  
Were the kinsmen of King Etzel and all that owned his sway,  
So that never the Lady Helka ruled with such power and might;  
For unto the death of Kriemhild were they bound by that troth-plight.  
So exceeding great was the glory of the King, so famed his land,  
That wherever knights were yearning with gallant heart and hand  
In knightly sport to prove them, thither they flocked from far;  
For the love of the King and the kindness of the Queen were their guiding  
star.



## XXIII

## HOW KRIEMHILD THOUGHT ON VENGEANCE FOR HER WRONGS

Amid all this honour and glory—herein doth the bard sing true—  
Dwelt they in love together till the seventh year onward drew.  
In the midst of the years unto Kriemhild was born a noble son.  
In the life of Etzel never had a brighter dayspring shone.  
Never she ceased from pleading till she won her love's reward  
That unto the font baptismal of the faith of Christ the Lord  
Brought was the child of Etzel, and Ortlieb they named the boy.  
Then all King Etzel's kingdom rejoiced with exceeding joy.

In the selfsame paths of virtue that Helka had trodden erst  
The feet of the Lady Kriemhild paced day by day from the first;  
By Herrat, the stranger princess, in the ways of the land were they set,  
While her secret heart for Helka bore a burden of long regret.  
The son of the land and the stranger with one accord confessed  
That never had any kingdom of any king possessed  
More bounteous queen and gracious: true witness they held it of her.  
Such was her praise mid the Hunfolk still till the thirteenth year.

Now when she marked how no man opposed him to her will—  
Even so unto wives of princes knights wont to bear them still—  
And that twelve kings stood in her presence aye as the years passed on,  
On the pain and the wrong she brooded that was dealt to her years ago.  
She thought withal on the honour that of yore in the Niblung land  
Of right unto her was rendered, whereof had Hagen's hand  
Utterly despoiled her when Siegfried by him had been slain:  
And she pondered how she might compass that his wrong should become his  
bane:—



"Into this land could I but bring him, then might my vengeance betide!"  
She dreamed a dream, how that walking anear her, close at her side,  
Was Giseler her brother, and she kissed him again and again  
In slumber—what meant that vision was thereafter all too plain!

The Foul Fiend was it surely that whispered Kriemhild's heart  
In outward-seeming friendship from Gunther the King to part,  
And with kiss of feigned forgiveness, in Burgundia years ago.  
Now the old pain woke, and her vesture was drenched with the hot tears' flow.  
On her heart lay morning by morning, and evening by evening lay  
The thought, how they had constrained her the faith of her youth to betray  
By taking to husband a heathen, when will thereto she had none.  
This wrong unto her had Hagen and her brother Gunther done.  
How she might wreak her vengeance still thought she day by day:—  
"Now am I waxen so mighty, I have such far-reaching sway,  
That I of them that have wronged me could exact the penalty.  
Gladly with Hagen of Troneg would I deal as he dealt with me!  
For my beloved mourneth my spirit within me still.  
Might I but draw them hither which have worked me all this ill,  
Then, then might I have vengeance at last for my Siegfried's death.  
Scarce can I endure this waiting!" she moaned with passionate breath.

Well was she loved of all men of Etzel's vassal-array  
Which were named the Knights of Kriemhild: good cause in sooth had they.  
Friends many were won by Eckwart her treasurer's open hand.  
The will of the Lady Kriemhild might none in the realm withstand.  
Each day was she thinking, thinking: "I will make my request to the King  
If so of his grace and his goodness he may haply grant this thing  
That my friends be bidden to see me here in the Land of the Hun."  
But the guileful purpose of Kriemhild the while was divined of none.

One night, when the Lady Kriemhild beside King Etzel lay,  
When he held her in arms enfolding, even as his wont was aye



In his love for the noble lady who was dear as his life unto him,  
Then on her enemies thought she, and her thoughts were guileful and grim.  
She spake unto King Etzel: "My dearly-belovèd Lord,  
I would make unto thee my petition, if this thy grace would accord,  
That thou suffer mine heart to be gladdened, if my love hath deserved this meed,  
By the proof of mine eyes that my kinsmen be dear unto thee indeed."  
Then spake the King, and, speaking, was guileless his heart within:  
"Hereof will I certify thee: whatsoe'er to thine hero-kin  
Is done for their honour and profit, for mine own joy shall it be done;  
For never by love of woman nobler kin have I won."

Unto him the Queen made answer: "Well known is this unto thee,  
That indeed I have high-born kinsmen; but sorely it troubleth me  
That, since I wedded thee, never their faces have I seen.  
In sooth, of all thy people am I known for 'the Kinless Queen'!"  
Made answer and spake King Etzel: "O wife, heart's dearest mine,  
If not too great be the journey, I will bid them over Rhine  
Hither to this my kingdom, the friends thou art fain to see."  
Then for the word that spake him her ally glad was she.  
"If thou, my lord," she made answer, "thy kindness to me wilt show,  
Unto Worms, to the city of Rhineland, forth let thy messengers go;  
So will I send mine heart's wish to the friends in the far-away home;  
And so knights noble and gentle full many to us shall come."  
He answered: "If this thou askest, thereto hast thou my consent.  
Thyself in the sight of thy kinsmen shall be never so well content  
As I, in beholding the faces of noble Uta's sons.  
I grieve that these have been strangers so long from the land of the Huns.  
My wife, my well-belovèd, if this be thy pleasure," he said,  
"As messengers unto thy kinsmen straightway of me shall be sped  
Unto Burgundy-land our minstrels, the lords of the viol-string."  
Into his presence the minstrels he bade them straightway bring.

Then came the King's two servants to the presence of their lord  
Where he sat by the Queen, and Etzel delivered to them his word



That he would they should be his heralds unto far Burgundia-land,  
And for their arraying in vesture right goodly he gave command.  
For good knights four-and-twenty were provided mantle and vest;  
For to these withal with the minstrels was given the King's behest,  
Even to bear his bidding unto Gunther and his men.  
But the Lady Kriemhild set her to commune with them privily then.  
Said the mighty King: "Now hearken, that mine hest ye may so fulfil:  
I send unto those our kinsmen all love and all good will,  
And I pray them to ride to my country unto them that love them here.  
Never in all my life-days guests have I known so dear.  
And if these peradventure be minded to grant the thing that I pray,  
Even the kinsmen of Kriemhild, I beseech them not to delay,  
But to come in the summer season of this year unto my feast:  
So by these my marriage-kinsmen shall the joy of my life be increased."  
Made answer the viol-minstrel, and Schwemmel the knightly replied:  
"When, O my Lord, in the Hunland shall fall thy festal tide,  
To the end that unto thy kinsmen by Rhine we may certainly say?"  
Made answer and spake King Etzel, "On next Midsummer Day."  
"We will do after thy commandment," straight Werbel made reply.

Then Kriemhild caused the heralds to be summoned secretly  
Unto the closet royal, and there she communed with the twain.  
Thereof unto many a good knight was begotten ruinous bane.  
She spake in her guile to the heralds: "Ye shall earn of me rich meed,  
If ye keep in your hearts my counsel, and perform it with diligent heed,  
And speak in mine ancient home-land the word of my desire;  
Then rich in goods will I make you, and give to you royal attire.  
When at Worms beside Rhine-river your messenger feet shall be brought  
To the presence of those my kinsfolk, see ye confess this not  
That here ye have ever beheld me in grief as of widowhood.  
And bear ye my love-greeting to the heroes valiant and good,  
And pray them to grant this favour, even my lord's request,  
And thereby to bring me riddance from the constant grief of my breast,



Even this, that I seem 'the Kinless' here in the Hunfolk's sight,  
 For me, full oft to the Rhineland would I come, were I but a knight!  
 Unto Gernot withal my brother, the noble prince, say ye  
 That none unto him more loving than I on earth can be;  
 And pray that he bring with him hither all our noblest kin  
 To greet us here in the Hunland: high honour so shall we win.  
 And to Giseller's remembrance withal be this thing brought,  
 That never through him to Kriemhild hath wrong or despite been wrought:  
 Him therefore here in the Hunland gladly mine eyes would see;  
 Yea, sorely I long to greet him for his love and his faith unto me.  
 What glory here hath crowned me do ye to my mother say.  
 And, if haply Hagen of Troneg would fain hang back from the way,  
 Who then through those strange marches shall be guide to the mighty ones?  
 For hath not he known from childhood the paths to the land of the Huns?"

Now the messengers knew not wherefore so fixed it was in her mind  
 That they should not suffer Hagen of Troneg to tarry behind  
 Beside the Rhine. To their sorrow were they to learn it yet,  
 When with grim death many a hero face to face should be set.  
 Unto these were messages given and tokens from Etzel's hand.  
 With wealth enriched they journeyed: they might bear them as lords of the land.  
 Fair leave of their liege-lord Etzel and his comely wife took they,  
 And they went forth splendour-vestured in royal-rich array.

## XXIV

### HOW THE HUN-KING'S MINSTRELS BADE THE BURGUNDIANS TO THE FEAST

When Etzel forth to the Rhineland had his viol-minstrels sped,  
 From land to land the story on the wings of rumour fled.  
 By messengers swift to his barons request and command he gave  
 To come to his festal high-tide; and they came—to the gates of the grave.



Meanwhile forth rode the envoys, and afar from the Hunland went  
To the folk Burgundian, whither of their lord the King they were sent  
Unto those three noble Princes and to all their vassal-array,  
To bid them to Etzel's high-tide; and fast and far rode they.  
To the castle of Bechlaren those messengers came with speed:  
There blithe was their entertainment; and for this their hosts took heed  
That Rüdiger and Gotlind and their daughter sent by these  
Unto the knights of Rhineland all loving messages.  
They loaded with gifts the envoys or ever they parted thence,  
That Etzel's servants might journey in the more magnificence;  
And to Uta and to her children this greeting did Rüdiger send,  
That never was living Margrave unto them so true a friend.  
They commended also to Brunhild their service and ready will,  
And in steadfast faith they pledged them her pleasure to fulfil.  
So when they had heard that message, onward the envoys would ride.  
Then prayed the Margravine Gotlind that God would guard them and guide.

Or ever the messengers wholly had traversed Bavarian ground,  
Werbel the eager minstrel the holy bishop found.  
What greetings he sent to his kinsmen, the dwellers beside the Rhine,  
This have the old bards told not; but of ruddy gold and fine  
He gave to the heralds freely. When now they would forth again,  
Spake Pilgerin the bishop: "Mine heart were exceeding fain  
If I might but see them before me, for my sister's sons they are.  
Right seldom indeed have I journeyed unto them by the Rhine afar!"

By what tracks fared they onward through the land on the Rhineward way,  
Thereof no minstrel singeth. Of their silver and rich array  
No spoiler dared to rob them, for the terror of Etzel lay  
Heavy on all; so mighty was the high-born Hun-king's sway.

So they came, even Werbel and Schwommel, to the folk by Rhine-river side,  
Unto Worms the fortress-city, ere the light of the twelfth day died.



Unto Gunther then and his liegemen did the watchman tidings bring  
Of the coming of stranger heralds; and straightway questioned the King,  
And spake the warder of Rhineland: "Who maketh known unto us  
From whence these guests and strangers to our land come riding thus?"  
But none was able to answer, till Hagen, Troneg's Lord,  
Looked forth and beheld those envoys, and he spake unto Gunther the word:  
"This day is a day of tidings: your surety for this am I;  
For these be the men of Etzel, and the lords of his minstrelsy.  
None other than your sister to the Rhine hath sped their feet.  
For the sake of their noble master must we give them welcome meet."  
Even as he spake it, rode they into the castle court:  
Never king's viol-minstrels came in such gallant sort.  
And the servants of King Gunther to welcome them in made speed,  
And they gave unto them fair lodging, and looked to their gear with heed.

So rich were their travelling-garments, so goodly-fashioned withal,  
Unshamed they might have worn them in the King's own presence-hall;  
Yet they scorned for one hour longer to wear them in courts of kings,  
And they bade make inquisition whether any desired the things.  
Good sooth, there lacked not people that were right well content  
That their need be supplied so richly, and to these were the garments sent.  
Then did the envoys array them in splendour of goodliest gear,  
Such as fitteth heralds royal in the presence of kings which appear.

Then gat they leave and license, those servants of Etzel, to go  
Where the King sat throned: right gladly men looked on their gallant  
show.

And Hagen sprang from his high-seat, and met them hard by the door,  
And greeted with kindly welcome, and they gave him thank therefor.  
Then asked he them of their tidings, and prayed the heralds say  
Concerning the welfare of Etzel and of all that owned his sway.  
"Never the land hath prospered more," those bards replied;  
"Never the folk were happier: hereof be ye certified."



To the presence of King Gunther they passed the thronged halls through;  
And the guests with courteous welcome were received, as aye is it due  
That envoys so be greeted in the land of another king.  
There round King Gunther standing were knights in a stately ring.  
Unto them the King gave greeting of princely courtesy:  
"O servants of King Etzel, ye minstrels, welcome be ye,  
Welcome your journeying-fellows! Wherefore hath Etzel your lord  
Into the land Burgundian sent you hitherward?"  
Before the King they bowed them, and Werbel answer made:  
"My dearly beloved master and Kriemhild your sister bade  
That hither we fare to your kingdom, and commend their service to you.  
Unto you, O knights, have they sent us in kindness loving and true."  
And the mighty King made answer: "Of thy tidings am I fain.  
How fareth it now with Etzel?"—spake on that royal thane—  
"And how with Kriemhild my sister in the Hunland hath it sped?"  
"I will tell thee all their story," the viol-harper said.  
"Better in any kingdom never its lords have been,  
Nor blither, know of a surety, than Hunland's King and Queen,  
And all their kinsmen and liegemen, and all their knightly train.  
Right glad were they of our journey, when hither we fared, we twain."  
"Now thank we him for the message that he sendeth by your voice.  
Thanks unto him and my sister: herein do I greatly rejoice  
That your King and all his people in peace and in bliss abide;—  
For indeed I feared in mine asking lest haply worse might betide."

Now came the two young princes into the hall, and heard;  
For touching those glad tidings had come to them yet no word.  
Bright at beholding the envoys shone young Giselher's eyes  
For the love that he bare to his sister: and he spake in friendliest wise:  
"Heralds twain, ye be welcome, right welcome to us this day!  
An ye came but oftener riding upon the Rhineward way,  
Here should ye find friends' faces that ye should gladly see.  
Small sorrow or scathe should betide you here in Burgundy!"



"Yea, in all honour," said Schwemmel, "we hail this greeting of thine! Of a surety I cannot tell you by any words of mine What loving greetings be sent you of Etzel the Lord of the land, And your noble sister, who highest beside him in honour doth stand. And the Queen unto thy remembrance calleth thy faith and thy love, And the true heart's tender kindness, and the steadfastness thereof. Now first before all unto Gunther our King's request we bear That ye of your grace into Hunland would ride, to greet them there. Etzel the King most mighty hath straitly commanded us That by all his love we entreat you, and to each and to all say thus— If haply the love of your sister avail not to draw you hence, Yet fain would he know what trespass ye have found in him, or offence, That ye hold you so far from his kingdom, and the land ye have never seen. Yea, though unto you a stranger, and wholly unknown were the Queen, Yet himself might surely merit that ye deigned to look on his face! If to this ye consent, ye shall gladden his heart by this great grace."

Answered and spake King Gunther: "After the seventh night Will I render to you mine answer, the thing that hath seemed me right In council with friends and kinsmen. Depart ye; tarry the while In the halls wherein we have lodged you, and find there rest from your toil!" But spake the minstrel Werbel: "May this not also be, That we come before Queen Uta, and the face of our Lady see Or ever we pass from the presence royal unto our rest?" And Giselher the courteous made answer to his request: "That boon shall no man deny you: if ye to her presence would go, After the will of my mother and her heart's desire were it so. For my sister's sake your faces right gladly will she see. For the sake of the Lady Kriemhild welcome to her shall ye be."

Straightway to the presence of Uta leading the twain he went. Glad was she to see the envoys from the land of the Hunfolk sent; And she gave to them kindly welcome with queenly and gracious mien, And the heralds courtly and loyal their message spake to the Queen:



"My Lady," said Schwemmel, "biddeth that I commend unto thee  
Her constant love and her service; and if so it might haply be  
That she might oftener see thee, this of a surety believe,  
That in all the world no pleasure greater could she receive."  
Answered and spake Queen Uta: "That cannot now befall,  
Though fain would I oftener see her, my best beloved of all:  
Too far from us she dwelleth, that noble Queen, alas!  
Evermore upon her and Etzel all blessing come to pass!  
Send word to me—see that ye fail not—ere ye must hence away,  
When ye will go. I have seen not for many and many a day  
Messengers so welcome as now, when I look upon you."  
Then did the young men pledge them her heart's desire to do.

So passed they unto their hostels, those knights from the land of the Huns;  
And the King to a council summoned his kin and his mighty ones.  
Then Gunther the noble questioned the heroes man by man  
Touching their rede of the matter; and many an one began  
Thus saying: "It were for thine honour unto Etzel's land to ride."  
This was the rede of the chiefest of them that stood at his side,  
Save Hagen alone; but hateful to him was the counsel of those.  
To the King he whispered fiercely: "To your own lives are ye foes!  
Surely thou hast not forgotten what deeds unto her we wrought!  
For us are the wrongs of Kriemhild for ever peril-fraught.  
I smote unto death her husband, even I with mine own hand.  
How should we be so hardy as to ride into Etzel's land?"  
Made answer the King: "My sister of all wrath emptied her heart:  
With kisses of lovingkindness, ere she turned from this land to depart,  
She sealed her forgiveness of trespass, whatsoever to her we had done.  
If she beareth a grudge, Lord Hagen, it shall be against thee alone."  
"Deceive not thyself," said Hagen, "whatsoever honied speech  
Fall from this woman's envoys! Come within Kriemhild's reach,  
And thou well mayest lose thine honour; yea, and thou stakest thy life!  
A memory long and relentless hath this King Etzel's wife."



Before the council Gernot flung back his haughty reply:  
"Albeit with too good reason thou haply fear to die  
In the kingdom of the Hunfolk, shall we too show faint heart,  
And cower away from our sister?—that were a sorry part!"  
And scornfully Giselher answered the baron and bitterly:  
"If conscience, O friend Hagen, maketh a coward of thee,  
Here in the land abide thou, and guard thine health with care,  
And let such as fear no dangers with us to my sister fare."  
At his scoffing the hero of Troneg brake into fierceness of wrath—  
"I tell thee, that no man fareth with thee on the Hunward path  
Who feareth so little as Hagen to Etzel's palace to ride!  
Ay, and by deeds will I prove it, since ye will not be turned aside."

Then spake the feast-arrayer, Rumold the noble thane:  
"The home-friend and the stranger at home can ye entertain  
After your own good pleasure, for here nought lacketh to you.  
I trow, the counsel of Hagen never yet had ye cause to rue.  
If ye will not be counselled by Hagen, I Rumold give you my rede—  
Unto you have I ever been faithful, I have served you with diligent heed—  
Here in the land, if ye hearken my will, do ye still abide,  
And leave King Etzel to tarry yonder by Kriemhild's side.  
Where can ye in all earth's compass be in better case than here?  
So safely here be ye shielded that no foe draweth near:  
Here in the goodliest raiment may your bodies be arrayed:  
Rich wine may ye drink, and for wooing is many a comely maid.  
Here meats be set before you the best that in all the earth  
Be arrayed for a great king's feasting:—and were all this nothing-worth,  
Yet in the land should ye tarry for the sake of your winsome wives,  
Nor like little wanton children set at the hazard your lives.  
C Yea, though all other victual utterly failed us, still  
One dish could ye have of Rumold to eat thereof your fill"—  
And he laughed—"good oil-fried collops! Rumold's rede is this,  
Forasmuch as, my lords, mid the Hunfolk a hidden peril is.



c Never to you-ward in kindness will Kriemhild's heart be turned.  
 Of a surety nor ye nor Hagen such grace at her hands have earned!  
 If ye will not tarry, who knoweth how sorely ye yet may rue?  
 Yea, ye shall yet acknowledge that this I have said was true.  
 Therefore I say to you, Go not! Rich is this your land:  
 Here shall ye better acquit you of duties that lie to your hand  
 Than yonder amid the Hunfolk. Who knows what waiteth us there?  
 Tarry ye here, my masters: saith Rumold, 'Avoid the snare!'"

"Nay, now will we nowise tarry!" did Gernot eagerly cry.  
 "Seeing that thus my sister bids so lovingly,  
 And with her Etzel the mighty, why hold we back therefrom?  
 Who is loth with us to journey, e'en let him linger at home!"

c "In troth," made answer Rumold, "I will be one at the least  
 Who never will cross Rhine-river unto Etzel's high-tide feast.  
 The better part I have chosen shall I on the hazard fling?  
 So long as my strength availeth to my one life will I cling."

c "So likewise am I minded," spake to him Ortwein the thane;  
 "I will help thee to ward the kingdom, and the peace of the home to maintain."  
 And so spake many another: of the journey would they none.  
 "Dear Lords, God have you in keeping," said they, "in the land of the Hun!"

c Indignant was then King Gunther, when he saw how many were these  
 That were minded in Rhineland to tarry, and there to take their ease.  
 "We will not be turned from our purpose," he said; "we will forth on the way.  
 Whoso is prudent of spirit can ward him in peril aye."  
 Answered and spake to him Hagen: "Now in ill part take not ye  
 This last word of my counsel, whatsoever your fate may be,—  
 For in all true faith I give it:—if aught for your lives ye care,  
 Arrayed in harness of battle to the Hunland do ye fare.  
 Since ye will not be swayed from your purpose, summon your men of war,  
 The best ye may find in your war-band, or hear of near or far;  
 And out of them all will I choose us a thousand chiefest of might:  
 So shall ye not be defenceless against this Kriemhild's spite."



"Yea, I will follow thy counsel," answered the King straightway.  
Then sent he all through his kingdom to summon his array.  
Soon brought they back with them heroes three thousand, yea, haply more.  
Little they thought of the death-snare, of the evil days in store!  
So onward they rode high-hearted through King Gunther's land.  
Horses to all and raiment were given by the King's command  
Which were ready to fare with the princes forth to the land of the Huns.  
Eager he found for the journey full many valiant ones.  
Then at the bidding of Hagen Dankwart his brother rode  
With fourscore knights of their war-band unto where Rhine-river flowed.  
Gallantly rode they and proudly: war-harness the keen knights brought  
Unto the land of Gunther, and raiment richly wrought.  
There came the aweless Volker, the lord of the viol-string,  
With thrice ten stalwart warriors, to ride where rode the King.  
Lordly was all their vesture; it was meet for a king to wear.  
"These also," he said unto Gunther, "with thee to the Huns will fare."  
What manner of man was Volker, now be it told in the song.  
Sooth, he was a noble baron, and in his vassal-throng  
Was many a knight; none stouter were found in Burgundia-land:  
"The Minstrel" they named him, for cunning upon the strings was his hand.  
Of them all chose Hagen a thousand, men throughly tested of him:  
What deeds had been done by their prowess in the storm of battle grim,  
And in many a desperate emprise, oft had he seen and known:  
Yea, and their peerless valour no man could choose but own.

Now the messengers of Kriemhild chafed that so long they should wait;  
For their dread of the King their master was beyond all measure great,  
And day by day were they longing to take fair leave and be gone.  
Yet by Hagen still were they hindered; of his cunning this was done.  
For he said to his lord King Gunther: "We needs must have a care  
That we let them not ride homeward, ere ourselves be ready to fare  
In seven days thereafter unto Etzel's land afar:  
So, if any mean us a mischief, the better forearmed we are.



Then also shall Lady Kriemhild have scant time so to plot  
That by her devising shall mischief to any of us be wrought;  
Or, if she should haply essay it, evilly shall she speed:  
So many chosen warriors to the land of the Huns do we lead."

The saddles and the war-shields, and all the goodly gear  
Wherewithal in the land of King Etzel they purposed to appear,  
By this were fully ready for many a valiant thane.  
Then at last to the presence of Gunther they summoned the minstrels twain.  
When the messengers stood before him, Lord Gernot spake to them thus:  
"The King unto that consenteth which Etzel asketh of us.  
We will come, and that right gladly, unto his festal tide,  
And to see the face of our sister: thereof be ye certified."  
Then spake unto them King Gunther: "This know ye so as to say,  
When beginneth the high-tide, or to tell us on what day  
The King will look for our coming?" Schwemmel made answer again:  
"At the next Mid-summer season; without fail shall it be then."

