THE NIBELUNGENLIED

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Editor's Preface

The following addition to the existing translations of the *Nibelungenlied* originated in the desire to place before English readers a rendering which should be at once literal and metrical. Of five which have appeared during the past fifty years not one quite accomplishes this object. Three only are in verse. The first, by Jonathan Birch, which appeared in 1848, was rendered in iambics of seven feet, from the short and to some extent hypothetical text of Lachmann. The second, by W. N. Lettsom, is a spirited performance, but it takes many liberties with the language and fails to preserve the antique flavour of the work. The third, by Mr. A. G. Foster-Barham, which appeared only ten years ago, is much more satisfactory in this respect, and errs chiefly in retaining too great a roughness of rhythm, which makes it displeasing to the modern ear. Of the two prose translations, the first, entitled *Echoes from Mistland* (Chicago, 1877), by Mr. Auber Forestier, is rather a paraphrase than a literal rendering, though it adheres closely to the matter of the original; and the second, by Miss Armour, which has only lately appeared, seems in all respects a praiseworthy production, lacking only a metrical form to make it a fair equivalent of the great German epic.

The additional difficulties involved in any verse-translation are so great, that a translator may well be excused from facing them. Assuming the indispensable qualification of sympathy needful in the translation of any work of art from one medium to another, the differences in word-formation, in inflection, and in grammatical construction between any two languages interpose mechanical obstacles which are inconsistent with the preservation of metrical similarity; a more or less close approximation is all that can be

looked for. Still more are the difficulties increased when the task involves the presentation to a modern reader of a work which belongs to a distant and nebulous past, deals with a primitive and imperfect phase of human culture, and teems with motives which, if not eradicated from human nature, are no longer regarded as legitimate and are often repugnant to modern ideas. In these circumstances it might be thought that a prose rendering would have the best or only chance of doing justice to the original. But, on the other hand, it may be urged that a prose translation of a rhymed poem can never be an adequate equivalent, especially in a work like the *Nibelungenlied*, where it must be obvious to any student that its construction in rhyme and strophe have played an important part in determining its style and character. Rhyme and rhythm are essential features of it; and the modern reader (as distinguished from the student) requires, no less than the medieval listener, the stimulus which they supply. To give for 9,000 lines of verse a corresponding quantity of prose seems—apart from considerations of verbal accuracy—to fail in doing due justice to the poem.

So at least the translator and editor, who are jointly responsible, have thought; though, at the same time, they have been fully alive to the necessity of a close adherence to the text. They are of the opinion of Dryden, as expressed in the preface to his version of Ovid's Epistles, that it is the business of a translator, as it is of a portrait painter, to make his work resemble the original. On this principle they have striven not to yield to the tempting idea—too often a delusion—that by sacrificing the letter they may preserve the spirit. On the contrary, they have thought that, in such a case as this, the letter and spirit are in a large measure inseparable. With, therefore, no small expenditure of trouble, they have tried, with what success the reader must judge, to reproduce in suitable English the matter, manner, and metre of the original.

With regard to the language, no futile attempt has been made by archaicisms to give the translation the appearance of an antique. The object has been to put English readers, as far as possible, in the same position as the German who reads the work in one of the several modern German versions. At the same time it is obvious that much of what forms the English of today is not a suitable vehicle for

the primitive ideas and manners illustrated in the poem. The translators have therefore tried to avoid words of merely modern use, and to adhere to English which is familiar to everyone in the Bible, or in the older Ballad literature, and is, at the same time, not out of harmony with a work which places the reader in an atmosphere far removed from that of the Victorian era.

Some latitude must also be allowed in respect to the metre. The rhythmical system of the original depends on accent rather than on time or measure. Opinions may differ as to the amount of accent to be given to lines like the following, which is a nearly normal stanza:

Nu wáren oúch die géste ze róssen álle kómen.
vil mánic ríchiu tjóste durch súlde wárt genómen.
daz vélt begónde stoúben sám ob ál daz lánt
mit loúge wære enbrúnnen: da wúrden hélde wól bekánt.

Stanza 596.

To the ordinary ear they resemble iambics with a central caesura;—a measure familiar in ballad verse, and much used by Macaulay in his well-known “Lays.” This form accordingly has been adopted as the metrical equivalent; though, for the sake of euphony, the extra accent which characterizes the second half of every fourth line has been omitted in the translation. How far this method of rendering the original is justifiable the reader may determine by turning to the specimens given by Carlyle, and comparing it with his rougher versions.

It has been thought well to prefix to the volume this Essay of Carlyle’s, because, though it was written more than sixty years ago, when the subject had attracted but little attention, it gives in a sympathetic manner, yet in a style full of characteristic humour, an account of the relations between this poem and other German medieval rhymes, founded on kindred subjects. So far as concerns the authorship of the poem, as it now exists, nothing has been discovered since Carlyle wrote. It must, however, be obvious to any careful reader that the poem is not in its original form. The references to people and events, not accounted for in it, prove that it is based on earlier legends. The strange juxtaposition of ethical

motives; the contrast of ideals, as shown in the characters of Hagen and Rüdeger; the mingling of historical personages of different dates, show that in its earliest form as a whole it must have been full of anachronisms, due to the fusion of different elements. These have to some extent been elucidated by the increased knowledge of Scandinavian literature. The Eddas and Sagas exhibit, in a different form, the ancient legends on which the various parts of the poem are based. In the *Volsungasaga* we have a key to the earlier history of Siegfried and Brunhild, to which, in the *Nibelungenlied*, only obscure reference is made. In the *Thidreksaga* we have the Scandinavian form of the widely-spread legend of Theodoric, differing little from the version found in the German epic. But inasmuch as the former, no less than the latter, is generally admitted to be of Teutonic origin, however much infused with Scandinavian mythology, we have not come much nearer to the ultimate sources of the mythical, as distinguished from the historical, elements of the story.

Lachmann, one of the earliest editors of the *Nibelungenlied*, went so far as to analyze it into twenty different legends, rejecting on various grounds more than one-third of what is here given. Between that phase and the last, it is evident that there are several stages in which the poem existed as a whole. It is known that, at the request of Bishop Pilgrim of Passau in the tenth century, the story was translated into Latin prose by Conrad, called “The Scribe,” and to him is attributed the inclusion of the name of the said bishop as that of an actor in events which, so far as they are historical, belong to the fifth century. After Conrad’s time there may have been several augmented German editions before the twelfth century, to which our version belongs. There are more than twenty extant MSS., of which, however, only three are regarded as having any independent authenticity. They are designated as “A,” “B,” and “C”; of which the first, used by Lachmann, is the shortest, but betrays fewest signs of deviation from an older and good version. “C,” on the contrary, is said to be considerably altered, from an earlier popular form, to suit the more courtly taste of a later period of culture. The remaining, “B”—a fine MS. preserved in the monastery of St. Gall—is intermediate in length, and, retaining as it does many stanzas of evident antiquity, has become what may be called the *textus*

receptus; as edited by Bartsch it is the basis of the present translation. A facsimile of one of the pages from Dr. Otto Henne am Rhyn's *Kulturgeschichte* is given as a frontispiece to the translation.

Those who wish to study more closely the interesting questions surrounding the history of the poem are referred to the works of Raszmann and Simrock; to Magmisson and Morris's translations of the Icelandic Sagas; and to a recent work by Prof. Ker on "Epic and Romance." A popular and well-written account of the relations between the Teutonic and Scandinavian versions of the legend will be found in an interesting little book, entitled *Legends of the Wagner Drama*, by Miss J. L. Weston.

December, 1897.

Adventure I

Kriemhilda

1

To us, in olden legends, is many a marvel told
Of praise-deserving heroes, of labours manifold,
Of weeping and of wailing, of joy and festival;
Ye shall of bold knights' battling now hear a wondrous tale.

2

A very noble maiden grew up in Burgundy;
Than hers no greater beauty in any land might be:
The maid was called Kriemhilda— a woman passing fair—
For whose sake many a warrior his life must needs forbear.

3

To love that lovely maiden seem'd but to be her due;
None bore her spite, and many did for her favour sue.

Fair were beyond all measure her noble form and face:
Her virtues were sufficient all womankind to grace.

4

Three noble kings and wealthy guarded her as their own:
Sir Gunther and Sir Gernot, for deeds of honour known,
And Giselher the youngest, a gallant warrior he:
The lady was the sister and ward of all the three.

5

These princes were right gentle, and came of noble race,
Bold, and of strength unequalled, peerless in knightly grace;
“The kingdom of Burgundia,” thus was their country hight;—
All Etzel’s land rang later with their great deeds of might.

6

At Worms upon the Rhine flood, they dwelt in power and might,
And there, in fealty, served them full many a haughty knight,
With honourable service throughout their earthly life.—
That life had woeful ending from two great ladies’ strife.

7

Their mother was Dame Uté, a queen exceeding rich,
And Dankrat was their father, broad lands he left to each
When he this life departed; he was a mighty man,
Who, e’en while yet a stripling, his knightly deeds began.

8

The three kings, who came after, were, as I've said before.
All men of strength and valour; and to them fealty swore
The flower of noble knighthood, of whom with truth 'twas said,
That strong they were and dauntless, in sharp fight undismayed.

9

Foremost of them was Hagen, of Tronjé; then his brother—
Sir Dankwart the swift-footed; Ortwein of Metz another;
And Eckewart and Gere, who both were margraves hight;
With Volker of Alsatia— a stout and proven knight.

10

Rumold the kitchen-master, a knight of high degree,
Sindold and Hunold also, whose duty 'twas to see
That courtly rites and honours were aye observéd well,
With many another gallant, whom time would fail to tell.

11

Dankwart, he was the Marshal, his nephew Ortwein bore
The office of High Sewer, in that proud court of yore;
Sir Sindold was Cup-bearer, and a bold knight men say,
The Chamberlain was Hunold; all honourable they.

12

Of all this courtly service, and of their far-famed might,
And of the worth and valour of each heroic knight,
And of their life as courtiers, through all their joyous days,
To give a true account were beyond my simple lays.

13

Meanwhile, amid this splendour, the maid Kriemhilda dreamed
That she had reared a falcon— strong, fair and wild he seem'd—
And that two eagles rent him before her very eyes;—
No worse grief could life bring her in any evil guise.

14

Quick to her mother Uté she told the vision dread—
Who, after her own manner, the dream interpreted:
"This falcon of thy rearing, thy noble husband he—
And now may God defend him, or he is lost to thee!"

15

"What sayest thou of husbands, O dearest mother mine?
Never for hero's wooing shall I, your daughter, pine!
Spotless and fair would I be, as now, unto my death;—
I would forego the sorrow that lurks man's love beneath."

16

"Forswear not Love thus lightly," her mother answer gave,
"If heart's joy ever reach thee in life, as women crave,
Through man's love thou must gain it;— thou wert a seemly bride
If God do not deny thee a good knight at thy side."

17

"Ah, let alone such counsel, my mother dear, I pray!
By many a woman's witness 'tis proven, clear as day,
How heart's delight too often with sorrow sore is paid;—
Lest such mischance befall me, I'll shun them both," she said.

18

So, in her mind Kriemhilda held ever Love at bay,
And lived in happy freedom for many a merry day;—
Caring for nought and no one;— and yet it was her fate
To be one day, in honour, a gallant warrior’s mate.

19

It was the self-same falcon that she in dreams did see,
Just as her mother told her; and bloody was to be
Her vengeance on her kinsmen, by whom the deed was done—
For one man’s death did perish full many a mother’s son.

Adventure II

Siegfried

20

In Netherland was growing a rich king's son and heir,
Whose father's name was Siegmund, Sieglind his mother fair.
In a strong castle lived they, of far and widespread fame,
Beside the great Rhine river; and Santen was its name.

21

This prince's name was Siegfried, a gallant knight and good,
In many kingdoms proved he his brave and warlike mood;
So great his strength of body, he rode from land to land.
Ha! what fine warriors found he on the Burgundian strand!

22

In his best days of prowess, when he was young and slim,
Full many a wondrous story the country told of him—

How noble was his stature, how fair he was to see—
And many a comely woman look'd on him lovingly.

23

He had a careful rearing, as did his birth befit,
His virtues were his own, though, and nowise due to it!
Unto his father's country he was an ornament,
For men in all things found him to be right excellent.

24

Now was he grown so manly that he to court must ride;—
The men-folk saw him gladly; and dames and maids beside
Wished that his will might bring him, not once, but ever there;—
Full many bore him favour, as well the knight was ware!

25

To ride forth unattended the boy was ne'er allowed.
In costly raiment decked him Siegmund and Sieglind proud;
And the wise elders taught him (as well they understood),
How best to win the people, and rule the land for good.

26

And being now so stalwart that he could weapons bear,
Having what he requiréd, enough and e'en to spare,
He turned his thoughts to women, and dreamt of a fair bride:
The fairest might stand proudly at the bold Siegfried's side.

27

Then did his father, Siegmund, summon his liegemen all
Unto a friendly banquet in the great castle-hall;
To many a neighbour-king's land the festal tidings spread;
On strangers as on kinsmen steeds, gear, he lavishéd.

28

If any squire were lacking knightly estate and name,
Who, by descent and breeding, had thereunto a claim,
Such noble youth was bidden to tournament and board,
And with the young king, later, was girt with knightly sword.

29

One could tell many marvels of this great feast so rare;
Siegmund and Siegelinda did win much honour there
By the good gifts they lavished, with free and open hand;
Therefore so many strangers came riding to their land.

30

Four hundred squires receivéd their knightly gear that day.
Together with young Siegfried; and maidens fair, they say,
Toiled at the festal raiment, because they did him hold
So dear, and many a jewel they broidered in the gold.

31

And wove them in the robe-weft, and stitched upon the hem:
Sure, to such proud young warriors behovéd lace and gem!
The host had seats preparéd for many a gallant man,
At that June feast, where Siegfried his knightly course began.

32

And thither to the Minster came many a wealthy squire,
And many a noble warrior. The elders did aspire
That day to serve the younger, as was the ancient rule;—
And merriment, and pastime, and joy were at the full.

33

When later, in God's honour, a solemn Mass was sung,
Up rose from out the people a great and mighty throng,
Who there receivéd knighthood, with fitting knightly rite,
And honours, such as ne'ermore were seen of mortal wight.

34

Soon ran the knights to where they found saddled chargers wait;
At Siegmund's court began then a tournament so great
That one heard hall and palace with crash of arms resound,
As the high-mettled thanes met upon the tilting-ground.

35

From old knights and from young ones went thrust and parry there,
Till crash of breaking lances re-echoed through the air;—
One saw the splinters flying up to the palace wall
From many a gallant knight's hand: so eager were they all!

36

The host he bade them end it; they led the steeds away;
Full many a sturdy buckler to sight all broken lay;
And precious stones, in plenty, had fallen on the sward
From out the shining shield-clasps: the onset was so hard.

37

Then went the host's guests whither they bidden were to sit;
Their weariness was banished by the choice food they ate,
And by wine of the rarest, of which there was no stint.
Alike to friends and strangers was all this lavishment.

38

And, though the games and pastimes had lasted all the day,
The throngs of merrymakers knew neither rest nor stay,
Contending for the many good gifts that were to hand:
A bounty which redounded to the praise of Siegmund's land.

39

Then did the king make over to young Siegfried, the loan
Of both his lands and castles, as he afore had done.
Unto his knightly comrades he gave with open hand,
So all were right well-pleaséd that they had sought his land.

40

Until the seventh sunrise the festival went on.
Then did the rich queen, Sieglind, as in old days was done,
For love of her son Siegfried, share out her red gold free:
To win all folks' hearts to him thereby, in sooth, hoped she.

41

Not one who in the games played, methinks, went poor away;
It rainéd steeds and raiment through all the land that day.
As if had come the world's end, and common life were o'er!
Such gifts, in such abundance, were never known before;

42

So, with befitting honour, ended the festal day.
And some of the rich nobles were overheard to say,
That they would like the young man, Prince Siegfried, for their lord:
Howbeit the honest Siegfried, gave heed not to their word.

While Siegmund and Sieglinda were living, their dear son
Would never dream of wearing the crown for any one!
He wished to be lord only the mighty to restrain,
Who kept the land in terror— the bold and gallant thane!

Adventure III

How Siegfried Came to Worms

44

The Prince was little troubled by pangs of heartache yet!
The people's talk, however, erelong his ears beset:
How there was in Burgundia a maiden, passing fair;—
For her sake joy and sorrow thereafter he did bear.

45

The beauty of this maiden was faméd far and wide;
Her lofty mind, 'twas vaunted, excelled her beauty's pride,
And brought her many a wooer, riding to Gunther's land,
Who fain would see the damsel, and bid for that fair hand.

46

And yet, however many contended for her love,
Kriemhilda felt in secret that none her heart could move;

There was no man among them whose love she could reward;
That knight was still a stranger, who was to be her lord.

47

But when the son of Sieglind to lofty love inclined,
Compared with his, all wooing was as an idle wind!
Right well, in sooth, deserved he to win so fair a bride:
Erelong the noble Kriemhild' stood at bold Siegfried's side.

48

His followers and kinsmen, seeing that he would wed,
Did counsel that the maiden he to the altar led
Should be by birth his equal— for his, and for their sake:
"Then," cried the gallant Siegfried, "Kriemhilda will I take!

49

"That beauteous young maiden of the Burgundian land,
For her surpassing beauty. Right well I understand
No Kaiser were so mighty but, should he need a wife,
That princess were fit consort to share his royal life."

50

A rumour of the matter soon reached King Siegmund's ears
('Twas buzzed among the people); his mind was full of fears
For this his son's intention;— that he was fain to wed
The fair and lovely maiden, and would not be gainsaid.

51

Sieglinda also heard it, the noble monarch's wife,
And much heart-searching had she about her dear son's life:
For well she knew King Gunther, and his bold warrior-train.
They sought to turn the hero back from his wooing vain.

52

Then outspake gallant Siegfried: "Belovéd father mine,
The love of noble women I will for aye resign
Unless I woo where Love is, and give my heart its way.
Such is my purpose truly— whatever men may say.

53

"If thou canst not forego her," the king said, "verily
My will shall be as thy will, and well it pleaseth me;
And I will help thee end it, and do the best I can:
Yet hath the royal Gunther full many a haughty man!

54

"If it were only Hagen, and no one else beside,
He hides 'neath courtly seeming such overweening pride,
That he'll do us a mischief— of that I'm sore afraid,
If once we go a-wooing this fair and stately maid."

55

"Shall that be hindrance to us?" asked Siegfried, fearlessly.
"If what I ask in kindness he venture to deny,
My strong right hand shall win it! I'll wrest from him," quoth he,
"Both land and lieges, surely, for all his subtlety."

56

Then spake the royal Siegmund, “I do mislike thy speech!
Should tidings thereof ever to the Rhine-border reach,
Thou durst not ever after into that country ride.
Long have I known King Gunther, and King Gernot beside.

57

“By force can never any expect to win the maid,”
Declared the good King Siegmund; “that hath been always said!
But if thou with thy warriors wilt to her country ride,
An’ we have any friends left, I’ll call them to thy side.”

58

“Far be it from my purpose,” cried Siegfried, eagerly,
“That when I ride to Rhine-land warriors should follow me,
Like an invading army! I should abhor this thing—
By force the glorious maiden into my arms to bring!

59

“I will not owe her winning to any other hand;
I and eleven others will ride to Gunther’s land.
Your help, good father Siegmund, I, for this purpose, pray.”
Then gave they to his warriors both coloured stuffs and gray.

60

His mother heard the tidings, the lady Siegelind,
She fell to grieving over her dear son in her mind;
Fearing lest she might lose him through some of Gunther’s men.
The noble queen refrained not from bitter weeping then.

61

This seeing, young lord Siegfried to her his way did make,
And unto his dear mother thus tenderly he spake:
“I prithee weep not, lady, because of mine intent;
I have no fear of foemen, nor of disparagement.

62

“Aid thou me in my journey to the Burgundian land,
That I and my companions may bravely furnished stand
In raiment that shall honour proud heroes, such as we—
Then will I for this favour, aye thank thee fervently.”

63

“Since thou wilt not forego it,” did Siegelind declare,
“I’ll help thee on thy journey, my only son and heir!
I will provide apparel, the best e’er warrior wore—
For thee and thy companions: and ye must take good store.”

64

Then bowed to the queen-mother Prince Siegfried, the young man.
He said: “On this my journey I’ll take, if so I can,
None save eleven warriors; for these be raiment made.
I long to see how fares it with Kriemhilda,” he said.

65

So Sieglind’s beauteous ladies sat stitching, night and day—
There were no idle fingers, and little rest or play,
Until Prince Siegfried’s raiment was ready to his hand.
He’d not forego his journey to the Burgundian land.

66

His father bade him polish his knightly harness grand,
Wherewith he meant to ride out of royal Siegmund's land.
And eke the glitt'ring hauberks they likewise did prepare,
Together with stout helmets, and bucklers broad and fair.

67

The hour of their departure for Burgundy was nigh,
And men as well as women watched them forebodingly,
Lest they again should never come to their fatherland.
To pack their gear and armour the heroes gave command.

68

Their chargers were resplendent, their trappings of red gold;
No knight could well be prouder nor had more right to hold
A high head, than Sir Siegfried and his eleven men.
He craved the king's permission to gallop Rhinewards then.

69

With grief Siegmund and Sieglind accorded his request;
Whom Siegfried sought to comfort, as tenderly he pressed.
He said: "Ye must not weep now through any care for me;
And fear not lest my life be in any jeopardy."

70

Sad-hearted were the warriors, and many a maiden wept:
Doubtless their hearts foreboded mischance for those who leapt
That day into the saddle— they dreamt these friends lay dead—
They had good cause for mourning, in sooth there was much need!

71

Upon the seventh morning, at Worms, on the Rhine shore,
Arrived the gallant horsemen; the raiment that they wore
With ruddy gold was flashing, and all their trappings shone:
The chargers of bold Siegfried went pacing smoothly on.

72

Their bucklers were new-wrought ones, and light and broad beside,
And bright their helmets glittered, as unto court did ride
Siegfried, the gallant chieftain, in royal Gunther's land.
Such fine-apparelled heroes were ne'er seen on that strand.

73

Their long-swords' points hung downwards unto the spurs they wore;
And sharp, too, were the javelins which these bold heroes bore.
The one that Siegfried carried was two spans in the blade,
Its twofold edge was deadly, and ghastly wounds it made.

74

All gilded were the bridles they lightly held in hand;
And silken were their horse-girths; so came they to that land.
The folk began on all sides on them to gape and stare,
Then many of Gunther's people ran forth to meet them there.

75

Those high and mighty warriors, and knight as well as squire,
Went out to bid them welcome, as honour did require,
Receiving them with kindness into their master's land,
Taking their horses, straightway, and bucklers from their hand.

76

They would have ta'en the chargers, and led them to the stall,
Had not the gallant Siegfried said out, before them all:
"Let mine and my men's horses stay here, as now they be—
It is my will and purpose to ride hence presently!

77

"I pray you therefore tell me— whoever knows this thing
Let him not hide it from me— where I can find your king,
Gunther, the mighty monarch of the Burgundian land?"
Then one among them told him, who knew where he did stand.

78

"If you would find King Gunther, 'tis easy done, I trow,
In yonder hall I saw him, and thither you must go;
He stands among his heroes; and, if you'll thither wend,
Full many a glorious warrior you'll find with him, good friend!"

79

Unto the king the tidings by this time had been told:
How warriors were arrivéd all gallant to behold,
Who wore white, glitt'ring mail-shirts, and raiment rich and grand,
And no one knew aught of them, in that Burgundian land.

8o

Then was the king astonished, and much he did inquire,
Whence came these splendid warriors, in dazzling bright attire,
And with such well-wrought bucklers, so new and eke so broad;—
It vexed the soul of Gunther that none could give him word.

81

Then Ortwein, lord of Metz, spake, and answered thus the king
(Rich and high-couraged was he, and feared not anything):
“Since we know naught about them, bid someone straightway go
And fetch my uncle Hagen, he’ll see them, and may know.

82

“He knoweth all the kingdoms, and ev’ry stranger-land.
If aught he wot anent them, he’ll make us understand.”
So the king sent to fetch him, him and his liegemen all;—
They watched his stately coming, with warriors, to the hall.

83

What the king wanted of him? first, Hagen sought to know.
“There are within my palace strange warriors, I trow,
Whom not a soul here knoweth; if thou didst them e’er see,
Declare it now, Sir Hagen, and tell the truth to me!”

84

“That will I,” answered Hagen, and to the window went;
One saw his keen glance wander, till on the guests it bent.
Well pleased him their equipment, and raiment equally:
But they were strangers to him, ne’er seen in Burgundy.

85

He spake: “From whencesoever have come these cavaliers,
They must themselves be princes, or princes’ messengers.
Their raiment is so splendid, their horses are so good;—
’Tis plain, where’er they come from, they are of noble blood.

86

“And,” furthermore said Hagen, “though hitherto, I ween
The famous hero Siegfried, mine eyes have never seen,
I cannot help believing, how strange soe’er it be,
That yon proud knight, there standing, can be none else but he!

87

“He bringeth us new tidings, here into this our land.
The hardy Niblungs slew he with his own hero-hand,
Both Nibelung and Schilbung, the sons of a rich king.
He hath wrought mighty wonders, by sheer strength vanquishing.

88

“For riding once, all lonely, and with no help at hand,
He came unto a mountain, (as I did understand,)
Where lay the Niblungs’ treasure, well watched by doughty men,
Who all were strangers to him, until he met them then.

89

“The treasure of the Niblungs had just been taken then
Out of a hollow mountain— (Now hearken, my good men!)
While as the Niblung warriors to share it did prepare,
Young Siegfried came, and saw them: and had good cause to stare.

90

“He came so nigh unto them that he could see them all,
And they did also see him;— then one of them did call:
‘Here comes the mighty Siegfried, the Netherlander strong!’
He met with strange adventures the Nibelungs among.

91

“The knight was well received by Schilbung and Nibelung;
And with one voice in counsel those noble lords and young
Cried: ‘Share for us the treasure, thou honourable man!’
And eagerly besought him: so he to share began.

92

“He saw so many jewels as I have heard men say,
That fivescore waggons scarcely would carry them away;
Yet more there was of red gold, from out the Nib’lungs’ land:
And all must be divided by gallant Siegfried’s hand.

93

“And unto him for wages they gave the Niblungs’ sword:
But little they foreboded what would be their reward
For rendering this service to Siegfried, the good knight;—
Ere he could end the sharing they had begun to fight.

94

“They had their friends anear them, twelve gallant arméd men,
Who all were mighty giants— but what availed them then?
For Siegfried fell upon them and slew them in his ire,
Full seven hundred Niblungs, vanquished in battle dire,

95

“With their good sword resistless, that was yclept ‘Balmung.’
And through the mighty terror that seized those warriors young,
Dread of the sword, and hero who bravely did it wield;—
Their land and eke their castles unto him did they yield.

96

“The wealthy kings he also smote, till they both fell dead.
But he himself, through Albrich, was grievously bested,
Who would avenge his masters upon the spot—till he
Found the great strength of Siegfried beyond his mastery.

97

“The sturdy dwarf was powerless against him in the fray.
Like lions wild to the mountain they twain then broke away,
Till the Tarnhelm[1] from Albrich he wrested; and thus lord
Became the dreaded Siegfried of all the Niblung hoard.

98

“They who had dared the battle there, one and all, lay slain.
Then bade he that the treasure be carried back again
Unto the cave, whence erstwhile the Niblungs did it take.
And then did he stout Albrich his treasure-keeper make.

99

“By a great oath he made him unto him fealty swear,
To serve him in all service, no matter when or where.”
So spake Hagen of Tronjé, “That did he presently:
“There never was a warrior who had such might as he!

100

“And yet another story of Siegfried I have heard:
How he did slay a dragon, with his own hand and sword,
And in its blood he bathed him till horny grew his skin,
And thus no sword can cut him, as hath been often seen.

101

“Then let us this young hero receive as best we may,
Lest we deserve his hatred and have to rue the day.
He is of such bold spirit ’twere best to be his friend:
He hath, by his strong right hand, wrought wonders without end.”

102

Then the great king said, “Truly, methinks that thou art right.
See but how chivalrously he stands prepared to fight,
He and his warriors with him, a dauntless man is he!
We will go down to meet him, and greet him courteously.”

103

“Thou mayest,” answered Hagen, “with honour do this thing,
His ancestry is noble, his sire a wealthy king.
One sees it in his bearing— and, by the dear Lord Christ,
It is no trifle brings him, I warrant, on this quest!”

104

Then spake the country’s ruler: “Right welcome let him be—
That he is brave and noble hath aye been told to me;
We’ll make his sojourn merry in our Burgundian land.”
So saying, down went Gunther to where Siegfried did stand.

105

The host and all his warriors received the guest so well
That nothing to good breeding was lacking, sooth to tell.
The goodly man, on his side, bowed low before them there,
And thanked them for their greeting, so friendly and so fair.

106

“I marvel at these riddles,” spake Gunther, suddenly,
“Whence have you, noble Siegfried, come unto this country?
And for what purpose come you to Worms upon the Rhine?”
The guest unto the king said: “To answer shall be mine.

107

“To me were told the tidings, erst in my fatherland,
That here with you were dwelling (which I would know firsthand,)
The boldest of all warriors— oft said they so to me—
That ever monarch governed: lo, I am come to see!

108

“Thy fame hath also reached me; I hear the knights declare
That never king was bolder nor braver, anywhere.
Such is the common folk-talk o’er all the land, in sooth,
And I shall have no quiet until I know the truth.

109

“I also am a warrior, and shall too wear a crown;
And I shall ne’er content me until I win renown,
Until the folk say of me, that I have proved my right
To reign o’er land and people: my honour do I plight

110

“And head thereto. And wert thou as bold as some men say,
I will now wrestle from thee whatever is thine to-day;
I care not who gainsay it, or who may like, or hate:
Thy broad lands and thy castles shall mine be, soon or late!”

111

The king did greatly marvel, and eke his liegemen all,
At the strange declaration that from his lips did fall:
To take his kingdom from him! so that was his intent!
His thanes all heard it, likewise, and fierce was their dissent.

112

“Whereby have I deserved this?” Gunther the warrior cried,
“That lands my father governed, with honour, till he died,
Should be now wrested from us by force, by whomsoe’er?
That were to prove but poorly that we too knighthood bear.”

113

“Nought else will I,” quoth Siegfried, “by that I fall or stand:
If thy strength cannot peace win for thine own fatherland,
Then shall my strong hand rule it, and after me mine heir;
If thou dost win, thine be it, and we thy rule must bear.

114

“Thy heritage, mine also, are now alike at stake;
Whichever of the other shall wholly conquest make
To him shall all be subject— the land and all its folk.”
But Hagen and King Gernot in hasty answer spoke:

115

“Far be it from our purpose,” spake Gernot presently,
“To conquer new possessions, and to cause death thereby
At hands of heroes; truly, we have a rich estate:
Which pays us due allegiance, nor seeks a better fate.”

116

Round and about were standing his friends, in sullen mood;
The lord of Metz, Sir Ortwein, among the others stood;
He spake: “This friendly parley doth vex me sore, as knight—
Stout Siegfried unprovoked hath here challenged you to fight.

117

“If you and your two brethren were here, without defence,
And if he brought against you the army of a prince,
Methinks I could o’ermaster yea, e’en such doughty one!
And force this haughty warrior to change his braggart tone.”

118

This saying stirred fierce anger in him of Netherland.
He spake: “Ne’er shalt thou measure against my like thine hand!
I am a mighty king’s son, and thou but a king’s knight:
Twelve such as thou art could not withstand me in the fight!”

119

Ortwein, the lord of Metz, then for swords called, lustily;
Of Hagen, lord of Tronjé, the sister’s son was he;
That he had held his peace still seemed not to Gunther right.
But Gernot put his word in, the bold and ready knight.

120

He thus spake unto Ortwein: “Now let thine anger be!
Siegfried hath not yet done us aught evil that I see,
Our difference in goodwill we yet may end, I deem,
And thus may gain his friendship; ’twill better us beseem.”

121

Then spake the doughty Hagen: “Well do we to be wrath,
Both we, and all thy warriors, for hath he not come forth,
Here to the Rhine, to flout us? he might have let that be!
My own good lords had never done him such injury.”

122

To this made answer Siegfried, that mightiest of men,
“If what I now have spoken offend you, Sir Hagen,
You shall have eye-proof, shortly, how this my strong right hand
Shall do great deeds of prowess in this Burgundian land.”

123

“That I, for one, will hinder!” Gernot in answer said—
And unto all his warriors insulting speech forbade,
Because such speech did grieve him. Then into Siegfried’s head
Came thoughts of Lady Kriemhild, the lovely, peerless maid.

124

“Is not all strife unseemly between us?” Gernot said;
“However many heroes fell by our prowess dead,
Small honour would by us be, by you small vantage won.”
Then answered him Prince Siegfried, the royal Siegmund’s son:

125

“Wherefore delayeth Hagen? and Ortwein, what doth he,
That he and his companions haste not to strive with me?
(Whereof he hath a’ many e’en here in Burgundy).”
But it was Gernot’s counsel that none should risk reply.

126

“You shall be welcome to us,” continued Uté’s son;
“You and the knightly comrades who come with you, each one;
Right gladly will we serve you, I and these kinsmen mine.”
Then for the guests were ordered goblets of Gunther’s wine.

127

Loud spake the country’s ruler: “All that we have is yours,
What ye desire, in honour, we’ll call no longer ours,
But gladly share it with you, be it or wealth, or blood.”
This wrought in good Sir Siegfried a somewhat softer mood.

128

The knights were soon relievéd of all the gear they brought;
And lodgment was found for them— the very best was sought
For Siegfried’s knightly followers; well were they lodged that day.
And now, in all Burgundia, right welcome guests were they.

129

All honour too was shown them, on that and many a day,
A thousand times more honour than I can ever say!
This had his boldness gained him; and this is true I state:
That seldom any saw him who long could bear him hate.

130

On pastimes now and pleasure the kings and court were set.
But, whatsoe’er they started, he outstript all men yet:
For none could equal Siegfried, nor come his strength anear—
Whether it were stone-putting, or shooting with the spear.

131

And when by courtly custom they will'd their games to play
In presence of the ladies— these knights of humour gay—
Approving glances followed the prince of Netherland.
Yet his heart brooded ever on loftier love, at hand.

132

Though to whate'er was passing he lent a ready mind,
One gracious maiden ever he in his heart did find;—
So, likewise, did the damsel, whom yet he had not seen,
Incline to him in secret, and talk of him, I ween.

133

When in the court the young folk their warlike games began,
The knights and their attendants, Kriemhilda straightway ran
And watched them from the window, king's daughter tho' she were,
Nor while it lasted did she for other pastime care.

134

And had he known she watched him, whom in his heart he bore,
It had been ample pleasure— he would have asked no more.
And could his eyes have seen her, ye need not to be told
No better bliss and greater for him this world could hold.

135

When he, among the heroes, down in the court-yard stood,
Between the games, at leisure, as other warriors would;
So winsomely he stood there, Queen Siegelinda's son,
That the heart's love of many a noble dame he won.

136

And many a time he pondered: “How shall I e’er attain
To see the noble damsel, whose love I seek to gain,
Her whom I love so dearly, and have for many a day?
To me she’s still a stranger, with sorrow I must say.”

137

Whene’er the kings were minded to ride throughout their land,
Their vassal knights had ever to follow, close at hand;
And Siegfried must be with them, which did the maid distress,
And he too suffered often, for her dear sake, no less.

138

So dwelt he with the three kings (and ’tis all true you hear,)
In Gunther’s court and country, the space of one whole year;
And all that time his Lady he never saw at all,
Through whom much love unto him and sorrow did befall.

Adventure IV

How Siegfried Fought the Saxons

139

And now, behold, strange tidings have come to Gunther's land,
And heralds from a distance arrive at the command
Of warriors unheard of and yet who hatred bore.
And when the three kings heard it their grief, in sooth, was sore.

140

These warriors' names I'll tell you: the first was Lud'ger hight,
Out of the Saxon country, a rich king of great might;
And Ludegast came with him, who was of Denmark king;—
These twain brought many with them, a princely following.

141

To Gunther's land the heralds their ready steps had bent,
Whom those kings, his opponents, had with their message sent.

The unknown men were questioned as to the news they brought,
And, summoned by King Gunther, the royal presence sought.

142

The king did greet them fairly; “Be welcome here,” quoth he,
“Though who hath sent you hither is yet unknown to me:
That must I hear now of you,” declared the monarch good.
Exceedingly they fearéd King Gunther’s angry mood.

143

“If thou, O king, allowest, the message we’ll reveal
Which we are sent to bring thee, and nothing will conceal.
We’ll name to you the masters who’ve sent us to this strand:
Lud’gast and Lud’ger, namely, who would invade your land.

144

“Ye have incurred their anger, nor shun we here to state
That both our masters harbour for you the greatest hate.
They mean to come with armies to Worms upon the Rhine:
And many warriors aid them;— so warn we thee and thine.

145

“Within twelve weeks their journey must here accomplished be,
If you’ve good friends to help you, you’ll seek them speedily
To guard your land and castles, and fight in battlefield.
By them will here be cloven full many a helm and shield.

146

“Or, if ye will treat with them, so make your offer: then
They will not bring upon you their hosts of arméd men,
All bitter foes unto you, to work you grievous woe,
Destroying your fair knighthood with many a deadly blow.”

147

“Now tarry here a little,” replied the monarch good,
“Until I have bethought me— then shall ye learn my mood.
If I have faithful subjects I must not hide this thing;
This grievous errand must I unto my lieges bring.”

148

Rich as he was, to Gunther it was a trouble sore;
Within his heart the matter he pondered o’er and o’er.
He sent in quest of Hagen, and others of his men,
And bade them from the palace to fetch King Gernot then.

149

His worthiest came unto him, all that were found to hand.
He spake: “The foeman cometh here into this our land,
Bringing a mighty army; to work you all much woe.”
To which the bold knight Gernot made answer: “Nay, not so,

150

“Our good swords shall defend us!” undaunted Gernot said;
“None but the doomed die, ever— and they’re as good as dead!
For fear of death, I’ll never forget mine honour dear.
Let the foe come, and welcome! they’ll find us ready here!

151

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: “The thing doth bode no good;
Lud’gast and Lud’ger both are too arrogant of mood.
The time’s too short to gather, and furnish all our men;
Ye must advise with Siegfried.” Thus spake the bold Hagen.

152

They bade men take the heralds, and lodge them in the town.
However hostile to them, for sake of his renown
Gunther would have them cared for, as was their due and right;
Until he knew what friends would stand by him in the fight.

