

IV. DIETRICH, THE FAITHFUL ALLY.

MARCH TO ETZEL.

DIETRICH lived in friendship with Etzel, king of the Huns, from the time Rüdiger first brought them together. When the hero came back from Burgundy, he had sent ambassadors to the king, and promised to help him if he was in any difficulty. It was not long before he was reminded of this promise.

The Margrave, who was known in all lands by the title of the good and gentle, came to Bern one day as he had often come before, for he was a welcome guest. On such occasions the warriors would talk over their past adventures, and tell tales of noble and doughty deeds. Rüdiger told amongst other things of his adventures in Spain, and how he had at last left that country, and taken service under King Etzel, who had always been a true friend to him since the beginning of their acquaintance. He went on to relate how King Etzel, powerful monarch as he then was, did not shun to speak of the hardships and homelessness of his early youth.

"Yes, truly," interrupted Master Hildebrand, "and I know as much of his early youth as ever the great king himself. Once when Wilkinus was ruler of the Wilkin-men—"

"Ha! my great-grandfather!" cried Wittich. "What have you to say of him?"

"I only know," continued the master, "that he was a mighty chief, and that many kings were subject to him; amongst others, King Hertnit. After the death of Wilkinus, Hertnit rebelled against his son and heir, Nordian, and forced the latter to acknowledge him as his liege lord. The conquered king obtained the rule of Zealand in fief, and declared himself satisfied, although he had four gigantic sons, namely, Asperian, Edgar, Awentrod, and terrible Widolf of the club, who was always kept chained up. because he did so much destruction whenever he was in a rage. When great Hertnit died, he divided his kingdom amongst his three sons. Osantrix (Oserich) obtained the rule over the Wilkinmen, Waldemar that over the Reussen, and Ylias became yarl of the Greeks. The eldest of the three wooed beautiful Oda, daughter of Melias, king of the Huns. He won her by trickery and force, with the help of Nordian's four giant sons. Oda's father and husband became allies after the marriage, but they could not conquer the bold Frisians, who often made raids into the land of the Huns, and burnt, destroyed, or stole whatever they laid their hands on. For Melias was old and weak, and the Wilkinmen lived so far away that their help always arrived too late. The leader of these bold invaders was the mighty man of valour now known as King Etzel, or Attila as he is sometimes called. He was a son of the Frisian chieftain Osid, and after his father's death had to allow his brother Ortnit to succeed to the rule of Friesland, and himself go out into the wide world, with nothing but his armour and a good sword. But Frisians are a bold and warlike people. Many of them joined themselves to the young hero, and accompanied him in his viking raids into the neighbouring land of the Huns. When Melias died, the notables of the land elected their former enemy, bold Etzel, to be their king, and thus the robber chief and invader became the sovereign and protector of the country he had once laid waste."

"Yes," returned Rüdiger, "that is quite true, and there is more to tell. King Etzel wished to marry Erka (Herche or Helche), the beautiful daughter of Osantrix, chief of the Wilkinmen. I was sent as ambassador to her father, and was well received; but when I told the king the object of my mission, he grew wrathful, and said that he would never give his consent to such a marriage, for Etzel was not the rightful chief of the Huns; adding that the position was his by right of his wife, the daughter of Melias. He cared not when I threatened him with war; but desired me to go my way. Etzel invaded the country with his men; and when, after much fighting, a truce was at last agreed to, neither side had gained much advantage.

"A year later, I went back with a number of brave men, and had a strong castle built for me in the Falster-wood. This done, I stained my face, and otherwise disguised by a long beard, went again to visit Osantrix. I told him I was a faithful servant of the late King Melias, that I had been ill-treated and deprived of my lands by Etzel, and had therefore taken refuge with him. This story gained me his confidence, and having occasion to send his daughter Erka a message, he made me his ambassador. I told the maiden of Etzel's wooing, and how he wished to share his power and glory with her. At first she was very angry, but at last consented to marry him.

"One moonlight night, I brought horses to the gares of the fortress where she was shut up with her young sister; broke the bars, and carried off the princesses. We were pursued, but managed to reach the castle in the wood where my men were awaiting me. I had scarcely time to send a message to Etzel, when Osantrix came upon us with all his host. He laid siege to our stronghold; but we managed to defend ourselves till Etzel came with a great army, and forced the Wilkin-men to withdraw. Ever since then, there has been a constant predatory

warfare between the two nations, and Osantrix has even now invaded our land with a large army. He is accompanied by Nordian's giant sons, who are the terror of our people. Now, noble Dietrich, Etzel thinks that if you will come and help him, he is sure of victory."

"Ah well! If my dear comrade Wildeber will go with me," cried Wittich, "I think that we two shall be able to reckon with the giants."

Dietrich promised his help, and ordered all preparations to be made for the campaign. The Bernese heroes arrived just in time, for the two armies were standing opposite each other in battle array. The fight began.

Dietrich and his men took up their position in the centre division. The Amelung banner, borne by Herbrand, floated proudly above their heads, and Wittich rushed foremost into the fray. He first encountered the grim giant Widolf, who gave him a blow on the helmet with his iron club. The dragon that formed the top of the helmet was bent by the terrible blow, and although Wieland's work did not break, the hero himself fell from his horse, and lay senseless on the ground. Over him rushed the men-at-arms in the wild mêlée. Heime alone drew rein. He stooped, and drew the sword Mimung out of Wittich's hand, for he held him to be dead. When the wild fight was over and done, the Wilkin-men retreated from the field, and the Huns pursued them, plundering where they could. Hertnit, nephew of Osantrix, reached the battle-field too late. He could not prevent his uncle's defeat, but he found Wittich, as yet scarcely recovered from his swoon, and took him prisoner.

The victors feasted at Susat, and rejoiced over their great deeds; but Dietrich was sad at heart, for he had lost sixty of his men; and, worst than all, his friend and comrade, Wittich, was among the missing. In vain had they sought him on the battle-

field. All wondered what had become of him. When the king of Bern, richly rewarded for his help by Etzel, made ready for his departure, Wildeber came to him, and asked for leave of absence, because he would not, could not, go home without Wittich. Dietrich willingly gave his consent, for he could not help the foolish hope springing up within his breast that perhaps Wittich might be yet alive, and that his friend might find him.

The next day, Wildeber went out hunting, and slew a bear of unusual size. He skinned it, and went with the skin to Isung, the minstrel, and arranged with him a plan to free Wittich, should he be a prisoner in the hands of Osantrix. Isung helped him to draw the skin over his armour, and fasten it up carefully; then led him in the guise of a dancing bear to the stronghold of the chief of the Wilkin-men.

Now wandering players and merry-andrews, of every sort, were welcome guests in all castles and cottages, so Isung and his bear were well received.

Osantrix laughed heartily at the marvellous agility of the creature in dancing and springing to the sound of the fiddle, and even Widolf, the grim giant, who was led about with a chain by his brother Awentrod, laughed for the first time in his life, making the halls shake with the sound. Suddenly it occurred to the king that it would enhance the sport to set his twelve boar-hounds on the bear, to see how strong it was.

Isung vainly entreated the king to forbear the cruel sport, alleging that his tame bear was worth more to him than all the gold in the royal treasury; but Osantrix was not to be persuaded. The great dogs were loosed, and the barbarous sport began. To the astonishment of all, the boar-hounds were either worried or smitten to death by the bear.

Osantrix sprang angrily to his feet, and slashed at the creature's

shoulder with his sword; but the steel armour under inside the bear-skin saved the hero's life. Another moment, and the bear had wrenched the sword from the king's hand, and split his head open. The second blow did to death grim Widolf, the third his brother Awentrod. Isung stood staunchly by his friend when the Wilkin-men sought to avenge their king. The courtiers, however, soon took flight in deadly fear of the player and his wild beast.

Wildeber now threw off the bear-skin, took the helmet off one of the giants, and fully armed, set out in search of Wittich. The heroes searched the palace. They found Wittich's good steed Skeming, and his armour; but neither him nor the sword Mimung could they discover.

At length they lighted on him in a damp, dark dungeon, chained to a wall, and grown so pale and thin as to be hardly recognisable. Fresh air, food, and wine soon made a change in his appearance. He put on his armour, and sadly took another sword, saying that none could be as good as Mimung.

"Now let us begone," said Isung, "lest the Wilkin-men should come back."

So Wildeber and he helped themselves to horses from the royal stables, and the three heroes galloped away.

"Of a truth," cried King Etzel, when he heard their story, "you are bold men. You have done me good service, and have brought the war to an end unaided. The lord of Bern is richer than I, in that he has comrades who willingly venture their own lives to serve a brother-in-arms."

He kept the heroes for several days to recruit their strength, and then sent them home laden with rich gifts.

Dietrich was overjoyed to see his brave warriors again, and showed them honour in many ways; but noticing that trusty Wittich was silent, and had no appetite for wine or food. he asked him what ailed him. And Wittich answered that he sorrowed for the loss of Mimung, his father's best gift, and would go in search of it though he had to wander through every land.

"I have a notion that you need not take so long a journey," replied the king, "for I cannot help thinking that the sword Heime wears is as like Wieland's work as one drop of blood is like another."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of two warriors in rich armour, who had been sent by the Emperor Ermenrich, Dietrich's uncle, to tell the hero that Yarl Rimstein, his vassal in a great fief, had revolted against his authority. Ermenrich, therefore, entreated his nephew's aid, and Dietrich promised to help the emperor.

MARCH AGAINST RIMSTEIN.

Before starting, Wittich said that he could not go to Rimstein without his sword, and Heime refused to give it up, alleging that it was his by right of war; but the king smoothed matters for the time by desiring Heime to lend it to his comrade during the campaign.

The warriors set out. The rebel yarl proved himself a tougher foe than had been expected, and even after weeks and months had passed, his castle seemed as impregnable as ever.

One moonlight night when Wittich was out alone, he met six warriors whom he knew, by the device upon their shields, to belong to the enemy. They fought, and Wittich slew their chief, his sword Mimung cutting him in two from the neck to the waist. The other five fled in terror, lest a like fate should befal them. On examining the dead man, Wittich found it was the yarl himself that he had slain, so he returned to the camp well

pleased. Next morning he told Dietrich and his comrades what had chanced, and how the war was now at an end.

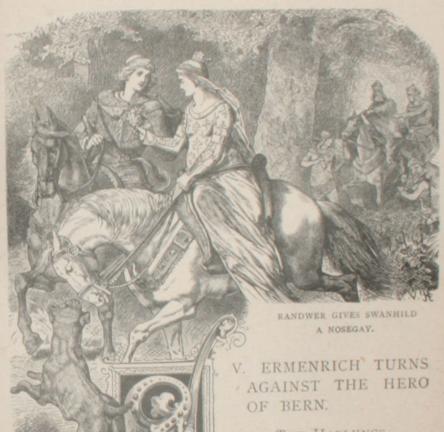
"He is indeed a bold warrior," said Heime sarcastically; "he has slain a weak old man, who could not defend himself a bit better than a woman. But now, I must have Mimung back again, for I only lent it for this enterprise."

"Let me first try it on your head, false comrade," answered Wittich indignantly. "You left your brother-in-arms to die in a strange land, and were traitor enough to rob him of his weapon of defence as well. You shall now pay the penalty of your meanness."

Heime drew his sword Nagelring, and a fight was imminent; but Dietrich thrust himself between the angry men, and commanded them on their allegiance to keep the peace.

Ermenrich rejoiced to hear of Wittich's deed, and that the war was at an end. He gave rich presents to Dietrich and his men, and asked the royal hero to give Wittich leave of absence, that he might marry fair Bolfriana, the emperor's ward, and undertake the government of her rich fief of Drachenfels (the "Trekanfil" of Norse legend). Dietrich was pleased at his comrade's good fortune, and at parting, he merely reminded him of his oath of fidelity, which the hero at once renewed.

Not long afterwards Wittich was married to Bolfriana, and was endowed by the emperor with the great fief of Drachenfels, which extends to Fritilaburg (Friedburg?), and far beyond the eastern mountains. So Wittich became a mighty chief, as he had told his father that he would. Heime also, when his father Studas died, went to Ermenrich's court to take the oath of allegiance. He received other lands from his imperial master, and, what he liked still better, much red gold besides.



THE HARLUNGS.

RMENRICH had a great and mighty empire. His lands

stretched out to the east and west, and many kings owed him fealty. His counsellors were wise and clear-headed men, whose advice was of the utmost use to him. Chief among these was Sibich, the marshal of the realm, who was helped in his arduous labours by Ribestein, the head of the royal household, and his constant companion. These men had always used their influence with the emperor to keep him true to his alliance with his nephew, the king of Bern, of whom, in his heart of hearts,

his imperial highness was not a little jealous. But a great change was soon to take place in the policy pursued at Romaburg.

Sibich had a young and beautiful wife, of whom he was very fond. Now Ermenrich once sent him away on a long journey, and during his absence did him foul wrong. When the marshal returned, and heard from his weeping wife of the emperor's treachery, he was filled with wrath. At first, he snatched up a dagger to kill his foe, but restrained himself, for he had thought of a subtler mode of vengeance. He desired to make the emperor the murderer of every member of his family, to deprive him of all his allies, and finally have him assassinated. It was a plan worthy of the devil himself, and was carried out with great craft and intelligence.

Sibich's first step was to buy over Ribestein to his design, which he did for a large sum of money, avarice being the man's weak point. This done, Ribestein agreed to write letters to the emperor as if from the duke of Tuscany, the count of Ancona, the prince of Milan, and others, warning him that his son Friedrich was plotting against him.

The evil deed was easily accomplished, as Ribestein had copies of all the coats of arms and seals used by the grandees of the empire. Ermenrich was naturally of a suspicious disposition, so he readily fell into the snare laid for him. He consulted Sibich as to what were best to be done, and the false counsellor advised him to send Prince Friedrich with a letter to Yarl Randolt, ostensibly to demand payment of the tribute the yarl owed, but really containing an order that the prince should be slain. The emperor did as he was advised; and Sibich took care that the deed should become generally known. A cry of horror went through the land, and Ermenrich was hated by all.

Reginbald, the second son, met his death in a different fashion:

he went down in the rotten ship in which his father had sent him on a pretended mission to England.

One son alone remained, Randwer, the third and youngest, a high-spirited, handsome youth, in whom there was no guile. That helped him nothing, however. One day, in the innocence of his heart, he gave his young step-mother Swanhild a bunch of flowers, when they were out hunting with the whole court, and Ermenrich, whose mind had been poisoned by false Sibich, ordered Swanhild to be trampled under foot by horses, and Randwer to be hung. His commands were obeyed. He was now alone in the world, a childless old man.

"Well, Ribestein," said the marshal to his accomplice, "we are getting on very well. The emperor's only remaining heirs are the Harlungs, Imbreke and Fritele, who live at Breisach, on the Rhine, with their governor Eckehart; and then Dietrich of Bern. The Harlungs and the hero are both brother's children. You were not born and brought up in Romaburg, so I will tell you the story.

"Ermenrich's grandfather left two sons besides him—namely, Dietmar, the father of Dietrich, who received the kingdom of Lombardy, and Dieter, surnamed Harlung, who during his father's lifetime received the Breisgau and an enormous hoard of red gold. Now listen to this. If we can only get rid of the Harlungs and the hero of Bern—yes, open your eyes and ears as wide as you can—you and I can divide between us the inheritance of Ermenrich!"

Ribestein jumped at the proposal as a fish jumps out of the water with joy on a bright day. He had never thought of such a thing before; but he quickly understood what was required of him, and set about the evil work at once.

The Harlungs were first brought under suspicion. Letters were shown to the emperor purporting to be from Imbreke,

Fritele, and even from their governor Eckehart, addressed to different notables of the empire, and setting forth Ermenrich's crimes in the darkest colours. One of the letters contained the following passage: "Since our liege lord has, in his desperate wickedness, slain his own children, he must himself perish, and that on the highest gallows." The emperor was so angry when he read these words, that he determined to collect an army, and march against his rebellious nephews.

The troops were called out without any one knowing against whom the campaign was to be made. They marched towards the Rhine till they reached Tralenburg, which belonged to the Harlungs and where the brothers then lived. Two horsemen kept watch by the river. When they saw the armed men, they feared something was wrong, and, dismounting, swam with their horses across the river. They gave the alarm, and all was prepared for defence. Imbreke and Fritele knew the science of war; but they were still very young, and Eckehart, their governor, was detained at Breisach by business of the state. When the Harlungs saw their uncle's banner, they thought all danger was over; but soon found to their cost that it was a warlike and not a peaceful visit. Wittich and Heime were with the imperial army; but as soon as they learnt Ermenrich's plans they rode away to Breisach to warn the faithful Eckehart of what was going on. As they journeyed together, they became good friends

Tralenburg was at length reduced by fire and taken by storm Without seeing his nephews, Ermenrich ordered a gallows to be erected, and the two brothers to be at once hung thereon. In those days the word of a mighty potentate was law, and the emperor was obeyed without remonstrance. Ermenrich now took possession of the Harlungs' land, and sent out men to search for the rich hoard the murdered princes had inherited from their

father. It was at length found hidden in a cave. The emperor rewarded his army richly, and kept the rest of the treasure-trove for himself.

Meanwhile Heime had returned. He had come back intending to reproach his liege lord with his evil deed, and to throw up his fief. But on receiving a large share of the booty, he forgot his better purpose. He was entrusted with the care of taking the treasure to Romaburg. When he saw the heap of red gold and precious stones, he took care that a considerable portion of it should find its way to Studa's grange, and not to Romaburg. Meanwhile curses both loud and deep were uttered in every land against the emperor. Eckehart brought the news of the Harlungs' fate to Bern, and Dietrich's wrath burned when he heard it. He said the time would surely come when he could demand expiation from Ermenrich, and punish his evil counsellors Sibich and Ribestein. The fiery young heroes Alphar and his brother Sigestab wished to start at once alone with Eckehart to avenge the murder. But their father Amelolt and Hildebrand persuaded them to wait.

"What is only put off may yet be done," said Alphar to his brother, laying his hand upon his sword.

Somewhere about this time Sibich and Ribestein met to hold counsel as to what they should do next.

"Another stone is out of the way," said Sibich; "now we must try to find levers strong enough to move the great rock that stands in our way."

The accomplices felt that they must be careful and not push matters too fast, for, in the first place, the emperor's own soul was darkened by the crimes he had committed, and whenever he was alone he was haunted by the unsubstantial ghosts of those whose death he had compassed,—and, in the second place, before declaring war upon the hero of Bern, they felt it would be

safer to gain over as many as possible of his comrades to their side. But they were hurried on faster than they wished, for Ermenrich's uneasy conscience would not let him rest—he must have excitement.

The first step taken was to demand tribute of Dietrich of Bern. So Reinhold of Milan was sent into the land of the Amelungs to levy the tribute. The messenger returned in a few weeks' time with empty hands. He said that the notables had flatly refused to pay what he demanded, for they had already paid it to the lord of Bern. And Dietrich had desired him to tell the murderer of the Harlungs to come himself and take the tribute, which would be paid him to the last mark at the spear's point and the sword's edge.

The emperor sent Heime to Bern to tell Dietrich that if he did not pay the tax, he would come in person and hang him on the highest gallows.

Heime was well received in Bern. Dietrich thought that he had come in memory of old times, but when he delivered the emperor's message, the hero asked him if he remembered his old oath of fidelity; to which Heime replied that he had served out his bond, that he was now a vassal of the emperor, who had given him land and gold, and to whom he therefore owed service. Therewith he took his leave.

Heime was not long gone, when Wittich appeared. He galloped up to the castle gate.

"Arm, comrades, arm!" he cried, "there is not a moment to lose. Ermenrich approaches with an innumerable army. I rode on before to warn you of his coming. Faithless Sibich intended to have taken you by surprise, and whoever falls into his hands is not far from death."

Dietrich reminded him of his oath, but like Heime he excused himself, and rode away.

The Norns appeared at this time to have thrown their darkest web over the head of the hero of Bern. One blow struck him after another. From Wittich he hastened to the sick queen Virginal. All night long he held her in his arms. In the morning she died, and grief for her loss prevented his acting with the quick determination usual to him. Master Hildebrand, however, was not idle. He had summoned all the vassals with their following from far and wide in the land of the Amelungs. And the night before the queen's death, many allied princes joined them; amongst the number, Berchtung of Pola (in Istria), and the king's faithful comrade, Dietleib of Styria, with all their men.

In the morning the old master called the king, and told him that the time was come to fight for his land and people. The hero of Bern made a mighty effort to master his grief. He pressed a last kiss on the pale lips of his dead wife, and passed away on his march to the great battle.

The emperor had already subdued the duke of Spoleto, and had advanced as far north as Milan. There he encamped, and not suspecting any surprise, he and his men all went to sleep. Meanwhile Dietrich had arrived within a short distance of his camp. While the others rested, Hildebrand rode forward to see what watch the enemy kept, and finding them unprepared, he advised an immediate onslaught.

The imperial forces were suddenly aroused by the battle cry, "Hey for Bern! Hey for the red lion!" They hastily got ready for the fray. The battle raged furiously. Dietrich and his followers were far outnumbered by the foe, but that only made them fight with the more desperation. And which of them could have failed to do his duty under such a leader?

Wolfhart cried, "If we must die, let each man throw his shield behind him, and take his sword in both hands."

He did as he said, and Sigestab and Eckehart followed his example.

Wittich and Heime fought bravely as of old, but they avoided their former chief, and were at length carried away in the general flight. For the imperial troops were routed by a flank movement made by Hildebrand.

Ermenrich went back to Romaburg in a very bad humour. He felt inclined to hang Sibich and Ribestein for leading him into a scrape, yet he refrained, as he hardly knew what he could have done without them.

Dietrich sent the treasure gained in Milan home to Bern under the charge of some of his comrades, and Berchtung of Pola undertook to provide pack-horses on which to convey it. The convoy travelled by forced marches, but when they reached the lake of Garden, and saw the stars mirrored in its bosom, and heard the plashing of the waterfall, Amelolt thought, that being in the land of the Wolfings, they need no longer fear robbers, and might enjoy a little needful rest. The wearied men hailed his proposition with joy, and, after supping on the provisions in their wallets, soon fell asleep on the soft turf. Hildebrand with ten of his followers tried to keep awake, but they were so tired that the sound of the murmuring water acted on them like a lullaby, and soon they were sleeping as soundly as the rest.

At daybreak they were roughly wakened. Wild faces glared upon them, strong hands bound them, and scornful laughter echoed in their ears. Four of the warriors, who had sought to defend themselves sword in hand, were cut down. The others were all bound and carried away with the treasure.

They had not been prisoners long before the comrades saw that they had fallen into the hands of their deadly enemy—faithless Sibich. He had heard of their journey in charge of the treasure, and had brought his troops by sea to Garden, had lain in wait

near the lake, and had then fallen upon the sleeping men. Thus it was that the brave heroes were conquered by cunning.

One warrior had escaped the common misfortune, and this was Dietleib, the hero of Styria. He was sleeping in a thicket a little apart from the rest, when Sibich's men fell on the camp. Hearing the noise, he sprang to his feet, slew several of the men-at-arms. mounted his horse and fled to Bern, a bearer of sad tidings. He found every one there in great anxiety. Ermenrich had again invaded the country, had taken Milan, Raben (Ravenna), and Mantua, and, worse than that, many of Dietrich's men had deserted him, and joined the enemy.

The warriors who preserved their faith, and were determined to die with their lord if needful, were few in number. A message was sent to Ermenrich that the hero of Bern was willing to exchange his prisoners of war for his brave comrades. The answer he received was, that he might do with his prisoners as he liked—the warriors the emperor had taken were all condemned to be hanged. This was the worst news Dietrich had ever heard

Then the lady Ute, Hildebrand's high-hearted wife, arose, and, accompanied by other noble ladies, went to the enemy's camp and entered the presence of Ermenrich. She offered him in exchange for the prisoners Sibich had just made, all her jewels, and those of all the other women and maidens of Bern. Ermenrich told her harshly that what she offered him was his already, and that if the king wished his comrades to be set free, he and they must leave the country as beggars, on foot, and leading their horses.

Hildebrand's wife could not bear to hear that. She had fallen on her knees before the emperor; but now she rose, and told him proudly that the heroes of Bern and their wives knew how to die, but not how to leave their country in dishonour. The women left the camp in deep sorrow

When Dietrich heard the bad news, he had a long struggle with himself. He had been victorious before with smaller numbers to support him, but victory was always uncertain, and how could he allow his dear old master, and noble Berchtung, brave Wolfhart, Amelolt, Sigeband, Helmschrot, and Lindolt, to die a shameful death? It was a hard struggle. At length he bowed his head to necessity. He consented to Ermenrich's terms.

On being set free from prison, his comrades received their horses and arms again, and then they, and other faithful souls, three and forty men in all, accompanied their lord on his sad journey. There was not a dry eye in Bern when the king went away, and even in foreign lands the fate of Dietrich and his comrades was spoken of with bated breath.

The heroes would not mount their horses when they had crossed the borders of the imperial domains, for the king walked on unheeding over the wild mountain roads. So the small band of brave men wandered through the beautiful Danubian land, and approached Bechelaren, where Margrave Rüdiger held court. There they received a brotherly welcome.

One day, when they had been some time at Bechelaren, Dietrich, who had been thinking of the contrast between his desolated home and the smiling land he saw before him, said, with a deep sigh, that everywhere around him was peace and unity, and he would like to remain there for ever and forget his woes.

Wolfhart reproached him vehemently for wishing to forget his home, adding, "If that is the case, I shall go back and fight till my last drop of blood is shed."

"Not so fast, young hero," answered the Margrave, "King Etzelowes thanks for the help once granted him. I will go with you to the court at Susat, and am certain that he will help you to regain the land of the Amelungs."



WALTER AND HILDEGUNDE TAKEN AS HOSTAGES BY THE HUNS.

VI. KING ETZEL, WALTER OF WASGENSTEIN, AND HILDEGUNDE.

WHEN Etzel became king of the Huns, he was the mightiest of all chieftains, but his lust of power was not satisfied. He collected a great army, and falling upon the land of the Franks, demanded tribute with threats of devastation. The Frankish king was unprepared to defend himself, so he paid large sums of money, and gave as hostage for his good faith, the boy Hagen of Tronje (Tronege). His own son was too young, being yet in the cradle.

The Huns went on to Burgundy, where they also levied tribute, and received as hostage the king's daughter Hildegunde, a child of four years old. They were equally successful with King Alphar of Aquitaine, who paid them much red gold, and gave them his young son Walter as hostage.

Hagen and Walter early showed great warlike ability. They learnt from the Huns to ride, throw the spear, and fight after

the German fashion, and few could equal them in manly sports. Hildegunde became very lovely, and was a great favourite with the queen. Time went on, and these young people all grew up. Helche advised her husband to marry Hagen and Walter to Hunnish maidens of high degree, so as to confirm them in their devotion to himself, and their adopted country; but the youths did not admire the beauties of that nation, whose blubber-lips did not provoke a kiss. Walter was more attracted by slender Hildegunde's rosy mouth, fair curls, and blue eyes, than by any of the daughters of the land; and he was more pleasing in her eyes than the bow-legged Hun whom the queen desired her to marry.

Meanwhile the Franks and Burgundians had thrown off the yoke of the Huns, and Etzel did not dare to enforce it in the then condition of affairs. Hagen one day found out what had chanced, and, according to one account, he made his escape to his own people, but, according to another, was sent home loaded with honours. But Etzel did his best to keep Walter with him, for he knew his bravery and worth.

Once when the king returned with his warriors from conquering an invading horde, he gave a great feast, and asked Hildegunde to sing him a song. The maiden complied, and sang about her old home and her mother, and how she trusted to return to them once more, when the hero came for whom she waited. Etzel did not take in the sense of her song, as she had expected; he had raised the wine-cup to his lips too often for that. But Queen Helche understood, and determined to watch Walter and the maiden, lest they should fly together.

Walter, too, had understood the meaning of the song, and soon found an opportunity of arranging matters with Hildegunde regarding their flight.

"Do not sleep to-night," he whispered one evening, "but slip

into the treasure-chamber, and take as much gold and silver as you can carry out of the seventh chest; it is part of the tribute money that your father and mine paid the Huns long ago. Put the money you have taken in two caskets, and



WALTER AND HILDEGUNDE HALT IN THE FOREST.

bring them down to the hall. You will find me waiting for you at the gate with two saddled horses. We shall be gone a long time before the drunken Huns find out that we have escaped them."

They carried out Walter's plan in every particular, and made their way to Bechelaren first, then to the Rhine, and finally to the mountains of Wasgengau (Vosges), in the highest of which, the Wasgenstein, they found a cave with such a narrow entrance that one man could there defend himself against an army. Walter wished to rest awhile, for he had had but little sleep during their long and toilsome journey, so he asked the maiden to keep watch, lest a sudden attack should be made upon them. He had not been long asleep when Hildegunde saw the sheen of armour in the distance. She wakened the hero, telling him that the Huns were upon them.

"These are not Huns, but Burgundians," he answered, starting to his feet. And he found they were messengers sent by King Gunther, to demand that the treasure should be given up to him. Walter offered to hand over a shield full of gold, but this was refused, and the fray began. But the assailants could only approach one at a time; so the hero, who had learnt from the Huns to throw the javelin, was able to kill them one after the other with these missiles, and, when they failed, with his sword. Hagen had come with Gunther's men, but he stood apart during the fight, siding with neither party; only when he saw his friends falling fast, his hand involuntarily sought his sword, but he did not draw it. He returned to the king, and advised him to try an ambush.