Then the King to the envoys granted what had not aforetime been,  
That, if they would fain have audience of the Lady Brunhild the Queen,  
Speech of her might be granted unto them by his consent.  
But Volker set him to thwart them—for this was the Queen's intent.  
"As touching the Lady Brunhild, as yet it doth not please  
The Queen," that noble baron answered, "to look upon these.  
Wait ye till the morrow morning: before her then shall ye come."  
Then trusted they to behold her, but again were they hindered therefrom.

Then commanded the King, of his favour to the envoys of Hunland's king,  
And of his royal bounty, that on broad shields men should bring  
Gold from his treasure-chamber—sooth, great store lay therein:  
Rich gifts moreover were given unto them by his friends and his kin.  
With Gere and Ortwein, the Princes Gernot and Giseler  
Showed unto all beholders how open of hand they were;



For unto the herald-minstrels such rich gifts offered they  
That for dread of their King they dared not but say the givers nay.  
For the messenger-minstrel Werber unto Gunther the King replied:  
"Lord King, e'en suffer thy presents here in thy land to abide.  
We may not carry them with us, for my Lord hath forbidden us this,  
Even accepting of presents—and little we need them, I wis."  
Then the Lord of the Rhine was angered, for he held it discourtesy  
That these should reject the bounty of so great a King as he,  
So that of force they accepted his gold and raiment at last,  
And homeward they needs must bear them when to Etzel's land they passed.

Fain were they to see Queen Uta, ere homeward they should fare;  
Wherefore brought were the minstrels by the young prince Giselher  
To the presence of his mother; and she charged them with this word:  
"For the honour rendered my daughter mine heart is gladness-stirred."  
Then for the sake of Kriemhild and the love that to her she bare,  
The old Queen gave commandment that gold and girdles fair  
Be given to those two heralds, yea also for Etzel's sake,  
For the true heart of the giver those gifts they needs must take.

Now the messengers of Kriemhild of all, both dame and knight,  
Courteous farewell had taken, and with merry hearts and light  
On into Suabia rode they, and Gernot sent thus far  
A warrior-band to escort them, that none their peace might mar.  
When the knights of the Rhine had departed, who thus had warded their way,  
By the power of the terror of Etzel were they shielded from that day.  
No reiver there was so daring as to touch or vesture or steed.  
So back to the land of the Hunfolk they rode with fiery speed.

Wheresoever they found friends dwelling, they told, as they passed, the tale  
How the lords of the land Burgundian in few days would not fail  
To come from the Rhineland riding unto the Hun-king's home;  
And to Pilgerin the bishop withal did the tidings come.



When, riding adown the highways, they came to Bechlaren's hold,  
Unto Rüdiger were the tidings of those swift messengers told,  
And withal to the Lady Gotlind, the noble Margravine.  
With exceeding joy rejoiced they that these of their eyes should be seen.

Ever their foaming horses the minstrels twain spurred on,  
Until to the presence of Etzel in his city of Gram they won.  
As by greeting upon greeting unto the King they showed  
The love of the far-off kinsfolk, for joy his visage glowed.  
Now unto the Lady Kriemhild were the welcome tidings come  
That her brethren had consented to fare to her Hunland home.  
Then was she glad: of her bounty did the messengers receive  
Rich gifts, such as are for the honour of so great a queen to give.  
She said: "Now give ye answer, Werbel and Schwemmel, to me:  
Who of my kinsmen be minded at my festal tide to be  
Of their noblest whom we have bidden to ride to the land of the Hun?  
When Hagen heard the tidings, what said that mighty one?"  
They answered and said: "To their council he came with earliest day;  
But little good of the high-tide would he be moved to say.  
When others commended the journey hither with eager breath,  
Hagen the grim withstood them, and named it the Ride unto Death.  
Hitherward come thy brethren, the royal Princes three,  
Uplifted in spirit: what other shall be of their company—  
Of the rest can I speak not surely that thou shouldst be certified,  
Save this, that the valiant minstrel Volker with these will ride."  
"I could well have foregone his presence," answered Kriemhild the Queen:  
"Small longing had I that Volker should here in our halls be seen.  
But I joy for the coming of Hagen, for he is a hero good:  
In the thought that we shall behold him, lightsome am I of mood."

Then went that Daughter of Princes where sat the King in hall:  
How lovingly did the accents from the lips of Kriemhild fall!  
"How pleaseth thee the tidings, my lord, my beloved?" she cried.  
"The long desire of my spirit shall at last be satisfied!"



"Thy will is my chiefest pleasure," the King made answer to her.  
"Were these mine own blood-kinsmen, less joyful my spirit were  
For the tidings of their drawing nigh to my land this day.  
For the love of these thy kinsmen my cares have vanished away."  
Then did the great King's stewards send forth urgent behests  
That palace and hall with high-seats should be adorned for the guests,  
For the loved and long expected who were drawing near at last.  
—Yet out of the life of Etzel by these all gladness was cast!

## XXV

## HOW THE PRINCES RODE TO THE LAND OF THE HUNS

So then of their doings in Hunland needeth no more to say:  
But for them of Burgundia—never such high-souled heroes as they  
Rode in such lordly fashion in the land of any king.  
All had they, weapons and raiment, that they would for their wayfaring.  
The Lord of the Rhine in vesture arrayed his warrior-throng,  
Knights fourscore and a thousand, as sayeth the olden song;  
Yea also, and squires nine thousand to that great feast-tide rode.  
—They were sorely bewept thereafter by them that at home abode.

At Worms through the palace-courtyard armour they bare and attire.  
As he watched, a word of boding spake the ancient bishop of Speyer  
Unto Queen Uta the lovely: "Our friends be minded to fare  
To be guests in a far-off country—God have them in his care!"  
Then Uta the noble Lady spake to her sons in her fear:  
"O heroes mighty-hearted, I pray you, tarry here!  
Last night came a dream of anguish mid the visions of mine head;  
For meseemed in the land Burgundian that all her birds were dead."  
Swiftly made answer Hagen: "Whoso regardeth a dream  
Shall never wisely advise him; he shall never rightly deem



In a matter that toucheth his honour, or choose the better part!  
Now it behoveth my master to bid farewell and depart.  
Blithely will we ride onward into King Etzel's land;  
There well to a king may service be done by a hero's hand:  
There what manner of high-tide Kriemhild holds shall we see."  
So Hagen counselled the journey—cause to rue it had he!  
Nay, still had he spoken against it, were it not for the bitter jeer  
That Gernot had flung at the hero, when he said with scornful sneer:  
"The ghost of Siegfried standeth, of the Lady Kriemhild's lord,  
In the path, and frighteth Hagen from journeying thitherward!"  
Spake Hagen of Troneg: "Never fear stirreth nor stayeth me!  
Lo, ye have determined it, heroes: your hands to the work set ye.  
Doubt not, I will ride with you blithely into King Etzel's realm."  
—Soon hewn by him asunder was many a shield and helm.

To bear them over the Rhine-flood ready the galleys lay;  
So the warriors set a-shipboard their goodly vesture-array:  
With lading and unlading till eventide busy they were.  
—O forth from their homes full blithely on the journey did they fare.  
The warriors pitched in the meadow for themselves pavilion and tent  
On the other side the Rhine-flood, where that last night was spent.  
"Tarry, O Gunther!" did Brunhild, his lovely wife, implore,  
As she clasped to her heart her husband that night, and never more.  
Shrilled flutes and blared forth trumpets as the first of the dawn-light shone,  
Bidding them forth on the journey, and all made haste to be gone.  
Lover in arms of lover was strained close, close to the heart,  
They whom with anguish unending would the wife of Etzel part.

Now the sons of the fair Queen Uta had of their vassals a man  
Bold and withal true-hearted: even as the journey began,  
The thoughts of his heart he uttered to the King, for he drew him aside,  
And he said: "It grieveth me sorely that thou goest to this high-tide."  
And the name of the thane was Rumold, trusty of heart and hand.  
"Whom wilt thou leave as warden," he said, "of thy folk and thy land?"



Alas that none can turn you, O knights, from your enterprise!  
Never the message of Kriemhild was good in thy servant's eyes."  
"Unto thee be the land committed, and also my little son.  
To our wives do loyal service: I will that so it be done.  
Whomsoever thou seest weeping, speak to them words of cheer.  
No hurt shall the wife of Etzel do us; have thou no fear."

c Moreover the King took counsel, or ever they parted thence,  
With all his chiefest liegemen: he left not bare of defence  
His kingdom and his castles: to keep them safe in ward  
He delivered them over to chosen barons, to watch and to guard.

All harnessed stood the horses for vassal and for king.  
With loving kisses of parting did wives unto husbands cling  
In whose bosoms were hearts high-leaping, in whose veins was lusty life,  
Yet for whom there was soon sore weeping of many a widowed wife.  
c Now all the air was thrilling with weeping and wailing wild.  
To the King drew nigh Queen Brunhild; she bare in her arms their child:  
"How canst thou endure to leave us desolate both in a day?  
For love of us," said the woeful Queen, "ah, stay with us, stay!"  
c "My wife, it doth not beseem thee thus to be weeping for me;  
Rather in queenly courage fearless here shouldst thou be.  
With joy shall we soon be returning safe and sound again."  
In that same hour from their dear ones parted all his train.  
Now did those valiant warriors their steeds at last bestride,  
While many a loving woman stood watching tearful-eyed.  
"Long, long shall be this parting!" their hearts were whispering still.  
None can be blithe of spirit in the shadow of coming ill.

Forward set the Burgundians, a battle-eager band.  
Thronged and pressed to behold them the people of the land.  
To right and to left on the hill-sides men and women wept;  
But, how sorrowed the people soever, for joy their own hearts leapt.



Forth also with these went riding Niblung men of war,  
A thousand heroes in hauberks: in the Niblung homes afar  
Fair women they left full many whom they saw not from that day.  
—Rankled the wounds of Siegfried in the heart of Kriemhild aye!

C Albeit the faith of Christians was weak in those far-off days,  
Yet journeyed with these a chaplain for chanting of prayer and praise;  
And, though out of desperate peril, alive this man came home;  
But all the rest in the Hunland tarried, for death was their doom.

Onward their way they wended far up the stream of Main,  
And upward through Eastern Frankland, that armour-glittering line.  
By Hagen still were they guided, for all the land knew he.  
And Dankwart was their marshal, the hero of Burgundy.  
On through the land of the East-Franks, through Swanfeld are they gone.  
It was like a procession of princes as the stately ranks swept on,  
Kings and their high-born kinsmen, heroes of world-sung fame.  
So at the twelfth day's dawning the King to the Danube came.

There rode Hagen of Troneg afront of all the rest,  
Right good at need as a helper, and a stay unto men distressed.  
From the saddle that dauntless baron sprang by the river-side,  
And the bridle of his charger straightway to a tree hath he tied.  
In flood were the mighty waters, no boat might any see.  
Then were the Niblung warriors in sore perplexity  
How they should win thereover, so broad was the rolling flood.  
Down lighted beside the river full many a warrior good.  
"Evil may well befall thee," said Hagen, "in this place.  
See, Lord of Rhineland, the peril stareth thee in the face.  
Over-bank are the great flood-waters: too strong is their rush to essay:  
Many good knights, if we tempt it, I ween, shall we lose this day."  
"Wherefore essay to daunt me, Hagen?" the proud King said.  
"For the sake of thy knightly honour no more speak counsels of dread!



Seek thou for a ford for our crossing over to yonder land,  
Whereby our gear and our horses may be brought from strand to strand."  
"Not yet of my life so weary am I waxen," Hagen replied,  
That I were contented to drown me in yonder waters wide.  
Full many a warrior smitten by mine hands shall perish first  
In the land of this King Etzel—yea, I am battle-athirst.  
Tarry ye here by the water, ye thanes of knightly pride.  
Alone will I go, and for boatmen will I search by the river-side  
Which unto the land of Gelfrat shall ferry us over the spate."  
Then took the aweless Hagen his strong shield, goodly and great.  
Well was he armed against foemen: his shield from his shoulders was slung,  
And he laced on his head his helmet, a splendour of fight far-flung:  
Belted unto his corslet was a broad bright battle-glaive  
Twin-edged, whose deadly keenness the shields of the mighty clave.

Up-stream and down-stream casting for a ferry-wight sought he.  
Then heard he a plashing of water, and hearkened where it should be.  
And lo, in a pool fair-welling did mermaids plunge and swim  
To cool in the dimpling river each summer-fevered limb.  
Then Hagen was ware of the wise-wives, and stealthily nearer he crept.  
They saw him, and swiftly flashing far off through the ripples leapt.  
Laughed they for glee, as fleers that mark a pursuer outrun.  
Then seized he their raiment, but further scathe unto them did he none.  
Then cried unto him a mermaiden, and Hadburg had she to name:  
"Behold, we will tell thee, Hagen, thou knight of peerless fame,—  
So thou wilt restore our apparel in guerdon for our rede,—  
How thou and thy friends in thy journey to the land of the Huns shall speed."

They swayed on the swaying water as birds that rock on the sea:  
And he thought on their weird foreknowledge, on the eyes that pierce the To Be;  
The gladlier therefore he trusted that their lips the truth would show;  
And answer they made, when he questioned of the thing that he fain would know.  
For Hadburg said: "Ye may safely to the land of Etzel ride.  
I pledge thee my faith in surety for that I have prophesied.



Never hath journey of heroes to an alien land been crowned  
With such high honour and worship. True shall my words be found."  
Welcome and heart-uplifting did the word unto Hagen come:  
He restored unto them their raiment, and tarried no more therefrom.

But when they had donned the vesture of the wondrous cloudy fold,  
Of the journey to Etzel's kingdom then first the truth they told.  
For now the second mermaid, whose name was Sieglind, spake:  
"Aldrian's son, thou Hagen, from me this warning take:—  
False is the thing my cousin but to win her raiment saith.  
If thou to the Hunfolk goest, betrayed art thou to thy death.  
While yet there is time, turn backward; wisely so should ye do,  
Forasmuch as ye valiant heroes are but bidden thereto  
To the end that ye all may perish in the Hunfolk's land.  
Yea, whoso rideth thither, Death rideth at his right hand."  
Answered and spake to her Hagen: "This your deceit is vain.  
How should thy word be accomplished, that all we should be slain,  
And so through any man's malice dead at their high-tide stay?"  
Then to the knight the story did they clearly and throughly say.  
Moreover said one of the mermaids: "Thus is it doomed to betide,  
That none shall alive fare homeward of all in your host that ride,  
Save one, King Gunther's chaplain. We verily know this thing,  
That unharmed he only returneth to the land of Gunther the King."

In scornful indignation made answer Hagen the bold:  
"And a goodly tale to my masters in sooth were this to be told,  
That doomed are we all mid the Hunfolk to pour out our lives in blood!  
Nay, show us, thou wisest of women, how we may cross this flood."  
She said: "If thou wilt not be counselled, if thy journey needs must be,  
Look yonder across the water; a hostel there shalt thou see.  
Therein a ferry-wight dwelleth: there is none else far or near."  
Thither impatiently turned he, to ask yet more and to hear.  
Yet after the wrathful warrior again the mermaid cried:  
"Too hasty art thou, Lord Hagen: a little yet abide



Till thou have received instruction how thou shalt reach yon strand.  
Elsè named is the ruler of the marches of yonder land.  
Gelfrat named is his brother, a mighty man in fight,  
A prince in the land Bavarian. Count not the emprise light,  
If ye think to press on through his marches: of peril must ye beware;  
And for dealing with yonder boatman have ye need of heedful care.  
So grim is he of his temper, he will do a mischief to thee,  
If thou gain not the strong one's goodwill, and bespeak him courteously.  
To win him to ferry thee over, proffer him guerdon due.  
He is warder of this land's gateway, and to Gelfrat is faithful and true.  
If he come not unto thee straightway, shout over the flood a name;  
Thy name is Amelrich, say thou: a warrior good was the same  
Who out of this land was driven by the malice of his foes.  
Thou shalt so draw over the boatman by the lure of the name that he knows."

Then bowed him Hagen the haughty to those weird women twain;  
But he sought no more of their counsel, and from speech did he refrain.  
Up-stream by the swirling waters close to the verge he hied,  
Till he marked where a little hostel stood on the farther side.  
Then Hagen his voice uplifted, and he shouted across the flood:  
"Ho! ferry me over, thou boatman," cried the thane in battle good,  
"And I will give thee an armlet of red gold for thine hire.  
Sore is my need of the crossing, and eager my desire."  
Now this ferryman nowise needed to ply, so rich was he.  
Right seldom a hire he accepted from whosoe'er it might be.  
And his servants were like to their master: haughty as he were they grown.  
So there stood Hagen unheeded still by the river alone.  
Once more so loudly he shouted, the whole stream rang again;  
For like to the crashing thunder was the mighty voice of the thane:  
"Me—Amelrich—ferry thou over! Elsè's liegeman am I,  
Who by reason of feud with foemen from thy land was enforced to fly."

High on his sword he uplifted the armlet full in his sight—  
Fair-wrought and golden-ruddy, and flashed therefrom the light—



To tempt him to ferry him over into Gelfrat's land.  
Then gripped that haughty boatman himself the oar in hand.  
Now this same ferry-boatman was a churlish wight and dour,  
Yet greedy of gain; and ofttimes is greed destruction's lure.  
He weened he should earn full lightly Hagen's gold for reward—  
Ha, but he earned from the hero grim death by the edge of the sword!

With mighty strokes that boatman from bank to bank rowed o'er;  
But him who was named he found not abiding him on the shore.  
Then brake he forth into fury when Hagen alone he espied:  
In the fierceness of his anger unto the hero he cried:  
"Haply the name that thou bearest Amelrich may be;  
But nothing thou hast of the favour of him I had looked to see.  
My brother was he: one father begat us, one mother bare.  
Since thou by a lie hast lured me across, e'en bide thou there!"  
"Nay, in God's name I charge thee!" Hagen answering cried.  
"A knight am I, and a stranger, and to other thanes am I guide.  
Take thou the gold that I proffer unto thee for thine hire as a friend,  
And ferry us over the river: no hurt unto thee I intend."  
Swiftly the ferryman answered: "Never shall this be done!  
My well-belovèd masters have enemies many an one;  
Therefore I bear no strangers from this to the farther shore.  
Thou then, if thy life thou lovest, step forth on the bank once more."  
"That will I not," said Hagen, "for now am I bitter-souled.  
Accept thou then as a friend's gift the jewel of precious gold,  
And bear us, a thousand horses and men, across the river."  
But that grim ferryman answered, "That will I do never!"

A mighty oar upswung he, massy and broad of blade,  
And on Hagen's head down dashed it—for the deed right dearly he paid!—  
Back in the boat he staggered, and sank upon one knee.  
So grim a ferryman never it befell to the hero to see!  
To enkindle yet hotter the anger of the valiant stranger, he strake  
With a huge boat-pole—so starkly, that wholly asunder it brake—



On the head of Hagen the hero. A giant was he in might;  
But thereof came his own destruction on Else's ferry-wight.  
In sternness of fury Hagen caught with sudden hand  
At his side where hung the sword-sheath, and he flashed thereout the brand;  
He smote his head from his shoulders, that adown the bank it rolled.  
Soon mid the proud Burgundians the tale thereof was told.

But in that selfsame moment when he laid the ferryman low,  
The barge slid down the current, which cost him travail enow:  
Yea, ere he could right her, weary he was with labour sore.  
In sooth, King Gunther's liegeman mightily plied the oar.  
He toiled, up-stream to turn her, with many a swift strong stroke,  
Even till the stubborn oar-shank in his grasp asunder broke,  
As he strove to steer to the waiting knights at the river-side.  
Inasmuch as he had none other, swiftly around it he tied  
His shield-strap, and firmly he spliced it with the narrow steel-strong band;  
So hard by a certain coppice he guided the barge to the land.  
There on the river-bank waiting his lords his coming abode,  
And many a chosen warrior to meet him eagerly strode.

With gladsome greeting they hailed him, those noble knights and good;  
And they looked, and they saw yet reeking on the planks of the barge the  
blood  
That welled from the trunk made headless by that swift sweep of the sword;  
And a torrent of eager questions anent it on Hagen poured.  
Yea also, when King Gunther beheld the hot blood reek,  
As within the barge it weltered, he could not choose but speak:  
"Prithee, what now, Lord Hagen, hath chanced to the ferryman-wight?  
His life, methinks, hath he yielded to thine overmastering might."  
But with lying lips he answered: "Nay, sooth, but the barge I found  
By a river-mead, a waste land, and mine hand her hawser unbound.  
But as touching ferry-boatmen, this day here saw I none.  
Of a truth by mine hands unto no man this day hath scathe been done."



Straightway thereat did Gernot the Prince Burgundian say:  
"Lest many a dear friend perish I needs must fear this day,  
Inasmuch as on all the river we see no boatman here,  
How we shall win thereover needs must I sorely fear."  
But cheerly and loud cried Hagen: "Down on the bank do ye cast,  
O squires, the horses' harness! I mind me that in time past  
Myself was the deftest boatman that on all the Rhine men knew.  
Into the land of Gelfrat even I will ferry you."

To the end that over the river they might win with the better speed,  
Thereinto drave they the horses: so well swam each good steed,  
That never a one of their thousands did the rush of the strong flood drown,  
Albeit were some forwearied, and won to the land far down.  
Then into the barge they carried their gold and their vesture-store,  
Forasmuch as now from the journey they could turn them back no more.  
And Hagen steered them over, that, with his strong hand on the helm,  
Came many a gallant warrior into the stranger's realm.  
At the first proud knights a thousand, and his own thanes threescore  
Did Hagen ferry over: then came aye more and more,  
Till squires had crossed nine thousand: all these he brought to land.  
Small rest that day had the valiant Lord of Troneg's hand!  
c Now the barge was stoutly builded, wide and exceeding great;  
Five hundred or more uncumbered it bare at a single freight  
Over the waters, heroes with their victual and war-array.  
Full many a stalwart warrior must strain at the oar that day.

When all these over the river Hagen had safely brought,  
Thereafter the fierce-heart hero on that weird prophecy thought,  
The boding the wild mermaiden so lately spake unto him.  
And for this King Gunther's chaplain well-nigh lost life and limb.  
In the boat stood the priest with his vessels of holy sacrament;  
His hand on the sacred relics and the hallowed things he leant.  
But their sanctity nothing availed him when Hagen's cruel eye  
Fell on the priest, and doomed him to sore calamity.



With sudden violence he seized him, he hurled him over the side  
Of the barge, while "Hold! hold, Hagen!" many a warrior cried,  
And brake into wrath indignant the young Prince Giselher.  
Yet, till he had well-nigh drowned him, would Hagen not forbear.  
Thereat did the princely Gernot, the lord Burgundian, cry:  
"What profit to thee is it, Hagen, that Gunther's chaplain should die?  
Had another done such outrage, it had cost him his life, I trow!  
What wrong had the poor priest done thee, that thou shouldst be his foe?"  
Hard strained the priest in swimming: he had gotten aboard again,  
If but any man had helped him; but his striving was all in vain,  
By reason that Hagen the stalwart—savage was he of mood—  
Back thrust him under the water: was none that deemed it good.  
So when that hapless chaplain no human aid could see,  
Back turned he, and swam shoreward: in bitter strait was he.  
With failing strength was he sinking; but upborne by God's own hand  
Were his limbs, that at last in safety he won back unto the land.  
There stood the priest all-hapless, and his streaming vesture wrung;  
And by that sign known unto Hagen was the truth of the tale that the tongue  
Of the wild mermaiden had uttered, of the doom no man might shun.  
And he thought, "These knights of a surety be dead men every one!"

So soon as the barge was unladed, and men had borne ashore  
The possessions of Gunther's liegemen, and all the treasure-store,  
Then Hagen shattered the planking, and thrust it forth on the flood  
To founder: exceedingly marvelled the valiant knights and good.  
"Why hast thou done this, brother?" did Dankwart wondering say.  
"How shall we pass hereover on the homeward-faring way,  
What time from the land of the Hunfolk back to the Rhine we ride?"  
Thereafter did Hagen tell him that this should never betide;  
But now said the Hero of Troneg: "Herein was this my thought,  
That if haply any faint-heart thus far on the way have been brought,  
Who might think in his fear to forsake us, and return by the way that he came,  
He should know that in these wild waters there waited a death of shame."



There was one in their host who had journeyed forth of Burgundia-land,  
 And his name of renown was Volker, a hero mighty of hand.  
 The thoughts of his fearless spirit with a biting tongue would he tell.  
 Whatsoever was done of Hagen, it liked that minstrel well.