153

Yet the king’s heart was heavy and sad with anxious care.
But one beheld him mourning— a gallant knight and fair,
Who knew not of the sorrow that had befall’n the king;—
Therefore besought he Gunther to declare to him this thing.

154

“To me it is a marvel,” quoth Siegfried (for ’twas he),
“How all your merry custom hath changéd utterly,
Which was the rule among us, and hath so long held sway?”
To which, in answer, Gunther, the comely knight did say:

155

“Not unto every comer would I the grief declare,
Which close within my bosom in secret I must bear:
One keeps one’s deepest sorrow for stedfast friends,” he said.
At this did Siegfried’s colour change quick, ’twixt white and red.

156

“I never have denied you,” he spake unto the king;—
“And shall not, in this trouble, my strong arm succour bring?
If you for friends are seeking, lo, am I not your friend?
I trust to be so ever— with honour, till mine end.”

157

“Now God reward you, Siegfried, for what you now have said.
And though your strength should never be needed in mine aid,
Yet doth this news rejoice me, that you my friend will be;—
And you shall ne’er regret it, if life be granted me.

158

“And you shall hear the reason wherefore I now am sad:
From enemies, by heralds, this message I have had:
That they will, with their armies, assail us, at our door;—
The like no warriors ever did in these lands before.”

159

“Let not your heart be troubled,” quoth Siegfried, thereunto;
“And calm your anxious spirit, and as I pray you, do!
Leave it to me to win you honour and vantage both,
And bid your thanes come hither to aid you, nothing loth.

160

“Although your mighty foemen should have at their command
Full thirty thousand swordsmen, yet would I them withstand,
Though I had but a thousand: so leave this all to me.”
“For this,” said Gunther, “ever your debtor I shall be.”

161

“So let a thousand warriors at my disposal be,
Since I of mine own following, have only here with me
A dozen knights, all reckoned: thus will I guard your land,
And faithfully at all times shall serve you Siegfried’s hand.

162

“In this must Hagen help us, his nephew Ortwein too,
Dankwart and Sindold also, all knights beloved of you.
And Volker shall ride with us, Volker the gallant man,
A better one I know not, and he shall lead the van.

163

“And let the heralds ride back home to their masters’ land;
And that they soon shall see us give them to understand,
That peace within our castles may undisturbéd reign.”
For followers and kinsmen the king then sent amain.

164

The messengers of Lud’ger straightway to court repair.
At news of home-returning greatly rejoiced they were.
The good King Gunther gave them rich gifts to take away,
And promised them safe conduct: right glad of heart were they.

165

“Say now,” King Gunther bade them, “unto my foes who come,
They’d best forego this journey, and stay content at home.
But, if they be determined to seek me in my land,
Unless my good friends fail me, they’ll find their work to hand.”

166

Rich presents then they, straightway, before the heralds bore,
Gunther was rich in treasure, and had enough and more;
These men of Lud'ger's durst not refuse the offered fee,
And when they leave had taken, departed joyfully.

167

Now when they unto Denmark returnéd were at last,
And had declared the tidings unto King Ludegast,
Which they had brought from Rhineland, and all to him was said,
The proud and haughty answer filled him with grief and dread.

168

They said that by the Rhine dwelt full many a gallant wight:
"Among them, with King Gunther, there was a certain knight,
Who bore the name of Siegfried— a knight of Netherland."
Sore grieved was Lud'gast when he this news did understand.

169

As soon as they of Denmark had heard the news of war,
They made all haste to gather their friends from near and far,
Till Ludegast could reckon on twenty-thousand men,
All warriors bold, and ready the war-march to begin.

170

King Ludeger the Saxon assembled his men, too,
Till he had forty thousand or even more to show,
Ready to join the others, and ride to Burgundy.
Nor was King Gunther idle at home, for also he

171

Sent word to all his kinsmen, and to his brothers' men,
To bid their troops assemble to go to battle then;
And likewise Hagen's warriors— the heroes needed all.
Whereby must many a chieftain in death, thereafter, fall.

172

So made they all things ready. When perfect was each plan,
The gallant warrior, Volker, was bade to lead the van,
And thus they rode together from Worms, upon the Rhine.
The chief command to Hagen of Tronjé they assign.

173

With them did ride Sir Sindold, and eke the brave Hunold,
Two knights of whom was either well worth King Gunther's gold;
And Dankwart, Hagen's brother, his nephew Ortwein too,
Who also might with honour upon the war-march go.

174

"Sir king," said Siegfried, "prithee, in quiet bide at home,
Seeing that all thy warriors with me to battle come,
Remain to guard the women, and aye be of good cheer:
I trow I can take care of your honour and your gear!

175

"From those who would assail you, at Worms upon the Rhine,
I'll see that nought of evil befall or thee or thine.
So closely will we press them, and compass them so near,
That all their braggart boasting shall soon be changed to fear."

176

From Rhine they rode through Hesse, their warriors as well,
Towards the Saxon country— where they to fighting fell.
They ravaged all the borders and spoiled with sword and brand,
Till fear fell on those princes, who sorrowed for their land.

177

So came they o’er the marches; their followers pressed on,
And then the gallant Siegfried began to think thereon:
“Who shall defend our camp-folk, now we have brought them here?
More damage-wreaking raiders to Saxons never were.”

178

Some counselled: “On the march let bold Dankwart guard our youth;
He is a trusty warrior, and swift in act, forsooth:
Let him and also Ortwein have conduct of the rear;
So shall we have less damage from Lud’ger’s men to fear.”

179

“Then I myself will ride on,” did gallant Siegfried cry,
“And keep the foremost outlook, till we the foe espy;
Until I find out where these same crafty warriors lurk.”
Fair Sieglind’s son then quickly donned helmet and hauberk.

180

The rank and file to Hagen he entrusted as he went,
And also unto Gernot, the warrior excellent.
Then all alone forth rode he into the Saxon-land;
That very day his sword hewed full many a helmet-band.

181

He saw a whole vast army upon the plain outspread,
By which his own few helpers were far outnumberéd:
There were full forty thousand, or even more, maybe;—
But when Sir Siegfried saw them, his heart was full of glee!

182

On the foe's side a warrior had to the front been sent,
Who on his guard stood ready, watchful and diligent.
The hero Siegfried saw him, and the bold man saw him:
And each did watch the other, with jealous hate and grim.

183

I'll tell you who it was, who thus sentinel did stand:
(A shining shield of red gold was hanging on his hand,)
King Ludegast it was who his army thus did guard—
The noble guest spurred forward to meet him on the sward.

184

King Ludegast had also his enemy espied,
And each sharp spurs had driven into his stallion's side,
With lances on the shields bent each charged with all his might,
And Ludegast the mighty was soon in sorry plight.

185

After the crash, the chargers bore the two princes by,
As if a mighty storm-wind had blown them furiously,
Till each, the rein obeying, was turned in knightly way;
Then did the two grim foemen with swords their skill essay.

186

The mighty strokes of Siegfried made all the field resound,
Until King Lud'gast's helmet seemed flaming all around—
The fire-red sparks shot upwards beneath the hero's hand,
Each knight found in his fellow a foeman worth his brand.

187

King Lud'gast dealt him also right many an ugly blow:
Their good shields caught the sword-thrusts, that else had laid them low.
Of Lud'gast's warriors, thirty were witness of the fray.
But, ere they came to aid him, Siegfried had gained the day.

188

From three great wounds and ghastly, which to the king he dealt
Clean through his white, steel harness; —though it was firmly welt—
Where the keen sword-point entered burst from his wounds the blood.
King Ludegast might well be thereat of doleful mood!

189

He begged for life; and offered to pledge to him his land,
Telling him that 'twas Lud'gast whose fate was in his hand.
And then uprode his warriors, who witnessed had right well
What, 'twixt the twain before them, upon the watch, befell.

190

Siegfried now thence would take him; but he was set upon
By thirty of the foemen: yet did he hold his own,
And kept his wealthy captive; and struck out, brave and true,
And gave those stately chieftains much bitter cause to rue.

191

In self-defence, the thirty he thereupon did slay.
One only left he living; who spurred his steed away
To bear the direful tidings of all that there befell:
Which eke his bloody helmet did but too plainly tell.

192

When to the men of Denmark the dreadful news was told—
How that theirking was taken— they scarce their grief could hold.
And when they told his brother, he fell to rave like mad,
In uncontrolléd fury— so great the grief he had.

193

So Ludegast the warrior was captive made, and then
Led from the field by Siegfried, and giv'n to Gunther's men.
To Hagen's care they gave him; and when they heard the truth,
That 'twas the king he brought them— they did not grieve, forsooth!

194

The banner of Burgundia was fixed its staff unto.
"Come on, my men!" cried Siegfried, "here have we more to do,
Before the day be ended. If God preserve my life,
There'll weep among the Saxons full many a comely wife!

195

"Give ear, ye Rhine-born heroes, unto these words I say:
To Lud'ger's host I, truly, can show ye straight the way.
Ye'll see some helmet-hewing by heroes' hands, I trow!
And, ere we turn us homewards, what grief is some shall know."

196

To horse did Gernot hasten, as eke did all his men.
Aloft upbore the banner the stalwart minstrel-thane—
The high-born noble Volker;— before the host he rode;
And eke the camp-folk, following, proudly to battle strode.
197

They had no more, all counted, than just a thousand men
And twelve, with those of Siegfried. The dust ’gan rising then
Upon the streets and roadways, as through the land they rode:
One saw their lances shining, and many a good shield glowed.
198

Now also had the Saxons come forth in great array.
Their swords were finely sharpened, as I have heard men say;
And keen they were and deadly, wielded by heroes’ hands:
Therewith they, from the strangers, would castle guard and lands.
199

The marshal of the Rhine-men led on his warriors then.
And Siegfried followed closely, with the twelve valiant men
Whom he had brought as comrades from out the Netherland.
That day in blood of battle was stainéd many a hand.
200

For Sindold’s might, and Hunold’s, and Gernot’s had laid
In course of that fell combat, full many a hero dead,
Ere they had time to reckon the valour of the foe.
And many a winsome lady that day must weep for woe.
201

Sir Volker and Sir Hagen, and also Ortewein,
Dimmed in that strife the light that from many a helm did shine,
With damp of blood downpouring— these battle-valiant men!
Sir Dankwart's prowess also wrought many a marvel then.

202

And also they of Denmark did well their weapons wield,
And many a thrust resounded on many a polish'd shield;
And the sharp sword-strokes echoed death-dealing, blow on blow.
The warlike Saxons likewise did harm enough, I trow!

203

As now the bold Burgundians, pressed forward in the fight,
By them was many a sword-wound, wide-cleft—a ghastly sight!
And streaming o'er the saddles, one saw the reeking blood.
Thus fought they for dear honour, those valiant knights and good.

204

One heard there, loud-resounding, from every hero's hand,
The clashing of keen weapons; whilst they of Netherland
Dashed after their bold leader, into the thickest fray.
Right valiantly they followed where Siegfried showed the way.

205

For him the Rhenish heroes could never come anigh;—
One might have seen down-flowing red streamlets bloodily
Beneath the glitt'ring helmets, cloven by Siegfried's hand;—
Until he saw King Lud'ger before his warriors stand.

206

Three sev'ral times he'd traversed the host, from end to end,
And now, to help him, Hagen his steps did thither bend.
Right well in fight assuaged they the fierceness of their mood:
Through them that day must perish full many a warrior good.

207

When Ludeger the stalwart saw Siegfried near him stand,
And how aloft he wielded the good sword in his hand—
The mighty weapon Balmung— and what a host it slew:
The king waxed very wrathful, and fierce his anger grew.

208

Then was a mighty thronging, and clang of swords as well,
As on each side the warriors on their opponents fell.
The chieftains sought each other, mettle and strength to gauge;—
The hosts began to waver; then waxed the hate and rage.

209

The leader of the Saxons was well aware, I trow,
His brother was a captive— and therefore grieved enow.
He knew too that the captor was Siegelinda's son;—
'Twas first set down to Gernot, but soon the truth was known.

210

So fierce was Lud'ger's onslaught, and eke of such fell force,
That under Siegfried's saddle stagger'd his battle-horse.
But soon it did recover; and, as the turmoil grew,
The aspect of bold Siegfried was terrible to view.

211

Hagen he had to aid him, and Gernot too was by,
And Dankwart and Sir Volker;— the dead around did lie.
There fought the bold thane Ortwein, and Sindold, and Hunold.
Who, on the field of battle, left many a warrior cold.

212

In combat undivided these noble princes were;
And o'er their helmets, harmless, flew many a well-aimed spear
Between the glitt'ring targets from each opposing knight.
And blood-stained were the bucklers that whilom shone so bright.

213

And, in the stress of battle, full many an eager knight
Dismounted from his charger. Thus, hand to hand, did fight
Siegfried the bold, and Lud'ger, who each did each defy.
One saw the broken splinters of shafts and lances fly.

214

Fast flew the shield-clasps, severed by mighty Siegfried's hand.
He thought himself the victor, this prince of Netherland,
Over the dauntless Saxons;— so many wounded lay.
Ha, how the bright mail-armour at Dankwart's strokes did fray!

215

Just then the Saxon Lud'ger espied upon a shield
A kingly crown emblazoned, which Siegfried's arm did wield.
Then knew he, of a surety, that 'twas the mighty man.
The chieftain to his comrades loudly to call began:

216

“Forego your fighting, warriors— my lieges, all is done!
For here have I seen Siegfried, the royal Siegmund’s son;—
Siegfried the mighty hero mine eyes have seen, I trow—
Sent by some evil devil to work us Saxons woe.”

217

Then lowered were the ensigns at Ludeger’s command.
For peace he sued; which, erelong, was granted to his band;
Though he as Gunther’s pris’ner must go to Burgundy:
Bold Siegfried’s hand alone ’twas that won this victory.

218

By general agreement the combat then was stopped,
And many a battered buckler was by the fighters dropped,
And many a helm;—whatever was found upon the land,
Bore on it blood-red traces of some Burgundian hand.

219

They captured whom they listed: all had they in their power.
And King Gernot and Hagen— of chivalry the flower—
Had the sick borne on litters; and, with them, took they then,
As prisoners to the Rhineland, five hundred goodly men.

220

Meanwhile the vanquished warriors to Denmark rode away,
Nor could the Saxons boast of much better luck than they,
That any one need praise them: sore vexed these heroes were.
The friends, too, of the fallen bewailed them, in despair.

221

They had their arms and weapons unto the Rhine conveyed.
How well now all had ended! With his brave warriors' aid
Siegfried the prince had done it, as he did all things, well:
Which even Gunther's liegemen were bound in truth to tell.

222

To Worms a message firstly the gallant Gernot sent,
To let his friends and kinsmen know how the matter went,
And what success had crowned them— him and his lieges all:
For honour had they striven, and gallantly withal.

223

The young esquires ran quickly, and soon the news was told.
And they for joy exulted— whom grief before did hold—
At these all-welcome tidings, which to the city came.
And many were the questions asked by each noble dame:

224

"How had they fared, the warriors of the most noble king?"
One of the squires they, straightway, before Kriemhilda bring:
But this was done in secret, she took no open part—
Though there was one among them to whom was pledged her heart.

225

And when she saw the envoy into her chamber led,
Kriemhild, the beauteous maiden, in voice most kindly said:
"Now tell me the dear tidings and gold I'll give to thee;—
And tell'st thou with no lying, a friend thou hast in me.

226

“How fared my brother Gernot amid the fight?” she said,
“And other friends and kinsmen? have we left many dead?
And who did best of any? fain would I hear of thee.”
Then outspake that bold herald: “Of cravens none had we!

227

“Yet, in the thick of battle rode ne’er a man so well,
Oh, Princess high and mighty— since I the truth must tell—
As did the noble stranger, who came from Netherland:
Full many a wondrous deed was wrought by bold Siegfried’s hand.

228

“For what great feats soever in battle may have done
Sir Dankwart and Sir Hagen and many another one;
Howe’er they fought for honour, it all was idle wind
Compared with Siegfried’s doings, the son of Siegelind.

229

“Though in the strife of battle full many a hero fell,
The wonders wrought by Siegfried no man hath words to tell!
Nor all his deeds of daring when he to battle rode:
Through him, for fallen kinsmen, the women’s tears have flowed.

230

“And many a girl’s betrothed one ne’er rose from off that ground.
Upon the brazen helmets one heard his blows resound;
And from the death-wounds spurted hot streams of crimson blood:
In all his acts is Siegfried a gallant knight and good.

231

“What doughty deeds were wrought by Ortwein, of Metz the lord!
How ever many foemen he came at with his sword,
There did he leave them lying— the better part were dead;
And yet no less of Gernot, your brother, might be said.

232

“For he did work such ruin as ne’er was seen in fight.
In truth, one must confess here of each well-proven knight
Among the proud Burgundians, that they all bravely bore
Themselves, and kept their honour untarnished evermore.

233

“Full many an empty saddle their handiwork did show;
And with their bright swords’ clashing loud did the field echo.
The Rhenish heroes truly, so fell a riding made,
’Twere better for their foemen if they at home had stayed.

234

“The two bold knights of Tronjé did work much dire distress,
What time the charging armies did one another press.
And many a warrior perished beneath bold Hagen’s hand;—
There’s much to tell of him yet here in Burgundian land.

235

“Sindold and Hunold also, who were King Gernot’s men,
And the bold warrior Runold, such doughty deeds did then,
That Ludeger the Saxon must rue, until he die,
That ever he thy kinsmen did on the Rhine defy.

236

“Yet still the best achievement that on that field hath been,
Or any, from the youngest to the oldest man hath seen,
Was done in knightly fashion by Siegfried’s own right hand.
Rich hostages he bringeth here, into Gunther’s land.

237

“These by sheer strength he vanquished, the brave and goodly wight!
And Ludegast of Denmark hath suffered great despite,
And Ludeger his brother, who from the Saxons came.
Now hearken to my tidings, most rich and noble dame!

238

“They twain were taken prisoners, and that by Siegfried’s hand.
Never so many captives were brought into this land
As to the Rhine are coming only for Siegfried’s part.”
No news could have been dearer to Lady Kriemhild’s heart.

239

“Unwounded captives bring they— five hundred men and more;
And then the deadly-wounded— of bloody biers fourscore;—
Full eighty bloodstained stretchers, my Lady, understand!
The better part of these were slain by bold Siegfried’s hand.

240

“They who, thus overweening, have flouted us on Rhine,
Must now, as battle-pris’ners, in Gunther’s kingdom pine:
Yea, even now they bring them with joy unto our land.”
Then sweetly flushed her fair face, as she did understand.

241

Her lovely face, with pleasure, became all rosy red;
For, by good luck, deliver'd out of the direst need
Had been her goodly warrior— the young man, Prince Siegfried;
For all her friends rejoiced she— as she was bound, indeed.

242

Then spake the winsome maiden: "Well hast thou said, and now
Thou shalt have costly raiment for guerdon, that I owe;
And ten good golden marks too; they shall be brought thee here!"
Such tidings to rich ladies a man would gladly bear!

243

They gave him for his guerdon the raiment and the gold.
Then to the windows hastened the fair maids, to behold
The horsemen up the street come: and, watching eagerly,
They saw the gallant riders come home to Burgundy.

244

They came, the hale and hearty, the wounded also came.
They heard the neighbours' greetings, and need not blush for shame.
The host rode forth rejoicing to meet his guests again:
It was a joyful ending to all his anxious pain.

245

He welcomed home his warriors, and all the strangers too;—
To the great king 'twas fitting not otherwise to do
Than graciously to tender his thanks to those who came,
Who had in fight defended the honour of his name.

246

Then Gunther asked for tidings, that he to hear was fain,
Of those who had returned not— their comrades who were slain.
But sixty men were missing, and he had lost no more;—
For these they might cease mourning, as for the brave of yore.

247

The men who were unwounded brought many a battered shield,
And many a dinted helmet, to Gunther from that field.
Before the royal palace dismounted all the men,
And, with a shout of gladness, were welcomed home again.

248

’Twas ordered then to billet the warriors in the town.
The king bade that his guests be well-treated, as his own.
The wounded must be cared for and granted quiet rest;—
E’en for his foes his kindness the king did manifest.

249

To Ludegast of Denmark he said: “Be welcome here!
Though, through your fault, much damage we have incurred, I fear;
But that will be repaid me, if I have luck!” quoth he,
“May God reward my brave friends, who fought so well for me.”

250

“And you do well to thank them,” King Ludeger outspake,
“For never king before did such high-born prisoners take!
The honourable usage shall well rewarded be,
Which unto us, your foemen, you’ve granted graciously.”

251

“I’ll let ye both,” cried Gunther, “here, on the spot, go free,
If all the other pris’ners swear to remain with me.
For these I will have pledges, that they leave not my land
Without my given warrant.” Thereon each gave his hand.

252

All were to rest and comfort within the hostels brought;
They put to bed the wounded, with kindly care and thought;
While to the hale and hearty good wine and mead they gave.
A gayer time and gladder the folk could never have.

253

The battered shields were taken and put away in store.
Of blood-besprinkled saddles were there enough and more;—
The men were told to hide them, in case the women wept.
Still many a way-worn horseman into the city crept.

254

For his guests the king provided with kindness wonderful.
With strangers and indwellers the land was very full.
Those who lay sorely wounded he greatly cared for, too.
’Twas thus the good king humbled his proud and haughty foe.

255

To all well skilled in leechcraft no guerdon was denied.
Unstinted store of silver and shining gold beside,
If they could heal the heroes, who wounded were in fight:
To load his guests with presents was eke this king’s delight.

256

If any there were minded to journey home again,
They, in most friendly fashion, were bidden to remain.
And then the king took counsel how to reward his men,
Who had his will accomplished with honour and with pain.

257

The warrior Gernot counselled: “Let these now homeward ride!
In six weeks’ time we’ll bid them, if nothing should betide,
Return with us to join in a great festivity;
By then may they be healéd who sorely wounded lie.”

258

For leave asked Siegfried likewise, the lord of Netherland;
But when the royal Gunther his wish did understand,
He lovingly entreated his dear friend not to go;—
Though, but for Gunther’s sister, he would have gone, I trow.

259

Though Siegfried was too wealthy to care for the king’s pay,
Right well had he deserved it. He was his friend alway,
And eke of all his kinsmen: for had their eyes not seen
How by his strength in combat the victory had been?

260

For love of the fair maiden he thought he still would stay—
Perchance he yet might see her: which came to pass one day,
Just as he most desiréd;— he learnt to know the maid.
Thereafter to his country right joyously he sped.

261

Each day in knightly contests the host would prove his men:
Which willingly were practised by many a proud young thane.
Then had he seats erected by Worms, upon the strand,
For those whom he awaited in his Burgundian land.

262

About this time, when well-nigh the coming guests were due,
The beauteous Kriemhilda heard what he had in view:
That he, with friends, was meaning to keep high festival.
Then was a great commotion among the fair dames all

263

As to the robes and ribands ’twere best for each to wear.
Unto the rich queen Uté the tidings straight they bear
Of the proud stranger-warriors, who now were on their way.
Then from her presses took she rich clothes and raiment gay.

264

For love of her dear children she had these garments made,
Wherewith were soon adornéd full many a dame and maid,
And many a bold young hero of the Burgundian land.
For many strangers, likewise, rich clothes she did command.

Adventure V

How Siegfried First Saw Kriemhilda

265

One saw them daily riding to Worms upon the Rhine,
The guests who to the revels did joyously incline.
Those whom the love of Gunther unto his kingdom brought,
Were freely offered horses, and raiment richly wrought.

266

Seats, ready for all comers, were well and duly made,
Fit for the best and highest— as hath to us been said—
For two and thirty princes at that festivity;
For which fair dames bedecked them in merry rivalry.

267

Then busiest of the busy was Giselher the lad.
For kinsmen and for strangers a welcome kind he had,

Receiving them with Gernot; and every knight and squire
Was greeted by these warriors, as honour did require.

268

Full many a gilded saddle to Worms these riders brought,
With richly chaséd bucklers, and garments finely wrought;
They brought them to the Rhineland to grace the festival;
And many of the wounded were merry enough withal.

269

For those who on their pallets lay wounded, in distress,
Must needs, though death were grievous, forget its bitterness,
And all the sick and ailing, must drive dull care away,
And join in the rejoicings for this great holiday.

270

Was ever such gay living and hospitality!
Delights, beyond all measure, and boundless jollity
Were shared by all the people, and found on every hand.
And there was joy and gladness throughout King Gunther's land.

271

'Twas on a Whitsun morning; one saw them all go by,
All festively apparelled, and mounted gallantly:
Five thousand men, and upwards, to join the revels ride.
And many a pleasant contest began on ev'ry side.

272

The host was not unmindful, and well did understand
How heartily and truly the prince of Netherland
Love-bound was to his sister, whom yet he had not seen;—
A match for whom in beauty no maiden yet had been.

273

Then to the king did Ortwein the thane, his thought unfold:
“If you, with fullest honour, this festival would hold,
You should allow our brave guests our winsome maids to see
Who are, in truth, the glory and pride of Burgundy.

274

“For where would man’s delight be, and what could charm his life,
If there were no fair maidens, and ne’er a comely wife?
Now, therefore, let your sister before your guests appear.”
This was a pleasing counsel to many a hero’s ear!

275

“Most gladly will I do this,” replied the king, straightway,
And all who heard his answer had merry hearts that day.
He sent to summon Uté, and eke her daughter fair,
And bade them with their maidens at once to court repair.

276

Then in their presses sought they for all their garments gay,
And all the goodly raiment that had been stored away;
The gold lace and the bracelets that there to hand were laid;
And with all care bedecked her full many a lovely maid.

277

And many a knight on that day had younger gladly been,
That he might be of women more favourably seen;
Instead whereof he'd care not a kingdom rich to own!
And gladly did they gaze on these damsels yet unknown!

278

Then the rich king commanded that with Kriemhild should go
A hundred of his liegemen— her service pledged unto.
Of his and her own kinsmen, who carried sword in hand.
Such were the court-attendants of the Burgundian land.

279

The rich Queen-mother Uté with her fair daughter came,
And in her train brought with her full many a comely dame—
Five score of them or over— all royally arrayed.
Her daughter, too, was followed by many a winsome maid.

280

From out the women's quarters one might have seen them go;
There was a goodly thronging of heroes eke, I trow,
For this of all things eager, if it perchance might be
That they should have the fortune the noble maid to see.

281

Then came the lovely maiden: even as morning-red
From sombre clouds outbreaking. And many a sorrow fled
From him whose heart did hold her, and eke so long had held:
When thus the winsome fair one before him he beheld.

282

Upon her raiment glittered full many a precious stone:
Her rosy blushing colour with lovely radiance shone.
Though any would deny it he could not but confess,
That on this earth he never had seen more loveliness.

283

Just as the moon in brightness excels the brightest stars,
And, suddenly outshining, athwart the clouds appears;
So seemed she now, comparéd with dames of fairest guise.
Then did our gallant hero feel his bold spirits rise.

284

One saw before her marching the chamberlains, in state—
But the high-mettled warriors their order would not wait:
They thronged to where, in passing, the fair maid they could see.
The while Sir Siegfried suffered both joy and misery.

285

Sadly he thought within him: “How can it ever be?
It is mere foolish dreaming that I should marry thee!
Yet to be still a stranger!— then were I better dead!”
And, thinking so, his colour did change ’twixt white and red.

286

There stood the son of Siegmund; as winsome did he look
As if his form were limnéd upon a parchment-book,
By hand of cunning master; and all men said of him,
That there was no man like him, so fine and fair of limb.

287

They who the maid attended now strove to clear the track,
And keep the throng from pressing; and many a knight drew back.
And manly hearts beat quicker for joy, in many a breast,
As passed each high-born lady in splendid raiment drest.

288

Then outspake gallant Gernot, the prince of Burgundy:
“To him, who such good service so late hath done to thee,
Thou Gunther, dearest brother, shouldst haste to do the same
In sight of all thy warriors: I say it without shame.

289

“If thou would’st bid Sir Siegfried unto my sister go,
That the fair maid may greet him, much good might come, I trow.
She, who ne’er greeted warrior, may by her greeting cheer;
And thus this goodly hero be bounden to us here.”

290

Then some of the host’s kinsmen went where the knight did stand
And thus spake to the warrior who came from Netherland:
“The king his leave hath granted that you to court should go,
His sister there shall greet you: they would you honour show.”

291

At this the knight’s mood changéd again from grave to gay;
And in his heart Love reignéd, and grief had fled away—
For the fair Uté’s daughter at last his eyes would see!
Right soon she greeted Siegfried, with winning modesty.

292

When the high-couraged warrior she saw before her there,
Her cheeks were lit with crimson: then spake the maiden fair:
“Be welcome here, Sir Siegfried, thou good and noble knight.”
And when he heard her greeting his heart grew wondrous light.

293

He bent him low before her; she took him by the hand.
How lover-like the knight did by the fair maiden stand!
Each looked upon the other with many a tender glance,
This hero and his lady— and yet they looked askance.

294

Was that white hand, I wonder, in lover’s fashion press’d?
In sign of tender wooing? in sooth ’twas ne’er confess’d.
But scarce can I believe that such chance had been let go;
For she her kindness to him did very quickly show.

295

In the full bliss of summer, and in the fair Maytide,
Within his heart could never, again such joy abide
As now did fill his bosom; the while he there did stand,
And her whom he desiréd was holding hand in hand.

296

And many a warrior murmured: “Ah, if it only were
My lot to walk beside her, as I have seen him here,
Or at her side to lay me, what bliss would mine have been!”
Never served hero better, methinks, to win a queen.

297

Whate’er might be the country the strangers call’d their own,
None had an eye for any save for this pair alone.
And when they let her kiss him— the goodly man and brave!—
In all this world he never a greater joy could have.

298

Then rose the King of Denmark, and suddenly did cry:
“To bring about this greeting how many wounded lie!
Too well have I observed it— and all by Siegfried’s hand;
Forefend him, God, from coming again to Danish land!”

299

On one side and the other they bade the folk make way
For beauteous lady Kriemhild. Then saw one an array
Of valiant knights who churchward did bear her company.
Then could her goodly gallant no longer near her be;

300

For she went to the minster, with all her dames beside.
So fair a sight and queenly was she in all her pride,
That the high vows of many whilom forgot to rise;
And many a hero feasted his soul upon her eyes.

301

Hardly did Siegfried’s patience last till the mass was done.
Yet might he thank his fortune that he such grace had won,
That she to him inclinéd, whom in his heart he bore:
Therefore it was but fitting that he should love her more.

302

As she came from the minster, which he had left before,
The gallant thane was bidden to join the dame once more.
Then, first, began to thank him the winsome maid, that he
Beyond all other warriors had fought so gloriously.

303

“Now God reward you, Siegfried,” thus spake the child so fair,
“Right well have you deservéd that all the warriors here
Do love and serve you truly, as they themselves avow.”
Right tenderly began he to look on Kriemhild now.

304

“For ever will I serve you!” declared the warrior,
“Henceforth my head I’ll never lay down to rest before
Your least wish be accomplished, if life be granted me;
All this, my lady Kriemhild, for your dear sake shall be.”

305

Then, for the space of twelve days, on each new dawning day,
One saw the lovely maiden beside the knight alway,
As often as to court she before her friends must go.
Unto the knight this service did her great love allow.

306

All kinds of mirth and pleasure, and mighty noise withal,
Were seen and heard forthcoming daily from Gunther’s hall—
Without, and inside also— from many a gallant man.
Sir Ortwein and Sir Hagen right wondrous feats began.

307

Whatever games were started these jocund heroes were
Always among the foremost, a skilled and ready pair.
Whereby these warriors soon were well known to every guest;
Of such kind were the jewels that Gunther's land possessed.

308

Those who had long lain wounded one saw, at last, appear:
They too would share the pastimes, would fence and throw the spear
Among the king's retainers; well-pleased to find at length
That they could do as others; they had renewed their strength.

309

The host would have them treated well, at his festal board,
Theirs was to be the best food. Thus managed he to ward
The slightest breath of scandal, which oft a king doth reach.
From guest to guest on went he, with kindly words for each.

310

He said: "All ye, good warriors, before ye ride away,
I pray ye take my presents: 'twas in my mind alway
To recompense your service; my goods despise not ye:
I fain would share them with you; this do I willingly."

311

Then did the lords of Denmark thus answer, out of hand:
"Before we ride hence, homewards unto our fatherland,
We fain would have a treaty: of peace we knights have need,
We've lost dear friends in plenty who, through your knights, lie dead."

312

King Ludegast of Denmark was healed now of his wound,
And eke the Saxon leader was once more whole and sound.
Albeit many dead men they left in alien land.
Then went the royal Gunther to where Siegfried did stand.

313

And to the warrior spake he: “Advise what I shall do;
For early on the morrow our foes intend to go,
And crave abiding pledges of peace, from mine and me:
Now counsel me, thane Siegfried, what seemeth good to thee?

314

“What ransom they have offered thou shalt be truly told:
So much as mares five hundred can carry of pure gold,
This will they give me gladly, if I will set them free.”
Then Siegfried answered stoutly “That would unworthy be!

315

“Free, and without a ransom hence shouldst thou let them fare:
And that these noble warriors henceforward may beware
How they come hither, riding as foemen to our land,
Of this in full assurance let both kings give their hand.”

316

“This counsel will I follow!” So saying, forth they went.
A message to the foemen was soon thereafter sent:
“The gold, that ye have offered, doth no man care to keep,
While for the strife-worn warriors at home their dear ones weep.”

317

Then many a shield with treasure piled high they carried there:
Enough, although he weighed not, for every friend to share;
Five hundred marks well-counted, yea more, he gave to some.
This counsel to King Gunther had from bold Gernot come.

318

Then took they leave, for all were impatient to be gone;
But first, before Kriemhilda the guests filed, one by one;
There sat dame Uté also, the Queen, who bade “God speed”!
Never before were warriors sped half so well, indeed.

319

The hostels were left empty when they had ridden away.
Only at home remainéd the king, in state array
With all his friends and kinsmen— full many a noble knight.
These, day by day, were gladden’d, by dame Kriemhilda’s sight.

320

Now Siegfried, the good hero, did also sue for leave:
Not hoping more to win her, to whom his heart did cleave.
The king o’erheard the saying that he would fain away:
’Twas Giselher who urged him his journey to delay.

321

“Now whither, noble Siegfried, is it thy will to ride?
Stay rather, I beseech thee, and with our warriors bide.
Remain with our King Gunther, and with his men and me;—
Are there not here fair women, whom thou hast leave to see?”

322

Then spake the stalwart Siegfried: “So bide the steeds in stall!
For I have changed my purpose, I will not ride at all.
And bear the bucklers hence too;— I hoped to see my land,
But Giselher’s true friendship I know not to withstand.”

323

Thus did the gallant hero remain for friendship’s sake.
And in no other country could he a sojourn make
That to his soul were sweeter;— and so it hap’d that he
On every day thenceforward did fair Kriemhilda see.

324

For her surpassing beauty he was content to stay
And spend the days in pastimes, which whiled the hours away.
Although her love constrained him, it gave him grievous pain.
Through it the brave knight, later, was miserably slain.

Adventure VI

How Gunther Went to Iceland After Brunhilda

325

Fresh rumours now were coming from over Rhine: for there
As all the folk were saying was many a maiden fair.
Of these was good King Gunther now thinking one to woo,
And high his knightly ardour rose, as this purpose grew.

326

There was a great queen, dwelling, somewhere beyond the sea,
Whose like none had seen ever, and ne'er again would see.
She was of matchless beauty, and strong withal of make;—
She shot with ready warriors, and made her love the stake.

327

A stone she hurl'd far from her, then after it would spring;
He, who her love did covet, must, without wavering,

Win three games in succession from her, the highborn maid;—
And if he failed in any, his head was forfeited.

328

Thus many a time and often the maid was wont to do.
’Twas one day heard in Rhineland, by a good knight and true,
Who turned his thoughts towards her, and sought to win the dame,
Through whom full many a hero to death foredooméd came.

329

Upspake the Lord of Rhineland: “I’ll go down to the sea,
And visit this Brunhilda, howe’er it fare with me!
For love of her I’m ready to venture limb and life:
I am content to lose them if she be not my wife.”

330

“From that would I dissuade you!” in answer Siegfried said,
“In sooth this queen hath customs so terrible and dread—
That whosoever woos her must pay a price too high;
Seek not to take this journey, I counsel earnestly!”

331

“Now I would fain advise you,” thus Hagen to him spake,
“To bid Siegfried go with you, and half the burden take,
And share your risk and danger; I counsel this in faith,
Since he such good acquaintance with Brunhild’s customs hath.”

332

Quoth Gunther: “Wilt thou help me in very truth, Siegfried,
To woo and win this fair one? ah, if thou dost indeed
Get her for my betrothéd, my own, my noble wife—
Then, for thy sake, I’ll venture mine honour and my life!”

333

For answer gave him Siegfried, the royal Siegmund’s son:
“Giv’st thou to me thy sister, behold, it shall be done!
Give me the lovely Kriemhild, the high and noble queen;
No guerdon for my labour, save this I care to win.”

334

“That swear I to thee, Siegfried,” cried Gunther “on thine hand!
And if the fair Brunhilda doth come here to this land,
I’ll give my sister to thee, to have and hold for wife:
So mayst thou, with thy fair one, aye lead a joyous life.”

335

By solemn oath they swore it, the noble warriors twain.
But they had toilsome labour, and grief enough, and pain,
Before the high-born lady home to the Rhine they brought.
The gallant knights’ achievement must be with sorrow wrought.

336

Siegfried his hood of darkness, Tarnhelm yclept, must take:
The same that the bold hero, after hard fight, did make
His own, from a dwarf wrested, whose name was Alberich.
The bold and mighty warriors sped on their journey quick.

337

Whene’er the gallant Siegfried the wondrous Tarnhelm wore,
A hidden strength was in him he had not known before:
He had the strength of twelve men, joined to his own, ’twas said;
And cunningly he plotted to win the noble maid.

338

Now this same hood was fashion’d in such a wondrous way
That any man who wore it could carry out straightway
Whatever thing he wanted, whilst no man could him see.
Therewith he won Brunhilda; whence mickle woe had he.

339

“Now answer me,” thane Siegfried, “ere yet our way begin,
How shall we, with due honour, across the water win?
Should we not take our warriors unto Brunhilda’s land?—
Full thirty thousand have I, who soon may be to hand.”

340

“How many folk soever we take there,” Siegfried said,
“This queen doth cherish customs so terrible and dread,
That they will all fall victims to her o’erweening mood.
I’ll give thee better counsel, thou fearless knight and good.