Next day, as Walter and Hildegunde were continuing their journey across the open country, they were set upon by two men in complete armour, who sprang out upon them from behind a clump of bushes. They were Hagen and King Gunther. Despairing of flight, Walter leapt off his horse, and they did the same. With wonderful agility, he dodged, now to the right, now to the left, to avoid their blows; at length his sword cut through one of King Gunther's greaves, and the edge

entered the bone of the leg. He stood over the fallen king, and was about to deal him a death-blow, when a stroke from Hagen disabled his sword-arm. He dropt the sword, but with his left hand drew his dagger, and plunged it into Hagen's eye. Seeing them all three disabled, Hildegunde came forward to propose a truce, and bound up all their wounds; after which she and Walter went on their way in peace. They arrived at Aquitaine without further adventure, and were there married. The young hero in later days always took part with the Burgundians and Ermenrich, as we saw before when Dietleib cnallenged him at Romaburg.





VII. ETZEL AND DIETRICH AGAINST THE REUSSEN.

BUT now we must return to Dietrich and Etzel. When the hero of Bern desired Etzel's help in freeing the land of the Amelungs from the tyranny of the usurper, he found that it was impossible for the latter to grant it. His hands were already overfull with his own quarrels.

Waldemar, king of the Reussen, and brother of that Osantrix whom Etzel had formerly slain, and whose daughter he had married, now invaded his borders, and threatened to overrun the country. In truth, Etzel needed Dietrich's help, and the latter did not hesitate to grant it.

The war lasted a long time. Many men were slain, and much fair land was devastated before the invaders were forced to retire. Dietrich himself was so severely wounded that it was some time before he felt like himself again. There was one thing which happened during the war that saddened and shamed honest Margrave Rüdiger, and that was the remembrance of the way in which Etzel had on one occasion fled before Waldemar, thereby proving the latter the better man. Indeed every one felt that the defeat of the Reussen was owing more to the leadership and heroism of the hero of Bern than to any other cause.

Etzel pursued the enemy within their own borders, and forced them to pay him tribute.

Dietrich was held in high honour by the Huns, but they did not see the advantage of helping him to regain his own land, and he felt sad at heart. At last Queen Helche thought of a way to make him happy. She proposed to give him her beautiful niece Herrat to wife, and then they might rule together over the princess's fair land of Transylvania. Dietrich and Herrat made no objection to the marriage, which was soon afterwards celebrated. But Etzel erred in thinking that the hero of Bern would ever be content to sink into the position of a vassal of the Hunnish empire. Neither he nor Herrat were made of such slight stuff, and Etzel was obliged after all to give the help he had before refused.





VIII. THE RAVEN-FIGHT (BATTLE OF RAVENNA).

DIETRICH GOES TO BERN.

"GOING back to Bern! Dietrich is going to Bern! We are to have a campaign in Lombardy," was the cry which rang through the land of the Huns.

Yes; Dietrich was really going back, accompanied by many brave comrades new and old, and at the head of a large army. Even Etzel's two sons, mere boys as they were, insisted on going too. The line of march lay through the great mountains and fair plains of Lombardy. Amelolt (Amelung) and Hildebrand, at the head of the Wölfings, stormed Garden, and took the fortress But the old master had not time to stay and embrace the Lady Ute and his son Hadubrand, for they were not in the castle at the time, and he had to rejoin the army without delay. He came up with the rest at Padauwe (Padua), which Dietrich failed to subdue. The army, leaving Padauwe behind it, moved on to Bern, from which Dietrich heard that Ermenrich's men had been expelled by the citizens.

At length the hero was at home in his beloved Bern, where he was received with great rejoicings. He had not long to rest; for a few days after his arrival, Alpher came, bringing a message from Duke Friedrich of Raben (Ravenna), that the Emperor Ermenrich was besieging his town, therefore he begged the hero's

assistance. The Bernese forces made a rapid march, and arrived unexpectedly in the neighbourhood of the imperial army.

It was of no use to send out scouts. The foe lay hidden in every thicket. Dietrich asked his heroes which of them would undertake to gain the enemy's outpost, and immediately young Alphart, the Lady Ute's foster-son, declared himself ready. Others wished to have the duty; but he had spoken first, and it was given to him.

ALPHART'S DEATH.

The youthful hero rode on towards the dangerous outposts. Suddenly, spears and arrows rained round him, and fell rattling from helm and shield. But they did no harm, for his armour had been made by dwarfs. The enemy's leader rode up to him, and desired him to yield, saying that he might give him his sword without shame, for he was Duke Wölfing, and would return the weapon to Alphart when he was ransomed.

"What?" cried the hero, "are you Duke Wölfing, the only traitor of our race? You shall have your wages here to-day, and from my hands."

The combat between the two men was short. Alphart slew his opponent. Upon this, the duke's retainers hastened up to avenge him, but the young hero killed half of them, and put the rest to flight.

"A spirit from the nethermost hell has come to fight for Dietrich," cried the men-at-arms. "It slew more than fifty of us single-handed, and we ourselves hardly escaped with our lives."

"Do you not know that the hero of Bern is a son of the devil?" was the answer; "and what is more natural than that a father should come to his child's assistance? No mortal man can be expected to fight with such a foe."

THE RAVEN-FIGHT.

220

Ben ar bin

图 图

150 15 15

空之世紀

217

VIII. THE RAVEN-

DIETR

OING back to Bert are to have a campa litting rang through the land of the ou had

Yes; Dietrich was really hand brave comrades new and old wand Even Etzel's two sons, mere b too. The line of march lay th plains of Lombardy. Amelolt head of the Wölfings, storme and But the old master had not times, and Ute and his son Hadubrand, for time, and he had to rejoin the up with the rest at Padauwe (I subdue. The army, leaving Pad Bern, from which Dietrich heard the expelled by the citizens. At length the hero was at hom

he was received with great rejoicings for a few days after his arrival, Alphe from Duke Friedrich of Raben (R. Ermenrich was besieging his town, the When War a through the roaring surf to the shore. The Milan out, but Wittich had vanished. He could see out, but Wittich had valued to the and service por the death he had d neither the vengeance nor the death he had

lared that they would return home as soon as lared that they would return their princes with fitting honour. Dietrich heard their princes with litting in the land did what he ster Hildebrand, on the other hand, did what he them to follow up the victory that they had ious day; but it was labour lost. They had had ing at the battle of Ravenna.

ed, Dietrich returned to King Etzel, by whom he vith the greatest kindness, in spite of all that had a. He sank into a state of sorrowful brooding and intil at length Herrat, his faithful wife, came to ke words of comfort and encouragement. And he his dull woe, and started again for fair Lombardy, by the Queen.

During the course of that day, Dietrich and Wittich met at last, and it was in this wise. Twilight was drawing on apace, when Wittich, led by his evil star, or by his companion, Rinold of Milan, went back to visit the outpost. Dietrich saw them go, and, remounting, galloped across the valley towards the height, and the other two turned to meet him. When Wittich saw the king riding towards him, his face distorted by the angry spirit that possessed him, and his breath issuing from his mouth like flames of fire, a terror he had never known before overmastered him. He turned his horse and fled, followed by Rinold.

"Halt, cowards, halt!" cried the king. "Two against one! surely ye are strong enough?"

"Halt, comrade!" said Rinold, "I cannot bear the shame of this."

Wittich turned; but no sooner did he see the terrible face and flaming breath of his old leader, than he fled once more, leaving Rinold alone to bear the brunt of the attack.

"Stop, traitor," shouted Dietrich. "You have the sword Mimung in your hand, with which you once conquered me at Bern, and do you now fear to stand?"

But Wittich, by encouraging words, and a free use of the spur, urged his noble steed to a yet swifter pace. The king did the same, and Falcon was even fleeter than Wittich's gallant charger. The surf might now be heard beating on the sea-shore. The fugitive warrior reached the strand. He could fly no farther. And behold, at the same moment, two white arms and a woman's head rose out of the waves.

"Wachilde—ancestress—save me—hide me from that spirit of hell," he cried, and took the terrible leap.

And Wachilde received him in her arms, and bore him to her crystal hall at the bottom of the sea. Dietrich did not hesitate to follow. The waters swept over him and his horse, but Falcon

rose again and swam through the roaring surf to the shore. The king looked all about, but Wittich had vanished. He could see nothing but the foaming waves. Sadly the king returned to the camp, having found neither the vengeance nor the death he had sought.

The Huns declared that they would return home as soon as they had buried their princes with fitting honour. Dietrich heard their determination unmoved. He was thinking of those who had fallen. Master Hildebrand, on the other hand, did what he could to induce them to follow up the victory that they had gained the previous day; but it was labour lost. They had had enough of fighting at the battle of Ravenna.

Broken-hearted, Dietrich returned to King Etzel, by whom he was received with the greatest kindness, in spite of all that had come and gone. He sank into a state of sorrowful brooding and melancholy, until at length Herrat, his faithful wife, came to him, and spoke words of comfort and encouragement. And he roused from his dull woe, and started again for fair Lombardy, accompanied by the Queen.



The

During the course of the had last, and it was in this w when Wittich, led by his evi Milan, went back to visit soon as and, remounting, galloped a who and the other two turned to the king riding towards him, his what he that possessed him, and his hey had flames of fire, a terror he had had him. He turned his horse and

"Halt, cowards, halt!" cris hom he surely ye are strong enough?" that had "Halt, comrade!" said Rino and this."

Wittich turned; but no soone flaming breath of his old leader Rinold alone to bear the brunt of party,

"Stop, traitor," shouted Die Mimung in your hand, with wh Bern, and do you now fear to stand

But Wittich, by encouraging wor urged his noble steed to a yet sw same, and Falcon was even fleeter t The surf might now be heard bear fugitive warrior reached the strand And behold, at the same moment, tw head rose out of the waves.

"Wachilde-ancestress-save meof hell," he cried, and took the terrible

And Wachilde received him in her crystal hall at the bottom of the sea to follow. The waters swept over him although he had can ING HOME. dignity he had usupper

of the neck, swing him ne. The only one of his former ne. The only one of hunting. back to the camp. iny happiness was that of hunting. "Remember the Har ful sound of the horns, his face would gallows to he har ful sound of the would once more a gallows to be erected on his lips, and he would once more Sibich entered on his lips, and he would once more Sibich entreated for is friends had known of yore. Once, have his d to have his death puton is friends had known is fri "Remember the Harmond close by. He sprang out of the water, And so the victor and called for horse and hounds. Before to Romaburg at the le

225

met by the princes of the him as their chief, and a the imperial crown.

Herrat was a faithful and many of his other the midst of his glon comrades who had died i him their all, and to the love or kindness.

ROUND THEODERIC'S TOME.

His power was goal ald bring him what he desired, Dietrich perceived it had ever been beint steed come towards him neighing. Seizing his Once, indeed, a giant arts, he hastily mounted the noble animal, and the land, and Heime the stag. His servants followed with the fleetest Dietrich himself had stables, but could not come up with him. The Dietrich himsen asser, and ever faster. His people waited weeks, monster. It was the d even years for his return, but all in vain. The pire had no ruler. Bloody wars broke out in con-His wife, noble How His subjects longed for his return, that his strong that time forward is

gloomy and morose all

although he had cast from him all signs of the imperial dignity he had usurped. Eckehart seized him by the scruff of the neck, swung him before him on his horse, and galloped back to the camp.

"Remember the Harlungs," he cried, and immediately ordered a gallows to be erected.

Sibich entreated for life, bare life. He offered much red gold to have his death put off for even a short space, but—

"Remember the Harlungs," was the only answer he received.

And so the victory was won. The hero of Bern marched to Romaburg at the head of his army. He was everywhere met by the princes of the land of the Amelungs. They greeted him as their chief, and on his arrival at Romaburg he received the imperial crown.

THE PASSING OF DIETRICH.

Herrat was a faithful wife and helpmeet. The old master and many of his other ancient friends were round him; but in the midst of his glory Dietrich could not forget the faithful comrades who had died in his service, the friends who had given him their all, and to whom he could no longer show either love or kindness.

His power was great. The empire was more extensive than it had ever been before, and peace reigned within its borders. Once, indeed, a giant had committed great devastations within the land, and Heime had sought him out, but only to be slain. Dietrich himself had then gone forth, and had conquered the monster. It was the last combat in which the aged hero ever took part.

His wife, noble Herrat, soon after fell sick and died. From that time forward his character seemed changed. He was gloomy and morose, and committed many actions for which no after repentance could atone. The only one of his former pleasures that gave him any happiness was that of hunting. When he heard the cheerful sound of the horns, his face would clear up, and a smile play on his lips, and he would once more look like the Dietrich his friends had known of yore. Once, when he was bathing in the river, a great stag with golden horns, wonderful to look upon, trotted slowly along the bank, and passed into the wood close by. He sprang out of the water, threw on his clothes, and called for horse and hounds. Before



HOUND THEODERIC'S TOMB.

the servants could bring him what he desired, Dietrich perceived a coal-black steed come towards him neighing. Seizing his sword and darts, he hastily mounted the noble animal, and galloped after the stag. His servants followed with the fleetest horses in his stables, but could not come up with him. The hero rode on faster, and ever faster. His people waited weeks, months, and even years for his return, but all in vain. The mighty empire had no ruler. Bloody wars broke out in consequence. His subjects longed for his return, that his strong

hand might rule the land again; but still he did not come. Wodan, his ancestor, had caught him up to himself, and had made him one of his wild huntsmen. Many a benighted traveller has seen him rushing past, mounted on his coal-black steed. The people of Lausitz and other parts of Germany talk of him as Dietherbernet, and see him in the Furious Host even to this day.

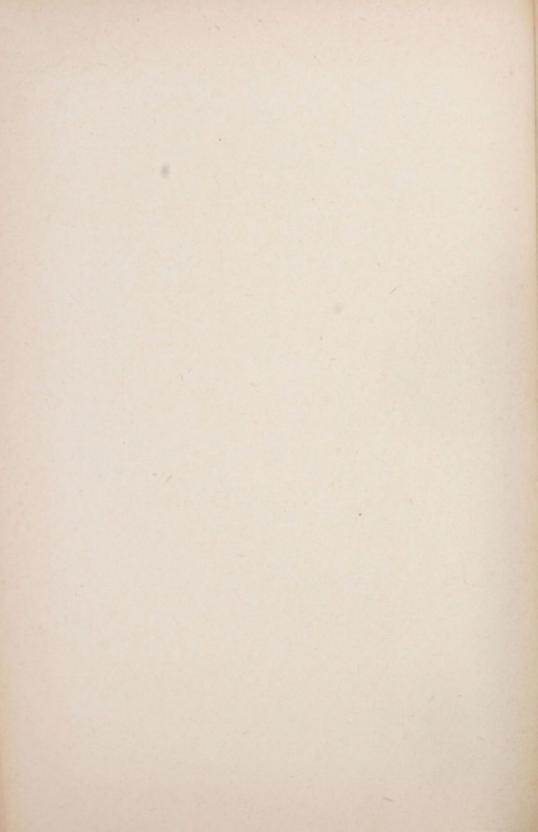


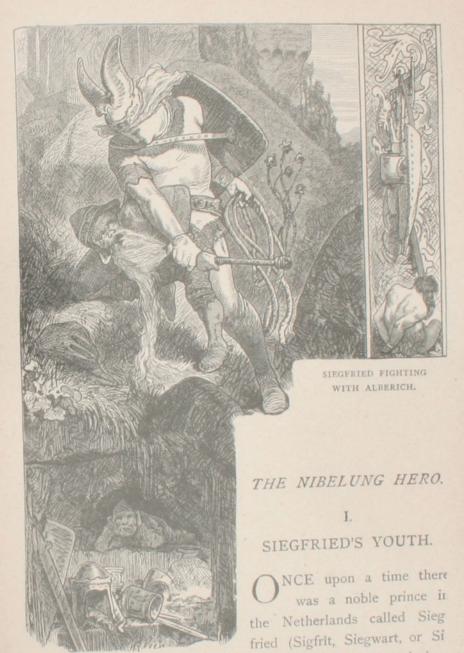
PART SECOND.

THE NIBELUNG AND KINDRED LEGENDS

GUDRUN.

BEOWULF.





gurðr). His father, Sigmund, was descended from the glorious race of the Wölfungs, who traced their lineage back to Wodan His mother, Sigelinde, was of equally high birth. They both

rejoiced in the early signs of strength and activity displayed by their son, and hoped that when grown to man's estate, his heroic deeds might gain him glory and renown.

The boy, however, soon became aware of his wonderful strength, and showed a haughty, unbending spirit. He would suffer no contradiction: he beat his playfellows black and blue when they displeased him, even those among them who were much bigger than he. The older he grew, the more he was hated by all the other boys, and the more anxious his parents became regarding his future.

At last Sigmund told the queen that he only knew of one way to bring the young rebel under rule, and that was to apprentice him to the smith, Mimer, who lived in the neighbouring forest, and who was a strong and wise man, and would teach the boy how to forge the weapons he should one day wield as a warrior. The queen gave her consent, so the father took the necessary steps.

When the smith heard the whole story, he declared himself ready to undertake the task assigned him, for he had a strong belief in the pacifying effects of hard work. Everything went well for a time. One year passed on after another, till the prince grew almost to man's estate. But labour in the smithy was irksome to him, and when his comrades set him right, he beat them, threw them down, and, on one occasion, went so far as to drag the best smith among them—Wieland—by the hair to his master's feet.

"This will not do at all," said Mimer; "come here and forge yourself a good sword."

Siegfried was quite ready to do so. He asked for the best iron and the heaviest hammer, which was such a weight that it took both hands to wield it. Mimer drew the strongest bar of iron out of the forge, glowing red, and laid it on the anvil. Siegfried swung the hammer with one hand, as though it had been a plaything; but when it came down upon the iron the blow was like

a clap of thunder, the house shook to its foundation, the iron shivered into splinters, and the anvil sank a foot deep into the ground.

"This will never do," said the master as before; "we must try another plan, my boy, if you are to make yourself a suitable weapon! Go to the charcoal-burner in the pine wood, and fetch me as much of his charcoal as you can carry on your strong shoulders. Meanwhile I shall prepare the best iron to make you a sword, such as never yet was possessed by any warrior."

Siegfried was so pleased to hear this, that picking up the largest axe he could find, he set out into the forest. It was a beautiful spring day. The birds were singing, and the grass was studded with violets and forget-me-nots. He plucked a bunch of the flowers, and stuck them in his leather cap, from a half-conscious feeling that they might perhaps bring him good luck. He went on further and further, till he reached the middle of a dark pine forest. Not a bird was to be seen; but the gloomy silence was broken by a gurgling, hissing, and roaring, that might easily have affrighted a less daring spirit. He soon found the reason of the noise. A dismal swamp lay before him, in which gigantic toads, snakes, and lind-worms were disporting themselves.

"I never saw so many horrible creatures in my life," said Siegfried; "but I will soon stop their music.".

So saying, he picked up dead trees and threw them into the morass, till he had completely covered it. After which, he hastened on to the charcoal-burner's house. Arrived there, he asked the man to give him fire that he might burn the monsters

"Poor boy," said the charcoal-burner, "I am very sorry for you; but if you go back the way you came, the great dragon will come out of his cave and make but a single mouthful of you. Smith Mimer is a faithless man; he came here before you, and

told me that he had roused the worm against you, because you were so unmanageable."

"Have no fear, good man," answered Siegfried; "I shall first slay the worm, and then the smith. But now give me the fire, that I may burn the poisonous brood."

The lad was soon back at the swamp. He set fire to the dry wood with which he had covered it, and let it blaze. The wind was favourable, and fanned the flames to a great fire, so that the creatures were all burnt up in a short space of time. The lad then went round the dismal swamp and found a small rivulet of hot fat issuing from it. He dipped his finger in it, and found, on withdrawing it, that it was covered with a horn-like skin. "Ah," he thought, "this would be useful in war." He therefore undressed, and bathed his whole body in the liquid fat, so that he was now covered with horn from head to foot, except in one place, between his shoulders, where a leaf had stuck to his skin. This he did not discover until later. He dressed himself again in his leather garments, and walked on, his club resting on his shoulder. Suddenly the dragon darted out upon him from its hiding-place; but three good blows of his club slew the monster. He then went back to the smithy to take vengeance on the master smith and his comrade. At sight of him, the men fled affrighted into the forest, but the master awaited the youth's arrival. At first Mimer tried the effect of flattering words; but finding they were vain, he took to his sword. Siegfried then dealt him one mighty blow, and had no need to strike again.

Having done this, the lad went into the smithy, and with great patience and care forged himself a sword, whose blade he hardened in the blood of the lind-worm. Then he set out for his father's palace. The king sharply rebuked him for his evil deed in slaying the master smith, who was so good a subject, and so useful to the whole country. And the queen, in her turn, re-

proached him with many tears, for having stained his hands with innocent blood. Siegfried, sobered by his father's reproof, and softened by his mother's tears, did not try to excuse himself; but, falling at the queen's feet and hiding his face in his hands, he said the sight of her tears cut him to the heart, and for the future he vowed that his deeds should be those of a gentle knight. Then the hearts of the parents were comforted.

From that time forward Siegfried was changed. He listened to the advice of men of understanding, and strove to learn how to act wisely and well. Whenever he felt one of his old fits of passion coming over him, he thought of his mother's tears and his father's reproof, and conquered the evil spirit that threatened to master him. The expectations of the people were great respecting him: they were sure that in him their nation had found a new hero. And then, he was so handsome and graceful, that the women admired him as much for his looks as the men did for his prowess.

YOUNG SIEGFRIED SAILS TO ISENLAND.

His father and mother were so proud of him, that they longed for the day when his name and fame should be hailed with applause in every land.

The king at length deemed that the time was come to give Siegfried and his comrades, and many young nobles of his own and other lands, the sword and armour that marked a warrior. This investiture was in those days a ceremony of great importance, and took up the same place in a young man's life as the ceremony of knighthood in later times. The solemn investiture was succeeded by feats of arms and trials of skill. Siegfried was victorious in all, and, at the end of the day, the populace shouted: "Long live young Siegfried, our king; long may he and his worthy father rule over us!"

But he signed to them, and said, "I am not worthy of such high honour. I must first win a kingdom for myself. I will entreat my noble father to allow me to go out into the world, and seek my fortune."

When the warriors were all assembled at the feast in the royal hall, Siegfried did not take his place at the upper end of the table beside his father, but modestly seated himself among the young warriors who had still their names to make. Some of the party began to talk of distant. Isenland, the kingdom of the beautiful and warlike Brunhild, who challenged all her wooers to do battle with her, thereby slaying many.

They talked of the land of the Nibelungs, learned in magic; of the Drachenstein, where a flying dragon, of fiendish aspect, had taken up its abode.

Others, again, talked of the lovely princess at Worms on the Rhine, who was carefully guarded by her three brothers and by her uncle, strong Hagen.

"Oh, how pleasant it must be to see such marvels, and to seek out adventures!" cried Siegfried, and approaching his father, he asked his permission to go out and see the world.

The king understood his desire, for he had had an adventurous youth himself; and promised to let him go, provided his mother gave her consent.

It was pain and grief to the queen to part with her son, but she at last permitted him to go, and one fine morning he set out, dressed in a shining suit of armour, mounted on a swift horse, and bearing the sword which he himself had made. His spirits were high, and his heart full of hope, as is the case with every youth of spirit who goes out into the unknown world to seek his fortune.

He went northwards in the direction of Isenland. On reaching the sea-shore, he found a vessel ready to start; but the skipper feared a storm, and only set sail at Siegfried's entreaty. After a quick but tempestuous voyage, Siegfried landed, and went up to the palace.

Queen Brunhild received him in the great hall, where many warriors were assembled, each of whom had come determined to woo the lady by great feats of arms.

On the following day the warriors assembled in the lists, where Brunhild joined them before long. She was clad in full armour, and looked as haughty and as beautiful as Freya, when she led the Valkyrs of old to the battles of the heroes.

Siegfried gazed at her in astonishment. She was so much taller and nobler looking than any of the maidens in her train, who were armed equally with herself. He almost wished to join the ranks of the wooers, and win her hand. He raised a stone in sport, and flung it far beyond the lists; then, turning to the queen, took leave of her with all reverence, and returned again to his vessel, saying to himself:

"I could never love her, she is too like a man. That maiden must be shy and modest, gentle and kindly, who would gain the heart of a brave warrior so utterly that he would think nothing of spending his heart's blood in her service."

After a quick voyage, he resumed his journey by land, now through rich and well-cultivated plains, and again through desert lands, where wild beasts and robbers had their abode. He had many a hard fight by the way, and slew all manner of giants and monsters. The minstrels sang of his great deeds in cottage and in castle, so that his name became known far and wide.

When he reached the land of the Nibelungs, the kings of that country, Schilbung and Nibelung by name, asked him to divide between them the treasure left them by their father Nibeling, for they could not agree as to what was a fair division. In payment for this service they offered him the good sword

Balmung, which was the handiwork of dwarfs, and was tempered in dragon's blood. The hero divided the treasure with the utmost fairness, yet the brothers were not satisfied. They told him that they were sure he was keeping back the most valuable things for himself, and commanded twelve enormous giants to seize him, and confine him in the hollow mountain where the treasure was kept. The hero at once drew Balmung, and began slaying one giant after another. Then the royal magicians chanted their spells, and called up a thick mist; a storm arose, and the mountain trembled under repeated thunder-claps. All in vain. The last of the giants fell, and finally the two brothers were slain; then the mist cleared away, and the sun shone full on the victorious warrior.

When the Nibelung people saw the wonders that had been done, they greeted Siegfried as their king. But even yet his difficulties were not at an end. An avenger had arisen: this was Alberich the dwarf. Well armed with enchanted weapons, he came up against the bold warrior. He was now visible, now invisible, according as he drew the cap of darkness over his helmet, or took it off. After a long struggle, Siegfried overthrew him.

The dwarf was now in his power, but Siegfried could not kill a defenceless foe. Alberich was so touched with this generosity that he swore to be true to his victor: an oath he never broke. After this, no one disputed the hero's right to the land of the Nibelungs. He was recognised as king by the whole people, and also became possessed of all the treasures in the hollow mountain, and of Alberich's cap of darkness by reason of his rictory over the dwarf.

When Siegfried had reduced the whole kingdom to order, and appointed proved men to be governors of the provinces, he chose out twelve noble warriors to be his trusty companions. The treasure furnished him with rings and chains of silver and

gold with which to enrich his followers. The whole band looked like an assemblage of kings under the lead of some yet mightier chieftain.

He and his men now set out on their journey homewards, and reached the Netherlands without further adventure. The king and queen were overjoyed to see their son, of whom they had for a long time heard nothing but indistinct rumours. Siegfried remained at home for many days to rest and recover from his weariness. He often passed hours sitting at his mother's feet, as when he was a little boy, and telling her of his hopes and longings. His confidence and trust in her made her very happy. But when he stood before her in all the panoply of war, her heart beat high with pride that she had such a hero for a son.

Pleasant as it was to be at home again, Siegfried could not long be contented with idleness; his soul panted to be out in the battle of life, where alone a man preserves his strength of mind and body. He told his father that he wished to go to Worms, in the Rhineland, and try his fortune with the great warriors of Burgundy.

The king's face clouded when he heard this. "My son," he said, "do not go to Burgundy, for there dwell the boldest warriors in the whole world. No hero has as yet withstood them. There are grim Hagen, strong Ortewin of Metz, and King Gunther, with his brother Gernot. They all unite in guarding the lovely maiden Chriemhild, whom many a brave man has wooed, only to lose his life."

"Ha! That is a good story!" cried bold Siegfried. "These mighty warriors shall yield me their kingdom, and the lovely maid as well, if she be pleasing in my eyes. With my twelve Nibelungs at my back, I have no fears about the fighting."

The king's remonstrances and the queen's entreaties were alike in vain. They were obliged to consent to their son's undertaking this adventure.



II. SIEGFRIED IN BURGUNDY.

HE lovely maiden Chriemhild, who lived in the land of Burgundy, was the daughter of King Dankrat and his wife, the Lady Ute. Her father had long been dead; but his three sons, Gunther, Gernot, and the boy Giselherr, nicknamed "The Child," regarded their beautiful sister as the costliest pearl in their crown. The royal brothers were surrounded by brave warriors, to whom fear was unknown. First among these was grim Hagen of Tronje, un-beautiful of face, and one-eyed, but known and feared, both in the land of the Teuts and in that of the Latins. He enjoyed great honour for another reason, that he was the uncle of the kings. After him came his brother, the marshal Dankwart; Ortewin of Metz; the Margraves Gere and Eckewart; Rumolt, the chief cook; Volker of Alzeyen, the faithful minstrel; Sindolt, the cup-bearer; and Hunolt, the steward. These and many other brave men, too numerous to mention, served the kings, and guarded their interests.

Young Chriemhild lived very much alone. She loved to wander about the garden and under the shady trees, and hated all sights and sounds of war. Her brothers once persuaded her to go out hunting with them; but a roe-deer fell dead at her horse's feet, and the sight so distressed her, that she went straight home, and could never be induced to go out hunting again.

One day the queen entered her daughter's room at an early hour, and seeing her look sad and troubled, she asked what ailed her.

Chriemhild answered: "I dreamed that I had brought up a noble falcon, and had grown very fond of it; but once, when I let it fly up among the cliffs, two eagles attacked and killed it before my very eyes."

"My child," said the mother gravely, "the falcon is some noble warrior, whom you will learn to love with all your heart; and the eagles are two false men, who will seek to compass his death by cunning. May God give you strength and wisdom to turn their plans to nought!"

"Mother!" said Chriemhild, "do not speak to me of men. I fear to go amongst them. If there were no men on the earth, there would be no more wars or bloodshed."

"Who knows?" answered her mother, laughing. "Women often shed more blood, and cut deeper with their tongues, than any man with his sword. But the time will come when you will learn to love some hero, and will become his wife and chief admirer."