- C Now when King Gunther's chaplain saw the wreck drift down the tide,  
 He lifted his voice, and to Hagen across the water he cried:  
 "Thou murderer and faithless, what had I done unto thee  
 That thine heart should devise the drowning of a guiltless priest, even me?"
- C Fierce answer flung back Hagen: "Shaveling, refrain thee from speech!  
 By my troth, 'tis for this I am sorry, that now thou art out of the reach  
 Of the hands that be fain to slay thee! No gibe, but the truth it is."  
 Made answer the priest all-hapless: "I praise God ever for this!"
- C Full little now do I dread thee, know this for verity!  
 Now fare ye on into Hunland, and back over Rhine will I.  
 May God vouchsafe to thee never to come over Rhine again!  
 This is mine heart's petition, for my life well-nigh hast thou ta'en."
- C Then cried aloud King Gunther to the priest there standing lone:  
 "Lo, I will fully requite thee for all that Hagen hath done  
 Unto thee in his evil anger, whensoever back to the Rhine  
 Alive thou shalt see me returning: no fear thereof be thine.
- C Fare homeward unto thy country, for so it must needs be now,  
 And unto my wife, my beloved, take my greetings thou.  
 And by thee do I greet my kinsfolk, as is meet and right for a king.  
 Bear thou unto them glad tidings of our prosperous wayfaring."

Now harnessed the horses waited, and the sumpters each with its load  
 And as yet no scathe had befallen any as onward they rode,  
 Nor cause for fear or for grieving, save the priest, by a deed unmeet  
 Constrained to fare back Rhineward alone upon his feet.



## XXVI

## HOW FOES FELL ON THEM AS THEY JOURNEYED BY NIGHT

So when they were now all mustered upon the Danube strand,  
 Then spake to his men King Gunther: "Who through the unknown land  
 Shall now on the right path guide us, that our feet err not from the same?"  
 Out spake the valiant Volker: "This office for mine I claim."  
 "Nay, halt ye a space," said Hagen: "halt, both squire and knight!  
 His friends must a man needs follow, it seemeth me meet and right.  
 But a tale of evil tidings now at my mouth must ye learn—  
 Home to the land Burgundian not one of us all shall return.  
 Unto me this morning early was it told of mermaids two  
 That for us was no more returning: now counsel I what ye shall do:  
 Gird on your armour, ye heroes: ward you with heedful care.  
 Stark foemen await us: ride ye as men that battleward fare.  
 I had hoped to prove those mermaids false in their prophecy,  
 When they said unto me, that no man of all our array should see  
 Again the home in the Rhineland, except the chaplain alone:  
 Therefore would I so gladly have drowned him a little agone."  
 From rank unto rank of their thousands the evil tidings flew.  
 Pale with a ghastly foreboding many a good knight grew,  
 As the hideous terror gripped them of the bitter death so near  
 At the end of this festival-faring, and their hearts were cold with fear.

That place was nigh unto Möring where they passed across the flood,  
 Where the ferryman of Else poured out his life in blood.  
 Again to the rest spake Hagen: "I have made for myself by the way  
 Foes, and our march shall shortly be beset by their array.  
 To-day have I slain their boatman while yet was the morning grey,  
 And by this have they heard the tidings. Haste ye, prepare for the fray,



That, soon as Gelfrat and Elsel fall on our company,  
They may fall on their own destruction, so stern shall their welcome be.  
They will nowise fail to attack us, for I know how bold is the foe ;  
Wherefore let ye your horses all softly pacing go,  
That none of them all may imagine that we flee before them in dread."  
"Yea, I will follow thy counsel," the young Prince Giselher said.  
"Now by whom to our host on-marching through the land shall the ways be  
shown?"

They answered: "Our guide shall be Volker, for unto him well-known  
Be highways alike and byways, the lordly minstrel-knight."  
And lo, ere any could ask him, he was there, all-armed as for fight,  
That valiant viol-minstrel: his helm on his head was laced ;  
With blazonry splendour-tinted was his armour overtraced :  
On his spear was a crimson pennon, a fluttering tongue of flame.  
—Ah, soon with his royal masters into terrible peril he came !

And by this of his certain knowledge unto Gelfrat had one brought word  
Concerning the ferryman's slaying ; and another withal had heard  
The tale, even Elsel the stalwart: they raged with wrathful pain,  
And they summoned their vassals, and ready with speed was their warrior-train.  
But a little while thereafter, as singeth still the Lay,  
To their banner came riding champions, whose hands in many a fray  
Had wrought wild havoc of carnage, a mighty chivalry ;  
Unto Gelfrat thronged seven hundred, yea, more it may haply be.  
On the track of those grim foemen they set forth spurring in haste ;  
But their lords, their battle-leaders, afront of them all on-raced  
Pursuing the fearless strangers: athirst for revenge they sped ;  
Yet on to their own destruction full many a friend they led.

Now Hagen the Lord of Troneg had ordered their marching so—  
How could a hero better ward friends against a foe?—  
That himself with the men of his war-band rode ever in the rear,  
And with him Dankwart his brother: wise war-craft was verily here.



Ran out the sands of the day-tide; all light faded away.  
On the hero's heart the peril of his comrades heavily lay.  
With shield on arm still rode they on through Bavaria-land:  
Well was it for them, for the onset of foes must they shortly withstand.  
On either side of the highway and behind them thundering close  
Heard they the sound of hoof-beats of reckless-riding foes.

Then cried the valiant Dankwart: "The foe be at point to set on!  
Bind on your brows your helmets: I trow it were wisely done!"  
Then, as needs must be, the riders drew rein, and rearward wheeled.  
Gleamed dancing lights through the darkness, the glint of many a shield.  
No longer might Hagen refrain him; he shouted his challenge-cry—  
"Who followeth us on the highway?" From Gelfrat rang the reply,  
And the lord of Bavarian marches flung fierce answer back:  
"We are in search of our foemen, we follow fast on their track.  
I know not who this morning my ferryman hath slain.  
He was a valiant warrior, and mine heart is hot with pain!"  
Made answer Hagen of Troneg: "And was that ferryman thine?  
He refused to ferry us over: the guilt of his blood is mine;  
I smote and I slew the strong one. Of a truth good cause had I,  
For of this thy stalwart liegeman was mine own death brought full nigh.  
I tendered to him fair guerdon, raiment and golden band,  
And prayed him to ferry us over, hero, into thy land;  
And thereat so flamed he with fury that he dealt me an evil blow  
With his oar-blade strong and massy; and my wrath waxed grim enow.  
Mine hand went unto my sword-hilt; from his wrath I warded mine head  
With a wound that was past all healing, and lo, thine hero was dead.  
For the deed am I ready to answer so soon as seemeth thee good."  
They addressed them straightway to battle, for exceeding fierce was their mood.  
"Full well did I know," cried Gelfrat, "that whene'er with his vassal-throng  
Gunther passed over the river, to us would be wrought foul wrong  
By the insolence of this Hagen! For this shall his heart's blood pay!  
Yea, for my ferryman's murder his life shall atone straightway!"



Then couched they over the bucklers for the onset-shock their spears,  
Gelfrat and Hagen the mighty: their rage was exceeding fierce.  
Dankwart the while and Elsel in fight clashed man against man.  
Right well did they prove their prowess, and stern was the strife that began.  
When was more gallant encounter of champions so renowned?  
In the mighty shock of their clashing was Hagen borne to the ground,  
Over his charger's crupper by Gelfrat's hand back-forced,  
Since the breast-band had snapped asunder: then first was Hagen unhorsed.  
With crashing of shivering lances then met their men withal.  
Swift to his feet leapt Hagen, more terrible from that fall  
Wherein by his enemy's lance-thrust he was hurled from the selle to the  
sward.

As flaming fire against Gelfrat was the wrath of Troneg's lord.  
I know not in battle-travail who held each warrior's steed,  
For both had voided the saddle, and face to face on the mead  
Stood they, Hagen and Gelfrat: then each at the other sprang.  
Knights aided their lords: all round them the din of conflict rang.  
How furiously soever Hagen on Gelfrat leapt,  
Yet the sword of the noble Margrave from the hero's buckler swept  
A huge shard earthward-clanging; the sparks were as lightning-flame.  
Then the champion of King Gunther even to death's brink came.  
He lifted his voice, and to Dankwart he cried for aid, and he said:  
"Help me, O brother beloved, for now am I hardly bestead  
Of a mighty-handed hero; he putteth in peril my life!"  
Answered him Dankwart the fearless, "Lo, I will part your strife!"  
With a leap of his horse he was on them: so fierce and fell a blow  
With the keen sword dealt he to Gelfrat, that in death he laid him low.  
Then Elsel would fain take vengeance for the mighty champion slain;  
But, so fast were they falling, backward borne were his vassal-train.  
Slain was his hero-brother, himself had a grievous wound:  
Full eighty of his war-thanes already were stretched on the ground  
A prey unto death the relentless: of need must the princely knight  
Flee from the men of Gunther in headlong-hasty flight.



As the men of the land Bavarian fled from the face of their foes,  
Ringing and clanging behind them ever echoed the dread death-blows,  
As the vassals of Troneg's hero held them close in chase.  
Whoso would 'scape, small respite had he in that terrible race!  
But amidst of pursuit and slaughter, to the rest cried Dankwart the thane:  
"Halt! on the path of our journey backward turn we the rein.  
Let us leave them riding in panic, while fast their gashes bleed.  
Back to our friends let us hasten: of a truth 'tis the better rede."  
When back to the place of their conflict they came, where many had died,  
Spake Hagen of Troneg: "Heroes, now let us be certified  
Who from our ranks be missing, whom of our friends we have lost  
Here, where the wrath of Gelfrat so many lives hath cost."  
So they numbered, and four were lacking; but for these they made short  
moan.

Well were they avenged of a surety! For the deaths of these to atone  
There lay of Bavaria's champions more than a hundred dead.  
The shields of the men of Troneg with blood were bedimmed and red.  
Fitfully out of the cloud-rack brake the clear moon's light.  
Then to the rest spake Hagen: "Let no man tell this night  
To my well-belovèd liege-lords what hap hath befallen us here.  
Till the morrow, as touching our welfare, no care let them know nor fear."

When the rest of the host was o'ertaken by these which had come from the  
fray,

Behold, all men were complaining for weariness of the way.  
"How long must we ride unresting?" many a warrior cried.  
Spake Dankwart the brave: "No hostel is here wherein to abide.  
Needs must ye still ride onward till breaketh the light of day."  
Then Volker the swift war-helper, which ordered their array,  
Sent one to ask of the Marshal: "Where shall we halt to-morn,  
Where the steeds and our well-loved masters may rest with toil outworn?"  
But answered Dankwart the fearless: "I may not certainly say.  
But we cannot and may not rest us till dawn in the sky is grey:



Then, wheresoever we find us, on the grass must we lay us to rest."  
Heavily weighed the tidings on many a warrior's breast.  
Unbewrayed by the blood red-reeking through those dark hours they rode,  
Till the sun shot forth, for a greeting to Morning's feet, as they trode  
The crests of the hills, his flame-shafts. Then straightway the King espied  
The tokens of that grim conflict, and in indignation he cried:  
"What meaneth this, friend Hagen? And thought ye scorn of our aid,  
That I might not come to your helping when the rings of your mail were made  
Red with the blood of battle? Who brought you unto this plight?"  
He answered: "The deed was Else's: he fell on us in the night.  
To avenge his ferryman's slaying his riders pursued us fast.  
Dead by the hand of my brother Gelfrat to earth was cast.  
Then Else fleeing outran us—of sore need surely he fled!  
Of us but four, but a hundred of them, on the field lie dead."

Where stayed they for rest and for slumber, no witness hath testified.  
Swift ran the tale of their coming through all the country-side,  
How the sons of Uta the noble unto Etzel's feast would fare.  
At the last they won unto Passau, and good was their welcome there.  
The noble princes' uncle, the bishop Pilgerin,  
Was exceeding gladdened in spirit to behold his royal kin,  
When into his land with comrades so many and knightly they rode.  
How fain he was to behold them his deeds right speedily showed.  
Friends thronged to meet them and greet them afar from the city-wall;  
And, seeing that lodging in Passau could not be found for them all,  
To the farther side of the river to a mead were the more part led  
Wherein by the squires were pavilions and many a fair tent spread.  
There were they constrained to tarry for the space of one whole day  
And the night that followed thereafter: right well entreated were they.  
Thence riding forth and onward, unto Rüdiger's land they passed,  
And to him the joyful tidings of their coming sped full fast.  
Now when by the night's rest strengthened those way-worn warriors were,  
And by this were drawing nearer to the land of Rüdiger,



There, hard by the marches sleeping, on a certain man did they light,  
From whose side was stolen by Hagen a goodly glaive of fight.  
Now the name of the sleeper was Eckwart, a good and noble knight;  
And exceeding sorrowful-hearted was he for his swordless plight,  
For the weapon lost through the passing of heroes the while he slept.  
He was warder of Rüdiger's marches, but for once ill guard had he kept.  
"Ah, woe is me," cried Eckwart, "that I wake to know this shame!  
Alas for me, that ever the Burgundians hitherward came!  
Siegfried's death was the well-spring of all my calamity!  
Alas for my betrayal of Rüdiger's trust in me!"  
Full well was heard by Hagen the sorrow of that good knight.  
He restored him his sword, and he added six armlets of red gold bright:  
"Take these for thy guerdon, hero, and be thou a friend to us now.  
Though here unguarded thou liest, a valiant thane art thou."  
"God guerdon thee for thine armlets!" Eckwart the knight replied.  
"Yet must I surely sorrow that ye to the Huns will ride.  
Thou wast the slayer of Siegfried: here hate is undying still.  
Look well to thyself!—I counsel in all faith and good-will."

"Why then, may God protect us," spake Hagen answering;  
"But now these thanes be troubled concerning none other thing  
Save for their harbourage only—my lords and their vassals withal—  
Even where we shall rest and refresh us at this day's evenfall:  
For by this forspent be our horses with the weary way they have gone;  
And consumed is all our victual"—Hagen the thane spake on—  
"Neither see we where we may buy it. Some noble host would we meet  
Whose open-handed bounty might give to us bread to eat."  
And to him made answer Eckwart: "Such a host unto you will I show,  
That entertainment so goodly on you should none bestow  
As here shall be your portion, in all lands far or near,  
If ye, O valiant warriors, will seek unto Rüdiger.  
Nigh to the highway he dwelleth: the noblest host is he  
That ever hath dwelt in mansion: his heart with charity



Blooms as the grass with flowers at the touch of May's bright feet.  
Blithe is he and thankful ever such heroes with service to greet."  
Then spake unto him King Gunther: "Mine herald wilt thou be  
To my dear friend Rüdiger? Ask him if, for a grace unto me,  
To me and to these my kinsmen and vassals he will be host.  
So will I requite that service unto mine uttermost."  
"Gladly will I be thine herald," answering Eckwart said.  
Straightway forth on the errand with eager haste he sped  
Unto Rüdiger, bearing the message told even now in his ear.  
There had come no such glad tidings to his lord for many a year.

Men saw from the towers of Bechlaren a knight spur thitherward fast.  
Well Rüdiger knew that rider, and he said: "In furious haste  
Cometh Eckwart, vassal of Kriemhild, galloping hitherward."  
He weened that of foes some mischief had been done to that valiant lord.  
To the castle-gateway he hied him, and there did the messenger stand  
Who unclasped his sword from his girdle and laid at his feet the brand.  
Spake Rüdiger unto the warrior: "What tidings hast thou brought  
That so hath constrained thee to hasten? hath any spoiled us of aught?"  
"No man hath done us a mischief," straightway Eckwart replied,  
"But to-day of three kings bidden unto thee have I hitherward hied,  
Of the King of Burgundia, Gunther, of Gernot and Giselher:  
And of these knights each commendeth unto thee his service fair.  
The like do Hagen and Volker; and each man sayeth it  
In loyal faith and hearty. Moreover I do thee to wit  
Of the message that the marshal of Gunther hath charged me withal,  
That the good knights pray thee to grant them lodging at evenfall."  
With smiling lips of kindness unto him did Rüdiger say:  
"Welcome to me be the tidings that kings so noble as they  
Now stand in need of my service: nothing to these I deny.  
So they will but come to my dwelling, exceeding glad am I."  
"From Dankwart the marshal moreover a message to thee I bring,  
How many unto thy castle this day be journeying.



Threescore valiant champions and a thousand knights draw near,  
And with these be squires nine thousand." Blithe was the host of cheer.  
"Welcome be these guests! Welcome the tidings," did Rüdiger cry,  
"That such noble and valiant heroes to my castle-halls draw nigh  
Unto whom I have ne'er shown kindness for kindness shown unto me!  
What ho, my kinsmen and vassals, ride forth to meet them ye!"  
Then hasted they to their horses, and rode forth, squire and knight.  
Whatsoever their lord commanded, that seemed them meet and right;  
For so with swifter obedience they rendered him service due.  
But still in her bower sat Gotlind, and nothing thereof she knew.

## XXVII

## HOW THEY CAME TO BECHLAREN

Thence hasted him the Margrave to where in the Ladies' Bower  
Were sitting his wife and his daughter: unto these in the selfsame hour  
Told he the joyful tidings that but now had gladdened his ear,  
That the brethren of her Lady and Queen to their halls drew near.  
"Now therefore, O my beloved," spake Rüdiger earnestly,  
"Graciously shalt thou receive them, these noble princes three,  
When they and their train come hither as they fare unto Etzel's court.  
And Hagen, Gunther's liegeman, shalt thou greet in friendly sort.  
With these cometh also another, and Dankwart he hath to name,  
And another withal, named Volker, of knightly honour and fame.  
Upon these six thou and my daughter shall the greeting-kiss bestow,  
And the grace of courteous kindness unto all the knights shall ye show."

All this did the ladies promise, and nothing loth were they.  
Then sought they out of the coffers their goodliest array,  
That so they might greet the warriors in worthy bravery.  
So with eager haste they bestirred them, those ladies fair to see.



Of false-feigned bloom of roses on their cheeks was little enow ;  
But shining golden chaplets they bare upon each white brow  
Fashioned as rich-wrought garlands, that so their braided hair  
By the wind might not be ruffled : all dainty and fresh they were.  
In the labours of women busied those courtly dames leave we,  
The while went swiftly riding far over the river-lea  
Rüdiger's friends and kinsmen, till they spied that princely band ;  
Then heartiest welcome they gave them into the Margrave's land.

So when to the castle the Margrave beheld that company ride,  
How blithely hailing their presence the eager Rüdiger cried,  
"Welcome to me, ye princes, and all in your vassal-train!  
Here in mine own fair country I behold you exceeding fain."  
Then bowed them to him the heroes in friendship and faith unfeigned.  
Well proved he with what gladness by their host were they entertained.  
Unto Hagen special greeting, as a friend known long ago,  
He gave, and withal unto Volker, Burgundia's hero-son.  
Dankwart withal he greeted ; then spake that valiant thane :  
"If thou care for us here in thy castle, who then will see to our train,  
Unto all the array which hath followed from Worms beyond the Rhine?"  
Straightway answered the Margrave : "Put by this fear of thine ;  
For all thy vassal-companions, and what possessions soe'er  
Ye have brought into this my country—steeds, silver, and raiment fair—  
I will cause them to have such warding that nought therefrom shall be lost.  
By a single spur no poorer shall be any man of your host.  
Pitch the pavilions therefore, ye squires, on yonder lea.  
Whatsoe'er from your store shall be missing shall be all made good by me.  
Cast off the bit and bridle, and let the steeds range wide."  
Never had men such welcome from any host beside!  
Glad were the guests when they heard it. So then when his bidding was done,  
And the lords rode thence to the castle, the squires all one after one  
Stretched them at ease on the greensward. Sweet rest at last had they :  
Nought like it before nor after found they in all the way.



To the front of the castle-gateway did the noble Margravine haste  
With her beauteous daughter; and many a lady lovely-faced  
Upon this side and that was standing, and many a winsome maid  
In carcanet and bracelet and queenly apparel arrayed.  
Gleamed many a precious gemstone casting afar its sheen  
Forth of their costly vesture—ah, fair were they to be seen!  
Forward the guests came riding; from selle sprang they to the earth,—  
What knightly grace and courteous showed they of Burgundian birth!  
There were six-and-thirty maidens, and many a dame beside.  
Fair to all heart's desiring were the women lovely-eyed  
That with many a valiant warrior to meet the strangers came:  
Yea, fairest greeting was tendered of noble damsel and dame.  
Then the Margravine welcomed the princes with the kiss of courtesy,  
The like did also her daughter. Now Hagen stood thereby,  
And her father bade her kiss him: but the maiden looked upon him,  
And fain would she have refrained her, for his favour was passing grim.  
Yet as their host her father commanded needs must she do:  
But came and went her colour, she was pale and red of hue.  
Thereafter Dankwart kissed she, and the lord of the viol-string,  
For his might and his valour won him the greeting due to a king.  
Then, to usher him into the castle, the maiden stretched her hand  
Unto Giselher the courteous, the Prince of Burgundia-land.  
And the hand of the valiant Gunther the Margravine hath ta'en.  
So blithely into the castle with the heroes passed these twain.  
The host gave hand unto Gernot: to the great hall so they came.  
There sat they down on the high-seats, brave knight and comely dame.  
Then poured they the wine of welcome, and bare to the guests all round.  
Never more gracious greeting have heroes-errant found!

With eyes of admiration looked many a warrior there  
On the damsel, Rüdiger's daughter, for the maiden was passing fair.  
In his heart did many a good knight her loveliness embrace:  
Well might they, her queenly spirit made a splendour of her face.



Ah, they might dream as they listed!—'twas a dream no morn should fulfil!  
Hither and thither the glances of the heroes wandered still  
To the faces and forms of maidens and of dames that thronged the hall.  
But the heart of the noble minstrel warmed to their host above all.

Then was the company sundered: the knights and the dames straightway  
Passed into several feast-halls, as the wont of the land was aye.  
In the great hall of the castle for the knights were the tables arrayed,  
And there to the friends from a far land was eager service paid.  
For a grace to her guests Burgundian the noble Margravine  
Sat in their midst at the table; but there was her child not seen,  
For apart she abode with the maidens, as the land's wont was from of old;  
And the brave knights sighed for the beauty they might no longer behold.

So when with the meats and the wine-cup the guests were satisfied,  
Back to the feast-hall led they the ladies lovely-eyed.

Then a murmur of admiration and of worship from all men broke,  
And chiefly the valiant Volker the praise of beauty spoke;  
For that same viol-minstrel spake freely and openly:

"O noble Lord of the Marches, God hath bestowed upon thee  
All gifts of his gracious bounty: he hath given to thee for wife  
A lady exceeding lovely, he hath crowned with bliss thy life.

Now if I were the heir to a kingdom," that viol-minstrel said,

"And if I bare crown and sceptre, then would I choose to wed

None other than thy fair daughter—in all sincerity

I speak:—she is lovely to look on, noble and good is she."

But the Margrave spake in answer: "How might it befall, this thing,

That my daughter should be the chosen and the heart's delight of a king?

Here I and my wife be homeless, nor demesne nor castle we own:

No lands can we give for her portion—what availeth beauty alone?"

Answered and spake to him Gernot, the royal-natured knight:

"Might I choose for my bride a maiden in whom my soul should delight,

Such wife as she should gladden ever mine heart and mine eyes."

Spake Hagen withal and answered in knightly-courteous wise:



"For my young lord Giselher's spousals a fitting time were this:  
And of such right noble lineage the child of the Margrave is,  
That with joy would we render her homage, I and his liegemen all,  
When crowned mid the folk Burgundian she paceth in purple and pall."  
Good in the eyes of the Margrave was the word of the princes found,  
And sweet in the ears of Gotlind did the counsel of Hagen sound.  
So of one accord were the heroes that the noble Giselher  
Should take to wife that maiden—meet bride for a king she were!

Who may withstand the issue that is doomed by fate to befall?  
They summoned the Margrave's daughter to appear before them in hall:  
Then swore the father to give him the lovely damsel to wife,  
And the Prince for his part hath pledged him to cherish her all his life.  
To the maiden the Kings for her portion allotted castles and land;  
And with oaths of confirmation by the noble Gunther's hand  
Was it sealed unto her, and by Gernot, that all should so be done.  
Then spake her father: "Albeit castles have I none,  
And I can but loyally prove me your friend for evermore,  
Yet shall my daughter's dower be silver and gold good store  
So much as a hundred sumpters fully laden may bear,  
That his kin may with honour content them with the bride of Giselher."