341

“Let us, as plain knights-errant, go sailing down the Rhine.
And I will name unto thee the knights we’ll take of thine.
Besides us two, two others shall go, none else at all:
So shall we win the lady, whatever may befall.

342

“I one of these four comrades, another shall be thou;
The third had best be Hagen, we should do well enow.
And let the fourth be Dankwart, he hath a dauntless hand;
A thousand others dare not in fight us four withstand.”

343

“I would I had some knowledge,” the king said—“verily,
Ere we from hither journey, ’twould much enhearten me—
In what apparel should we before Brunhild appear;
What would be right and fitting? that, Siegfried, would I hear.”

344

“Whatever be most handsome is worn, I understand,
By ev’ry man, at all times, in Queen Brunhilda’s land;
Therefore should we go finely before this haughty dame—
That when men talk about us we need not blush for shame.”

345

Then cried the good king, “Surely, I will myself go ask
My own dear, gracious mother, that she do set the task
To her fair maids, to make us such garb, wherein array’d
We may appear with honour before the royal maid.”

346

Then Hagen, knight of Tronjé, in courtly fashion spake:
“Why trouble you your mother with things to undertake?
Let your fair sister hear now all that you have in mind.
Her aid, in this state journey, you will of service find.”

347

So sent he to his sister; saying, he fain would see
Her face, as would Sir Siegfried. But, long ere this, had she
Put on her goodliest raiment; and stood, so fair a maid,
I trow that at their coming she was not much dismay'd!

348

Also her court-attendants array'd were as was meet
When princes twain were coming; and as she heard their feet,
Straight from her chair upstanding right modestly she went
To greet the noble comers with fitting compliment.

349

"Right welcome is my brother, and his companion eke;
But fain would I have knowledge," thus did the maiden speak,
"What is your lordships' pleasure that ye at court appear?
With you two noble warriors how stands it? let me hear."

350

Then spake King Gunther: "Lady, to you the truth I'll tell:
Although we have high courage, yet have we cares as well.
For we would go a-courting, far in a foreign land,
And now, unto this journey, fine raiment would command."

351

"So sit you down, dear brother," bade the king's daughter fair.
"And who may be the ladies, for I would rightly hear,
Whom you would go a-wooing in other ruler's land?"
These favour'd knights the lady did take now by the hand.

352

And with them straight returnéd to where she sat afore.
Rich mattresses, I doubt not were spread upon the floor,
With pictures fair embroidered, set off with golden thread.
Then must they with the ladies a pleasant time have had.

353

And friendly mutual glances, and looks that were not loth,
Caused many a thought to waken within the hearts of both.
He in his heart aye bore her, dear as his very life;
And soon, by steadfast service, he won her for his wife.

354

The rich king spake unto her: “O dearest sister mine,
This thing that we have purposed fails without help of thine.
In Queen Brunhilda’s country some pleasure we desire;
And need, in ladies’ presence, the goodliest attire.”

355

Then did the maiden answer: “Belovéd brother mine,
Ready am I, at all times, to serve, in need of thine;—
Of that thou mayst be certain: it is Kriemhilda’s part.
Should any one deny thee ’twould vex her to the heart.

356

“Nor shouldst thou, noble hero, beg of me anxiously—
Thou shouldst command my service, in lordly style and free.
For whatsoever please thee, for that I’m ready aye,
And gladly will I do it;” the maiden sweet did say.

357

“’Tis our desire, dear sister, in goodly garb to stand,
Which you may help provide us, with your own noble hand:
So set your women working, that all may be well done—
For we about this journey will be gainsaid by none.”

358

Then spake again the maiden: “Now mark what I shall say!
I have the silk already: see that we get, straightway,
Some gems from off your bucklers: we’ll work them on the cloth.”
Then Gunther and Sir Siegfried obeyed her, nothing loth.

359

“And who may be the comrades,” inquired the royal maid,
“Who shall to court go with you, thus gorgeously arrayed?”
“I and three more,” he answered, “and two my men will be,
Sir Dankwart and Sir Hagen;— these go to court with me.

360

“And mark you well, dear lady, and list to what I say!—
We four companions must have enough for four days’ stay.
Three shifts of clothing daily, of good stuff all of it,
That we Brunhilda’s country without disgrace may quit.”

361

With kind farewells the heroes soon after did depart.
Then, of her maidens, thirty, well skilled in needle-art,
Did the young queen Kriemhilda call from their room, in haste;
These all for such-like labours had wit beyond the rest!

362

Arabian samite was there, white as new-fallen snow,
And Zazemang silks also— so green doth clover grow—
Whereon they wrought the jewels; fine clothes, in sooth, they were;
The peerless maid, Kriemhilda, herself the cloth did shear.

363

Of foreign fish-skin made they the linings, good and rare,
For stranger-folk to stare at— as many as there were;
And these with silk were covered, as then the mode did hold.
There might be many a marvel of this bright raiment told.

364

From far Morocco's borders, and from the Libyan shore,
The very choicest samite, that e'er enriched the store
Of any king soever— this had they, and to spare.
Right plainly showed Kriemhilda to whom she kindness bare!

365

Since they on this state journey determined to set forth,
Plain ermine furs they reckoned of insufficient worth.
So over them fur trimmings of coal-black hue they set:
On high-days such like garments brave knights right well befit.

366

Amidst Arabian gold-work there glittered many a gem.
So careful were the women, naught was too small for them.
In seven weeks the raiment was all prepared aright,
And eke the weapons thereto for every gallant knight.

367

When this was all made ready, upon the banks of Rhine
Was diligently fashion'd a little vessel, fine
And strong, which down the river should bear them to the sea.
The noble maids by this time were of their tasks weary.

368

'Twas told unto the warriors that all things were to hand
That they were to take with them;— all their apparel grand,
Such as they had desiréd; it all was now complete:
So would they on the Rhine-bank no longer stay their feet.

369

Therefore, to fetch their comrades, a messenger was bade,
That they should come and look on this raiment newly made;—
It might be, for the heroes, too long, or else too small.
But 'twas of the right measure: they thanked the ladies all.

370

For all who came and saw it were bounden to confess,
In all the world they never had seen more noble dress.
They might be proud such clothing in any court to wear;—
Of finer knights' apparel, in sooth, knew no one there.

371

Thanks manifold and hearty their judgment did receive.
And then these joyous warriors desired to take their leave;—
This did the noble comrades with knightly courtesy.
Bright eyes were then, with weeping, all sad and watery.

372

She said: “My dearest brother, you still have time to stay,
And woo some other woman, ’twould be the better way.
You would not then endanger your body and your life:
Here might you find, much nearer, as highly-born a wife!”

373

Her heart, I ween, foreboded what, later, did befall:
As ev’ry word was spoken they fell to weeping all.
The gold upon their bosoms was tarnished with the tears
Which rainéd from their eyelids, by reason of their fears.

374

Again she spake: “Sir Siegfried, let me commend, I pray,
Unto your truth and kindness, my brother dear alway;—
That no mischance befall him in Queen Brunhilda’s land.”
The gallant hero swore it, upon Kriemhilda’s hand.

375

The mighty thane thus answered: “So long as I shall live,
You, to his safety, lady, no anxious thought need give;
I safe and sound will bring him home to the Rhine;” he said,
“That know now of a surety.” The fair maid bow’d her head.

376

Their gilded shields were carried straight down unto the shore,
And to the ship was taken of clothing their whole store;
They bade men bring their horses, they hasted to be gone.
Then was by beauteous women much bitter weeping done.

377

There, standing, at the windows, was many a lovely child;
A high wind fair was blowing— the ship's sail soon was fill'd.
The gallant band of heroes on Rhine were floating free;
Then spake the royal Gunther: "Who now shall skipper be?"

378

"That will I be!" cried Siegfried, "for I can down the flood
Right well and safely steer you, doubt not, ye heroes good;
The proper water-channels, I well do understand."
Then joyously they parted from the Burgundian land.

379

Sir Siegfried took a boathook, and stoutly did it grip,
And, leaning on it strongly, from strand he shoved the ship;
The mighty man, King Gunther, did likewise seize an oar,
And soon these worthy heroes had cleared them from the shore.

380

They carried costly viands, and plenty of good wine—
The best that had been vintaged upon the banks of Rhine.
Their horses stood right firmly— they had a well-found stall;—
Their vessel voyaged smoothly; small ill did them befall.

381

Then they unfurl'd the sailcloths— the stout sails, strained and tight—
And twenty miles they sailéd, or ever it was night,
With a good wind to help them down stream, toward the sea.
Their steadfast toil was later those brave ones' woe to be.

382

Upon the twelfth day morning, as we have heard men say,
The wind had borne the vessel far distant, and away
Toward Isenstein the fortress, in Queen Brunhilda's land:
To all of them, save Siegfried, it was an unknown strand.

383

Now, when the royal Gunther so many towers did see,
And eke so wide a marchland, he spake, all suddenly:
"Tell me, my good friend Siegfried, if it be known to thee,
Whose are these many castles, and this fair land we see?"

384

Then answered Siegfried: "Truly it is to me well known:
This people and this country doth Queen Brunhilda own,
And Isenstein's her fortress, as you have heard me say;—
And many comely women you well might see this day.

385

"I'll give ye heroes counsel all of one mind to be—
Agree in all your discourse— so seemeth best to me.
If we to-day, as may be, before Brunhilda go,
We shall need all our prudence to deal with her, I trow.

386

"When we behold that fair one, attended by her train,
One speech, and but one only, ye heroes must maintain:
King Gunther is my chieftain, and of his men I'm one;
Thereby what he hath purposed shall all be duly done."

387

They ready were to promise whate’er he asked of them;
With all their pride o’erweening none did his word contemn.
They vowed whate’er he wanted: so better did they fare,
What time the royal Gunther beheld Brunhilda fair.

388

“This not so much for thy sake, I do,” Sir Siegfried said,
“As for love of thy sister— the ever-beauteous maid!
She’s as my soul unto me, and as my very life;
I’ll gladly do this service, so her I win to wife!”

Adventure VII

How Gunther Won Brunhilda

389

Now, while all this was passing, their ship had neared unto
The castle walls, so closely that the king's eyes could view
Above them, at the windows, full many a winsome maid.
That he knew none amongst them made Gunther passing sad.

390

Then questioned he Sir Siegfried, his brave companion:
"Of all those lovely maidens, dost thou in truth know none,
Who now are gazing downward at us upon the flood?
Whoe'er their lord and master, they be of noble blood."

391

To him replied Sir Siegfried: "Now look you, secretly,
Amidst the maids there standing, and then confess to me

Which you would take among them, if you thereto had might.”
“That will I do!” cried Gunther, the bold and valiant knight.
392

“Yonder, within that window, I see one of them stand
All in a snow-white garment; she’s fairest of the band!
’Tis her mine eyes have chosen, so fair she is to see:
Had I the power to wed her, my wife she needs must be.”
393

“The judgment of thine eyesight hath done for thee right well!
That is the noble Brunhild, the maiden beautiful,
Whom all thine heart desireth, thy senses, and thy mood.”
In all ways did her bearing seem to King Gunther good.
394

The queen her beauteous maidens did thereupon command
To leave the windows straightway: they ought not there to stand,
A gazing-stock for strangers! they readily obey’d.
And what the ladies next did hath since to us been said:
395

They decked themselves for sake of the visitors unknown,
As comely women ever since days of old have done.
Then to the narrow windows they quickly came again,
Whence they could see the heroes— and gazed with might and main.
396

There were of them four only, who came unto the land.
Bold Siegfried now was leading a horse along the sand;
The comely dames beheld him, across the window shelf:
Whilst Gunther thought with pride that they gazed upon himself.

397

He held it by the bridle— the shapely animal,
It was so sleek and handsome, so big and strong withal—
Until the king had mounted, and in the saddle sat.
Thus Siegfried did him service; which he erelong forgat.

398

Then Siegfried fetched his own steed, which in the ship did stay;
Such service had he rendered but seldom till that day,
To stand at a man's stirrup, until he was astride!
The fair and noble ladies this from their lattice spied.

399

These two high-mettled heroes— to one ensample clad—
White chargers and white raiment like snow new-fallen had,
Each matching with the other; their solid bucklers bright
Shone, on the left hand hanging of either goodly knight.

400

Bejewell'd were their saddles, their saddle-bows were small;
So rode they in their glory, before Brunhilda's hall.
The bells upon their harness were wrought of bright red gold,
They came unto that country as bound on venture bold.

401

With spear-heads newly sharpened, with swords well-wrought and keen,
Which hung down to the rowels of these two goodly men;
Such weapons bore the bold ones, with broad and sharp-edged blade.
'Twas all marked by Brunhilda, the great and noble maid.

402

With them came also Dankwart, and Hagen of Tronjé.
These warriors were apparell'd, as ancient legends say,
Alike, in costly raiment and raven-black of hue;
Fair were their shields and mighty, and strong and broad thereto.

403

The jewels that adorned them from India's land were brought,
And glittered on their garments, as these the sunshine caught.
Their little vessel left they unguarded, on the flood;
So rode they to the castle, these heroes brave and good.

404

Full six-and-eighty turrets they saw within the wall,
Three palaces far-stretching, and one fair, well-built hall,
Compact of precious marble, as meadow-grass all green;
And here, amid her court-folk, awaited them the queen.

405

The castle gate unlock'd was, the doors were open thrown,
Brunhilda's liegemen hasted to meet these guests unknown,
To welcome these newcomers unto their lady's land;
They bade men take their horses and bucklers from their hand.

406

A chamberlain said to them: “Yield now your swords to us,
And eke your shining hauberks.” “Nay, it shall not be thus!”
Cried Hagen, lord of Tronjé, “These we ourselves will bear!”
Then Siegfried had to teach him what were the customs there.

407

“The fashion in this castle, as you must understand,
Is that no guest shall carry a weapon in his hand.
So let them hence be taken: in sooth, ’tis fairly meant.”
Then Hagen, Gunther’s liegeman, did grudgingly consent.

408

Wine for the guests was order’d, and lodgings good prepared.
And to and from the palace swift-footed warriors fared—
All clad in princely raiment they ever came and went;
And on the stranger-heroes were wond’ring glances bent.

409

Then unto Queen Brunhilda some one the news declared,
That certain unknown warriors had suddenly appear’d,
In glorious apparel, by ship across the flood.
Whereon began to question the maiden fair and good.

410

“I would that someone told me,” so spake the maiden queen,
“Who are these stranger-warriors, that ne’er afore were seen,
And now stand in my castle, with such a noble grace?
And for whose sake these heroes have voyaged to this place?”

411

Then spake one of her people: “Lady, I must avow
Not one of these same warriors I e’er beheld till now;
But there is one among them much like unto Siegfried:
You must give him good welcome, that is in sooth my rede.

412

“The other his companion, who is so praiseworthy,
If he the power had, either some rich king he might be,
Or have the jurisdiction o’er some wide princely lands:
One sees beside the others how royally he stands.

413

“The third of these companions he is of aspect grim,
Yet, mighty Queen, right comely he seems, and fair of limb;
From those his rapid glances that he around him throws,
His mien, if I mistake not, a gruesome temper shows.

414

“The youngest knight among them seems worthy of all praise;
As gentle as a maiden, yet knightly are his ways.
How winsomely he stands there, with what a high-born mien!
And yet, if he were thwarted, we’d rue the hour, I ween.

415

“How blithe soe’er his bearing, and beautiful his form,
There’s many a goodly woman— an’ he began to storm—
That he could bring to weeping; his body fashion’d is
To excel in manly virtues— a brave, bold thane is this!”

416

Then spake the queen: “Now bring me my raiment and my gear;—
And if the mighty Siegfried to win my love is here,
And therefore to this land comes— ’tis like to cost his life!
In sooth, I do not fear him enough to be his wife.”

417

Ere long, the fair Brunhilda was fittingly array’d.
With her there came full many a beauteous serving-maid—
A hundred, perhaps, or over— attired in all their best.
These comely dames were eager to see the stranger-guest.

418

With these there went, in order, the thanes of Isenland,
The warriors of Brunhilda, each with his sword in hand,
Five hundred men, or over; whereat their hearts misgave.
Then from their seats uprose they, the heroes bold and brave.

419

When first the Queen Brunhilda perceived the knight Siegfried,
Ye would, perchance, be told of the words the maiden said:
“Be welcome,” quoth she, “Siegfried, here unto this our land.
What meaning hath your journey I fain would understand?”

420

“I proffer, dame Brunhilda, my hearty thankfulness,
That you have deigned to greet me, most generous princess,
Before this noble warrior, who stands beside me now;—
Seeing that he my lord is, such grace I disavow!

421

“By birth he is of Rhineland; and what shall I say more?
His love for thee ’tis only that brings us to this shore.
My lord doth seek to wed thee, whatever may befall;
Of this, in time, bethink thee: he will not change at all.

422

“The name he bears is Gunther, he is a mighty king.
If haply he may win thee, he asks no other thing.
’Twas this good warrior bade me upon this journey come:
An’ I had dared deny him, I’d fain have stay’d at home.”

423

She spake: “Since he’s thy master, and thou his vassal art,
I’ll stake a venture with him, if he dare play his part,
And if he gain the mast’ry, then will I be his wife;
But should I be the winner, ye all do risk your life.”

424

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: “O lady, let us see
This mighty game you play at; before a victory
You score off my lord Gunther, it will go hard enow!
For such a beauteous maiden he’ll count to win, I trow.”

425

“The stone he must throw boldly, then leap to where it lies;
Then hurl the javelin with me: so be ye not unwise!
Who knows? each may be losing his honour and his head!
You must bethink you therefore,” the winsome fair one said.

426

On this, the gallant Siegfried unto King Gunther went,
And bade him tell the princess his purpose and intent;
He might be for the issue without anxiety:
“I shall be there to shield you with all my craft,” quoth he.

427

Then spake the royal Gunther: “Most high and mighty queen!
Declare your task unto me; and had it harder been,
For sake of your fair body I everything would stake:
My very head I’d venture you for my wife to take.”

428

As soon as Queen Brunhilda his will and meaning knew,
She bade the games be hastened, as seemed to her but due.
And ordered them to bring her her wonted gear for fight,
A ruddy golden breastplate, and buckler round and bright.

429

A silken fighting-doublet drew over all the maid,
Such as, in closest combat, would turn the sharpest blade;
Of Lybian stuff ’twas woven, and it was deftly done;
A bright embroider’d trimming upon the border shone.

430

Meantime the stranger-warriors were eyed somewhat askance,
And Dankwart and Sir Hagen ill brooked this arrogance.
And how the king would fare, too, did weigh upon their mood.
They thought: “unto us warriors our journey bodes no good.”

431

The while these things were doing, Siegfried, the crafty one,
Had, unperceived of any, back to the vessel gone,
And found his hood of darkness, where hidden it had lain,
And swiftly slipped it on him: thus he became unseen.

432

Then back again he hastened to where the queen he found
Her fateful game arranging, with many knights around.
Invisibly he joined them: so cunningly ’twas done
That, midst the whole assembly, he was discern’d by none.

433

The ring was marked out clearly wherein the games should be;
In presence of bold warriors, who came the sport to see.
Seven hundred men and over one saw, who weapons bare:
Which of the two was winner the heroes must declare.

434

Ere long appeared Brunhilda in all her warlike gear,
As if she meant to conquer all kingdoms far and near.
Above her silken vestment was twisted golden twine:
One saw thereunder ever her lovely colour shine.

435

And then came her attendants; who in their hands did hold
A mighty round-rimmed buckler, all wrought of ruddy gold,
With steel-like clasps upon it, many, and broad, and bright;
And underneath its shelter the lovely maid would fight.

436

The maiden’s shield-sustainer a noble baldrick was,
Wherein were gems embroidered, as green as e’er was grass;
Their ever-changing brightness was mirror’d in the gold.
He who would win such lady must needs be warrior bold!

437

Her shield beneath the bosses, as we have heard declare,
Was three good spans in thickness; and this the maid could bear.
With steel and gold inlayings so richly ’twas beset,
Her chamberlains—four of them— could scarcely carry it.

438

When now the sturdy Hagen beheld this shield brought in,
The wrathful Lord of Tronjé did thus to speak begin:
“How now, King Gunther? truly we’re like to lose our life,
She, whom you would be wooing, must be the devil’s wife!”

439

Hear more now of her raiment: she had a wondrous store,
A warrior’s silken mantle from Azagaug she wore—
A noble, costly garment; from which the flash was seen,
Of many a splendid jewel pertaining to the queen.

440

Then bore they to the lady— and weighty ’twas, I trow—
A giant-spear well sharpened, which she was wont to throw;
Most strong and monstrous was it, and mighty too, and broad,
And with its keen twin-edges right terribly it gored.

441

Of that spear's weight, now hearken and hear the wonderment:
Four and a half good measures of metal to it went.
Three of Brunhilda's liegemen could scarce uphold its weight.
When noble Gunther saw it, his courage did abate

442

And in his heart he pondered: "What e'er will be the end?
If she be a hell-devil, who can the matter mend?
Were I alive and safely once more in Burgundy,
Here, rid of love and wooing, she long might wait for me!"

443

Then outspake Hagen's brother, the valiant Dankwart,
"Alack that we did ever on this state-journey start!
But knights we still are, surely, and it were very shame
To perish in this country, o'ermastered by a dame.

444

"I do regret right sorely that e'er I saw this land!
Had but my brother Hagen his weapon in his hand,
And I had mine! methinketh they'd be a whit more mild,
With all their pride and boasting, these vassals of Brunhild.

445

"For, know now of a surety, each one of you I warn,
No oath of peace should bind me— had I a thousand sworn.
Ere I fordone before me my master dear shall see,
This maid her life shall forfeit, how ever fair she be!"

446

“We, without let or hindrance, could surely leave this land,”
Said Hagen, Dankwart’s brother, “had we good swords in hand,
And eke the armour on us that we in battle need;
Then would this haughty woman soon change her tone indeed!”

447

Full well the noble maiden heard what the warrior said;
With smiling mouth, half-turning, she o’er her shoulder bade:
“Thinks he himself so valiant? bring them their armour then,
And let these heroes handle their keen-edged swords again.”

448

When they received their weapons, at the proud maid’s command,
For joy did Dankwart redden to hold his sword in hand:
“Now play your games, and welcome!” shouted the fearless thane,
“Gunther need fear no danger, we have our swords again!”

449

The strength of Queen Brunhilda it was a fearsome thing;
They brought her for the contest a stone into the ring—
A monstrous one and heavy, so mighty, and so round,
Twelve stalwart heroes scarcely could heave it from the ground.

450

Whene’er she threw the javelin she next would hurl this stone.
Then did the stout Burgundians within their spirit groan:
“God help us!” cried Sir Hagen, “what bride our king hath woo’d!
Hell were her proper sojourn, she’s of the Devil’s brood!”

451

Around her snow-white arms she began her sleeves to wind,
And on her hand she fastened the buckler to her mind;
Then high she poised her javelin; and so began the fight.
Gunther, and Siegfried likewise, did dread Brunhilda's spite.

452

And were it not for Siegfried, who came unto his aid,
The king's life had been forfeit unto the doughty maid.
The knight, unseen, approach'd him, and twitch'd him by the hand;
But Gunther quail'd: his cunning he did not understand.

453

"What was it that did touch me?" the bold man thought, and he
Look'd round and sought on all sides, but not a soul could see.
A voice said: "It is Siegfried, 'tis I, your trusty friend,
As to this queen, I pray you, let fear be at an end."

454

He said: "Unhand the buckler, and let me carry it,
And what thou hear'st me tell thee, mark well with all thy wit:
Thine must be all the gestures, but I will do each deed."
When Gunther understood him his heart grew light indeed.

455

"See thou conceal my cunning, and tell no man thereof:
The queen will little glory win from thee, though she scoff,
And though it be her purpose to add unto her fame:
See how she stands before thee, fearless, the noble dame!"

456

With all her strength of body, her spear the glorious maid
Against a new shield hurléd— ’twas broad and stoutly made—
Which on his arm was bearing the son of Siegelind;
Bright fire-sparks from the steel flew, as driven by the wind.

457

The blade of her stout lance-head clean through his shield did crash,
And from his close-ring’d hauberk the fire was seen to flash.
The shock of the encounter so drave the stalwart men,
That, saving for the Tarnhelm, they both had there been slain

458

Out of the mouth of Siegfried, the bold knight, gushed the blood;
But soon again upsprang he: then gripped the hero good
The spear which she had hurléd, that thro’ his buckler went,
And back it flew upon her, by Siegfried’s strong hand sent.

459

He thought: “I will not shoot her, this maid who is so fair!”
And so he turned behind him the sharp head of the spear,
And with the shaft he smote her upon her vest of steel;
So that the blow re-echoed that his stout hand did deal.

460

The fire broke from her armour, as driven by the wind;
Hard were the spear-thrusts dealt by the son of Siegelind!
So much King Gunther never had done with his own hand.
With all her strength, the maiden such blows could not withstand.

461

The beauteous Brunhilda, how soon she up did bound!
“I thank thee, noble Gunther, thy shot its mark hath found!”
She thought that he had done it by his own strength alone;—
But no, there slipt behind him a far more mighty one.

462

Away she sped full swiftly, and wrathful was her mood;
The stone aloft she lifted— this noble maid and good—
Then from her hand she hurled it with all her might and main,
And after it she leapt while her armour rang again.

463

The stone fell twelve good arms’ lengths beyond her standing-place;
But further yet the maid sprang, and cleared the stone a pace.
Then came the noble Siegfried to where the stone did lie:
’Twas Gunther that did lift it, ’twas Siegfried let it fly.

464

So bold a man was Siegfried, so mighty and so tall,
He threw the stone still further, and leapt beyond its fall.
His subtle arts had given such wondrous power of limb,
That, in the leap, King Gunther, he bore along with him.

465

Thus was the leaping over, and hurling of the stone;
And they who looked saw no one, save Gunther there alone.
The beauteous Brunhilda all red with wrath became:
For Siegfried had prevented King Gunther’s death and shame.

466

Unto her court-folk turning, she loudly spake, as she,
Across the ring, the hero all safe and sound did see:
“Come hither, quick, my kinsmen, and my good lieges all,
Ye must now to King Gunther be underlings and thrall!”

467

Then laid these stalwart warriors their weapons from their hand
At Gunther’s feet, the rich king from the Burgundian land;
Then bent to do him homage full many a dauntless knight;—
They thought that he the contest had won by his own might.

468

He gave her gentle greeting, for he was courtly bred.
Then by the hand she took him, that famous maid, and said:
She would henceforth allow him the rule and power to hold.
Right glad thereat was Hagen, the warrior brave and bold.

469

She bade the noble hero along with her to go
Into the wide-room’d palace; which being done also,
More fittingly was service paid to the noble knight.
Dankwart and Hagen glad were to see such pleasant sight.

470

Meanwhile, the ready Siegfried wisely his plans did lay:
He took the hood of darkness and hid it safe away.
Then the great hall he entered, where many ladies sat,
And fell to question Gunther, and artfully did that:

471

“Wherefore, my lord, delay you? when doth the game begin
At which the queen so often hath challenged you to win?
Let us behold and quickly in what wise it is done!”
As though he knew naught of it behaved the crafty one.

472

“How can it e’er have happened,” thereon inquired the queen,
“That you, most noble Siegfried, naught of the game have seen,
Wherein I have been worsted by mighty Gunther’s hand?”
Then answered her Sir Hagen of the Burgundian land.

473

He spake: “Yourself, O lady, did much disturb our mood;
So to the ship departed Siegfried, the hero good,
What time our lord of Rhineland did win the game from you:
Therefore he knows naught of it,” said Gunther’s liegeman true.

474

“Now welcome are these tidings,” quoth warrior Siegfried,
“That thus your pride hath fallen doth please me well, indeed,
That some one there is living who may your master be!
Now must you, noble maiden, go with us o’er the sea.”

475

Then spake the noble fair one: “This may not yet befall:
My kinsmen first must hear it, and my good liegemen all;
I may not thus so lightly desert my land, I trow;
My chief friends must be sent there, ere I myself shall go.”

476

Then sent she heralds riding here, there and everywhere,
To bid her friends and kinsmen, and lieges all repair
To Isenstein the fortress, nor would she take excuse;
And bade that costly raiment be given for their use.

477

So daily came they riding, from early hours till late
Unto Brunhilda's castle, like to an army great.
"Now, by my faith!" cried Hagen, "see now what we have done!
With fair Brunhilda's liegemen we'll trouble have anon.

478

"While thus in power and numbers they throng throughout the land,
What is the queen's intention we cannot understand:
What if she be against us so wroth that we be lost?
The noble maiden surely was born to our great cost!"

479

Then spake the sturdy Siegfried: "All this will I forestall;
The danger you are dreading I will not let befall.
I must go hence, and succour bring quickly to this shore—
A band of chosen warriors ne'er known to you before.

480

"Ye must not seek to find me, I go across the sea;
May God meanwhile preserve you from all indignity!
I'll come back quickly, bringing a thousand men with me,
The very best of warriors that ever one could see."

481

“Be not too long gone from us,” the king in answer said:
“In this our need we shall be right glad to have your aid.”
Said he: “I’ll come back to you, ere many days be spent;
And you must tell the queen that by you I have been sent.”

Adventure VIII

How Siegfried Went to Fetch the Nibelungs

482

So thence went Siegfried unto the haven on the strand,
Clad in his hood of darkness, to where a boat did stand.
Therein he stood, all hidden, this son of Siegmund brave;—
He steered it quickly seaward, as ’twere the wind that drave.

483

Though no one saw the steersman, fast sped the bark along,
Urged by the strength of Siegfried— in sooth his arms were strong.
Men thought that she was driven by some strange, mighty wind:
No, it was Siegfried drave her, the son of fair Sieglind.

484

When he a day had voyaged, and likewise through a night,
He came unto a country, by dint of main and might;—

From one end to the other a hundred leagues or more,
The Niblung land, where kept he the mighty hoard in store.

485

Then, all alone, the hero steered to an eyot broad,
And ran his skiff alongshore and left her safely moor'd.
Then climbed he to a mountain, on which a castle stood,
And, like a wayworn traveller, for shelter sought and food.

486

So came he to the gateway, which, locked, before him stood—
They guarded well their honour, as folk at this day would.
Then straight he fell a-knocking, like any man unknown.
The gate was kept well guarded: he saw within it soon

487

A monstrous giant warder, who sentinel did stand,
And kept at all times ready his weapons close at hand.
He called: "Who cometh knocking so loudly at the door?"
Then answer'd the bold Siegfried— but changed his voice therefore—

488

And said: "I am a warrior; undo me now the gate,
Ere I arouse to anger some one, though it be late,
Who rather would sleep softly and in his chamber bide."
It anger'd the gate-keeper that Siegfried thus replied.

489

Soon had the doughty giant girded his armour on,
Set on his head his helmet, and quickly seized upon
And swung aloft his buckler, and opened wide the gate:
How straightly then on Siegfried he rush'd, with scowl of hate!

490

"How had he dared awaken so many a gallant man?"
And straight upon the question his hand to smite began.
The noble guest prepared him a bold defence to make—
But, at the porter's onset, his very shield-clasps brake,

491

Smashed by a bar of iron; the knight was sore distrest,
And somewhat was he fearful that death would end his quest—
Seeing the huge gate-keeper did smite so sturdily;
Which yet his master Siegfried was not ill-pleased to see.

492

So mighty was their combat that all the castle rang.
Throughout the halls of Niblung men heard the crash and clang.
At last he threw the giant, and bound him foot and hand;
The tidings soon spread over the whole of Niblung-land.

493

The noise of fierce strife sounded deep through the mountain side,
Where Alberich the bold one— a wild dwarf—did abide:
With speed he seized his weapons, and ran to where he found
This brave and noble stranger, as he the giant bound.

494

A fierce wight was this Albrich, of strength he had good store;
A helmet and a hauberk he on his body wore;
A weighty whip, gold-handled, he carried in his hand:
With all his swiftness ran he to where Siegfried did stand.

495

Seven knots, both hard and heavy, hung down in front of it,
With which the bold man's buckler so ruthlessly he hit—
As in his hand he held it— that it in pieces fell.
Then was the goodly stranger in fear for life as well.

496

The shield, that now was broken, he from his hand did throw,
And thrust into its scabbard his sword—'twas long enow.—
His treasurer he would not, an he could help it, slay:
His breeding he forgat not, as was his righteous way.

497

With his strong hands for weapons at Alberich he ran,
And by the beard he gripp'd him, that old and grizzly man!
So ruthlessly he pull'd it, that loud the old man cried:
The grip of the young hero could Albrich ill abide.

498

Loud was the bold dwarf's outcry: "I prithee now, have done;
An I could be the liegeman of any knight, save one
To whom I have sworn fealty to be his vassal aye—
Rather than die, I'd serve thee!" the crafty one did say.

499

But Alberich was bound as the giant had been bound,
And by the strength of Siegfried much pain and trouble found.
The dwarf began to question: “How are you call’d?” quoth he,
He said: “My name is Siegfried: I should be known to thee!”

500

“That is a goodly hearing!” said Alberich the dwarf.
“Now know I of a surety what metal you are of,
And know you have good reason to lord it in the land.
If you my life will leave me, I’ll do what you command.”

501

Thus spake the hero Siegfried: “Then must thou straightway go
And bring me of the warriors the best we have, I trow;
Of Nibelungs a thousand I fain would here behold.”
But wherefore these he wanted that was to no man told.

502

Of Albrich and the giant the fetters he unbound.
Then Alberich ran quickly to where the knights he found.
The Nibelungs he wakened from sleep right cautiously,
And said: “Up now, ye heroes! to Siegfried hasten ye!”

503

Then sprang they from their couches all ready at his call—
A thousand active warriors equipp’d stood in the hall.
So went they unto Siegfried, who by himself did stand,
And fairly did he greet them— some knelt to kiss his hand.

504

They lit full many a taper, pure wine for him they pour'd.
He thank'd them all for coming so promptly at his word.
Then spake he: "Ye must yonder with me across the flood!"
For this he found them ready, those heroes bold and good.

505

Full thirty hundred warriors had come at his behest:
From out their numbers took he a thousand of the best.
To these were brought their helmets, and all their gear to hand—
Because he fain would lead them unto Brunhilda's land.

506

He spake: "Ye good knights, hearken to that which now I say:
Your raiment should at court be exceeding rich and gay—
For many a lovely woman will look on us, I trow;
So make your bodies handsome with good clothes ere we go."

507

All on a morning early the bold knights rode away.
What gallant comrades Siegfried had got himself that day!
They all had good war-horses, and garments rich and grand:
With knightly mien and bearing they came to Brunhild's land.

508

Upon the turrets standing was many a winsome maid.
Then spake the queen: "Doth any know who be these," she said,
"Whom I see sailing hither from o'er the sea so far?
Their sails be richly woven— whiter than snow they are."

509

And the Rhine-king made answer: “My warriors are they,
Whom I did on the journey bid near at hand to stay.
I sent to fetch them, lady, and here they come, I see.”
Whereon the noble strangers were eyed all wond’ringly.

510

For plainly saw they Siegfried upon the foredeck stand,
Arrayed in costly raiment, with all his warrior-band.
Then said the queen: “Now must you, my Lord King, counsel me:
Shall these new guests be welcomed? or shall I let them be?”

511

He spake: “Without the palace to meet them you should go,
As if we saw them gladly, that they may take it so.”
Then did the queen according unto the king’s behest;—
Though, in her greeting, Siegfried she sever’d from the rest.

512

A lodging was found for them, their goods were put in store.
And now so many strangers had landed on that shore,
That great the throng of folk was, whichever way one went.
The knights on sailing homewards to Burgundy were bent.

513

Then spake the Queen Brunhilda: “Right thankful should I be
To him who could my silver and gold divide for me
Between my guests and Gunther’s; an ample store I have.”
Then Dankwart said:—the liegeman of Giselher the brave—

514

“Most noble Queen and Lady, let me now have the key.
I trow I can divide it: if shame should fall on me,
So let it be mine only.” Thus spake the doughty thane.
That he a gentle knight was, was from his bearing plain.
515

As soon as Hagen’s brother the key had at command,
So many gifts and costly dispensed the hero’s hand:
To those who one mark needed, such bounty did he give,
That all the poorest, henceforth, in comfort well might live.
516

Pound pieces by the hundred he, without reckoning, gave.
In clothing rich, full many that royal hall did leave
Who ne’er such splendid raiment before that time had worn.
This vexed the queen right sorely, it was not to be borne!
517

She spake, in her vexation: “Sir King, it seems to me
This chamberlain of yours is with all my goods so free
He soon will leave me nothing: he throws my gold away!
I shall be aye beholden to him who this can stay.
518

Such rich gifts doth he lavish, the thane must sure believe
I’ve sent for Death to take me: but I would longer live!
Whate’er my father left me I trow I well can spend.
On such a spendthrift treasurer did never queen depend!”
519

Then Hagen spake of Tronjé: “Fair lady, have no fear!
The king of the Rhine river hath gold enough, and gear
To lavish just as freely; and well may we forego
To take Brunhilda’s treasure when hence we homeward go.”

520

“Nay, for mine own sake, hear me,” the queen said, “for I will
Take with me twenty coffers, which I with gold will fill
And silken stuffs, which also I’ll give with mine own hand,
When we come over yonder unto King Gunther’s land.”

521

With precious stones and jewels they did her coffers lade;
Her own lords of the chamber to help therewith she bade:
For she would put no trust in the men of Giselher.
Gunther, therefore, and Hagen began to laugh at her.

522

Then spake the Queen Brunhilda: “To whom leave I my land?
That first must be determined by thine and mine own hand.”
The noble king made answer: “Let him forthwith appear
Who best thereto would please you— we’ll leave him steward here.”

523

One of her noblest kinsmen the lady to her bade,
(It was her mother’s brother) to him the maiden said:
“To you be now entrusted my castles and the land,
Until they come directly under King Gunther’s hand.”

524

Then did she of her people choose twenty hundred men,
Who with her to the Rhineland must make the voyage then—
Beside the thousand warriors who came from Niblung land.
Then all to start made ready: they rode down to the strand.

525

Of women six and eighty along with her she took,
And eke a hundred maidens, who comely were in look.
Then they delay'd no longer— they wearied to be gone;
But those they left behind them, these wept, ay, many a one!

526

With seemly grace the lady fared from her fatherland;
She kissed her nearest kinsmen, who stood on either hand.
With kindliest leave-takings they came unto the shore;—
To her forefathers' country the lady came no more!

527

One heard of games of all kinds to pass the time away
And make the journey shorter: a hundred pastimes gay.
They had, too, for their voyage a right good sailing wind.
With merriment and laughter they left their land behind.