"Never," cried the maiden in a voice of horror. "Mother, you terrify me even more than my dream."

Ute and Chriemhild went down to the garden. They had not been there long when they heard the sound of horses prancing in the court, and horns blowing. The queen went to see what was going on, and soon came back to tell her daughter of the arrival of some strange warriors in shining armour, and mounted on beautiful horses. She asked the girl to come and help her to receive the guests. But Chriemhild refused to do so, and Ute returned to the palace alone. Meanwhile Gunther and his brothers had heard of the coming of the strangers. No one knew who they were, so Hagen was sent for, and he at once recognised Siegfried. He further advised his nephew to receive the hero

and his men with all honour, and to enter into friendly alliance with them.

Gunther resolved to follow Hagen's counsel; but Siegfried said that he had come to prove to his own satisfaction whether the Burgundian warriors were as great in battle as he had always heard. He offered them the Nibelung realm and treasure as the prize of victory, and said that for his own part he was ready to defend himself against double or threefold the number of his own party, if the kings of Burgundy would venture their kingdom against his. Bold Ortewin and other Burgundian heroes answered that it was not their habit to fight strange warriors for aught else than their armour and horses. And King Gernot came forward and said,—

"Lord Siegfried, we want neither your goods nor your blood; I rather desire to receive you as an honoured guest, and become your friend and ally, if you will also be ours." So saying, he held out his hand, which Siegfried clasped in his, as he replied:

"God be my witness that I will be your faithful friend and ally, and if you ever come to see me, I shall greet you as honoured comrades."

The Nibelungs then followed their hosts into the banqueting hall, where many a toast was drunk to the success of the new alliance.

Siegfried enjoyed his stay in the land of roses and vineyards. The days passed happily in hunting or jousting; but a great longing to see fair Chriemhild soon took possession of him, and grew stronger every day, for he was always hearing of her sweetness, modesty, and gentleness—qualities that had ever pleased him best in women.

Chriemhild had also heard of him; but the only time she had ever seen him was once when curiosity led her to peep out of a high window, when he was jousting in the court below. He

seemed to her like the white god Balder, of whose beauty and glory her forefathers had told many a tale. At that very moment, he looked up, and she shrank away, fearing lest he had seen her; but he had not. Chriemhild could not understand herself. She hoped that he would stay at Worms—she, who had never before cared who came or went.

An embassy from Daneland and Saxonland arrived at Worms. The kings Lüdegast and Lüdeger declared war against Burgundy, if the kings of Burgundy did not at once pay them tribute, as in olden times.

The tribute was refused, and the Burgundian army was called out. Siegfried and his men joined King Gunther's forces. The armies met. The Danes and Saxons numbered forty thousand; the Burgundian forces were much fewer. Each side fought bravely, but Siegfried's performances were perhaps more wonderful than any other man's. He took King Lüdegast prisoner, and brought him sorely wounded into camp; handed him over to the care of servants, and returned to the battle. The fight raged on for hours. Grim Hagen was always in the front rank, and near him were Volker, Sindolt, and Hunolt. Siegfried fought by their side, always keeping the king of Saxony in sight. At length he reached Lüdeger, and swung his sword over his head. Then the Saxon king exclaimed,—

"Ha, Siegfried of the Netherlands, the devil has given me into your hands. I acknowledge myself your prisoner."

The battle was at an end, and the victors, covered with glory and laden with booty, set out on their return to the Rhine. They were received at Worms with great joy, and Siegfried's name was in every mouth. King Gunther prepared a feast of victory, which was to take place some weeks later, so that the wounded warriors might be well enough to take part in it. Lüdeger and Lüdegast offered a large ransom for their liberty. While the Burgundians

were debating what sum it would be proper to demand, Siegfried exclaimed:

"A king's head is neither to be bought nor ransomed for gold, silver, or precious stones. It can only be won in love through well-doing. Let the imprisoned kings go free, provided they promise Burgundy their help in war."

When the days of feasting were over, the guests all took their leave, and the Nibelung hero was about to do the same. But Gunther, acting on Ortewin's advice, begged him to tarry a little longer, for the women, and more especially his sister, Chriemhild, wished to show him their gratitude. The hero's face lighted up with pleasure, while he answered that in that case he would stay. When the king went to the women to tell them what he wished them to do, he felt at the bottom of his heart a little fear lest his sister should refuse; but, though she blushed, she consented to do his will.

At the time appointed, she entered the hall at Lady Ute's side; and as she entered, her eyes and Siegfried's met. She said a few words to him with her usual gentle courtesy, and his heart beat with a feeling he had never known before. No one in the crowd noticed the look that had passed between them except Queen Ute, who rejoiced to see it, for she loved them both. She contrived that the hero should sit next to her daughter at the feast, and that he should afterwards join them in the garden, while the other warriors sat over their wine.





III. THE DRAGONSTONE.

SIEGFRIED returned to his lodging that evening feeling happier than he had ever done before. Early next morning, he rode out into the wood to hunt; but his thoughts were so full of Chriemhild, that he let the game pass by unheeded. Coming back empty-handed in the afternoon, he found both town and palace in great confusion. Warriors and citizens were shouting and crowding in every open place. Queen Ute was weeping and wringing her hands. Siegfried heard broken fragments of conversation; but no one answered his questions. At length he entered the great hall, where he found Hagen, and asked him the meaning of the disturbance, and whether some dreadful thing had happened.

"That it has," replied Hagen; "it could not be worse; but what is to be, must be, and, as men said in the olden time, 'what the Norns have ordained must needs be best.' Hearken, Siegfried. When we were in the tilt-yard this morning, we were startled by hearing a rushing noise in the air, and the brightness of the sun was darkened as if the wolf Skiöll were devouring it. The thing of terror that approached was a flying-dragon, of shape so monstrous, that there is none like it in all the realm of Helle. As it flew over our heads, we flung spears at it, but they bounced off its horny skin like reeds. Next moment we heard a cry, and

saw that the monster had caught up sweet Chriemhild from her seat in the garden, and was bearing her off through the air so rapidly that both were soon out of sight."

"And none of you went in pursuit!" shouted the Nibelung hero, "cowards that you are!"

Are you mad?" asked Hagen, unmoved. "Are you a bird, that you can fly through wind and cloud?"

"I shall seek out the monster," said Siegfried quietly; "if I have to wander through the whole world and Helle's realm itself, I shall find the maiden, or—my death."

He hastened away, mounted his horse, and rode by unknown paths, leading he knew not whither. A ferryman set him across the Rhine, and then he wandered about among the bare mountains, but found no trace of the dragon's abode. At length he reached a dark and trackless pine forest. The boughs of the trees hung so low that he had to dismount, and lead his horse by the bridle. As night came on, he threw himself under a tree, utterly exhausted, leaving his steed to graze at will.

At midnight he heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs, and, looking up, saw a faint red light approaching. The rider was a little dwarf. On his head was a golden crown, the point of which was formed of a shining carbuncle. The hero asked the dwarf to show him the way out of the forest, and the little creature answered that he was glad they had met, for no one knew the forest better than he; adding, that he was the dwarf-king Eugel, who lived in the mountains hard by with his brothers, and thousands more of their race.

"As for you," he continued, "I know that you are Siegfried of the Netherlands. I have often seen you when I have been going about the world with my cap of darkness on. You could never have got out of the wild wood without my help, but would infallibly have found your grave at the Drachenstein, where the

terrible giant Kuperan and the great dragon have taken up their abode."

On hearing this, Siegfried shouted aloud for joy, and promised the dwarf a rich reward, even to the whole Nibelung hoard, if he would lead him to the Drachenstein. This Eugel refused to do, fearing for the hero's life; but when Siegfried threatened to slay him, and at the same time seized him by the waist and shook him till his crown fell off, he promised to obey. He replaced his crown, and rode on first through the dark forest. At daybreak they reached their destination.

"Knock at that door," said the little king. "It is there that Kuperan lives. If you are hero enough to slay the giant, I and mine will serve you, for now we are entirely in the power of that monster."

Having thus spoken, he donned his cap of darkness, and vanished.

Siegfried knocked at the door, at first gently, then louder and louder, at the same time shouting to Kuperan to give him the keys of the Drachenstein. Suddenly the door sprang open, the giant rushed out in a tremendous passion, and asked in a thunderous voice what Siegfried meant by disturbing his morning's sleep. With these words he hit out at the warrior with the pole he had in his hands, which was taller than any of the tree tops, and every blow of which rang like a castle bell. Siegfried sprang aside to avoid the pole, and then the battle began. The giant swung his pole with such good will that trees and rocks came rattling down, but he never succeeded in touching his agile foe. At length, holding his weapon in both hands, he brought it down on the ground with such terrible force that it clove the earth three fathoms deep. As he stooped to draw it out, the hero sprang upon him and gave him three deep wounds. The giant, howling with pain, slunk into his dwelling, and slammed the door behind

him. Siegfried battered at the iron door, but could not move it. He sought to force an opening with his good sword, and succeeded in cutting some holes and crannies. He peeped into the inner room, and saw the giant binding up his wounds, and then arming himself in a suit of mail, that glistened like the sun when mirrored in the sea. In another minute Kuperan came forth, and the combat was renewed. After a long struggle, Siegfried had the best of it, and the giant begged for his life, swearing to be a true comrade and helper in the hero's fight with the dragon, who could not be overcome without his aid. Upon this Siegfried gave Kuperan his hand in friendship, bound up his wounds, and promised on his side to be his faithful comrade; but as he entered the cavern first, the false giant hit him so hard a blow on his helmet that he fell senseless to the ground. Eugel, who was watching all that passed, unseen, came up at the same moment and flung his cap of darkness over the hero. While the monster thought he had vanished through enchantment, and felt about for him outside, Siegfried recovered from his swoon, sprang to his feet, and tearing off the cap of darkness, cut down the giant with the first blow. He once more forgave the traitor, but forced him to go on before.

Faithless Kuperan again tried to murder the hero at the entrance of the Drachenstein, and Siegfried would not have again forgiven him if he had not needed his help to save the maiden. The giant now brought out the key, unlocked the door, and led the hero through many passages into a vaulted chamber, in which a soft twilight reigned. Looking round, Siegfried saw her whom he sought, looking pale and wan, but very beautiful. He called her name, and hastened to her. He even dared to clasp her in his arms; he felt that she returned his kiss, and the consciousness that he was loved made him feel so strong that he could have fought all the powers of hell for her sweet sake. Chriemhild

wept bitterly, and entreated him to be gone before the dragon came back; but Siegfried asked for nothing better than to come face to face with the monster, hew him in pieces, and save the princess. The giant now told them that a sword was hidden in the Drachenstein, so fashioned that it could cut through the scales of a dragon. The warrior set out to fetch it, accompanied by Kuperan and Chriemhild. Siegfried saw the hilt of a sword on a ledge of rock just below the edge of the beetling cliff. He stooped to pick it up, and at the same moment the monster seized him, and strove to fling him over. A terrible struggle began, in which the bandages came off the giant's wounds, his blood streamed down, his strength failed him, and Siegfried flung him into the depths below. A loud laugh of joy was heard, and the victor, turning, saw King Eugel, who thanked him heartily for having delivered the dwarfs from their cruel task-master. At his command a number of mannikins appeared, bearing food and wine to refresh the brave warrior after his exertions. He was much in need of food, for he had not tasted a mouthful for two days. The dishes Chriemhild placed before him, and the wine she gave him, tasted better than anything he had ever eaten or drunk before.

All at once a rushing sound was heard in the dir, and a howl of rage, so terrible, that all the dwarfs hid themselves in any crannies of the rock that they could find, and the hero and maiden were startled out of their momentary feeling of security. Chriemhild entreated, prayed her lover to conceal himself; but he was a stranger to fear, and refused to fly. The monster approached like a storm-cloud, preceded by flames of fire. It came nearer and nearer, dark, mysterious, gruesome. The mountain trembled, and the little dwarfs, hiding in the fissures of the rock, feared to be crushed to death. At Siegfried's request, Chriemhild withdrew into the vaulted chamber. And

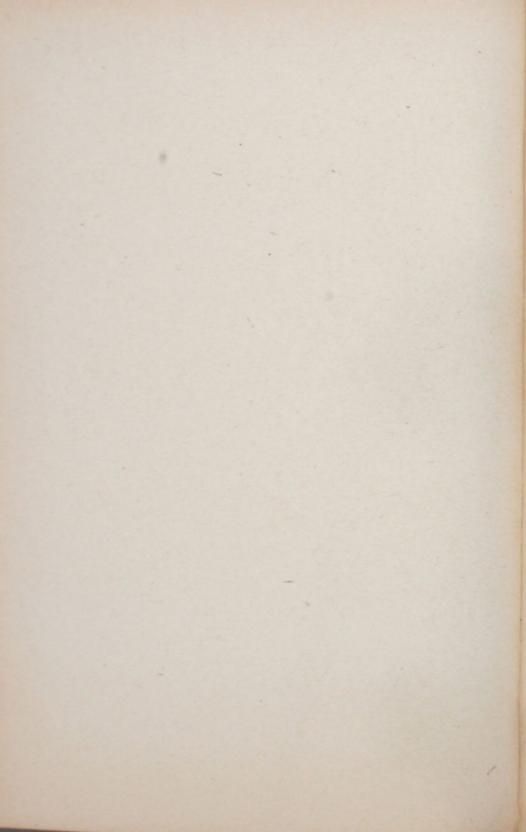
now the dragon fell upon the hero, tore away his shield with its claws, and tried to seize him in its great teeth. The warrior knew how to act; he sprang aside, until the fiery breath that issued from the dragon's yawning jaws had cooled. Then he renewed his attack, now on the right, now on the left of the monster, taking care to avoid its claws.

All at once he felt himself encircled by the dragon's tail. He made a marvellous spring, freed himself, and sought to attack the creature in front, where it was undefended by scales. Upon this, the dragon caught him so tight within its curling tail that he could not free himself. In sore distress, he seized his good sword Balmung in both hands, and gave so hard a blow that the rocks trembled; but his object was attained. The tail was cut off, and rolled thundering over the edge of the cliff. A second blow, as hard as the first, divided the monster in two. 'Tis true, the jaws still snapped at the hero, but he, with the last effort of his strength, flung the pieces over the cliff. Having done this, he fell back exhausted and half stifled by the poisonous breath with which the dragon had so long surrounded him. When he came to himself he found Chriemhild's arms round him, and the dwarfs busily engaged burning herbs and sprinkling essences to do away with the baneful effect of the fetid odours with which the place was impregnated.

The dwarfs now led the hero and the maiden into their underg ound kingdom, where a feast was prepared for them. While they rested, Eugel told them that the dragon had formerly been a man of handsome figure and face, but that a mighty enchantress, whom he had deserted, changed him into a dragon, under thich form he was to remain for the rest of his life, unless a pure maiden should consent to marry him within six years.



SIEGFRIED'S COMBAT WITH THE DRAGON.



The dwarfs offered the warrior his choice of all their treasures. He took certain things from them, placed them on his horse beside Chriemhild, and, accompanied by Eugel, set out on his return to Worms. When they reached the edge of the wild forest, the dwarf-king looked at him sadly, and said:

"You must know, bold warrior, that your life will be short, but glorious. You will fall by the envy of your own kindred. But your fame will last through all ages, and your name will be held in honour by the bards of every nation as long as the human race exists on the earth."

Eugel then took leave of him, and returned to his home in the forest. When Siegfried and Chriemhild came down to the banks of the Rhine, the hero took the treasure that the dwarf had given him, and sunk it in the deep waters of the river.

"What is the use of gold to me?" he said. "My life is to be short, but glorious! Hide it in thy bosom, mighty river; may it gild thy waves and make them gleam more brightly in the sunlight! Gold does the devil's work in the hands of the children of men; it sharpens the assassin's dagger to strike some unsuspecting heart—perhaps mine. But as yet I live in the light of day. I will rejoice in my glory, and in my love for the sweetest maiden on the face of the earth."

He then rejoined Chriemhild, and called the ferryman to take them across the Rhine, after which they pursued their way to Worms, and were received there with great rejoicing.

Siegfried took the first opportunity when he found Gunther alone to ask him for his sister's hand, and the king answered:

"I will give her to you with all my heart, if you will first help me to win a high-born and most heroic woman to be my wife. I mean Brunhild, the proud queen of Isenland, for whose sweet sake many a wooer has already gone to his death."

"I know her well," replied Siegfried, "and have seen how

she bears herself in the fray. She fights bravely and well, yet I do not fear but that she will find her masters in you and me. You will do well to prepare for an early start, that we may get back before the end of summer."

Queen Ute and her daughter feared the result of the adventure, but Siegfried told them to be of good courage. He promised to stand by Gunther in life and death,—even the proud queen of Isenland would scarcely prove so hard an antagonist as the monster of the Drachenstein. The king proposed to take a thousand warriors in his train, but Siegfried dissuaded him; and when at last they started, the party of adventurers consisted of Gunther, grim Hagen, Dankwart, and himself.





IV. THE WOOING OF BRUNHILD

AFTER a favourable voyage they arrived at Isenstein, and rode up to the palace. Servants hastened to meet them and take their armour and horses. Hagen was at first unwilling to give up his horse and armour, but he yielded when Siegfried told him that such was the law and custom at Isenstein. The warriors entered the hall where Brunhild awaited them, clad in her royal robes. She greeted her guests with courtesy, and told the Nibelung hero how glad she was to see him again, as she had been told of his great deeds of valour; adding that she supposed he had come to enter the lists. Siegfried then informed her that he had only come as the comrade of King Gunther, his lord, who desired to try his fortune, and who was well worthy of the high prize of victory.

"This is news to me!" said the queen, "I always thought you were your own man, and owed no allegiance to another."

Then, turning to King Gunther, she told him that she had also heard of his great deeds, and asked him who were the warriors that bore him company. Gunther answered with many thanks for her kind reception, and explained who and what his companions were. Brunhild laughed, and asked whether he intended to fight aided by his three comrades.

"No, I alone am to fight," answered the king; "I alone compete for the great prize."

"Very well," said the lady, "the lists are open, prepare to do your best."

The warriors were led into the castle court, where a wide space was enclosed for the combat. The queen's serving-men surrounded it, well armed. One of these proclaimed in a loud voice:

"If any nobly-born warrior ventures to play the three-fold play with the queen, and gains the victory, she and her kingdom shall be his; but if he is conquered, his head and wealth belong to her."

Four grooms now dragged a great stone into the lists, which the combatants were to "put" (throw). It was as large and heavy as a millstone. Three other men brought in the huge broadsword which the maiden was accustomed to fling.

"If the woman can play with such a thing as that," said Hagen, "she is the devil's bride. No son of man can win her!"

"If we only had our weapons," cried Dankwart, "neither the king nor we need lose our lives."

"Be of good courage, King Gunther," said Siegfried, "I will fetch my cap of darkness from the ship, and will help you without any one seeing that I do so."

He hastened away whilst all eyes were fixed upon the queen, who now entered the court, surrounded by her ladies, and clad in full armour.

"Is it right, noble queen," said Hagen, "that your men should be armed, while we remain defenceless?"

"Bring the warriors their armour," commanded Brunhild. Then turning to Hagen, she continued: "But, for all that, you must lose your lives here. If I conquer Gunther, as I have hitherto conquered all who have entered the lists with me, your heads will fall under the axe of yonder man."

The heroes looked in the direction in which she pointed, and

perceived a man clad in blood-red garments standing without the barrier holding a sharp axe in his hand.

The trial of strength began.

Brunhild went up to the stone, lifted it in both hands, and flung it the length of six fathoms. After which, she leapt forward with one spring as light as a bird, making the point of her foot touch the stone. This feat was greeted with applause. Then came a silence as of death. Gunther advanced. Aided by Siegfried's strength, he lifted the stone, weighed it in one hand, and flung it a full fathom farther than the queen. It was a stronger hand than his that helped him both in this and in the leap that followed, which carried him beyond the stone.

In the first feat of strength, he was thus indisputably the conqueror.

Then Brunhild rose with flashing eyes, and seized the heavy spear with its sharp steel point.

"Now look to yourself, proud king," she cried, and flung the weapon with such force that it crashed through his shield, and would have laid him prostrate had not Siegfried come to his aid by turning the point towards the edge of the shield instead of the centre. Then tearing it out of the broken shield, he turned the weapon so that the blunt end pointed at the queen, and guiding Gunther's hand, Siegfried launched it at her. And immediately Brunhild fell backwards, her chain armour rattling with the force of her fall.

The combat was at an end, the victory won. Brunhild rose. She stood calmly before the people, accepting her fate; but whoever could have read her heart would have seen it full of shame, anger, and a wild thirst for vengeance. The notables of Isenland were summoned to appear at Isenstein within three days to take the oath of allegiance to Gunther. Brunhild begged the Burgundian warriors to remain her guests during that time. She asked

where the Nibelung hero was, and when he stepped forward, and said that he had been busied about the ship and the sailors, she called him a faithless servant for not having been by while his master played so dangerous a game.

A great feast was made in the hall. Many ladies were present, but the queen remained in her own apartments. Gunther's feelings were very mixed. He was ashamed not to have won the victory single-handed, and yet he was pleased at having gained his object. Hagen drained many a cup of wine, and watched the laughing warriors around with a grim look on his stern face. When the heroes of the Rhine were taken to their common chamber, Hagen advised them to see that their weapons were at hand, because he feared the queen was nursing some treacherous plan against them. Bold Siegfried answered that he would at once set out for the land of the Nibelungs, and return with an army of good men and true. He made his way to the ship unperceived in the darkness, and set sail for his own kingdom. Arrived there, he went straight to the dwarf Alberich who guarded the treasure, and desired him to call out a thousand well-armed men to go with him to Isenland. His commands were obeyed in an incredibly short time, and he and his troops set out to join his friends. On the third morning, he landed in front of the palace, to the great joy of the Burgundians. The queen, on the other hand, was anxious, not knowing what the arrival of so large a force might mean. But Gunther comforted her by explaining that Siegfried had brought over a band of his Nibelungs to do honour to him, the king.

During the next few days everything was arranged for the proper government of Isenland, and when Brunhild at length took leave of her people and her mother's brother, who had been appointed governor, there was hardly a dry eye to be seen. The queen herself was not happy, for she felt sure she would never

see her home again; but Gunther would not let her lose time, being anxious to get back to Worms to celebrate his marriage.

When the travellers arrived in Burgundy, they were received with great joy by every one. The Lady Ute welcomed Brunhild as a daughter, and Chriemhild kissed her, and promised to be a faithful sister to her. So the two maidens stood side by side: the one, grand, beautiful, and mysterious as a starlight night; the other, sweet, gentle, and lovely as a May morning. None looking at them could say which was the fairest. But Siegfried had no doubt. He never moved from Chriemhild's side till they reached the castle.

That evening, Gunther asked Siegfried and Chriemhild if they were still of the same mind as before, and, finding that they were, announced that he would make preparations for a double wedding on the following day.

Brunhild sat at the feast that evening by Gunther's side, pale and cold as marble, while Chriemhild sat smiling and whispering between her mother and her lover.

"King of Burgundy," said Brunhild, at last, "I cannot understand why you give your sister in marriage to one of your vassals. She ought to be the wife of a great king."

"Say not so," answered Gunther; "Siegfried is as much a king as I am. He is king of the Nibelungs, and, after the death of his father Sigmund, the whole Netherlands will belong to him."

"It is a strange story," she said; "he told me himself that he was your man."

"I will explain it all to you another time," replied Gunther; "we'll say no more about it just now."

The double wedding took place next day. When the ceremony was over, the old queen showed her daughter-in-law all her possessions, and gave up to her all authority in the house. "Ah, mother Ute," said the young wife, "the Burgundians are rich in wealth and great in power; but they are poor in wisdom and weak in action, otherwise King Gunther never would have come to Isenland."

Without waiting for an answer, she turned and left the room.

The feast was at an end, twilight had long fallen, and the guests all sought their beds. Gunther and his queen went to their private apartments. When he would have followed her into her room, she barred the way, saying,—

"This is no place for you; you can find a more fitting room elsewhere in the palace. If I permitted you to enter, I should lose my great strength."

At first he tried entreaties, then threats, and lastly force. They wrestled together, but she very soon mastered him, bound him hand and foot, and left him lying outside the door. He did not sleep much that night.

Next morning, before the household was stirring, the proud queen loosed her husband's bonds, desired him to hold his peace, and to respect her will in future. Gunther was sad at heart the whole day long; he looked at his wife with a feeling that was almost horror, and often left the feast to walk alone in the garden. Siegfried met him there, and asked what ailed him. When he heard the strange story, he cried:

"Be comforted, dear comrade; we have conquered this proud woman before, and I think we shall get the better of her again. I will follow you to-night, hidden under my cap of darkness, when you take the queen to her room. Blow out the candles and let me take your place. Then she shall have an opportunity of trying her great strength against me."

"Ah, good comrade," said Gunther, "I fear for your life. We did ill to bring her from Isenland to the sunny banks of the

Rhine. She is a demon, as Hagen says, and has her marvellous strength from her friends the devils."

"Well," said Siegfried, "and even if a demon has taken up his abode in her heart, it shall go hard but we'll get the better of him. I shall be with you to-night in my cap of darkness."

The kings returned to the feast, Siegfried looking as cheerful as ever, while Gunther was bowed down by manifold cares and anxieties. At midnight Gunther led Brunhild to her room, blew out the candles, and immediately Siegfried took his place. The wrestling began, Brunhild pushed him between the wall and a cupboard, and tried to bind him with her girdle. She squeezed his hands till the blood spirted from under his nails. Such a wrestling-match was never seen between a man and a maid. He used all his hero-might, and pressed her into a corner of the room with such force, that, shivering and moaning, she entreated him not to kill her, and she would be an obedient wife. No sooner did Siegfried hear this than he slipped softly away, leaving Gunther alone with the queen.

The wedding festivities lasted eight days longer; then the guests took leave of their host, and went home with many rich gifts. Siegfried and his wife also made ready for their departure. The hero refused to take any dowry with his wife, for, in his opinion, the Nibelung treasure was wealth enough.

It was on a beautiful day that the travellers reached the Netherlands. King Sigmund and Queen Sigelinde came out to meet them, and received them with great joy. An assembly of the people was summoned to meet, and after a short speech from the throne, the old king and queen placed their crowns on the heads of Siegfried and Chriemhild. The people shouted, Long live our young king and queen! May they reign as

long and as happily as their forerunners!"

It seemed as if the people's wish were to be realized, for

years passed on, and all went well with the royal family. Queen Sigelinde had the great joy of holding a grandson in her arms. The child received the name of Gunther, in honour of his uncle in the distant Rhineland. And King Gunther, who had a son born about the same time, called the infant Siegfried. Not long after this the old queen was taken ill and died. This made a break in their domestic happiness; but still there was peace in the realm, and along its borders.





V. TREASON AND DEATH.

EIGHT years, or thereabouts, had come and gone, when messengers arrived from Burgundy inviting Siegfried and Chriemhild to a great feast. They accepted the invitation, and Sigmund determined to accompany them to Worms.

Brunhild had said one day to her husband, "King Gunther, why does your brother-in-law Siegfried never come to our court like the other vassals? I should like to see both him and your sister Chriemhild. Pray send, and command their presence at court."

"I told you before," answered Gunther, somewhat nettled, "that my brother-in-law is as mighty a king as I. He rules over the Nibelungs and the Netherlands."

"How strange!" she replied. "You cannot deny that he called himself your man when he was in Isenland."

"Oh! he only said that to help me in my wooing," said Gunther, feeling uncomfortable.

"You only say that," was her answer, "to make your sister seem to have a higher rank. But however that may be, I should very much like to see them both at our court."

"Very well," he answered kindly, "I will send messengers to invite them to the Midsummer feast, and they will not refuse to come."

He went away, and did as he had said. Brunhild remained alone, plunged in thought.

"There he goes," she muttered. "The man that conquered the once heroic maiden, who thought herself strong enough to brave the battle like the Valkyrs of old. And he, what is he but a weak reed, moved hither and thither by every breath of wind that blows? How much greater Siegfried is! He is a hero with the world at his feet. But then a vassal! To be sure, none such could dare to raise his eyes to the queen of Isenland. Had he done so, she must have scorned him, and would scorn him to this very hour."

Siegfried and his party came to Worms at the appointed time. There was no end to the feasting, tilting, and minstrelsy. Old Sigmund renewed his youth again, and delighted to talk of old days with the Lady Ute, whom he had known as a child. The young queens were always together, at church, or at the feast, or else in the gallery overlooking the tilt-yard. The only amusement to which Chriemhild did not accompany her sister-in-law was the chase.

One day when they were sitting together in the gallery watching the feats of agility and skill shown by the warriors, she said in the joy of her heart:

"Is not my Siegfried glorious among warriors, like a moon among the pale stars of night? He is a royal hero."

"He is well deserving of your praise," replied Brunhild, "but still he must yield the first place to my husband."

"Of a truth," answered Chriemhild, "my brother is a bold warrior, but he does not equal my husband in feats of arms."

"Why," said Brunhild, "did not win he the prize at Isenstein, while Siegfried remained with the ship?"

"Do you mean to accuse the Nibelung hero, the dragon-queller, of cowardice?" cried the young wife indignantly.

"He cannot stand so high as the king of Burgundy," answered Brunhild, "for he is not his own man, but owes fealty to my husband."

"You lie, proud woman!" exclaimed Chriemhild, her face flushing with anger, "you lie most insolently. My brother would never have let me marry a man who was not free. Siegfried owes no man allegiance, neither for Nibelungland nor yet for Netherland. The first kingdom he conquered with his own right hand, the other is his inheritance; and I, his queen, may hold my head as high as you."