Into the midst of a circle led they the plighted twain  
After the ancient custom. Full many a strong young thane  
Stood there and gazed upon them with laughter-litten eyes,  
Thinking such thoughts as ever in young hearts wont to rise.  
So then when her kin put question unto the winsome maid—  
"Wilt thou take this knight to thine husband?" awhile was she loth and afraid:  
Yet her heart within her was pleading for him, that goodly one;  
But for shame she hung on her answer, as many a maiden hath done.  
Then Rüdiger her father spake saying, "Answer yea,  
And gladly for husband take him." How swiftly did he straightway  
With loving white hands clasping to his heart his beloved press;  
Even Giselher the young prince!—how brief was their happiness!



Then spake once more the Margrave: "O kings of lineage high,  
What time to the realm Burgundian returning ye pass hereby,  
Then will I give you my daughter, even as is meet and right,  
To bear her with you to the home-land." Unto this their troth did they plight.

The tumult of feasting and joyance at last must have an end;  
And then did the new-wed maiden to her bridal-chamber wend,  
And the guests through the castle rested and slept till the day shone clear.  
Then brake they the bread of the morning, and the host made abundant cheer.  
And now when the feasting was ended, they addressed them thence to go  
Journeying on to the Hunland—"I pray you, do not so,"  
Said the Margrave noble-hearted; "awhile yet tarry here.  
Long is it since in my castle I have harboured guests so dear."  
Answered and spake to him Dankwart: "Now nay, this may not be.  
Whence should provision of victual and of wine be gotten of thee  
Enough to suffice for the feasting of so great a company?"  
But the host made answer: "I pray you, put all such vain words by!  
My lords and dearly beloved, ye may not say me nay.  
With meat and drink can I feast you till endeth the fourteenth day,  
And all that with you came hither, both lords and vassal-train.  
Little enow of my substance King Etzel from me hath ta'en."  
How sorely soe'er they excused them, yet there perforce they abode  
Till dawned the fourth day's morning. Such lavish gifts were bestowed  
Of their host's free-handed bounty, that the fame thereof spread wide,  
How he gave to his guests rich raiment and gallant steeds to ride.

No longer now might they tarry: they must needs press on to the goal.  
But of all his mighty possessions would Rüdiger's princely soul  
Spare nought in his lavish bounty: whatsoever any might crave,  
Unto none he denied or begrudged it; to the heroes gladly he gave.  
Before the gate of the castle the squires brought harness-dight  
Long lines of goodly horses: then came forth many a knight  
Unto where the steeds stood waiting. Their shields on their arms they bare,  
For thence would they now be riding unto Etzel's land to fare.



But, or ever the high-born strangers forth of the feast-hall strode,  
Freely the host on the heroes the gifts of his love had bestowed.  
He could live wealth-crowned with honour, how largely he gave soe'er.  
His daughter, a gift all-priceless, had he given to Giseler;  
But to Gunther the peerless hero Rüdiger gave a thing  
That well might add new honour to the majesty of a king.  
Right seldom the King took presents, but he bowed him courteously  
As he took from the hand all-courteous the hauberk goodly to see.  
And a sword, a light of battle, unto Gernot the princely he gave;  
Ere long in the wild war-tempest mightily flashed that glaive.  
Smiled on him the wife of the Margrave as he took that gift from his hand.  
—Ah me, but her noble husband was to die by that same brand!

Then, as well beseemed such a lady, unto Hagen Gotlind brought  
Gifts of her lovingkindness: since the King had refused them not,  
She prayed he would fare not forward unto Etzel's festal-tide  
Unholpen of her bounty; but the hero refused, and replied:  
"Of all things that ever," said Hagen, "I have seen unto this day,  
Nought I desire so sorely to bear with me hence away  
As the shield that hangeth yonder against your palace-wall:  
That same would I bear right gladly unto Etzel's festival."  
When heard of the wife of the Margrave was the word that Hagen spake,  
It wakened her sleeping sorrow: no marvel her tears outbrake!  
With anguish she called to remembrance the death of Nudung, her son,  
Whom Wittich had slain; and rekindled was the olden grief and moan.  
To the thane made answer the mother: "O yea, the shield will I give.  
Ah, would to God in Heaven that yet on the earth he might live  
Who bare it of old! In battle he slept the iron sleep.  
I must needs evermore lament him: sore cause have I to weep."  
Then the noble wife of the Margrave rose up from her carven chair,  
And she took down the shield of the dear dead with her own white hands, and bare  
And gave it, her gift unto Hagen: he received in his hands the same;  
Ay, and he won for the buckler new glory of deathless fame!



A cover of bright-hued loomwork enfolded its blazonries.  
Never hath shone the daylight on better shield than this.  
So richly with precious gemstones bordered was its device,  
That, if any were fain to buy it, a thousand marks were its price.  
His squires bare forth at his bidding that shield for the mighty thane.  
Then came his brother Dankwart before the chatelaine,  
And on him rich-broidered vesture did the Margrave's daughter bestow  
Which thereafter he wore glad-hearted in the halls of the Hunland foe.

But of all gifts Rüdiger gave them, how great soever of worth,  
Unto none had the haughty princes stretched a finger forth,  
Were it not for his courteous kindness, and the love it begat that day—  
Yet ere long were they foes so bitter that they needs must smite him and slay!

Then Volker the battle-eager, with his viol in his hand,  
Stepped forth with courtly bearing before Gotlind to stand;  
And the sweet notes rang through the feast-hall as he chanted the lovely lay.  
So took he leave of the Lady ere he passed from Bechlaren away.  
Then the wife of the Margrave commanded that her maids unto her should bring  
A casket—of gifts love-sweetened now shall the minstrel sing:—  
Twelve armlets she took from the coffer, and she slid them over his hand:  
“These bear thou, Volker, I pray thee, into King Etzel's land;  
And there for my sake shalt thou wear them in presence of King and thane,  
That folk may tell me the story, when hither thou comest again,  
Of the courtly service rendered unto me of Etzel's guest.”  
And the bold knight did thereafter according to all her request.

Then spake to his guests the Margrave: “For your safe journeying hence  
Myself will be your escort: so strong shall be your defence,  
That none shall set upon you to do you hurt by the way.”  
Then was his sumpter-palfrey saddled without delay.  
Arrayed he stood for the journey, and, furnished with raiment and steed  
Good knights with him five hundred; and all these thence did he lead



Bound for the Hunfolk's high-tide with merry hearts and light—  
 There returned again to Bechlaren of them all no single knight!  
 Then did their host with kisses of love from his dear wife part;  
 With kisses was Giselher sundered from his bride; with yearning heart  
 They held in their arms fond-clasping their wives, the passing fair.  
 Ah, soon bewept full sorely by many a maiden they were!  
 All through that stately castle they flung the casements wide  
 To see the Lord of the Marches with all his men forth ride,  
 Their hearts with mournful boding whispered to them, I trow:  
 Wept many a winsome lady and maiden to see them go.  
 For beloved friends and for kinsmen all these were sorrowing sore  
 Whom the watchers should see returning to Bechlaren never more.  
 Yet rode that company blithely down to the river-strand,  
 And far through the Danube-valley away to the Hunfolk's land.

Then to the thanes Burgundian the princely Margrave cried,  
 Even Rüdiger the noble: "We may now no longer hide  
 From the lords of the realm the tidings that to Hunland we draw near.  
 Sooth, never hath King Etzel heard aught to his heart so dear."  
 Then rode swift heralds many to the land of the Easterling,  
 And so full soon did the tidings through all the country ring  
 That from Worms-over-Rhine the heroes were coming thitherward.  
 Welcomer news heard never the vassals of Hunland's Lord.  
 c And when to the Daughter of Princes the tidings thereof was told,  
 From her stricken heart in a measure the burden of grief was rolled,  
 Since now from the land of her fathers came they which had done her a wrong—  
 Ay, they through whom King Etzel had sorrow enow ere long!

Fast, fast pressed onward the heralds as the tale to the King they bare  
 How that the Niblung chieftains nigh unto Hunland were.  
 Kriemhild the Queen from a casement watched with eager eye  
 For her kinsmen, as friends sore-yearning look forth as friends draw nigh.  
 At last she beheld those thousands from the ancient home that came;  
 And ware was the King of their coming, and he laughed with joy for the same:—



"See to it, O dear wife, Kriemhild, thou receive them worthily.  
 To be crowned with exceeding honour thy brethren come unto thee."  
 "Glad am I for these good tidings," spake Kriemhild her heart within.  
 "Ha, many a bright new buckler they bring, my faithless kin,  
 And hauberks gleaming and glancing!—now whoso will take of my gold,  
 And think on my wrongs, such champion my friend for aye will I hold."  
 C In her soul was she thinking—thinking—"The day of reckoning is this!  
 He who hath utterly emptied my life of all its bliss  
 Shall drink, if I may but contrive it, to the dregs the cup of pain  
 At this guest-greeting! Ready am I and exceeding fain.  
 C O yea, I will so devise it, that on this festal day  
 My vengeance shall stand triumphant, betide thereof what may,  
 Over his hateful body who bereaved me utterly  
 Of love, of the joy of living—but the hour of requital is nigh!"

## XXVIII

## HOW THE BURGUNDIANS CAME TO ETZEL'S STRONG CITY

Now when the Burgundian Heroes came to the Hunfolk's land,  
 Told was the thing to the warrior of Bern, old Hildebrand,  
 And he unto Dietrich told it; and his lord with grief and dismay  
 Heard; yet he bade him welcome that valiant knightly array.  
 Then were the horses saddled at the bidding of Wolfhart the strong.  
 With the Hero of Bern went riding knights in a lordly throng  
 To greet the friends far-travelled. On the river-plain they met  
 Where many a goodly pavilion the squires by this had set.

So soon as Hagen of Troneg beheld them from far away,  
 In knightly-courteous fashion unto his lords did he say:  
 "Now, warriors battle-eager, leap each man down from the selle,  
 And go ye forward to meet them which be come to greet you well.  
 A warrior company cometh; full well be they known unto me;  
 Thanes battle-eager and stalwart from the Amals' land they be;



And the Hero of Bern is their leader, and their courage is high in the fray.  
 Ye shall nowise scorn the service they proffer to you this day."  
 Then sprang to the earth from the saddle, even as was meet and right,  
 Dietrich, and there with their captain were many a squire and knight.  
 Forward to that guest-greeting they strode to the hero-band,  
 And in kindest wise they welcomed the men of Burgundia-land.

So now when the noble Dietrich beheld them drawing nigh,  
 Gladness and sorrow within him strove for the mastery<sup>1</sup>.  
 Well knew he the deadly secret: a grief was their journey to him;  
 But he weened that Rüdiger knew it, and had told of the peril grim.  
 "Welcome, my lords! O Gunther and Giselher, welcome be ye!  
 Gernot and Hagen, welcome! Lord Volker, welcome to thee  
 And to Dankwart the battle-eager!—but hath no man told you the tale  
 How still for the Niblung Hero doth Kriemhild weep and wail?"  
 "Let her weep so long as she listeth!" scornfully Hagen replied.  
 "Many a year hath fled since her lord was smitten and died.  
 Ay, let her joy and her solace be the love of the Lord of the Hun!  
 Siegfried returneth never; he was buried long ago."

"Enough of the slaying of Siegfried! His memory is not dead.  
 So long as Kriemhild liveth may the vengeance-snare be spread."  
 —So spake the noble Dietrich, the Hero of Bern, his rede.—  
 "O hope of the Niblung Nation, of her vengeance take good heed!"  
 "Beware of my sister!—and wherefore?" proudly the King replied.  
 "Etzel hath sent to us heralds—what should I ask beside?—  
 Bidding us ride to meet him here in this land as a friend.  
 Yea, many a loving greeting did my sister Kriemhild send."  
 "Hearken," again spake Hagen, "and so will I counsel you.  
 Hear ye this story of Kriemhild, and let it be told all through  
 By Dietrich the Lord of the Amals, and his heroes valorous:  
 So shall the mind of Kriemhild be wholly revealed unto us."

<sup>1</sup> For this and the next line Simrock's text is followed.



Then drew them apart the Princes, and spake together the three,  
Even Gunther the King and Gernot and Dietrich secretly:  
"O Knight of Bern most noble and valiant, tell us now—  
Of the inmost mind of Kriemhild the Queen what knowest thou?"  
And the Prince of Bern made answer: "What other can be my tale  
Save this, that morning by morning I hear her weep and wail—  
This Etzel's wife, Queen Kriemhild—with bitter and passionate breath  
Appealing to God in Heaven to avenge strong Siegfried's death?"  
"O'erlate is it now for repenting as touching this thou hast told,"  
Spake Volker the viol-minstrel, the warrior ever bold.  
"Let us on to the court of the Hun-king, and let it there be seen  
What deeds shall be done of the Hunfolk to the warriors battle-keen."

So on to the court went riding that bold Burgundian band,  
Bearing themselves right proudly after the wont of their land.  
Then many a valiant warrior of the Huns watched eagerly  
For the coming of Hagen of Troneg, what manner of man should he be.  
Known long since was the story to all folk, how that his hand  
Had dealt unto Siegfried the death-stab, to the King of the Nether Land,  
Of all stark knights the strongest, the lord of Kriemhild the Queen:  
Therefore the expectation of men to behold him was keen.  
Mighty of mould was the hero, as the soothfast songs declare,  
Exceeding broad in the shoulders and deep of chest, and his hair  
By this was a sable silvered; sinewy, long of limb,  
As a king was he stately in going, and his face as death was grim.

Then all the thanes Burgundian into hostels did they bring;  
But the train of the squires of Gunther were sundered far from the King.  
It was done by the Queen's devising, for the hate that to him she bare.  
Slain ere long in their hostels all those henchmen were.  
Dankwart the brother of Hagen was marshal of all that train,  
And to him did the King commit them, charging him once and again  
To do his utmost endeavour for supplying of all their need;  
And he laboured with willing spirit, and served with diligent heed.



Forth came the fair Queen Kriemhild with a goodly company.  
With falsely-feignèd kindness those Niblungs greeted she.  
Then Giselher her brother did she kiss, and she clasped his hand:  
When Hagen of Troneg saw it, he tightened his helmet-band.  
"Good sooth, after such a welcome," Hagen cried, "there is need  
That the battle-eager warriors should take to themselves good heed!  
The greeting of prince and of liegeman is here no whit the same.  
I wot, on an evil journey to this high-tide we came!"  
She answered, "To him be welcome who joyeth to see thy face!  
For thy friendship's sake is accorded here no greeting's grace.  
This tell to me, what dost thou bring me from Worms beyond the Rhine,  
That unto me so welcome should be this presence of thine?"  
"What new thing shall this be, quotha!" spake Hagen scornfully,  
"That these good knights Burgundian should be bringers of gifts unto  
thee?  
Had I known that thou wert so grasping—I am rich enow, I wot,—  
A gift unto thee of my bounty to the Hunland had I brought."  
"Thy gifts!—thou answer the question I ask of thee this day:  
The Hoard, the Niblung Treasure—where have ye thrust it away?  
That at least was mine own possession, well dost thou understand!  
That should ye have brought to its owner unto King Etzel's land."  
"Of a truth, my lady Kriemhild, full many a day hath passed  
Since the gold of the Niblung Treasure of me was beholden last.  
Under the Rhine-river waters by command of my lords was it drowned:  
There must it stay of a surety till the Trumpet of Doom shall sound."  
And the Queen made bitter answer: "I trowed that so it would be!  
Of his spoil has the thief brought hither little enow unto me,  
Though the gold was mine own possession, erewhile of me controlled!  
For the gold and its lord have I suffered anguish manifold."  
"The Fiend a gift do I bring thee!" cried Hagen in savage scorn.  
"'Tis enough for me that I carry the shield on mine arm that is borne,  
And the harness about my body, and mine helm bright-glittering,  
And the sword at my side—they suffice me: nothing to thee do I bring."



C "Nay, never think thou," she answered, "that it is for the gold I care.  
I need not to stint my bounty, enough have I and to spare.  
But the murderer, twice a robber, who hath stol'n from my life its light,  
The spoiler of helpless women, him would I fain requite!"

Then spake that Daughter of Princes to Burgundy's warriors all:  
"It fits not that ye bear weapons here in the royal hall.  
Commit them to me, ye heroes, and well will I ward them for you."  
"Of a truth," made answer Hagen, "that will we never do!  
I crave not the honour, O gracious child of a princely line,  
That thou to thy place of safety bear any weapon of mine,  
Nor shield, nor battle-harness—queen, well I wot, thou art here.  
Wisely my father taught me to ward mine own war-gear."  
"Ah, woe is me for the sorrows heaped on me!" Kriemhild cried.  
"For what cause now of my brother and of Hagen is this denied  
That I have their shields in my keeping? Of a surety, warned are they!  
If I knew what man hath betrayed me, his head for his treason should pay!"  
Then Dietrich flamed into anger, and swiftly answered he:  
"Lo, I am he that hath warned them, these Princes of Burgundy,  
And the King of the Rhineland's liegemen, and Hagen the unafraid!  
Make trial, thou child of the Devil, if the debt shall by me be paid!"  
Then quailed before him Kriemhild, and darkly she flushed with shame:  
For before the mighty Dietrich great fear on her spirit came.  
Straightway she went from their presence: no word to her lips arose,  
But one swift glance of hatred she flashed upon her foes.

Stood face to face these heroes with hand in right hand clasped:  
Dietrich of Bern in friendship the hand of Hagen grasped.  
Then spake to the knight of Troneg that battle-mighty chief:  
"Of a truth your journey to Hunland is pain unto me and grief,  
Forasmuch as yon Daughter of Princes hath so revealed her hate."  
Answered him Hagen of Troneg: "We will put to the test our fate."  
So did the dauntless heroes each unto other say.  
King Etzel beheld them communing, and he questioned of them straightway:



"Fain would I one should tell me," so asked of his men the King,  
"What knightly warrior yonder with such friendly welcoming  
Is greeted by our lord Dietrich. A lofty spirit he bears:  
What thane soe'er was his father, a goodly knight he appears."  
Spake of the train of Kriemhild to the King a certain knight:  
"Troneg is the warrior's birthplace, his father Aldrian high.  
How blithely soever he bear him, a grim stark foeman he is.  
I trow, ere long shall I prove it, that utter truth is this."  
"Nay, how should I learn that the hero is in battle so grim?" he replied;  
For as yet had the King no knowledge of the snares of death spread wide  
Around the feet of her kinsmen by the Queen for revenge who yearned—  
So wide, that back from the Hunland no man of them all returned.

"Well knew I Aldrian," spake he: "my liegeman he was of old.  
Praise at my court he won him and honour manifold:  
Yea, and of me was he knighted, and I gave him gold and gear;  
And my true and faithful Lady, Helka, held him dear.  
Well known thereafter was Hagen unto me: in years long fled  
As hostages high-born children twain to my land I led,  
Even him and Walter the Spaniard. Here unto men grew they,  
Till I sent home Hagen; but Walter with Hildegund fled away."  
So mused he on days passed over and deeds done long ago,  
And his warrior-friend of Troneg whom there of old he had known,  
Who in youth had rendered him service in many a strenuous day,  
But now in his age was destined a host of his friends to slay.



## XXIX

## HOW HAGEN REFUSED TO RISE UP IN PRESENCE OF THE QUEEN

Now did those thanes far-famous each from other turn,  
Hagen the Lord of Troneg, and Dietrich the Hero of Bern.  
Then over his shoulder glancing did Gunther's liegeman gaze  
Keenly around for a comrade, and he marked him in little space.  
For anigh Prince Giselher standing Volker he straightway espied,  
Volker the viol-minstrel; and he prayed him, "Stand by my side!"  
For well had he proved his spirit, how grim he was in fight,  
And in all that a knight beseemeth a fearless warrior wight.  
The lords Burgundian left they standing amidst of the court;  
But the twain in the sight of all men strode with lion-port  
Alone across the baily, and in front of a palace wide.  
They cared not who should withstand them, they faced all dauntless-eyed

They sat them down on a settle before the palace-wall  
Over against the windows and the doors of the Queen's own hall.  
On their mighty limbs was gleaming their royal-rich array;  
And many an one who beheld them much marvelled who were they.  
Many an one of the Hunfolk, as on wild beasts of the wold,  
Gazed open-mouthed upon them, on the heroes haughty-souled.  
And Etzel's Queen through a casement beheld that terrible twain,  
And the heart of Kriemhild the comely was darkened afresh with pain.  
She thought upon all her sorrows, and she wept for grief and shame.  
Then on the thanes, the liegemen of Etzel, amazement came,  
As they marvelled what should have troubled the royal heart of the Queen;  
And she answered, "The deed was Hagen's, O good knights battle-keen."  
Hotly they answered their Lady: "What deed hath of him been done?  
Lo, of good cheer we beheld thee and blithe but a little agone.



Whosoever hath done thee a mischief, be he never so valorous,  
So thou but bid us avenge thee, with his life shall he answer to us."  
"Unto him for aye were I bounden who avenged me on my foe.  
What boon he may ask soever ready am I to bestow.  
I bow at your feet in suppliance!" cried King Etzel's wife.  
"Avenge me upon this Hagen! Let him forfeit limb and life!"  
Then armed them the valiant champions; sixty by tale they were:  
For love of their Lady Kriemhild forth of the hall would they fare  
And fall upon Hagen and smite him, the battle-dauntless lord,  
And with him the viol-minstrel: all they were of one accord.

But the Queen looked on her champions, and marked their slender array,  
And in wrathful indignation to the heroes did she say:  
"From such manner of desperate emprise, I counsel you, refrain!  
Ye be all too few to grapple with Hagen in battle-strain.  
How valiant and mighty soever the Hero of Troneg be,  
The man that sitteth beside him is mightier far than he,  
Volker the viol-minstrel: a very fiend he is.  
Ye may nowise meet yon heroes with so scanty a band as this."  
So when they had heard that warning, four hundred warriors more  
Clad them in battle-harness. With longing exceeding sore  
Was the heart of the Queen a-hungred for vengeance for her wrong.  
Therefrom were the valiant champions into grim straits brought ere long.  
And so soon as armed for the onset she saw her vassal-train,  
To the warriors battle-eager the Queen spake yet again:  
"Now tarry ye here for a season; stand ye still for a space.  
With my crown on mine head yon foemen will I first meet face to face.  
Hearken as I reproach him for the wrongs he hath done unto me,  
This Hagen of Troneg, vassal of Gunther of Burgundy.  
I know him so high-hearted, that his crime he will scorn to deny.  
What shall befall him thereafter from avengers nought care I."

Then the valiant viol-minstrel, the lord of the strings, was ware  
Of the high-born Daughter of Princes, as her feet came down the stair



That led from the palace-portal. Soon as he saw that sight,  
Unto his warrior-comrade spake Volker the dreadless knight:  
"Behold now, O friend Hagen, and mark as she draweth nigh  
Who as guests hath bidden us hither with purpose of treachery.  
Never so many warriors saw I follow a queen  
With sword in hand drawing nigh me, and with faces battle-keen.  
Of this art thou ware, friend Hagen, that to thee are they foemen fell:  
Wherefore I give thee counsel, take heed that thou guard well  
Thy life and thy knightly honour. I trow such rede is good;  
For in very deed meseemeth they come in angry mood.  
There is many a man amongst them broad-chested and stalwart of frame.  
Whoso would keep life scatheless, betimes let him see to the same!  
I mark how under their vesture glittering hauberks they wear:  
What deed thereby they purpose I know not, neither care."

Made answer in scornful anger Hagen the aweless man:  
"Well know I, for my destruction is all their plot and plan;  
And for this are the gleaming weapons that yon men bear in hand.  
But for all they may do, shall I yet ride back into Burgundy-land.  
Now tell unto me, friend Volker, by me art thou minded to stand  
If these be fain to beset me, yon men of Kriemhild's band?  
Lo, by thy love I adjure thee, tell me thy mind herein,  
And my love and my loyal service for ever shalt thou win."  
"Yea, of a surety I help thee," the minstrel made reply;  
"And though I beheld against us a king of the earth draw nigh  
With all his knights about him, so long as endureth my life,  
Through fear will I ne'er draw backward one foot from thy side in the strife."  
"Now God in Heaven reward thee, Volker, thou peerless of worth!  
Though all these rise up against us, what need I more on earth?  
If thou but stand mine helper, as now thou hast said in mine ear,  
These knights have need to be wary of coming a step more near."

"Now," said the viol-minstrel, "rise we up from our seat  
In presence of this King's Daughter, as before us pass her feet;



So render we due honour unto a high-born queen,  
And by courtesy do we honour unto ourselves, I ween."  
"Nay," Hagen replied, "if thou love me, in no wise do this thing.  
Yon knights will be puffed up haply with vain imagining  
That I did it of failing courage, and were minded to flinch from her face.  
But I,—for no soul among them will I rise up from my place.  
From such honour to her refrain we; it better beseemeth us so.  
What, should I render her homage who hath set her to be my foe?  
No, that will I do never so long as endureth my life!  
What reck I of the malice of this King Etzel's wife?"