528

Not once upon the journey did she embrace her lord:
Until they reached his palace their pleasure was defer'd.
At Worms they, in the castle, their wedding feast would hold;
Where they, ere long, with gladness came with their heroes bold.

Adventure IX

How Siegfried Was Sent to Worms

529

When they nine days had travel'd upon their homeward way,
Spake Hagen, lord of Tronjé: "Now hark to what I say!
We yet have sent no tidings to Worms upon the Rhine:
Your heralds should be, surely, in Burgundy long syne."

530

King Gunther made him answer: "Lo, what you say is right,
And for this errand, surely there is no better knight
Than you yourself, friend Hagen; so ride now to my land:
Our journey no one better can make them understand."

531

Whereto made answer Hagen: "Small use should I be there!—
Let me look to the cabin, whilst on the flood we fare:

I'll stay beside the women, and to their gear attend,
Until we bring them safely into Burgundian land.

532

"Bid Siegfried rather do it, and him your envoy make;—
His mighty strength will aid him, the task to overtake.
Should he decline the going, you must, with kindliness,
For love of your fair sister, the journey on him press."

533

He sent to fetch the warrior, who came at his command.
Quoth Gunther: "Since we're nearing our home in mine own land,
I ought to send a message unto my sister dear,
And eke unto my mother, that we the Rhine draw near.

534

"This ask I of thee, Siegfried: the favour grant, I pray,
That I may ever thank thee," the warrior good did say.
But Siegfried did withstand him— he was so bold a man!
Until King Gunther sorely to plead with him began.

535

"To ride thou shouldst be willing, for my sake," Gunther said,
"And likewise for Kriemhilda's, the beautiful young maid;—
That we may owe thee service, the noble maid and I."
When Siegfried heard that saying he could no more deny.

536

“Whate’er thou wilt command me, I cannot say thee nay!
For love of that fair maiden I’ll do what thou dost say.
How could I aught deny her, who owns my heart alone?
For her sake that thou askest is all as good as done.”

537

“Go then and tell my mother, Uté, the noble queen,
That we anent this journey in joyous mood have been;
And let the kings, my brothers, know each how we did fare;
And all our friends must also the happy tidings hear.

538

“And from my beauteous sister, I pray thee naught reserve;
But say that I and Brunhild will her right gladly serve.
And tell unto the court-folk and all my serving-men,
That what my heart had yearn’d for, full well did I attain!

539

“And tell to gallant Ortwein, that nephew dear of mine,
That he have seats erected by Worms upon the Rhine.
And all my other kinsmen, they also should be told
That I, with Queen Brunhilda, high festival will hold.

540

“And tell unto my sister (as soon as she hath learn’d
How, with my guests so shortly I shall be home return’d)
That she to my betroth’d one a welcome good must give:—
So shall I to Kriemhilda for aye beholden live.”

541

Then did the noble Siegfried a courteous farewell
Take of the Lady Brunhild, as did beseem him well—
And of her courtiers likewise; then to the Rhine rode he.
No messenger were better in all the world than he.

542

With four and twenty horsemen he into Worms did ride.
“Without the king he cometh!” was heard on every side;
And all the folk lamented, and stirr’d were with the dread
Lest in that foreign country they’d left their master dead!

543

They from their steeds dismounted: right happy was their mood;
And Giselher hasten’d to them, the youthful king and good,
And eke his brother Gernot: how eagerly spake he,
When he the kingly Gunther did not with Siegfried see!

544

“Be welcome, Siegfried,” cried he, “but, pray you let me know
Where you have left my brother, who forth with you did go?
If Queen Brunhilda’s prowess have robbed us of our king,
Methinks your high-aim’d wooing hath been an evil thing!”

545

“Forego your fears!” quoth Siegfried, “my noble comrade sends
His loyal love and greeting to you and all his friends.
In rare good health I left him: I came at his command
To bring you, as his envoy, tidings to this your land.

546

“You must see to it quickly, however it may be,
That I the good queen-mother and your fair sister see;—
For they must hear the message, which I was bade to tell,
From Gunther and Brunhilda: with both of whom ’tis well.”

547

Then Giselher the lad said: “Go then to her you’ve won,
Since for my sister’s favour, such service you have done!
Great trouble doth she suffer about my brother’s fate.
The maid will see you gladly, I’ll warrant me of that!”

548

The noble Siegfried answer’d: “An I can serve the maid,
Right faithfully and gladly that service shall be paid.
Now who will tell these ladies that them I fain would see?”
’Twas Giselher the comely his messenger would be.

549

Swift Giselher the tidings unto his mother told,
And eke unto his sister, when he did them behold:
“To us the hero Siegfried of Netherland hath come;
Him hath my brother Gunther here to the Rhine sent home.

550

“He bringeth us full tidings of how the king doth fare.
Now must ye give permission that he to court repair;
From Iceland brings he hither a true report, I trow.”—
Yet soon these noble ladies much sorrow were to know.

551

To get their robes they hasten'd, and did themselves array;
And then they summon'd Siegfried to come to court straightway—
Which did he, willing-hearted, too happy her to see:
The noble maid Kriemhilda spake to him graciously.

552

"Be welcome, my lord Siegfried, thou worthy knight!" she cried;
"Where doth my brother Gunther, the noble king, abide?
Of him, by Brunhild's prowess, I ween we are forlorn!
O woe is me, poor maiden, that ever I was born!"

553

Then spake the gallant hero: "Now pay me herald's fee!
For know, O beauteous ladies, no need to weep have ye.
In lusty health I left him, of that ye may be sure;—
To tell you both these tidings he sent me on before.

554

"They send to you their duty— he and that bride of his—
With all true love and kindness, most noble queen; it is
High time to leave off weeping— for they will soon be here!"
For many a day she had not heard tidings half so dear.

555

Then with her snow-white kerchief she wiped her lovely eyes
That were all wet with weeping; and in her gracious wise
Began to thank the bearer for the good news he brought.
And so her grief and sorrow were turn'd to pleasant thought.

556

She bade him to be seated, whereof right glad was he.
Then spake the lovesome maiden: “Rejoicéd should I be,
Could I for herald’s guerdon give all my gold away!
Too rich for such meed are you— I’ll be your debtor aye.”

557

Said he: “If for my portion I thirty kingdoms had,
I would, by your hands given, of any gift be glad!”
“Well!” said the gracious lady, “it shall be given to you.”
Her chamberlain was bidden to fetch the herald’s due.

558

Full four-and-twenty buckles, set with bright stones and good,
She gave him for his guerdon. And yet the hero’s mood
Allowed him not to keep them;— he handed them around
Unto her nearest ladies that in the room he found.

559

Her mother gave him greeting, in kind and courtly way.
“I have yet more to tell you,” the valiant man did say,
“Of what the king requireth when to the Rhine comes he;—
If, lady, you will grant it, he’ll aye beholden be.

560

“The noble guests he bringeth— I heard him this desire—
He wishes you to welcome; and eke he doth require
That you ride forth to meet him, outside Worms, on the strand;
This doth the king, at your hands, in all good faith demand.”

561

Then spake the lovely lady: “Ready am I alway
Howe’er I can to serve him; I cannot say him nay;
All shall in loyal kindness, as he desires, be done.”
Whereat her cheek, for gladness, a heighten’d colour won.

562

No prince’s herald ever a better welcome had;
And had she dared to kiss him she would have been right glad.
How winsomely the gallant then from the dames withdrew!
As noble Siegfried counsel’d did the Burgundians do.

563

Sir Sindold and Sir Hunold, and eke Rumold the thane,
To whom the charge was given, must work with might and main
To have the seats made ready, by Worms upon the sands,
One saw the royal stewards there working with their hands!

564

Ortwein and Gere would not that aught be left undone.
They sent unto their kinsfolk on all sides, every one;
They told them of the wedding which was about to be.
The beauteous maids adorn’d them for the festivity.

565

The palace was made splendid, and deck’d was ev’ry wall
In honour of the guest-folk. King Gunther’s royal hall
Was all right well upholstered by many a foreign man.
And so this mighty wedding right merrily began.

566

Then all along the highways throughout the countryside
Were seen the three kings' kinsmen, who bidden were to ride
And wait the guests' arrival, who soon were to appear.
While from the stores was taken abundance of rich gear.
567

Erelong was spread the rumour that certain folk had seen
Brunhilda's friends approaching; at which there did begin
Great stir among the people in the Burgundian land.
Ay me! what gallant warriors were seen on either hand!
568

Then spake the fair Kriemhilda: "Ye maids attending me,
Who would at this reception fain bear me company,
Go, seek from out my presses the richest robes and best:
That thereby praise and honour we gain from every guest."
569

The warriors came shortly— who ordered to be brought
The saddles nobly-fashioned, with finest gold inwrought,
On which should ride the ladies, at Worms upon the Rhine.
One never saw horse-trappings more fitting or more fine.
570

Ha! what a golden gleaming from these gay palfreys shone,
And how the bridles sparkled with many a precious stone!
The footstools eke were golden, on carpets bright and good
Placed for the ladies' mounting: right joyous was their mood.
571

The women's mares were saddled, and in the court did stay
For the young maids of honour— as I erewhile did say.
Small saddle-bows and silken one saw these palfreys bear:
The finest silk, I warrant, of which you e'er could hear.

572

Then six-and-eighty matrons out of the palace went,
And on their heads were wimples. Towards Kriemhilda bent
Each beauteous dame her footsteps, in garments bright array'd;
And no less well apparell'd, came many a comely maid.

573

In number four-and-fifty, damsels of Burgundy,
The best they were and fairest that ever eye could see;
One saw their flaxen tresses, with bands of riband bright.
What Gunther had desiréd was done with zeal aright.

574

The richest stuffs then wore they, the best one e'er could find,
Before the stranger-warriors; good clothes of many a kind—
So that each sev'ral beauty might have a setting fit.
Whoso were discontented must be of little wit.

575

Of sable and of ermine was many a costume there,
And many an arm, and hand too, were made to seem more fair
With buckles and with bracelets on the silk stuffs they wore.
Should any try to tell you, his task would ne'er be o'er.

576

With many a fine-wrought girdle— so rich, and long, and gay,
Hanging o’er shining raiment— the women’s hands did play.
Their skirts of Ferrandine were, and stuff of Araby.
Among those noble maidens was gladsomeness and glee.

577

In stomacher bejewell’d was many a maiden fair
Most winsomely enlacéd. And sad indeed it were
Did not her bright complexion outshine her dress in hue.
No other king had ever so fair a retinue.

578

As now those lovely ladies in full attire were seen,
The knights who should escort them appear’d upon the scene.
High-couraged warriors were they, of mighty strength and craft;
And each, beside his buckler, did bear an ashen shaft.

Adventure X

How Brunhilda Was Received at Worms

579

Now, on the further Rhine-bank, came with a numerous band
The king and his guests with him, and drew nigh to the strand.
One saw, too, by the rein led, full many a maiden's steed.
For those who should receive them to wait they had no need.

580

For when the folk of Iceland unto the ship were led—
And eke the Niblung people who Siegfried followéd—
They put across the water, with quick, unwearied hand,
To where, upon the quay-side, they saw the king's friends stand.

581

Now hearken to my story! I'll tell you how the Queen
Uté, the rich queen-mother, was with her maidens seen,

Forth coming from the castle, whence she herself did ride.
Then many an acquaintance ’twixt knight and maid was tied.

582

Kriemhilda’s palfrey led was by Gere the Margrave
As far as the fort gateway, where Siegfried, warrior brave,
Must thenceforth wait upon her;— she was a lovely maid!
And he by this fair lady was, later, well repaid.

583

Alongside Lady Uté, Ortwein the bold rode he,
With many knights and maidens who bare them company.
Ne’er at a great reception, we must confess, had been
So great a throng of ladies as here together seen.

584

And many a fair encounter took place amid the train
Of praise-deserving heroes, (they could not well refrain)
Before the fair Kriemhilda, until the ship they reach.
Then from their palfreys lift they, the well-dight ladies each.

585

The king had now cross’d over, and many a guest of worth.
Hey! what stout shafts were shiver’d for these fair ladies’ mirth!
One heard the hurtling tumult, as lance on buckler rang,
Ay, and the rich shield-bosses that in the press did clang!

586

The fair ones now were standing the landing-place upon;—
With all his guests had Gunther up from the vessel gone;
He led the Lady Brunhild with his own royal hand.
Then shone against each other bright gems and garments grand.

587

With courtly grace Dame Kriemhild did thereupon repair
To where the Lady Brunhild and all her courtiers were.
One saw them push their chaplets with their white fingers by,
What time they kissed each other: ’twas done in courtesy.

588

Then spake the maid Kriemhilda, and fittingly spake she:
“To us in this our country right welcome may you be;
To me, and to my mother, as unto ev’ry friend
Whom we as faithful reckon.” Then each did lowly bend.

589

The dames each other greeted with clasp of hand and arm,
No one had ever heard of a welcoming so warm.
As soon as the two ladies the bride for certain wist,
Dame Uté and her daughter her sweet mouth often kiss’d.

590

When all Brunhilda’s ladies had lighted on the strand,
They tenderly were greeted, and taken by the hand.
For many a well-dight woman there was a warrior good;
And many beauteous maidens with Dame Brunhilda stood.

591

Before their greeting ended a good long hour had sped;
Ay, and the lips, like roses, were kiss'd of many a maid.
Still stood by one another those two kings' daughters bright—
To many a valiant hero they were a lovely sight.

592

With their own eyes beheld they, who often told had been
That no such peerless beauty had ever yet been seen
As that of these two ladies: it now was plain to view;—
One saw, too, on their bodies naught in the least untrue.

593

Those who could judge of women and on fair forms decide,
Did laud and praise for beauty the royal Gunther's bride.
But others—they were wise men with more discerning eyes—
Said, that from Dame Brunhilda Kriemhilda won the prize.

594

Now dame and maid were walking, each other opposite,
And many a lovely body one saw right nobly dight.
And many a rich pavilion and silken tent were there:
The plain that Worms surrounded was crowded everywhere.

595

The kinsmen of King Gunther came thronging thereunto.
Brunhilda and Kriemhilda were thither bade to go
And take with them their ladies— where they in shade could stand.
There, with them, came the nobles of the Burgundian land.

596

Meanwhile upon their chargers the guests were all a-field,
And many a doughty lance-thrust was caught upon the shield.
The plain with dust was smoking— as though the very earth
In flames would soon be bursting: now heroes show'd their worth.

597

Upon these knightly doings looked many a maiden's eye.
I doubt not that Sir Siegfried full many a time rode by
The tents, as with his liegemen he back and forward sped.
A thousand gallant warriors from Nibelung he led.

598

Then Hagen, lord of Tronjé, at his host's bidding went,
And courteously the hero did close the tournament—
Lest by the dust besprinkled the beauteous maids should be.
This order by the guests was obey'd good-humouredly.

599

Then spake the noble Gernot: "Let now the horses rest.
As soon as it grows cooler we knights will do our best
To please these lovely ladies, before the palace wide.
Let everyone be ready whene'er the king will ride."

600

When all the wide field over the tournament was stayed,
For pastime went the heroes beneath the tall tents' shade,
To parley with the ladies— on mirth and pleasure bent;
Thus, till 'twas time for riding, their leisure hours were spent.

601

But when it grew towards even and near the sun's last ray—
Seeing the air was cooler— they would no more delay.
Then many a knight and lady toward the castle rode.
On many a beauteous woman were loving looks bestow'd.

602

And now they raced for raiment such as good knights do wear,
These highly-mettled warriors— as was the custom there—
Until they reach'd the palace; there did the king dismount,
And they the ladies aided as gallant knights be wont.

603

Now, too, the royal ladies did from each other part.
Queen Uté and her daughter together did depart,
With all their court-attendants, unto a chamber wide.
Then shouts of joy and laughter were heard on ev'ry side.

604

The seats being set in order, the royal Gunther would
Go with his guests to supper; 'twas seen how by him stood
The beautiful Brunhilda; and now a crown she wore,
As queen in her king's kingdom;— well worth was she therefore.

605

Fine seats were set for many, by tables broad and good—
As we have been assuréd— laid with abundant food.
Of all that they could wish for how little lack was seen!
And with the king was many a guest of lordly mien.

606

The host's own body-servants, in ewers of red gold,
Did fetch and carry water. If you should e'er be told
That at a prince's wedding the service was more fit,
'Twould trouble me but little— I'd put no faith in it!

607

Before the great Rhine ruler did of the water take,
Sir Siegfried went unto him a due request to make:
To warn him of his promise, which he, by his right hand
Pledged, ere he saw Brunhilda at home in Isenland.

608

He spake: "You must remember, you swore by your right hand,
If ever Dame Brunhilda should come to this your land,
You'd give to me your sister; now what hath got your oath?
Much trouble with your journey I've taken, nothing loth."

609

Then to his guest the king said: "Thou didst right well to speak;—
What on my hand I swore you, that oath I will not break.
As best I can, I'll help you to bring about this thing."
Then was Kriemhilda summon'd to court before the king.

610

With all her beauteous maidens she came unto the hall.
Then, from a dais springing, young Giselher did call:
"Bid all these other damsels return, for verily
No other than my sister here with the king shall be."

611

They brought the Lady Kriemhild to where the king did stand,
With noble knights around him from many a prince's land.
In the wide hall they bade her stand quietly alone;—
Meanwhile the Lady Brunhild had to the banquet gone.

612

Thereon did speak King Gunther: "Dear sister, noble maid,
I trust unto thy goodness to let mine oath be paid.
I've pledged thee to a warrior; should he become thy lord,
By thy true faith and duty thou wilt have kept my word!"

613

Then spake the noble maiden: "Belovéd brother mine,
Thou shouldst not thus beseech me; my will is ever thine
To do as thou commandest; what thou hast will'd, shall be:
I'll take, my lord, for husband, him whom thou giv'st to me."

614

At her dear eyes' kind glances all red grew Siegfried's face;
At Dame Kriemhilda's service the knight himself did place.
They twain then must together within the circle stand:
They asked if she were willing to take this hero's hand?

615

A little was she shaméd with maiden modesty;
But yet, so blest was Siegfried and eke so lucky he,
That she did not refuse him at once and out of hand.
To wife he swore to take her, that king of Netherland.

616

So he to her was plighted, and unto him the maid.
And now the loving damsel no longer was afraid
Within the arms of Siegfried in sweet embrace to rest.
And then, before the heroes, his beauteous queen he kiss'd.

617

The crowd in twain divided; and, soon as this was done,
Lo, there was Siegfried seated upon the second throne
And, by his side, Kriemhilda; many on them did wait;
One saw the Niblungs thronging around where Siegfried sate.

618

The king was likewise seated, with Brunhilda the maid.
But when she saw Kriemhilda (she ne'er had been so sad!)
By noble Siegfried sitting, a-weeping she began:
Her many hot tears falling adown her bright cheeks ran.

619

Then spake the country's ruler: "What ails you, lady mine,
That you should dim with weeping those bright and shining eyne?
You rather should be joyful that subject unto you
My land is, and my castles, and many a bold man, too."

620

"Good cause have I for weeping," replied the beauteous maid,
"In sooth about thy sister my very heart is sad;
I see her sitting next to yon vassal of thine own:
Needs must I ever mourn it if she be thus undone."

621

King Gunther whisper'd to her: "I prithee, silent be!
At some more fitting season I'll tell this tale to thee,
And wherefore unto Siegfried I did my sister give;
In sooth she, with this warrior, right happily may live."

622

She said: "I aye must pity her beauty and her grace;
And gladly would I hide me— did I but know a place—
That it might ne'er befall me to lay me by your side;—
Unless thou tell'st me wherefore she must be Siegfried's bride."

623

The noble king said to her: "This much then understand:
He hath as many castles as I, and broader land—
That know now of a surety; a mighty king is he,
And therefore this fair maiden gave I his wife to be."

624

Whate'er the king said to her, she troubled was in mood.
Now hastened from the tables full many a warrior good.
So lusty was their tilting, it made the fortress ring;—
The host amid his guests was distraught and wearying.

625

He thought how sweet would rest be, by that fair woman's side!
His heart was never free from this longing for his bride.
He from her wifely duties much love must surely win:
Then tenderly Brunhilda to eye did he begin.

626

The guests of knightly pastimes were bid to make an end;
The king unto his chamber would with his spouse ascend.
Before the great hall-stairway Kriemhild and Brunhild met:
They look’d upon each other with nought but kindness yet.

627

Then came their court-attendants; there was no lingering;
The chamberlains rich-suited the taper-lights did bring.
The warriors were divided— to either king his men:
’Twas plainly seen how many did follow Siegfried then.

628

Unto their wedding chambers thus both the heroes came.
And each of them was thinking how he by love would tame
His lovely lady’s scruples, and tender was his mood.
To Siegfried was his pastime beyond all measure good.

629

For when the lordly hero held Kriemhild to his heart,
And comforted the maiden with every loving art,
Amid his noble wooing she seem’d his very life:
Not for a thousand others had he foregone his wife.

630

Of how he woo’d his lady I nothing more will tell.
But hearken to this story, to Gunther what befell
Along with Dame Brunhilda. Methinks the comely thane,
On many a softer pillow with other dames had lain!

631

The serving-folk had vanish'd, women as well as men:
The door of the bride-chamber was quickly closéd then.
He thought he should be clasping her sweet form presently—
The time was still far distant when she his wife would be.

632

In shift of snow-white linen she came unto the bed.
Then thought the noble warrior: "Now have I compasséd
All that I ever yearn'd for, through all my livelong days!"
Her beauty had bewitch'd him— 'twere no unlikely case.

633

The noble king did firstly quench with his hand the light.
To where the dame was lying then ventured that bold knight.
He stretch'd himself beside her: his joy could not be told
As in his arms the hero the lovely one did fold.

634

All loving customs was he right ready to fulfil,
If but the noble lady had let him have his will.
But she so full of wrath was that sorry was his state:
He thought to meet with kindness, and found unfriendly hate.

635

She spake: "O knight most noble, you best had let me be,
For that which might content you you ne'er will get from me!
I will remain a maiden— you may be sure of that—
Until I learn the story." That made her Gunther hate.

636

He tried to wring love from her, and, striving, tore her dress.
Whereat she seized a girdle— this masterful princess;
It was a cord well-twisted, which round the hips she wore.
Then to the king full measure she gave of anguish sore.

637

His feet and hands together she fasten'd therewithal;
Then to a nail she bore him, and hung him on the wall!
Because her sleep he hinder'd, to him she love forbad:
Her strength, in sooth, was such that his death he well-nigh had.

638

Then fell he to beseeching, who master should have been:
"Loose now my bonds, I pray you, most good and noble queen!
I'll take an oath, fair lady, you never to constrain;
And never will I lay me so nigh to you again."

639

She little reck'd how fared he, so she but softly lay:
He needs must stay there hanging all night until the day—
Until the light of morning athwart the lattice shone.
If e'er of strength he boasted, that strength was well-nigh gone.

640

"Now say to me Lord Gunther, would you not be afraid
To be found tied and hanging," question'd the beauteous maid,
"By your own body-servants?— bound by a woman, too?"
The noble knight made answer: "'Twould evil bode for you!

641

“I, too, should win small honour,” the worthy man did say:
“I pray you of your goodness to let me by you stay,
And since it seems my wooing doth anger you so much,
’Twill long be ere my fingers shall dare your robe to touch!”

642

Then speedily she loosed him, and let him to his feet.
Again into the bride-bed he to his wife did get;
Yet so far did he lay him, that he her raiment fair
Thenceforth could scarcely ruffle— of that she took good care.

643

In came then their attendants, and brought them fresh array—
Of which a mighty store was all ready for that day.
How gay soe’er the world was, right gloomy had he grown,
The country’s noble ruler, who wore, by day, a crown!

644

According to old custom, which rightly men obey,
King Gunther and Queen Brunhild no longer must delay
To go unto the minster, where Holy Mass was sung.
There, likewise, came Sir Siegfried, and mighty was the throng.

645

As kingly rank demanded, in readiness did wait
Whatever they had need of: their crowns and robes of state.
Then were they consecrated; and, after that was done,
All four were seen in gladness to stand, each with a crown.

646

Then many youths were knighted— six hundred, maybe more—
In honour of the crowning;— of that ye may be sure;
And great rejoicing was there throughout Burgundian land.
One heard the lances splinter in every new knight's hand.

647

The fair maids in the windows sat, and o'erlook'd the field:
They saw below them flashing full many a polish'd shield.
King Gunther kept aloof from his lieges' revelry—
Whate'er the rest were doing, a mournful man was he:

648

How great was the unlikeness of his and Siegfried's mood!
And well he knew what ailed him that noble knight and good.
Unto the king he hastened, and straight to question fell:
"How fared you yestereven? to me you this should tell."

649

Then to his guest the host spake: "A foul disgrace 'twill be!
I've brought the very devil home to the house with me!
For when I sought to woo her, she bound me tight withal,
Then to a nail she bore me and hang'd me on the wall.

650

"There hung I in mine anguish all night until the day,
Before she would unbind me. How softly, too, she lay!
This, trusting in your friendship, I tell you secretly."
Then cried the stalwart Siegfried: "This grieves me, verily;

651

“I’ll see if I can help you, so put your grief away.
I’ll manage that this evening she’ll let you by her stay;—
She shall not even flout you, nor scorn your love again.”
This saying was to Gunther sweet comfort after pain.

652

And further spake Sir Siegfried: “Thou yet mayst prosper well.
Right different, I ween, was the luck that us befell!
To me your sister Kriemhild is dearer than my life:
This same night Dame Brunhilda shall be your willing wife.”

653

He said: “Unto your chamber I’ll come this very night,
Clad in my hood of darkness, unseen of any wight—
That ne’er another person my artifice may know;
So let your chamber-servants unto their hostel go.

654

“The lights the pages carry I’ll suddenly put out;
And this will be the token, that you may have no doubt
But I am nigh to aid you: yea! I will tame your wife
That you this night can woo her;— thereon I stake my life!”

655

“Then,” quoth the king, “be careful thou yieldest not to love;
She is mine own dear lady! The rest I do approve—
Do with her what thou choosest;— if thou shouldst take her life
Methinks I would o’erlook it: she is a fearsome wife!”

656

“I do agree,” cried Siegfried, “and, by my faith, I swear
I will not seek to woo her. Is not thy sister dear
Before all other women I have set eyes on aye?”
Right well believéd Gunther what Siegfried then did say.

657

The merry games brought gladness and also weariness.
The tilting and the shouting were bidden soon to cease:
For to the hall the ladies were shortly to depart.
The chamberlains commanded the folk to stand apart.

658

The horses and the people were driven from the court.
Each of the beauteous ladies a bishop did escort,
When they in kingly presence must go to sit at meat.
And many a goodly liegeman them follow’d to their seat.

659

The king, with hopes encouraged, in joyous humour sat:
What Siegfried had assured him, his mind was full of that!
To him this one day seeméd as long as thirty days.
Upon his lady’s wooing his thoughts were set always.

660

He scarcely could content him until the meal was done.
Then was the fair Brunhilda at leisure to be gone,
As also was Kriemhilda; both to their rooms would go,
The thanes around them thronging;— ha! ’twas a gallant show!

661

Sir Siegfried by Kriemhilda his beauteous wife still sate,
And with her held sweet converse with joy unmarr'd by hate.
His hands she softly fondled with hers that were so white—
Until—but how she knew not— he vanish'd from her sight.

662

As she with him was toying and found he'd slipped away,
She turned to his attendants, and thus the queen did say:
"I marvel what hath happen'd the king, where hath he gone?
His hands he but this moment hath taken from mine own."

663

She did not question further. Meanwhile he quickly came
To where the chamber-servants did wait with links aflame:
He straight began to quench them, each in the page's hand.
That it was done by Siegfried Gunther did understand.

664

Well knew he what he wanted: he therefore bade begone
The maids and dames who waited. As soon as this was done
The noble king was careful himself to lock the door:
Two strong bolts drew he quickly and fastened therebefore.

665

Behind the tester-hangings he hid the tapers' light.
And then began a play-piece, which ended not that night,
Betwixt the stalwart Siegfried and that fair maiden wife;—
Which was unto King Gunther with joy and sorrow rife.

666

When on the couch lay Siegfried alongside of the queen:
“Take care,” quoth she, “Lord Gunther, —though sweet it might have been
To love me—lest you suffer as you have done before.”
The lady for bold Siegfried had bitter woe in store.

667

To hide his voice he fail’d not, and ne’er a word spake he.
And so ’twas plain to Gunther, although he could not see,
That nothing sly or secret was passing ’twixt the twain.
But little peace or comfort did either of them gain!

668

He bore himself as though he the great King Gunther were,
And in his arms clasp’d closely that maiden passing fair.
But on a bench by-standing she hurl’d him from the bed,
So that against a footstool he loudly smote his head.

669

Arising, strong as ever, up leapt the gallant man:
This time he would do better! but soon as he began
To try and overpower her, again she wrought him woe.
Ne’er wife hath made a fending the like of that, I trow!

670

And when he gave not over, the maiden sprang upright:
“Full ill doth it beseem you to touch my shift so white!
Coarse are you and unmanner’d: woe therefore you betide!
You shall not soon forget it!” the comely maiden cried.

671

She clasp’d the good knight tightly with both her arms around,
And would have laid and bound him, as she the king had bound—
That she in peace and quiet might lie upon her bed.
The ruffling of her raiment she vengefully repaid.

672

What did his valour serve him, and what his power of limb,
When she essayed to show him that she could master him?
By might and main she bore him— not elsewise could it be—
And ’twixt the bed and cupboard she crush’d him cruelly.

673

“Ah, woe is me!” the knight thought, “am I to lose my life,
And that through a mere maiden? if so be, every wife,
From this day forth for ever, with arrogance and pride
Will treat her lawful husband; which else should ne’er betide.”

674

The king could hear all plainly, and grievéd for the man.
Siegfried, full sore ashaméd, to rage within began;
His monstrous strength outputting he with the maid did close,
And strove with all his forces Dame Brunhild to oppose.

675

Long time it seemed to Gunther ere he the maid did quell.
She grasp’d his hands so tightly, that from each finger-nail
The blood burst from her pressure;— sad pain the hero bore
Ere yet the noble maiden he made for evermore

676

Renounce that will unruly, of which she was so proud.
The king heard what was passing, but durst not speak a word.
Against the bed he press'd her, until she cried again:
His strength it was sufficient to cause her gruesome pain.

677

Then clutch'd she at the girdle she wore about her waist,
And would have bound him with it: he stopp'd it with such haste
And force, that all her body and joints crack'd in the strife.
Thus ended was the battle— she now was Gunther's wife.

678

She spake: "O noble sovran, now let my life go free,
And all shall be atoned for that I have done to thee.
Ne'er more I'll do despite to the love of thy true heart:
Right surely have I proved that thou women's master art."

679

Sir Siegfried stepp'd aside then— whilst there the maiden lay—
As though he had bethought him his clothes to put away;
But first, from off her finger a golden ring he drew,
So that the noble maiden naught of it ever knew.

680

He likewise took her girdle— a silken cord and good—
I know not if he took it in arrogance of mood.
Unto his wife he gave it, whence woe he one day had.
Then lay each by the other the king and his fair maid.

681

He woo’d her as a lover, as was his right to do.
And needs must she her anger and eke her shame forego.
So closely did he court her her cheeks grew somewhat pale:
Ah me! how all her power was made by love to fail!

682

For now she was no stronger than any other dame,
And all her lovely body his very own became.
If she had tried to spurn him, what profit could it prove?
This was the work of Gunther by virtue of his love.

683

How full of fond endearments he by the lady lay,
In tender love and kindness until the dawn of day!
Meanwhile, the noble Siegfried had gone again outside,
And was right warmly welcomed by his own winsome bride.

684

He put aside the questions which did perplex her thought,
And long from her kept hidden what he for her had brought;—
Until, a queen and crownéd, to his own land she went.
What he was doom’d to give her he nowise could prevent!

685

The host upon the morrow was in a gayer mood
Than on the former morning; thereby a humour good
Spread through his lands, rejoicing full many a noble thane
Whom to his house he summon’d, and well did entertain.

686

The merry-making lasted until the fourteenth day.
And all the while the turmoil did not abate nor stay
With all kinds of rejoicing, which one and all must share.
’Twas all at the king’s charges, and great in sooth they were.

687

For noble Gunther’s kinsmen, as them the king had told,
Gave gifts to do him honour, of raiment and red gold,
Of horses and of silver, unto the outland men.
They who for gifts were eager departed happy then.

688

And even the lord Siegfried from out of Netherland,
With all his thousand lieges, of that apparel grand
Which they had brought to Rhineland to them did freely give;
Fine horses, eke, and saddles: right nobly could they live!

689

Ere all the costly presents were shared among the throng,
Those who would fain go homeward began to think it long.
Ne’er yet of like enjoyment had guests so had their fill.
And so the wedding ended, such was King Gunther’s will.

Adventure XI

How Siegfried Went Home with His Wife

690

Now that the guests departing all on their way were sped,
Siegfried the son of Siegmund unto his people said:
“We likewise must make ready home to our land to go.”
Well liked his wife these tidings, when she the news did know.

691

She spake unto her husband: “When must we needs set out?
That I should go thus quickly I very much misdoubt;
For firstly must my brothers with me the kingdom share.”
’Twas irksome unto Siegfried from Kriemhild this to hear.

692

The princes went unto him and spake to him, all three:
“Now be assured, Sir Siegfried, that yours shall ever be

Our true and faithful service, ay, even unto death!”
He bowed unto the princes who pledged him thus their faith.

693

“We would with you share also,” said Giselher the young,
“The lands and eke the castles which unto us belong.
Whate’er of this wide kingdom be subject to our rule,
Together with Kriemhilda, that shall you share in full.”

694

Thereon the son of Siegmund said to the princes three,
As soon as of these nobles the goodwill he did see:
“Your heritage, God grant it for ever blesséd be,
And eke the folk within it! But, for my dear wife, she

695

“Gladly foregoes the portion that ye to her would give.
A crown she’ll soon be wearing, and, if we both should live,
She’ll be, in sooth, far richer than any living bride.
In aught else at your service I’ll loyally abide.”

696

Then spake the lady Kriemhild: “Though naught my land you deem,
Burgundian thanes should never stand in such small esteem!
To lead them to his country right glad a king might be.
Ay! let my own dear brothers e’en share in all with me.”

697

Then spake the noble Gernot: “Take whom thou hast a mind;
Of those who would ride with thee, thou here wilt plenty find!
Of thirty hundred warriors a thousand we’ll give thee
To be thine own attendants.” Then Kriemhild speedily

698

For Hagen sent, of Tronjé, and likewise for Ortwein:
“Will ye and eke your kinsmen,” she asked, “be men of mine?”
But Hagen, when he heard it, cried in a mood of wrath:
“Nay, Gunther may not give us to anyone on earth!

699

“Let others of your household attend you on your way,
Well might you know by this time the customs of Tronjé
Upon the king attending at court we choose to stay—
Whom we thus far have follow’d, we still would serve alway,”

700

’Twas therefore so decided: to start they did prepare.
As noble court-attendants Dame Kriemhild took with her
Of maidens two-and-thirty, besides five hundred men.
Sir Eckewart, the Margrave, went with Kriemhilda then.

701

Then was a great leave-taking, of squire as well as knight,
Of maiden and of matron: as was indeed but right.
Friend kissing friend at parting was seen on every hand:
Right gaily they departed from out King Gunther’s land.

702

Their kinsmen did escort them far out upon the way.
And camping-grounds were fix'd on, where they the night should stay—
Wherever seem'd good to them throughout the kings' domain.
Swift messengers to Siegmund the tidings bear amain

703

That he and Dame Sieglinda, might straight be made aware
How that their son was coming, with Uté's daughter fair—
The beauteous Kriemhilda, of Worms on the Rhine-strand.
No dearer news and better could e'er have come to hand.

704

"Ah, well for me," quoth Siegmund, "that I this day have known
When beauteous Kriemhilda comes hither for a crown!
Mine heritage I reckon thereby a worthier thing:
My son, the noble Siegfried, shall here himself be king."

705

Then gave the Lady Sieglind much velvet of red hue,
And weighty gold and silver, that was their herald's due;
So much the news rejoiced her which she had heard that day.
With zeal her waiting-maidens now donn'd their best array.

706

Folks talk'd of who was coming with Siegfried to their land.
They bade men raise a platform, with benches close at hand,
Wherefrom his friends might see him as with his crown he rode.
King Siegmund's men went forward to meet him on the road.

707

If any better welcome to heroes aye befell
Than in this land of Siegmund, it is not mine to tell.
To meet the fair Kriemhilda Sieglind herself did ride,
With many a lovely lady and gallant knights beside.

708

After a whole day's journey at length the guests they spied.
Both native-born and strangers did weary of the ride,
Before they reached a fortress— a castle large and strong—
'Twas Santen hight; and therein they wore their crowns erelong.

709

With smiling lips and loving, Sieglind and Siegmund too
Greeted the fair Kriemhilda, with kisses not a few;
They did the like to Siegfried; now gone was all their pain.
Their followers did likewise a hearty welcome gain.

710

They bade the guests be taken in front of Siegmund's hall.
And there the beauteous maidens were holpen, one and all,
To dismount from their palfreys; and there was many a man
Who on these lovely women to wait with zeal began.

711

How grand soe'er the wedding had been upon the Rhine,
Here did they give the heroes apparel far more fine
Than they, in all their lifetime, had ever worn before.
One might tell mickle marvels of all their wealth in store.

712

They sate in state and splendour, and had of all enough.
What raiment wore their servants of golden-colour’d stuff!
With broider’d lace adornéd, and precious stones inwrought!
The noble Queen Sieglinda of this had taken thought.

713

Before his friends and kinsmen then noble Siegmund spake:
“I charge all Siegfried’s kinsfolk notice hereby to take,
That he, before these warriors, my crown henceforth shall wear.”
This news the Netherlanders were glad in sooth to hear.

714

To him he gave his kingdom, his crown, and government.
Henceforth he was their master. And his arbitrament
And rendering of justice became abiding law;—
So that fair Kriemhild’s husband was greatly held in awe.

715

In this estate of honour, he lived, as all declare,
And wore the crown and govern’d— until, in the tenth year,
His comely wife in safety brought forth her first-born son;
Whereat the royal kinsfolk were gladden’d ev’ryone.

716

They hasten’d to baptize him, and gave him for a name,
After his uncle, Gunther, which could not bring him shame.
Were he but as his forbears, a brave man he would grow.
They gave him careful training, as bounden so to do.

717

About the self-same season Dame Sieglind pass'd away.
Then noble Uté's daughter did over all hold sway—
As doth beseem such ladies who wealth and lands possess.
That Death the queen had taken they mournéd none the less.