"Try it, chatterer! I shall always walk into church before you."

With these words Brunhild left the gallery. Chriemhild felt both hurt and angry. It was the first grief that had ever befallen her, and she could not get over it. She went to her rooms, put on her costliest garments and the jewels that had come out of the Nibelung treasure; then, followed by her ladies and serving-men, she walked to the minster. Brunhild was already there with her train. She would have passed the proud woman silently, but the latter exclaimed:

"Your husband is my husband's man, so wait here, and let your queen go first."

"Better for you had you held your peace," said Chriemhild.

"A paramour go before a king's wife, indeed!"

"Are you mad?" asked Brunhild. "What do you mean?"

"I will tell you what I mean," replied Chriemhild, "when I come out of church;" and passing before her enemy, she went in to the house of God.

The proud queen stood still, weeping, at the entrance door. Shame and anger struggled in her breast, and she could scarcely wait till the end of the service. At length the door opened, and Chriemhild appeared.

I "Now," exclaimed Brunhild, "stop, and explain what you meant by your insulting words, you wife of a bondsman."

"Wife of a bondsman?" repeated Chriemhild, as though she had not heard the other words. "Do you recognise the gold ring on my hand shaped like a serpent?"

"It is mine," said Brunhild. "Now I know who stole it from me."

"Well," continued Chriemhild, "maybe you also remember the silken girdle I wear round my waist, with its gold buckles and precious stones. My husband gained both the ring and the girdle that night, when he, not Gunther, conquered you."

Chriemhild went her way with the air of a hero on the day of his greatest victory. The proud queen remained standing where her sister-in-law had left her, her head bowed with shame. She sent for her husband, and when he came, told him how she had been insulted. And Gunther promised to ask Siegfried if he had any knowledge of what had taken place. He received his brother-in-law in the royal hall, and in the presence of many of his bravest warriors. He told him what had chanced, and immediately the Nibelung hero declared, in all good truth, that he had never spoken of dishonour and of the queen in the same breath; adding that too much weight should not be laid on the words that women spoke in anger. He then offered to clear himself by a solemn oath. But Gunther interrupted him, saying he knew him of old, and that his word was as good as his bond.

"Hearken, then, ye men of Burgundy," said the hero; "you see that I am pronounced innocent of causing the humiliations your queen has endured, and indeed I have always regarded her as a modest woman, and a good wife. And now, dear comrade Gunther, chide your wife as I shall chide mine for what they have this day done, that we may never again be brought to dispeace by their idle chatter."

He then turned and left the hall; but many a Burgundian felt that their queen had suffered a cruel wrong.

Next day Brunhild began to make preparations for her departure to Isenland. The king and his brothers entreated her to stay; but she sat silent and immovable as a stone figure.

"We cannot let you go," cried the king. "We will at any cost expiate my sister's thoughtless speech. What price do you demand?"

She rose, looked round the circle of warriors, and said in a hoarse and hollow voice:

" Blood!"

The Burgundians started, and stared at each other, none daring to speak. She continued in the same tone:

"Not all the waters of the Rhine could wash the stain from my honour. The heart's blood of yonder man alone can do it."

The uneasiness of the warriors increased; but Hagen said:

"Are the bold Burgundians grown weak with age? Have they become children again? I will explain the matter. Our queen demands the heart's-blood of Siegfried. Ha! The words seem to terrify you!"

The Burgundians exchanged whispers about Siegfried's strength, how it were certain death to fight with him, and, moreover, that he was innocent of all blame in the matter.

Then grim Hagen turned to Brunhild, and said, "Lady, it was against my advice that Gunther went to woo you in Isenland; but now that you are our queen, your honour shall be safe in our hands. I will satisfy your desire."

"But," exclaimed young Giselher, "it is not the way in Burgundy to return evil for good. Siegfried has always been true to us, and I, at least, will not be false to him."

Hagen tried to persuade Volker, the minstrel, to help him in the work of assassination, for Siegfried was not a man they could attack openly. But Volker refused. Ortwin offered himself in his stead, saying that the mere fact of Siegfried having given the ring and girdle to his wife was an insult to the queen of Burgundy, and must therefore be revenged.

Gunther here broke in passionately, "Such a murder would cast dishonour on all Burgundy, and it is my duty as the king to prevent it."

"Lord of the Rhine," cried Brunhild, rising from her seat, "I give you three days to think of it. After that, I either go to Isenland, or have my revenge." With these words she left the room.

"No weapon can hurt him," said the Margrave Gere, "for he has bathed in dragon's blood, and is only vulnerable in one place, on which a lime-leaf fell when he was doing it."

"If he guesses what we are after," added Sindolt, "he and his thousand Nibelungs will conquer the kingdom."

"I will do it by cunning," said grim Hagen.

The king could not make up his mind one way or the other. He would—and would not. And when the warriors separated, nothing was settled. Three days later, when Gunther saw that the queen's mind was fully made up, he consented with a sigh to let his uncle Hagen try his plan.

About this time heralds came from Lüdegast and Lüdeger to declare war against Burgundy. Siegfried at once promised to help his brothers-in-law to defend the country. The ladies were all busy preparing the jerkins their husbands were to wear. One day when Chriemhild was thus employed, Hagen entered her room. He bade her be of good cheer, because the hero having bathed in dragon's blood was invulnerable.

"Good friend," she answered sadly, "my Siegfried is so bold that he often pushes into the midst of the enemy, and, in such a case, he might easily be wounded in his only vulnerable point."

Hagen begged her to embroider a little cross upon his jerkin to mark the place, so that he might always cover it with his shield. She promised to do so, and immediately worked a little cross with silver thread upon the garment. Her anxiety was needless, for the next day fresh messengers came to say that the kings had changed their minds regarding war, and were now determined to be true to their old alliance. Soon after this, Gunther made preparations for a great hunt to be given in honour of the continued peace. On the morning on which it was to be held, Chriemhild entreated her husband to remain at home. She had had such terrible dreams the night before, that she feared for his life. He laughed at her, and then kissed her, saying that a bad dream would be a foolish reason for keeping away from the hunt.

"Besides that, be comforted, dear wife. What harm can happen to me? I shall be amongst faithful friends and comrades all day long. I shall take Balmung and a sharp spear with me, and I should like to see him who would dare withstand me."

He kissed her again, and hastened away. She ran to the window, and watched him until he disappeared from sight. The morning passed very pleasantly, and then the warriors sat down to their mid-day meal, which was spread out on the grass. There was food in plenty, but the wine ran short. Hagen explained that he had sent the wine on to another place, thinking it was there they should have dined; but he told his friends of a cool spring under a lime-tree not far off, and offered to run a race there with Siegfried. The latter laughingly accepted the challenge, adding that he would carry his sword and hunting-tackle, while Hagen went empty-handed, that the race might be more equal. The two warriors ran across the meadow ground towards the linden, and, as they ran, the field flowers tried to stop bold Siegfried, the branches of the trees beckoned him to go back,

and the birds in the linden sang sadly as though they would say, "Turn back, noble hero, the traitor is behind you." But Siegfried did not understand the language of the flowers, trees, and birds. He trusted his friend as himself.

"Here we are at last," he cried to the panting Hagen. "Here is the clear spring; see how the water sparkles. Let us rest under the cool shade of the linden, until the king comes up, for he must have the first draught."

He laid aside his sword and other weapons, and threw himself on the flowery grass.

"How dull you look," he continued to Hagen, "and yet it is such a bright and beautiful day, and we have had such good sport this morning. Ah, here are the others. Come, Gunther, we are waiting for you. You must have the first draught."

Gunther stooped and drank of the fresh, clear water of the spring, then Siegfried followed him, saying with a laugh:

"I intend to have a real good drink. But do not fear, noble friends, I shall leave you plenty. This spring is like mankind: one part goes down into the earth, and another comes up into the light of day, but it never ends."

"Very true," said Hagen; "what matters one life more or less?"

The Nibelung hero bent over the well and drank thirstily, and, as he did so, Hagen caught up his spear and plunged it into his back, in the exact spot where Chriemhild had embroidered the silver cross on his jerkin. He did it with such force, that the point of the weapon went through his back and came out at his chest. The wounded man sprang to his feet, and, not finding his sword where he had put it, for it had been removed by one of the conspirators, seized his shield and struck the murderer to the ground. More he could not do. He sank back helplessly amongst the flowers, which were dyed red with his blood. The silver stream was also reddened, and all the sky was crimson with

the light of the setting sun. It seemed as if nature were blushing for the evil deed that had just been done.

Once more the hero feebly raised his beautiful head, and said, looking round upon the Burgundians:

"Ye murderous hounds, what harm did I ever do you? Had I known of your treachery, ye had all lain dead at my feet. A devil from hell must have tempted you to do this foul deed. None of you ventured to meet me in open battle, and so you fixed upon Hagen to do the cowardly deed. Your names will be known until the latest times as those of cowardly traitors. And now, King Gunther, dishonoured as you are through this ill-deed, and weak of will, listen to the words of a dying man. Protect my wife, she is your own sister, protect my poor wife from Hagen."

These were the last words of the royal hero.

The warriors stood silently around him, their hearts filled with sorrow and repentance. Gunther at length said:

"We will tell the people, who all loved the dead man, that he was murdered by robbers. Chriemhild will never then hold us to blame."

"Nay," said Hagen, "that may not be. I will not deny what my own cunning and my own hand have done. Our queen has now the expiation that she demanded, and your honour required. Burgundy is safe from all enemies, for no man was ever Siegfried's equal, or ever will be. What do I care for the complaints of a people or for the tears of a woman? Let us make a bier of branches, that the dead warrior may be borne to Worms thereon. Ha! here is Balmung, his good sword; to-day it shall do its old master a last service, and its new master a first."

When the bier was made, the hunting party set out for Worms in very different fashion from that in which they had started in the morning. They did not arrive until late at night. It almost

seemed as though the dead hero inspired both warriors and serving-men with terror. None of them would carry him up the staircase. Hagen called them cowardly loons, and raising the body on his shoulders, carried it up, and laid it outside Chriemhild's door. Next morning early the queen got up, and made ready to go to the sanctuary. She called a chamberlain, and he, seeing a dead man, whom he did not recognise in the half-light, lying in the passage, told his mistress. She shrieked aloud:

"It is Siegfried! Hagen has murdered him at Brunhild's command!"

The servants brought lights, and they saw that she had spoken truth. She threw herself on her husband's body, and with her tears washed his face clear of the blood stains that marred it. There he lay before her, pale, cold, and motionless; never, never again should she hear his voice;—never again. The word rhymed in her ears, and seemed to madden her. She would willingly have died with him, and have gone down to the grave; or, as her fore-fathers believed, have rejoined him in Freya's halls.

Old Sigmund, on hearing the news, uttered no word, but his heart seemed broken. He kissed his son's wounds, as though he hoped thereby to recall him to life. Suddenly he started to his feet, and the old spirit awoke in his heart.

"Murder! Vengeance!" he cried. "Up, Nibelungs, up, and avenge your hero."

He hastened into the court, and the Nibelungs, hearing his words, crowded round him in full armour. The old man received a sword and coat of mail from them, but his trembling hands were too weak to hold them, and next moment he had sank unconscious on the ground. The Burgundians were awaiting the assault with arms in their hands, and grim Hagen was bringing up new forces to help those already there.

The Nibelungs retired, gnashing their teeth.

On the third day after this, the bier was taken to the sanctuary to be blessed by the priest. The populace crowded into the church, that they might give a last look at the dead hero, who had done so much for Burgundy. Chriemhild stood by the uncovered coffin, which was adorned with gold and precious stones. Her eyes were tearless, but all could read her sorrow in her face and bearing. A veiled woman passed close by amongst the crowd. Chriemhild alone recognised her.

"Go, murderess," she cried, "do not approach him, lest the very dead should bear witness against you."

The Unknown vanished in the crowd.

The Burgundian warriors now came to view the corpse, as custom demanded. When Hagen came up, the wounds of the dead man opened, and his blood flowed forth in a warm stream, as at the hour of the murder.

"Do not stand there, assassin," said Chriemhild; "do you not see how the dead bears witness against you?"

The bold warrior remained where he was.

"I do not deny what my hand has done. I only acted as I was bound to act by my fealty to my liege lord and his queen."

If Chriemhild had had a sword in her hand, and had been possessed of a man's strength, Hagen had scarcely quitted the sanctuary alive.

Many gifts were made to the poor in honour of the dead hero, who was buried on the fourth day. The grave-chamber was richly decorated, and over it rose a high mound. Chriemhild followed the coffin to its quiet resting-place. There the lid was opened once more at her command. She kissed and wept over the pale face of her husband. Her women at length had to bear her away, for she would have remained there for ever. Hagen was standing without, grim and unmoved as ever, and said with his usual fatalism "What has happened, must needs

have happened. The will of the Norns must be done." The queen did not hear him. She did not even see how Gunther, Gernot, and many of the other warriors tried to hide their grief and repentance. Her thoughts were all with the dead.

Sigmund and the Nibelungs prepared to return home. They wanted to take Chriemhild with them, to guard her from the false Burgundians, but she would not leave her husband's grave, and only begged the old king and the Margrave Eckewart to take care of her little son, and bring him up to be like his father. For she said he was an orphan, fatherless, and perhaps motherless. She had only one wish, which she whispered in the old man's ear—the wish for vengeance. Sigmund took leave of none but the Lady Ute, who mourned for Siegfried as if he had been a son of her own, and of Giselher, the youngest of the brothers. Then he set out for the Netherlands.

Time passed on, and it almost seemed as though Chriemhild had grown content, and had become reconciled to her brother. Grim Hagen alone seemed to fill her with horror, and Brunhild she also avoided. She, one day, told her brother that she wished the Nibelung treasure to be brought up to Worms, as it was her private property. Gunther rejoiced at this proof of her renewed confidence in him, and at once consented to send for it. Alberich delivered the treasure to the messengers without hesitation, and at length it arrived at Worms. The queen made generous gifts to the people, and whenever she found a brave warrior who possessed but few worldly goods, she would provide him with all that was necessary for his calling, and with daily pay besides. So that she gradually became complete mistress of a small army, which grew daily larger, and more powerful.

Hagen warned the kings of this; he told them that the Lady

Chriemhild meditated vengeance. He did not care for his own life, he said, but the fair land of Burgundy must not fail into her hands. The only way that he could see of preventing this consummation would be for the kings to take the Nibelung treasure under their own care. The brothers would not consent. Gernot said that enough harm had been done to their sister already without heaping small indignities on her. Once, when his liege lords were absent, Hagen, who had always considered that prevention was better than cure, called his men together, and fell upon the warders who had charge of the Nibelung treasure. He carried off all that remained of it, and sank it in the deep waters of the Rhine. It was of little use that the kings heard of his ill-deed on their return; it was of little use that Chriemhild made indignant complaint: the deed was done, and could not be undone.

"If you were not our uncle," said Gunther and Gernot, "this should have cost you your life."

A short time afterwards, Hagen showed his nephews the place in the Rhine where he had hidden the treasure, and made them swear that none of them would betray its hiding-place as long as one of them was alive. Chriemhild was sad and sorrowful as before; she always sat with her mother, and embroidered tapestry in which she depicted the scene of Baldur's death, and showed how he was cruelly slain by his brother Höder, and how Nanna died of a broken heart, and shared her husband's bier. But in Baldur every one recognised the features of her hero, and in Nanna her own; while Höder had the features, garments, and murderous weapon of grim Hagen. She often held the needle suspended in her fingers, and sat watching the picture thoughtfully. When the Lady Ute asked her, on such occasions, "What are you thinking of, my child?" she would answer, "I was thinking of Hagen."



warriors to the Burgundian court. Gunther, Gernot, and Hagen were old acquaintances of his, and he had often held young Giselher on his knees as a child. Now that he came to the house of mourning, his gentle, noble spirit had such an effect on Chriemhild that she would sometimes accompany her mother

to the hall, and listen to the Margrave with a gentle smile, such as had not been seen on her face since her hero's death. But if Brunhild or Hagen entered, she would go away at once.

Days and weeks passed on, and at last Gunther said to his guest that he fancied the Margrave had not come merely for the pleasure of renewing an old acquaintance, but had something on his mind. Then Rüdiger answered:

"Well, King Gunther, I will tell you what brings me here. You know that good Queen Helche, the faithful helpmeet of my liege lord King Etzel, died some years ago, and that her sons were slain in battle by Wittich. The king of the Huns has long sat lonely in the wide halls of Etzelburg, but he has now made up his mind to marry again. He consulted me on the subject, and I advised him to try and win the hand of the noble Lady Chriemhild, your sister and the widow of heroic Siegfried. If you will give your consent to the match, I am empowered to say that she shall be queen of the Huns."

"She is no longer under my charge," was the answer; "she is queen of the Nibelungs, and of the Netherlands, and I fear that she will not be willing to marry again."

"I will take her the good news," said Giselher, "and mother Ute will advise her to do as we wish."

The young warrior immediately rose, and went to the women's apartment. He found his sister busied as usual with her embroidery. He told her that it was time she should give up grieving so much for her dead husband, and reminded her that she was still young, and might yet be happy. Then he told her what Rüdiger had related of Etzel's court, its greatness and its glory, and finally told her of Etzel's wooing. But Chriemhild answered with solemn firmness, that she would not leave the grave-mound in which all she loved was buried.

Then mother Ute spoke. "If you will be Etzel's queen, my child, you will be the most powerful of women."

"Most powerful of women," repeated the daughter thoughtfully.

"Look, Giselher," she went on, pointing to her embroidery. "you know whom that hero is intended to represent?"

He shook his head, and she added, "It is Wali, the Avenger, of whom our fathers said that he revenged Baldur, and sent dark Höder to his own place."

"These are old wives' stories that are forgotten now," answered Giselher. "Let us speak of him in whose name good Rüdiger is come to woo you."

"Yes—but what if it were to be fulfilled?" she said, "perhaps—Ask the Margrave to come to me, that I may hear his wooing myself."

Giselher left the room, and the Lady Ute went out also, leaving Chriemhild alone, as she requested.

"Siegfried," said the young queen, "it is for your sake that I leave your resting-place, from whence you have so often come to me, in waking and in sleep, and pointed to your wounds—those gaping, bleeding wounds, that will never close until it is granted me to send grim Höder down to dark Hella."

Rüdiger appeared, and in courteous fashion wooed the queen in his master's name; but not till he had promised, in the name of the god Irmin, that she should have men to fight her battles when she needed them, did she consent to go to the land of the wild Huns, and to become Etzel's wife.

The Burgundians all rejoiced when Rüdiger told them the good news,—the three royal brothers especially, for now, they thought, their sister would again be happy. But Hagen came to them, and said,—

"What are you thinking of, that you thus call the lightning down on our heads? Do not give your sister to the king of

the Huns. Between the widow of Siegfried and us, such friendship alone can exist as that between fire and water. Either must the one be quenched, or the other fly off in steam. It is a childish action to supply one's enemy with a sword to cut off one's head."

But the brothers refused to listen to his warnings. Preparations now went on apace for the journey to Etzelburg. Ambassadors were sent to the Nibelungs and to the Netherlands to tell them of the queen's contemplated marriage. They returned with a numerous company of warriors and servants. At length all was ready, the kings went with their sister as far as the Danube, where they took leave of her, and Margrave Rüdiger took their place as leader of the travelling party. At the borders of the land, King Etzel with a large following awaited the queen's arrival. His face lighted up with pleasure when he saw the pale, beautiful countenance of the Lady Chriemhild. He told her that she should have full power over his treasures and his lands,-that, in short, she should be his queen. She answered that she would be a faithful and obedient wife, but that her love was buried with Siegfried. The king paid no attention to the last words. He made sure of winning her love through kindness and affection. And so they went on together to Etzelburg. The marriage festivities lasted a fortnight, and were celebrated in the usual way.

Chriemhild took little part in the rejoicings. She did all that she had to do, thinking of Siegfried the while. Now, amongst the warriors present, there was one who was famed for his unusual strength, bold Dietrich of Bern. His thoughts were far away in the beautiful land of the Amelungs, which his uncle Ermenrich had taken from him by guile and force. He longed to return to his own people, and win the victory for them; but Etzel would not give him the necessary help. Sometimes, as he

sat grave and sad in the great hall, while other men were laughing and talking, the queen would go to him, and tell him of Hagen's foul deed. He understood that she wished to woo him to vengeance, but he was silent, for he neither could nor would raise his sword against the Burgundian warriors who had been his faithful comrades in the olden time.

Months and years passed on; a little boy was born to the royal pair. He was the image of his mother, and received the name of Ortlieb. The king and country rejoiced equally in the birth of an heir to the throne. For his son's sake, Etzel loved his wife more than he had ever done before, and would have given her anything she chose to ask; but she cared for nothing; she remained grave, quiet, thoughtful about her duties, but sparing of her words. Even her little boy, carefully as she tended him, did not bring her happiness. She was never seen to smile even on him. The wound that her first husband's death had dealt her would not heal. The spirit of vengeance, rising out of the abyss, never ceased to whisper in her ears, "Blood for blood, murder for murder," and her ears were open to its cry.





II. THE BURGUNDIANS VISIT HUNLAND.

THE JOURNEY.

NE day when the king was playing with little Ortlieb, and speaking to his mother, he said how much he wished that the child should one day be a hero like Siegfried. She nearly shrieked when she heard the name, but forcing herself to be quiet, begged her husband to invite her brothers and their friends to come on a visit to the land of the Huns. It was the first request that she had ever made, and so King Etzel was overjoyed to hear it. He despatched the minstrels Swemmeling and Wörbeling, with four and twenty noble warriors, to invite the Burgundian kings to the Midsummer festival. And Chriemhild sent a special message to her mother, begging her to come too. In spite of Hagen's remonstrances, the three kings accepted Etzel's invitation.

Hagen prepared for the journey as though they were setting out on a campaign, and not to a feast. The Lady Ute would have liked to go, but her age and infirmities hindered her taking so long a journey. Brunhild also remained at home, for she had no desire to see her enemy's good fortune; besides, she had long given up caring for festivals; she only cared to spend her time near Siegfried's grave-mound.

"The Nibelungs are going to visit the Huns," said the common people, as they watched King Etzel's visitors crossing the Rhine; for, ever since the treasure had come into the country, the kings and their followers had been called Nibelungs, after the unknown land.

The travellers rode for twelve days through the Black Forest and many waste places, till they reached the Danube. At the borders of Bavaria neither inn nor ferryman was to be found. While the rest made preparations to encamp for the night, Hagen went deeper into the inhospitable land, and came to a spring that ran into a small lake. There he saw some women bathing in the clear water, and at once knew that they were swan-maidens Seeing him, they swam away, but he got possession of their feather garments, which obliged them to speak to him.

"Give us back our garments," said one of them, "and I will tell you of the future."

He promised to do as she desired, if she would tell him how their journey should end. She then prophesied pleasant things to him, and the hero gave back all the swan-garments. No sooner had he done this, than another of the maidens informed him that her sister had spoken words of guile, for that, far from the happy ending she had foretold, the priests alone of all that numerous company should ever see the Rhine again; as for the warriors, they should all die by the sword, if they did not at once return home. Hagen answered that he was ready to defend himself and his kings, and then asked how to cross the river. The swan-maidens directed him where he should find a ferryman, and then flew away.

Hagen followed the advice given him, and brought his company down to the ferry. The boatman turned out to be an old enemy, so after a hand-to-hand encounter, he was slain, and Hagen took his place. When they were halfway across the river, Hagen flung the priest, who accompanied them, overboard, that at least one portion of the swan-maiden's prophecy might come to nought. But he had miscalculated in this instance; the priest's floating

garments upheld him on the turbulent waters, and the current drove him back to the shore.

"The holy man has the devil's own luck," said the grim warrior.

"I care not, however. What must be, will be, as the Norns used to say."

The travellers pursued their journey rather more rapidly than before. At length, after meeting with several adventures, they arrived at Margrave Rüdiger's castle, where they met with a hearty reception from their old friend and his wife. During their visit to Bechelaren, Giselher fell in love with fair Dietelinde, the only daughter of the house, and wooed her through his brother. So, according to old custom, the youth and the maiden were called to appear before the whole company in the great hall of the castle, and say whether they were willing to be man and wife. Giselher did not hesitate for a moment. His "yes." was loud and clear. But fair Dietelinde blushed, and looked down, and her whispered "yes" was only obtained in response to a second demand. Then Giselher clasped her in his arms, and gave her the kiss of betrothal. The bond was therefore sealed for life.

The Burgundians, or Nibelungs as they were generally called, remained at Bechelaren for many days, and when they went away, their host pressed all manner of costly gifts upon them. Hagen refused to receive anything in the way of ornament, and only begged for a strong shield that hung on the wall amongst other pieces of armour.

"It is Nudung's shield, and he, our only son, was slain by faithless Wittich," said the Margravine; "take it, noble hero, and may it guard you well."

The travellers continued their journey, and arrived at the land of the Huns, on the borders of which they were met by Dietrica and many other warriors. Accompanied by these, and by Rüdiger they at length arrived at Etzelburg. The queen came down to meet them in the castle court. She greeted the kings, and kissed young Giselher, but scarcely seemed to see the warriors who accompanied them. Hagen was angry, and said,—

"When one comes as an invited guest, one is accustomed to hear one's host at least say 'Welcome.' This praiseworthy custom does not seem to obtain in the land of the Huns."

"Lord Hagen of Tronje," said Chriemhild, "have you done anything to gain such greeting? Have you, perchance, brought me some of the stolen Nibelung treasure?"

"It lies deep sunk in the Rhine," replied the warrior, "and there it will remain till the end of time. But had I known that you desired a gift, I am rich enough to have brought you one."

"I can do without it," said the queen, "I too am rich; I only thought you might perhaps have desired to restore to me my own again."

"I find my shield, helmet, sharp sword, and coat of mail a heavy enough weight to carry," replied the hero, "but I promise to try and bring you the devil. He has much rich treasure."

"I do not need your gifts," cried the queen, "nor do I desire them. You have served me ill enough in time past with your murderous and thievish hand. I have not yet requited you for what you have already done for me."

She turned away in anger, and calling her men-at-arms around her, promised to reward whoever avenged Siegfried's death.

The queen then asked her brothers to divest themselves of their armour, as it was not customary to appear in the panoply of war before King Etzel. Hagen at once advised them not to do so, warning them of the consequences in plain terms.

Chriemhild exclaimed, that she would give much to know whose advice he was following in this matter; then the Amelung hero came forward, and boldly avowed that it was he who had given this counsel, for he knew well the devilish plots that were

being contrived in the palace. The queen only answered him with an angry look, and at once retired to her apartments.

While the kings talked together in the friendliest fashion, the Hunnish warriors looked askance at the Burgundians. Hagen, desirous of showing that he felt no fear, asked one of his comrades to go with him to the inner court to await the toming of the queen. His familiar friend, Volker the minstrel, declared himself ready. They seated themselves on a bench near the queen's hall. As they sat there—Hagen with his good sword Balmung laid across his knees—Chriemhild came down the steps, and asked him why he had hated her so, and why he had slain the noble Siegfried.

"Well," he said, "I never denied that I did it. The queen of Burgundy was insulted for his sake, and the royal house dishonoured. The shame had to be washed out with blood, and as the hero was too strong to attack in the open field, he had to be slain by cunning. Any one may blame me, any one may strive to avenge the deed, I am not afraid. I have no cap of darkness, and am easily to be found."

Then Chriemhild turned to her serving-men, and desired them to slay the slanderer of their queen, and the treacherous murderer of Siegfried. But the two brave men were so terrible to look upon, that none of the Huns dared touch them, although the queen offered them much gold. They then went their way, and the queen returned to her apartments, blushing with shame.

A message now came from King Etzel begging the Burgundians to visit him in his palace. They accepted the invitation, and he greeted them like old friends. After having welcomed the heroes, he said that he should very much like to know who the two warriors were that looked so brave, and stood so close together.

"They are Volker the minstrel, and my uncle Hagen of Tronje," replied King Gunther.

"What, Hagen!" cried Etzel. "So we have met again at last, old friend, and I can tell you to your face that you have not belied the promise of your youth. But you are much changed in your looks from what you were in the old days when I was proud of your brave deeds in my service, and set you free, to return to Burgundy. You have lost an eye since then, your hair is mixed with grey, and your face has grown so rugged that you might alarm the boldest warrior when you swing your broadsword."

"Who can tell," replied the hero, "how soon I may have to do it again?"

"Never in the land of the Huns," answered the king; "you, like all Burgundians, áre a favoured guest."

The evening passed quietly, and it was nearly midnight before the Burgundians were led to the great hall, where couches were spread for them with down cushions covered with gold embroidery. They agreed with Hagen that it would be well to keep watch during the night for fear of surprise, and that each man should place his weapons where he could get them at a moment's notice.

Hagen and Volker kept guard. They had been seated for some time in silence, when all at once the minstrel saw helmets and shields glancing in the starlight. He pointed them out to his companion, who knew that they were the queen's men, and needed no telling to inform him on what errand they were come. The minstrel wanted to spring out upon them, but Hagen prevented him, because some of the enemy might then have slipped into the hall, and perhaps murdered their sleeping friends. So peace was preserved for the time; and at dawn, the Burgundians marched to the sanctuary to keep the solemn Midsummer festival. King Etzel appeared with his train, and asked, in astonishment, why they wore their armour. But they answered that such was their custom, not thinking it well to tell him what had happened during the night

After the service was over, a great repast was served, which was in turn succeeded by games, dances, music, and other entertainments. In all feats of arms and trials of skill in the lists, the Nibelungs showed themselves better men than the Huns. At length the games appeared to be over, and the warriors desired to rest after their exertions. As they were leaving the scene of contest, a prince of the Huns presented himself in shining armour, and offered to try his skill against the strangers, who, he alleged, had hitherto only measured their strength with the common people, and not with the princes. Bold Volker caught his spear more firmly in his hand, and turned to accept the challenge. His thrust was so shrewd that he wounded the Hun severely, and a cry of "Murder, down with the murderer!" arose on every side. A free fight would have begun in another minute, had not King Etzel thrown himself between the belligerents, and threatened death to any of his people who hurt one of his guests. Peace was then outwardly restored; but the sullen glances each side cast on the other, showed the angry turmoil in every heart.