Across his knees did Hagen in haughty defiance lay  
A flashing glaive of battle, and with restless splendour-ray  
A jasper shone on the pommel—spring grass were not so green.  
Full well did Kriemhild know it, for Siegfried's sword had it been.  
She saw the brand, and remembered, and anguish it was to see.  
Of gold were the hilts, and the scabbard all crimson broidery.  
The olden grief was awakened, and fast did the hot tears flow.  
In sooth, with none other purpose had Hagen done it, I trow.  
Then close to his side on the settle Volker the unafraid  
Drew a viol-bow strange-fashioned, a mighty and long steel blade:  
Yea, as a sword was it shapen, and keen it was and broad.  
Thus sat these knights in the presence of a throng of their foes unawed.

Of such high worth they accounted themselves, that fearless twain,  
For dread of any foeman never a whit would they deign  
To rise from the place of their session. Now stood before them there  
That high-born Daughter of Princes, and a bitter greeting she bare;  
For she spake: "Now say, Lord Hagen, who sent a bidding to thee  
That thou dardest hither to journey to my land thus hardily,  
Albeit full well thou knewest what deeds unto me thou hast done?  
Hadst thou been prudent of spirit, into peril thou hadst not run."  
"Me?—no man hath bidden me hither," with careless scorn he replied.  
"Hither to this thy kingdom were three knights bidden to ride,



And these same knights be my liege-lords, and I am their liegeman true.  
Whensoever they wend to a high-tide, my wont is to be there too."

She said: "This also tell me—why diddest thou that deed  
For the which the hatred I bear thee is but thy rightful meed?  
Thou, thou didst murder Siegfried!—my lord and my love didst thou slay  
For whom I must needs mourn ever unto my latest day."

"Tush! this sufficeth," he answered. "Why idly waste thy breath?  
I still am the same—that Hagen who dealt unto Siegfried death,  
To the mighty-handed hero. Dearly he paid at last  
For the flouts that the Lady Kriemhild upon Brunhild the fair had cast.  
Dream not, O Queen most mighty, that I will conceal or deny  
That of all the scathe and the mischief done to thee guilty am I.  
Let whoso dareth avenge it!—let woman or man essay!  
I have heaped thee the measure of sorrow, if I be not a liar this day."  
"Ye hear him, knights! He confesseth all shamelessly," she cried,  
"This crime that was cause of mine anguish! What unto him may betide  
In requital for this, I care not, O vassals of Etzel the King!"  
But her thanes looked each upon other with glances wavering.

Had they closed that instant in conflict, those two companions, I trow,  
Right soon had exacted homage to their prowess from the foe,  
As oft in the days passed over they had proved in battle-storm.  
The thing they had undertaken now feared those men to perform.  
Then spake a knight to his fellows: "Why look ye so upon me?  
The deed that erewhile I promised, fulfilled may it nowise be.  
No mortal's gifts shall beguile me to barter away my life.  
To our own destruction hither were we lured by Etzel's wife!"  
Then spake and answered another: "As thou art, so am I.  
If one would give to me towers with the ruddy gold heaped high,  
Against yon viol-minstrel in battle I would not stand.  
I have marked his eagle-glances, and I fear the might of his hand.  
Yea, and I knew yon Hagen in his youth long years ago.  
It needs not that any should tell me of the prowess that I know:



In battles two-and-twenty have I seen him play his part.  
Unto many a wife made widow hath he given sorrow of heart.  
Yea, he and Walter the Spaniard upon many a foray fared ;  
And here under Etzel's banner full many a deed they dared  
For the King's renown: they have proved them so oft in foughten field,  
That men must needs unto Hagen the palm of honour yield.  
Yet a child in years was the warrior what time he won such praise,  
And now are they men grey-headed which were boys in those far days ;  
But now hath he gained war-cunning, and grimmer than he is none,  
And he beareth the great sword Balmung by a deed of darkness won."

So ended their vaunting, for no man dared battle with such stern foes.  
In the heart of the Daughter of Princes the anguish-tide high rose,  
As backward recoiled her champions: ay, death seemed all too near  
At the hands of the viol-minstrel—good cause had they for fear!  
How oft do men's hearts fail them, that they shrink from an emprise aghast  
When faced by friend that standeth at friend's side loyal and fast!  
Ay, intermeddlers in quarrels, if wisdom they have to refrain  
And to take heed unto their goings, may deliver themselves from bane.

Then spake the dreadless Volker: "Now for ourselves have we found  
The truth whereof we had warning, that here foes swarm all round.  
Let us pass on then to the Princes, where in the palace they are,  
That none may beset our masters unawares with array of war."  
"Good; lead thou on, I follow," did Hagen answering say.  
And thence went those two comrades; and there in the hall saw they  
Those knights, and the Hunfolk greeting thronged them all about.  
Then the voice of Volker the dreadless like a trumpet-blast rang out,  
As he cried to his lords the Princes: "How long are ye minded to stay  
To be thronged and pressed thus tamely? Ye should to the King straightway,  
And hear in his presence-chamber what is his mood unto you."  
Then the good knights and valiant set forward two by two.  
For the champion of Bern, Lord Dietrich, in fellowship took by the hand  
The mighty ruler Gunther, the King of Burgundia-land;



And with Gernot the valiant hero was Irnfried handed there;  
And with Giselher to the palace went the noble Rüdiger.  
But, howsoe'er companioned were the rest, to the hall as they hied,  
Never did Volker and Hagen leave one another's side,  
Save only in one grim conflict, until on their death they came,  
Which was cause of sorrow and weeping unto many a noble dame.

On passed to the hall of the presence with the Princes a gallant train,  
A thousand of their vassals, each man a valiant thane.  
There were threescore knights moreover of that royal company,  
Warriors whom Hagen the dauntless had brought from his seignory.  
Hawart and Iring, chieftains of Etzel's own war-band,  
Went with Burgundia's Princes to the palace hand in hand.  
Dankwart withal, and Wolfhart, an earl of high degree,  
Bare them amidst of the concourse with knightly courtesy.

So now when the Lord of Rhineland passed through the palace-door,  
Etzel the King wide-ruling would tarry no whit more:  
He leapt adown from his high-seat when he saw him standing there.  
Never was welcoming given by king unto king more fair.  
"Welcome be thou, Lord Gunther! Lord Gernot, welcome to thee,  
And to Giselher your brother! I bade you Princes three,  
With greeting and all true service, from Worms beyond the Rhine.  
Welcome to me, King Gunther, be all these vassals of thine.  
Be ye twain also welcome, good knights, to my festival,  
Volker the valiant champion, and thou, Lord Hagen withal.  
Unto me and my wife be ye welcome here in the land of the Hun:  
Messages unto Rhineland hath she sent you many an one."  
Made answer Hagen of Troneg: "Her words of love have I heard.  
Had I not in my masters' service hither to Hunland spurred,  
O King, to render thee honour had I come unto thy land."

Then the host right noble and royal took each dear guest by the hand;



And he led them unto the high-seat, and set them at his own board.  
For the guests the drink of welcome the cupbearers hasted and poured,  
Mead, wine, and mulberry-brewis, into golden goblets wide;  
So they hailed with gladsome welcome those thanes, Burgundia's pride.  
Then spake the great King Etzel: "O guests, I needs must avow  
That nought on the earth more welcome to mine heart could befall me now  
Than cometh, O knights, by your presence, for to see you here am I fain;  
And thereby hath the Queen's heart gotten relief from yearning pain.  
Sooth, oftentimes had I marvelled wherein I had haply transgressed,  
In that, though I had won to my feast-hall many a noble guest,  
Yet ye, the chiefest, have never deigned to my land to ride:  
But now at the last I behold you, and mine heart is satisfied."  
Answered a knight great-hearted, and Rüdiger made reply:  
"Well may ye rejoice to behold them, for their knightly honour is high;  
And this can my Mistress' kinsmen in the face of the world maintain.  
And they bring to thy palace-portals full many a hero-thane."

On a fair Midsummer even they came, those guests renowned,  
To the court of Etzel the mighty. Full seldom hath it been found  
That the guests of a king had greeting so fair as the heroes won.  
And by this was the hour of feasting, and the King to the board led on.  
In the midst of his guests sat never a host more gracious-willed.  
There were meats in abundant measure, and with wine were the cups aye filled.  
Whatsoever a guest might crave for, straightway it lay at his side,  
For honour to heroes whose prowess had been published far and wide.

- C Ere this had the great King Etzel on a mansion spacious and fair  
Spent measureless toil and trouble, and nought for the cost did he care.  
Palace and tower rose stately, with chambers therein untold,  
And a lordly-fashioned feast-hall, in the midst of a great stronghold.
- C He had caused his wrights to uprear it long and wide and high,  
To lodge the knights unnumbered that sought to him ceaselessly,  
And all the host of his liegemen: for twelve kings mighty of sway,  
And warriors worship-worthy, had he in his war-band aye,



C Yea, more than king had ever whose name to the minstrel is known.  
So lived he blithely with kinsmen and vassals about his throne;  
And the good King's halls with thronging and gladsome tumult were loud  
That rose from his valiant warriors, and his heart was high and proud.

## XXX

## HOW HAGEN AND VOLKER KEPT WATCH WHILE MEN SLEPT

By this was the daylight ended, and nearer the night-tide drew.  
But perplexed were the way-worn heroes, for as yet they nowise knew  
Where they should find them couches for the rest of the slumber-tide.  
Then Hagen put it to question, and by him were they certified.  
For unto their host spake Gunther: "God prosper you of his grace!  
We would fain go hence to our slumber: thou have us excused for a space.  
Tomorn we return right early, if this to the King seem best."  
Then the host with blithe leave-taking let all depart to their rest.

But the Queen's folk thronged and beset them, and pressed on every side.  
Then out spake Volker the dreadless, and unto the Huns he cried:  
What mean ye to bar and to cumber our feet, discourteous crew?  
If ye from our path avoid not, mischief shall light upon you!  
Upon some this bow of my viol so heavily shall smite,  
That whoso there be that love them shall weep for their woeful plight.  
Hence from our path! Meseemeth it were best that ye block not our way!  
Knights these name them—but little enow of the knight have they!"  
The while that the viol-minstrel spake thus angerly,  
Around him Hagen the dauntless cast a scornful eye;  
And he said: "Ye have heard good counsel from the minstrel battle-keen.  
Get you hence to your lodging, ye men of Kriemhild the Queen!  
Whatso'er be your purpose of malice, now shall it nowise speed.  
Come early to us to-morrow, if ye fain would essay some deed,



And leave us way-worn warriors to rest in peace this night.  
It was ever the wont of true men to do their deeds in the light."

Then brought they the guests Burgundian to a hall both great and wide;  
For all that throng of warriors was it dight for the slumber-tide  
With couches exceeding splendid: long and broad they were.  
—There trusted Kriemhild to tangle their feet in murder's snare.  
With tapestries of Arras were the couches overspread.  
Wrought all of radiant loomwork, and strown was every bed  
With glistening silks Arabian, the richest that eye hath seen,  
And coverlets lay thereover that gleamed with lordly sheen.  
And rich rugs, some of ermine fashioned, lay in sight,  
And some of the dusky sable, whereunder through the night  
They should rest them lying softly till shone the light of day.  
Sooth, never a king with his vassals in state more lordly lay.

"Alas for the place of our resting!" the young Prince Giselher cried,  
"And alas for our friends and our kinsmen that hither with us have hied!  
With what fair words soever my sister hath bidden us come,  
We have won, I sorely fear me, through her hate to the Net of Doom!"  
"Nay then, put by misgivings," said Hagen, "and rest you well.  
Myself will to-night be your watchman and slumber-sentinel,  
And faithfully will I guard you till morning bringeth the day.  
Fear nought till then: thereafter let him keep his head who may."

Low bowed them unto him all men, and thanked him courteously;  
Then on their beds they cast them. Few moments fled by  
Ere hero by goodly hero untroubled rest had won.  
And now 'gan Hagen the dreadless his harness of battle to don.  
Then answered the viol-minstrel, and the good thane Volker spake:  
"If thou scorn my request not, Hagen, with thee will I undertake  
This night the watching in armour, till the shadows flee away."  
Then heartily thanked he Volker, and thus did the warrior say:



"Now God from his Heaven reward thee, Volker, of men most dear!  
In all my sorest peril would I have none other near  
Than thee alone, whensoever into hard straits I were brought.  
Full well will I requite thee, so death forestall me not."  
Then did these twain array them in mail bright-glittering;  
And over his arm his buckler did either warrior sling.  
Forth of the great hall went they afront of the door to stand,  
And they guarded the guests there lying with loyal heart and hand.

Then Volker the battle-eager unclasped his buckler good  
From his arm, and upright set it, that propped by the wall it stood.  
Then unto where was his viol he turned him back again,  
And rendered his tired friends service worthy of such a thane.  
For under the great hall's doorway he sat on the threshold-stone—  
More valiant viol-harper never hath mortal known.  
When the strings thrilled under his fingers and the soul of the viol woke,  
Low murmured their thanks unto Volker the proud, the homeless folk.  
The walls and the rafters echoed as the chords pealed loud and clear—  
In might and in music-cunning was the hero without a peer:—  
Then sweeter and softer they whispered like the ripple of murmuring streams,  
And so were the heavy-hearted lulled into happy dreams.  
So when all slumbered, and Volker was ware that their cares were stilled,  
Then over his arm the warrior drew once more his shield;  
And forth he strode from the portal, and afront of the door he stood  
To ward his friends and kinsmen from Kriemhild's avengers of blood.

Now hard on the hour of midnight, or earlier perchance,  
He marked, this Volker the dreadless, the gleam of a helmet glance  
Far away through the darkness. The vassals of Kriemhild were there,  
Full fain to have done some mischief to the sleepers unaware.  
c Now ere these were sent of Kriemhild to take the prey in the snare,  
She said: "If ye come on them sleeping, in God's name have a care  
That of all this company one man, and only he, be slain,  
Hagen the faithless traitor: your hands from the rest refrain."



Then spake the viol-minstrel: "Friend Hagen, see to it now  
That we bear this burden of peril together, I and thou.  
Lo, in front of the hall in armour I see folk gathered near.  
If I may divine their purpose, they come to fall on us here."  
"Hush!" answered Hagen: "suffer that they come unto us full close.  
Ere they be ware of our presence, shall the helms of yonder foes  
With these good swords be cloven that shall swing in the hands of twain.  
In evil plight unto Kriemhild will we send them back again!"

Then ware was one of the warriors of the Hunfolk suddenly  
How that the door was guarded. In haste to the rest spake he:  
"The deed that we had purposed, now doth fate forestall.  
I behold the viol-minstrel stand guard afront of the hall.  
He wears on his head a helmet whose splendour flames through the dark,  
As adamant hard and burnished, dintless withal and stark.  
Bright glow the rings of his hauberk, as fire that flashes afar;  
And beside him standeth Hagen. Well warded the strangers are!"

Then backward they faltered: when Volker marked how they turned to flee,  
Straightway unto his comrade he spake full angerly:  
"Now suffer me from the hall-way to go to yon men in mail:  
I will speak with the vassals of Kriemhild, and ask of the night-tide's tale."  
"Now nay, an thou lovest me," Hagen answered, "thou shalt not so!  
If once thou leave this portal, yon battle-eager foe  
With onset of swords may bring thee right soon into such hard strait,  
That I needs must help, though our kinsmen thereby met an evil fate.  
For if we twain in battle were compassed by yon false crew,  
Haply some two of their comrades, or four, or ever we knew,  
Into the great hall rushing, therein might work such scathe  
On our slumbering friends, that we surely should rue it unto our death."

And again made answer Volker: "At the least let us do this then,  
To cause them to know of a surety that we have espied yon men.



Then they, those vassals of Kriemhild, can nowise lie unto us  
That they sought not to do to the King's guests a deed most treacherous."  
Then cried the viol-minstrel, and the throng of the Huns he hailed:  
"How cometh it, valiant heroes, that ye come thus armour-mailed?  
Be ye fain, O vassals of Kriemhild, to ride in quest of spoil?  
Then take ye me and my comrade to help in your knightly toil."  
But no man rendered him answer. Then wrathful waxed his mood.  
"Out on you, caitiff dastards!" cried that warrior good.  
"To murder us in our slumber—for this be ye prowling nigh?  
Never yet to such noble heroes was done such treachery!"

Right soon thereafter the story unto the Queen was told  
How the men she had sent had failed her: then waxed she heavy-souled.  
New plots she devised, for her hatred was cruel as the grave.  
Destined thereby to perish was many a hero brave.

### XXXI

#### HOW THEY BORE THEM AT MASS AND TOURNEY

"So chill now groweth mine harness," said Volker unto his friend,  
"That I trow in no long season will the night-tide draw to an end.  
Yea, and I feel by the dawn-breeze that hard at hand is the day."  
Then waked they many a hero that still in slumber lay.  
Now on the guests in the great hall the morning light shone fair,  
And Hagen fell to question the good knights gathered there  
If they would go to the minster the chanting of mass to hear;  
For now after Christian custom the bells of prime rang clear.  
The chanting was but a discord: sooth, marvel therein was none  
That Christian men and heathen sang not in unison.  
Yet minded to go to the minster were they of Gunther's train;  
And they rose up all from the couches whereon through the night they had lain.



Then did the warriors clothe them in such royal-rich array  
That to no king's kingdom ever in any after-day  
Brought heroes goodlier vesture. But wroth waxed Hagen thereat,  
And he cried: "It were well ye arrayed you in other raiment than that!  
Ye know too well of a surety how doth the matter stand.  
Therefore instead of roses take ye weapons in hand,  
And instead of caps bejewelled your helmets gleaming bright,  
Forasmuch as we have full warning of wicked Kriemhild's spite.  
This day for our lives must we battle: this unto you I say.  
Instead of silken tunics ye must wear steel hauberks to-day;  
And instead of costly mantles must bear shields massy and broad,  
That if any rage against you ye may nowise be overawed.  
My well-belovèd masters, kinsmen and liegemen mine,  
With hearts of sincere repentance draw nigh to the holy shrine,  
And lay before God Almighty your burden of need and fear;  
For know ye this of a surety, that death to us all is near.  
Forget not past transgressions, the sins wherein ye had part,  
And stand in your God's presence with humble and contrite heart.  
Yea, hearken ye all to the warning, every valiant thane—  
If God in Heaven help not, ye shall hear no mass again."

Onward then to the minster princes and liegemen passed.  
In the holy outer precinct were they bidden all stand fast  
By Hagen, that each from other might so be sundered by none;  
For he said: "As yet none knoweth what by the Huns shall be done.  
Set down, O ye my kinsmen, your shields before your feet;  
And, if any in insolent fashion us stranger guests shall greet,  
With deadly wounds requite it. Lo, Hagen's rede is this;  
And thereby shall ye prove by trial that so for your honour it is."  
Those comrades, Volker and Hagen, planted them side by side  
In front of the wide-walled minster: there fixed did they abide;  
For they did it of this set purpose, that the Queen might enter not  
Unjostled by their shoulders—unto such stern mood were they wrought.



Then came the Lord of the Hunland, and beside him his fair Queen paced.  
With royal-rich apparel was Kriemhild's beauty graced.  
And valiant warriors many in the train of these drew nigh.  
'Neath the tramp of the feet of the vassals of the Queen the dust rose high.  
When the great King beheld them all mail-clad as for fight,  
Those princes and their liegemen, he cried unto them forthright:  
"What meaneth this?—behold I my friends in battle-gear?  
By my troth, it should vex me sorely if any harmed them here!  
All wrong, whatsoever atonement they asked, would I requite.  
If to their heart and their spirit any have done despite,  
I will show unto them and to all men what indignation have I.  
What redress they demand soever, nothing do I deny."  
To the King made answer Hagen: "None doeth despite unto us.  
It is ever the wont of my masters to go in armour thus,  
Whose guests they be soever, till three full days have run.  
We would make our complaint unto Etzel, if a wrong unto us had been done."

Now the word that Hagen answered full well was heard of the Queen.  
How flashed 'twixt her half-closed eyelids her hate's glance bitter-keen!  
But as touching her fatherland's custom not she would utter the truth,  
Albeit Burgundia's daughter had known it full well from her youth.  
How grim and stern soever was the Queen's mood unto her foe,  
Had any revealed her purpose unto Etzel the King, I trow,  
He had verily prevented the thing that thereafter befell;  
But their pride thought scorn of complaining, and nought unto him would they tell.

To the minster-door paced Kriemhild with a multitude in her train;  
Yet to step aside at her coming they two would nowise deign  
Two handbreadths: wroth were the Hunfolk, as men that chafe being wronged,  
For in passing the stalwart heroes their Queen was jostled and thronged.  
Wroth with their reckless defiance were Etzel's chamberlains:  
Full fain from the path had they thrust them, and angered those insolent thanes,  
Had they but dared in the presence of the great King to do aught.  
So then there was thronging and pressing, but more than this was there nought.



When again they turned them homeward from holy chant and prayer,  
High-borne upon goodly chargers hosts of the Hunfolk were.  
In Kriemhild's train moreover was many a winsome maid,  
And warriors full seven thousand in the Queen's war-band were arrayed.  
Amidst of her ladies Kriemhild at the casement sat on high  
At Etzel's side: that pageant well-pleased he saw sweep by.  
They would fain see the far-famed heroes ride in the tourney-ring.  
What gallant Burgundian barons were in presence of the King!

Now came Burgundia's marshal bringing the mighty steeds,  
And came with Dankwart the valiant to minister unto their needs  
The squires of the princes and barons, the lords of Burgundia-land;  
And they brought out the good steeds saddled for the Niblung warrior-band.  
So soon as they all were mounted, the Princes and their men,  
Volker the fearless captain gave them his counsel then  
After their own land's fashion to close in the wild mellay.  
Then into the lists the heroes rode in gallant array.  
That which the minstrel counselled, was none that against it spake.  
Then in the lists did the clashing and clanging of arms awake.  
Into the spacious tilt-yard thronged many a thane to the strife:  
And high over all sat gazing King Etzel and his wife.

Unto the place of the tourney six hundred warriors came—  
Knights were they all of Dietrich—to meet those guests of fame.  
They would clash in the mimic battle with the sons of Burgundy:  
Had their lord but given them licence, they had done it joyfully.  
Ha, they were goodly warriors that rode to the barriers!  
But tidings of their purpose were borne unto Dietrich's ears:  
Forthright their clashing in tourney with Gunther's men he forbade.  
He feared for his vassals, lest mischief befall them—good cause he had!  
And so, when the knights of Dietrich were thus withheld from the fray,  
On came the men of Bechlaren, even Rüdiger's array;  
Five hundred in front of the palace rode under buckler-fence.  
Well pleased had been the Margrave, afar had they tarried thence.



On through the press fast riding he came to his retinue,  
And he spake unto all his liegemen: "It must needs be known unto you  
How chafed and ungentle of spirit the warriors of Rhineland be.  
Ye therefore refrain from the tourney, and so shall ye pleasure me."

So when these war-fain heroes had turned from the lists away,  
Then came Thuringia's champions, as telleth the ancient lay,  
And valiant men from Daneland a thousand with these there were.  
Then the shards of the shivered lances went leaping high through the air.  
Into the ringing tourney Irnfried and Hawart rode,  
But the champions of the Rhineland their onset proudly abode;  
And they clashed with the knights Thuringian in the hero-sport of spears:  
Full many a goodly shield-rim did the lightening lances pierce.  
Then came the good knight Blödel, and followed him thousands three.  
Etzel the King and Kriemhild watched full eagerly  
The meeting of charging squadrons, the gallant glorious fray:  
But in fierce joy Kriemhild waited till her hate should have its way.  
C On a vision she dreamed, the fulfilment whereof ere long was seen—  
"If haply any be wounded, then, ah then, I ween,  
This sport may grow into earnest: then over my scornful foe  
Should I stand in revenge triumphant—small were my grief, I trow!"

Then clashed Gibeke and Schrutan with the strangers front to front,  
And with them Hornbog and Ramung, after the Hunnish wont:  
Yet stayed by the knights Burgundian were the onsets of them all.  
The splintered spear-shafts whirling flew over the palace-wall.  
Yet, how featly they rode soever, it was nought but empty sound.  
With clanging of smitten bucklers rang wide echoes round  
From mansion and hall, as the champions of Gunther clashed with the Hun.  
High praise and glorious honour by his mighty men were won.  
So strenuous was their pastime as in grapple of giants they met,  
That drenched were the saddle-housings with foam-flakes and with sweat  
From the goodly chargers dripping, as in gentle and joyous sport  
The heroes against the Hunfolk matched them in chivalrous sort.