718

Now yonder too, in Rhineland— so doth the story run—
Unto the wealthy Gunther there had been born a son
Of beauteous Brunhilda, in realm of Burgundy;
And, for the love of Siegfried, that hero's name had he.

719

With what great care unceasing that child was watch'd and taught!
For him the noble Gunther caused teachers to be sought,
To rear him in all virtues befitting man's estate.
Alas! how in his kinsfolk he found an evil fate!

720

In legends old, the story hath many a time been told,
Of how those gallant warriors lived in the days of old;
Worthy of praise, at all times, in good King Siegmund's land.
The like did also Gunther and all his knightly band.

721

The kingdom of the Niblungs was under Siegfried's sway—
Among his wealthy kinsfolk there was no wealthier aye—
And Schilbung's warriors also, and all their goods and gold.
Well might the gallant warrior his head more highly hold.

722

The greatest of all treasures that ever hero won,
Save they that erst-time held it, the gallant knight did own;—
Which once upon a mountain he wrested by his might;
He did to death to gain it full many a doughty knight.

723

He had his fill of honour; and had it not been so,
In justice to the hero one needs must own, I trow,
That he among the best was that e’er on horseback sat;
Men fear’d his strength of body; with reason did they that.

Adventure XII

How Gunther Bade Siegfried to the Festival

724

Now Gunther's wife the meanwhile was brooding ev'ry day:
"Why bears herself Dame Kriemhild in such a lofty way?
Is not her husband Siegfried a vassal of our own?
Scant service hath he paid us in all these years agone!"

725

Within her heart this kept she, and heed took thereanent.
Yet that they came not ever did make her ill-content,
And that she got no service out of Sir Siegfried's land;
And wherefore this should happen she fain would understand.

726

So of the king inquired she, whether it might not be
That she the Lady Kriemhild yet once again might see?

She privily spoke to him of what her mind thus teased:
But when her lord had heard her, he was but half well-pleased.

727

“And how are we to bring them,” then said the mighty king,
“Here into this our country? that were no easy thing!
Too far from us they’re dwelling; to ask I am afraid.”
Then answer’d him Brunhilda, with crafty air and said:

728

“However high and mighty a king’s man be, I say
That he his lord’s commandments should never dare gainsay.”
And to himself smiled Gunther whilst she laid down the law:
He had no thought of service whene’er he Siegfried saw.

729

She spake: “My lord belovéd, I pray thee, for my sake,
Lend me thine aid; that Siegfried may with thy sister take
Their journey to this country— that here we them may see;—
For nothing that could happen would be more sweet to me.

730

“Thy sister’s gentle breeding and well-contented mood,
Whene’er I think upon them, in sooth, it doth me good.
How we did sit together, when first I was thy wife!
Right well hath she deservéd bold Siegfried’s love and life.”

731

So long she thus besought him, until the king did say:
“Be sure that guests more welcome could ne’er be any day;
’Tis easy to persuade me! and messengers of mine
I’ll send unto the couple, to bring them to the Rhine.”

732

Then spake the queen yet further: “Now also you must say
When you will send to fetch them, and at what time we may
Look for our well-loved kinsfolk to come unto our land:
And whom you purpose sending I fain would understand.”

733

“That will I do,” the king said: “thirty of mine own men
Will I send riding thither.” These did he summon then,
And by them sent his message unto Prince Siegfried’s land.
Dame Brunhild to content them gave much apparel grand.

734

Then said the king: “This message ye’ll take, my warriors bold,
Wherewith I now entrust ye —see that ye naught withhold—
Unto the mighty Siegfried and to my sister dear:
That in this world doth no one more kindness to them bear.

735

“And pray that both do shortly come to us on the Rhine,
For which we’ll ever thank them, I and this lady mine.
Before this next midsummer he and his men shall see
Things done, which to his pleasure and honour great shall be.

736

“And likewise to King Siegmund my service take and say,
That I and all my people be bound to him alway.
Say also to my sister, that she must tarry not;
More worthy entertainment shall never be her lot.”

737

Brunhilda and Queen Uté, and every dame at hand,
Sent messages of service to all in Siegfried’s land;
Unto the lovely women, and many a man of worth.—
Then by the king’s good pleasure the messengers set forth.

738

In trav’lling guise they journey’d; their steeds and wearing-gear
Were ready made beforehand; so from the land they fare.
They made good progress onward to where their goal did lie,
The king came with an escort to speed his embassy.

739

At end of three weeks’ riding they came into the land
Wherein the Niblung stronghold, where they were sent, did stand
On the Norwegian border; and there they found the thane.
Both steeds and men were weary with their long journey’s pain.

740

Then was it unto Siegfried and to Kriemhilda said
How knights had come on horseback and so apparelléd
As in Burgundian country the fashion was that day:
Straight from the couch up-sprang she whereon she resting lay.

741

And quickly to a window she bade a maiden go,
Who saw the gallant Gere stand in the court below,
Him and the comrades with him, who had been thither sent;
Instead of all her heartache how great was her content!

742

Unto the king then spake she: “Now look you down below,
How they with doughty Gere about the courtyard go,
Whom my good brother Gunther here down the Rhine hath sent!”
The stalwart Siegfried answered: “We’ll make them well content.”

743

Then all the court attendants did hasten out to greet,
And every one among them did speak a welcome meet;
They gave unto the envoys the best words that they had.
The old King Siegmund likewise was of their coming glad.

744

A lodging was appointed for Gere and his men,
The horses too were cared for. The messengers went then
Unto the hall where Siegfried near to Kriemhilda sat.
At court they had free entry: and therefore did they that.

745

The host rose with the hostess and near to them did stand.
Right well was Gere welcomed from the Burgundian land,
With all his knightly comrades— King Gunther’s men to wit.
The noble Gere bade they upon the bench to sit.

746

“Before we sit allow us to tell you of our news;
Though weary with our journey, to stand the while we choose.
We have to give a message which unto you we bring
From Gunther and Brunhilda— and weighty is this thing.

747

“And likewise what Dame Uté, your mother, sendeth you,
And Giselher the young knight, and noble Gernot too,
And all your nearest kinsfolk, from whom we have command
To offer you their greeting from the Burgundian land.”

748

“Now God reward ye, heralds,” cried Siegfried, “and I trust
Unto your truth and kindness— as towards friends we must—
So likewise doth their sister;— and now your tidings give
If still our friends belovéd at home in gladness live.

749

“Since we from them departed hath no one evil done
Unto Kriemhilda’s kinsmen? let that to me be known.
My faithful help is ready in ev’ry time of need,
Until mine aid and service their foes shall rue indeed!”

750

Then quoth the Margrave Gere— he was a warrior good:
“Right happily abide they in all good livelihood;
They bid you to the Rhineland, to a high festival;
Right gladly will they see you, of that doubt not at all.

751

“They pray my lady also that she will thither wend
So soon as e’er the winter shall come unto its end.
Before this next midsummer your faces would they see.”
Then spake the stalwart Siegfried: “Nay, that can hardly be!”

752

But further spake Sir Gere, from the Burgundian land:
“It is your mother Uté who maketh this demand;
Eke Giselher and Gernot, ye must not them gainsay:
That ye be so far distant I hear complaints each day.

753

“Brunhilda, too, my mistress, and all her maidens fair
Rejoice at this my errand; if likelihood there were
That they once more might see you, happy would be their mood.”
Unto the fair Kriemhilda this message seemed right good.

754

As Gere was her kinsman, the host then bade him sit.
Wine for the guests he ordered; nor long they wanted it.
And thither, too, came Siegmund, who had the heralds seen;
To the Burgundian heroes he spake with friendly mien:

755

“Be welcome, Gunther’s liegemen, ye warriors, every one!
Since it hath happ’d that Siegfried my son to wife hath won
Kriemhilda fair, more often ye would we gladly see
In this our land, if truly to us ye’ll friendly be.”

756

They said that if he wish'd it they'd gladly come again.
And so in pleasure vanish'd their weariness and pain.
The messengers were seated, and food was brought them there:
For guests so welcome Siegfried had plenty of good fare.

757

For nine days' space and longer to stay they were constrain'd.
Until, at last, the horsemen, who would be gone, complain'd
That back into their country they never more would ride.
Meanwhile his friends King Siegfried had summon'd to his side,

758

To ask them what they counsell'd: would they go to the Rhine?
"He hath sent here to fetch me, Gunther, that friend of mine—
He and his kinsfolk bid us to keep festivity:
I'd gladly go there, save that his land too far doth lie.

759

"They also bid Kriemhilda to go along with me.
Now counsel me, dear kinsmen, how thither come shall she?
If I through thirty kingdoms my men, for them, must lead,
Still Siegfried's hand to serve them must ready be indeed."

760

Then spake his chiefs unto him: "If you've a mind unto
The journey to this hightide, we'll counsel what to do:
You with a thousand warriors unto the Rhine shall ride;
So may you with all honour in Burgundy abide."

761

Then spake the noble Siegmund, of Netherland the lord:
“Will ye unto this feasting, and tell me not a word?
An if it will not shame you I’ll ride along with you;
I’ll take a hundred swordsmen to swell your retinue.”

762

“Wilt thou in sooth ride with us, my own good father dear?”
Exclaimed the gallant Siegfried: “right gladly that I hear.
Before twelve days are over my fatherland I’ll leave.”
To all who did desire them they steeds and raiment gave.

763

Now that the noble ruler was minded soon to start,
The heralds swift were bidden straight homewards to depart,
And unto his wife’s kinsmen upon the Rhine to say,
That he would very gladly with them keep holyday.

764

Both Siegfried and Kriemhilda, as doth the story say,
More gifts gave to the heralds than could be borne away
On their own horses homewards: a wealthy man was he!
Their sturdy beasts of burden they drove right merrily.

765

Their folk were cloth’d by Siegfried and Siegmund worthily.
And Eckewart the margrave gave orders speedily
To seek out women’s raiment, the best that could be found,
Or anywhere be heard of in Siegfried’s lands around.

766

The saddles and the bucklers began they to prepare.
And to the knights and ladies who should the journey share,
Was given whate'er they wanted, that they might fail in naught.
Unto his friends full many a noble guest he brought.

767

The heralds did not loiter upon the journey home.
And soon the gallant Gere to Burgundy was come,
Where right well was he welcomed: they then alighted all
From chargers and from palfreys before King Gunther's hall.

768

The youths went and the elders, as men are wont to do,
To ask what might the news be. Then spake the good knight true:
"When to the king I've told it the rest of you shall know."
Then straightway with his comrades did he to Gunther go.

769

The king, in joy to see them, rose quickly from his chair.
That they had come so swiftly also from Brunhild fair
Received they thanks, while Gunther unto the envoys spake:
"How fares it now with Siegfried? much wrought he for my sake."

770

Then spake the gallant Gere: "For joy his face grew red—
Both his and your fair sister's; and ne'er was message sped,
From any man of honour unto his friends, more true
Than Siegfried and his father by me have sent to you."

771

Then thus unto the margrave the noble king's wife spake:
"Say, now, is Kriemhild coming? and care doth she yet take
To keep the outward fairness, which she to foster knew?"
"Aye," said the warrior Gere, "doubtless she comes to you."
772

Then Uté to her presence the heralds did command,
And by her question might one right plainly understand
What she to hear was longing: "Still well did Kriemhild fare?"
He told how he had found her, and that she'd soon be there.
773

Nor from the court retainers did they the gifts withhold
That they had had from Siegfried: the raiment and the gold
In sight of all the liegemen of the three kings were spread.
For their abundant largesse were many thanks repaid.
774

"'Tis easy," then said Hagen, "for him such gifts to give:
He could not spend his riches did he for ever live.
The treasure of the Niblungs he holds within his hand.
Ha, what if it should ever come to Burgundian land!"
775

Then was there great rejoicing among the people all
That soon the guests were coming. From dawn till evenfall
The three kings' craftsmen labour'd, with zeal untiring fill'd.
Grand rows of seats in plenty they then began to build.
776

The valiant Sir Hunold and Sindold too, the thane,
Had little time for leisure; they too must work amain,
As steward and cupbearer the places they must set.
And Ortwein help’d them: wherefore they Gunther’s thanks did get.

777

Rumold the kitchenmaster, knew well to rule aright
His underlings and scullions! Ay me! it was a sight
To see the polish’d kettles and pots and pans at hand!
For food must be made ready when guests were in the land.

Adventure XIII

How They Journeyed to the Festival

778

Now in their stir and bustle awhile we'll let them be,
And tell how Dame Kriemhilda and her fair company
Hence, on their journey Rhinewards, from Niblung-land did go.
No horses of fine raiment e'er bore so grand a show.

779

When many sumpter-coffers were ready for the way,
Then with his friends Sir Siegfried no longer did delay
To ride forth, with Kriemhilda, wherein they look'd for joy.
For all of them soon after it turn'd to sore annoy.

780

They left at home behind them Sir Siegfried's baby son,
The firstborn of Kriemhilda— not elsewise could be done.

From out of their state-journey arose much woe and pain:
His father and his mother that babe saw ne'er again.

781

Thence also did Lord Siegmund together with them ride.
Had he but known what evil thereafter would betide
At this same courtly banquet, he ne'er had gone at all:
To him by loss of kindred worse ill could ne'er befall.

782

Heralds were sent before them the news betimes to say.
And soon rode out to meet them, in lordliest array,
Many of Uté's kinsfolk and Gunther's gallant men.
The host began to stir him his guests to welcome then.

783

He went unto Brunhilda where seated was the dame:
"How did my sister greet you," quoth he, "when first you came?
Even in the self-same fashion you Siegfried's wife must greet."
Said she: "That will I gladly; I love her, as is meet."

784

Then spake the great king: "Early to-morrow are they due.
If you would fain receive them, be quick in what you do;
Lest we have first to greet them in this our citadel.
In all my days I have not had guests I loved so well."

785

Her maidens and her women she therefore straightway bade
To go and seek fine raiment, the best that could be had—
Such as her own attendants might wear her guests before.
This did they with much pleasure, of that you may be sure!

786

King Gunther’s men now hasten’d to tender service due.
The host about his person had all his warriors true.
The queen herself rode with him, all gloriously array’d;
To these well-lov€d guests was a royal welcome made.

787

With what unfeign’d rejoicing the guests by all were met!
’Twas said that Dame Brunhilda did ne’er such greeting get
In the Burgundian kingdom on the part of Dame Kreimhild.
They who had ne’er beheld her with happiness were fill’d.

788

By this time was arrivèd Sir Siegfried with his men.
One saw the heroes riding forwards and back again
In all parts of the meadows, a vast and shapeless host;
None there could get away from the thronging and the dust.

789

Now when the country’s ruler did gallant Siegfried see,
Together with King Siegmund, how courteously spake he:
“Ye are to me right welcome, and unto every friend!
I trow your royal visit in joy to us will end.”

790

“God prosper you!” quoth Siegmund, that honour-loving man.
“Since my son Siegfried’s friendship for you and yours began.
’Twas aye my hope and purpose one day your face to see.”
King Gunther said: “I also am glad that it should be.”

791

Then was Siegfried receivéd, as well did him beseem,
With ev’ry fitting honour: which none amiss did deem.
And Giselher and Gernot did lend all courteous aid.
Methinks to no guests ever were kindlier honours paid.

792

And now the two kings’ spouses anigh each other came.
Empty was many a saddle, as many a beauteous dame
Was by the hands of heroes dismounted on the grass:
For those who loved fair women no Httle work there was!

793

Then lovingly the ladies unto each other went;
And many a knight who saw it was heartily content
That of these twain the greeting so handsomely befell.
Then many a warrior saw one stand by each damosel.

794

The throng of noble people each other’s hands did take;
Whilst men unto each other their courtly bows did make,
The ladies fair were kissing each other lovingly—
Which Siegfried’s men and Gunther’s right joyous were to see.

795

No longer did they linger, but rode towards the town.
The host meanwhile had bidden that every guest be shown
How truly he was welcome to royal Burgundy.
Then many a match was tilted for maidens fair to see.

796

And Hagen, too, from Tronjé, and Ortewein also,
That they were men of power did all they could to show;
And whatsoe'er they order'd that durst no man gainsay.
Unto the guests so welcome much service offer'd they.

797

The clang of shields resounded before the castle-gate
From many a thrust and parry; and long thereby did wait
The host and guests together, ere within doors they came;
Ay, and the hours sped quickly with many a merry game.

798

Before the stately palace all joyously they rode;
And many fine-wrought housings, of handsome stuff and mode
Were seen upon the saddles of many a well-dight dame,
On either side low-hanging. Then Gunther's chieftains came.

799

The guests unto their chambers were taken presently.
One saw how Lady Brunhild at times would cast her eye
Toward the Lady Kriemhild, who verily was fair.
Her colour in bright beauty might well with gold compare.

800

At Worms was heard the turmoil, on all sides of the town,
Of these incoming strangers. King Gunther made it known
Unto his marshal, Dankwart, that he for these must care;
So did he for the people good lodging-room prepare.

801

Both out of doors and indoors they e'en might feast their fill.
Ay! ne'er before were strangers welcomed with more goodwill.
Whatever they desiréd was ready at their side:
So wealthy was King Gunther to none was aught denied.

802

Served were they in all friendship and banish'd was all hate;
The host himself at table with all the guest-folk sate.
Siegfried must now his seat take where he afore had done;
There went to table with him full many a worthy one.

803

Twelve hundred gallant warriors were round the table seen
Sitting with him and feasting. Then thought Brunhild the queen,
That ne'er a sovran ruler could ever have more wealth.
Still leaned she so towards him she could but wish him health.

804

And verily that evening, while the king sat there yet,
Right many a costly garment was by the wine made wet,
As the cup-bearers quickly around the table went.
The servants there were many, and all right diligent.

805

As long had been the custom when festival was made,
Unto the maids and matrons a fair good-night they bade.
To whomsoever came there the host a welcome gave.
In kindliness and honour they all enough could have.

806

As soon as night was ended and the next daylight shone,
The packing-chests were open'd, and many a precious stone
Shone bright on goodly raiment, by lady's hand shown forth.
Then was to sight unfolded full many a robe of worth.

807

Ere yet it was broad daylight the knights and squires came out
Before the hall in numbers; again began the rout
Or ever early mass had before the king been sung.
Then thanks for featly riding he gave the heroes young.

808

Soon shrill and loud resounded full many a trumpet-blast.
From drums and pipes together there was a noise so vast,
That Worms, the great, wide city, loud echoed to the call.
Upon their chargers mounted the haughty heroes all.

809

Throughout the land began then a mighty tournament,
Where many a good knight tilted; and thereto many went,
Whose youthful hearts and eager beat high in gallant mood;
Behind their shields one saw them, gay warriors and good.

810

And at their windows seated look'd down the stately dames
And beauteous, well-dight maidens, intent to watch the games,
And see the merry jousting of the bold knights below.
The host amongst his lieges himself would riding go.

811

Thus were the hours beguiléd, and none did deem them long,
Until the minster-belfry did call to evensong.
Then were brought round the palfreys; the dames to ride began;
The noble queens were follow'd by many a gallant man.

812

Alighting at the minster, they stood down on the grass.
Unto her guests Brunhilda so far right friendly was.
Into the wide cathedral, wearing their crowns of state,
They went: ere long love changéd to jealousy and hate.

813

When they to mass had listen'd they left the church, and so
Rode off with many honours. One saw them later go
All gaily to the banquet. Their pleasure knew no stay,
And all was merrymaking until the eleventh day.

Adventure XIV

How the Queens Railed at One Another

814

Before the hour of vespers one day the tumult loud
Was heard, of many warriors, who in the court did crowd.
Their knightly feats they practised to pass the time away:
And many a man and woman ran up to watch the play.

815

The noble queens were seated together, side by side,
They thought of two bold warriors, renownéd far and wide.
Then said the fair Kriemhilda: “I have indeed a lord
Who rightly is the ruler of all this kingdom broad.”

816

Then cried the Lady Brunhild: “Howe’er could such thing be,
Unless there were none living but only thou and he?

Beneath his rule the kingdom might fall in such a case:
So long as Gunther liveth, it could not come to pass."

817

But then again said Kriemhild: "There stands he; dost thou see
How he before the warriors doth walk right royally?
Just as the moon all brightly above the stars doth shine!
Good cause have I for wearing this happy mood of mine."

818

Then Lady Brunhild answer'd: "Comely as is thy lord,
And gallant too and handsome, thou must the meed award
Unto thy brother Gunther, the noble warrior:
Who, be it known, is truly all other kings before."

819

But yet again said Kriemhild: "Mine is a man so rare,
That not without good reason his praises I declare.
By many deeds great honour he hath won, far and near;
Thou wilt allow, Brunhilda, he well is Gunther's peer."

820

"I pray thee now, Kriemhilda, take it not ill of me,
I, too, have grounds for saying what I have said to thee:
I heard them both allow it, when them I first look'd on,
And, as he would, against me the king my wager won—

821

What time my love he gainéd in such a knightly siege,
Siegfried himself confess'd it, that he was Gunther's liege.
Therefore I hold him vassal, I heard him that allow."
Then spake the fair Kriemhilda: "For me 'twere ill enow!

822

"How could my noble brother have hansell'd so for me
That of a mere retainer the good-wife I should be?
I do beseech thee, Brunhild, in all true friendliness,
Oblige me of your kindness and let these cavils cease."

823

Thereon the king's wife answer'd: "I will not let it be!
Why should I yield my claim to so many a good knight's fee,
Who, like the thane, thy husband, doth suit and service owe?"
At this the beauteous Kriemhild began with wrath to glow.

824

"The thought thou must abandon, that he to thee did e'er
Owe any kind of service; he is far worthier
Than is my brother Gunther— right noble though he be.
Withdraw me now this saying that I have heard from thee!

825

"I cannot choose but wonder, since he thy vassal is,
And thou o'er our two persons hast mastery like this,
That he his dues unto you hath set so long aside!
With right do I demur to thine overweening pride."

826

“Thou ratest thyself too highly!” the king’s wife answer’d then,
“Now will I gladly prove me whether thou hast of men
As much respect and honour as they accord to me!”
By this time both the ladies were wrathful as could be.

827

Then cried the Lady Kriemhild: “This must at once be seen!
If that my lord’s thy vassal, as thou hast sworn, O queen,
To-day must I the liegemen of both the kings let know
Whether before the king’s wife to church I dare to go.

828

“This very day I’ll show thee that I am fealty-free,
And that my man’s more worthy than ever thine will be!
And I myself, moreover, will not be slighted so:
Thou shalt to-day be witness how I, thy vassal, go

829

To court before the warriors of royal Burgundy.
I’ll prove myself more worthy than e’er was known to be
Any princess whatever who here hath worn the crown!”
Thus hate enough and envy betwixt the dames was sown.

830

“Dost thou deny,” cried Brunhild, “that thou our vassal art?
So must thou with thy women keep from my train apart,
When I and my attendants unto the minster go.”
To that Kriemhilda answer’d: “In truth, it shall be so!”

831

“Now robe yourselves, my maidens,” commanded Siegfried’s wife.
“For we no shame must suffer whilst here we live our life;
That ye have rich apparel ye must let all folk see.
She shall repent at leisure what she hath said to me!”

832

There was small need to urge them: they sought their richest gear,
And many a dame and maiden right well-dight did appear.
When came with her attendants the noble Gunther’s dame,
Then also in fine raiment the fair Kriemhilda came.

833

With three and forty maidens, whom she to Rhine had brought,
Who wore fine-woven silk stuffs in Araby y-wrought.
So came unto the minster the comely maidens all:
They found all Siegfried’s liegemen waiting before the hall.

834

The people fell to marvel how it had come about
That these two royal ladies had plainly fallen out,
And went no more together, as erewhile they were fain.
Therefrom befell hereafter sore woe to many a thane.

835

King Gunther’s wife stood waiting before the minster door;
The while much pleasant pastime had many a warrior
With the fair waiting-women, whom she with her did bring;
Then came the noble Kriemhild with her brave following.

836

Such costume as the daughters of noble knights might wear,
Compared with what her maids wore was common as the air;
In gear she was so wealthy, that thirty queens had shown
No such display of raiment as this fair queen alone.

837

Had anyone been wishful he never could have said
That any richer clothing had e'er been worn of maid
Than on that day adornéd her noble company:
Except to vex Brunhilda, Kriemhild had let it be.

838

The two queens came together before the minster wide,
And thereupon the hostess, by hatred moved and pride,
With evil voice and gesture Kriemhilda bade to stay:
"Before the queen a vassal shall ne'er take right of way!"

839

Then spake the fair Kriemhilda: (and wrathful was her mood)
"Couldst thou but have been silent, for thee it had been good!
Thou hast disgraced thy beauty and stain'd thy purity:
How should a shameless wanton a king's wife ever be?"

840

"Whom art thou calling 'Wanton'?" in answer cried the queen.
"That call I thee," quoth Kriemhild'; "thy body fair hath been
Woo'd first, not by thy husband, but by my lord, Siegfried:
I trow 'twas not my brother who won thy maidenhead!

841

“Where hadst thou left thy senses? it was a trick of his.
Why didst thou let him woo thee, who but thy liegeman is?
I hear thee,” said Kriemhilda, “without all reason scold.”
“Now this, in truth,” cried Brunhild, “shall be to Gunther told!”

842

“And why should that annoy me? thy pride hath thee betray’d:
To cite me to thy service by word thou hast essay’d.
This know now, of a surety I grieve that it be so:
All confidence is over for aye betwixt us two.”

843

Brunhilda wept, but Kriemhild no longer tarried there;
Before the king’s wife passing, with all her maidens fair,
She went into the minster: such hate did this beget
That many bright eyes later were sore bedimm’d and wet.

844

How much soe’er they worshipp’d, by service and by song,
Unto the Queen Brunhilda the time seem’d all too long:
So full she was of trouble, in body and in mood.
For which hereafter suffer’d bold warriors and good.

845

Brunhilda with her women stay’d by the minster door;
She thought: “Now must Kriemhilda, let me hear something more
Of what she rail’d so loudly— the scolding, sharp-tongued wife!
If Siegfried hath been boasting, ’twill stand him in his life.”

846

Forth came the noble Kriemhild, with many gallant men.
Dame Brunhild called unto her: “Now stand you still again—
You said I was a wanton, that shall you prove to me:
That word of yours, be certain, hath stung me bitterly!”

847

Thereto said dame Kriemhilda: “’Twere best to let me fare!
By this gold ring I’ll prove it, which on my hand I wear;
’Twas brought to me by Siegfried when by your side he lay.”
Ne’er yet had Queen Brunhilda outlived a sadder day.

848

She spake: “This golden jewel was from me stol’n away,
And hath from me most wrongly been hidden many a day.
I now at last discover who stole my ring from me!”
By this time were both ladies in direst enmity.

849

Yet spake Kriemhilda further: “I will not pass for thief!
Thou mightst have kept thy counsel, to thee were honour lief.
This girdle be my witness, that round my waist I wear,
That I am not a liar. Ay! Siegfried was thy dear.”

850

The girdle she was wearing was silk from Nineveh,
With precious stones for fastening, right good it was to see.
When dame Brunhild beheld it to weeping she did fall:
It must be told to Gunther and to his lieges all.

851

Then spake the queen in answer: “Go hence, and bring to me
The sovran-prince of Rhineland, and from my lips shall he
Hear how his sister flouts me, and slandereth my life,
By openly declaring I have been Siegfried’s wife!”

852

The king came with his warriors; and when the weeping eyes
He saw of his belov’d one, he spake, in kindly wise:
“Now tell me, dearest lady, who hath done aught to thee?”
Unto the king she answered: “Aye joyless must I be!

853

“Kriemhilda of mine honour would like to cozen me;
And, seeing she’s thy sister, I make complaint to thee.
She swears I’ve played the wanton with her own man, Siegfried.”
Then answer’d the King Gunther: “She doth an evil deed!”

854

“She weareth here my girdle, which I so long have lost,
My ring of red gold likewise. To me ’tis bittermost
That e’er my mother bore me. An’ thou wilt not disprove,
O king, this grievous scandal, no longer thee I’ll love.”

855

Then up and spake King Gunther: “Siegfried shall now appear;
If he hath play’d the braggart, he shall the truth declare,
Or else deny the slander— this knight of Netherland!”
Then did Kriemhilda’s husband right soon before them stand.

856

As soon as he had look'd on these dames discomfited,
(Naught knowing of the matter) the noble Siegfried said:
"Why are these ladies weeping? that am I fain to hear,
And wherefore I am bidden before the King to appear?"

857

Then spake to him King Gunther: "Right sorrowful am I;
To me my wife Brunhilda hath told a history
That thou thyself hast boasted her first love to have won:
Thy wife, Kriemhild, declareth that thou, thane, this hast done."

858

Then spake the noble Siegfried: "And if she so hath said,
Before I rest I'll see that for this she be repaid!
In face of all your lieges I'm ready to aver
By oath of mine most solemn, I never told it her!"

859

Then spake the King of Rhineland: "Give proof of that must thou!
The oath which thou dost offer, if thou canst take it now,
From ev'ry untrue dealing I'll hold thee clear and free."
Then in a ring around him stood they of Burgundy.

860

His hand the gallant Siegfried outstretched the oath to take.
Then spake the mighty sovran: "So certain do I make
Of thy great innocency, that I will thee acquit:
Sure what my sister charges thou never didst commit."

861

Yet once again spake Siegfried: “And if she joy doth find
In that she hath so troubled Brunhilda’s peace of mind,
My sorrow, of a surety, too deep were to be told.”
Then look’d at one another these ready knights and bold.

862

“So should one train one’s women,” the hero Siegfried said,
“That suchlike haughty speeches should aye be left unsaid:
Unto thy wife forbid them, to mine I’ll do the same;
Such ill-advised behaviour doth fill my heart with shame.”

863

By this dispute were many fair women kept apart.
Brunhilda still the matter so sorely took to heart
That needs must Gunther’s warriors feel pity for the dame.
Then Hagen, knight of Tronjé, unto his lady came.

864

He bade her say what ail’d her, finding her weeping sore.
Then told she him the story, and unto her he swore
That either Kriemhild’s husband must for the lie repent
Or he himself thereafter would never live content.

865

Ortwein and also Gernot, in council join’d the twain;
And there the heroes plotted how Siegfried should be slain.
And Giselher came likewise, the noble Uté’s son;
When he had heard their saying, he spake—the faithful one:

866

“Alack! ye gallant warriors, now wherefore do ye that?
I trow that never Siegfried deservéd such like hate,
That he, by reason of it, should need to lose his life:
Ay, very trifles are they that make an angry wife!”

867

“Are we to harbour cuckoos?” cried Hagen, answering:
“To gallant knights as we are scant honour that would bring!
That he of my dear lady hath bragg’d so scurvily
His life shall make atonement; or I myself will die.”

868

The king himself spake, saying: “Naught hath he to us done
Save what is good and worthy; so let his life alone.
What matter though the warrior were hateful now to me?
He hath been ever faithful and that right willingly.”

869

Then spake the warrior Ortwein, who came from Metz, and said:
“His great strength, of a surety, shall give him little aid.
If now my lord allow me, short shrift of him I’ll make.”
Thus, without cause, the heroes the part of foes did take.

870

But none went any further, save Hagen, who for aye,
Was pressing upon Gunther this counsel day by day:
That, if King Siegfried lived not, to him would subject be
The broad lands that he governed;— the king heard ruefully.

871

They let the matter rest; then to jousting did they take.
Ha! many a sturdy lance-shaft for Siegfried's wife they brake
In shadow of the minster, up to the royal hall!
Yet were some men of Gunther's but ill-content withal.

872

The king spake: "Lay aside now this murd'rous hate and scorn;
Unto our weal and honour he verily was born.
So fierce his strength is also, this marvellous-bold knight,
Had he of this an inkling, none durst withstand his might."

873

"He'll never know," quoth Hagen, "save thou should let it out!
I trow that I in secret can bring it so about
That for Brunhilda's weeping sore reckoning he shall pay.
Yea, verily is Hagen his enemy for aye."

874

Then spake the royal Gunther: "And how may that be done?"
And Hagen said in answer: "That will I now make known.
We'll bid two unknown envoys to ride as from afar
Unto our land, 'fore all men to challenge us to war.

875

"Then thou, before the guests, wilt declare that thou must go
To battle, with thy liegemen; and when he that doth know
He'll offer you his service: so shall he lose his life.
I'll seek to learn his secret from the bold warrior's wife."

876

Unto his vassal Gunther in evil hour gave ear.
With treason foul to tamper, ere any grew aware,
Began those chosen warriors of chivalry the boast.
By wrangling of two women was many a hero lost.

Adventure XV

How Siegfried Was Betrayed

877

Upon the fourth day morning came two and thirty men
Unto the king's court riding; and word was carried then
To Gunther, the most mighty, that he was call'd to war.
The lie cost many a woman much grief and sorrow sore.

878

When leave to them was granted, before the king they went,
And said that they were under King Lud'ger's government—
Who vanquish'd was aforetime by doughty Siegfried's hand,
And brought by him a captive unto King Gunther's land.

879

Then greeted he the heralds, and bade them seated be.
But one among them pray'd him: "Sire, let us stand, till we

Our message have deliver'd and errand duly done:
Know then that thou art hated by many a mother's son!
880

"King Ludegast and Lud'ger, do challenge you to war,
Of whom you were aforetime the bloody conqueror:
They're coming with their armies, to ride thy country through."
At this the king feign'd anger, as if to him 'twere new.
881

They took these counterfeiters to hostel presently.
How then could Siegfried ware be of any treachery—
Could he or any other suspect they played a part?
Unto themselves hereafter befell the pain and smart.
882

The king with his advisers were whispering without cease;
Nor would Hagen of Tronjé e'er let him be at peace.
Though many a lord would gladly have given up the plot,
Yet Hagen from his counsel would never swerve a jot.
883

One day it chanced that Siegfried came on this scheming band;—
And straight began to ask them the Lord of Netherland:
"Why goes the king so sadly, thus brooding with his men?
Hath any done him mischief, I'll help avenge it then."
884

Then up and spake King Gunther: “Cause have I sad to be!
For Ludegast and Lud’ger have straightly challenged me:
The eyes of all shall see them here riding in my land.”
Then cried the gallant hero: “Right soon shall Siegfried’s hand,

885

“As doth beseem your honour, this business undertake
To break these warriors’ power, as it erewhile I brake:
Their strongholds shall be ruin’d, their land be ravagéd,
Ere I with them have ended: thereon I stake my head!

886

You may with all your warriors at home stay quietly,
And let me ride to battle with those who came with me.
That willingly I serve you, you very soon shall know:
Your foes by me shall suffer as ne’er before, I trow.”

887

“This is to me good hearing,” the king in answer said—
As if he were in earnest well-pleased to have his aid.
Before the knight low bow’d he— the false and faithless knave!
Then said the noble Siegfried: “No care you need to have!”

888

With their esquires and liegemen they plann’d the journey then:
’Twas done for the deceiving of Siegfried and his men.
He bade them all be ready, his men of Netherland:
And soon had Siegfried’s warriors their fighting gear at hand.

889

Then spake the gallant Siegfried: “My father Siegmund, pray
Remain thou here behind us; we shall not long delay;
If so be that God speed us, we’ll come back to the Rhine.
So with the king abiding shall happy days be thine!”

890

The banner they unfurléd, as though they fain would start.
Of Gunther’s liegemen present there were a goodly part
Who naught knew of the message, nor what it all did mean:
A mighty throng of people round Siegfried there was seen.

891

Their helmets and their breastplates on horses they did stow:
And many a stout knight hastened to leave the land and go.
Then went Hagen of Tronjé to where Kriemhild did stand,
And prayed for leave of absence, since they would quit the land.

892

“Thrice happy I,” cried Kriemhild, “that I have got for lord
One who to my dear kinsmen such succour can accord,
As doth my dear lord Siegfried unto my kindred here.
Therefore,” the queen said, “will I be now of right good cheer.

893

“But you, my good friend Hagen, one thing remember still;
That I would gladly serve you, nor e’er have done you ill;
For this you can requite me to my dear lord one day:
If I’ve done aught to Brunhild for that he must not pay!

894

“For since then I have rued it,” the noble lady said;
“He therefore hath my body most sorely punishéd.
If I did ever utter aught to enrage her mood,
Right well hath he avenged her, the hero bold and good.”

895

“You yet shall be forgiven, in days to come,” quoth he;
“Kriemhilda, my dear lady, now must you tell to me
How through your husband Siegfried to serve you I may try;
I’ll gladly do it, lady; to none more willingly.”

896

“I should have no misgivings,” replied the noble wife,
“Lest any one in battle should jeopardize his life;
If he were not so reckless and over-rash of mood
He aye might be in safety, my gallant thane and good.”

897

Thereon said Hagen, “Lady, if you have any fear
Lest any one should wound him, ’twere best to let me hear
The arts that I must practise if any ill betide;
For I will ever guard him, whether I walk or ride.”

898

She spake: “Thou art my kinsman, as I, in sooth, am thine;
Therefore to thee I’ll trust him, this darling love of mine,
That thou mayst guard him for me— this husband of my own.”
Then told she him the story ’twere well he had not known.

899

She spake: “Bold is my husband and strong enough thereto.
When he upon the mountain erstwhile the dragon slew,
In the brute’s blood he bathed him, the goodly warrior,
And since that day, in battle, no steel can cut him more.

900

“Yet, no less am I anxious when he in fight doth stand
And javelins fly around him from many a hero’s hand,
Lest by mischance I lose him, and mourn my husband dear.
Alas, what sorrow have I for Siegfried’s sake to bear!

901

“I’ll tell it as a favour, my dearest friend, to thee—
In faith that thou maintainest the pledge thou gav’st to me—
Where, only, may be wounded this husband dear of mine,
I’ll let thee hear, confiding unto no ear but thine.

902

“When from the dragon’s death-wounds came pouring the hot blood
And therein he was bathing himself, the warrior good—
There fell between his shoulders a large-sized linden-leaf:
On that spot one may wound him; ’tis this doth cause my grief.”

903

Then spake Hagen of Tronjé: “Upon his garment sew
A little token for me, that I the spot may know
Where I have got to shield him, when we stand in the strife.”
She thought to save the hero: by this he lost his life.

904

She spake: “With fine silk will I upon his garment sew
A little cross unnoticed, that so thy hand may know,
O hero, where to guard him, when into fight he goes,
And in the stress of battle he stands before his foes.”

905

“That will I do,” quoth Hagen, “my lady dear.” Whereon
The lady thought some vantage she for her lord had won:
And yet Kriemhilda’s husband was by this means betray’d.
His leave then took Sir Hagen, and went away right glad.