That evening, Etzel sent for his little son into the hall, that he might present him to his guests. The warriors all admired the handsome, frank-mannered child, and told the father that they did so; but Hagen said he did not think the boy would live to grow up, he looked so delicate.

This speech of Hagen's increased the bad feeling of the Huns towards the Burgundians tenfold; but no one betrayed his thoughts. A little later, a great noise was heard in the court without—shouts, the clang of armour, howls and cries.

THE FIRST BLOOD. BLÖDELIN AND DANKWART

Before the warriors went to the feast that evening, Queen Chriemhild had spoken privately to the hero of Bern. She promised him Etzel's help in regaining his kingdom, if he would

do her one service-if he would avenge Siegfried's death. But he told her that he could not, for the Burgundian warriors were old friends and comrades of his; besides, he reminded her, that they had come to Etzelburg in all good faith and loyalty. A few minutes after Dietrich had left her sad and hopeless, Blödelin, Etzel's brother, came in, and told the queen of what had happened that afternoon in the tilting ground. Seeing how hot his anger was, Chriemhild thought she might perhaps succeed in gaining him over to her cause. She therefore told him of the unavenged death of Siegfried, and promised him a rich treasure of silver and gold if he would do her will. But he refused, from fear of Etzel's anger. Upon which, the wise woman offered him a margravate in addition, with lands and towers, and the hand of a beautiful maiden of her court, whom he had long wooed, and wooed in vain. These promises gained him to her will. He told her that he would cause a quarrel to spring up between the men on either side, and if Hagen came to try and settle matters, he would have him overpowered, and carried to the queen in

Chriemhild then retired to her chamber, which was pervaded by a soft light, the curtains of Indian silk keeping off the rays of the sun. As she sat there thinking, the words that her mother had once spoken rushed into her memory. "Women often strike deeper wounds and shed more blood with their tongues than men with their swords." She would have started up, and recalled Blödelin; but at the same moment she saw, as distinctly as if it had really been there, Siegfried's bier with the dead warrior stretched upon it. She saw him raise himself, and stretch out his arms to her; but when she started forward to meet him, there was nothing but empty air. She determined now to go on to the bitter end. Whether her vengeance brought about the death of her little son, and of King Etzel; whether it brought about the de-

struction of the kingdom, she did not care. She could die, and die willingly, if only she had the murderer's life.

Meantime, Blödelin was making his preparations. His men were rejoiced to hear the news he brought them, and followed him joyously to the hall, where Dankwart the Marshal, Hagen's brother, had charge over the serving-men. The hero rose from his seat to greet the prince, who exclaimed:

"Prepare to die. The queen demands a bloody atonement for the death of the great Siegfried."

"But why should I have to expiate a murder of which I knew nothing?"

"That cannot be helped," said the Hun; "my men's swords cannot return unstained to their sheaths."

"Then I am sorry that I gave you words of peace. I shall now give you your answer with cold steel."

With that he drew his sword, and swung it so lustily at the warrior's neck that his head fell to the ground at one blow.

Wild shrieks and shouts of vengeance arose, and all prepared to take part in the fight that had become inevitable. Dankwart made his way fighting to the hall, his armour bespattered with blood; but the defenceless serving-men were slain to a man.

"Up, brother Hagen!" he cried, "save me from the faithless Huns. Lord Blödelin attacked both me and the servants, in order to avenge Siegfried's death. I slew him, but the servants are all dead, and I alone am escaped out of the traitorous toils that the Huns have laid for us.'

THE SLAUGHTER.

The fight recommenced in the banqueting hall, in spite of all King Gunther's efforts to smooth matters over, and during the struggle the little Prince Ortlieb, the sole hope of Etzel's house, was killed. At length Hagen, Dankwart, and Volker, succeeded in locking and bolting the doors of the hall.

Etzel and the queen sat full of anxious care during the mêlée. Dietrich and Rüdiger, neither of whom took part in the fight, were also grave and sad. At length the hero of Bern exclaimed:

"Listen to me, Nibelungs. Hearken to my words, ye friends of Burgundy. Grant me a truce that I and my men and Margrave Rüdiger may go away unharmed."

King Gunther recognised Dietrich's voice, and said: "If any of my warriors has done harm to you or yours, noble hero of Bern, I shall take your cause into my own hands."

"No one has done me harm," replied the warrior; "all that I request is that you should let us go freely."

"What is the good of so much requesting?" cried hot-headed Wolfhart; "we have sharp keys to unlock the doors with, even if a thousand such as these Nibelungs tried to keep them shut."

"Hush! hush! foolish comrade," said Dietrich; "there was but little sense in that speech of yours."

King Gunther then commanded his people to open the door, and much to the wrath of the Burgundians, Dietrich passed through their ranks with Chriemhild leaning on one arm and King Etzel on the other, and followed by his six hundred warriors. After them came Rüdiger with four hundred men. Giselher said to the Margrave:

"Greet your daughter from me, and say to her that I shall think of her even in death."

Many of the Huns tried to escape with King Etzel, but Volker cut them down as they strove to pass the door.

No sooner were Dietrich and Rüdiger safely gone than the horrible carnage recommenced. The Burgundian swords had no rest, until all the Huns were lying dead or dying on the floor. After that the Nibelungs rested awhile from their labours, but Hagen speedily called them to be up and doing, and fling the corpses out, lest they should be in the way in any renewed attack. He was at once obeyed. The dead and wounded Huns were one and all flung into the court below.

Volker and Hagen now guarded the entrance, lest the enemy should unexpectedly break in.

While Etzel wrung his hands, and moaned over the slaughter of so many good men and true, Chriemhild offered a shield full of gold and jewels to whoever slew her deadly foe, Hagen of Tronje. Of all who heard her, one alone came forward and said that he would try and do her will. And he was Count Iring of Daneland, Haward's man.

He went forward boldly and performed prodigies of valour, but at length was beaten back, and fell dead under Chriemhild's window.

Haward and Irnfried of Düringen (Thuringia) determined to avenge bold Iring, so they called out their men and went to the attack. The fight began at the door, where Irnfried fell under the minstrel's sword, and immediately afterwards Haward was slain by the hero of Tronje. But still the men of Daneland and Düringen fought on unheeding, and Hagen exclaimed,—

"Give place. Let them go through the door, out of which they shall never come back alive. Volker shall play them a slumber-song to which our swords can beat the accompaniment."

So the Nibelungs opened their ranks, and the men of Daneland and Düringen entered the blood-stained hall. Once more the battle began. Many a brave Burgundian fell to rise no more; but not one of their enemies escaped alive.

THE PARLEY AND THE FIRE.

Silence fell on the palace. The Nibelung warriors laid down their shields and heavy armour, that they might the better rest from their labours, while Hagen and Volker kept watch by the door. During this time of quiet, the Burgundians tried to make peace. They reminded King Etzel that they had come to his land at his own invitation, and relying on his good faith, only to meet with treachery from him and his. But Etzel demanded that the Burgundians should acknowledge him their feudal superior. Then Giselher turned to his sister and asked what harm he had ever done her that she should behave in such a way. And even the women, who were weeping for their husbands and sons, bore him witness that all his life had been spent in doing good to others. Chriemhild was touched by his appeal, and told him that he, Gunther, and Gernot should go free with all their warriors and men-at-arms if only they would give up the murderer Hagen, that she might punish him as he deserved. But with one voice the Nibelungs refused terms which were dishonourable in their eyes.

Enraged at the boldness of her foes, the queen called upon the Huns to make one more assault, and drive them out of the house. Again the bitter strife began. Chriemhild knew no more compassion. She commanded her servants to set fire to the upper part of the house, which was built of wood, and soon the flames were seen spreading over the whole roof, which at length fell with a crash. A wild wail of human creatures in their last agony accompanied the fall. After that the queen retired to her own apartments, and standing at the window overlooking the house where her brothers and their friends must have been burnt, thought sadly and half remorsefully over the past. Only half remorsefully, for she felt her heart as full of hatred to Hagen as it ever had been.

Meanwhile the Nibelungs had not perished in the flames, as Chriemhiid fondly imagined. The great vaulted hall in which they had entrenched themselves was too strongly built to have suffered much from the fire in the wooden upper storey; though the Burgundians were for a long time as if shut up in an oven, the

heat was so terrific; they yet escaped with their lives; and Hagen made them slake their intolerable thirst by drinking the blood of their fallen enemies.

When the Huns at length came to look for their charred bodies, they were not a little surprised to find themselves confronted by six hundred brave and utterly undaunted warriors.

SLAUGHTER AGAIN.—THE LORD OF BECHELAREN.

The queen heard with astonishment that the Nibelungs were still alive and armed for a new fight. While she pondered what it were best to do, one of the Hunnish notables told her that she should apply for help, either to the Margrave of Bechelaren, who had received so many benefits from the king, or to Dietrich of Bern, who had enjoyed Etzel's hospitality so long as a fugitive. Chriemhild thought the advice good, and at once sent off a message to Rüdiger.

The noble Margrave immediately obeyed the queen's summons. Etzel explained to him the true position of affairs, and reminding him of all the honours that had been heaped upon him, told him the time was come to prove his gratitude. He must punish the Nibelungs for the great scath they had wrought to the royal house and to the land of the Huns.

"My liege," said the good old hero sadly, "all that you have said is true, and I am ready to do you any service, however dangerous, but do not ask that I should break the faith I swore to them when they stayed with me at Bechelaren, before I led them to Etzelburg at your command. They trusted me utterly, and young Giselher chose my daughter to be his wife, and to share the Burgundian throne. Methinks it were an ill deed to raise my hand against them that trusted me."

When the king reminded him of his oath of allegiance, he continued,—

"Take back my castles and towns, the wealth that you have given me, and the possessions I have won for myself. I will go penniless into the wide world with my wife and child, and what is my best wealth, Honour and Truth."

"Nay, noble Margrave, but you cannot do so," replied the queen, "if you fail in obedience. Think of the time when you came to Burgundy to woo me for Etzel. I feared to go alone amongst the barbarous Huns, where I had not a friend or helper, and you swore to me with a solemn oath that you would help me against every adversary, except your liege lord. Your sworn faith to me is older than that which you promised to the Nibelungs. If you break your oath to me, you are dishonoured."

Rüdiger stood in silent thought before the queen. At length he said,—

"Take my head. I shall not even tremble when the executioner's sword touches me. But do not force me to do what my conscience disallows."

The conversation lasted a good while longer. At length Rüdiger with a heavy heart consented to obey the king and queen.

The Nibelungs stood by the window looking out for help. On seeing the noble Margrave approach with his men, Giselher exclaimed joyfully that all was not lost, that they should see Bechelaren and the Rhine again. When Rüdiger came close to the door he explained his errand. Gunther reminded him of the friendship they had sworn, and Rüdiger answered sadly that the oath he had sworn to Etzel's wife forced him now to fight her battle. And so they took fair leave of each other, as noble friends forced to fight against their will. Once more the blood of the Nibelungs and their opponents stained the great hall. The heat of battle raged anew in every heart, and many

men were slain. Amongst the number were Rüdiger and Gernot. At length the men of Bechelaren were conquered, and slain to the very last man. Two hundred Nibelungs also fell beforethis victory was gained.

The heroes were silent in the wide hall. They heard the sound of voices in the court without. The queen's voice was raised in indignation, as she accused the Margrave Rüdiger of playing the false traitor and making peace with the Nibelungs. Volker's anger was roused at this unjust suspicion. Leaning out of the window, he told her not to vex herself on that score, nor accuse a good man falsely, for the hero of Bechelaren had died serving her. He then commanded the Margrave's body to be shown at the window, so that the king and queen and all the Huns should see it. Etzel uttered a loud cry of horror, and cursed the hand that had done the deed. He called for his sword, that he might himself lead the band of avengers, but he forebore to unsheath it when he saw that terrible pair (Hagen and Volker) still guarding the threshold.

Chriemhild stood looking on with folded arms. She was beautiful as ever, but it was now the beauty of a fallen angel. She shed a few tears for the loss of her old friend Rüdiger. Perhaps also because she feared that he was her last ally. She may likewise have pondered whether by any means she might yet attain her end. But be that as it may, the next events were unexpected by her as by every one else.

DIETRICH AND HIS AMELUNGS.

One of Dietrich's men heard what had happened. He hastened to his master and told him the strange tale. Dietrich refused to believe it, and sent Helfrich to the palace to find out the truth. On hearing the news of Rüdiger's death con-

firmed, the hero of Bern sent his old master Hildebrand to ask the Nibelungs why they had done this evil deed.

The master would have gone unarmed upon this errand, but Wolfhart cried out upon the folly of appearing as a lamb in the presence of wolves. The master thought the advice good, and put his armour on. When he was on the way, he saw that all Dietrich's men were following him well-armed, under Wolfhart's guidance. He desired his quick-tempered nephew to go back, but the latter refused point-blank, saying that he could not let his uncle go alone; and the other warriors, one and all, declined to leave him. When the small band of five hundred brave men came in front of the house the Nibelungs were defending, Master Hildebrand lowered his shield, and asked if it were true that good Margrave Rüdiger was dead. Hagen answered that they wished it were untrue, but it could not be helped, for he had been slain in unavoidable fight. The Amelungs mourned aloud for their friend. Wolfhart would have avenged him on the spot, but the master held him back, threatening him with Dietrich's anger if he thrust himself into the quarrel. Then, turning to the Nibelungs, he demanded in the name of the hero of Bern that the Margrave's body should be handed over to them, that they might give him honourable burial. King Gunther replied that it was a good and worthy desire on their part, and one that ought to be gratified. Wolfhart called to them to make haste and bring out the body, upon which Volker said that they were too tired to do more work, so the Amelungs might come in and fetch it.

One word led to another, till Wolthart lost his temper altogether, and rushed forward, followed by the Amelungs, shouting as with one voice their ancient war-cry. Master Hildebrand, drawn on in the general rush, was found in a foremost place when the battle began. The tired Nibelungs, and the brave

Amelungs-men who had formerly fought side by side in the great battle of Ravenna, and on many other fields-were now engaged in hand-to-hand conflict for life and death. Here was strong Sigestap, duke of Bern, there brave Helfrich, there the bold heroes Wolfwin, Wolfbrand, Helmnot, Ritschart, and others, all burning to avenge the death of Rüdiger. The confusion was so great that often those who wished to meet could not find each other. Thus Volker and Wolfhart were kept apart; the minstrel fell upon Sigestap, who had slain many of the Burgundians, and gave him his death-blow, only to meet Hildebrand a little later and himself to fall under his hand. Dankwart was slain by Helfrich; Wolfhart did many a deed of valour, until Giselher attacked him. After a tremendous struggle, the young king thrust him through the breast, but even then, though in mortal agony, he grasped his sword in both hands, and slew his adversary.

Old Hildebrand saw his nephew fall, and hastened to him. He lifted him in his arms, and tried to bear him from that hall of doom; but he was too heavy. The wounded hero opened his eyes once more, and said in a faint voice,-

"Uncle, tell our friends not to weep for me, for I have met my death at the hands of a brave king, as he has at mine. My wild blood has grown calm and still, and I am ready to sleep peacefully like a tired child."

These were the last words of the wildest, hottest warrior in Dietrich's train. Like Wolfhart, all the other comrades of the hero of Bern, save Hildebrand alone, lay stretched on the bloody floor; and with them all the Burgundians, except Hagen and King Gunther.

"Come now, Master Hildebrand," cried a rough voice, "you owe me satisfaction for the death of my comrade Volker."

It was Hagen that spoke. The meafdtelsmer defend his

bravely, but the hero of Tronje was strong and determined, and Balmung was sharp. One terrible blow cut through Hildebrand's coat of mail, and the blood flowed freely from his side.

THE END OF THE NIBELUNGS.

When the old man felt the wound, and looked in the grim, rugged countenance of his antagonist, for the first time in all his long life fear took possession of him, and covering his back with his shield, he fled like a coward.

With shattered armour, and red with his own blood, and that of others, the old man came before his master. Dietrich asked whether he had fought with the Nibelungs, and why he was so wet with blood. Then Hildebrand told how the Burgundians had slain the good Rüdiger, and had declined to give up his body for burial.

The hero of Bern was so saddened by these tidings, that he asked no further questions; he begged the old man to command his comrades to arm themselves at once.

"Whom shall I command?" asked the master.

"The swordsmen of Bern are all here. You, my lord, and I, are all that remain of them; and of the Nibelungs, Hagen and King Gunther are the only ones alive."

At first Dietrich did not understand, and when he did, he mourned aloud for his friends and comrades,

"How could my brave men have fallen under the swords of these tired warriors? Who will now help me to regain the land of the Amelungs?"

So he cried in his sore distress. But soon, mastering his emotion, the hero prepared to avenge his fallen friends, and, accompanied by the master, went full-armed to the house where Hagen and Gunther awaited their fate with undaunted courage.

Hagen and Hildebrand exchanged so many scornful words

when they met, that Dietrich chid them for a couple of old women, and demanded that the combat should at once begin. Hagen sprang forward without delay. Balmung was as sharp as ever it had been, and the hero of Bern had much trouble to defend himself; but the hand that wielded the sword was weary, and less nimble than of yore. Dietrich, seeing this, made a sudden spring upon Hagen, threw him down, and bound him fast. Then he bore his prisoner into the presence of Chriemhild, and recommended him to her mercy, saying that he was the boldest and bravest warrior in the whole world. He only noticed the thanks and praise she gave him for his doughty deed, and did not mark the gleam in her eyes, nor rightly interpret the flush that rose to her cheeks. He hastened away to the last battle with King Gunther.

Chriemhild had gained her end: that end to which she had waded through rivers of noble blood. Hagen read his fate in her eyes; but he never flinched: he would not give her that dear satisfaction. She wondered whether she could make him confess where he had hidden the Nibelung treasure. She spoke to him kindly, and promised to let him go safely home, if he would only tell her the hiding-place. The hero seemed touched by her gentleness, and said that he would willingly tell her, but that he had sworn to keep the secret as long as one of the three kings of Burgundy was alive.

She promised him again that she would keep her word, if he did her will; and then had him taken away to sure watch and ward.

"Lies, lies, all lies," he said to himself, as his gaolers led him away.

The hero of Bern soon afterwards appeared with King Gunther as a prisoner; the latter was at once taken to a separate dungeon Chriemhild considered what was now to be done. Siegfried's

murderers were now in her hands, both the man who had done the deed, and the king who had condoned it.

She felt a few qualms of conscience when she thought that Gunther was, after all, her brother; but she soon stifled them, and calmly pursued the path she had marked out for herself. King Gunther's head was cut off by her orders, and laid at Hagen's feet to convince him that now the last king of Burgundy was dead.

The hero thrust away the head contemptuously. "It was not thou," he said, "to whom I swore allegiance, and whose crown I strove to keep free from stain. The royal house of Burgundy, to which I belonged, is wasted, and its glory overthrown. Of what worth to me is the span of life that remains?"

That night Chriemhild had a happy dream. She thought that Siegfried stood before her as she had seen him first; that he stretched out his arms to her in love and gratitude, and then vanished slowly in the grey dawn.

Next morning Chriemhild seated herself beside King Etzel in all her robes of state. The hero of Tronje was brought before her, a prisoner, and in bonds. She questioned him again as to the hiding-place of the treasure. Raising his head, he answered with all his former boldness:

"You are mistaken, woman, if you think that you have my mind in your power, that you have tamed me entirely. The kings are all dead now, Gunther, Gernot, Giselher; now none but God and I know where the treasure was sunk in the deep waters of the Rhine, and from me you shall never learn where you may seek with any hope of finding."

Chriemhild silently came down from the throne, and picked up the good sword Balmung that lay beside Hagen's armour.

"You took good care of the gold you stole from me," she said, "but another thing that you stole I have in my hands at this

moment. My noble husband Siegfried wore this sword when last I saw him, before he fell under your murderous hand. I wil' now try whether it be strong enough to avenge its master."

She had drawn the sword from its sheath, and now swung it with both hands, and with such force that the head was cut from the body, and fell at the feet of old Hildebrand.

A cry of horror echoed through the hall, then all was still. Chriemhild thrust the bloody weapon back into its sheath, and said,—

"This blood may never be washed from the blade. Balmung must be taken to Worms as it is, and laid in Siegfried's grave. Perhaps he may then learn that his wife loved him faithfully, and punished his murderer. Two things alone made up my life: Love and Revenge. My work is done."

"Strange," said Hildebrand, staring at the hero's dissevered head, "that the bravest warrior in all the world should have been slain by a woman! But although he wronged me much of late, I will yet avenge him."

So saying, the old master drew his sword, and gave the queen her death-blow. Etzel shrieked out, and threw himself on his knees beside his wife. She was deadly pale, and had only strength to gasp rather than speak,—

"Let none touch the old master for this," she said, and they were her last words.





III. THE NIBELUNGS' LAMENT.

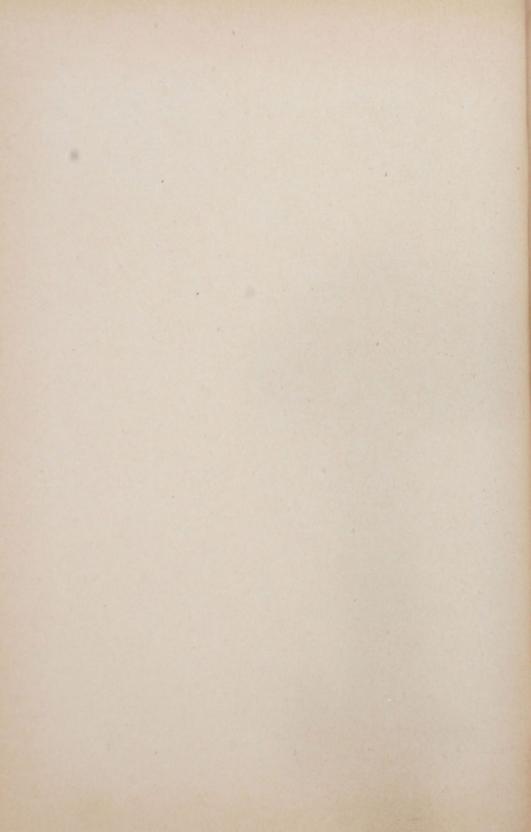
AT ETZELBURG.

REAT as was the misfortune that had come upon the people and the royal house, the burial of the dead had yet to be seen to as speedily as possible. King Etzel was too full of his own grief to attend to business of any kind, so Dietrich and Hildebrand gave all necessary orders, and themselves helped in the sad work.

All the dead were buried with every honour, save and except the hero of Tronje, who was forgotten. The grave-mounds were filled and closed, before the old master remembered the brave warrior, whose headless trunk still lay in the audience-hall. Hildebrand ordered that he should receive instant burial. So a separate grave was prepared for him, and there he was laid with all his armour, except the good sword Balmung, which was to be taken to Siegfried's grave, according to Chriemhild's wish. Many of the Huns went with the funeral procession; they neither wept nor made moan for the dead man whose strong right hand had brought so much evil on their native land. Next spring lovely flowers decked the other grave-mounds, while on Hagen's thistles and thorns alone were to be seen, in the midst of which a venomous adder had found its home. All who had gone near enough to the snake to examine it carefully, main-



ETZEL BESIDE CHRIEMHILD'S BIER.



tained that it had only one eye like the hero of Tronje, and were firmly convinced that it was the form his spirit had taken.

AT BECHELAREN.

Dietrich and Hildebrand sent news to Bechelaren and to Worms of all that had occurred. They chose the noble minstrel Swemmeling as their ambassador, for they knew that he was tender-hearted, and would break the news as gently as possible.

The Margravine and her daughter sat by an open window, watching the clouds that rose in the east. Godelinde felt strangely anxious, a presentiment of evil overpowered her, and she could not resist telling her daughter.

She said that she feared evil news was coming, for she had dreamed the night before that Queen Helche had appeared to her, surrounded by the Burgundians, and many other warriors in full armour. "The queen," added Godelinde, "said that she wished all these heroes to go with her. She took your father and Giselher by the hand, and led them away, the others following. I wished to join the procession, but she signed to me to go back. Then they all vanished in a grey mist, out of which a hill seemed to rise like—"

She was interrupted by sounds of arrival. It was the procession of mourners who had come under Swemmeling's guidance. The Margravine recognised Rüdiger's horse and armour, and the meaning of her dream was clear to her. But in the midst of all her grief, she tried to keep up, that she might comfort her daughter, who sat at her side, pale with terror.

The minstrel joined the ladies. The Margravine rose to meet him, and said it was needless for him to tell his tale, for she knew what had happened. A few moments later, they were able to listen to what Swemmeling had to say; so they asked him how the noble Rüdiger had met with his death. He took up his harp, and sang a song of the heroes who had kept their faith, and had conquered in the battle of life. He told how they come to the realms of Woden and of Freya, how they float over earth and sea, and how they speak to their friends in the breath of the wind and in the rustling of the leaves, and thus bring them comfort in their sorrow.

After that he gave them all the details of what had occurred at Etzelburg. On the following day Swemmeling had to continue his journey. A few weeks after his departure, the Margravine died of grief, and Dietelinde was left alone. She remained alone for a long time, but when Dietrich reconquered the land of the Amelungs, he took the orphan from Bechelaren, and brought her to his wife, the noble Herrat, at whose court she won the love of a bold warrior, whom she afterwards married.

Swemmeling made his way to Worms as rapidly as he could.

AT WORMS.

Meanwhile things were going on very quietly at Worms. Queen Ute would sit spinning by the hour together, humming many a weird ditty, but seldom speaking. Queen Brunhild would sit by her side embroidering the death of Baldur, which she copied from old patterns. Curiously enough, the white god was not like the pattern, but rather resembled Siegfried.

"Look, mother Ute," she said. "Is it not strange that, in spite of all my efforts, the picture will resemble Siegfried, as he looked that day when he rode out hunting for the last time. It is a sad story, and reminds me of an old legend that I used to hear in my childhood, in Isenland, in which a murder was committed for the sake of possessing a magic sword. It seems to me that when Hagen comes back, I must get him to give me Siegfried's sword, Balmung, that I may restore it to the

dead hero. Otherwise I fear that Burgundy will suffer as Isenland suffered through the theft of that other sword."

"Neither Hagen nor any of the others will ever return to this house, on which the sin of bloodshed rests, as yet unexpiated," said mother Ute; and, breaking off, she began to hum one of her strange, weird ditties, which was so gruesome that none could listen to it without a shiver. About this time Swemmeling arrived, and told the queens of the journey to the land of the Huns, of the friendly reception the Burgundians had met with from King Etzel, and then of the quarrel, the battle, and its fatal results. No plaints, no weeping, no questions, interrupted the minstrel's tale. When he came to an end, the Lady Ute said:

"It is a sad tale, very, very sad, but it could not have been otherwise, for much heroic blood was needed to wash away the curse of murder from this house."

Neither did Brunhild weep. She made all necessary arrangements for the comfort of her guests. She asked that the good sword Balmung should be given to her, and, looking at the bloodstains on the shining blade, she said:

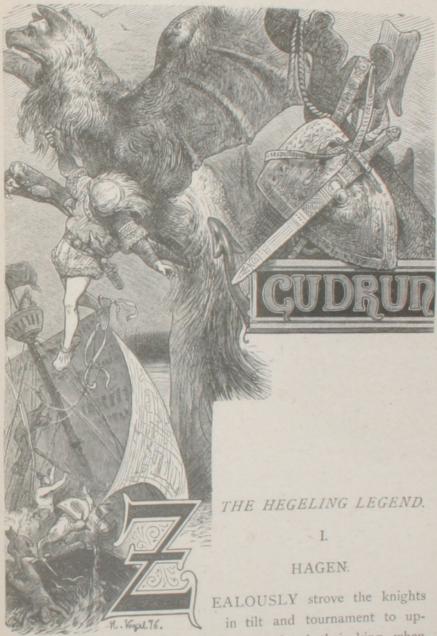
"Grim Hagen stole this weapon out of Siegfried's grave. I will take it back to the hero, now that it has been dipped in the blood of his murderer, that he may rest in peace."

She went to the grave mound with the sword, and did not return that day, nor during the night. When they sought her, they found her lying dead beside Siegfried's coffin, on which she had laid Balmung.

The Lady Ute went on spinning for many a day, and as she span, she hummed a song of the snake-queen who murdered her own brood.

The Burgundian nobles, and all the people, mourned for their royal house and the fallen heroes. But when feuds arose in the kingdom, they united, and raised the young son of Gunther and Brunhild to the throne, appointing brave men to act as guardians for the king so long as he remained a child.





hold their country's honour before Sigeband their king, when he held the Midsummer feast at his high castle of Balian in Ireland. Sweetly the minstrels sang the praise of warlike deeds, and eagerly did boys of noble birth contend in games of hurling the spear and shooting with the bow. But evermore did little Hagen, the king's son, bear him best in the gentle strife; and the heart of his mother, the Lady Ute, was pleased.

One day the boys were amusing themselves by throwing their spears at a target. Having thrown them all, they ran forward to get their weapons again, the prince among the rest. As he could run faster than his companions, he reached the target first, and was busy pulling out his spear, when an old man called to the children to run back and hide themselves, for danger was approaching. He pointed up at the sky, crying, "A griffin!"