Then the noble viol-minstrel, Volker the aweless, said:  
"I trow these knights be faint-hearts; to meet us fairly they dread.  
Yet hear I talk of their hatred, how bitter against us it is.  
Sooth, never a better season may they find to prove it than this!  
Now once more unto the stables," again Lord Volker cried,  
"Let the squires lead back the horses. Peradventure again will we ride  
When draweth the day unto even, if haply the time suffice.  
Perchance to the knights Burgundian will the Queen give valour's prize!"

Then into the lists came riding one of such lordly mien  
That in all the host of the Hunfolk no goodlier man was seen.  
Perchance from a casement a dear one gazed on his pomp and his pride:  
Like a maid was he richly appavelled, yea, like a young knight's bride.  
Then again in his scorn spake Volker: "Who now can forbear to smite?  
He must needs take a buffet, yon minion of women, yon carpet-knight.  
He hath set his life on the hazard: not I will be turned from my path!  
As for yon wife of King Etzel, nothing I reck of her wrath."  
"Now nay, by my love I charge thee," said Gunther, "do not thus!  
All folk will blame if the first blood be wantonly shed by us.  
Let the Huns be the first wrong-doers: it were more for our honour, I ween."  
—And all this while King Etzel at the casement sat with the Queen.  
"I make one more in the tourney," cried Hagen instantly.  
"We will let yon dames at their casements and the knights that throng us see  
How knightly is our jousting: yea, it were right well done.  
In any wise, from our foemen small praise shall by us be won."

Volker the battle-eager again rode into the strife:  
That onset to many a woman with sore heart-anguish was rife.  
From breast to back his lance-head hath pierced that noble Hun.  
That stroke wept many a maiden and matrons many an one.  
Straightway returning Hagen came with his hero-train;  
With his own threescore warriors he rode the lists again.  
On pricked they to where the minstrel had shown them such grim sport.  
—Etzel the while and Kriemhild gazed down on the stormy court.



Now also Burgundia's princes would leave not void of aid  
In the midst of unnumbered foemen that minstrel unafraid,  
With a thousand heroes behind them, the flower of chivalry,  
They rode the lords of the tourney, and their hearts were proud and high.

Now when that knight of the Hunfolk in death had been thus laid low,  
A cry brake forth from his kinsmen of lamentation and woe.  
All through the throng were they shouting, "Now who hath done this thing?"  
Men answered, "Volker the dauntless, the lord of the viol-string."  
They shouted, "Take ye the bucklers, and grip ye the sword in hand!"  
Those friends of the slaughtered Margrave, the lords of the Hunfolk's land.  
Fain were they to smite the minstrel to death for that grim deed;  
But down from the casement hasted the King with eager speed.  
Then rose from the midst of the Hunfolk uproar that on all sides rang.  
Down to the earth from their saddles the Kings with their liegemen sprang:  
Behind them they put their horses, the men of Gunther's array.  
Now cometh in haste King Etzel, with intent to part the fray.  
From a man of the slain Hun's kinsmen, who chanced anigh him to stand,  
He gat him a sword keen-whetted, yea, tore it out of his hand,  
And therewith beat back his people, and he cried in exceeding wrath:  
"May I not keep faith with the heroes? Must I break my plighted troth?  
If ye had slain this minstrel in revenge for the deed he hath done,  
On the word of a king, I had hanged you—I had hanged you every one!  
As touching the spear-thrust given to the Hun—I marked him ride:—  
It was not of his will, but his charger stumbled in his stride.  
These be my guests: ye shall suffer that in peace they all go hence."  
So himself became their escort. Led were the horses thence  
To the stalls, for squires there waited, and henchmen not a few,  
With swift obedience ready to render them service due.

So back to the hall of the palace his guests did the host-king lead:  
He suffered in his presence no wrathful word or deed.  
They set the tables in order, the water the pages bare:  
—Yet many a most stern foeman had the Rhineland warriors there.



C Albeit it irked King Etzel, a great throng into the hall  
 Followed the lords Burgundian, and weapons had they all.  
 On the guests they scowled their hatred, as they passed to the feastful board;  
 For they burned to avenge their kinsman when time and place should accord.  
 C "That ye come to the banquet in armour clad and with sword on thigh,"  
 Spake the lord of the land to his people, "is foul discourtesy  
 Now whoso dareth to offer an insult to any guest  
 Shall atone with his head for the outrage. Huns, ye have heard mine hest."

Long was it, ere at the banquet seated were all those chiefs,  
 The while the heart of Kriemhild was racked with manifold griefs.  
 "O Prince of Bern," she pleaded, "this day must I of thee  
 Entreat both help and counsel in my sore perplexity."  
 Then unto her the good knight Hildebrand answer made:  
 "Whosoever slayeth the Niblungs doth it without mine aid.  
 What treasures tempt him soever, he taketh his death with the gold.  
 Never yet have they been vanquished, those warriors aweless-bold."  
 C "This toucheth none save Hagen, who hath done foul wrong unto me:  
 Siegfried, my lord, my beloved, he murdered treacherously.  
 Who severeth him from his fellows, my gold shall guerdon him well.  
 My spirit should inly sorrow, if hurt to the rest befell."  
 C But the old lord Hildebrand answered: "Nay, how might such thing be  
 That one should slay him only? Surely thyself mayst see  
 That if any beset him, his fellows with him will live or die.  
 Yea, small and great together, if he fell, in death would lie."  
 Then added and spake Lord Dietrich with knightly courtesy:  
 "O mighty Queen, I pray thee, put all such pleading by.  
 Never to me have thy kinsmen done any deed of wrong  
 That I should defy to battle such valiant thanes and strong.  
 For thy prayer, O noble Lady, small honour to thee is therein  
 That so thou devisest mischief against the lives of thy kin.  
 They came under pledge of friendship hither to Etzel's land.  
 It must needs be that Siegfried remaineth unavenged by Dietrich's hand."



So when in the Bernese champions no treachery might be found,  
Unto Blödel her faith she plighted, by oath and by handclasp bound  
To give him a fair wide lordship, which Nudung possessed of yore—  
But ere long, smitten of Dankwart, he remembered her gift no more.  
She said: "O Blödel my brother, unto thee for help I call.  
My deadliest foes be gathered in yonder palace-hall,  
Even they which murdered Siegfried, my beloved lord, time was.  
Unto him were I bounden for ever who now would avenge my cause."  
Unto her made answer Blödel: "Know thou, O Lady and Queen,  
In Etzel's presence I dare not let this hatred be seen  
So long as unto thy kinsmen he showeth his favour still.  
Never the King would forgive me, if I wrought them aught of ill."  
"Nay, fear not thou, Lord Blödel; thy friend evermore will I stand,  
And with guerdon of my silver and my gold will I fill thine hand,  
And will give thee to wife that fair-one who was plighted Nudung's bride,  
And in cherishing her beauty shall thine heart be satisfied.  
Her land withal and her castles will I give to be thine of right;  
So shalt thou live in joyance evermore, O noble knight,  
When thou shalt be lord of the marches that were Nudung's in days gone by:  
Yea, all that to-day I promise will I then do faithfully."

Then seemed unto Blödel the castles and the gold a guerdon fair,  
And the witchery of beauty to his heart became a snare.  
Fain was he by battle-prowess to win that fair-one to wife:  
But foredoomed thereby was the warrior to cast away his life.  
He spake to the Queen: "To the feast-hall pass thou unto thy place.  
Ere these be ware of the peril, a tumult will I upraise.  
For the wrong he hath done thee shall Hagen make atonement at last,  
When this King Gunther's liegeman in bonds at thy feet I cast.  
Now arm you all, my liegemen!" to his vassals did Blödel cry.  
"We will forth against our foemen where in harbourage they lie.  
My Lady, the wife of King Etzel, constrains me to this assay.  
We must needs all set on the hazard life and limb this day!"



- So when from Blödel the warrior the Queen had wrung consent  
To make beginning of conflict, to the feast-hall thence she went  
Beside the great King Etzel, and their knights behind them pressed.  
A terrible doom for the strangers she purposed within her breast.
- C In what order they passed to the banquet unto you shall the song declare:  
Men saw great kings and mighty the crown before her bear;  
Yea, high-born princes many and thanes of high degree  
Before the Queen did service in great humility.
- C The King to his guests appointed their seats through the feast-hall wide,  
And the chiefest and noblest among them were nearest set to his side.  
For Christian knights and heathen were diverse meats prepared,  
Yet all to the full were feasted, for all in his wisdom he cared.
- C Apart in the place of their lodging for the squires was a feast arrayed,  
And there before them the sewers all things in order laid  
With diligent heed that nothing of all they lacked should fail:—  
Too soon were revel and joyance turned into woe and wail!

Now since the flame of battle could be lit in none other way,—  
For the old pain crying for vengeance in Kriemhild's heart still lay,—  
She caused that her child and Etzel's to the banquet-board should be brought.  
How by a vengeful woman could fearfuller deed be wrought?  
Forth four men went from the feast-hall of Etzel's following,  
And returned with the young prince Ortlieb, the little child of the King;  
And they set him before the princes—and Hagen sat thereby,  
He through whose murderous hatred that child was doomed to die.

So then when the great King Etzel beheld his son brought in,  
In faith and in lovingkindness he spake unto Kriemhild's kin:  
"Behold, my friends and my kinsmen, mine only son is this,  
And the child of Kriemhild your sister: your friend that shall be he is.  
If he favour his Rhineland kinsmen, a stalwart man shall he be,  
Mighty withal and noble, valiant and comely to see.



If I live, I will make him ruler of lordships twelve in my land :  
So service fair shall be rendered to you of Ortlieb's hand.  
Therefore I fain would pray you, beloved kinsmen mine,  
Whensoever again ye be riding homeward unto the Rhine,  
That ye take him, the child of your sister, in that day home with you,  
And show all lovingkindness to my son as kinsmen true.  
Train him in ways of honour, till unto man he shall grow ;  
Then, if to your land a mischief be done of any foe,  
And he to his strength be waxen, his aid unto you shall he bring."  
—And all this speech heard Kriemhild, the wife of Etzel the King.

"Yea, well may all these warriors in his loyal faith confide,  
If ever he grow unto manhood," grimly Hagen replied ;  
"But the young king is but a weakling, I trow, in outward show.  
Not oft to the court of Ortlieb shall folk behold me go."  
Then the King looked sharply at Hagen, for stung by the word was he,  
Albeit he answered nothing, of his kingly courtesy ;  
Yet his soul was chafed and indignant, for he deemed it nowise good.  
Yea, also was Hagen's spirit nowise in jesting mood.  
No less than the King were his servants indignant, a princely band,  
That so evilly Hagen had spoken of the child of the lord of the land.  
To sit and endure such insult as gall to their spirit seemed ;  
But of that which ere long by the warrior should be done, ah, little they dreamed !  
c Full many that heard it, whose hatred of him already was hot,  
Would fain have fallen upon him—yea, that would the King, I wot,  
Had his honour permitted ; the hero had then been in evil plight.  
More cruelly soon did he wrong him, that he slew his child in his sight.



## XXXII

## OF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SQUIRES AND THE SLAYING OF THE SLAYER

Now the knights that Blödel gathered arrayed themselves forthright.  
To the feast-hall they hied them, a thousand in hauberks harnessed for fight,  
To the hall where ranged at the tables the squires with Dankwart sate.  
Soon brake there forth between heroes the deadliest of all hate.

In strode the war-thane Blödel, and afront of the board stood grim.  
But with friendly courtesy Dankwart the Marshal greeted him:  
"With welcoming to our mansion, Lord Blödel, I hail thee now;  
Yet I marvel at thy coming. What tidings bringest thou?"  
"Thou hast nothing to do to greet me," sternly Blödel spake;  
"Seeing my coming hither an end of thee shall make,  
For that Hagen thy brother murdered Siegfried years ago;  
For the deed with heroes many shalt thou to the Huns atone."  
"Now nay, my good Lord Blödel," peaceably Dankwart replied;  
"Sooth, this were a sorry ending for us all unto this high-tide!  
But a child was I when Siegfried departed from light and life.  
No cause know I why hated I should be of Etzel's wife."  
"For thee, I know not and care not how the truth of the story lies:  
Thy kinsmen, Hagen and Gunther, did it in any wise.  
Defend you, ye doomed and homeless! Ye live not another day!  
Here, now, with your lives the forfeit unto Kriemhild must ye pay!"

"Ha, will ye forbear not?" cried Dankwart, "ye messengers of death!  
I repent me of mine entreaty: I had better have spared my breath!"  
That keen knight battle-eager leapt from his place at the board;  
He swept from out the scabbard a mighty and long sharp sword:  
Therewith hath he dealt unto Blödel a stroke that as lightning flashed;  
And lo, his head in the helmet down at his feet was dashed.



"That be thy morning bride-gift," the war-fain warrior cried,  
"To the widowed wife of Nudung, whom thou wert to win for bride!  
Ay, let them wed her to-morrow to another traitor yet:  
If he craveth a dower, that Blödel hath gotten shall he too get!"  
So scoffed he touching the tidings that a Hun true-hearted had brought  
Of the plot whereby Queen Kriemhild the destruction of all these sought.

Then saw the men of Blödel how their good lord lay slain,  
And their hands from the guests Burgundian no longer would they refrain.  
With swords for the onset uplifted they rushed in furious mood  
On the squires—but this their emprise ere long full many rued.  
With a great voice then to his henchmen all did Dankwart cry:  
"Ye see well, squires brave-hearted, they have doomed us all to die!  
Now, homeless men, defend you, for sore is your need, I ween.  
—So then for this were we bidden guests of a gracious queen!"  
Then, whoso were swordless, 'twixt table and seat good weapons they found,  
For many a massy footstool swung they up from the ground.  
O yea, those youths Burgundian would flinch no foot from the fray,  
But with those ponderous maces the foes' helms dinted they.  
How grimly the friendless yeomen defended them in the fight!  
Those armed knights from the feast-hall they drave in huddled flight.  
Five hundred—yea, more, it may be—fled not, for they lay there dead.  
There yeomen and squires all blood-drenched stood and crimson-red.

In a little while thereafter these heavy tidings came  
To the knights of King Etzel: with anguish and wrath were their souls aflame  
That Blödel with all those warriors nought save death had won.  
This had the brother of Hagen with his squires and his yeomen done.  
Or ever the King might hear it, a host of the Hunfolk stood,  
Two thousand—yea, more, it may be—mail-clad, in furious mood.  
They fell on the squires—one ending alone could there be to the strife;—  
And they left of all that concourse no single soul in life.  
For a mighty host did the traitors lead to that hostelry,  
And the homeless men unarmoured withstood them valiantly.



What profited strength and valour? One doom of death did they find.  
—But the feet of a terrible vengeance were treading close behind.  
Now must ye hear a marvel and a horror hard to be said:  
Burgundian squires nine thousand in the hall of blood lay dead,  
And with these lay the knights of Dankwart, twelve battle-helpers good;  
And alone at last and unholpen in the midst of his foes he stood.

The uproar fell to silence, the tumult was stilled for a space;  
Then Dankwart glanced around him o'er the slaughter-reeking place:  
"Alas for the dear friends," cried he, "that here in death lie low!  
And I—woe's me!—I am standing alone in the midst of the foe!"  
Upon that one man in fury did countless sword-strokes leap:  
But the wife of many a hero for this had cause to weep.  
Higher he lifted his buckler; the arm-brace lower he drew.  
Then many a rifted harness was drenched with crimson dew.  
Cried Aldrian's son: "My torment is greater than man may bear!  
Give way, ye knights of the Hunfolk; let me win forth to free air,  
That over the warfare-weary the cooling breeze may play!"  
To the door through blows down-hailing he gallantly hewed his way.  
When the battle-weary champion forth of the portal sprang,  
How many swords unblooded then on his helmet rang  
Wielded by them who had seen not the marvels wrought by his hand!  
Forth leapt to meet them the hero, the pride of Burgundia-land.

"Now would to God," cried Dankwart, "that a messenger were but nigh,  
Who should tell my brother Hagen of mine extremity,  
Who am thus by armed traitors beset before and behind!  
Me from their midst would he rescue, or his own death here would he find."  
Answered the Hunfolk scoffing: "That messenger thou must be,  
When into thy brother's presence we drag a dead man—thee!  
Then first shall the liegeman of Gunther gaze on his own heart's woe.  
Thou to the men of King Etzel hast here done mischief enow."  
"Have done with your threats!" he shouted. "Give back, ye traitor brood!  
Else many a man's war-harness will I drench with his own life-blood.



I, even I, to the palace will bear these tidings of bane,  
And there of the wrong and the outrage to my lords will I complain."

Then he plunged in their midst, and such havoc he wrought in the Hunnish  
horde,

That they shrank before him, and dared not close in the strife of the sword;  
But they hurled their spears, till so thickly did the shafts in his buckler stand  
That the weight thereof constrained him to cast it away from his hand.  
Then thought they to overbear him, that one man shieldless left.  
Ha! but he hewed two-handed, and through helmet and brain he cleft.  
Before him many a brave man went reeling and staggering back.  
High praise and renown bold Dankwart won in the battle-wrack.  
Then leapt his adversaries upon him to left and to right:—  
Ha! but of these full many too hastily came to the fight!  
Full on the foemen charged he, as chargeth a forest-boar  
On the hounds in the wood—was valour like his seen ever before?

Ever gushing as streams from a fountain the hot blood reddened his way.  
Did e'er knight single-handed more gallantly turn to bay  
Facing such hosts of foemen as in that hour did he?  
On pressed to the palace the brother of Hagen triumphantly.  
The cupbearers heard and the stewards the bickering blades' fierce clang,  
And they caught at their swords, down casting the cups on the floor that rang:  
Some clutched spears, dropping the bakemeats that they to the feast-hall bare;  
So when Dankwart won to the palace, fresh foemen thronged the stair.  
"How now, ye knightly sewers," did the weary warrior say,  
"Of a truth, to the guests of your master meet service should ye pay,  
And should bear to the waiting princes the goodly meats through the hall,  
And let me bear to my masters the tidings I come withal."  
Whosoe'er with presumptuous courage to bar his coming essayed,  
Upon him with his swinging war-glaive such giant strokes he laid,  
That the rest all terror-stricken fell back from his fierce onslaught.  
Marvels exceeding mighty by his prowess had he wrought.



## XXXIII

## HOW THE FIGHT BEGAN IN ETZEL'S HALL

So then when the aweless Dankwart strode through the feast-hall door,  
Shouting to Etzel's servants, "Back! bar my path no more!"  
Behold, with the blood of slaughter all his apparel dripped,  
And a sword exceeding mighty unsheathed in his hand he gripped.

c In that instant it was, when Dankwart through the portal entered so,  
That men were bearing Ortlieb through the feast-hall to and fro  
From table unto table to the princes one after one—  
And now through his evil tidings was the innocent undone!  
For loud and clear cried Dankwart in the presence of all that throng:  
"Thou sittest, O brother Hagen, here at thine ease too long!  
Unto you and to God in Heaven of wrong unto us I complain.  
Our knights and our squires together in the hostelry lie slain!"  
Cried Hagen to him in answer: "Now who hath done this thing?"  
"This was the deed of Blödel and of them of his following:  
But dearly he paid for his treason, unto all men here be it said;  
For with these mine hands from his shoulders have I hewn the traitor's head."

"He hath paid for his wrong too lightly," Hagen the dauntless cried,  
"If men may but say of the traitor as of any knight who hath died,  
That stilled by the hands of a hero he hath slept the iron sleep;  
Fair ladies for one so smitten shall have less cause to weep.  
Make answer to me, dear brother, how art thou thus all red?  
I trow thou hast been sore wounded, and full evilly hast sped.  
If the villain be here in presence who did this deed contrive,  
Except the Foul Fiend help him, he goeth not hence alive!"  
"Nay, before you I stand unwounded; my raiment is wet with blood;  
But it gushed from the deadly gashes of other war-thanes good



Whereof this day so many beneath my sword-edge fell—  
If I must make oath of their number, good sooth, I could not tell.”

“Brother Dankwart,” he cried, “our warder of yon door do thou be,  
And let no man of the Hunfolk win forth of the hall by thee.  
Now with these knights will I reason, as our wrong constraineth us.  
Dead lie our fellows guiltless: it is they have entreated them thus!”  
“Must I,” said the valiant hero, “be the chamber-sentinel?  
In presence of kings so mighty the office liketh me well.  
Dear as I cherish mine honour, I will faithfully guard yon stair.”  
At his word on the knights of Kriemhild fell the shadow of despair.

“Now exceeding sorely I marvel,” rang Hagen’s bitter jeer,  
“What secret the Hunfolk whisper each in his fellow’s ear.  
I ween they would gladly spare him who watcheth yonder the door,  
Who unto the men Burgundian such royal tidings bore!  
Long time since, I bethink me, have I heard Queen Kriemhild say  
That she would not endure her anguish of heart unavenged for aye.  
A loving-cup to her vengeance! In Etzel’s wine be it poured!  
And the first to spill the death-drink be the hope of the Hunfolk’s Lord!”  
Then he lashed at the young child Ortlieb, Hagen the terrible thane,  
That down o’er his hand from the sword-blade did the blood of the innocent  
rain,

And into the lap of his mother hurled was the head from the stroke.  
Then mid the knights a murder grim and great awoke.  
For next on the young child’s guardian, which tended him truly and well,  
A mighty stroke two-handed swift as the lightning fell,  
That afront of the foot of the table his head on the floor was cast.  
A woeful guerdon he gave him for all his travail past!

He marked where at Etzel’s table was seated a minstrel-man:  
Swiftly upon him Hagen in madness of fury ran;  
He smote him where on his viol rested the bard’s right hand—  
“That have thou for the message thou broughtest to Burgundy-land!”



"Woe for mine hand!" cried Werbel the harper of Etzel the King.  
"Wherein, Lord Hagen of Troneg, have I wronged thee in anything?  
I came to the land of thy masters in faith and in loyalty.  
How shall I waken my music who am maimed of mine hand by thee?"  
Little enow recked Hagen, though never he harped again!  
Then up and down the feast-hall he raged, till his hands had slain  
Full many a knight of Etzel, to sate his murder-lust:  
Many an earl in the palace through the gates of death he thrust.

Volker the battle-eager from his place at the table sprang;  
His viol-bow now was his war-glaive, and loud in the hands it rang  
Of that viol-minstrel of Gunther: a music of death did he wake:  
Many a foe mid the Hunfolk for kinsmen slain did he make.  
Leapt up withal from the table the noble Princes three:  
They would fain have parted the fighters, ere wilder the work should be,  
But all in vain was their prudence, and nothing availed their might;  
For those twain, Volker and Hagen, were mad with the fury of fight.

Now ware was the Lord of Rhineland that he could not still the fray:  
Then himself unsheathed his war-glaive, and fell on the foes' array,  
And he cleft their shining hauberks, and dealt wounds deep and wide.  
What man of his hands was the hero that havoc testified.  
Then also Gernot the stalwart plunged mid the surges of strife:  
Out of many a valiant champion of the Huns he smote the life.  
With the keen-edged brand of battle, the gift that Rüdiger gave,  
For many a knight of Etzel did he open the gates of the grave.  
Then the youngest son of Uta hurled into the tempest-roar:  
His battle-brand victorious through many a morion shore  
Of the warriors of King Etzel, the pride of the Hunfolk's land.  
Ay, marvels of hero-prowess were wrought by Giselher's hand.  
But, how brave were the rest soever, the kings and their vassal-train,  
Yet no man like unto Volker might ye see, as he battled amain  
Facing the starkest foemen—ha, 'twas a warrior good!  
Many a champion before him fell wounded to death in his blood.



Of a truth the liegemen of Etzel made stout defence that day:  
But the guests—ye might see them hewing forth and back their way  
Through the length and breadth of the feast-hall of the King with the lightening  
brand,

While scream and groan of the stricken went up on every hand.  
Then they without right gladly would have holpen their friends within:  
But when they would force that doorway, small honour could they win.  
And they in the hall full gladly would have gotten to outer air,  
But past that door-ward Dankwart might none set foot on the stair.

So gathered before that portal throngs upon throngs of foes,  
And loud were the helmets ringing as the swords dealt crashing blows.  
Then hardly bestead was the warder, Dankwart the unafraid;  
But his brother marked his peril, as love and loyalty bade.  
With a mighty voice unto Volker straightway did Hagen shout:  
"Seest thou yonder, my comrade, how beset by a Hunnish rout  
Alone my brother standeth, while down on him stark blows rain?  
O friend, do thou help my brother, ere sped be the valiant thane."  
Made answer the viol-minstrel: "Yea verily will I so."  
Through the hall he strode to the music of that strange viol-bow,  
That sword of the ice-brook's temper, that rang in his grasp evermore;  
And the Rhineland knights as they heard it gave hearty thanks therefor.  
Then unto Dankwart Volker the aweless hero said:  
"This day hast thou sorely travailed, and now art thou hardly bestead:  
Wherefore to me for thine helping did Hagen thy brother appeal.  
Them from without withstand thou, and with these from within will I deal."