906

The king’s men and retainers were all of cheerful mood.
And yet, I ween, no warrior within his breast e’er could
Hide heart so false and perjured, as he in his did hide
Upon whose faith and promise Kriemhild the queen relied.

907

Upon the next day morning with his own thousand men
Rode forth the gallant Siegfried: and joyful was he then.
He thought he would take vengeance for his friend’s injury.
To him rode Hagen closely that he his coat might eye.

908

When he espied the token, two of his following
He sent away in secret another tale to bring:
How peace should not be broken towards King Gunther’s land—
They had but come as envoys by Ludeger’s command.

909

How loth turn'd Siegfried homewards; he rode unwillingly,
Sad that his friend's annoyance thus unavenged should be!
Hardly could Gunther's warriors bring him to turn his ranks.
Unto the king straight rode he: his host began his thanks.

910

"Now God reward thy goodwill, my noble friend Siegfried!
That thou didst go so gladly to help me in my need,
I aye shall be thy debtor, as I of right should be.
Beyond all friends and kinsmen I build my faith on thee.

911

"Now that this expedition will trouble us no more,
I fain would go a-hunting the wild bear and the boar
At Waskenwalde, yonder, as I so oft have done."
This was the plan of Hagen, the false and faithless one.

912

"To all guests in my palace due notice shall there be
That I will ride forth early: those who would hunt with me
Must hold themselves all ready; those who would rather stay
To loiter with the ladies have my good leave alway."

913

Then spake the stalwart Siegfried, with noble courtliness:
"If you will ride a-hunting, Til gladly do no less.
A huntsman you must lend me, and sundry hounds also,
Then gladly to the forest along with you I'll go."

914

“And dost thou want one only?” the king said thereupon,
“I’ll lend thee, if it please thee, four men to whom are known
The forest and the coverts the quarry most frequent;
So that the tryst in seeking thy time be not misspent.”

915

Home to his wife then rode he, the goodly warrior bold,
And quickly faithless Hagen unto the king had told
How he could get the vantage of the brave thane: ’twere shame
Such treason foul should ever disgrace a noble name.

Adventure XVI

How Siegfried Was Slain

916

King Gunther now and Hagen, those knights exceeding bold,
Had treacherously plotted a woodland hunt to hold.
With lances sharp pursuing the boar in forest free,
The wild bull and the bear too: what bolder sport could be?

917

With them rode Siegfried also, in honourable mind.
They carried food, too, with them, and that in divers kind.
Hard by a cool spring was he foredoom'd to lose his life.
And this was by the counsel of Brunhild, Gunther's wife.

918

First went the bold thane thither where he Kriemhilda found,
Already on pack-horses his hunting-gear was bound,

And that of his companions: to cross the Rhine they meant,
Kriemhilda ne’er before had such reason to lament.

919

And then his own belovéd he on the mouth did kiss:
“God grant that I may find thee, my wife, safe, after this;
And that thine eyes may see me! With good friends, till I come
Beguile the time of waiting, I may not bide at home.”

920

Now thought she of the secret she had to Hagen told:—
She did not dare to own it— nor longer could withhold
The noble queen lamenting that she had e’er been born!
For thus with grief unmeasured did Siegfried’s fair wife mourn.

921

She spake unto the warrior: “Ah, let your hunting be!
Last night I had an ill dream: two wild boars I did see
That chased you o’er the moorland: the flowers grew red as blood.
If I do weep thus sorely, ’tis that I bode no good.

922

“I have a sore misgiving that there may be some plot:
Whether some grudge be owed us for service rendered not,
Which may be bringing on us dire hate and enmity?
Go not, dear lord, I beg thee in truth and honesty.”

923

“My love, in but a few days again I shall be here.
Nor know I of these people one who ill-will doth bear;
To me at all times friendly are all thy kith and kin:
Nor by these warriors elsewise entreated have I been.”

924

“Nay, nay, my dear lord Siegfried, I bode thy fate too well:
Last night my evil dreaming told how upon thee fell
Two mountains in the valley; I saw thee never more.
If thou wilt thus forsake me, ’twill wound me to the core.”

925

His wife so good and loving he in his arms did press,
And cherish’d her fair body with kisses numberless;
Then took his last leave of her, and tore himself away;
Alas, no more she saw him alive after that day!

926

Now rode they forth and came to a deep and shady wood,
For sake of sport, and many a warrior bold and good
Did follow after Gunther and with his sportsmen roam.
But Giselher and Gernot, they two remained at home.

927

And many horses, laden with stores of bread and wine
Provided for the huntsmen, went forward o’er the Rhine;
Both fish and flesh they carry, and many another cate
Such as a king so wealthy might duly have to eat.

928

They ordered their encampment, these hunters proud, hard by
The greenwood's skirts, where mostly the quarry's runs did lie
Which they to hunt were minded; 'twas on an eyot broad,
And thither too came Siegfried: as straight the king had word.

929

The hunters then appointed the watchers where to take
Their places at the openings. Then he, the bold man, spake,
Siegfried the ever-stalwart, "Who leads us through the wood,
To show us where the game is, ye valiant thanes and good?"

930

"Suppose we part," quoth Hagen, "or ever we begin
To beat about the forest to see what is therein.
That I and these my masters may reason have to know
Who are the better sportsmen that on this chase do go.

931

"The beaters and the hounds too, we'll evenly divide:
Thus each his choice may follow where'er he please to ride.
Then he who is best sportsman shall have our thanks therefore."
So spake he, and the hunters together stay'd no more.

932

Then said the noble Siegfried: "The hounds I value not,
Save but a single setter, who such a scent hath got
That he the track will follow where'er the game hath led;
Here's to a merry hunting!" Kriemhilda's husband said.

933

Thereon an aged huntsman took with him a sleuth-hound,
And brought the noble hunters to where much game they found
Without too long a-seeking. The comrades then did hunt
Whatever broke from covert, as sportsmen keen are wont.

934

Whate'er the setter mark'd him, that slew with his own hand
Siegfried the doughty hero, who came from Netherland.
His steed so swiftly bore him, that naught could him outrun;
Praise above all the others upon this chase he won.

935

In all he put his hand to alert he was enow;
Of all the beasts, the first one that he to death did do
An ox was, strong and savage, that with his hand he fell'd;
And then he, on a sudden, a lion grim beheld.

936

E'en as the hound aroused it he with his bow let fly,
On which a sharpen'd arrow he'd fitted hastily.
After the shot the lion but three bounds further ran;
Whereon his hunting comrades to thank Siegfried began.

937

There after he an elk slew, and then a buffalo,
And then four sturdy bisons, a savage stag also.
His steed so swiftly bore him that naught could get away:
Of harts and hinds scarce any there were he fail'd to slay.

938

A huge wild boar the sleuth-hound had routed from his lair,
And when to flee he turn'd him right in his path was there
The hero of the hunting, all ready for the fight;
The savage brute did straightway charge at the valiant knight.

939

This boar Kriemhilda's husband then with his broadsword slew:
The like no other huntsman so easily could do.
And when he thus had felled him, they put in leash the hound:
His goodly spoils were talk'd of all Burgundy around.

940

Then spake to him his huntsmen: "If 'tis for us to say,
Leave us, we pray, Lord Siegfried, a few live beasts to slay!
To-day thou hast made empty for us both wood and wold."
Thereat he fell to smiling that worthy thane and bold.

941

Then suddenly, on all sides, were heard great noise and cries.
From dogs and men together such tumult did arise
That all the woodland echoed, and eke the mountain-side
For four-and-twenty leash-hounds the hunters had untied.

942

Then many a forest creature must unto death be done,
Since every hunter fancied that he might be the one
To win the prize for hunting: but no award could be
Until beside the camp-fire stout Siegfried they did see.

943

The hunting, though ’twas over, was not yet brought to end:
For some, with burdens laden, to camp their way did wend,
Of beast fells bringing many, and game a goodly store.
What piles of it for cooking the king’s camp-servants bore!

944

Then to the high-born hunters the king would have it known
That he to dine was ready. Then all at once was blown
A hunting-horn, right loudly, that all might know around
That now the noble princes would at the camp be found.

945

Quoth one of Siegfried’s huntsmen: “Sir, I have heard but now,
By sounding of a horn, that ’tis time for us to go
Back to the camp: in answer I will my bugle wind.”
Then went the loud blasts flying their followers to find.

946

Then spake the noble Siegfried: “Now let us leave the wood!”
His hunter bore him smoothly: and all in haste they rode.
They startled, with their clatter, a grisly brute and grim—
A savage bear. Then, turning to those who followed him,

947

The thane cried: “Now our comrades a little fun shall share!
Loose from the leash the setter; yonder I spy a bear;
I’ll see that he goes with us from here unto the camp.
He never can escape us, however fast he tramp!”

948

They loosed the hound, and swiftly the bear before them hied.
Then thought Kriemhilda's husband close after him to ride;
But to a ground-rift came he, whereby it could not be;
The sturdy beast made certain 'twas from the huntsmen free.

949

The proud knight, from his charger, sprang down upon the sward:
And straight began to chase it; the beast was off its guard,
And could not now outrun him: the hero clasp'd it round,
And, in a trice, unwounded, he held it tightly bound.

950

The man it was not able to scratch or bite one jot!
He bound it to his saddle, then promptly up he got.
Unto the camp he bore it— a prize of hardihood;
Which all was but a pastime to that knight bold and good.

951

How noble was his bearing as into camp he rode!
His spear was very mighty, and thereto stout and broad.
Right down unto the rowel a handsome long-sword hung:
And a fair horn around him of ruddy gold was slung.

952

Of better hunting-habit I never have been told.
In tunic of black velvet there was he to behold;
A riding-cap of sable, handsome enough, he wore;
Ay, and what broider'd fillets he on his quiver bore!

953

Upon it there was fitted a cap of panther's hide,
Because of its sweet odour. He carried at his side
A bow, such that it needed— to draw it to the full—
A hand-winch, when another save he himself did pull.

954

And then his nether garments of otter-skin were made.
From head to foot his raiment with tufts was overlaid.
And, 'mid the sleek fur, many a thread of golden twine
Of this bold champion-hunter on either side did shine.

955

And Balmung bore he also— a handsome blade and broad,
That was so sharp, moreover, its edge was never scored
When helms by it were dinted; and either edge was keen.
Ne'er had that noble huntsman of gayer spirit been.

956

Since I have undertaken the story to declare,
I must tell how his quiver was fill'd with arrows rare;
The shafts of them were golden, the points a hand-breadth wide.
Whate'er with them he piercéd, surely and swiftly died.

957

So rode the noble hero in all his hunting gear;
And Gunther's men espied him as he to them drew near.
They hurried out to meet him, and led his horse along.
There lay across his saddle the bear so huge and strong.

958

As soon as he alighted he loosed the binding thong
From off its paws and muzzle; then yelpings loud and long
Of hounds arose, so soon as afoot the bear appear'd.
The brute would to the forest: the folk were fairly scared.

959

The bear, through all the shouting, into the kitchen ramp'd:
Hey, how the frighted scullions from round the fire decamp'd!
The kettles toppled over, the burning sticks were drown'd:
Hey, what a store of victuals lay in the ashes round!

960

Quick from their seats upsprang they, the masters and the men.
The bear began a-growling: the king gave orders then
To let loose all the hound-pack, that in their leashes lay.
Had it herewith but ended that were a merry day!

961

With bows and spears provided they stay'd no longer there,
But off the swift ones started to follow up the bear.
Yet no one shot: so closely the dogs were thronging round.
The shouting of the people made hill and dale resound.

962

With all the pack behind him the bear began to race,
But, save Kriemhilda's husband, no one could match its pace.
He quickly ran upon it, and with a sword-stroke slew.
Then to the camp-fire, slaughter'd, the grisly brute they drew.

963

And all who saw, were saying he was a mighty man.
The hunters proud were summon'd, and then the feast began.
Upon a fair green meadow, a goodly crowd they sate;
Ha, 'twas a royal banquet these haughty hunters ate!

964

The cupbearers still came not, who were the wine to bring—
No heroes ever better deserved such offering;
Had there not been in secret such treacherous intent,
Then free had been those warriors of all disparagement.

965

Then spake the noble Siegfried: "I marvel much hereat;—
Since from the kitchen plenty of food they send to eat,
Why come not the cupbearers to bring us also wine?
Let them treat hunters better, or 'tis no sport of mine!

966

"I have deserved that people more care of me should take."
The king then from the table, in answer, falsely spake:
"However we have blunder'd we'll mend it by-and-by;
'Tis all the fault of Hagen, who'd have us all go dry."

967

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: "My dear lord list to me,
I reckon'd that the hunting to-day was fix'd to be
Right over in the Spessart, so sent the wine-flasks there.
If we to-day go thirsty, next time I'll take more care!"

968

Then answer'd the lord Siegfried: "Small thanks, methinks, are thine!
Seven sumpters' burden should they of mead and unmix'd wine
Have hither sent to meet us; or were that hard to do,
They should have pitch'd our quarters more nigh the Rhine unto."

969

Then spake Hagen of Tronjé: "Ye noble knights and bold,
I know that here hard by is a spring of water cold—
Pray be ye not offended— 'tis thither we should go."
To many a thane this counsel was fraught with mickle woe.

970

With pangs of thirst was Siegfried the warrior sorely smit:
The sooner then the table he gave them word to quit;
Along the hill-side would he unto the fountain wend.
Thus what the knights had plotted drew on towards its end.

971

The game that had been slaughter'd by Siegfried's cunning hand,
They bade men pile on wagons, and carry through the land.
And everyone who saw it his praise and honour spake.
Right grievously did Hagen his troth to Siegfried break.

972

Whilst to the shady lindens they were upon their way,
Cried Hagen, lord of Tronjé: "Oft have I heard men say
That to Kriemhilda's husband no one a match could be
When he would show his paces: ay! will he let us see!"

973

Then spake the Netherlander Siegfried, the valiant:
“Now is the time for trying, if ye a wager want,
From here unto the fountain; so soon as it be done
The onlookers shall settle which is the foremost one.”

974

“Now verily we’ll try it,” the warrior Hagen said.
Then quoth the stalwart Siegfried: “If ye come in ahead,
Before your feet I’ll lay me full length upon the grass.”
When Gunther heard the promise, how glad at heart he was!

975

Then spake the bold thane further: “Yet something more I’ll say,
I’ll carry all the clothing that I have worn to-day—
My spear and eke my buckler, and all my hunting gear.”
His sword and quiver bound he around him then and there.

976

But they, the king and Hagen, their upper clothes did doff:
In two white shirts one saw them stand ready to be off.
As fleet as two wild panthers they through the clover ran:
Yet at the spring bold Siegfried came in the foremost man.

977

In all he put his hand to he won the prize from all.
Straightway his sword he loosen’d and let his quiver fall;
Against a bough of linden he let his stout spear rest;
Close by the flowing fountain now stood the stately guest.

978

And herein also Siegfried did manifest his worth:
He laid his shield beside him where flow'd the fountain forth,
But, greatly as he thirsted, the hero tasted not
Before the king had drunken: base thanks from him he got.

979

Cool was the spring of water, and clean, and bright, and good;
And Gunther bent him downwards to the refreshing flood;
As soon as he had quenchéd his thirst, away he came;
Then ready was bold Siegfried and would have done the same.

980

His courtesy and breeding, then met with their reward:
For Hagen to the background withdrew his bow and sword.
Then back again ran quickly to where he found the spear,
And looked to find a token the hero's coat did bear.

981

And whilst the noble Siegfried drank of the rippling flood
He stabb'd him through the cross-mark, and through the wound his blood
Straight from his heart outspurted, and Hagen's shirt was wet;
So foul a misdeed never befell a hero yet.

982

He left the lance within him close to his heart stuck tight;
And grimly then did Hagen betake himself to flight,
As in his life he never from mortal man did flee.
The stalwart Siegfried, feeling how sorely smit was he,

983

All madly from the fountain in rage and anguish sprang,
Whilst from between his shoulders a long lance-shaft did hang.
The chieftain thought to find there his bow, or else his sword:
Then verily had Hagen not gone without reward.

984

But when the knight sore-wounded his sword had fail'd to find,
And saw that they had left him naught save his shield behind,
He gripp'd it from the well's side, and after Hagen ran:
Then vainly to escape him essay'd King Gunther's man.

985

Though he to death was wounded, so mightily smote he,
That from the hero's buckler there fell abundantly
The precious stones that deck'd it; the shield itself did break;
The noble guest his vengeance was fain enow to wreak.

986

Yet by his hand must Hagen lie stretch'd upon the ground.
So hard, in sooth, his blows were, they made the glebe resound.
Had he his sword had handy, then Hagen had been slain.
The wound was burning sorely, and made him writhe with pain.

987

His cheeks had lost their colour; no longer stand could he,
And all his strength of body was failing utterly;
Death's sign upon his forehead in pallid hue he bore:
Fair women soon were mourning for him with weeping sore.

988

Then fell Kriemhilda's husband upon the flowery sward:
One saw from out the lance-wound, how fast his life-blood pour'd.
Upbraiding then began he— forced by his mortal pain—
Those who had thus betray'd him and treacherously slain.

989

"Ye perjured, lying cowards," the dying warrior said,
"What hath avail'd my service, since thus ye strike me dead?
To you aye was I faithful: and thus do ye repay!
Your kith and kin shall suffer for what ye've wrought this day.

990

"The children born unto ye shall be, from this day forth,
For evermore accurséd, for ye have wreak'd your wrath,
And vengeance all too sorely upon my body done:
Now ye, with scorn and hatred, all worthy knights shall shun."

991

The knights all ran together to where he stricken lay.
To many a man among them it was a joyless day.
They who had aught of honour sore lamentation made.
From all he well deserved it, this hero undismay'd.

992

The king of the Burgundians mourn'd also for his death.
Then spake the dying chieftain: "Small need is there, in faith,
That he who work'd the evil should grieve that it be done:
Much blame he hath deservéd: 'twere better left alone!"

993

Grim Hagen spake to Gunther: “What art thou weeping for?
For done is our vexation and all our sorrows o’er:
We shall find few henceforward who ’gainst us dare to stand.
Glad am I that his kingship hath perish’d by my hand!”

994

“’Tis easy now to vaunt ye,” said Siegfried, in reply,
“If I had known beforehand your deadly enmity,
Alone would I against ye have well maintain’d my life:
For naught grieve I so sorely as for Kriemhild, my wife.

995

“And now must God forgive me, that I a son did get
Whom folks shall taunt in future and let him not forget
That kin of his by some one was murderously slain.
If that avail’d,” said Siegfried, “right well might I complain.”

996

Yet once more spake the hero, in anguish nigh to death:
“If thou, O king most noble, art willing to hold faith
With any living being, I fain would now consign
Unto your grace and favour, that well-loved wife of mine.

997

“And let her from this profit, that thou her brother art:
If there is faith in princes, stand by her with true heart.
My father and my liegemen must tarry long for me;
Ne’er worse to any woman could loss of dear friend be.”

998

All round about, the flowers were wetted with his blood,
As now with Death he struggled: nor long the strife withstood.
Alas, the deadly weapon too well had done its part!
Then mote he speak no further, that warrior of bold heart.

999

And when the nobles saw that the hero was quite dead,
Upon a shield they laid him, that was of wrought gold red;
And straightway held they counsel how they might best take heed
From all to keep it hidden that Hagen did the deed.

1000

Then divers of them counsell'd: "Woe hath befallen us,
But ye must all conceal it, and tell the story thus:
'As Dame Kriemhilda's husband alone a-hunting rode,
Some vagabonds set on him and slew him in the wood.'"

1001

Then spake of Tronjé Hagen: "Myself I'll take him home,
It matters not to me that the truth to her should come:
Brunhilda's mind hath sorely by her been harasséd,
It troubles me but little what tears she now may shed!"

Adventure XVII

How Kriemhilda Mourn'd for Her Husband, and How He Was Buried

1002

Then waited they for nightfall, and o'er the Rhine did row:
Ne'er to more direful ending could heroes hunting go.
The quarry they had slaughter'd mourn'd noble maids and wives:
And many goodly warriors paid for it with their lives.

1003

Of arrogance o'erweening the tale ye soon shall hear,
And of a fearful vengeance. Then Hagen bade men bear
The body of dead Siegfried, the Niblung lord of late,
And lay it in a chamber wherein Kriemhild did wait.

1004

He had him laid in secret down close beside her door,
That she might find him lying when she, as heretofore,

Went forth to matins early, ere daylight had begun;
Which duty dame Kriemhilda but seldom left undone.

1005

The wonted bell was ringing, which to the minster bade;
Then rose the fair Kriemhilda and waken'd many a maid:
She bade them bring a taper, and fetch her all her gear.
Then came a chamber-servant who lit on Siegfried there.

1006

In red blood he was lying, and all his garb was wet;
But that it was his master he did not know as yet.
Into the room he carried the candle in his hand,
From him did Dame Kriemhilda some ill news understand.

1007

For, as she with her women would to the minster fare,
The chamberlain spake to her: "My lady, stay you there!
Right opposite the doorway a murder'd knight doth lie."
Whereat began Kriemhilda to weep unmeasuredly.

1008

Before she knew for certain that 'twas her husband dead,
Unto her mind recall'd she how Hagen questionéd
In what way he might guard him: then first she was afraid.
An he were dead, her pleasure was all to sorrow made.

1009

To earth down sank she swooning, and ne'er a word could say:
Upon the hapless fair one men gazed as there she lay.
The grief of Dame Kriemhilda was past all measuring:
After her swoon, the chamber did with her wailing ring.

1010

Her people said unto her: "What if it be a guest?"
But from her mouth came flowing the blood, by anguish press'd;
Then spake she: "'Tis my husband, my own belov'd Siegfried:
It was Brunhilda's counsel, and Hagen did the deed."

1011

The lady bade them lead her where she her hero found.
With her white hand she lifted his fair head from the ground;
Red as he was with blood-stains, well knew she him again.—
There lay the Niblung hero, so pitifully slain.

1012

Then in her sorrow cried she, that fair and gentle queen:
"Woe on mine evil fortune! Upon thy shield is seen
No dint of any sword-stroke: thou liest murder'd there.
And wist I who hath done it, of death mote he be ware."

1013

Thereon all her attendants began to wail and weep:
With their belovéd lady, their grief indeed was deep
About their noble master, of whom they were forlorn.
Thus heavily had Hagen made good Brunhilda's scorn.

1014

Then sorrowfully spake she: “Go hence now, all of ye,
And waken Siegfried’s liegemen as quickly as may be.
And unto Siegmund also my sorrow must ye tell,
If so be he will help me to mourn brave Siegfried well.”

1015

A messenger ran swiftly and found them where they lay—
Siegfried’s own band of heroes from Niblung land were they.
He told the grievous tidings, and joy fled at his word;
Yet would they not believe it till they the wailing heard.

1016

The messenger sped further to where he found the king.
Unto the noble Siegmund that night no sleep did bring;
His heart within foreboded what happ’d to him, I ween:
How that his dear son living should never more be seen.

1017

“Awake, arise, Lord Siegmund! Kriemhilda, my mistress,
Hath bidden me to fetch thee; to her a sore distress
Hath happ’d beyond all others, which cuts her to the heart:
And thou must help her mourning, for thou in it hast part.”

1018

Upstarted Siegmund, crying: “What grief hath happenéd
Unto the fair Kriemhilda, as thou just now hast said?”
Then spake the herald, weeping, “I cannot it withhold:
Ay! Siegfried hath been murder’d, the Netherlander bold!”

1019

Then spake the noble Siegmund: “Pray let this jesting be,
And of such evil stories, beware, for love of me,
The like you tell to no man— how Siegfried hath been slain:
In such case could I never live happily again.”

1020

“If thou wilt not believe me when thou hast heard my tale,
With thine own ears ’tis easy to hear Kriemhilda wail;
For she and all her people are mourning Siegfried dead.”
Then sore afraid was Siegmund: and sad was he indeed.

1021

Straight from his couch upsprang he, with five score of his men;
They reach’d their hands in search of their weapons long and keen,
And ran, grief-stricken, thither to where they heard the cries;
Then, too, the thousand warriors of Siegfried bold did rise.

1022

Whilst piteously the women were heard to weep and moan,
Some of the men bethought them that raiment they should don:
Ay, scarcely for their trouble could they their senses keep.
And bitter was the anguish that in their hearts lay deep.

1023

Soon came the royal Siegmund to where Kriemhild did stand.
He spake: “Woe on the journey that brought us to this land
Who hath thy husband taken, and reft me of my son,
And, amidst friends and kinsmen, thus murderously done?”

1024

“Ah, if I only knew him!” the noble wife did say,
“No mercy would I show him, in mind or body aye:
Such evil would I do him, that if his kith and kin
Had not good cause for weeping, ’twould be no fault of mine.”

1025

Then in his arms did Siegmund the murder’d prince enfold;
Whereat his friends their sorrow so little could withhold,
That with their lamentation the palace rang and hall;
And even through Worms city, the sounds of woe did fall.

1026

To none who strove to comfort did Siegfried’s wife give heed.
Meanwhile from out its clothing his body fair they freed;
They washed his wounds with water, and laid him on the bier;
The sorrow of his people right grievous was to hear.

1027

Then up and spake his warriors the men of Niblung-land:
“With right goodwill shall vengeance be taken at our hand;
Within this very fortress is he who did the deed.”
Then ran they all for weapons the liegemen of Siegfried.

1028

These thanes, for valour chosen, each with his shield, were there,
A thousand and one hundred, ready at hand they were
To follow noble Siegmund. The murder of his son
He to avenge was eager— ’twas needful to be done.

1029

Nor knew they ’gainst what foemen they had to strive withal,
Unless it might be Gunther and his bold liegemen all,
With whom their master Siegfried, did late a-hunting go.
Kriemhilda saw them arming, and grievous was her woe.

1030

However deep her sorrow, and dire as was her need,
Yet did she for the Niblungs fear with such mighty dread
Death, by her brother’s liegemen, that she would have them stay:
She warn’d them in all kindness, as friends each other may.

1031

Thus spake the grief-lorn lady; “My lord Siegmund, what dost
Thou think to take in hand now? Thou hast not weigh’d the cost.
King Gunther hath so many bold warriors at command,
That all of ye will perish if ye his knights withstand.”

1032

With shields already lifted, they needs must to the fray;
The noble queen besought them and even bade them stay,
And seek not for a conflict— these knights of courage high.
Yet would they not forego it; which grieved her verily.

1033

So said she: “Noble Siegmund, ’twere best to let it be
Until a fitter season: then will I readily
Avenge with you mine husband. Who me hath widow made,
To him, when it is proven, shall evil be repaid.

1034

“Hereby upon the Rhine-strand dwells many a haughty knight:
I cannot therefore counsel that you with them should fight.
Full thirty warriors have they against our every one.
God grant that they may prosper as they to us have done!

1035

“Ye must remain beside me, this grief with me to share;
And, when the day is dawning, ye heroes bold prepare
To help me in his coffin my husband dear to lay.”
Then all the thanes made answer: “It shall be as you say.”

1036

No tongue could ever tell you the marvel of it, how
From knights as well as ladies arose the cries of woe,
So that throughout the city the noise thereof did sound.
The noble burghers heard it, and quickly throng’d around.

1037

They mournéd with the strangers, for they themselves were sad.
If fault had been with Siegfried, none told them that it had,
Nor why the noble warrior had forfeited his life.
Then wept, too, with the women, each worthy burgher’s wife.

1038

The smiths were bidden quickly a coffin to devise
Of gold y-wrought and silver, strong and of mickle size;
They bade them firmly bind it, with temper’d steel and good.
Then truly all the people were sorrowful of mood.

1039

The night was spent, and daylight ’twas said would soon appear.
The noble lady bade them unto the minster bear
Siegfried their noble master, her husband well-beloved.
One saw his friends all weeping, as they the body moved.

1040

They brought him to the minster, and toll’d was many a bell:
On every side the chanting of priests was heard to swell.
And thither came King Gunther, and all his folk with him,
To take part in the mourning; and likewise Hagen grim.

1041

He said: “My dearest sister, alas, indeed, for thee!
That from thy sorrow’s burden can none of us be free:
We must bewail for ever the loss of Siegfried’s life.”
“That do ye without reason,” answer’d the mourning wife.

1042

“It never need have happen’d if real your sorrow were;
Me must ye have forgotten— that may I well aver—
When I was there bereft of my own belovéd one.
I would to God,” said Kriemhild, “it had to me been done!”

1043

They clave unto their lying. Kriemhild began again:
“Whoso of you is guiltless, now let him make it plain;—
Let each before the people walk up unto the bier;
Thereby the truth that’s in him shall presently appear.”

1044

It is a wondrous marvel that oft hath happenéd:
That when one sees the slayer beside the murder'd dead,
The wounds afresh start bleeding; as here, too, came to pass.
Whereby men saw that Hagen the malefactor was.

1045

Again the wounds bled freely, as they had done afore;
They who had mourn'd him sorely bewail'd him now the more.
Then spake aloud King Gunther: "I tell you everyone
'Twas vagabonds that slew him: 'twas not by Hagen done."

1046

"These vagabonds, too surely are known to me," she spake,
"By friendly hands, God willing, we'll vengeance on them take!
Thou Gunther and thou Hagen have surely done this thing."
By this time Siegfried's warriors for strife were hankering.

1047

Kriemhilda spake yet further: "Now share with me my need."
Then came those twain unto her who found him lying dead—
They were her brother Gernot and Giselher the youth.
As many a man did later, these mourn'd for him in sooth.

1048

With all their hearts they mourn'd him, the husband of Kriemhild.
Now masses must be chanted: the minster soon was fill'd
With men, and wives, and children— from every side they came.
E'en they who little miss'd him mourn'd Siegfried all the same.

1049

Gernot, and Giselher with him, spake: “Sister dear to me,
Now, for this death, take comfort, as verily must be.
We will atone unto you as long as we shall live.”
Yet on the earth was no one who could her comfort give.

1050

His coffin was made ready wellnigh about mid-day;
Then from the bier they raised him, whereon till then he lay.
Fain would the noble lady have kept him from the grave;
Which unto her attendants sore trouble surely gave.

1051

In richly broider’d vestment they wrapp’d the body round,
And then, I ween, that no one unweeping there was found.
With all her heart wept Uté— a noble woman she—
And each of her attendants the goodly corpse to see.

1052

When people heard the chanting within the church begin,
And knew that he was coffin’d, they throng’d to enter in:
For his soul’s weal and profit what offerings were made!
In sooth, among the foemen good friends enough he had!

1053

Kriemhilda, the poor lady, said to her chamberlain:
“The love they bear towards me will be to them a bane,
Seeing they grudge him nothing and hold me also dear;
For Siegfried’s weal ’tis fitting that they his gold should share.

1054

There was no child so little, who any wit might have,
But join'd in the almsgiving, ere he was laid in grave.
More than a hundred masses were sung ere day was done
And Siegfried's friends and kinsmen came thronging ev'ry one.

1055

When ended was the chanting the people went away.
Then spake the lady Kriemhild: "Ye must not let me stay
Alone to watch beside him, this knight exceeding brave.
My joys are, with his body, all buried in the grave.

1056

"Three days and three nights longer here would I keep him still,
Until of my dear husband my heart has had its fill.
Then what if God should order that death should take me too?
Then would poor Kriemhild's sorrows no longer trouble you."

1057

The people from the city now homewards went their way.
The priests and monks Kriemhilda besought with her to stay,
And eke her own attendants, to watch beside the knight.
Forbidding was the darkness and wearisome the light.

1058

From eating and from drinking did many a man abstain.
If any cared to take it, to them it was made plain
That they might have in plenty: Siegmund of that took care.
And yet, full many a labour the Niblung-folk must share:

1059

For three whole days, unceasing— the story thus we hear—
They who had skill in singing must needs the burden bear
Of chanting many an office. What alms to them folk paid!
They who were poor aforetime now wealth in plenty had.
1060

Whene'er they found poor people who nothing had to bring,
They sent them to the minster, with gold for offering
From Siegfried's treasure taken. Since life he could not have,
Of marks for his soul's welfare they many thousand gave.
1061

The first-fruits were divided in all the land around,
Wherever cloister-houses or goodly folk were found.
Of silver and of raiment the poor got ample store:
Men did the like as showing what love to him they bore.
1062

Upon the third day early, just at the hour of Mass,
The churchyard wide extending— that by the minster was—
With country-people's wailing was fill'd from end to end.
In death they did him service, as to a well-loved friend.
1063

In those four days of mourning, indeed, it hath been said,
That marks full thirty-thousand, or even more, were paid
For sake of his soul's welfare, and given to the poor.
Laid low was all his beauty, his life was now no more.
1064

When God was servéd duly, and all the chants were sung,
A dreadful cry of sorrow arose from out the throng;
Out of the minster must they now bear him to his grave.
Those who were loth to lose him fresh tears and cries forth gave.

1065

With cries of lamentation the people follow'd then;
The faces all were joyless of women and of men.
Ere in his grave they laid him they sang and read withal;
Ay! and the priests were worthy who gave him burial.

1066

Or ever Siegfried's widow had come unto the grave,
Her faithful heart with sorrow such bitter strife did have
That they must needs revive her with water from the spring;
Her bitterness of sorrow was past all measuring.

1067

It was a mickle wonder that strength again she found.
With cries of pity, helping, the women throng'd around.
Then spake the Queen: "O liegemen of Siegfried, hearken ye!
I pray you of your fealty a favour grant to me—

1068

"That after all my sorrow this small grace I may gain,
And on his goodly features may set my eyes again."
So long did she beseech them, with all her sorrow's strength,
That they the splendid coffin must break apart at length.

1069

And then they brought the lady to where her love did lie,
And she his fair head lifted, with white hand tenderly,
And in his death she kiss'd him— the noble knight and good;
Her shining eyes, for sorrow, were weeping tears of blood.

1070

It was a piteous parting, if ever there was one.
And so away they bore her; she could not go alone,
For in a swoon and senseless that noble wife lay low;
Her life, for weal appointed, was wellnigh lost in woe.

1071

When now their noble master within his grave was laid,
Unmeasured was the sorrow that all his followers had,
Who from the Niblung country had borne him company;
And little joy or gladness in Siegmund was to see.

1072

Amongst them there were many who, for their sorrow's sake,
Till those three days were ended nor meat nor drink did take.
Yet could they not their bodies abandon utterly:
So feasting follow'd sorrow, as evermore will be.

Adventure XVIII

How Siegmund Went Back to His Own Land

1073

Kriemhilda's husband's father had to her presence come.
And to the queen thus spake he: "We now would fain go home,
I trow that we in Rhineland, unwelcome guests must be.
Kriemhilda, dearest lady, come to my land with me.

1074

"Since that your noble husband, by treason underhand,
Hath from us all been taken here in this very land,
You must not overlook it: I will be kind to you
For love of my son Siegfried; doubt not that this is true.

1075

Henceforward also, Lady, to you the power I'll yield
That the bold warrior Siegfried did teach you how to wield.

The land and the crown likewise shall subject be to you;
And all of Siegfried's vassals will gladly service do."

1076

Then were the servants bidden that thence they were to ride;—
It was a mighty business the horses to provide!
Amidst their bitter foemen to dwell were sorry cheer.
They bade the dames and maidens to seek their travelling gear.

1077

And when King Siegmund also was ready forth to ride,
The kinsmen of Kriemhilda besought her to abide:
Her place was with her mother, and there to stay ought she.
Then spake the noble lady: "Nay, that can hardly be!

1078

"How could I bear for ever him with these eyes to see,
Through whom to me, poor woman, hath come such misery?"
Then Giselher, the youthful, made answer: "Sister dear,
For duty's sake now shouldst thou bide with thy mother here.

1079

"Of them who have distress'd thee, and brought thee to despair,
Thou dost require no service; my fortune thou shalt share."
But to the knight she answer'd: "Nay, this can never be;
I needs must die of sorrow if I should Hagen see."

1080

“I’ll see that doth not happen, my sister dear,” quoth he,
“With Giselher thy brother in safety shouldst thou be;
Amends will I make to thee, for thy dear husband’s death.”
Then spake the poor forlorn one: “True need Kriemhilda hath!”

1081

When this so kindly offer to her the young man made,
Uté and also Gernot fell likewise to persuade,
With all her faithful kinsfolk: they begged her not to go:
For amongst Siegfried’s kindred not many did she know.

1082

“They are all strangers to thee,” Gernot began to say;
“So strong is no man living but he must die one day.
Bethink thee then, dear sister, and comfort thy sad mood;
Stay with thy friends and kinsmen: it will be for thy good.”

1083

So Giselher she promised that there she would abide.
The horses all were ready for Siegmund’s men to ride—
Who would be homeward riding unto the Niblung-land;
The pack-horses all laden with knightly gear did stand.

1084

Lord Siegmund came, and standing before Kriemhilda, then
Said he unto the lady: “The whole of Siegfried’s men
Await you by the horses; ’tis time we rode away—
For willingly I would not with the Burgundians stay.”

1085

But lady Kriemhild' answer'd: "My friends their counsel give—
So many as are faithful— that I with them should live:
For I have ne'er a kinsman within the Niblung-land."
Sad was the heart of Siegmund when he did understand.

1086

Then answer'd her King Siegmund: "Let that be said by none!
Rather than to my kinsmen I'll give to you my crown.
With power and might you'll wear it, as you have done before;
You shall be none the worse that our hero is no more.

1087

"Come back with us, if only it were for your child's sake:
You surely will not, lady, the babe an orphan make.
When once your son a man is he'll comfort your sad mood;
Meanwhile you'll have the service of many heroes good."

1088

She spake: "Sir Siegmund, truly I cannot with you ride.
Whate'er may happen to me here must I still abide
Among my friends and kinsfolk, and mourn with me they will."
The good knights at this answer began to take it ill.

1089

With one accord they answer'd: "Then must we fain confess
That for the first time, truly, our hearts knew bitterness,
Since you indeed are willing here with our foes to bide:
On such a grievous journey did heroes never ride."

1090

Said she: “Ye may, God-speeding, without foreboding fare:
Safe-conduct shall be given— of that I’ll have a care—
From here to Siegmund’s country. As for my darling child,
Unto ye knights I trust him, and to your mercies mild!”

1091

When they were well persuaded that thence she would not go,
The lieges all of Siegmund did weep for very woe.
How full of bitter sorrow was Siegmund when his leave
He took of dame Kriemhilda! Then knew he how to grieve.

1092

“Woe be on these great doings,” the noble king quoth he:
“An ending worse of pleasure there ne’er again can be
To king or to his kinsfolk, than this to us has been.
No more shall we henceforward in Burgundy be seen.”