The Lady Ute looked, and saw a dark spot in the sky. It seemed too small to be dangerous. But it approached with the swiftness of an arrow, and the nearer it came the bigger it grew. All could now hear the noise made by its wings, and the sound resembled the rushing of the storm. The other boys fled in terror, but Hagen stood his ground boldly, and flung his spear with all his childish strength at the great bird. The weapon grazed its feathers harmlessly, and, at the same moment, it swooped down upon the child and bore him off in its talons.

So the feasting and mirth that had reigned at Castle Balian were turned into mourning, for the heir to the kingdom was gone. There was no hope of rescue; for though many a hero would willingly have fought with the griffin, its flight was so swift that no one could see where it was gone. Years passed on, and the king and queen had no news of their boy.

The griffin carried Hagen over land and sea to its nest, which it had built on a rock rising out of the water. It gave the boy to its young ones to eat, and then flew away in search of new booty. The little griffins fell upon the child, and prepared to devour him, but he made ready for his defence, thrust back their bills with all his strength, and caught the birds by the throat

striving to throttle them. At length one of the griffins, which was old enough to fly, caught him up, and carried him to the branch of a tree, that it might enjoy the sweet morsel alone The bough was too weak to bear their united weight; it bent, broke, and the monster fell with the boy into a thicket of thorns beneath. The griffin fluttered away, and Hagen crept deeper into the thicket, unheeding the thorns. At length he reached a dark cave, where he sank down utterly exhausted. When he came to his senses, he saw a little girl of about his own age standing a little way off and looking at him in astonishment. He raised himself on his elbow to see her better, upon which she fled to a greater distance, and no wonder, his appearance was so frightful. He was dirty, wounded, and bleeding, and his clothes hung about him in rags. He limped and crept as well as he could after the girl, and found that she had taken refuge in a large cave with two companions. They all shrieked when they saw him, for they thought he was either a wicked dwarf or a merman, who had followed them to devour them; but when he told them that he was a prince who had been carried off by the griffin, and had only escaped from the monster as by a miracle, they were comforted, and shared their scanty fare with him.

After that they told him their story, which was much the same as his own. He found that the girl he had first seen was called Hilde, and that she was an Indian princess; the second was Hildburg of Portugal; and the third came from Isenland. The maidens nursed their young companion with such care that his wounds were soon healed. When he was well again, he went out to provide the needful food, and ventured deeper into the land than the maidens had ever done. He made himself a bow and arrows, the latter of which he tipped with fish-bones and brought home small game of all kinds. As the children

had no fire, they were obliged to eat their food raw, but they became all the stronger and hardier for that, and when Hagen was twelve years old he was almost a man in size.

Meanwhile the young griffins were grown up, and were able to go out in search of food for themselves, so that the boy could no longer wander about as freely and fearlessly as before. Nevertheless, one evening he ventured down to the shore, and crept under an overhanging rock which hid him from view. He looked out at the foaming waves and the wild sea, which now looked dark as night, and again was lighted up by the vivid flashes of lightning that burst from the storm-clouds. He listened fearlessly to the loud peals of thunder, the howling of the wind, and the sound of the frantic waves dashing against the rocks. But suddenly he caught sight of a boat, struggling in unequal conflict with the elements, and his heart was filled with hope and fear; of hope, because thoughts of home and his parents were awakened in his breast; of fear, because the boat seemed too weak to live on such a sea. Then he saw it drive upon a point of rock. There was one shriek of agony, and ship and crew were swallowed in the waves. The storm raged on, until morning came, and seemed with its soft light to calm the fury of the winds. On the strand were scattered pieces of the wreck, and the corpses of the luckless mariners. Hagen was going to sally out in hopes of picking up something useful, when he was stopped by hearing the whirr of griffins' wings, and knew that the great birds had come down to the shore, having scented the prey. While the monsters were busied with their meal, the boy crept out of his hiding-place in search of something to eat. But he only found drift-wood, and a drowned man in full armour, with sword and bow, and a quiverful of sharp-pointed arrows. He could have shouted aloud for joy, for now he had arms, such as he used to see at his father's court. Quickly he donned the coat of mail, covered his head with the

helmet, girded the sword to his side, picked up the steel bow and the arrows. It was high time, for at this moment one of the griffins swooped down upon him. He drew his bow with all his strength, and the arrow struck his enemy in the breast, bringing it down with fluttering wings. It fell at his feet, dead. A second monster shared its fate, and now the three other birds attacked him all at once; but he slew them all with his sword. He took the heads of the dead monsters to his friends in the cave, who had passed a wakeful night in anxiety for him. Great was their joy when they found that the griffins were dead. They accompanied their hero to the place of his victory, they helped him to throw the great birds into the sea, and then, true to pious custom, they assisted him to heap up a mound over the dead warrior whose weapons had helped Hagen to victory. Vainly did they seek for provisions among the wreckage; but they found a well-preserved box with flint and steel, which enabled them to make a fire. So they were now able to enjoy a well-dressed meal, which after their former privations seemed a perfect banquet.

Hagen went out hunting much more frequently than before, and slew bears, wolves, panthers, and other wild beasts. Once, however, he met with a curious creature. It was covered with shining scales, its eyes glowed like red-hot coals, and horrible grinders gleamed in its blood-red jaws.

He aimed a sharp arrow at its back; but the point glanced off the glittering scales, and the monster turned upon the lad. A second arrow was likewise without effect. Hagen now drew his sword; but all his efforts were useless, and he only escaped the terrible claws by his marvellous agility. When he was almost exhausted by the long struggle, he at length saw his opportunity, and plunged his weapon into the great jaws. Overcome with fatigue, he seated himself on the still heaving body of the creature. He longed for a few drops of water to quench his thirst, and

as none was near, he eagerly drank of the blood that streamed from the monster's wounds. Scarcely had he done this, when his weakness vanished, and an unaccustomed sense of power took possession of him. He sprang to his feet, longing to put his new strength to the test. He would not have hesitated to fight all the gri ins and giants in the world. He drew his sword, and slew a bear with one stroke. In like manner he killed two panthers, and a rhinoceros. He was covered with blood from head to foot, and looked so ferocious carrying the bear on his shoulders, that he frightened the maidens in the cave; but he regained his accustomed manner when he had seen the gentle Hilde.

Many years came and went. Hagen and his three friends had enough to eat and drink, and were clothed in the skins of wild beasts. Although they were very happy together, they longed to get back to the haunts of men, and often cast anxious looks over the sea in hopes of seeing some ship approach. At length one morning, when the three maidens were standing on the shore, a white sail appeared on the horizon, and came gradually nearer and nearer. They lighted a fire, and called Hagen, who joined them fully armed. Their signals were seen from the ship, and a boat was sent out, which soon approached the shore. The helmsman uttered a cry of astonishment when he saw their strange dress, and asked if they were human beings or watersprites.

"We are poor unfortunate people," said Hagen; "take us with you, for God's sake."

So the sailors took them to the ship, and they were soon on board. The captain looked at them in amazement, and Hagen, in answer to his questions, told their whole story. When he spoke of his father Sigeband, the powerful king of Balian, the captain exclaimed:

"What! you can kill griffins like flies! Still you are a lucky catch for me, for I am that Count of Garadie to whom your father has done so much injury. You shall now be hostage till a proper sum of money is paid to me. Here, men, put this young fellow in chains, and steer for Garadin."

Scarcely had the Count said these words when Hagen fell into a Berseker rage. He flung the sailors, who would have laid hold of him, into the sea: then, drawing his sword, he rushed upon the master of the vessel, when a soft hand was laid upon his arm. He turned round furiously; but at the sight of Hilde's gentle, lovely face, his terrible anger vanished. Hilde spoke gentle words of conciliation, and Hagen listened. Then, turning to the Count, he promised to make all matters right between him and the King, if he would at once steer for Balian. The captain agreed to do so, and steered for Ireland. Favourable winds swelled the sails, and ten days later the walls and towers of Balian hove in sight. Naturally his parents did not at first recognise Hagen; but great was their rejoicing when they found who he was. A firm peace was concluded with the Count of Garadie, and the three maidens were received with all honour and courtesy.

Hagen did not long remain quietly at home in his father's house. He wished to see something of the world, and to gain both name and fame.

Time passed on, and Hagen, wno was known far and wide for his great deeds, was appointed to rule the land in his old father's place. When urged by his mother to choose a wife, now that he had settled down after his wanderings, he wooed fair Hilde, the sweet companion of his childhood, and soon afterwards married her.

Queen Ute lived to hold a grandchild in her arms, who was called Hilde after her mother; but soon after that she and Sigeband died, leaving their son to rule alone

The Princess Hilde grew up beautiful, and many wooers came to Balian to ask for her hand in marriage. But Hagen would receive no man as a son-in-law without first fighting with him, declaring that he would never give his daughter to one that was not stronger than himself. Whoever ventured to try conclusions with him had the worst of it. Wild Hagen, the terror of kings, became also the terror of wooers, and before long, he really had his house to himself.





HETTEL THE HEGELING AND HIS HEROES. II.

NOW about this time King Hettel the Hegeling lived at Castle Matelane in Denmark. He was a bold warrior, and Nordland, Friesland, and Dietmarsch owed him allegiance. Many princely heroes were about his throne. Chief among them was his kinsman, old Wate, who bore rule in Sturmland, and was famous for his doughty deeds of war. Not less celebrated were the minstrels Horand and Frute, both powerful lords in Denmark. Then came Irold the Swift from Friesland, and Morung of Nifland; bold warriors both, and ever ready to help their liege lord.

One evening, at the feast, Morung of Nifland advised King Hettel to seek a wife, and said that Hilde, the Irish princess, was the best maid for him to woo, for she was famous in all lands for her beauty and virtue. And Horand answered, that the lady was justly praised; but that wild Hagen, her father, would permit no man to woo her, and that many a noble warrior had met his death in fighting with him for her hand.

The king was much taken with what he heard of fair Hilde, and greatly desired to raise her to the Hegeling throne. He asked who would undertake the wooing for him. The courtiers advised him to make old Wate his ambassador, and although the lord of Sturmland had no desire to go on any such errand, yet he promised to set out, and said that if Horand and Frute would

accompany him he had no doubt the wooing would be successful.

The three warriors, joined by Irold of Nordland, prepared to set out on their journey. They took a small fleet of ships laden with costly wares, and a thousand armed men, and started on their mission.

After a long voyage they reached Balian, where wild Hagen held his court.

Their arrival was greeted with the utmost amazement, for no one in Ireland had ever seen such splendour before. The masts of the Danish ships were of shining cypress-wood, the sails of purple silk, and the anchors of silver. Sailors in rich garments bore foreign wares from distant lands out of the ships, and spread them before the astonished multitude. The captains offered rich articles for sale, explaining that they were merchants, and had come to Balian on a trading expedition.

When King Hagen heard what was going on at the wharf, he and Queen Hilde went down to the ships to see what was to be seen. Then Frute at once came forward, and, drawing him aside, explained that they were not really merchants, but fugitives, who desired to be protected from their king, Hettel the Hegeling.

Hagen laughed when he heard this, for he had long wished to try his strength in single combat with the Danish king. So he told the warriors to be of good courage, and to come up to the palace with him. The strangers accepted the invitation. They gave the king and queen rich presents of garments and precious stones. Indeed, their riches seemed so inexhaustible, that Hagen would willingly have kept them in the country, and given them houses and lands. But they pleaded that they had left their wives and children in Hegelingland, where they hoped one day to return.

They all met in the banqueting-hall, and the strangers were

presented to the princess. Wate alone spoke little, and often looked out towards the sea.

"Go, Hilde," whispered the queen, "and greet the foreign lord with a kiss."

The girl started with fear, for the hero of Sturmland was a full head taller than any of his comrades, and was a stern-featured man, with a large hooked nose, bald head, and long grey beard.

"What are you looking at, Lord Wate?" said the queen. "Do you see fairer women on the shore than here in the hall?"

"I am looking at my ship," answered the hero, "for a storm is coming on."

Then the princess smiled and said:

"Are you not happy with us, noble warrior? or do you always wish to be out among storms and fighting?"

"Lady," said Wate, "I never learned to talk sweet talk with women, or to dance with girls. I only care for the dancing of the stormy waves and for the din of battle, when the Norns sing of conquest or a glorious death."

This was the speech of the stern old man. But the other warriors talked of the lovely land of the Hegelings, of its castles and granges, and of the minstrels and knights who served their ladies in all honour and modesty. After this they took leave of their hosts and retired. The next day passed, as was usual on such occasions, in jousting, feasting, and minstrelsy.

Horand used to sing, early in the morning and in the late evening, before the queen and her daughter, who were both delighted with his voice and his songs. Once, when he was alone with the princess, he sang about a great king who fell sick with love for a beautiful maiden named Hilde. The princess felt that there was something hidden behind the song. So she asked at length who the king was that cared for her. Upon which the minstrel showed her a portrait of King Hettel, and

told her of her father's stern cruelty to all noble warriors who came to Balian to woo the princess. He told her also on what secret mission he and his friends had come, and entreated her to come with them to Hegelingland, where the king was waiting eagerly for her arrival. Once there, he continued, he would sing to her every day, and so would King Hettel, who knew far more beautiful songs than he.

Hilde promised that she would ask her father's permission to go down to the ships and look at the strangely beautiful stuffs and jewels on board.

What she promised she did.

One day the men of Hegeling came before King Hagen, and said that they had good news from their home. Their king had found that they had been falsely accused, and had therefore restored them to his favour. They wished now to take leave of Hagen, and return to their own land. The king was displeased to think of losing his guests, and yet they should not go without rich gifts.

"Sire," said Frute the Wise, "we are so rich that we cannot well accept either silver or gold; but if you would show us a kindness, come on board our galleys with the queen and her ladies, and look at our treasures."

Wild Hagen shook his head, but his daughter and the queen wished so much to go that he at length gave way.

At the appointed hour, when the sails were spread and the ships were ready for departure, the king, queen, princess, and their ladies appeared upon the strand. Boats were ready to take them to the ships. Fair Hilde and her maid sprang quickly into a boat steered by Horand. But when Hagen and his armed followers were about to get into another boat, Wate, Frute, and Irold thrust them back and pushed off from land. The wild chieftain immediately caught up his spear, and rushed

into the sea till the waves dashed over his head. Spears were hurled on either side, but Horand brought the princess safely to the ship. Hagen ran along the shore and called despairingly for ships and men to pursue the traitors; but the Irish boats were not ready for sea, and even at that moment the sails of the Hegelings were disappearing in the distance.

The voyage lasted many days and many nights. Fair Hilde wept much for her father and mother, but Horand sang to her, now of great deeds, and now of love, till she was comforted. At length they reached the coast, where King Hettel awaited them. He came down to meet them, and soon gained fair Hilde's heart. On the following morning they prepared to go to Matelane. But when they were about to start, they saw white clouds appear on the western horizon, which, as they came nearer, were discovered to be ships forming a great fleet, and from the topmast of each ship floated the banner of the cross. The Hegelings took it to be a fleet of crusaders going out against the unbelieving Wilkinmen or Reussen; but very soon a flag was hoisted bearing the arms of Hagen, a tiger, and then they knew that the enemy was approaching.

King Hettel and old Wate drew out their men in battle array on the strand. The old man laughed loud for joy that he was really to have a passage of arms with the warlike Irish king. The other princes advanced with their men to prevent the enemy's landing. The warriors were all of good cheer; but fair Hilde, who looked down from the battlements of the castle on the turmoil below, wrung her hands with grief that she should be the cause of bloodshed.

The galleys cast anchor, and boats were put off filled with armed men. The battle began, and so firm was the resistance made to their landing that the boatmen could not approach the shore. Then wild Hagen flung himself into the water and fought

his way to land, followed by his bravest men. His blows were so terrible that he carried all before him, and even Hettel fell wounded to the ground, and was with difficulty borne away from the field. Old Wate now came forward, and he and Hagen had a hand-to-hand encounter. Each fought like a lion, and neither gave way in the least before the other, although both were severely wounded.

At length King Hettel, his head bandaged, and looking pale from loss of blood, forced his way through the throng of combatants with Hilde leaning on his arm. He threw his arms round Wate, while she did the same to her father, and entreated them both to make peace for her sake.

Wild Hagen was touched by his daughter's words. He clasped her in his arms, and then held out his hand, first to Hettel, and then to the grim old hero of Sturmland.

Now that the battle was over, Wate went about binding the wounds of all whom he found, whether of Irish or Hegeling birth, with some healing herb, of whose virtues he was well aware. In the evening there was a great feast, and next morning the warriors all went to Matelane, where the marriage was to take place. A ship was sent to bring good Queen Hilde to her daughter's wedding, which was celebrated in the cathedral, with all pomp and circumstance.





III. GUDRÛN.

KING Hettel and fair Hilde lived happily at Matelane, and the men of Hegeling, Friesland, and Dietmarsch, were faithful subjects, out of love and gratitude for the justice and protection afforded them by their liege lord. Two children were born to the royal pair, Ortwin and Gudrûn (pronounced Goodroon), both of whom were strong and blooming as Nordland roses. As the boy grew older, he was given into the charge of the hero of Sturmland, that he might learn all that it became him to know from the greatest warrior in the land. Gudrûn remained at home with her parents, and was instructed by her mother, both by precept and example, in all woman's work and knowledge. So she grew up, and became celebrated in every land for her beauty, her gentleness, and her wisdom.

Many noble princes came to woo her while she was yet very young. Among them was the proud Moorish king, Siegfried, gigantic in height, and brown of hue. With many kings for tributaries, he felt himself so great, that he feared no refusal. Queen Hilde, however, thought the hero too arbitrary in his manners, and ignorant of the proper way to treat women. Hettel was of the same opinion; so he told the wooer that the maiden was too young to be able to conduct a royal household. The Moorish king returned to his distant realm in great anger and disgust. But before leaving Mateiane, he nad bribed some

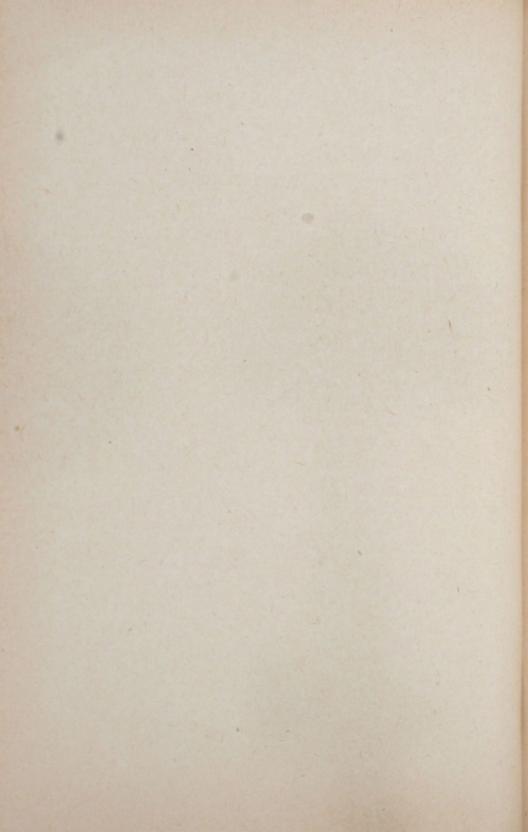
faithless men with gold to keep him informed of all that went on in the land of the Hegelings.

Now, at this time, King Ludwig ruled over Normandy and the neighbouring lands. He was a great and warlike king, His son, Hartmut, was like his father in character, and helped him in his wars. When the latter heard of Gudrûn, he determined to woo her for his wife. King Ludwig thought it a mistake, because the maiden's grandfather, Hagen, had once been his feudal superior, and had never forgiven him for having freed Normandy from the Irish yoke; also he believed that Queen Hilde had inherited her father's temper. The Lady Gerlind, Ludwig's queen, was of a different opinion: she thought that Hartmut was worthy of the noblest wife in Christendom, and that, if they only set about the matter in the right way, his offer would be accepted. The young warrior was pleased with his mother's counsel, so ambassadors were sent to the Hegeling court, bearing rich presents. Queen Hilde accepted the gifts with gracious courtesy, thanked the ambassadors for bringing them, and added that she supposed the lord of Normandy wished to pay off an old debt which he owed her father as his liege lord. The warriors were kindly treated, although the king and queen heard their message with displeasure, and said that the husband of their daughter must be of higher, birth than the lord of Normandy. The ambassadors, seeing that no good would come of their further stay, returned to Ludwig with their evil tidings.

The Norman king was not much surprised at the result of the embassy; but the Lady Gerlind, whose ancestors had been powerful kings, chafed under the affront, and advised her son to avenge the insult with his sword. But the young prince had thought of another plan. He possessed strongholds and granges in Scotland. So he determined to go a-wooing himself in



GUDRUN ON THE SHORE.



Scottish garb, accompanied by a large train of attendants. He was a hero, learned in all knightly duties, tall, manly, and strikingly handsome. He was accustomed to ladies' smiles, and to meet with kindness from women wherever he went; so he never for a moment doubted his power of winning the love of the Princess Gudrûn. The ships were manned, a favourable wind filled the sails, but soon fell again, and the voyage was a very slow one.

Meanwhile, another suitor had arrived at Matelane. This was bold Herwig, lord of Zealand. He was a brave warrior, celebrated in many a victory; a faithful friend and loyal foe. Fair curls surrounded his face, and his blue eyes shone with intelligence.

The maiden and he soon learned to understand each other, and before a word of love was spoken, each knew the other's feelings.

When Hartmut arrived, in the guise of a Scottish prince, he soon discovered what was going on.

A favourable chance led Hartmut to the garden one day, and there he found Gudrûn alone. He told her of his love, and at the same time explained who he was. She was startled, but soon recovering herself, answered that she cared for some one else. She further told him to beware how he betrayed his identity, for her father and mother regarded King Ludwig as a vassal, and his life would be in danger if they knew his name and quality. The word vassal brought an angry flush to the young hero's cheek; he did not, however, betray his feelings, but took leave of the maid in seemly fashion, and, after saying farewell to the king and queen, set sail for his own land.

Herwig lingered on at the palace in the hope that he might find some opportunity of seeing and speaking to the princess alone. But, whether by accident, or because the queen prevented it, he never found his opportunity. So he went boldly to the king, and made a formal offer for Gudrûn's hand. Hettel listened to him calmly, and told him that the maiden was too young to marry. This, however, was merely an excuse, for he really thought the king of Zealand was too poor a match for his peerless daughter.

Herwig found no rest at home. He assembled his forces, and prepared to invade the land of the Hegelings. His army only consisted of three thousand warriors, but they were one and all tried men of valour, on whom he could rely. Hettel was totally unprepared for the invasion. His heroes were at their own homes, or scattered abroad; but he collected what men he could, and went out against the foe. Soon the clang of arms sounded on the strand, and the battle began. It raged fiercely for a long time. At length Queen Hilde, taking Gudrûn with her, and followed by her ladies, descended to the place of combat, and spoke so wisely that she soon induced the men to put up their weapons, and make peace. Hettel was so much pleased with the boldness and valour displayed by Herwig, that he consented to receive him as his son-in-law, but stipulated that the marriage should not take place for a year.

Herwig spent some time at Matelane in company with certain other warriors, and at midsummer, young Ortwin and several of his friends received their swords at the hands of old Wate of Sturmland, who bade them act in all things so as to be soon worthy of the honour of knighthood. At the jousts that followed, the young men's prowess gladdened their teacher's heart. But the rejoicings came to a sudden end through the arrival of some wounded men from Zealand, who brought news that the Moorish king, Siegfried, had fallen upon the island, and was laying the country waste.

Hettel determined to send troops to help Herwig against the

Moors; but the king of Zealand would not wait until they could be summoned; he set out at once, saying that they could follow, and he would meantime go and show his people that he had not deserted them.

Herwig landed in a small bay. His heart was wrung when he saw the devastation caused by the cruel Moor, and knew that he was not strong enough to offer him battle. But he was not idle for all that. He and his three thousand followers separated into companies, cut off isolated bands of free-booters, and harassed the enemy as much as they could. So matters went on for days and weeks. At length the Hegeling fleet arrived with Hettel and his heroes. A great battle was fought by sea and land, but, although the Moors suffered terrible loss, both in men and ships, it was by no means a decisive battle. Siegfried knew that he had now no hope of winning the victory in open war, but still he trusted to the chapter of accidents to get him out of his difficulties. And he did not hope in vain.

Whilst King Hettel and his heroes were fighting in Zealand, Hartmut, with a large Norman army, had fallen upon the land of the Hegelings. Ludwig had accompanied his son. Together they had stormed the palace at the head of their men, had taken it, and had carried away the Princess Gudrûn and her maidens; amongst whom was Hildburg, granddaughter of that Hildburg whom Hagen found on the griffin's strand.

The first messenger, who brought the news of the Norman invasion, was soon followed by a second, with tidings of the storming of the castle, and the carrying off of Gudrûn. The first thought in every mind was to set off in pursuit of the robbers; King Hettel sent to offer terms to Siegfried, telling him at the same time of what had chanced, and the Moorish king immediately offered to help to rescue the princess; so an alliance was concluded between Hettel, Herwig, and Siegfried without more ado.

This being settled, they turned their attention to the ships; but great was their despair when they found that most of them had been burnt in the fight, and of those that remained very few were seaworthy: Herwig and his men would have started alone in the few vessels that remained, but Irolt the Frisian stopped them, by drawing their attention to a fleet that was already approaching the shore. The masts and flags of the coming ships all bore the sign of the cross, and on deck were figures in long grey garments, with the staff of peace in their hands.

"They are pilgrims going to the Holy Sepulchre," said Horand the minstrel.

The pilgrims disembarked and pitched their tents on the strand, to enjoy a little rest after their long and toilsome voyage.

"Necessity knows no faw," said Wate. "These pious men must put off their journey for a little. They have plenty of time to do their penance in. Let us borrow their vessels and provisions. If we return, we can reward them richly for the enforced loan."

Horand and Frute warned their friends that such a deed would surely bring its punishment. The pilgrims raised their hands in piteous entreaty. All in vain. King Hettel decided to take the ships, and Wate and Herwig voted with him.

So the heroes sailed over the high seas in pursuit of the Normans, in ships that bore the cross as their pennon.

After many days' sail they saw before them a low flat island, called the Wölpensand, and on it a great army was encamped, upon whose banners was depicted a raven with widespread wings, the ensign of the Normans. They were able to get quite close to the land, thanks to the pilgrims' ships, before their real character was discovered. But no sooner was it known, than the Normans sprang to their feet, and shouting their battle-cry, stood ready to defend themselves.

The battle began. Lances and arrows filled the air, and many a

deed of desperate valour was done on either side. Darkness alone put an end to the fight. The victory was undecided. It was a dark and cloudy night, and the flickering watch-fires alone threw any light upon the scene. Then it was that King Hettel challenged Ludwig to single combat, telling him that he should always regard him as a coward if he did not at once arm him for the fray. Ludwig accepted the challenge, and came out to meet the king. Many a shrewd blow did the heroes exchange before Ludwig at length gave his adversary his death-wound Seeing their leader fall, the Hegelings rushed forward shouting their battle-cry, and a general engagement took place in the darkness. None could tell friend from foe, and many a brave warrior fell under his comrade's spear. The leaders on either side ordered the horns to blow the recall, and the two armies took up their position at a greater distance from each other than before. Knowing the vengeance the Hegelings would take on the following day, the Normans thought prudence the better part of valour, and set sail for home under cover of the night, taking their prisoners with them; for they were on their way home from Hegelingland.

At daybreak, old Wate called his men to be up and doing. Great was the astonishment of all when they found their enemy flown. Wate and Herwig were keen to follow the Normans without loss of time, but Frute and Morung advised them to be prudent. They reminded them of the numbers of men they had lost, and advised that they should go home, and wait till the young men, who were growing up, should be old enough to bear arms.

The wisdom of this advice was recognised by all. Herwig alone felt indignant, but he was powerless to act unaided, so he returned to Zealand to work for his people, until the time should come to renew the expedition.

Queen Hilde was sad at heart when she saw the Hegelings return vanquished, and without either her husband or daughter.

But what could she do? She was only a weak woman, unable to wield a sword, to avenge Hettel or to save Gudrûn.

Horand, Morung, and Irolt mourned the dead king with her, but old Wate chid them for women, and bade them rouse themselves, and teach the youth of the land all warlike accomplishments, to the end that they might win the day when the time for vengeance came.





IV. QUEEN GERLIND.

MEANWHILE the Norman fleet had reached its destination. Queen Gerlind, her gentle daughter Ortrûn, their ladies, and many of the citizens of Cassian went down to the harbour to welcome the heroes home. After they had greeted the kings, Ortrûn hastened to sad Gudrûn's side, and, embracing her, told her to be of good courage. Gudrûn was touched by the maiden's kindness, though it could not stop her tears; but when Queen Gerlind would have kissed her, she recoiled from her touch, for the sharpfeatured woman with the bold, glittering eyes seemed to her a spiteful snake, ready to dart on his prey and crush it in his coils.

"Eh, pretty puppet," said the offended queen. "What, so shy? But you'll soon grow tame under my training." She would have said more, but Hartmut interposed, saying that Gudrûn was to be his wife when the days of mourning for her father were over. He then offered the princess his arm, and sorely against her will, she had to enter the palace side by side with him. Some of the townsfolk, watching her, said, "How beautiful she is!" to which others made answer, "But how sad!"