Now without is the door well warded, for Dankwart the keen stands there.  
Whosoever would win the threshold back hurled he down the stair.  
To the ringing music of sword-blades in many a hero's hand  
Within was the door well warded by Volker of Burgundy-land.  
Then over the tossing tumult a cry did the minstrel send:  
"Safe warded is the mansion, thou seest, Hagen my friend



The door of Etzel's palace is locked and bolted amain  
Fast as with bars a thousand, by the hands of heroes twain!"  
So then when Hagen of Troneg saw that the door was fast,  
That battle-eager hero his shield behind him cast;  
Then, then in grimmest earnest he began to avenge the wrong.  
Then faint grew the hearts of the valiant, and palsied the might of the strong.

When the Prince of Bern, Lord Dietrich, saw the marvels that he wrought,  
Saw Hagen the valiant cleaving the morions as he fought,  
Then sprang the chief of the Amals on a bench amidst of the hall,  
And he cried: "Here Hagen poureth a death-draught bitter as gall!"  
Well might the Lord of the Hunfolk be stricken with sore affright.  
—What hosts of his friends were falling down gulfs of death in his sight!—  
Death's wings overgloomed him, for round him was closing the foes' stern ring.  
In anguish he sat—what profit was it now unto him to be King?  
Then cried in her fear unto Dietrich Kriemhild, a great king's wife:  
"Help me, O noble hero, O help me hence with life!  
By the chivalrous honour I pray thee of the princes of Amelung-land!  
For if yon Hagen reach me, death is at my right hand."  
"How may I avail to help thee," Dietrich the princely said,  
"O noble Daughter of Princes? For myself do I stand in dread,  
So fiercely the wrath is kindled of yon King Gunther's array,  
That for no man's life can I answer in this season of dismay."  
"Now nay, Lord Dietrich, noblest of all knights," cried the Queen;  
"Let the chivalry of thy spirit in this dark hour be seen.  
Forth of this place do thou help me or ever I lie here dead!"  
Of a surety the spirit of Kriemhild was anguished with mortal dread.  
"Nay then, if perchance it avail you, your help will I essay,  
Albeit have I seen never through many a perilous day  
Aflame with such bitter fury such hosts of warriors good.  
I see from the helmets spurting 'neath sword-strokes ever the blood!"

Then did that peerless warrior uplift a shattering shout:  
Like the horn of a wild bull blaring his mighty voice rang out,



That through all the wide-built fortress its thunder-echoes rolled ;  
So great was the strength of Dietrich, its measure may not be told.  
Then heard that shout King Gunther, and he hearkened thereunto  
As it pealed o'er the battle-tempest, and the voice of the hero he knew ;  
And he cried : "The voice of Dietrich!—it fell on mine ear but now.  
Our knights in the battle have smitten a friend of his, I trow.  
There on the table I see him : he beckoneth with his hand.  
Ho ye, my friends and kinsmen, knights of Burgundia-land,  
From the strife for a little refrain you, that so we may hear and see  
What hurt hath been done unto Dietrich by them of my company."

So the knights at the prayer of Gunther, at the warrior king's behest,  
Let sink their swords, and the fury of fight for a space had rest.  
By that sudden peace did Gunther his power unto all men show :  
Then straightway he asked of Dietrich wherefore he cried to him so.  
He said : "O noble Dietrich, now who hath lifted a hand  
Of any my friends against thee? Willing and ready I stand  
To make unto thee atonement, and thy claim to satisfy.  
If any had done thee a mischief, grieved to the heart were I."  
Made answer the noble Dietrich : "No wrong hath been wrought unto me.  
But let me in peace and safety forth of the hall go free,  
And take with me all my people out of the bitter strife ;  
So will I to thee of a surety be beholden all my life."  
"Wherefore so soon," cried Wolfhart, "a grace of him dost implore?  
Yon viol-minstrel hath barred not, I wot, so fast the door,  
But that wide ourselves can set it, till we all therethrough have won."  
"Thou, hold thy peace!" said Dietrich, "no smallest deed hast thou done."

Spake unto him King Gunther : "This I accord unto you.  
Lead all forth of the palace, many be they or few,  
So they be not my foemen : of these forth goeth none,  
For of these foul wrong hath been done me here in the land of the Hun."  
When Dietrich the noble heard it, around the high-born Queen  
Cast he an arm of protection—her fear was deadly-keen!—



And forth of the hall King Etzel he drew with the other hand;  
And after Dietrich followed six hundred knights of his band.

Then unto Gunther the Margrave, the noble Rüdiger, cried:  
"If thou meanest that forth of the palace any shall win beside  
Of such as be fain to serve thee, of this thing do me to wit;  
So shall our bond of friendship and peace be abidingly knit."  
Then to his fair bride's father Giselher straightway spake:  
"Let peace and love between us be a bond that none shall break.  
The troth-plight of friendship ever do thou and thine maintain.  
Go fearless forth of the palace, thou and thy vassal-train."  
When Rüdiger, Lord of the Marches, passed free through the guarded door,  
There went with him five hundred—yea, peradventure more—  
Friends of the Lord of Bechlaren and his trusty vassal-throng:  
But of that fair faith unto Gunther great scathe befell ere long.

Now it happed that a knight of the Hunfolk beheld King Etzel go  
Safe under Dietrich's shielding, and would fain 'scape even so;  
But with a stroke so deadly the viol-minstrel swept  
The head from the skulker's shoulders, that to Etzel's feet it leapt.  
So when the Lord of Hunland came forth from the battle-wrack,  
He turned him about, and at Volker he looked in amazement back—  
"Woe's me for the guests I have harboured! O day of sorrow and bane  
Wherein beneath their prowess all these my knights fall slain!  
Woe's me for my festal high-tide!" that king of nations said:  
"Within there fighteth a warrior, Volker, a name of dread.  
Like some wild boar he rageth—and a minstrel him they name!  
Thank Heaven that safe from the talons of this foul fiend I came!  
Doom rings and sings in his measures, red are the strokes of his bow;  
In his notes I hear the death-knell of many a knight laid low.  
What hath the viol-minstrel against us know I not.  
Never by guest such sorrow upon mine house was brought!"



C Straight to their harbourage went they, those noble warriors twain,  
Rüdiger, Lord of the Marches, and Dietrich, Bern's great thane.  
Themselves were steadfast-minded aloof from the quarrel to stay,  
And they straitly commanded their vassals to have nought to do with the fray.  
C Yet had those guests had foreknowledge of the mischief hard by the door,  
To be wrought by those two heroes, which for them fate had in store,  
Verily not so lightly had they won that hall-way through  
Ere those grim portal-keepers with the sword had smitten them too.

All whom they would had they suffered by this to pass from within;  
Then again brake forth in the feast-hall a yet more fearful din.  
Grimly the guests avenged them for the broken troth and the wrong.  
Ha, how were the helmets cloven by the arm of Volker the strong!  
To the clash of that deadly music King Gunther turned him about—  
“Hear'st thou the tunes, O Hagen, that Volker beateth out  
On the heads of the Huns, whosoever essay the door that he keeps?  
Red are the strings of the viol whereover his swift bow leaps!”  
“Sore is mine heart above measure for this thing,” Hagen replied,  
“That in this hall-feast I am sundered afar from the good thane's side  
Ever was I his comrade, and he true comrade to me.  
We will dwell, if we win home ever, in love and loyalty.  
Behold, Lord King, is Volker to thee not faithful-souled?  
Nobly he earneth guerdon of thy silver and thy gold!  
His viol-bow goeth cleaving the adamant steel in twain,  
And the gemmed helm-crests are shattered and scattered in flashing rain.  
Never beheld I minstrel stand such a lord of the fray  
As Volker the thane hath proved him on this his glory-day.  
Hark, how through helm and shield-plate his measures clash and gride!  
He shall yet wear kingly raiment, and goodly steeds bestride.”

So fought they on, till of Hunfolk that in that hall had been  
Through all its mist of slaughter no living man was seen.  
There was none to fight, and the uproar was hushed, the tumult died.  
From their hands the aweless heroes laid now their swords aside.



## XXXIV

## HOW THEY CAST FORTH THE DEAD

Then sat them down the warriors to rest them toil-forspent.  
But forth of the feast-hall doorway Volker and Hagen went;  
And leaning upon their bucklers, as in scorn of foes without,  
Spake they together, casting at the Hunfolk gibe and flout.  
Then cried the Prince Burgundian, Giselher the thane:  
"We may not, O friends belovèd, resting longer remain.  
We must needs first hale the corpses forth of the palace-hall;  
For our foes, I say of a surety, again upon us will fall.  
Nowise it befitteth that longer clogging our feet they lie.  
Ere the foe in the storm of battle from us wrest victory,  
Deep wounds will we hew full many, and sweet is the thought unto me;  
Yea, my heart is set on the war-feast," said Giselher, "steadfastly."  
"Glad am I that such a war-lord I have!" cried Hagen the grim.  
"This counsel well beseemeth no meaner knight than him,  
But such an one as the young Prince hath proved him to-day in your sight:  
And for this, O thanes Burgundian, blithe be your hearts and light!"

Then did they after his counsel, and out through the door they drew  
Seven thousand slain men's corpses, and forth of the palace threw.  
Afront of the steps they hurled them adown to the court below.  
Then wailed from the friends of the slaughtered lamentation and mourning and  
woe.

There was many a man among them whose hurts were not so sore,  
But that soon, had he gentle tendance, he were whole again as before,  
Who yet found death all swiftly, hurled from that cruel height.  
Loudly their kin lamented who saw that pitiful sight.

Then shouted the viol-minstrel, the champion dauntless-souled:  
"Now well do I see how truly the tale unto me was told



That this is a land of cravens: like women they wail, these Huns,  
They who should now be tending the battle-stricken ones!"  
Then it seemed to a lord of the marches that he spake not in scoffing mood;  
And that same lord had a kinsman there fallen in his blood;  
And he thought from the carnage to bear him, and his arms around him he  
threw;

But the minstrel with a javelin hurled at him, and slew.  
Then back from the stairway fled they who in hope had been drawing near,  
Cursing the viol-minstrel in the impotent fury of fear.  
Then caught up Volker a javelin, stubborn-shafted and keen:  
Shot by one of the Hunfolk against himself had it been.  
Across the court he sped it, putting his might to the cast,  
That it flew o'er their heads fierce-singing; and Etzel's men were aghast,  
As he warned them to safer standing, from the hall-door far away.  
At his matchless might all people were thrilled with sore dismay.

Before that hall with Etzel in thousands the Hunfolk stood.  
And now did Volker and Hagen in scornful-reckless mood  
Set them to gall the Hun-king, and with bitter taunts to defy.  
Ere long grim retribution on the heroes came thereby.  
"It were well," cried Hagen, "to hearten the folk in the evil day,  
That the lords of the land should battle in the forefront of the fray,  
Even as this day battle those true men, even my lords:  
They hew the helmets asunder, blood fieth to meet their swords."

No battle-blencher was Etzel: he grasped in wrath and pride  
His shield—"Risk not at their bidding thine own life!" Kriemhild cried.  
"Nay, offer thy shield gold-brimming for a champion of thy war-band.  
If thou close with yonder Hagen, death standeth at thy right hand."  
Yet the King was a knight so fearless that he would not refrain from the strife—  
Sooth, now such mighty princes more dearly tender their life!—  
Their lord from the fray by his shield-band his servants needs must hale.  
Then with grim laughter Hagen again at the King 'gan rail:



"Good sooth, 'tis a far-away kinship," he cried with bitter jeer,  
"That hath drawn this Etzel and Siegfried each unto other so near!  
He wantoned with yonder Kriemhild or ever she looked on thee!  
What ho, King Etzel the craven, what grudge hast thou against me?"

In the ears of the great Queen tingled the scoffer's every word:  
Black grew the heart of Kriemhild at the thought that his taunt was heard  
Of all those vassals of Etzel, when he dared to make her a jest;  
And she set her once more to enkindle her champions against that guest.  
She cried: "Whosoever will smite me yon Hagen of Troneg dead,  
And bring for a trophy hither and cast at my feet his head,  
For him the shield of Etzel will I fill with gold to the brim,  
Yea also, castles for guerdon and land will I give unto him."  
"I wot not why these falter," the viol-minstrel said.  
"Never have I seen heroes stand so sorely adread,  
When offered in all men's hearing is all that wealth of gold.  
Of a truth, never more will Etzel unto these be gracious-souled.  
These things of shame and scorning, on the bread of the King they feed,  
And behold, they now forsake him in the stress of his sorest need!  
Of such I behold full many: utterly cowed are they—  
And they name them heroes!—branded are they with contempt for aye!"

- C The heart of Etzel the mighty was shaken with grief and groan:  
For his kin and his perished liegemen did he make bitter moan.  
From many a land around him stood knights on every side,  
And wept with the King for the sorrow of that heavy festal tide.
- C Once more the aweless Volker set him to gibe and jeer:  
"Warriors I see full many with false tears weeping here;  
But little do they for the helping of their king in his evil case.  
They eat the bread of their master to their shame and confusion of face!"
- C And their best in their hearts acknowledged, "That Volker saith is truth."  
And of all that throng was no man more stung with shame and ruth  
Than Iring, Lord of the Marches, a knight from the land of the Dane;  
And in sooth in no long season he proved it in battle-strain.



## XXXV

## HOW IRING FOUGHT AND DIED

Then shouted the Margrave Iring, the lord of the Danefolk's land :  
"Ever on quest of honour have I set mine heart and hand,  
And have done my best endeavour where surges of fight tossed high.  
Bring me mine harness! My prowess against yon Hagen I try."  
"Thou shalt do it to thy destruction!" did Hagen scornfully say.  
"Thou shouldst better bid these Hunfolk to shrink yet farther away.  
Though twain, yea, three of you rushing essay to win this hall,  
Back grievously hurt will I send them; adown this stair shall they fall."  
"Not for thy threats I refrain me!" cried Iring with shining eyes.  
"Full oft ere this have I ventured on as perilous emprise.  
Alone will I withstand thee, and not with words, but the sword.  
What care I for all thy vaunting, O thou tongue-valiant lord?"

Then with speed was the good thane Iring sheathed in knightly mail  
And Irnfried of Thuringia, a heart unused to quail,  
And Hawart the strong, with a thousand warriors in battle-array,  
Stood eager to go where Iring the hero led the way.  
Then looked the viol-minstrel, and beheld that huge war-band  
That would press on after Iring, armed all with shield and brand,  
And upon their heads had they settled and laced the helmets bright.  
Then was the valiant Volker exceeding wroth at the sight.  
"Seest thou, friend Hagen," he shouted, "how Iring cometh on,  
He that but now made proffer to meet thee in battle alone?  
Is it seemly that heroes be liars? contempt upon such I pour.  
Lo, armed at his side come onward a thousand knights or more!"

"Liar me thou no liars!" Hawart's liegeman replied.  
"Unto you did I give a promise, and by that will I abide.



My word shall not be broken for any craven fear!  
Be Hagen never so grimly, alone will I meet him here."  
Thereat did Iring bow him at his friends' and liegemen's feet:  
"Suffer ye me unholpen," he said, "yon knight to meet."  
Right sorely loth they consented, for known to them well was the might  
Of Hagen the Burgundian, the overweening knight.  
So long did he entreat them that at last they needs must yield.  
When his friends and his faithful vassals beheld him steadfast-willed,  
And marked how he thirsted for honour, at the last they let him go.  
Then did begin a grapple most grim 'twixt foe and foe.

Iring the knight of Daneland a casting-spear upswung;  
For a fence of his breast the hero his shield before him flung:  
Swift to the meeting with Hagen to the door of the hall he sprang;  
Then burst forth 'twixt those champions a mighty battle-clang.  
The hands of the twain, ere they grappled, sped the javelins' flight:  
They pierced through the strong-knit bucklers, they rang on the hauberks bright,  
That high above their helmets the splintered spear-staves flew;  
And swiftly the two grim warriors their swords from the scabbards drew.  
Measureless might had Hagen the dauntless above all men;  
Yet starkly did Iring smite him, that the castle rang again:  
Through the halls and the towers of the palace did their blows' wild echoes thrill.  
Yet the Dane with his uttermost striving might compass not his will.

So Iring turned him from Hagen, who was woundless yet of his blows,  
And now with the viol-minstrel in conflict did he close.  
He weened, as he hailed grim sword-strokes, he should smite his foeman down;  
But of fence exceeding cunning was that champion of renown.  
So starkly smote the minstrel, that the studs were whirled through the air  
By Volker's strong hand stricken from the shield that Iring bare.  
So he left him standing unwounded, for a terrible foe was he:  
Then turned he, and leapt upon Gunther, the Lord of Burgundy.  
So champion clashed with champion, giants in battle-might,  
Gunther and Iring, and starkly each the other they smite;



Yet neither could redden the armour of other with gushing blood,  
For the strong-knit links of the harness the edge of the steel withstood.

From Gunther he swiftly hath turned him, and now upon Gernot he springs;  
He smiteth his mail, and he heweth flashes of flame from the rings.  
But Gernot the lord Burgundian with such stark fury fought,  
That to death's sheer brink his prowess the valiant Iring brought.  
But he sprang from the Prince—as a panther's swift was the leap of the thane—  
And four good knights Burgundian with four great strokes hath he slain;  
In the noble host of the vassals from Worms over Rhine they came.  
Never ere then so hotly did the wrath of Giselher flame.  
"By the living God, Sir Iring," the young prince Giselher cried,  
"Unto me shalt thou make atonement for these that here have died  
Even now by thy battle-brand stricken!" He leapt upon his foe,  
And he lashed with a stroke so mighty that the Dane reeled back from the  
blow:

As hurled from the hands of the smiter, backward he fell in blood,  
That it seemed unto all beholders that the warrior stalwart and good  
Should never strike in battle another stroke of brand:  
Yet Iring the while unwounded lay of Giselher's hand.  
In sooth, so rang his helmet, so clashed the sword on his head,  
That stunned he lay, and his senses awhile were utterly fled;  
And indeed for a space he knew not whether he yet lived on.  
Even this unto him had the prowess of valiant Giselher done.

When he came to himself, and out of the darkness his soul awoke  
From the swoon wherein it had sunken at the falling of that great stroke,  
Then thought he: "Behold, I am living! Moreover, wound have I none.  
Now know I Giselher's prowess, the might of the valiant one!"  
Around him the feet of the foemen he heard, as they moved to and fro.  
Had they known that he lived, right swiftly had they ended him, I trow!  
The voice of Giselher heard he withal as he stood hard by;  
And he pondered how from the foemen that ringed him round he should fly.



From the blood like a very madman upsprang to his feet the knight—  
Well might he thank his fleetness for speeding thence his flight!  
As out through the door he darted, lo, there did Hagen stand,  
And the Dane hailed blows upon him with swift and sudden hand.  
Then Hagen thought: "Thou art surely now in the clutches of death!  
Except the Foul Fiend help thee, thou drawest thy latest breath!"  
Yet indeed had he wounded Hagen with a stroke through his helm that clave:  
That deed had he done with Waske, a mighty battle-glaive.  
When Hagen the grim-hearted of the wound so dealt was ware,  
In his grip with tenfold fury his war-glaive hissed through the air  
In such wise that Hawart's liegeman must needs give back from his face,  
And Hagen, as down the stairway he fled, still held him in chase.  
Over his head his buckler he swung up, Iring the strong,  
To screen him: yet had the stairway been even thrice so long,  
No time had Hagen left him to strike one stroke of sword.  
Ha, how the red sparks streaming from his ringing helmet poured!

Yet back unto friends and kinsmen unwounded Iring returned;  
And so soon as the Lady Kriemhild the wondrous tidings learned  
How against Hagen of Troneg her champion had borne him in fight,  
For this that Daughter of Princes poured forth her thanks to the knight:  
"Now God reward thee, Iring, thou thane renowned and bold!  
To mine heart hast thou brought comfort, and made me joyful-souled.  
Lo, I see on the battle-harness of Hagen a bloody stain!"  
And for joy took Kriemhild the buckler herself from the hand of the thane.  
"Small cause wilt thou have to thank him," cried Hagen in fierce disdain:  
"Let but thy valorous champion essay the deed again;  
If alive he win back ever, a hero indeed shall he be;  
And as for the wound he hath dealt me, small joy shall it be unto thee!  
For the little scratch I have gotten that mine harness reddeneth,  
It hath but enkindled my fury unto many a warrior's death:  
Against the liegeman of Hawart mine anger it doth but whet.  
Small scathe thy champion Iring hath done unto Hagen yet!"



For a space in the breeze fresh-blowing stood Iring of Danish land :  
He cooled his limbs in his harness, he loosed his helmet-band.  
All round him the folk stood praising his might and his chivalry,  
And the heart of the Lord of the Marches thereat beat proud and high.  
Then once again spake Iring : " Good friends, I pray you go  
And bring new arms : I am purposed again to essay yon foe,  
If I haply may still the boaster, and abase the arrogant head."  
Sore hacked was his shield, but a better they gave him in its stead.

Soon stood the knight full-armoured in stronger warrior-gear :  
He grasped in his battle-fury a stubborn-shafted spear,  
And he set his face unto Hagen to defy him to fight once more ;  
Then leapt to meet him the hatred of that murder-wolf of war.  
For Hagen the thane would wait not for the coming of Iring's feet,  
But hurling javelins before him he sprang his foe to meet  
Down all the length of the stairway : his fury was passing great.  
Ah, little did Iring's prowess avail in the hour of fate !  
As the swords hewed through the bucklers, it was as a fierce wind blew  
The sparks of a burning forest. Then Hawart's liegeman true  
Gat from the sword of Hagen a wound that bit to the brain  
Crashing through buckler and helmet—he was never whole again.  
When ware was the good knight Iring of the bite of the sword-edge keen,  
Higher he swung his buckler his rifted helm to screen.  
He weened that in that grim sword-gash he had gotten scathe enow ;  
But Gunther's liegeman dealt him a yet more deadly blow :  
For Hagen caught at a javelin that lay at his feet on the ground ;  
At the Daneland hero he hurled it, and his shieldless face it found,  
And lo, the quivering spear-shaft stood out from his head behind.  
From the hand of Hagen the mighty a grim end did he find.  
Back to the ranks of his people staggered the fainting Dane ;  
But ere they could raise the helmet from the piercèd head of the thane,  
They must needs draw out the spear-shaft :—death's hand upon him lay,  
And his friends brake forth into weeping : good cause to weep had they !



Then Kriemhild, Daughter of Princes, to the stricken man drew nigh,  
And she cried over Iring the stalwart an exceeding bitter cry;  
Over his wounds sore wept she: her heart was wrung with grief.  
Then spake in his kinsmen's presence that battle-fearless chief:  
"Forbear thy lamentation, O Lady royal-born.  
What now availeth thy weeping? My life from my limbs is torn:  
Out through the wounds I have gotten it fleeteth fast away.  
Death putteth an end to my service of Etzel and thee this day."  
Unto Dane he turned and Thuringian, and bespake that warrior-band:  
"The gifts that the Queen hath proffered, take heed that no man's hand  
Be tempted to earn that guerdon of the shining gold and red;  
For if ye encounter Hagen, ye shall look on the place of the dead."

Bloodless-grey was his visage: the tokens of death showed plain  
On the brow of the valiant Iring. Their hearts were wrung with pain  
For Hawart's hero-vassal, brave heart for ever stilled!  
Then a sudden fury of battle the Danemark warriors thrilled.  
On charged they, Irnfried and Hawart: they leapt to the guarded door,  
And a thousand heroes followed. Then roar on shattering roar  
Rang round in crashing echoes unearthly wild and high.  
What hail of massy javelins did against the Burgundians fly!

Full on the viol-minstrel did Irnfried the dauntless run,  
But bitter scathe his daring from the hand of Volker won;  
For he dealt, that noble minstrel, the landgrave such a blow  
That it cleft through the firm-knit helmet—in sooth was he grim enow!  
Wounded to death, yet Irnfried smote one mighty stroke,  
And the sword through the rings of the hauberk on the breast of the minstrel broke,  
And over his mail fell flashing the links in a fiery rain:—  
But now was he sped, and the landgrave fell, by the minstrel slain.

Man against man clashed Hagen and Hawart in grapple of fight;  
A tale might he tell of wonders who had looked upon that sight.