1093

Then loud, that all might hear them, the men of Siegfried spake:
“Yet once again the journey may we to this land make,
When we shall have discover’d who laid our master low.
They’ll have among his kinsfolk stout enemies enow!”

1094

And so he kiss’d Kriemhilda; and mournfully did say,
Whenas he saw for certain she had a mind to stay:
“Now will we unrejoicing go home unto our land.
My sorrow for the first time now do I understand.”

1095

From Worms without an escort unto the Rhine they rode;
Well might they, notwithstanding, be confident of mood,
That if they should of foemen an onset have to ward,
The hands of stalwart Niblungs would serve them for a guard.
1096

Leave did they take of no man ere they set forth to ride.
But Giselher and Gernot were presently espied
All kindly coming t'wards him: his sorrow made them grieve,
As soon these gallant heroes did bring him to believe.
1097

For then the princely Gernot right courteously said:
"Be God in Heaven my witness! that Siegfried now is dead
Is through no fault on my part, nor have I heard men tell
Who wish'd him any evil: so can I mourn him well."
1098

Then had they a safe-conduct at Giselher's own hand:
And carefully he led them in time, from out the land.
The king and all his warriors to Netherland got home.
How little could their kindred rejoice to see them come!
1099

And what befell them after I cannot rightly say.
And still one heard Kriemhilda bewailing day by day
That none could give her comfort, in either heart or mood,
But Giselher, who only was true to her and good.
1100

The beauteous Brunhilda still arrogantly sat:
Howe’er Kriemhilda fretted she took no thought for that,
And never more in goodwill did turn to her again.
Erelong the dame Kriemhilda did wring her heart with pain.

Adventure XIX

How the Nibelung Hoard Was Brought to Worms

1101

Now when the noble Kriemhild a widow thus was made
Count Eckewart was with her, and in the land he stay'd
With all his men, and daily he served her without fail,
And helped his lady often his master to bewail.

1102

At Worms, hard by the minster, they built for her a hall:
'Twas very wide and lofty, and richly deck'd withal.
There, with her own attendants, all joylessly sat she.
She loved the church's service and went there willingly.

1103

From where her love lay buried, she seldom was away;
With sorrow-laden spirit she went there every day.

She prayed to God Almighty to keep his soul aright.
And faithfully and often bewailéd was the knight.

1104

Uté and all her women to cheer her aye were fain;
Yet was the heart within her so sorely smit with pain,
However they might comfort she took not any heed.
She had for her belovéd such all-surpassing need,

1105

As for a well-loved husband no other wife ere found.
Thus might one see how virtues in her did much abound.
Unto her end she mourn'd him, as long as she had life,
And soon a mighty vengeance took valiant Siegfried's wife!

1106

So after all this sorrow— 'tis truth—she did abide
Until the fourth year's halving from when her husband died;
Nor all this time 'twixt Gunther and her did speech arise,
Nor did she once on Hagen, her enemy, set eyes.

1107

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: "Could you not so contrive
That you might with your sister in friendly fashion live?
That so unto this country might come the Niblung gold:
If but the queen were friendly, your gain were manifold."

1108

He said: “We must attempt it; my brothers are with her;
We’ll beg them so to urge her that she be friendlier,
Until at last prevail we that she thereto agree.”
Quoth Hagen: “I misdoubt me that that will ever be.”

1109

He presently bade Ortwein unto her court to go
Likewise the margrave Gere: and both of them did so.
And Giselher the youthful and Gernot, too, they brought,
Who straightway Dame Kriemhilda in friendly wise besought.

1110

To her the valiant Gernot of Burgundy then said:
“Too long hast thou, O Lady, bewail’d thy Siegfried dead!
The king to you will swear that by him he was not slain.
Still day by day one hears thee so bitterly complain.”

1111

Said she: “None doth accuse him: ’twas Hagen’s hand that slew;
And where he might be stricken from me alone he knew.
How could I have believed that such hate to him he bore?
More care would I have taken”— the Queen said furthermore—

1112

“Ere any word of mine had his noble life betray’d:
Then little cause for weeping should I, poor wife, have had.
No more can I have kindness for those who this have done.”
Then Giselher besought her, the brave and comely one.

1113

“To greet the king I’m willing,” she did at last declare:
With his best friends before her one saw him soon appear.
But Hagen durst at no time within her presence go
His guiltiness well knew he; ’twas he who wrought her woe.

1114

Since she her hate to Gunther was willing to forswear,
’Twould better have beseem’d him to kiss her then and there.
Were’t not that by his counsel her sorrows had been made,
He might have met Kriemhilda with boldness undismay’d.

1115

Ne’er was a reconcilement, when friend by friend was met,
More tearfully accomplish’d: her sorrow rankled yet.
Save only one amongst them, she pardon’d every one:
He ne’er were slain, if Hagen the murder had not done.

1116

Not very long thereafter they brought it so about
That unto dame Kriemhilda the mighty hoard came out
Of Niblung-land, and safely was to the Rhine conveyed.
It was her wedding dowry, and rightly hers was made.

1117

’Twas Gernot who went for it, and with him Giselher
And eighty-hundred liegemen, who had commands from her
To go and fetch the treasure from where it lay unseen,
Since Alberich its keeper, with trusty friends, had been.

1118

Now when they saw the Rhine-men coming the hoard to take,
The ever-valiant Albrich unto his comrades spake:
“We dare not keep the treasure withholden from her power,
Seeing the noble lady can claim it as her dower.

1119

“Yet never would the matter have come to such a pass,
Had we not had,” said Albrich, “the evil luck, alas!
The goodly cap of darkness with Siegfried’s self to lose:
Which fair Kriemhilda’s husband was ever wont to use.

1120

“Now evil unto Siegfried hath happen’d since the day
That from our hands the hero the Tarnhelm took away,
And all this land by conquest did to his service bind.”
Then went the treasure-keeper straightway the keys to find.

1121

At the hill-foot were waiting the Queen Kriemhilda’s men
And sundry of her kinsmen; the treasure bore they then
Down to the lake-shore, lading their vessel with the same:
Then o’er the waves they took it and up the Rhine-stream came.

1122

Now may you of this treasure a wondrous story hear:
It took a dozen wagons it from the mount to bear;
Four days and nights they ceased not to carry it away;
And each must make the journey, so laden, thrice a day.

1123

Naught else but gold and jewels within this treasure lay;
And had one taken from it what would the whole world pay,
’Twould not have seem’d to eyesight of one mark’s value quit.
Ay! Not without some reason did Hagen covet it.

1124

The gem of all lay lowest— a little rod of gold.
Whoever understood it he might the mastery hold
In all the world’s dominions, o’er every race of men.
Of Albrich’s kinsmen many did follow Gernot then.

1125

As soon as they had carried the hoard to Gunther’s land,
And thus the queen had taken the whole into her hand,
The storerooms and the towers were full as they could hold.
Never of such vast treasure the marvel hath been told.

1126

And even were the treasure increased a thousand fold,
And she once more might Siegfried in health and strength behold,
Gladly to him would Kriemhild have empty-handed gone:
For never could a hero a truer wife have won.

1127

Now that she had the treasure, she brought unto the land
Full many a stranger-warrior; in truth the lady’s hand
Her bounty gave so largely, the like had ne’er been known.
This queen had many virtues: that all the folk did own.

1128

To poor men and to wealthy she now began to give
So much, that Hagen argued: if she perchance should live
For long enough, ’twas likely so many would she win
To stay there in her service, that ’twould go ill with him.

1129

King Gunther said: “Her own are her body and estate;
What she shall do with either how then can I dictate?
Nay, hardly could I compass that she became thus kind.
So let both gold and silver go as she hath a mind.”

1130

But to the king said Hagen: “No prudent man and wise
Would leave to such a woman a treasure of this size.
In gifts we’ll see her spend it and squander the whole store,
And then the bold Burgundians may rue it evermore.”

1131

Then answer’d him king Gunther: “To her an oath I swore
That I to her would never do any evil more;
And that will I abide by, for she my sister is.”
But thereunto said Hagen: “Let me be blamed for this.”

1132

The oaths that they had taken they reckon’d all for naught.
And from the widow’s keeping the mighty hoard they brought,
And quietly did Hagen of all the keys get hold.
Wroth was her brother Gernot when he the truth was told.

1133

Then spake the noble Giselher: “Hagen a deal of ill
Hath done unto my sister: reckon with him I will.
And were he not my kinsman, ’twould stand him in his life.”
Then once again to weeping fell Siegfried’s widow’d wife.

1134

Then up and spake Lord Gernot: “Ere we be troubled aye
By reason of this treasure, we’ll take it all away
And sink it in the Rhine-stream; then will it no man’s be.”
To Giselher her brother then went she woefully.

1135

She spake: “Belovéd brother, thou must take thought for me;
Of both my life and substance the guardian thou shouldst be.”
Then spake he to the lady: “This will I undertake
When we have home returned: we have a ride to take.”

1136

The king and all his kinsmen now left their land behind—
The best of all were taken that one therein could find—
None stay’d save Hagen only; that did he for the hate
He bore unto Kriemhilda; with purpose did he wait.

1137

Before the mighty king came back to his home again,
Hagen had meanwhile managed the treasure great to gain.
Down in the Rhine at Lochheim he sank it bodily.
He hoped yet to enjoy it: but that was not to be.

1138

The princes came back shortly, and with them many a man.
Of her great loss Kriemhilda to make complaint began,
And all her maids and ladies: great was their grief, in sooth.
Ready with faithful service was Giselher the youth.

1139

They one and all said: “Hagen hath done us a foul wrong.”
Then from the princes’ anger he kept aloof for long,
Till he regain’d their favour; and so they left him free:
Yet never to Kriemhilda could he more hateful be.

1140

Before Hagen of Tronjé had hidden thus the hoard,
They made a pact together and with strong oaths assured,
That it should remain hidden as long as each should live:
None for himself should take it, nor to another give.

1141

So now again with sorrow her heart was desolate:
First for her husband’s murder, and now that her estate
Had all been taken from her. Thus she became a prey
Unto her grief for ever until her dying day.

1142

After the death of Siegfried, as verily appears,
With many troubles burthen’d she dwelt for thirteen years;
And all the while could never forget the warrior dead.
She aye was faithful to him: that all the people said.

Adventure XX

How King Etzel Sent to Burgundy After Kriemhilda

1143

Now on a time it happen'd that lady Helka died;
Then was King Etzel minded to woo another bride:
His friends all bade him look to the land of Burgundy,
Towards a high-born widow; Kriemhilda named was she.

1144

Soon after the fair Helka departed had this life,
Quoth they: "If thou would'st ever possess a noble wife—
The highest and most worthy that king did ever have,
Then take this self-same lady, widow of Siegfried brave."

1145

"How might that be accomplish'd," then said the mighty king,
"Seeing I am a heathen and ne'er had christening?

The lady is a Christian; she never would agree.
A miracle must happen, if this should ever be.”
1146

The ready ones made answer: “What if perchance she should?
With thy high name to help thee and all thy substance good,
To win the noble lady one very well might try.
To woo so fair a person would please you verily.”
1147

Then said the noble sovereign: “Doth any one of you
The people of the Rhine-land and eke the country know?”
Good Rüdeger made answer, who from Bechlaren came:
“I’ve known her from her childhood, this queen of noble name.
1148

“King Gunther and King Gernot, the noble knights and brave,
And Giselher, the third one— each ever doth behave
In such wise as high honour and virtue too have taught;
Nor elsewise from aforetime have their forefathers wrought.”
1149

But furthermore said Etzel: “Friend, I would learn of thee
If in my land she’s worthy to wear the crown with me?
And if she’s fair of body as has to me been said?—
Then those to me most friendly, need never be dismay’d.”
1150

“Indeed unto my lady in beauty likeneth she,
To Helka, the most mighty; ay! in this world could be
For any king whatever never a wife more fair.
To whom her love she plighteth he may be of good cheer.”

1151

He spake: “Then win her, Rüdeger, if dear to thee am I.
And if beside Kriemhilda it e’er be mine to lie,
I will reward thee for it as fully as may be;—
Seeing thou wilt my wishes have compass’d thoroughly.

1152

“So much out of my treasure I’ll have bestow’d on thee
That thou and thy companions may live right merrily;
Of horses and of raiment whatever you may need,
I will have for your journey made ready with all speed.”

1153

Sir Rüdeger made answer: —a mighty margrave he—
“Did I thy riches covet, that were unpraiseworthy.
Unto the Rhine thy message to bear I shall be glad
At charge of mine own fortune, which from thy hands I had.”

1154

Then spake the mighty sovereign: “Now when wilt thou fare hence
To seek this lovely lady? May God give thee defence
And honour in the journey, and eke this lady mine,
May she to us, luck helping, a gracious ear incline.”

1155

Then Rüdeger spake further: “Ere yet we leave the land,
We must prepare both raiment and weapons to our hand,
That so before the princes due honour we may have.
I’ll lead unto the Rhine-land five hundred warriors brave.

1156

“So, me and mine beholding, the men of Burgundy
Shall every man among them be fain to testify
That ne’er from king in those parts on such a journey went
So many men or better than thou to the Rhine hast sent.

1157

“And be it not displeasing by thee, great ruler, found
That, noble love obeying, she was in wedlock bound
To Siegfried, son of Siegmund; him hast thou here beheld.
In honour great he must be in truth for ever held.”

1158

Then said King Etzel: “Though she was wife unto that knight,
Yet was his noble body so precious in my sight,
That on the queen I cannot e’er look disdainfully;
By her exceeding beauty right well she pleaseth me.”

1159

Then spake to him the margrave: “The four and twentieth day
From now, I dare to promise, shall see us on our way.
I’ll send and tell Gotlinda, my dear wife, presently,
That I myself will envoy unto Kriemhilda be.”

1160

So thence unto Bechlaren sent Rüdeger straightway.
Both sorrowful and proud was the margravine that day.
A wife by him, he told her, must for the king be woo'd;
Still tenderly, as living, she thought of Helka good.

1161

For when her husband's letter the margravine did spell
Some little was she troubled and straight to weeping fell.
Would she another mistress like her have e'er again?
And when she thought of Helka it gave her heartfelt pain.

1162

In seven days' space had Rüdeger set forth from Hungary.
A glad man was King Etzel, and gay at heart was he.
Already in Vienna the travelling gear was made,
Nor would he that the journey should longer be delayed.

1163

Gotlinda at Bechlaren awaited Rüdeger;
The margravine his daughter was also waiting there,
And glad she was on seeing her father and his men.
And many fair young maidens watch'd kindly for them then.

1164

Ere Rüdeger the noble forth for Bechlaren went
From out Vienna's city, all his accoutrement
Was perfectly made ready and on the sumpters laid.
They travell'd in such fashion that nothing was waylaid.

1165

When they to Bechelaren within the town did fare,
The host his fellow travellers bade kindly welcome there,
And offer'd board and lodging. Good quarters each one had.
The noble Gotelinda to see him come was glad.

1166

Likewise his well-loved daughter, the little margravine,
At her dear father's coming could ne'er have gladder been.
The heroes out of Huns' land how glad she was to see!
And them the noble maiden accosted merrily:

1167

"Right heartily be welcome my father and his men!"
And readily, to thank her, fair words were spoken then
Unto the margrave's daughter, by many a worthy knight.
Sir Rüdeger's demeanour Gotlinda read aright.

1168

For when alone at night-time by Rüdeger she lay,
How lovingly besought him the margravine to say
Whither the king from Huns' land had bidden him to go.
Said he: "My wife Got'linda, I'll gladly let thee know.

1169

"I for the king my master must seek another wife,
Now that the beauteous Helka departed hath this life.
Therefore to fetch Kriemhilda unto the Rhine ride we;
To Huns' land she is coming a mighty queen to be."

1170

“God grant,” said Gotelinda, “that that may come to pass
Since we have heard, in honour, how much she doth surpass.
She may replace my lady belike, in days to be,
We’ll let her wear in Huns’ land the queen’s crown willingly.”

1171

Then said the margrave to her: “Beloved wife of mine,
The men who hence are riding with me unto the Rhine,
All kindly must thou offer with them thy stores to share:
When heroes fare right nobly more stout of heart they are.”

1172

She answered: “There is no man who cares to take of me,
To whom whate’er beseemeth I give not willingly,
Or ever hence depart ye, thou and thy fighting men.”
Then said to her the margrave: “So doth it please me then.”

1173

Ay, and what noble garments they from the store-rooms bare!
For every noble warrior there was a plenteous share.
All lined they were with peltry downwards from throat to spur;
What best his purpose suited was chosen of Rüdeger.

1174

Upon the seventh morning from Bechelaren rode
The host with all his warriors. Weapons and raiment good
They bore with them in plenty through the Bavarian land;
Nor on the road were harass’d by any robber band.

1175

Within a twelve days' journey they to the Rhine did ride;
The tidings of their coming small chance there was to hide.
Some to the king gave warning, and eke his men did tell,
That stranger-guests were coming. The host to asking fell
1176

If they were known to any? that was he fain to know.
One saw their sumpter-horses so heavy-laden go:
That they were very wealthy was plain enough to see.
In the great town was found them a hostel presently.
1177

Now when the all-unknown ones were given an abode,
Upon these self-same nobles vast was the heed bestow'd:
Men wondered whence the warriors to the Rhine had found their way.
The host sent after Hagen, if haply he could say.
1178

Then spake the knight of Tronjé: "I have not seen them yet,
I doubtless may declare you when sight of them I get,
From whence they've come a-riding into this land. I trow
They must indeed be strangers if naught of them I know."
1179

By this time every stranger a place of lodging had.
Then forward came the envoy, in rich apparel clad,
With all his noble comrades; and so to court they rode.
Fine raiment were they wearing right well-devised in mode.
1180

Then quoth the ready Hagen: “For all that I can tell—
Not having seen these nobles for somewhat of a spell—
Such like is their demeanour as Rüdeger might have,
Out of the Hunnish country— a noble knight and brave.”

1181

“How am I to believe it,” the king replied straightway,
“That he of Bechelaren is hither come this day?”
But as the royal Gunther from speaking did forbear,
Bold Hagen saw for certain that it was Rüdeger.

1182

He and his friends to meet them, did hasten everyone.
One saw from off their horses five hundred knights stand down.
These messengers from Hunsland right welcome were they made,
And never yet were envoys so gallantly array’d.

1183

Then Hagen spake of Tronjé, and in a loud voice cried:
“Now in God’s name be welcome ye thanes who hither ride,
The Warden of Bechlaren, and each one of his men.”
An honourable greeting the doughty Huns had then.

1184

King Gunther’s nearest kinsmen, came forth to where they were,
The lord of Metz, Sir Ortwein, then said to Rüdeger:
“Ne’er yet in all our life-time have we until this day
Set eyes on guests so gladly: that may I truly say.”

1185

Thanks gave they for the greeting unto the warriors all;
So with their noble escort, they went unto the hall.
And there they found King Gunther with a gallant company,
And from his throne upstood he, such was his courtesy.

1186

With what right courtly breeding did he the envoys meet!
Gernot, as well as Gunther, was full of zeal to greet
The guest and eke his liegemen, as did his rank demand.
Good Rüdeger King Gunther himself took by the hand.

1187

Unto the seat he led him, on which himself he sat:
Then to the strangers served they— all gladly did they that—
Of right good mead full beakers, and of the best of wine
That ever one could meet with in all the land of Rhine.

1188

Now Giselher and Gere had both of them appear'd;
And Dankwart, too, and Volker, who all of them had heard
About the guests arriving; they were in gladsome mood:
Before the king they greeted the noble knights and good.

1189

Then Hagen, knight of Tronjé, unto his lord did say:
"These warriors of ours should be beholden aye
For kindness that the margrave hath shown to us before:
Fair Gotelinda's husband must have reward therefore."

1190

Then spake the royal Gunther: “I can no more delay;
In health how are they faring, that tell to me, I pray;—
Etzel, I mean, and Helka, who over Hunsland reign?”
“All will I,” said the margrave, “gladly to you make plain.”
1191

Straight from the seat uprose he, as eke did all his men,
And to the king thus spake he: “If thus it may be then,
And you, O prince, allow it, I will no more delay
The tidings that I bring you, but willingly will say.”
1192

He said: “Whate’er the tidings that unto us you bear,
I wait not friendly counsel, but bid you to declare.
Let me and my men hear them, whatever they may be;
I bid you, in all honour, discharge your embassy.”
1193

Then spake the trusty envoy: “To you upon the Rhine
His faithful service tenders that mightful lord of mine;
To every friend moreover that unto you may be,
This message I deliver, in faith and honesty:
1194

“The noble king doth ask for your pity in his need.
All joyless are his people: my lady she is dead,
The rich and mighty Helka, of my good lord the wife;
And now full many a maiden doth lead an orphan’d life—
1195

“Children of noble princes, whom she did rear of late—
And therefore is the country in lamentable state:
These now, alas, have no one to rear them faithfully.
I doubt there is no ending to the king’s misery.”

1196

“Requite him God,” said Gunther, “for that to me he sends
So willingly his service, as eke unto my friends!
The greeting thou hast brought me right gladly have I heard:
My kinsmen and my lieges shall merit his good word.”

1197

Then spake, from the Burgundians, Gernot the warrior:
“The world fair Helka’s dying may rue for evermore,
For all her many virtues, which she to cherish knew.”
The doughty knight, Sir Hagen, agreed that this was true.

1198

But Rüdeger said further, the high ambassador:
“Since you, O king, allow me, I have to tell you more
Of that which my dear master hath bidden me fulfil;
Since from the death of Helka things have with him gone ill.

1199

“It hath been told my master that, Siegfried being dead,
Kriemhilda is a widow. If this be so, indeed,
And you to her will grant it, then she a crown shall wear
Before King Etzel’s warriors: this have I to declare.”

1200

The mighty monarch answer'd (in courteous mood was he):
"I'll tell her my opinion, if she perchance agree.
I'll see that you our answer in three days' time shall know,
How should I, ere I've asked her, say unto Etzel, no?

1201

Meanwhile they had good lodgings made ready for each guest.
So well provided were they, that Rüdeger confess'd
That he had friends in plenty amongst King Gunther's men;
As he had once served Hagen, so Hagen served him then.

1202

So Rüdeger abode there till the third day was come.
The king a council summon'd, (as was his wise custom)
Inquiring of his kinsmen if they would deem it right
That Kriemhild should to Etzel her faith in wedlock plight.

1203

They all, save only Hagen, agreed with one accord;
But he unto the warrior, to Gunther spake this word:
"If you are rightly minded, so will you take good heed,
That, even though she wish it, you will not do this deed."

1204

"And wherefore," answer'd Gunther, "should I not do this thing?
Whate'er of love the future unto the queen may bring,
I surely shall not grudge her: sister she is to me.
We ought ourselves to seek it, if for her good it be."

1205

But once again spake Hagen: “With further talk be done!
Knew you as much of Etzel as I of him have known—
And were she him to marry, as I have heard you say—
Then would yon see good reason, at length to rue the day.”

1206

“And wherefore?” answered Gunther, “since I should take good care
“Never to come so nigh him, e’en though my sister were
His wife, that I need suffer from any hate of his.”
But once again said Hagen: “I’ll ne’er agree to this.”

1207

Then messengers to Gernot and Giselher they sent,
To ask of these two princes if they were well content
To have Kriemhilda marry the rich and noble king.
Sir Hagen still gainsayed it, but had no following.

1208

Then spake of the Burgundians the warrior Giselher:
“Now may you show, friend Hagen, that loyal still you are:
Make good to her the evil that you to her have done:
If aught may bring her fortune, that should you leave alone.

1209

“You’ve wrought unto my sister such evil manifold,”—
So Giselher spake further— the knight of spirit bold:
“That she hath had good reason to hold you in despite.
Ne’er yet was any woman bereft of more delight.”

1210

“That am I well aware of and willing to allow.
And should she marry Etzel and live for long enow,
She’ll do us yet much evil, howe’er she it contrive;
For many a goodly warrior to serve her there doth live.”

1211

Thereon the valiant Gernot to Hagen answeréd:
“In that case it behoves us, until they both be dead,
To study that we ride not into King Etzel’s land.
We must be loyal to her: thus honour doth demand.”

1212

Whereto again spake Hagen: “No man can me gainsay!
And should the noble Kriemhild wear Helka’s crown one day,
She’ll do to us a mischief, howe’er it may be done:
It better would beseem you to leave the thing alone.”

1213

Then wrathfully cried Giselher, of Uté fair the son:
“We need not all be traitors, though thou perchance be one!
If honour doth befall her, right joyful should we be,
Whate’er thou sayest, Hagen, I’ll serve her faithfully.”

1214

When Hagen heard that saying, anger’d was he in mood:
For Giselher and Gernot, proud warriors both and good,
And mighty Gunther likewise, did all of them agree
That if it pleased Kriemhilda they would no hindrance be.

1215

Then spoke the princely Gere: “The lady I’ll advise
That she do let King Etzel find favour in her eyes:
So many knights obey him, and suit and service owe—
He yet may make her happy in spite of all her woe.”

1216

Then went the ready warrior where Kriemhild he did see;
She graciously received him: how quickly then spake he!
“Well may you greet me, lady, and give me herald’s bread,
For good luck comes to save you now out of all your need.

1217

“For love of you, dear lady, lo! there hath hither sent
One of the best and greatest that e’er had government
O’er realm with highest honour, or ever crown shall wear;
And noble knights sue for him: your brother bids declare.”

1218

Then spake the sorrow-laden: “Now God prohibit thee
And all my friends from making a mockery of me!
Of me, the poor forlorn one! what could I be to one
Who heart-felt love hath ever from a good woman won?”

1219

She sorely strove against it; but presently to her
There came her brother Gernot and the lad Giselher.
These tenderly besought her to be of cheerful mood:
If she the king would marry, ’twould be for her true good.

1220

Not one of them was able the lady to persuade,
That she should e'er be willing another man to wed;
Then did the thanes beseech her: "At least we beg of thee—
If thou naught else wilt grant us— the messengers to see."

1221

"That will I not refuse ye," replied the noble wife,
"For gladly would I look on Sir Rüdeger in life,
For all his many virtues. If he it had not been,
Whoever were the envoy, I would have stay'd unseen."

1222

She spake: "To-morrow morning, I pray ye, bid him go
To see me in my chamber; then will I let him know
What is my will, right surely: to tell him am I fain."
Then did her grievous sorrow break forth in tears again.

1223

To Rüdeger the noble naught better could have been
Than that he should be granted to see the mighty queen:
He knew that, could this happen, so wise in words was he,
She, by the warrior's talking, must needs persuaded be.

1224

So, early on the morrow, after the mass was sung,
Arrived the noble envoys; then mighty was the throng.
Of those who to the palace with Rüdeger should go,
All gallantly accoutred; one saw a goodly show.

1225

The highborn dame Kriemhilda her heart with trouble sore,
For Rüdeger was waiting— the goodly warrior.
He found her in the raiment she wore for ev'ry day:
But none the less her women had donn'd their best array.

1226

She rose and went to meet him, and by the door she stood,
And unto Etzel's liegeman she gave a welcome good.
With but eleven comrades he came therein to her.
Worship had he, for never came nobler messenger.

1227

One bade them all be seated— the leader and his men.
The while before her standing they saw her margraves twain,
Counts Eckewart and Gere— both noble knights and good.
For sake of her, their mistress, none seem'd of joyful mood.

1228

They saw beside her sitting full many a lady fair.
For nothing save her sorrow had Kriemhild any care.
The raiment on her bosom was wet with tear-drops hot,
Nor fail'd the noble margrave Kriemhilda's grief to note.

1229

Then spake the lordly envoy: "Daughter of kingly race,
To me and to my comrades who here with me have place,
I pray you leave to grant us that we before you stand
And tell to you the errand that brings us to this land."

1230

“Now be it to you granted,” the queen in answer said,
“To speak as ye are minded; for I am purposéd
Right willingly to listen: thou art a herald good.”
Yet to the others’ hearing unwilling was her mood.

1231

Then he of Bechelaren, Prince Rüdeger, began:
“With plenteous love, and faithful, Etzel, a great sovran,
To this thy land, fair lady, hath sent an embassy
Of knights to seek thy favour— a goodly company.

1232

“He offers thee right frankly love free from all alloy:
And eke such stedfast friendship thou shalt with him enjoy,
As erewhile did dame Helka, so near his heart who lay.
Ay, he hath mourn’d her virtues for many a joyless day.”

1233

“Sir Rüdeger the margrave,” in answer spake the queen,
“No one who hath already my bitter sorrow seen,
To any man would bid me myself in wedlock bind.
Ay! I have lost the best one that ever wife did find.”

1234

“What else,” the bold man answer’d, “for sorrow may atone
So well as loving friendship, if such may be, from one
Who for himself is choosing what seems to him the best?
Naught, after heartfelt sorrow, can give such happy rest.

1235

“If to my noble master to give thy love thou’lt deign,
Of twelve right wealthy kingdoms thou shalt be sovereign.
My lord will also give you full thirty princes’ lands,
Each one of which was conquer’d by his all-potent hands.
1236

“Thereto shalt thou be mistress of many a worthy wight
Who to my lady Helka did service owe of right;
And over many a lady who dwelt beneath her sway,
Of high and princely lineage.” Thus did the bold knight say.
1237

“My lord will likewise give thee, as he doth bid me say—
If with the king thou deignest to wear the crown one day—
The highest power that ever he unto Helka gave:
Thou over Etzel’s vassals authority shalt have.”
1238

Then spake the queen: “What pleasure remains for me in life,
That ever I should covet to be a hero’s wife?
Such sorrow have I suffer’d all through the death of one,
That I must aye be joyless, until my life be done.”
1239

But once more spake the Hunsman: “Most high and noble queen,
Your life along with Etzel so glorious would be seen,
Naught would it be but gladness, if this should come to pass:
And many a handsome warrior the mighty monarch has.”
1240

“The damsels of Queen Helka, the maids that follow thee,
Shall make with one another a single company;
A sight at which the warriors shall merry be of mood.
Be counsell’d therefore, lady; in sooth ’tis for thy good!”

1241

With courtesy she answer’d: “Now let this parley be
Until to-morrow early; then come again to me
And you shall have my answer to what you have at heart.”
Needs must the valiant warrior agree, and so depart.

1242

When they unto their hostel had all returnéd home,
Then sent the noble lady for Giselher to come,
And likewise for her mother: and unto both did vow,
That nothing else save weeping was fitting for her now.

1243

Said Giselher, her brother: “Sister, ’tis my belief—
And some to me have said it— that all thy bitter grief
King Etzel will make vanish: and shouldst thou marry him—
Whatever others counsel— well done I will it deem.

1244

“He surely may console thee,” said Giselher again:
“From Rhone unto the Rhine-stream, from Elbe unto the main,
There’s not another sovran so powerful as he.
Right soon may’st thou be happy, if wife he makes of thee.”

1245

“My brother well belovéd, how canst thou thus advise?
To weep and mourn seems ever more fitting in mine eyes.
How, at the court there, should I before the warriors go?
If ever I were comely, no longer am I so.”

1246

Then spake the lady Uté her daughter dear unto:
“Whate’er thy brothers counsel, fail not, dear child, to do;
Follow thy friends’ advising, so will it prosper thee.
Too long have I beheld thee in thy great misery.”

1247

Then God she pray’d right sorely that store of worldly gear,
Of silver, gold and raiment be granted unto her,
To give; as when her husband in life and health she had;
Though never as aforetime could life again be glad.

1248

Within her heart she ponder’d: “Shall I my body give—
Who am a Christian woman— and with a heathen wive?
Fore all the world and ever disgrace on me ’twould bring—
Though all his wealth he gave me, I would not do this thing!”

1249

And so she left the matter: but all night long, till day,
The lady on her pillow with endless brooding lay.
Her eyes that shone so brightly, from tears were never dried,
Until at dawn of morning unto the mass she hied.

1250

The kings came thither also close on the hour of mass;
They had been taking counsel upon their sister's case:
To marry they advised her the king of Hungary.
But neither found the lady disposed more cheerfully.

1251

Forthwith were orders given King Etzel's men to bring,
Who now would leave have taken and home been travelling—
Accepted or rejected, whichever of the twain.
Then to the court came Rüdeger. The heroes urged again

1252

That he should rightly fathom the noble Gunther's mood,
And do it very quickly: to all did this seem good:
To get back to their country, they needs must journey far.
And so unto Kriemhilda they usher'd Rüdeger.

1253

With kindly words of pleading began the warrior;
The noble queen beseeching that she would let him hear
What message for his master, to Etzel's land she sent.
I ween he found her answer naught save discouragement:

1254

That she forsooth would never again wed anyone.
Whereon the margrave answer'd: "That surely were ill-done!
Why shouldst thou thy fair body so wastefully disdain?
Thou mightst become with honour a good man's wife again."

1255

But naught avail'd their praying, until that Rüdeger
All privately did whisper into the great queen's ear,
That all she ever suffer'd he would make good again.
Whereat her great misliking somewhat began to wane.

1256

Unto the queen thus spake he: "Let now your weeping be.
If you among the Hunsfolk had ne'er a friend save me,
And all my trusty kinsmen, and eke my liegemen true,
Hath any done you evil right dearly should he rue."

1257

Thenceforth the lady's humour somewhat more gentle grew.
She said: "An oath now give me: whatever men may do
That you will be the first one to right mine injury."
Whereto the margrave answer'd: "That will I readily."

1258

With all his men did Rüdeger swear by an oath to her
That he would serve her truly; and that no warrior
Should ever aught deny her, throughout King Etzel's land,
In what concern'd her honour. So pledged her Rüdeger's hand.

1259

Then, faithful-hearted, thought she: "Since on my will to wait
I've met with friends so many, I'll let the people prate
Howe'er they have a mind to, of me, poor wretched wife!
What if I yet have vengeance for my dear husband's life?"

1260

She thought: “Since Etzel holdeth so many knights in fee,
I also may command them, and do what pleaseth me.
So wealthy is he also, I shall have much to give:
Me did that hateful Hagen of all my goods deprive.”

1261

To Rüdeger thus spake she: “If it were known to me
That he were not an heathen, I would come willingly,
Whithersoe’er he listeth, and take him for my lord.”
The margrave answer’d: “Lady, heed not a single word.

1262

“He hath so many warriors, who in Christ’s faith believe
That with the king at no time shall you have cause to grieve.
What if your faith should win him to take the Christian life?
Then might you well be happy to be King Etzel’s wife.”

1263

Then said her brothers also: “Now, sister mine, say ‘Yes,’
And so be quit for ever of your unhappiness.”
Thus long did they beseech her, till, full of sorrow, she
Before the heroes promised King Etzel’s wife to be.

1264

She said: “You will I follow, a queen right sad of heart,
And fare with you to Huns’ land; so may we now depart,
When I the friends have found me to bring me to his land.”
To that, before the heroes, fair Kriemhild gave her hand.

1265

Then to her said the margrave: “Hast thou a pair of men,
To them I can add many: it will be easy then
To bring you with due honour unto Rhine’s further side:
No longer, mid Burgundians, lady, must thou abide.

1266

“I have five hundred liegemen, and kinsmen too, of whom
Thou mayst command the service— or here, or there at home
To do thy bidding, lady; and I will do the same,
Whene’er thou claim’st my promise— that so I have no shame.

1267

“Now see that you have ready your horse accoutrement;
What Rüdeger doth counsel you never shall repent;
And say this to your maidens whom you will thither bring:
‘Ay, many a chosen hero shall we meet travelling.’”

1268

Still much of wrought equipment from Siegfried’s time they had,
That had been used in riding; wherewith full many a maid
Might take the road with honour whene’er they thence should fare.
Ay! goodly were the saddles they gave the ladies fair.

1269

If such-like costly raiment they ere had worn before,
Now ready for the journey they had a goodly store;
For of the King such marvels had unto them been said.
Chests that had long been standing close-lock’d were open laid.

1270

Unwearyingly work'd they till unto the fifth day;
They sought from out the presses the stores that in them lay.
Her treasure-chests to open Kriemhild herself did go.
On Rüdeger's good liegemen she fain would wealth bestow.

1271

Still had she somewhat over of gold from Niblung-land;
(Among the Huns she thought to divide it with her hand),
A hundred sumpter horses the load could nowise bear.
This tale about Kriemhilda was brought to Hagen's ear.

1272

Quoth he: "Because Kriemhilda will ne'er to me be kind,
The gold that once was Siegfried's, she needs must leave behind.
Why should I such a treasure unto my foes let go?
Right well I know what Kriemhild with all this gold will do.

1273

"For if she hence should bring it, I'll wager verily
'Twould be in largesse given to stir up hate for me.
They have not e'en the horses to carry it away.
'Tis Hagen's will to keep it, thus unto Kriemhild' say."

1274

Now when she heard this message, smit to the heart was she.
The word was likewise carried unto the kings all three.
Fain would they have gainsaid it, but as this did no good,
Sir Rüdeger the noble outspake in joyous mood:

1275

“O, mighty Queen, and noble, why grieve ye for this gold?
When unto you king Etzel such kindliness doth hold,
That when his eyes behold you, he’ll give such riches rare
That you can never spend it: that, lady, will I swear.”

1276

To him the queen made answer: “Most noble Rüdeger,
Never had a king’s daughter more wealth bequeath’d to her
Than that of which Sir Hagen hath now despoiléd me.”
Then went her brother Gernot unto the treasury.

1277

By right the king’s key took he and put it in the door:
And gold therefrom withdrew they, that was of Kriemhild’s store;
Of marks full thirty thousand or something more they had:
He bade the guests to take it: and Gunther was right glad.

1278

Then he from Bechelaren, dame Gotelinda’s lord,
Said: “If my lady Kriemhild yet ownéd all the hoard
Such as it was aforetime when brought from Niblung-land,
Nor I, nor the queen either, would touch it with our hand.

1279

“Now back let it be taken, for of it will I naught;
Sufficient from my country, ay, of mine own, I brought,
That we can do without it right well upon the way,
And all our homeward charges right royally can pay.”

1280

Unto that end her maidens had meanwhile pieces told
Into a dozen coffers, all of the finest gold
That ever one might meet with: these with them they would bear,
And ornaments for ladies upon the road to wear.

1281

The mastery of grim Hagen seem'd overpowering.
Some thousand marks still had she left from the almsgiving.
For her dear husband's welfare the whole did she dispart;
And Rüdeger but deem'd it done with a right true heart.

1282

Then said the weeping lady: "Where are those friends of mine
Who for my sake are willing in banishment to pine?
They who unto the Huns' land will bear me company?
Let them take of my treasure and horse and raiment buy."

1283

Then Eckewart the margrave, made answer to the queen:
"So long as in your household a servant I have been
Right truly have I served you," thus did the warrior say,
"Nor will I cease to do so until my dying day.