Days and weeks passed on. Hartmut did his best to win fair Gudrûn's love, but all his efforts were vain. One day he asked her why she would not love him, and she replied that he was a great and noble warrior, well worthy of a woman's love, but she was betrothed to Herwig, and would never break her troth. Queen

Gerlind was not of so patient a disposition as her son: she was determined to break Gudrûn's proud spirit, and force her to consent to marry Hartmut. At first she tried soft words and flattering speeches; but finding these of no avail, she had recourse to sterner measures, though she waited till her son had left home on a warlike expedition. Before going he confided Gudrûn to his mother's care, telling her she might "try to tame the wild bird" in any fashion she liked, that was not inconsistent with the maiden's royal dignity.

No sooner was Hartmut gone, than Queen Gerlind set to work. She made Gudrûn dress like a servant, and then set her and her maidens to cook and sweep, and do all the hardest work in the palace. Gudrûn bore her wrongs in patient silence. Her soft hands were blistered with scrubbing pots and pans, and doing other kitchen work, with which she was busied from early morning till late at night. The queen would sometimes ask her viciously if she would not rather wear the Norman crown than continue to slave in that manner, but she answered gently that she would keep her troth.

So she did all that was given her to do through the hot summer days, and in the icy cold of winter, without uttering a single murmur at her hard fate.

Year after year she lived this wretched life. At length Hartmut came home victorious from his wars. He greeted his father, mother, and sister with warm affection, and then looked round for Gudrûn. When he saw her dressed in coarse clothing, and doing hard work, he was very angry with his mother for her ill-treatment of the girl. He begged Gudrûn to forgive what was past and gone, and grant him her love, trying to rouse her ambition by dwelling on the wealth and greatness of the kingdom he offered to share with her. But Gudrûn answered that a noble-minded woman could love but once, and never again. So he left her, but took care to protect her from Gerlind's malice.

Gudrûn was restored to her former position, and slept that night in her old room. Next morning, when she awoke, she found the princess Ortrûn, whom she had not seen for a long time, bending over her. The two girls spent the summer together, and learnt to love each other warmly. As autumn came on, Gudrûn thought that her friend looked graver and sadder than her wont, and asked her the reason of the change. Ortrûn then confessed that as Gudrûn had not given way to Hartmut's entreaties, but remained obdurate as ever, Gerlind intended to separate her daughter from the Hegeling princess.

While the two girls were talking, Hartmut joined them, and said:

"Lady Gudrûn, the warrior to whom you plighted your troth is not worthy of your love, otherwise he would not have allowed so many years to pass without coming in search of you at the head of his men. He has forgotten you, and is most likely married to another"

"You do not know him, noble hero," answered Gudrûn; "death alone, which looses all bonds, could separate us."

"What if he has fallen in battle, or has died of some illness?" asked the young king.

"Then he shall find me faithful when I join him where there is no more parting," replied the princess, with a look of courageous

So Hartmut took leave of her, and again went away to try and forget her amid the excitement of battle.

When he was gone, Queen Gerlind once more deposed Gudrun from her high estate, and sent her to wash the clothes, making her work from early morning till late at night, and threatening her with the rod if she were lazy; but the princess worked too hard to give her an excuse for inflicting this last indignity.

More years passed on, and at length Hartmut returned vic-

torious as at first. He spoke to Gudrûn, but found her faithful as ever to Herwig.

Gerlind, after this, was harder than ever to Gudrûn. The other Hegeling maidens were given lighter tasks than she. They had to spin and card flax and wool, while their beloved mistress had to wash the clothes all the cold winter through, and often, on her return from the shore, she sank into an exhausted sleep on her straw pallet, without having the strength first to take off her wet garments. At last matters came to such a pass that her cousin Hildburg could hold her peace no longer, and asked the queen how she dared treat a princess with such cruelty and disrespect. Upon which Gerlind set her to join her mistress in her work.

This was just what Hildburg wanted. Her great desire was to be with her mistress, to cheer and comfort her, and lighten her toil. Still Gudrûn had often to go down to the shore alone when Hildburg was busy at the castle. On one of these occasions she saw a swan come swimming over the sea.

"O swan, had I thy wings, I would soar into the sky and hie me to my home."

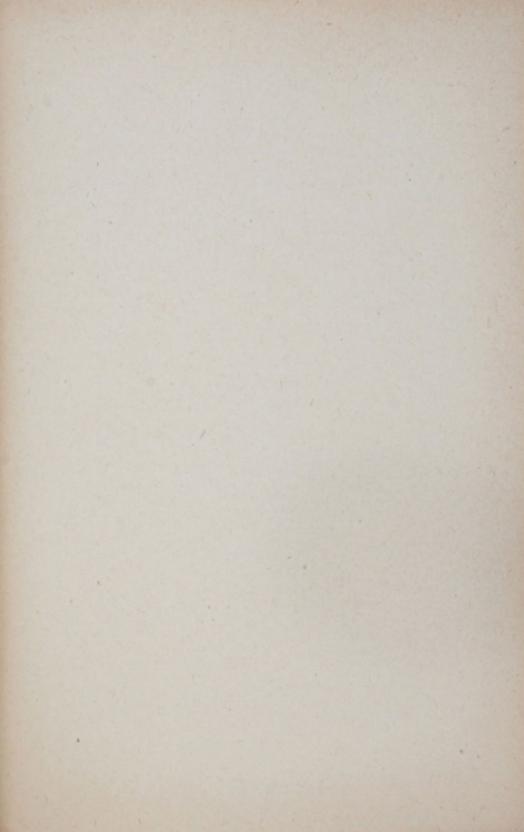
While she spoke, the swan dived into the sea, and in its place up came a mermaid:

"O heart long tried and true, thy grief shall pass away: thy lover and thy kindred live, and lo, they hasten to thy rescue."

So saying, the mermaid dived, and again the white swan floated on the wave. He spread his wings and rose in the air, flew three times round the princess, and sang:

"True love on the earth may yet be found,
True hearts that never roam;
Lo, through the breakers' foam
'Tis thy warrior's bark o'er the wave doth bound.
To lead his true-love home."

It was well for Gudrun that she had this secret hope to support





MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

her, for Gerlind's cruelty grew daily more intolerable. The princess and Hildburg were forced to wash the clothes on the seashore, dressed in simple linen shifts, and without shoes. When they begged for shoes, the cold was so terrible, their taskmistress gave them insulting words, and threatened to scourge them with thorns if their day's work were not finished by evening. Trembling with cold in the cutting east wind, and their beautiful hair blowing about their faces, they worked on busily. Suddenly they saw a boat gliding swiftly along the shore, rowed by two warriors in full armour. The maidens, ashamed of their insufficient clothing, would have fled, but the men called to them to stop, and tell them what castle that was on the height above. When they added that they would throw the linen into the sea unless they received an answer, the girls came back, and as they did so, Gudrûn whis-

"See, it is Herwig. I know him well, but he-he has forgotten me."

And in good truth the hero was unaware that his long-lost bride stood there before him; but no sooner had she pushed her fluttering hair back from her face, than he recognised her, hastened to her, and clasped her in his arms. When the other warrior opened his visor, Gudrûn exclaimed, "Ortwin!" and threw herself into her brother's arms.

Then Ortwin turned to her companion, and said, taking her hand

"It is you, Hildburg! Do not be ashamed to confess that you and I have long loved each other, and would have been openly betrothed years ago, had not the Normans carried you off."

They then exchanged the kiss of betrothal.

Herwig wished to take the two girls away with them at once, but Ortwin would not consent. He said they must come openly on the

morrow for Gudrûn and Hildburg, who should never run away secretly from their captors.

The two girls stood on the shore watching the boat as long as it was in sight. At length Hildburg in startled accents begged her friend to help her to finish the washing. But Gudrûn answered proudly that the days of her slavery were over, and, so saying, she cast one garment after another into the sea, and watched them floating away on the waves with a smile; while poor Hildburg tremblingly remembered that they were still in the power of the Norman queen.

When they reached the castle, Gerlind came down to meet them, asking why they were so early, and what they had done with the linen. Gudrûn answered that the work was too hard for them, and that she had thrown the clothes into the sea, where Queen Gerlind's men might find them yet, if she did not delay too long in sending out boats. The queen was dumb with astonishment when she heard the gentle, patient Gudrûn speak to her in such a manner; but soon recovering herself, she called her bond-women to fetch thorny rods, and beat the maidens for their insolence. The women hastened to do as they were desired; but Gudrûn called to them to stop, telling them to touch her at their peril, for she would be their queen on the morrow.

"And will you really marry Hartmut?" asked Gerlind joyfully.
"I fear there is some trick in this."

"Bring the king here," said Gudrûn; "I would speak with him."

The queen went thoughtfully to her son, and said :-

"Hartmut, that obstinate girl has given in at last, and has consented to be your wife, but . . ."

"No 'but," cried the hero, "she consents!—mother, I must hear her say so with her own lips," and he hastened from the room. When he saw Gudrûn, he would have clasped her in his arms but she signed to him not to approach her, telling him that she could not listen to him in the abode of her misery; but that next morning, in the full light of day, and in presence of all the warriors, she would receive, and give the bridal ring. Hartmut now gave orders that Gudrûn should be provided with all that was necessary for the comfort and well-being of the future queen, and that her maidens should be restored to her.

His orders were fulfilled. The princess and Hildburg kept their secret well. It was not till the Hegeling maidens were all safe in their sleeping chamber that they heard of the arrival of Ortwin and Herwig.





V. BATTLE AND VICTORY.

BEFORE day-break one of the maidens stationed herself at the window, and gazed anxiously over the sea. After some time she saw vessels full of armed men approaching the shore; and, with difficulty restraining a cry of joy, she wakened her mistress and told her the good news. Not long after, the alarm was given from the tower, where the sleepy watchman had just woke up.

Queen Gerlind had her wits about her more than any one else. She did not need to be told who the enemy were, and had given the requisite orders to the garrison before Ludwig's and Hartmut's eyes were well open. But when the kings were ready, they countermanded her orders, and instead of defending the castle, marched out to meet the foe in spite of all her warnings and entreaties.

Each party moved forward to meet the other in close array, and no sooner had they met than the battle began. Ortwin and Hartmut fought hand to hand, and Ortwin had well been overthrown, had not bold Horand struck up the Norman's spear. But he too was unable to withstand the king, and was soon afterwards carried to the rear by his men, severely wounded. Meantime Herwig and Ludwig had met, and after a terrible combat, the latter was slain.

"The king is dead!" cried his men, and they fled incontinently,

pursued by the victor, strong Irolt, and Siegfried the Moor. The old hero of Sturmland pressed the advantage. His swordarm was never still for a moment, and he was always in the front rank. When the terrified Normans fled to the castle, they found, to their horror, that he was close behind them. They only got the great gate shut just in time. But Wate was not to be done. He shouted to his men to bring up ladders and storming tackle, meaning to scale the wall.

Hartmut, ignorant of his father's death, had continued to fight bravely, till he saw that the Normans were flying. He then retreated slowly to the castle with his immediate followers. Looking up at the battlements, he saw Queen Gerlind giving a man a naked sword, and pointing with fierce earnestness to the women's apartments in the castle. He knew his mother, and feared that she was telling the man to go and murder the Hegeling women, so he exclaimed in a loud voice of command:

"Coward! If you raise your hand to murder any woman, I will have you hung before sunset."

The man let the sword fall to the ground, and slunk away At this moment Hartmut, to his intense amazement, caught sight of old Wate at the castle gate. He looked round for help, but Ludwig was nowhere to be seen; on every side waved the banners of the Hegelings and their allies, and their foremost men were fast closing round him and his little band. Hartmut was too brave to fly; he prepared to defend himself to the last. The lord of Sturmland now came forward to attack him; and although he fought desperately, it had gone ill with him, if Herwig had not thrown himself in the old warrior's way, and pleaded for his rival's life. In the heat of the conflict, Wate did not notice who it was that addressed him; he brought down one of his sledge-hammer blows on Herwig's head, and the king

of Zealand was stretched unconscious on the ground beside many a dead and dying Norman. This restored the wild lord of Sturmland to his senses. Leaving Hartmut alone, he bent over his friend, and, to his joy, discovered him to be whole and sound. As soon as Herwig was on his feet again, Wate asked:

"What devil possessed you to make me spare the life of that Norman robber?"

"No devil at all," replied Herwig; "the noble Gudrûn loves the Princess Ortrûn, and, for her sake, begged that Hartmut's life should be spared."

"Women, women!" cried the old warrior. "They are all alike. They have soft hearts, as easily moved as a fleecy cloud is blown by the breeze. But now let us haste, and trap the she-wolf in her lair."

At length the castle gate was burst open, and the hero of Sturmland cut his way through the small crowd of defenders to the women's apartments. There he found Gudrûn surrounded by all the frightened women in the palace, while Ortrûn and Gerlind knelt at her feet and entreated her protection.

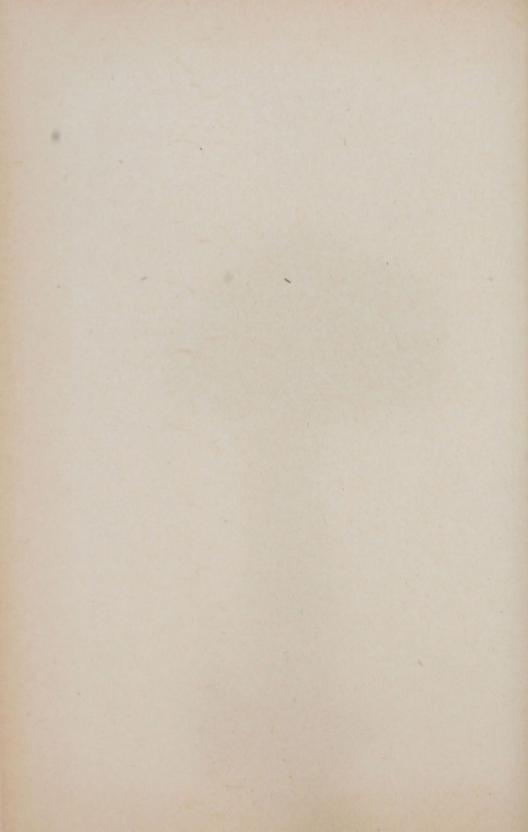
"Where is the she-wolf?" shouted Wate. "Speak, Gudrûn, and you others!"

He was awful to look upon, with his grim, stern face, his armour and sword dripping with the blood of his enemies; but Gudrûn did not quail, nor did she utter a single word to betray the cruel woman who had used her so badly. She sat still and quiet, full of a gentle dignity, and looked at the angry old man without blenching.

He cast a quick glance round the room in search of Gerlind, and as he did so, one of the maidens pointed to the queen. The moment he saw the glittering, snaky eyes, he caught Gerlind by the hair, and dragging her to the battlements, cut off her head, and flung both it and the body over the wall.



GERLIND AND ORTRUN AT GUDRUN'S FEET.



"Now the other!" he cried, rushing up to the terrified Ortrûn; "she belongs to the serpent's brood, and must share her mother's fate."

But Gudrûn held the maiden tightly clasped in her arms, and told the grim warrior of all the love and tenderness that Ortrûn had shown her, so Wate was fain to be satisfied with the vengeance he had already wreaked.

Meanwhile the fighting outside the castle had also ceased. The Norman hero, weary to death, had surrendered with the eighty warriors that were left him.

Three days later, the victorious army went on board their ships, and set sail for the land of the Hegelings, leaving Morung and his men to garrison Cassian. Hartmut, and Ortrûn with thirty of her maidens, had to accompany their conquerors. On their way they touched at Wölpensand, where Queen Hilde had had a minster built, and the bones of those who fell in the old fight buried; and there the heroes gave solemn thanks for their great victory. Ortrûn sat alone in the churchyard, looking at the graves: she thought of her slain father, and wished that she too were at rest. But Gudrûn coming up to her, took her by the hand and led her to the Moorish king Siegfried, who desired to gain her love. During the remainder of the voyage, Gudrûn managed to throw the two much together, and delighted in telling Ortrûn of Siegfried's noble and warlike deeds.

In the meantime Queen Hilde, and Hergart, Herwig's sister, often sat together at a window overlooking the sea. The Hegeling army must soon return, but how would it return? and would Gudrûn have kept her troth? Hilde was not so hopeful as her young companion, for she was more used to sorrow. One day when they were at the window as usual, Hergart saw the fleet appear in the distance, and uttering a cry of joy, told Queen Hilde that their friends were coming back.

Before the queen and her ladies could get down to the shore, Wate had already landed. On seeing the queen, he at once told her the good news.

The rest of the ships were not long in arriving, and soon Hilde had the pleasure of embracing her daughter, the long-lost Gudrûn. Time passed on, and joy reigned in every breast but one. Hartmut ate out his soul in sadness. Gentle Hergart pitied him, and begged Queen Hilde to use her influence to have him set at liberty. and allowed to return to his kingdom. But Hilde explained how impossible it was to let a man go free who was sure to bear them deadly enmity, and attack them when he could. Hartmut one day by accident overheard Hergart pleading for him so tenderly and so wisely that he was deeply touched. He began to think that she was, if possible, even more beautiful than Gudrûn, and took the first opportunity he could find of speaking to her. It was not long before they learnt to love each other. Hartmut told the queen about it, and asked for her consent to his marriage with Hergart, which she at once granted, and at the same time gave him back his sword and freedom, for the husband of sweet Hergart could never be aught else than the friend of the Hege-

A few weeks later, a great marriage feast was held, in which four couples appeared before the altar to receive a priestly blessing on their vows; after which they adjourned to the banqueting-hall, where all old scores were forgiven and forgotten for the sake of the happiness that now prevailed. Then the old minstrel, Horand, took up his harp and sang his last song. In it he told of the great deeds he had known; he sang of noble lives and noble deaths, of truth and constancy; and when he ceased, there was not a dry eye in the hall, for even the grim lord of Sturmland was seen to dash away a tear.



NE evening while the warriors were feasting in King Hrodgar's hall, a minstrel was called upon to sing. He tuned his harp, and sang of the coming of Skiöld, the son whom Odin sent to live a human life among mortal men. He told how the babe had been seen lying on a shield floating on the waves of the sea, how he had been drawn ashore and carefully tended, and how he had become a mighty king and warrior in Jutland. He sang of Skiöld's glorious life, of the kingdom he had left to his children

and grandchildren; and last of all he sung of Hrodgar, Skiöld's most famous grandson, who, like him, was the patron of all peaceful arts, the protector of all peaceful folk, and the punisher of evil-doers.

Many heroes were collected round the king that night at Hirschhalle, so called from the gigantic antlers of a royal stag, which, carved in stone, adorned the battlements. At length the time came for the warriors to separate for the night, and as there were too many of them to be accommodated elsewhere, beds were made up for them in the great hall. Two and thirty brave men lay down to sleep on the couches spread for them; but next morning, when the servants came to waken them, they were gone. The room was in confusion, here and there might be seen stains of blood, and other signs of struggle.

King Hrodgar came himself as soon as he heard what had chanced, and examined the place carefully to try and find out the cause of the disaster. He followed the blood-stains through the hall, and out of doors, and there, in the soft earth, he saw the deep footprints of a giant. The whole affair was clear to him now. He knew that the monster Grendel, who had been banished the land by the aid of a great magician, had at length returned. When it became known that Grendel had come back, ten warriors offered to keep watch in the hall, and fight the giant if he tried to come in. Next morning they were gone. They had either been surprised in their sleep, or had not been strong enough to withstand the monster. The Skiöldungs' people were brave and fearless, so twelve other heroes immediately offered their services. Eleven of them laid themselves down to sleep in their armour, while the twelfth, a minstrel, kept watch.

At midnight the giant came, smacking his great lips, and slowly dragging his heavy body along. The minstrel saw and heard all that took place; but he could neither speak nor move; he was,

as it were, paralysed with fear, and at last sank back senseless. Next morning, when with infinite trouble they restored him to consciousness, he either could not, or would not, tell what he had seen. He picked up his arms and his harp, pointed to the stains on the floor, and strode down to the strand without a word or sign of farewell to any one. A vessel was on the point of sailing for Gothland, so he went on board, and had soon left the ill-fated shores of Jutland behind.

II. BEOWULF, THE BOLD DIVER.

Hygelak, a brave and heroic man, ruled over Gothland at this time. He was surrounded by a band of famous warriors, chief among whom was his nephew Beowulf (bee-hunter, i.e., woodpecker), son of Ektheov. When the harper arrived in Gothland, he found that the Swedes had invaded the country, and a great battle was about to take place. A few days later the battle was fought, and would have gone badly with the Goths had it not been for the almost superhuman prowess displayed by Beowulf, who, in spite of repeated disaster, always returned to the charge. His coolness and courage kept up the spirits of his men, and at last the Swedes had to return to their own land, mourning the loss of their king, and of many a valiant hero.

During the feast that was given in honour of this great victory, the stranger minstrel sang to the assembled warriors of the great deeds of past and present times. He sang of Siegmund (Siegfried) the brave Wölsung, and of all his adventures with giants and dragons. Then, striking yet louder chords upon his harp, he sang of Beowulf's victory, and called upon him to do yet greater things, to seek out and slay the horrible fiend of the fen, Grendel, who nightly crept into the Skiöldungs' hall, and fed on the blood of heroes.

Beowulf promised to go and try to slay the monster that had

done such incredible mischief. Now one of the great lords, Breka by name, was envious of Beowulf's fame, and proposed that they two should on the morrow go down to the sea, and fight the monsters of the deep. They would then see which of them was the better man; and the one that reached the shore first after the battle was over should receive the prize of victory. It was agreed that this trial of strength should take place on the morrow, and King Hygelak promised to give the gold chain he wore round his neck to whichever was the victor.

Next morning the sun rose red in the east, the stormy sea moaned, groaned, and dashed upon the shore, as though demanding a human sacrifice. The two bold swimmers stood on the strand, arrayed in their shirts of mail, their swords in their hands. When the signal was given, they flung themselves into the raging sea, and were soon lost to sight. They kept close together, that they might come to each other's help if hard pressed by the monsters of the deep, but were at length parted by waves which bore them in different directions. Breka soon after found himself in calm water, where he swam about until it was time to return. Beowulf, on the contrary, was carried to a place where the waves beat fiercely against great cliffs that towered above the water, a place that swarmed with polypi, sea-dragons, and horrible nixies, all lying in wait for their prey. Gigantic arms were stretched out to grasp him, but he cut them down with his sword. Monsters of every sort tried to clutch and stifle him, but he stabbed them through their scales. A nixie clasped him in his arms, and would have dragged him down to his cave, but he stabbed the monster to the heart, and drew him to the surface of the water. After a long struggle he again reached the open sea, and then strove with all his might to get home before the sun should quite have set. The storm was over, so that there was the less danger. Breka was the first of the bold swimmers to reach the shore. He turned

with a triumphant smile to greet Beowulf, but what was his astonishment, and that of all present, when the hero dragged the monstrous form of the nixie on the sands, and stretched it out before them. The princes crowded round the hideous creature, and gazed at his enormous limbs in speechless amazement.

"Here is the gold chain," said the king to Breka. "You have won it by hard labour; but my bold nephew has done even more than you, in that he has conquered and slain one of the monsters of the deep. I shall therefore give him my good sword Nägling with the golden hilt, and the Runic letters engraved in gold, that are sure to bring good fortune to the possessor."

Beowulf was held in high honour by the Goths; but he could not sit still, satisfied with what he had already done. He longed to free the royal palace of the Skiöldungs from the monster Grendel, so he presently took ship for King Hrodgar's castle, accompanied by the minstrel, and fifteen noble and courageous Goths.

On their ship touching the strand below the fortress, the watchman asked them who they were, and what brought them to King Hrodgar's land. When he learnt their names and business, he was pleased, and sent them on to the king. Hrodgar also received them with joy and gratitude. The minstrel tuned his harp and sang of Beowulf's heroic deeds, and prophesied that he would conquer and slay the monster of the morass. This praise made Hunford, one of the courtiers, angry and jealous. He said it was Breka, not Beowulf, that had won the golden chain; that the Gothic hero was undertaking an enterprise that would very likely lead him to his death; and he advised him to think twice before attacking Grendel. Upon this, Beowulf exclaimed indignantly that he had won a good sword instead of the golden chain, and that it was sharp enough both to pierce the hide of the monster and to cut out a slanderous tongue. Hrodgar bade the courtier

be silent, and promised the Goth that if he were victorious, he would give him rich presents, and would enter into a firm alliance with his people.

At night-fall Hrodgar and his warriors withdrew, and servingmen came into the hall to make up beds for the strangers. Beowulf felt so confident of victory, that he laid aside his helmet and shirt of mail, and then gave his sword to the groom in attendance.

"I intend to master Grendel with my fists," he said; "he is unarmed, and I will meet him in like fashion."

Midnight came, and the fiend of the fen rose out of his hidingplace. He expected a feast that night, and, wrapping himself in a veil of mist, made his way to the palace. He entered the banqueting-hall, and, at sight of the Goths, a grin of satisfaction spread over his countenance, displaying his great teeth, which resembled boar's tusks in size and shape. At the same time he stretched out his hairy hands, which were furnished with claws like those of an eagle.

The warriors were all sunk in a sleep so profound as to seem like enchantment. Beowulf alone remained awake, and that only by a mighty effort. He watched the monster through his half-closed eyes, and saw him stand gloating over his intended victims, uncertain with whom to commence. At last he seemed to have made up his mind, for he hurled himself upon one of the sleepers, whom he rapidly slew, drinking his blood with evident eagerness and enjoyment. He turned next to Beowulf. But the hero seized his outstretched arm in such a firm grip that he bellowed with pain. And now began a terrible struggle between the man and the demon. The hall trembled to its foundation, and threatened every instant to fall in ruins. The sleepers awoke. They drew their swords and fell upon the monster; but their weapons glanced harmlessly off his scaly hide, and they were fain to take

refuge in out-of-the-way corners, that they might not be trampled under foot by the wrestlers. At length Grendel had to acknowledge Beowulf's mastery, and now only strove to escape. With a mighty effort he succeeded in freeing himself from the hero's grasp, but at the price of one of his arms, which, torn out at the socket, remained in his antagonist's hands. Then, with a howl of rage and pain, the demon fled back to his morass, leaving a trail of blood to mark the path by which he had gone.

The Gothic hero stood in the middle of the vast hall, holding his trophy in his right hand. The rays of the rising sun streamed in at the window and lighted up his head as with a glory. His companions crowded round him and greeted him with awe and reverence. Then he fastened the trophy of his victory over the door of the hall, and, having done this, he returned thanks to All-father for having given him strength to withstand the monster. The warriors knelt round him and joined him in his praise and thanksgiving.

When the Goths rose from their knees, they saw the king and his courtiers assembled in the hall, gazing in astonishment, now at them, and now at the monster's arm over the doorway. They told Hrodgar all that had happened during the night.

The king was at first too much amazed to speak, but recovering himself, he desired his nephew, Hrodulf, to bring the gifts he had prepared to reward the victor. The warrior soon returned with some servants bearing the presents, which Hrodgar gave to Beowulf with many words of gratitude for the service he had done him and the country. He then prayed the Goth to stand his friend and his son's friend as long as they all should live.

After these things the king ordered a great feast to be prepared in honour of the last night's work. While this was being done, Hunford came forward and said:

[&]quot;Noble Beowulf, I wronged you yesterday evening by my scorn-

ful speech, which I never would have made had I known what you were. Will you accept my sword Hrunting? it was made by dwarfs, and the blade was hardened in dragon's blood, and, in taking it, will you grant me your forgiveness and friendship?"

The two heroes shook hands in token of their reconciliation, and went together to the feast.

When the feast was over, and the warriors sat over their winecups, the minstrel sang of Beowulf's victory over Grendel, and of the alliance which had that day been concluded between the Goths and the Skiöldungs. When the song was finished, Queen Walchtheov filled the goblets of all present. To Beowulf she presented a golden cup, telling him to keep it in remembrance of her, together with a ring and a necklace that she put in his hand, saying they were the same that Hama (Heime) in the olden time stole from the Brosing (Harlung?) treasure.

"Wear them," she added, "for our sakes, but also for your own, that you may come whole and victorious out of all the battles you will have to fight during a long life."

Beowulf thanked the queen in seemly fashion, and then the Lady Walchtheov retired.

While the king and his men, and Beowulf and his friends, retired to the royal apartments, beds were spread in the hall for many warriors, who, no longer fearing a one-armed Grendel, had now flocked to the palace and filled it to overflowing.

The night, however, was not to pass as quietly as was hoped.

III. THE SHE-WOLF OF THE SEA.

At midnight a great column of water rose in the midst of the sea, and out of it came a gigantic woman, whose face was as grey as her garments. Her eyes shone like coals of fire, her bristly hair stood up on end, and her long bony arms were stretched out as though in search for prey. It was Grendel's mother, who had

come to avenge her son. She came-up out of the sea, crossed the morass, and entered the great hall; there she slew one warrior after another, in spite of their resistance, and slaked her thirst with their warm blood.

Deep was the sorrow of both king and people next day when they heard of the new misery that had come upon the land. Then Beowulf said that the cause of all this wretchedness was Grendel's mother, and that she would never cease to persecute the Skiöldungs as long as she lived. The only thing to be done was to seek her out in her own place, and there to slay her. This he was prepared to do. He begged Hrodgar to send the treasures that he and the queen had given him to his uncle Hygelak, king of Gothland, should he fall in his struggle with the giantess.

The whole party then went down to the shore, and Beowulf, wading into the sea, sought to find the road leading to the monster's dwelling. Finding that it was a longer way than he had imagined, he came back to the shore and took leave of his friends, who one and all entreated him to give up the enterprise; but in vain.

"Wait for me two days and nights," he said, "and if I do not then return, you may know that I have been conquered by the mer-woman; but that is a matter that is in the hands of the gods alone in whom I trust."

Having thus spoken, the hero tore himself away from his weeping friends, and plunged into the raging sea with all his armour on, and with Hunford's good sword at his side.