Like lashing rain fell swordstrokes from either hero's hand,  
Till slain was the death-doomed Hawart by him of Burgundia-land.  
When Danefolk and Thuringians beheld how their lords were slain,  
Maddened afront of the palace yet grimmer battle-strain,  
As they struggled with mighty hand-strokes to win that portal through,  
And through many a shield and helmet did the flashing steel-edge hew.

"Give back from the door," cried Volker, "and let these enter in!  
Ha, but the prize that they look for not a man of them all shall win!  
One and all shall they perish—ay, and that full soon.  
With death shall they earn their guerdon, Queen Kriemhild's golden boon!"  
Into the hall of slaughter those men high-hearted pressed,  
But soon did many a warrior stoop to the earth his crest.  
Fast, fast by the lightning sword-strokes of its warders were they slain.  
Well fought the dauntless Gernot, well Giselher the thane.  
Into the great hall thronged they, a thousand men and four;  
Then flashed and flickered above them the dancing glaives of war,  
Till at last by the grim guests slaughtered one and all they lay.  
Well may bards sing the wonders of Burgundia's vengeance-day!

Then suddenly died the tumult, there was silence in that hall,  
Save the sound of the blood-streams pouring through the channels in the wall  
And rushing without down the rain-shutes, the blood of knightly foes  
Slain by the men of Rhineland with their swords' resistless blows.  
Then sat them down war-weary the sons of Burgundia-land:  
Dropped was the massy buckler and the sword from the red right hand.  
Yet standing before the doorway did the valiant minstrel stay,  
And watched, if haply a foeman would yet draw near for the fray.

Sorely the King lamented, and the Queen, with bitter cry;  
Sisters and wives were wailing in bereavement's agony.  
Ah, death, I ween, full surely against them an oath had sworn,  
For many a warrior's life-thread by the guests was yet to be shorn.



## XXXVI

## HOW THE QUEEN BADE SET FIRE TO THE HALL

"Unlace ye now your helmets," spake Hagen Troneg's lord.  
"I and my comrade Volker will again keep watch and ward;  
And if yon vassals of Etzel once more the onset essay,  
Straightway will I warn my masters with all the speed I may."  
Then loosed was the band of his helmet by many a warrior good;  
And they sat them down on the corpses that lay there in their blood,  
Which had come by the hands Burgundian to their death, and cumbered the floor,  
The while with bitter hatred the Hunfolk scowled at the door.

Ere the evening shadows had fallen, the King by hest and prayer,  
With Kriemhild the Queen, had persuaded that with hope of fortune fair  
The Huns should essay the onset again: in huge array  
They stood, full twenty thousand in ordered ranks for the fray.  
Then a wilder battle-tempest against the King's guests swept.  
Dankwart, the brother of Hagen, the mighty warrior, leapt  
From beside his lords to the foemen to meet them afront of the hall.  
They deemed him verily death-doomed, yet scatheless he won through all.  
Long lasted that stubborn conflict till the shadows darkened down;  
And the guests still stood unflinching like heroes of renown  
Against the hosts of Etzel through that long summer day.  
Ha, what unnumbered heroes in death before them lay!

In the fair midsummer season was that mighty murder wrought,  
When Kriemhild for her heart's anguish revenge so dearly bought  
On her own nearest kinsfolk and on many guiltless men,  
By reason whereof King Etzel knew never joy again.  
C But so grim and great a murder had she purposed not at the first:  
Nay, in the strife's beginning one thought in her breast she nursed,



That Hagen alone by her vengeance to a bloody end should come:—  
But therein was the Foul Fiend working to fashion for all one doom.

The day was past: the heroes were now in evil strait.  
Weary and famished, it seemed them swift death were a better fate  
Than long to linger in torment of hunger and thirst and pain.  
Wherefore the knights high-hearted for a truce with their foes were fain.  
They asked that the King might meet them before the feast-hall door.  
Then the heroes with armour-soilure blackened, and red with gore,  
Strode forth of the hall, and amidst them stood the Princes three:  
But their haggard eyes found nowhere one glance of sympathy.

And now stand Etzel and Kriemhild that place of death before—  
Theirs is the whole land, therefore waxeth their host evermore—  
Then spake the King to the King's guests: "Say, what would ye of me?  
Haply for peace ye petition? Hardly this may be  
After the wrongs ye have done me, and your ruthless work of death.  
Ye shall not in any wise win it so long as I draw breath.  
My child whom ye have murdered, and all my friends laid low—  
Look ye for peace and forgiveness for these? In sooth, not so!"

"Enforced," made answer Gunther, "were we by a grievous wrong.  
Within their lodging murdered were all mine henchman-throng,  
Murdered by thine own heroes!—whereby had I earned such meed?  
I came to thee trustful-hearted, I held thee a friend indeed!"  
Then spake of the Princes Burgundian the youngest, Giselher:  
"Ye warriors of King Etzel which be yet alive, give ear.  
What have ye against me, heroes? What have I done unto you,  
I, who to this land journeyed with loving heart and true?"  
"*Thy love!*" they replied: "our castles are filled by reason thereof  
With mourning, and all our country! We well could have spared thy love,  
Hadst thou never journeyed hither from Worms beyond the Rhine!  
The whole land lieth orphaned through thee and those brethren of thine!"



Then in mighty indignation Gunther the hero cried:  
"Would ye suffer this deadly hatred even now to be laid aside  
In peace with the homeless warriors, for us and for you it were well,  
For no guilt of ours is the anger of Etzel the King so fell."  
The King to the guests gave answer: "Not yet made equal they are,  
Your sufferings and Etzel's—the bitter travail of war,  
The scathe and the deadly insult that ye have loaded on me—  
For these no man of you living cometh forth into liberty!"

To the King made answer Gernot the stalwart and valorous:  
"At the least may God incline thee to do one grace unto us:  
Slay us indeed, the homeless; but let us forth unto you  
From this prison into the open: for your honour this should ye do.  
Whatsoever then may betide us, be it quickly over and done,  
Ye have hosts of men unwounded: if they dare one and all set on,  
They shall give to the battle-weary death and a soon-won rest.  
How long shall we knights linger thus grievously distressed?"

Now the warriors of King Etzel would lightly have done them the grace  
That the heroes forth of the feast-hall should come to the open space.  
But so soon as Kriemhild heard it, in anguish of wrath she cried  
Against it; and unto the homeless was this last boon denied.  
"Nay, noble knights," she pleaded, "the thing ye incline unto  
Ye never will grant, if ye hearken to faithful counsel and true,  
To let these murder-lusters set foot forth of the hall!  
If ye do it, many your kinsmen in the pit of death shall fall.  
If only three were living, my brethren, Uta's sons,  
And to free air of heaven came forth those mighty ones,  
To cool their scalding harness, ye were lost!—not lightly I warn;  
For verily braver heroes on earth were never born."

Spake Giseler the young Prince: "O fairest sister mine,  
In an evil hour did I trust thee, at whose word I passed over Rhine



A bidden guest to thy country—nay rather to this sore strait!  
What have I done to the Hunfolk to earn me this evil fate?  
Unto thee have I kept troth ever; never I wronged thee in aught.  
Unto Etzel's palace riding I came with this one thought  
That to me thou wert loving-hearted, O sister cherished of me.  
Now show unto us thy mercy: ah, surely so it must be!"

"I show unto you no mercy: no mercy to me was shown!  
Unto me hath Hagen of Troneg foul wrong and ruthless done,  
And for this is there no atonement, so long as I yet have life;  
And for this must ye all pay forfeit!" So spake King Etzel's wife.  
"Yet—yet if Hagen only for hostage to me ye give,  
Not utterly will I deny you, I will haply let you live,  
Forasmuch as ye be my brethren; sons of my mother ye are:  
So will I commune of pardon with these my men of war."

"Now God in Heaven forbid it!" Gernot indignantly cried.  
"Though yet we numbered a thousand, we would all die side by side—  
We who are yet thy kinsmen!—ere one man of us all  
Shall be rendered up for a hostage: that shame shall never befall."  
"So then we must needs all perish," did the young Prince Giseler say;  
"Yet none shall hinder our dying like knights in our war-array.  
If any be fain to fight us, ready here we stand.  
No friend I forsake, betraying the troth of my right hand!"  
Then spake the valiant Dankwart; in the word was his true heart shown:  
"Verily Hagen my brother standeth not here alone.  
We asked of them peace: their denial thereof shall work them woe!  
Yea, by my troth, to their sorrow they yet shall find it so."

Then spake that Daughter of Princes: "O heroes valiant and strong  
Go forward unto the stairway, and avenge us of our wrong;  
And to you will I aye be beholden, even as is meet and right,  
And the insolent outrage of Hagen will I to the full requite."



Let none of all their warriors tarry without the door;  
And I will cause yon feast-hall to be fired at its corners four:  
So shall I have meet vengeance for all mine anguish of heart!"  
Swiftly the warriors of Etzel set them to play their part.  
Them that without were standing they drave back through the door  
With swords and with hail of javelins: loud rang the battle-roar.  
Yet in all that stress the princes and liegemen were sundered not:  
From loyal faith to each other never they swerved one jot.

Then the wife of Etzel commanded to set the hall aflame.  
Now on the heroes the torment of a fiery furnace came.  
The house was enwrapped in the leaping flames by a great wind blown.  
Never, I ween, such anguish by a leaguered host was known!  
Within were there voices crying: "Woe's me for this horror of pain!  
Better that dead we were lying in the storm of battle slain!  
God upon us have mercy!—how utterly are we lost!  
Grimly the Queen is wreaking her vengeance on all this host!"  
Cried a voice yet again through the hot reek: "Here must we meet our doom!  
Unto such a festal high-tide did the false King bid us come?  
Thirst in this flaming furnace so sore tormenteth me,  
That fainteth my life and faileth in this mine agony!"

Then shouted Hagen of Troneg: "O noble knights and good,  
Whoso by thirst is tormented, here let him drink of the blood.  
In heat thus fiercely scorching better than wine it is:  
In this our strait moreover may we find none better than this."  
Then a certain knight which heard him went unto one of the dead;  
He bowed him down to the death-gash, he loosed the helm from his head;  
He drank of the blood fresh-flowing, and deep and long he quaffed  
Of a cup theretofore untasted, and sweet to his lips was the draught.  
"God guerdon thee, Lord Hagen," the weary warrior cried,  
"For this good drink I have gotten, who took thy counsel for guide!  
Never hath cupbearer poured me more soul-refreshing wine.  
So long as I live am I bounden to thee for this rede of thine."



Now when his fellows heard it, that counsel seemed them good,  
And behold, there was many another that likewise drank of the blood:  
Therefrom in the frames of the warriors was strength and life renewed;  
By many a wife on the morrow in the death of her lord was it rued.

From the roof great fragments flaming fell heavily all round;  
But their heads with the shields they warded, and dashed the brands to the ground.  
The rolling smoke and the scorching tormented them full sore:  
Never, I ween, unto heroes befell such pain before.  
Then again spake Hagen of Troneg: "Stand ye close to the wall:  
Suffer ye not the firebrands on your helmet-bands to fall,  
But beneath your feet do ye trample and quench in blood the flame.  
Unto an evil high-tide at Kriemhild's bidding we came!"

Amid such tribulation the night drew on to an end.  
And ever the valiant minstrel kept guard with Hagen his friend,  
Before the palace-portal on his shield-rim resting a hand,  
Aye watching against new onslaughts from the men of Etzel's land.  
C Much it advantaged the heroes that the hall was vaulted o'er:  
By reason thereof, in the morning there lived so many the more.  
Albeit on them at the windows more hotly the flame-tongues played,  
Unflinching did they withstand them as valour and honour bade.

Then spake the viol-minstrel: "Now go we into the hall.  
These Huns shall deem peradventure that their enemies one and all  
Be dead through the fiery torment wherewith we have been beset;  
But I ween there be some that in grapple of fight shall close with them yet."  
Then of the Princes Burgundian the youngest, Giselher, spake:  
"Lo now, a cold wind riseth: the day shall, I trow, soon break.  
May God in Heaven vouchsafe us that a happier day may dawn!  
To an ill high-tide by the bidding of my sister were we drawn!"  
Spake after a space another: "Now I discern the day.  
Then, seeing nought else remaineth, and for us there is but one way,  
E'en make you ready, my masters, as needeth to be done.  
At the least will we die with honour, seeing escape is none."



Now thought, as he well might, Etzel that the guests by this were dead,  
Forspent with battle-travail and with flames encompassèd;  
Yet there six hundred warriors still dauntless stood at bay.  
No king on earth had ever better knights than they.  
Now the watchers that spied on the strangers full well by this were ware  
That many a guest was living, what grievous scathe soe'er  
And torment had been suffered by the kings and their warrior-band.  
They beheld in the blackened feast-hall a goodly company stand.  
Then one brought word unto Kriemhild that yet lived many a foe.  
"Nay," cried the Queen in amazement, "never can this be so—  
Never, that one man living through such a fire could come!  
Nay, I must needs think rather that all have found one doom."

Full fain would Princes and liegemen yet have been spared to live,  
Had any been moved by mercy that boon at the last to give.  
There was none: they could find no daysman in all the Hunfolk's land:  
Therefore did they for their slaying avenge them with willing hand.  
A sudden greeting received they in the first of the morning-red,  
Even a furious onslaught, that the heroes were hardly bestead.  
With javelins flying before it rolled up that battle-flood;  
Yet ever the knights unquailing with ranks unbroken stood.

Now were the hosts of Etzel high-wrought and eager-souled,  
For they looked to win the guerdon of Kriemhild's lavished gold;  
And they burned to prove them loyal in fulfilling their King's command—  
But for many an one doom waited, swift death was hard at hand.  
Of her gifts and her promises marvels now might the minstrel sing.  
She bade men bear upon bucklers the gold bright-glittering;  
And on all that desired and would take it freely did she bestow.  
Never was wealth so lavished to spur men against a foe.

So a mighty array of warriors all-armed to the door drew near.  
Then cried the viol-minstrel: "O yea, yet are we here!"



Never so gladly beheld I heroes come to the fight  
As these which have taken the treasure of the King to do us despite."  
Then many a stern voice shouted: "Ye heroes, come more nigh!  
Make ye an end of us quickly, seeing we needs must die!  
Here shall ye find none waiting save them whom death is to win!"  
Soon were the bucklers heavy with the spears that quivered therein.

What shall I more say?—hundreds twelve, with toil and strain  
Of mightiest sword-strokes battled to break through once and again;  
But with gaping wounds the defenders cooled their fiery mood.  
By none could their strife be parted: rushed in torrents the blood  
Out of the death-deep gashes: fast, fast men fell and died.  
Lamentation for dear friends perished shrieked up on every side.  
So fought they, till all those champions of Etzel the mighty fell,  
And nought was heard but the wailing of them that loved them well.

## XXXVII

### HOW THE MARGRAVE RÜDIGER WAS SLAIN

That morn had the homeless heroes like battling giants warred.  
And now came into the courtyard of the palace Gotlind's lord;  
And he saw what fearful havoc had been wrought unto Hun and to guest.  
Wept Rüdiger the true-hearted with sorrow-burdened breast.  
"Alas and alas," cried the hero, "that I live this day to see!  
And none can now put an ending to this calamity!  
Fain would I make reconciliation, but now no word of peace  
Will the King hear, seeing that ever doth the mischief done him increase.'  
Then Rüdiger the noble sent unto Dietrich of Bern,  
If perchance some little relenting he might win from Etzel the stern.  
But the Lord of Bern sent answer: "The doom who now may stay?  
No man will King Etzel suffer to stand between him and the prey."



Then a certain man of the Hunfolk saw Rüdiger making dole  
With weeping eyes; for long time had he stood there bitter of soul.  
And spake to the Queen that scorner: "Behold him idly stand  
Whom Etzel and thou have exalted above all else in the land!  
Lordships he hath and vassals; to him all minister.  
Wherefore be castles so many committed to Rüdiger,  
Those stately towers that he holdeth now of the King our Lord?  
No knightly blow hath he stricken in this war-storm with his sword.  
Meseemeth he recketh little what here unto us may betide,  
So himself be full of substance and his greed be satisfied.  
Men vaunt him a champion braver than any in all our array:  
Little enow hath he proved it in this our evil day!"

In sorrow and wrath the hero, the man of the loyal heart,  
Glared on the Hunnish mocker who hurled that slander-dart.  
He thought: "For this thou payest! A craven am I, saidst thou?  
In the presence of kings too loudly hast thou told thy story now!"  
He clenched his fist in his anger; full on the scoffer he ran,  
And with such might resistless he smote that Hunnish man,  
That down to the earth he dashed him, and dead at his feet did he lie.  
But the sorrow of King Etzel was made but the more thereby.  
"Away with thee, vile caitiff!" did the good knight Rüdiger cry.  
"Trouble enow and anguish of soul before had I!  
What hast thou to do to taunt me that here I have struck no blow?  
Of a truth to hate yon strangers reason have I enow.  
Yea, now were I striving against them to the uttermost of my might,  
Were it not that I was escort hither to prince and knight.  
Yea, it was I that convoyed them to my lord Etzel's land;  
Therefore I may not against them uplift my wretched hand."  
Then to the Lord of the Marches did Etzel the great King say:  
"Rüdiger, noble hero, how hast thou helped us to-day?  
Good sooth, in the land have perished more than enough of my folk:  
No more murders are needed! Thou hast stricken an evil stroke."



But the noble knight made answer: "He angered my spirit sore;  
For he taunted me with mine honours and my wealth's unstinted store,  
With the gifts that with hand ungrudging thou hast heaped upon me, O King!  
Of a truth to the reckless liar was his scoff an evil thing!"

Drew nigh that Daughter of Princes, which also had seen it done,  
That deed which the hero's anger had wrought on the hapless Hun.  
Bitterly did she lament it, many a tear she shed;  
And unto Rüdiger spake she: "Wherein have we merited  
That to me and the King yet further thou shouldst multiply sorrow and pain?  
Thou hast, O Rüdiger, promised unto us, yea, once and again,  
That thou wouldst venture thine honour, yea, and thy life for us,  
Oft have I heard knights yield thee the prize of the valorous,  
Of the oath-plight now I remind thee that thou swarest by thy right hand,  
When, chosen of knights, thou didst woo me to be queen of Etzel's land,  
That thou wouldst render me service even to our life's end.  
Never—ah me all-hapless!—had I such need of a friend!"

"O Queen, no whit I deny it, an oath unto thee did I take  
That my life and my very honour I would venture for thy sake.  
But to peril my soul's salvation!—that have I never sworn.  
It was I that brought to this high-tide those princes nobly-born."  
"Rüdiger," said she, "bethink thee of that thy plighted troth,  
How that in all mine affliction—thou didst promise and seal it by oath—  
Aye wouldst thou be mine avenger, in my wrongs wouldst stand by my side."  
Made answer the Lord of the Marches: "Never yet hath my word been belied!"

Then did the great King Etzel set him withal to entreat;  
And they knelt in supplication, they twain, at the hero's feet.  
Then was the noble Margrave 'neath a burden of sorrow bowed,  
And the loyal knight in anguish of spirit cried aloud:  
"Woe's me, the God-forsaken, that I live to see this day!  
All my manhood's honour must I now cast away,



All loyal faith God-given, and all my knightly renown!  
 Ah God in Heaven, why rather may death not smite me down?  
 Which deed soever I turn from, to take the other on me,  
 I play the part of a traitor, I act all evilly.  
 Though I take the part of neither, still will the world cry shame.  
 Oh that He now would guide me, from whose fashioning hands I came!"

They hung upon him so sorely, the King and Kriemhild his wife,  
 That doomed was many a warrior to cast away his life  
 By Rüdiger's right hand smitten, yea, the hero's self must die.  
 Now hearken ye to the story of the woe he won thereby.  
 Well knew he that scathe and sorrow unmixed should be all his gain.  
 Of a truth unto Etzel and Kriemhild had he denied full fain  
 Herein to fulfil their pleasure. A dark thought haunted his breast,  
 That the world would hold him accursèd if he slew one single guest.

Then spake once more unto Etzel that hero battle-bold:  
 "Lord King, take back, I pray thee, all things that of thee I hold,  
 My lordships and my castles—I will keep nor wealth nor lands.  
 Forth on my feet into exile will I fare with empty hands.  
 C Stripped bare of all my possessions thy land will I leave—to be free!  
 Only my wife and my daughter will I lead by the hand with me.  
 I choose this, rather than passing to meet death perjured-souled.  
 In an evil hour to thy service did I bind me to earn thy gold!"  
 But answer made King Etzel: "Who then shall mine helper be?  
 Behold, thy land and thy vassals, all these I committed to thee  
 To the end that thou mightest avenge me on whoso should do me despite.  
 Do this, and next unto Etzel shalt thou reign in kingly might."

But Rüdiger made answer: "How can I do this thing?  
 Unto mine house I bade them with friendly welcoming,  
 With meats and with drinks love-lavished their feast did I array,  
 And I gave to them gifts at parting—shall I fall on them now and slay?"



What if the world misdeem me, and say that Rüdiger quailed?  
At the least in all true service to them have I never failed.  
If now I should fall upon them, that were a deed most vile.  
I should sorely rue the friendship knit up with these erewhile.  
I gave to wife my daughter unto Giseler the thane:  
On earth no worthier bridegroom for my dear child could I gain,  
Nor in knightly spirit nor honour, nor in faith, nor in this world's good.  
Never was prince thus youthful so chivalrous of mood."

But again made answer Kriemhild: "O Rüdiger, noble chief,  
Think also on us; have pity on all our wrongs and our grief,  
Upon mine and my Lord King Etzel's; yea, ponder well thereon.  
No host in the wide world ever more pestilent guests hath won."  
Thereat unto Queen Kriemhild did the Lord of the Marches say:  
"His life must be rendered in payment by Rüdiger this day  
For all the kindness showed me of thee and my Lord the King.  
For this must I die: remaineth no space for lingering.  
This day I know of a surety my castles and my land  
Shall be yielded up, shall be wrested from me by a foeman's hand.  
I commit to your lovingkindness my wife and my fatherless child,  
And all mine household abiding in Bechlaren's halls exiled."  
"Now God reward thee," answered the King, "O Rüdiger!"—  
Even he and the Lady Kriemhild, so glad at heart they were—  
"The care of all thy people as a solemn trust we receive.  
Yet, as I hope salvation, I look that thyself shalt live."

So did he set on the hazard both soul and mortal life.  
And now brake forth into weeping Kriemhild, Etzel's wife.  
But he said: "I must keep unbroken the oath that I sware unto thee.  
Alas for you, friends! Sad-hearted I become your enemy!"  
So from King Etzel's presence he departed heavy of cheer;  
And he looked, and behold, his warriors to their lord had now drawn near.  
And he cried: "Ye must forthwith arm you, all ye my faithful ones.  
Woe's me, I must needs do battle with Burgundia's valiant sons!"



Straightway his warriors shouted, "Ho, bring my battle-gear!"  
Then here might ye see a helmet, and a massy buckler here  
Across the court borne swiftly by the squires for their lords to don.  
Too soon were the evil tidings to the haughty strangers known!

Now Rüdiger stood full-armoured, with his five hundred men:  
Twelve knights of Etzel's war-band joined them withal to him then:  
They thirsted to win them glory in the storm of the battle-strain—  
But they knew not the end of the story, nor that death should be all their gain.  
Strode forward under helmet the Lord of the Marches there.  
Battle-glaives keen-whetted the knights of Rüdiger bare:  
Each man gripped by the arm-brace a broad shield burnished bright;  
And the viol-minstrel beheld them, and his heart sank down at the sight.

And behold, his fair bride's father young Giseller saw come,  
On his gallant head his helmet:—what should he divine therefrom  
As touching the warrior's purpose, but the help of a loyal ally?  
And his soul went out to meet him, his heart with joy beat high.  
"Thank God for such true friendship," in gladness the young Prince cried,  
"As we won for our help in trouble, when we rode unto this high-tide!  
Now unto us deliverance for my young bride's sake draws nigh.  
By my faith, my heart rejoiceth that wedded to her am I!"  
"On a broken reed thou leanest," the viol-minstrel said.  
"When sawest thou heroes so many with helmet laced on head  
Draw near for reconcilment, and with swords made bare in the hand?  
Against us he cometh, to render service for castles and land."

Or ever the viol-minstrel had fully spoken the word,  
In front of the great hall-portal men saw that noble lord.  
He set his goodly buckler on the earth before his feet,  
And he looked on the friends he could help not, on the faces he might not greet.  
Then cried the noble Margrave to the hall, a cry of woe:  
"O dauntless men of the Niblungs, now guard you against a foe!