He swam a long way. At last he saw a light deep down in the water. "Her dwelling must be here," he thought; "may the gods have me in their keeping!" He dived down, down, down to the bottom of the sea. Many a monster of strange shape snapped at him as he shot past, but his coat of mail was proof against their teeth. Suddenly he felt himself caught as

though with hooks, and dragged along so swiftly that he could scarcely breathe. In another moment he found himself in the crystal hall of a submarine palace, and face to face with the antagonist he had sought.

Then began a terrible struggle. Beowulf and the giantess wrestled together for life and death. The walls of the palace shook so that they threatened to fall. The two wrestlers fell to the ground, Beowulf the undermost. The mer-woman pulled out a sharp knife to cut his throat, but Wieland's armour was too well made to give way, and Beowulf struggled to his feet again. The giantess then drew a monstrous sword, so heavy that few mortal men could have wielded it; but, before she could use it, Beowulf made an unexpected spring upon her, and wrenched the sword out of her hand. He clutched it firmly in both hands, and, swinging it with all his strength, cut off the woman's head. He felt so exhausted with his labours that he rested awhile, leaning on his sword. After a few minutes he looked about him, and saw Grendel lying dead on a couch of sea-weed. He cut off his head, meaning to take it with him as a sign of victory; but no sooner had he done so than the blood began to flow from the monster's body in a great gurgling stream, then it mixed with that of his mother, and flowed out of the entrance door into the sea. The blade of the giantess' sword melted in it, and vanished as completely as ice in the rays of the sun. The golden hilt of the sword and Grendel's head were the only booty that Beowulf brought with him out of the depths of the sea.

His friends were collected on the shore, their hearts filled with a deadly anxiety, for they had seen the sea reddened with blood, and knew not whose it was. So when the hero appeared, they received him with acclamation.

Hrodgar and his people could find no words that would fitly express their gratitude to the hero who had saved the land from

two such foes as Grendel and his mother; and when Beowulf and his warriors set out on their journey home, they were laden with blessings and gifts of all kinds.

Hygelak received his nephew with great delight, and listened to the tale of his adventures in speechless amazement and ecstasy.

IV. BEOWULF IS MADE KING.

Many years passed away in peace and quiet. At last the Frisians made a viking raid on Gothland, burning defenceless granges and cottages. Before King Hygelak could reach the place of their depredation, and offer them battle, they had taken to their ships again, and were far away. The king determined to make a descent upon Friesland and punish the marauders; he would not listen to Beowulf when he advised him to delay till better preparations could be made for the onslaught.

The Goths landed in Friesland without opposition, and, marching into the country, revenged themselves by burning many a farmstead, and taking many a castle and township. Now the Frisians were a free and warlike people, whose heroes had played an honourable part in the great Bravalla-fight; the time had come for them to preserve their homes and liberty, and they did not shun to make ready for battle. A murderous engagement took place between them and their Gothic invaders, in which the latter were defeated, and obliged to fly to their ships, terror-stricken by the loss of their king. Beowulf and the noblest of the warriors alone stood their ground, and, although severely wounded, did not join in the retreat until they had rescued and carried off Hygelak's body. Then the conquered army set sail for Gothland.

Queen Hygd was at first so overwhelmed with sorrow for the loss of her husband that she could give no thought to matters of state; but after a time she roused herself from her grief, and

began to consider what was best for the nation. It was well that she did so, for while she was still wrapped up in her sorrow, the barons had been quarrelling among themselves, and creating much disturbance. The royal widow therefore called a meeting of the notables, and standing up before the assembly, spoke of the anarchy into which the country was falling, and said that as her son Hardred was too young to govern the kingdom, and preserve it from civil or foreign war, she strongly advised that Beowulf should be made king. The notables all cheered, and shouted that Beowulf should be their king; but the hero came forward and said:

"And do you really think, ye men of Gothland, that I would rob the child of my uncle and friend of his rights and honours? May the gods, the avengers of all evil, preserve me from such a crime! Here," he cried, lifting young Hardred on his shield, and holding him aloft, "here is our king. I will be his faithful guardian, and will act in his name till he is old enough and wise enough to take the reins of government into his own hands."

Nobody ventured to remonstrate with Beowulf; indeed, they all knew that remonstrance would be in vain. And so the matter was settled.

Years passed on, and Beowulf kept his word. He ruled the kingdom with a strong hand, and with absolute justice; and with the help of Queen Hygd educated the young king with so much wisdom, that when the sovereign power was placed in his hands, there was every hope that he would use it for his people's good. But Hardred was not long to rule over the Goths. Like his former guardian and teacher Beowulf, the king was of a frank and honest nature, and trustful of all who had not shown themselves his enemies. So when Eanmund and Eadgils, the sons of Ohtere, king of Swithiod, came to him as fugitives, he received them with all kindness. He often tried to make them see that they had

been wrong in rebelling against their father, and offered to arrange matters with him on their behalf. One day, when he was speaking to them very earnestly on this subject, Eanmund, a passionate, hot-tempered man, told him that he was too young to advise a tried warrior like him. Hardred sharply told him to remember to whom he was speaking; and Eanmund, completely losing the little self-control he ever had, drew his sword and stabbed his royal host to the heart. Young Wichstan (Weohstan) at once avenged the king's murder by slaying Eanmund; but Eadgils fled back to Swithiod, and soon after succeeded his father on the throne.

The Gothic Allthing, the assembly of all the free men of the nation, was called together as soon as Hardred's murder was made known, and by a unanimous vote Beowulf was elected king in his cousin's stead. He accepted the office, and swore to rule his people justly.

V. THE FIGHT WITH THE DRAGON.

When Hardred's death was noised abroad, several of the neighbouring peoples made raids upon Gothland, but Beowulf kept so strict a watch on the borders that the enemy was beaten back at all points. Scarcely was the country freed from the attacks of these sea-wolves, when Eadgils, king of Swithiod, came at the head of a large army to avenge his brother's death. The Goths and Swedes met, and fought a murderous battle, in which many men were slain, and among them King Eadgils. After the death of their king, the Swedes retired to their ships, and sailed back to their own land. The consequence of this victory was a lasting peace. No vikings dared attack the well-defended shores of Gothland, and but few quarrels arose among the nobles to disturb the internal peace of the realm. Beowulf ruled the land with

great justice and wisdom. No one entreating his help was ever sent empty away, and no act of tyranny remained unpunished.

Forty years or more passed after this fashion. The hero had grown an old man, and hoped that the national peace and happiness would last as long as he lived. But he was to be rudely awakened from this dream. An enemy attacked Gothland, against whom all weapons and armies were useless. This was how it happened. A dishonest slave, who feared discovery and punishment at his master's hands, fled from home, and took refuge in a wild, rocky place. When he got there, he looked about for some cave in which he might take up his abode. Coming to one, he entered, but found it already tenanted by an immense dragon, which lay stretched on the ground asleep. Behind it, at the back of the cave, were treasures of all sorts. The man looked greedily at the shining mass of jewels and gold, and thought in his heart, "If I had but a few of these treasures, I could buy my freedom, and need no longer fear my master." This idea made him bold. He slipped softly past the monster, and stole a golden pot, the knob on whose lid was formed of a shining carbuncle. He escaped safely, and going back to his master, bought his freedom. Neither of the men had the slightest notion of the harm this deed would bring down upon the land.

The dragon, which had watched over its hoard for hundreds of years, and knew each costly thing by heart, saw at once that it had been robbed. At nightfall it crept out of its hole to look for traces of the thief. Finding none, it lifted up its voice and howled so loud, that the earth shook, at the same time flames issued from its mouth and burnt up granges and homesteads far and wide. The men, who sought to put out the fire, fell victims to its fury, or else were dragged into the monster's cave, where they perished miserably. This happened night after night; the devastation had no end. Many brave warriors went out against the dragon, and

tried to kill it, but none of them could withstand the fiery blasts with which the creature defended itself.

The old king heard the story of these events with infinite sorrow. He determined himself to attack the monster, and when his friends remonstrated with him on his rashness, he replied that it was his duty to defend his people from all their enemies, and that the gods would help him. He further announced that he would have fought the dragon unarmed, as he had done the monster Grendel, the son of the sea-witch, but that he feared he could not make his way through the flames without such protection. He therefore had a shield made three times as thick as usual, and so large that it covered him completely. This done, he chose eleven of his bravest warriors to be his comrades in this adventure, among them Wichstan, the man who avenged King Hardred's death.

Beowulf and his companions set out on their journey, and in due course arrived at the dragon's cave, out of which there flowed a brook whose waters were made boiling hot by the monster's fiery breath.

The king bade his friends wait a little way off, until they saw whether he needed their help, and then advancing to the mouth of the cave, he called the dragon to come forth. The great beast came out at his call, and a terrible struggle ensued. Both combatants were hidden from view in a dense cloud of smoke and fire. The rocks trembled and shook at the bellowing of the monster, which at the same time slashed out with its tail, whose blows fell like a sledge-hammer both in sound and regularity. For a moment the smoke and flames were blown aside by a puff of wind, and Beowulf's comrades saw that the dragon had just seized their king in its great jaws. They could not bear the sight, and ten of them slipped aside and strove to hide behind rocks and trees; but the eleventh, brave Wichstan,

hastened to help his master. His shield was burnt up in a twinkling, and he was obliged to seek shelter behind the king, Both heroes seemed lost. The dragon tore down Beowulf's iron shield, and caught him a second time in its great jaws, crushing him between its teeth with such force, that the iron rings of his coat of mail cracked like so much crockery, though they had been forged by Wieland himself. Then Wichstan seized his opportunity, when the beast's head was raised, the better to champ his prey, and plunged his sword into the fleshy part of its throat under the lower jaw. Upon this the dragon dropped the king, and encircled both its adversaries with its tail, but Beowulf at the same moment made a lunge at its open mouth, driving his weapon so deep that the point came out at the dragon's throat. After that they soon dispatched the monster, and then threw themselves on a ledge of rock, panting and exhausted.

When they had recovered a little, the heroes loosened their armour, and Wichstan saw that blood was oozing slowly from under the king's gorget. He wanted to bind up the slight wound; but Beowulf forbade him, saying that it would be useless, as the hurt had been given by the dragon's tooth, and the poison was already in his veins.

"I must die," he added, "but I go to my forefathers without sadness, though I am the last of my race, for my wife has given me no son and heir. I can look back on my past life with pleasure, for I have wronged no man, but have shown justice to all."

He then asked Wichstan to fetch him a drink of water, and afterwards to bring him the treasure out of the dragon's cave, that he might see, with his own eyes, the last gift he should ever make to his people.

His commands were obeyed, and a few minutes later he had

passed away quietly and peacefully. Wichstan gazed at him in silent grief. Beowulf had been his dearest friend, and he felt that, with his death, his last tie to life was loosed. Meanwhile the ten warriors had come out of their hiding-places, when they found that all danger was over. On seeing what had chanced, they raised their voices in mourning; but Wichstan bade them



BEOWULF DYING.

hold their peace, or if they must weep, at least to weep for their own cowardice, and not for the hero who had died at his post. He then advised them to make the best of their way to other lands, as he could not answer for their lives when the Goths became aware of the way in which they had deserted their king in his hour of need.

With bowed heads and shame-stricken faces the men turned

away. They departed out of Gothland, and sought to hide their heads in countries where their names were unknown.

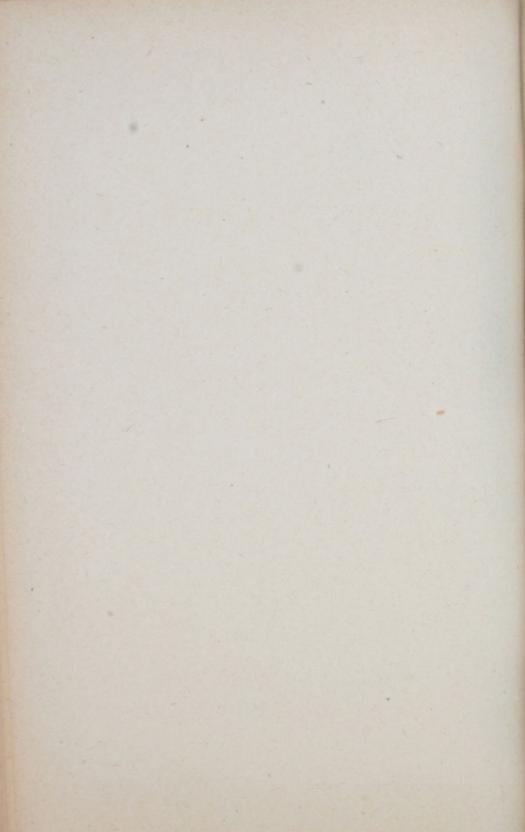
The body of Beowulf was borne to its funeral pile on the height called Hronesnäs, and there burnt amid the tears and sorrow of a nation. When the funeral rites had all been performed, the great treasure was taken back to the dragon's cave. For the Goths would have none of the gold their beloved king had won for them in his death. So it still lies hidden in the heart of the earth as in the olden time when the dragon guarded it from mortal ken. If it is useless to men, it is at all events not hurtful.



PART THIRD.

I. CAROLINGIAN LEGENDS.

II. KING ARTHUR AND THE HOLY GRAIL
III. TANNHÄUSER.





HAYMON.

AFE and victorious, Karl the Great (Charlemagne), king of

the Franks, had returned from Hungary. He had conquered the wild Avars, destroyed their strongholds, and come back to Paris with much booty.

High festival was being held in the royal palace, for the king was busied dividing the newly conquered country into counties and baronies amongst those of his warriors whom he thought best fitted for such responsible charge. While thus employed, Lord Hug of Dordone came forward, and asked the king if he had forgotten the faithful services rendered him by Count Haymon of Dordone, that he had not mentioned his appointment to any of the new fiefs. Karl at once replied, that he had not forgotten Haymon, but he considered that bold warrior had already fiefs enough and to spare. Indeed, if he gave him more, it would only make him think himself as powerful as his master, and might even tempt him to throw off his allegiance to the Frankish crown.

"He is a faithful vassal, sire," answered Hug, "as true as a sword to its sheath; but if he is given a lower position than meaner men, he may in good truth forget his oath of allegiance, and fight for his rights. Did he do so, he would not lack aid from many a trusty comrade."

As he spoke, the hero touched his sword significantly. The king's wrath was so roused by the boldness of this speech, that he drew his sword, and, next moment, the good lord's head was severed from his body at one blow.

The courtiers drew back in speechless horror, and Haymon, who came in at that instant, asked one of the bystanders what had happened. When he heard the reason of the king's murderous deed, he turned sharp round upon his heel, and went out without further word or greeting.

As soon as he reached his own castle, he gathered his friends about him, and declared war against his liege lord. No great battle was fought; but continual conflict raged between the contending parties, the country was laid waste, and the peasantry suffered terribly. Haymon was able to move about from place to place with such incredible swiftness that people began to say he rode a magic horse, gifted with the speed of lightning, and the wit of man. The war lasted for years, till at last King Karl came with a large army, and besieged the castle of the rebel count.

One morning, when matters were in this position, Haymon went to the stables as usual with a feed of oats for his favourite horse; but the stall was empty, the good steed Bayard was gone. Haymon was in despair. He was just considering whether it was worth while carrying on such a hopeless war, when his cousin Malagis, a small, insignificant-looking man with a long beard, came to him, and told him that he knew for certain that the devil had carried off the horse, and had hidden it in Mount Vulcanus, which is near the mouth of hell. He further promised to go and fetch it, in spite of all difficulties. Then, without waiting for a word of thanks or warning, the little man turned, and left the count.

When he got outside the castle gate, Malagis pulled a small bag of powdered hellebore from his pocket. He sprinkled a good deal of it in the air, and the wind carried it over the besieger's camp. A general fit of sneezing suddenly infected the whole army. While the men-at-arms were thus sneezing, and calling out, "God bless you!" to each other, Malagis quietly walked through their lines, and pursued his journey to Mount Vulcanus.

He reached the foot of the great mountain in safety, and saw smoke and flames issuing from its top. He at once went in search of the ruler of the world of fire, greeted him courteously, and introduced himself as a great necromancer, who had come to offer his valuable services to his Satanic majesty. The devil answered sarcastically, that he was accustomed to hear the followers of the black art vaunt their powers and wisdom, but as he was curious to see what the stranger could really do, he would give him a chance of showing off.

You must know, fellow," he continued, "that I have always hitherto ridden on the storm-wind, but I find that too great an exertion now. I am grown too old for that sort of thing, so I looked out for a good horse, and managed to find one fleet enough

to satisfy me. I therefore took possession of it, and brought it here. I thought that I should now be able to ride through the world of men more at my ease than before; but," and here he sighed deeply, and blue flames issued from his month as he did so, "if I were not the devil myself, I should say that that horse was an incarnation of Satan, he will not even let me mount him. I have therefore put him into the volcano, hoping to tame him in that manner. I have kept awake for months to look after this work myself, but hitherto without effect. Will you take my place while I enjoy a little nap?"

"Well spoken, great king," said Malagis, "but should I not be able to watch the effect on the horse better if I were close to it? Let me therefore beg you to withdraw the fire and smoke for a few minutes, that I may go down into the heart of the mountain, and enter upon my duty. Perhaps, also, the horse may be more easily induced to obey, if he gets a breath of fresh air."

Satan consented to do as he was asked. He climbed to the top of the mountain, accompanied by Malagis, and ordered the spirits of the nether-world to hold back the flames. As soon as the intense heat had cooled down, the necromancer descended into the abyss, and took up his position near the horse. Then, as if by accident, he threw what looked like a handful of ashes up in the air. But it was really a sleeping-powder. In another moment the prince of hell was sound asleep, and snoring so loud that the mountain trembled at the sound, and ignorant men thought there was an earthquake. Malagis now approached the horse, which snapped and kicked at him viciously. But no sooner had he whispered the word, "Bayard," than the creature pricked up its ears, and when he added, "your master, Haymon, has need of you," it became gentle as a lamb, and allowed him to lead it to the upper-world.

"To Haymon!" cried Malagis, springing on its back; and the

horse, neighing for joy, set off with the speed of the wind over hill and dale, heath and morass.

At the sound of the whinny, the prince of darkness awoke out of his sleep, and at once understood what had happened. Without loss of time, he flung himself astride of a storm-cloud, and hurled a thunderbolt after the fugitives. But Malagis quietly said, "Abracadabra," at the same time holding up his crucifix. The thunderbolt fell harmless to the ground; but Lucifer was so much startled by the sight of the cross that he tumbled off his cloud, and, falling to the earth, broke his leg; and from that day forward he has had a limp in his gait.

Meanwhile Count Haymon was in sore distress. He was hunted like a wild beast from place to place. His men were all dead, or else had deserted him. He was alone and desolate. One day, as he rode through a wood on a wretched broken-down hack, listening bitterly to the bay of the blood-hounds, and the hollo of the hunters who pursued him, he saw a rider gallop into the clearing in front, and exclaimed in joy:

"Malagis, cousin Malagis, and Bayard, faithful Bayard! My misery is at an end now."

Scarcely had he uttered these words when his pursuers were upon him. He sprang on Bayard's back, swung his sword, and faced his foes. He and his horse fought together, and but few of his antagonists lived to tell the tale of that day's work.

Haymon's evil fortune now changed to good. Friends came to his aid, and many castles and strongholds fell into his hands. The paladins of the great king avoided giving him battle, and the war seemed as if it might go on for ever. The proud king longed for peace, and at last sent ambassadors to his disobedient vassal, offering to restore all his fiefs, and to pay him four times the weight in gold of the murdered Hug of Dordone. Count Roland was sent at the head of the embassy. Haymon received

the messengers with all honour, especially his old friend Roland; but when he heard the terms offered by Karl, he said that the king's expiation for the murder must be six times the weight of his victim, and that he must further give his sister Aya to Haymon in marriage. These terms were at first rejected by the king, but afterwards he consented, partly because the country needed peace, and partly, it was said, because the fair princess Aya used her influence with her brother to that end.

So peace was at length concluded. Count Haymon was restored to his former rank and dignity, and was married to the princess. After the wedding, the newly married couple retired to their castle of Pierlepont, where they lived for some time in love and unity. But Haymon's was too active a disposition to be content with an idle life for long. He thirsted for glory, and to do great deeds. So he crossed over the Pyrenees into Spain, a country where the Christians and heathen Moors kept up a constant internecine war. For the first few years Count Haymon used to return home from time to time to see his wife and children, but when the fortune of war led him further south, he stayed away altogether, and seemed to have forgotten his beautiful home, and all that it contained.

REINOLD AND HIS BROTHERS.

Countess Aya mourned him as dead, and expended all her love on her four sons, whom she educated with the greatest care, and who rewarded her for her pains by growing up into wise and stately men. Reinold, the youngest, and his father's image, was taller and stronger than his brothers, and a better swordsman than any one about Pierlepont. He had inherited much of his father's quick temper; but to his mother he was always gentle and bidable.

The four lads, Richard, Adelhart, Wichart, and Reinold had already shown their prowess in the field, when a messenger came to Pierlepont to say that Count Haymon was lying sick at an inn at the foot of the Pyrenean hills, and near a place where hot mineral springs were to be found. He wanted his wife to come and nurse him. Aya prepared to obey her husband without a moment's delay, and set out accompanied by her sons.

On her arrival at the inn, she hastened to embrace her husband, and present her sons to him. The three elder lads embraced their sick father tenderly, but Reinold hung back.

"Who is this broken-down old man?" he cried. "It cannot be my father, for he is a great hero, and that man does not look much of a warrior. I wonder if he will try a bout with me."

"Boy," said Haymon, standing up straight, "do you not know me for your father? Look at this ring which your mother gave me years ago, and at these scars which I gained in battle."

"And," continued the countess, "does not my love for him bear witness that he is your father?"

"Yes, mother," cried Reinold, "I recognise him now;" and, so saying, he clasped his father in his arms, and squeezed nearly all the breath out of his body.

"Ah, this one is my son, and no mistake," said Haymon. "He was cut out of the same quarry."

Aya and her sons were anxious to hear all that the count had done and seen since they had met last, so Haymon told them all that had befallen him, and ended by saying that he had brought home great wealth. This wealth he intended his three elder sons to divide equally amongst them, whilst his youngest son was to have his good sword Flammberg and the horse Bayard, if he could manage to ride it.

Reinold did not in the least doubt his powers of riding anything, and begged his father, mother, and brothers to come and see him mount his new steed. They followed the lad into the stable. Reinold went straight up to Bayard, and seizing the halter in one hand, was about to mount, when the horse caught his coat between its teeth, and threw him on the ground. The bold warrior, ashamed of his fall, sprang to his feet, and next moment was seated in the saddle. There was a fierce struggle for mastery, which ended in the victory of Reinold. After a wild and dangerous ride, when Bayard once more stood in its stall, Haymon went up to the noble animal, and said:

"Bayard, this is my son, your future master."

The horse seemed to understand, for it laid its head gently against Reinold's breast, as though to acknowledge his mastery.

Count Haymon was soon strong enough to return to Pierlepont with his family. Shortly after his arrival there, he heard that the king, who had lately been crowned emperor at Rome, intended to confer the honour of knighthood on his son and heir, Prince Ludwig, and on several squires of noble birth. Haymon and his sons at once determined to go to court on this occasion.

A great tournament was held before the emperor knighted the young men, and each and all of the candidates showed himself worthy of the honour about to be bestowed on him; more especially Reinold, whose prowess brought down endless acclamations. After the ceremony of knighting the young nobles was over, Ludwig was crowned king, and named his father's successor in the empire. The young king's first act was to distribute fiefs to the new-made knights, save and except to the brothers alone; these he passed over entirely. He did not even invite them to the feast, and to all appearance the day of general rejoicing was to be a fast day for them. Reinold thought it too bad, so he walked into the royal kitchen and helped himself to all he needed for himself and his brothers.

The reason of this extraordinary conduct on Ludwig's part

was easy to guess. He was jealous of the superior strength and prowess Reinold had displayed in the lists; above all, he could not forget the fall he had met with at his hands. He confided his dislike of Reinold to his favourite, Ganelon, a fawning sycophant, and told him that he wanted to rid himself and the country of him whom he chose to regard as his enemy. Ganelon at once had a plan to propose. He said that Ludwig, who was famous for his skill in playing chess, should challenge Adelhart, one of the brothers, to play a game with him, each player to stake his head to the other. Reinold would be sufficiently punished, in Ganelon's eyes, by the pain his brother's death would cause him. Ludwig agreed to the plan with alacrity. Adelhart, on receiving the challenge, declined to play on such terms, saying that if he won, he could not raise his hand against the life of his future liege lord; but Ludwig would not listen to any excuse, saying he would have him proclaimed a coward if he did not consent. So the young hero gave way, much against his will.

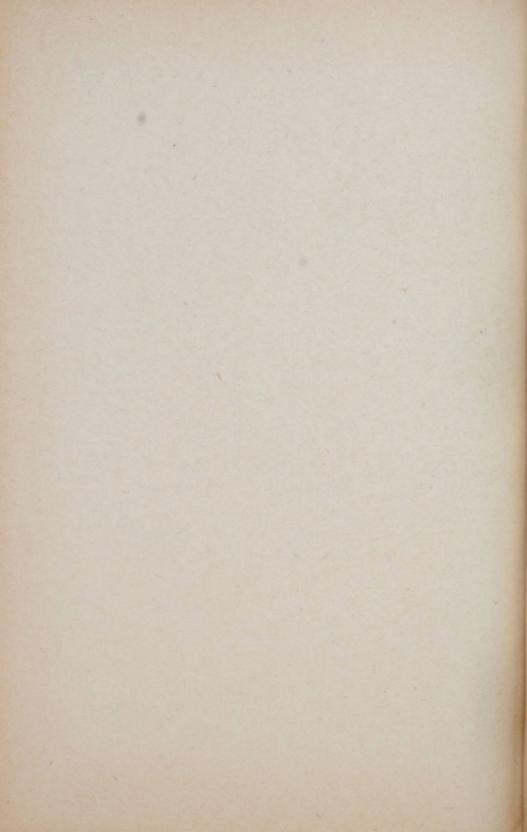
A few minutes later the two men were seated opposite each other before a chess-board, while three of the courtiers, who had been chosen umpires, stood beside the table and watched the players. Five games were to be played. The chess-men on the one side were made of gold, those on the other of silver. Ludwig, who played with the golden chess-men, had the first move. The five stipulated games were played one after the other, and in each of the five, Ludwig was check-mated. The umpires were silent. The king swept the pieces together impatiently, and when Adelhart said he had only played for the sake of his life and honour, that the head of his king was sacred in his eyes, Ludwig caught up the chess-board and flung it in his face with such force that the blood flowed from his mouth and nose, and stained his garments.

The hero instantly rose and withdrew. As he crossed the

courtvard, his brother Reinold hastened to meet him, and asked what was the matter. On learning what had taken place, the vounger brother was very angry. He gave orders that all should be got ready for their departure, and sent a servant to tell his father and brothers to come down to their horses. Then, turning to Adelhart, he said he would fetch him the prize he had won. Signing to his brother to follow him, he at once directed his steps to the throne-room, where the emperor was seated with his knights and nobles about him. Ludwig and the umpires were there also. Reinold advanced to the throne, and told Karl the whole story, asking the umpires if it were not so. Two of them were afraid, and held their peace; but the third boldly avowed the truth. Reinold, upon this, drew his sword Flammberg, and with one stroke severed Ludwig's head from his body. Almost before the spectators could draw breath, the brothers had left the room. On reaching the courtyard, they at once mounted their horses and rode away, accompanied by Haymon and the rest of their

They were pursued on the instant. The men-at-arms came up with them outside the town gates, and a battle ensued. From the first there seemed to be very little chance for Count Haymon and his sons. They had but a few men-at-arms to support them, and the enemy's numbers increased every minute. Their men were at last all slain, and so were all their horses, except Bayard, which bore bold Reinold here, there, and everywhere with equal speed and safety. At length, seeing that further contest was useless, Reinold called to his father and brothers to mount behind him on Bayard. The three brothers lost no time in obeying him but Haymon was so hemmed in by the press of people that he could not move. Although bearing a fourfold burden, Bayard galloped away as lightly and easily as if he had had nothing on his back.





Haymon meantime yielded himself prisoner to Bishop Turpin, the bishop promising that his life should be spared. But the emperor refused to be bound by Turpin's promise, and ordered that Haymon should be publicly hung for the offence his son had committed. The bishop's entreaties were vain. It was not until Roland and the other paladins threatened to leave his service if he persisted in ordering Haymon's death, that the emperor gave way, and set his prisoner free, after making him swear to deliver his sons into his hands on the first opportunity. With the prospect of the gallows before his eyes, Haymon took the oath demanded of him.

Meanwhile the brothers journeyed rapidly through the broad lands of France. Nowhere could they find an abiding-place, for they were outlaws, whose life was forfeited if they fell into the emperor's hands. At length they came to Saforet, a Moorish chieftain, with whom they made friends, and to whom they swore fealty. They remained with him three years, serving him well; but when, at the expiration of that time, they asked for the pay he had promised but never given, the Moor, who thought them unable to defend their rights, refused to listen to the request. So Reinold, growing impatient, cut off his head. It was certainly an effectual way of ending the argument, but it necessitated immediate flight on the part of the brothers. This time they turned for protection to Iwo, prince of Tarasconia, the mightiest opponent of Saforet. The prince received them with every mark of honour, and with their help gained many victories over his enemies. But when he heard of the imperial ban under which they lived, Iwo called his council together, and asked what was to be done. Some of his advisers wanted him to get rid of the brothers as quickly as possible; while others said that it would be well to court the emperor's favour by delivering the outlaws into his hand; but the greater number were of opinion that the best thing to do would