1284

"And of my men five hundred eke will I bring with me,
Whom I unto your service do pledge right faithfully.
For nothing shall divide us, till Death our lives do part."
She bent her head to thank him: too full was her sad heart.

1285

Then led they forth the palfreys, for it was time to go.
Her friends all fell a-weeping, and many tears did flow.
The noble lady Uté and many a maiden fair
Show'd that for dame Kriemhilda their hearts were full of care.

1286

A hundred highborn maidens along with her she led,
Who as their rank befitted were all apparelléd.
Then from their eyes bright-shining did many a tear-drop well.
And yet with Etzel later much pleasure them befell.

1287

Lord Giselher came also and Gernot none the less,
With many of their household, as bade their courtliness.
They would their well-loved sister upon her journey bring.
They led a thousand warriors, a goodly following.

1288

The ever-ready Gere, and Ortwein also came;
Rumold the kitchen-master he too must come with them.
Night-quarters made they ready hard by the Danube side.
But Gunther from the city did but a small space ride.

1289

Ere from the Rhine they journey'd they had before them sent
Their messengers, who swiftly unto the Huns' land went,
And told the king beforehand how Rüdeger had done,
And as a wife for Etzel the noble queen had won.

Adventure XXI

How Kriemhilda Went to the Huns

1290

Leave we the heralds riding: we must make known to you
How the Queen's journey prosper'd, as she the land rode through;
And where from her did Gernot and Giselher depart.
Right truly each had served her, as taught of faithful heart.

1291

They rode as far as Pfoering, upon the Danube-strand.
Then of the queen began they kind quittance to demand,
Since homeward they returning unto the Rhine would ride:
Nor might this without weeping 'twixt loving friends betide.

1292

Then Giselher the ready unto his sister said:
"If ever thou, fair lady, shouldst stand in need of aid,

If e’er thou art in danger, fail not to let me know.
To Etzel’s land to serve thee I presently will go.”

1293

Those who were of her kindred upon the mouth she kist;
And at the hour of parting full many a loving tryst
One saw the liegemen keeping of margrave Rüdeger:
For many a well-dight maiden the queen led forth with her.

1294

Five score and four in number: rich clothing did they wear
And brightly tinctured cloth-stuffs: and many men did bear
Broad shields to guard the ladies beside them on the way.
But many a princely warrior must part from them that day.

1295

Thence rode they swiftly forward down through Bavarian land.
The people told the tidings of how a mickle band
Of unknown guests were coming, nigh where a cloister still
Doth stand, and where Inn river the Danube’s flood doth fill.

1296

Within the town of Passau there was a bishop’s see.
The hostels and the palace stood empty presently:
To meet the guests men hied them on to Bavarian ground,
Where Pilgerin the bishop the fair Kriemhilda found.

1297

The warriors of the country no whit displeaséd were
To see behind her coming so many ladies fair,
Their eyes upon these daughters of noble knights did rest.
Good lodging was provided for every noble guest.

1298

The bishop into Passau, his niece beside him, rode;
And when among the burghers the news was noised abroad
That coming was Kriemhilda, their prince's sister's child,
Right gladly was she welcomed by all the merchant guild.

1299

That they were come to sojourn the bishop fain had known,
But Eckewart said to him: "It is not to be done;
To Rüdeger's dominions we needs must journey down,
Where many knights await us: as is to all well-known."

1300

The tidings of their coming now fair Gotlinda knew.
Straightway she made her ready, her noble daughter too.
For Rüdeger had warn'd her that he would deem it good
If when the queen was coming— to somewhat cheer her mood—

1301

She would ride forth to meet her, with escort of his men,
Unto the river Ense; which being accomplish'd, then
On every side beheld one the very roads alive
With folk, on foot or horseback— to see the guests arrive

1302

Now was the queen by this time to Everdingen come.
No few of the Bavarians did then as outlaws roam,
To rob upon the highways; and they, as was their wont,
Might to the guests have offer'd some dangerous affront.

1303

But well the noble margrave of this had taken thought;
For he a thousand warriors and even more had brought.
There also came Gotlinda, the wife of Rüdeger,
And many a knight of valour right nobly rode with her.

1304

When they the Traun had traversed, upon the level green
By Ens, folk making ready cabins and tents were seen;
For there it was determined the night-halt should be made.
All charges for the strangers by Rüdeger were paid.

1305

The fair Gotlinda stay'd not upon the camping ground,
But forward went to meet them. Along the roadway wound
With ever tinkling trappings a handsome cavalcade.
Right kindly was her greeting— which Rüdeger made glad.

1306

And those whom either party encounter'd on the way
Rode in praiseworthy fashion; right many thanes were they.
They practised knightly pastimes, by many a maiden seen;
Nor was the warriors' service unpleasing to the queen.

1307

As Rüdeger's retainers unto the guests came nigh,
Right many were the lance-shafts one saw raised up on high,
By warriors' hands uplifted, as is the knightly mode;
And then before the ladies praiseworthily they rode.

1308

This brought they to an ending; then many of the men
Greeted each other kindly. The fair Gotlinda then
To where she saw Kriemhilda they brought upon her way.
They who could serve the ladies had little rest that day.

1309

The lord of Bechelaren up to his wife did ride;
The noble lady-margrave was right well satisfied
That he from the Rhine country all safe and sound had won.
And somewhat was her sorrow in happiness undone.

1310

When she had made him welcome, he bade her on the green
Dismount, with all the ladies who in her train were seen.
Then many a noble liegeman was busy as could be;
And service to the ladies was done right readily.

1311

As now the lady Kriemhild the margravine espied,
Standing with her attendants, she would no nearer ride;
But with the rein her palfrey at once began to stay,
And bade them from the saddle to lift her down straightway.

1312

His sister's daughter leading one saw the bishop soon,
With Eckewart, to make her unto Gotlinda known;
And, in a trice, the people made wide the way for this.
Upon the lips the stranger did Gotelinda kiss.

1313

Then spake in loving fashion the wife of Rüdeger:
"Now well is me, dear lady, that I thy presence fair
Within my country's borders and with mine eyes have seen.
To me could at this season no greater joy have been."

1314

"Most noble Gotelinda, God give you your reward!
If haply I," spake Kriemhild, "and Botlung's son be spared,
One day you may be joyful that you have seen my face."
They both were all unknowing of what must come to pass.

1315

Due courtesies exchanging, walk'd many maidens fair;
Their services to render the warriors ready were.
They sat, the greetings ended, upon the clover down,
And many made acquaintance, who were till then unknown.

1316

Wine brought they for the ladies; and now 'twas full midday;
The noble folk would therefore no longer there delay.
They rode on till they came where large huts and many stood,
And for the noble strangers was waiting service good.

1317

That night they slept in quiet until the dawning brake.
But they of Bechelaren themselves did ready make,
So that they might provide for so many a worthy guest.
Well Rüdeger had managed that little should be miss'd.

1318

One saw how every window stood open in the wall:
The castle of Bechlaren was entry-free to all.
Therein the guests came riding, well seen of all around.
The noble host had bidden good hostel to be found.

1319

Then Rüdeger's fair daughter with all her company,
Unto the queen approaching, received her lovingly.
There likewise was her mother, the wife of the margrave.
To many a young damsel they kindly greeting gave.

1320

Hands took they with each other, and so together went
Unto a wide-room'd palace of fashion excellent,
For there, beneath it rushing, one saw the Danube's flood.
They sat and took the breezes, and had much pastime good.

1321

Of what they did there further I cannot say a word.
That so much time was wasted complaints, howe'er, were heard—
Made by Kriemhilda's warriors, whose patience thus was tried.
But with them, from Bechlaren what goodly thanes did ride!

1322

By Rüdeger kind service was amply offeréd.
The queen bestow'd, when leaving, twelve golden bracelets red
On Gotelinda's daughter, and raiment, too, well-wrought:
She into Etzel's country herself no better brought.

1323

Although they had despoil'd her of all the Niblung gold,
The love of all who saw her she knew to win and hold
With what small wealth remaining she for her use might have.
Unto her host's house-servants great store of gifts she gave.

1324

Like honour show'd on her side the lady Gotelind
Unto the guests from Rhineland; to whom she was so kind
That one could find scarce any among the strangers there
Who had not of her jewels or raiment fine to wear.

1325

When they enough had eaten, and time it was to start,
The mistress of the household proffer'd, with all her heart,
Most true and loyal service to Etzel's wife to-be.
Then was the fair young maiden embraced right lovingly.

1326

Unto the Queen thus spake she: "If it seem good to you,
I know that my dear father right gladly this will do:
He'll send me into Hunsland that I with you may be."
That she was loyal-hearted Kriemhilda well could see.

1327

In front of Bechelaren the horses had been led;
The noble queen already her parting words had said
Unto the wife and daughter of margrave Rüdeger;
With greetings, too, departed full many a maiden fair.

1328

They scarce from that day forward saw one another more.
And when they came to Medlick, lo! in their hands men bore
A store of brave gold flagons, wherein, unto the street,
Wine brought they for the strangers; to give them welcome meet.

1329

There was a lord of manor here dwelling, hight Astold;
Into the Austrian country the way to them he told:
By Mautern, somewhat further the Danube stream adown.
There right true service later the mighty queen did own.

1330

Unto his niece the bishop a loving farewell bade;
To be of cheerful spirit her earnestly he pray'd,
And win herself such honour as Helka erst had done.
Ay! what great honour later amongst the Huns she won!

1331

Unto the Traisen river the guests they soon did bring;
And Rüdeger's retainers served them, unwearying,
Until the Hun-folk riding across the country came.
Then was there mickle honour done to the royal dame.

1332

The king of the Huns' country did, near the Traisen, own
A very noble stronghold, to everyone well known.
Its name was Traisenmauer, where Helka lived of yore,
And practised such great virtues, scarce met with any more,

1333

Save only in Kriemhilda;— for she knew how to give;—
And, after all her sorrow, was for some joy to live,
In that she also honour of Etzel's folk might have;
Which soon, in fullest measure, the heroes to her gave.

1334

The sovereignty of Etzel was own'd so far and wide
That at his court were met with, at every time and tide,
The bravest of all warriors whose names were known to fame
'Mongst Christians or heathens: all thither to him came.

1335

With him there was at all times— which scarce again can come—
The Christian confession along with heathendom.
Whatever rule of living each for himself might have,
The king's mood was so easy, plenty to all he gave.

Adventure XXII

How Etzel Espoused Kriemhilda

1336

Until the fourth day dawning at Traisenmauer she stay'd.
The dust upon the roadways meanwhile was never laid;
It rose, as from some burning, on every side, like smoke,
While through the Austrian country came riding Etzel's folk.

1337

Meanwhile to the king also the news was duly brought;
Whereon his former sorrow soon vanish'd at the thought
How royally Kriemhilda across the land did ride.
The king then made him ready to go and meet his bride.

1338

Strange tongues of many races one heard upon that road,
As many gallant warriors in front of Etzel rode;

Of Christians and of pagans a host exceeding great;
And when they met the Lady they went in noble state.

1339

Of Russ and Greek came riding a goodly company,
And Poles and Wallachs saw one go rushing swiftly by
Upon their gallant chargers, that mightfully they rode;
And nothing was there lacking of native use and mode.

1340

From out of the Kief country rode many a warrior bold;
And hordes from wild Petschnegen. These did the custom hold
Of carrying bow and arrow to shoot birds as they flew;
With strength they pull'd the bow-string, and the full shaft's length drew.

1341

There stood upon the Danube, in Austrian land, a town
The name whereof was Tulna: to her was there made known
Full many a foreign custom she had not seen before.
By many was she welcomed, who through her suffer'd sore.

1342

As guard before King Etzel a company there rode
Of mighty men and merry, courtly and high of mood;
Of princes four-and-twenty, all great and wealthy men.
They came to see their Lady— naught more they ask'd for then.

1343

There also was Duke Ramung, from the Wallachian plain,
Who with seven hundred horsemen before her sped amain:
Like birds of passage flying, one saw them whirling by.
Prince Gibeche soon follow'd, with stately chivalry.

1344

Hornboge, the aye ready, came with a thousand men,
And from the king's side turn'd him towards his Lady then.
As was their country's custom, they raised a mighty shout.
And all the Hunnish kinsmen in swarms came riding out.

1345

Also there came from Denmark Haward the valiant one,
And ever-ready Iring, to falseness all unknown;
And Irnfried of Thuringia, a goodly man was he!
So welcomed they Kriemhilda, she needs must honour'd be.

1346

With their twelve hundred liegemen the host they rode before.
Sir Bloedelin came also with thrice a thousand more—
The brother of King Etzel from out of Hungary:
Right royally escorted unto the queen rode he.

1347

And last of all King Etzel; and with him Dietrich came
With all his chosen comrades and many a knight of fame,
Right noble and praiseworthy, and valiant and good.
Whereat was dame Kriemhilda much lightsomer of mood.

1348

Then, to the princess speaking, the nobler Rüdeger
Said: “Lady, I will welcome the mighty sovran here.
And whomsoe’er I bid you to kiss, so do it then:
You must not give like greeting to all of Etzel’s men.”

1349

Then down from off her palfrey the high-born queen they took;
Whereon the mighty Etzel no more delay could brook.
He from his steed dismounted with many a bold knight too:
And then one saw him blithely towards Kriemhilda go.

1350

Two rich and mighty princes, as has to us been told,
Were standing near the lady her garment’s train to hold,
What time the royal Etzel went forward her to meet.
The noble prince with kisses then did she kindly greet.

1351

She raised the veil that screen’d her; her dainty colour glow’d
Out of its golden setting; and many a knight avow’d
That ne’er could Lady Helka have shown a face more fair.
King Etzel’s brother, Bloedelin, was standing very near.

1352

Him Rüdeger the margrave bade her to kiss; and eke
King Gibeche; and Dietrich, who was not far to seek.
A dozen of the warriors were kiss’d by Etzel’s bride;
Then gave she other greeting to many a knight beside.

1353

Now all the while that Etzel did by Kriemhilda stay
The younger men were busy (as such would be to-day)
With many mighty tiltings; one saw then how they rode;
Both Christian knights and heathen, each following their mode.

1354

How knightly was the bearing of Dietrich's gallant men!
Their javelins and lances went flying forth amain
High over shields and bucklers, by good knights' hands address'd,
Then shiver'd were the shield-rims of many a German guest.

1355

Then was a mighty crashing of breaking lance and spear.
The warriors of the country were all assembled there,
As were the king's guests also— a throng of noble men:
The mighty king was walking with dame Kriemhilda then.

1356

They saw hard by them standing a very noble tent;
The plain around was cover'd by many a wooden pent,
Where folk might sit and rest them when work was duly sped;
And many beauteous maidens by heroes there were led

1357

Unto their royal mistress, as she was sitting there
Upon the rich chair covers. The margrave right good care
Had taken, so to fit it, that everyone should find
Kriemhilda's bower delightful: and glad was Etzel's mind.

1358

What Etzel spake unto her it is not mine to say.
Meanwhile her small white fingers within his right hand lay.
In loving fashion sat they, for knightly Rüdeger
Would have no secret wooing betwixt the king and her.

1359

Straightway commands were given that all the games be stay'd;
With honour they were ended and all the din allay'd.
Into the wooden houses the men of Etzel hied;
And folk provided lodging around for far and wide.

1360

The day had reached its ending: they laid them down to sleep
Until the light of morning again began to peep.
Then were the steeds bestridden once more, by many a man:
Ha, and in Etzel's honour what pastimes then began!

1361

The king enjoin'd his Hunsmen to do all honour bade.
Unto Vienna city their way from Tuln they made;
There, deck'd in fine apparel, full many a dame they found;
King Etzel's wife these welcomed, as in all honour bound.

1362

In all-sufficing plenty whatever they would have
Was there, already for them. Right many a warrior brave
With joy the sport awaited. All went to hostelry.
And soon the royal wedding began right merrily.

1363

But not for all could lodgings be found within the town.
To such as were not strangers, did Rüdeger make known
That they must seek out quarters in country places round.
I ween there were at all times near dame Kriemhilda found

1364

Dietrich, the noble warrior, and many another thane.
These, in their work unresting, but little peace mote gain
Till nothing should be lacking to cheer the strangers' mood.
So Rüdeger and his comrades had rest and pastime good.

1365

The marriage was accomplish'd one day in Whitsuntide,
When first the royal Etzel lay by Kriemhilda's side,
Within Vienna's city. So many men, thought she,
At her first husband's bidding, she surely ne'er did see.

1366

To those who had not seen her she made herself well known
By gifts; yea many among them unto the guests did own:
"We deemed that dame Kriemhilda had little goods or gold—
But here hath she, by giving, wrought marvels manifold."

1367

The merry-making lasted for days full seventeen.
And never was there told of another king, I ween,
Whose wedding was more noble: such is to us unknown.
All folk who there were present did new apparel own.

1368

In Netherland, aforetime, thought she, she ne’er had sat
With such a throng of warriors. I say, moreover, that,
If great was Siegfried’s substance, he ne’er had, as his men,
So many noble warriors as stood round Etzel then.

1369

Nor was there ever any who at his wedding-tide
Of mantles gave so many, so rich and deep and wide;
Nor any such good raiment as here there was to don.
In honour of Kriemhilda was all in this wise done.

1370

Their friends and eke the strangers were all alike of mind,
That there had been no sparing in gear of any kind.
Whatever any wanted, that presently he had.
Yea many a knight through kindness was wellnigh naked made.

1371

Yet days of old in Rhineland she could not quite forget,
Beside her noble husband; and then her eyes grew wet.
She did her best to hide it, lest anyone should see.
After so many a sorrow much honour now had she.

1372

What others gave in bounty no better was than air
Compared with Dietrich’s giving. Whatever Botlung’s heir
Had given him for largesse, that quickly lavish’d he.
Eke Rüdeger with bounty was marvellously free.

1373

And Bloedelin came also, the prince from Hungary,
And bade men take whatever in many chests might be
Of gold and silver pieces: ’twas all to give away.
Then saw one the king’s heroes keeping high holiday.

1374

The players of King Etzel, Wärbel and Swemmelin,
I ween that either of them did at the wedding win
A thousand marks for certain, or maybe even more,
What time the fair Kriemhilda her crown by Etzel wore.

1375

Upon the eighteenth morning they from Vienna went.
Then was in knightly pastime full many a buckler bent,
By lances that were carried in every warrior’s hand.
Soon came the royal Etzel unto the Hunnish land.

1376

In the old town of Heimburg they rested overnight.
By then the throng of people could no one tell aright,
Nor with what strength of numbers they overspread the ground.
Ay me, and what fair women they in his country found!

1377

At Miesenburg the wealthy unto the boats they took.
The stream with men and horses was hidden, as to look
Not otherwise than dry land; yet ever seem’d to flow.
The women, travel-weary, had ease and comfort now.

1378

Together had been fasten'd ships many and right good,
That they might get no damage from either waves or flood;
And many a well-made awning thereover did they strain,
As if they still beneath them had land and open plain.

1379

At Etzelburg, before them, arrived these tidings then.
Whereat was great rejoicing of women and of men.
The ladies of Queen Helka, who erewhile were her care,
Soon many days and happy did with Kriemhilda share.

1380

There stood and waited for her full many a noble maid,
On whom abundant sorrow since Helka's death had weigh'd.
The daughters of kings seven still there Kriemhilda found,
Who were the pride and glory of Etzel's land around.

1381

The maiden lady Herrat, still of them all had care,
Queen Helka's sister's daughter, of many virtues rare,
The bride betroth'd of Dietrich, child of a king of fame,
The daughter, too, of Nentwein: to honour great she came.

1382

Unto the guests' arrival she look'd with mood right glad,
Whereto great stores and treasure were also ready made.
How later the king feasted— who could it all declare?
And with a queen at no time did Hunsmen better fare.

1383

As with his wife beside him the king rode from the strand,
The noble dame Kriemhilda was given to understand
The name of every lady, the better them to greet.
Ay, mightily she bore her sitting in Helka's seat.

1384

To her was faithful service render'd right readily.
Wherefore the queen divided her gold and jewelry,
Her silver and apparel: whatever she did convey
From over Rhine to Hunsland must all be given away.

1385

Also with suit and service subject to her, from then,
Were all of the king's kinsmen, and likewise all his men.
Never had Lady Helka enjoy'd such potent sway;
So must they serve Kriemhilda until her dying day.

1386

Then stood so high in honour the court and realm around,
That men came there at all times, and chosen pastime found—
To whatsoe'er it might be that each one's heart did lean—
Be it the king's good favour or bounty of the queen.

Adventure XXIII

How Kriemhilda Thought to Avenge Her Injury

1387

In great estate of honour, as truly doth appear,
They dwelt with one another until the seventh year.
During this time the king's wife brought forth a son and heir;
Whereat the royal Etzel could ne'er be happier.

1388

She would not be persuaded to be content with aught
But that the child of Etzel should to the font be brought,
With Christian rites according. Ortlieb they named the boy:
Which all through Etzel's country was cause of mickle joy.

1389

Whatever noble virtues in Lady Helka lay,
To match them dame Kriemhilda aye studied, day by day.

The customs soon were taught her, by Herrat, maid forlorn,
Who with a secret longing for Helka still did mourn.
1390

To native folk and strangers she now was widely known:
’Twas said of her, that never did any king’s land own
A better, milder mistress; right sure of this they were.
Such fame she bore in Hunsland until the thirteenth year.
1391

Now since she knew for certain that none would her gainsay
E’en as kings’ warriors mostly their princes’ wives obey—
And as twelve kings before her were ever seen to come,
She thought on all the sorrows that she had known at home.
1392

She thought, too, of the honours that once in Niblungland
Had been in her possession; and which by Hagen’s hand,
At time of Siegfried’s murder, were wholly done away:
And whether he might ever for that be made to pay.
1393

“It might be, could I bring him by some means to this land.”
She dreamt that she was walking, and near her, close at hand,
Was Giselher, her brother, and in her gentle sleep
She kissed him very often. He soon had cause to weep!
1394

I ween some evil devil Kriemhilda did provoke
That with her brother Gunther her friendship now she broke,
Whom she, in full forgiveness, kiss'd on Burgundian soil.
Then with hot tears began she once more her robe to spoil.

1395

And ever, late and early, within her heart it wrought
How, without fault on her part, she had thereto been brought,
That henceforth with a heathen she must in wedlock live;
This bitterness did Hagen and Gunther, too, contrive.

1396

The wish that dwelt within her ne'er let her heart alone;
Thought she: "I am so mighty, and such great riches own.
That on my foes in vengeance some ill I may repay.
Thus would I do right gladly to Hagen of Tronjé.

1397

"My heart is longing sorely for my dear faithful one:
Might I but get them near me who ill to me have done,
So would I take full vengeance for my beloved's life;—
Scarce can I bide their coming;" so murmur'd Etzel's wife.

1398

The whole of the king's liegemen held highly in esteem
The warriors of Kriemhilda: and well it was, I deem.
Her treasurer was Eckwart— good friends thereby he made.
Nor could Kriemhilda's wishes by any be gainsaid.

1399

Now was she ever thinking: “I will beseech the king!”
To wit, that of his goodness he would allow this thing,
That unto the Hun-country her kinsmen might be brought.
But no one there discover’d the queen’s unholy thought.

1400

It came to pass one night-time, as by the king she lay,
(His arms were cast about her, as was his wont alway,
Loving the noble lady: for she was as his life)
That of her foes was thinking the fair and noble wife.

1401

And to the king thus spake she: “My ever dear good lord,
I fain would ask a favour, if thou wouldst such accord:
If I am worthy of it, that thou shouldst let me see
Whether my friends and kinsmen thou lovest verily.”

1402

Then spake the mighty sovran, and guileless was his mood:
“I would have thee believe that, if any grace or good
Be done unto those warriors, I must thereat be glad,
Since I by love of woman ne’er better friends have made.”

1403

And yet again the queen spake: “To thee it hath been said,
That I have high-born kinsmen; and this my grief hath made
That they have never troubled to come to see me here.
I hear the people call me naught else but foreigner.”

1404

Whereunto answer'd Etzel: "Belovéd lady mine,
If not too far it seemeth, so will I from the Rhine
Bid all unto my kingdom whom thou art fain to see."
When thus she learnt his purpose right glad at heart was she.
1405

She said: "If thou right truly wouldst serve me, master mine,
So wilt thou send an envoy to Worms beyond the Rhine.
That I may tell my kinsfolk all that I have in mind.
Then many a knight right noble his way to us shall find."
1406

"Whenever thou commandest," said he, "it shall be done.
Thou canst not be so eager thy friends to look upon
As I of noble Uté the sons to see am fain;
That we are still such strangers hath caused me mickle pain.
1407

"And if it should content thee, belovéd lady mine,
So will I send right gladly, unto those friends of thine,
My players on the fiddle to the Burgundian land."
To bring the worthy fiddlers straightway he gave command.
1408

They hasten'd very quickly to where King Etzel sat.
And eke the queen beside him. He told them both, how that
As envoys they were chosen to Burgundy to fare.
For them he bade his people rich raiment to prepare.
1409

For four-and-twenty warriors was new apparel made;
And by the king their errand was also to them said:
How Gunther and his people to bring there they should seek.
But fain was Lady Kriemhild apart with them to speak.

1410

Then said the king most mighty: “Now hark ye what to do!
All that is good and kindly I bid my friends, by you;
If they vouchsafe to journey unto my kingdom here.
Ne’er yet have I had knowledge of guests as these so dear.

1411

“And if they so be minded my will herein to do,
These kinsmen of Kriemhilda, then must they not forego
To come to us this summer, to keep my wedding-feast;
For much on my wife’s kindred my happiness doth rest.”

1412

Then spake the fiddle-player, the haughty Schwemmelin:
“When will in this your kingdom your wedding-feast begin?
That we to your friends yonder unerringly may say.”
Then answer made King Etzel: “On next Midsummer-day”

1413

“We’ll do as thou dost bid us,” made answer Werbelin.
Then gave the queen an order that they be brought within
Her private room in secret, to speak with her alone.
Whereof soon many a warrior but sorry comfort won.

1414

To both the envoys spake she: “Well shall it be for you
If you my will and purpose right faithfully shall do,
And say whate’er I bid you when to my home you go;
In goods I’ll make you wealthy, and raiment rich bestow.

1415

“What friends of mine soever ye see and meet with there
At Worms on the Rhine river, take heed lest ye declare
That ye have ever seen me in melancholy mood:
And bear my greeting unto those heroes bold and good.

1416

“To what the king requireth beg them that they agree,
And thereby let them make me from all my trouble free.
The Huns may well believe that I have no friends at all.
Were I a knight, I’d ever be ready at their call.

1417

“And to my noble brother, to Gernot eke say ye
That in the world is no one I hold more lovingly:
Our best of friends and kinsmen bid him unto this land
To bring, that so the better we may in honour stand.

1418

“To Giselher say also that he must not forget
That never have I suffer’d by fault of his as yet:
Wherefore would I right gladly set eyes on him again;
And, for the faith he show’d me, to see him here am fain.

1419

“And also tell my mother what honours now I bear.
If Hagen, too, of Tronjé shall still be dwelling there
By whom shall they more fitly be through the country shown?
To him the roads to Hunsland from childhood have been known.”

1420

Unknowing were the envoys what meaning therein lay,
That Hagen, knight of Tronjé, on no account should stay
Behind the rest in Rhineland. Soon woe for them it made:
With him was many a warrior to cruel death betray’d.

1421

With message and with letters they were provided now:
To live henceforth in plenty of wealth they had enow.
Their leave they took of Etzel and of his lady fair.
And clad in rich apparel a goodly sight they were.

Adventure XXIV

How Werbel and Schwemmel Did Their Errand

1422

When Etzel to the Rhineland had sent his embassy,
The news thereof right swiftly from land to land did fly:
He greeting gave and bade them, by messengers right fleet,
To come unto his feasting: whence many death did meet.

1423

From out the Huns' dominions the envoys swiftly went
To the Burgundian country; for thither were they sent
Three noble kings to summon, and eke their chivalry,
To come and visit Etzel: so rode they speedily.

1424

First were they on their journey to Bechelaren brought;
The folk there served them gladly. That he might fail in naught

By them unto the Rhineland sent greeting Rüdeger,
As also did Gotlinda and eke their daughter dear.

1425

Nor did they send them further without a proper meed,
Whereby the men of Etzel made all the better speed.
To Uté and her children sent message Rüdeger,
To say there lived no margrave who meant them kindlier.

1426

Unto Brunhilda also a kindly greeting went,
Of good faith ever steadfast, and friendliest intent.
When they these words had taken, forth would the envoys fare:
That God in Heaven would keep them, was Gotelinda's prayer.

1427

Ere yet the envoys fully had cross'd Bavarian ground,
The ever-ready Werbel the worthy bishop found.
What message for his kinsmen upon the Rhine he told
Thereof I have no knowledge; save that in ruddy gold

1428

He gave the twain a token before he let them ride.
Quoth Pilgerin the bishop: "And could I at my side
See them, so were I happy— these sister's sons of mine:
Scarce can I come to see them, myself, unto the Rhine."

1429

The ways by which they travell'd o'er land unto the Rhine,
I cannot say for certain. Silver and raiment fine
By none from them was stolen: men fear'd their lord's despite—
That king of noble lineage— ay, potent was his might!

1430

In the Burgundian country, to Worms upon the Rhine
Came, after twelve days' riding, Werbel and Schwemmelin.
Unto the king the tidings were told, and to his men,
Of foreign envoys coming. Gunther made question then.

1431

Quoth he, the Lord of Rhineland: "Who can to us declare
Whence come these foreign riders that through our country fare?"
But that was known to no one: till Hagen of Tronjé,
As soon as he had seen them, did thus to Gunther say:

1432

"Strange news to us is coming that much I will aver.
The fiddle-players of Etzel I have but now seen here.
Unto the Rhine your sister hath sent them, verily;
For sake of both their sovereigns right welcome must they be."

1433

Meanwhile before the palace in full array they rode;
No prince's minstrels ever in nobler fashion show'd.
The royal court-folk hasten'd to meet them presently:
They bade men take their mantles and found them hostelry.

1434

Their travelling clothes were costly, with work so deftly done
That they might well with honour before the king have gone.
Yet in the same apparel to court they would not go:
Who cared for it might have it, the envoys let men know.

1435

Without delay they met with folk who were well content
To take the clothing gladly; and unto them ’twas sent.
And thereupon the strangers put on far better gear,
As it behoves kings’ heralds in full array to wear.

1436

So went, when leave was given, to where the monarch sat
Those followers of Etzel: and all were glad thereat.
With courtesy did Hagen towards the heralds make,
And gave them kindly greeting, for which their thanks they spake.

1437

To learn from them the tidings to questioning he fell,
If Etzel and his lieges were faring all right well?
Then answer’d him the minstrel: “Ne’er throve the country more,
Nor were the folk so happy— of that thou may’st be sure.”

1438

Towards the host then went they. Crowded the palace was;
Unto the guests was offer’d such kindly welcome as
In foreign kings’ dominions is ever given of right.
And there, in Gunther’s service, found Werbel many a knight.

1439

And graciously King Gunther began to greet them then:
“Be both of ye right welcome, ye Hunnish minstrelmen,
And your companions also. Ye are, I understand,
Sent hither by great Etzel to the Burgundian land?”

1440

Before the king they bow’d them, and then spake Werbelin:
“To thee his service offers that well-loved lord of mine;
And to this land thy sister Kriemhilda greeting saith.
They send us to you warriors trusting in your good faith.”

1441

The mighty prince made answer: “Of this right glad am I.
And tell me how is Etzel,” so did the king reply.
“And eke my sister Kriemhild, yonder in Hunnish land?”
Then spake the fiddle-player: “I’ll answer this demand.

1442

“Of this ye may be certain, that never yet there were
Two folks who lived together more happy than this pair;
And all the knights around them, their kinsfolk and their men.
When on this ride we started, right joyous were they then.”

1443

“Gramercy for the greeting he hath sent me this day,
And thank my sister also; since it be as ye say,
That all live in contentment, ruler and ruled as well:
For I with some misgiving, ask’d ye the news to tell.”

1444

The king's two younger brothers had likewise come by now:
For they the news from Hunsland but now had got to know.
And Giselher right gladly, for his dear sister's sake,
Set eyes upon the envoys and kindly to them spake.

1445

"Right welcome must ye heralds be unto me and mine,
And if ye rode more often hither unto the Rhine,
Friends would ye find here always rejoicing ye to see.
That aught should here befall you small peril can there be."

1446

"We trust you in all honour," made answer Schwemmelin.
"And never can I tell you by any wit of mine,
How Etzel hath enjoin'd us to greet you lovingly,
As hath your noble sister, who there hath honour high.

1447

"Of former faith and kindness the queen doth you remind,
And how with heart and body you aye to her inclined.
But to the king's self firstly have we been sent, to pray
That into Etzel's country ye deign to take your way.

1448

"That we thereto should urge ye hath given strict command
The rich and mighty Etzel, who likewise doth demand
That if ye by your sister would not again be seen,
Then would he fain have knowledge of what his fault hath been

1449

“That ye are strangers to him, and to his country, too;
For if the Queen Kriemhilda were all unknown to you,
Still he himself were worthy for you to come to see.
And were this thing to happen, ’twould please him verily.”

1450

Then spake the royal Gunther: “A week from now being gone,
So will I give you tidings of what conclusion
My friends and I have come to. Meanwhile for you ’twere best
To go unto your hostel, and may ye have good rest.”

1451

But Werbelin spake further: “If such a thing might be,
Fain would we have permission my lady first to see—
I mean the mighty Uté— before our rest we seek.
Then Giselher the noble in courtly wise did speak:

1452

“That no man shall deny you; and if to her ye go,
Ye will my mother’s pleasure right well accomplish so:
For gladly will she see ye; and for my sister’s sake,
The Lady Kriemhild namely, you welcome will she make.”

1453

So Giselher he brought them to where they found the dame.
With joy she saw the heralds who from the Huns’ land came;
And heartily did greet them, so kindly was her mood.
Then told they her the tidings those courtly heralds good.

1454

Spake Schwemmelin in this wise: “My lady sends to thee
Her faithful love and duty; and if it so might be
That she could see you often, she bids you to believe
That in this world would nothing more gladness to her give.”

1455

Whereto the queen made answer: “Alas, it may not be!
Often as I am longing my daughter dear to see,
Too distant dwelleth from me your noble monarch’s wife.
May she and Etzel ever be blesséd in their life.

1456

“But ye must give me warning, ere from this place ye fare,
When ye will be returning; for heralds saw I ne’er
For long days past so gladly, as I have look’d on you.”
The squires then gave their promise her will therein to do.

1457

And so unto their hostel the men from Hunsland went.
Meanwhile for friends and kinsmen the mighty king had sent.
The noble Gunther question put unto every man
What thought he of the matter. And many then began

1458

To say that he might fairly ride unto Etzel’s land.
So counsell’d him the warriors who did around him stand,
Excepting only Hagen— to whom ’twas bitter woe.
He told the king in secret: “Thou wilt thyself undo.

1459

“Thou know’st as well as I do what thing we wrought of yore:
Needs must we of Kriemhilda be fearful evermore,
Seeing I slew her husband, and that with mine own hand.
How durst we take this journey and ride to Etzel’s land?”

1460

Then spake the mighty Gunther: “My sister’s wrath was spent.
Pardon to us she granted, ere from this place she went,
With kisses of forgiveness, for what to her was done:
Unless, it may be, Hagen, that thee she hates alone.”

1461

“Be not deceived,” said Hagen, “whate’er the message be
The envoys bring from Hunsland. Would you Kriemhilda see,
Be well prepared to forfeit your honour and your life:
Long-waiting in her vengeance is she, King Etzel’s wife.”

1462

Thereon the princely Gernot unto the council said:
“Because that thou with reason to lose thy life dost dread
Within the Huns’ dominions, must we then lay aside
This plan to see our sister? right ill would that betide.”

1463

Prince Giselher then also spake thus unto the knight:
“Since thou, friend Hagen, knowest thou art the guilty wight,
So stay thou here in safety and of thyself take care,
And let, with us, the bold ones unto my sister fare.”

1464

With wrath began to kindle the warrior of Tronjé:
“I will not have another go with you on your way,
Who dares than I more boldly on this court-ride to go.
Since ye will not be hinder’d, that will I let you know.”

1465

Then spake the kitchen-master, Rumold the worthy thane:
“Here friends and strangers can ye right easily maintain
As ye yourselves are willing: your stores are full, I trow;
And ne’er, I ween, hath Hagen betray’d you hitherto.

1466

“If ye will heed not Hagen, Rumold now counsels you—
And I have ever served you with love and service true—
That here ye fain should tarry, out of good will to me,
And let King Etzel yonder along with Kriemhild be.

1467

“How otherwise in this world could ye e’er better live?
In spite of all your foemen here may you right well thrive;
You may your bodies freely with raiment rich endue,
And wine drink of the choicest, and winsome maidens woo.

1468

“Meats, too, are set before ye— the best that e’er were brought
To any king in this world; and if this all were naught,
You should, methinks, remain here for sake of your fair wife—
Ere in such childish fashion you seek to risk your life.

1469

“I counsel your abiding: rich is your heritage.
At home can vassals better to you redeem their pledge
Than yonder ’mid the Hun-folk. Who knows how things be there?
My lords, go ye not thither: thus Rumold doth declare!”

1470

Thereunto answer’d Gernot: “Here will we tarry not,
Since we such friendly bidding have from my sister got,
And from the mighty Etzel. Why put the thing aside?
Who goes not gladly with us may e’en at home abide.”

1471

And thereto answer’d Hagen: “See lest ye take amiss
The words that I have spoken, howe’er ye do in this.
I give you faithful counsel: as ye regard your life,
Go well-arm’d to the Hun-folk, as if for battle-strife.

1472

“Will ye not be dissuaded, so send ye for your men,
The best that ye can muster or any way can gain;
And from them all I’ll choose ye a thousand warriors good:
So may ye fear no evil from angry Kriemhild’s mood.”

1473

“That rede I’ll gladly follow,” the king in answer said.
Then sent he heralds riding, who through his kingdom sped.
And so they brought the warriors, three thousand men or more.
They dreamt not of the evil that lay for them in store.

1474

All through the lands of Gunther right joyously they rode.
On every man a charger and raiment were bestow'd—
Of those who were to journey away from Burgundy.
A goodly number follow'd the king right willingly.

1475

Then Hagen, lord of Tronjé, his brother Dankwart bade
The four score knights who served them unto the Rhine to lead.
They came in knightly order; with arms and wearing gear
Within King Gunther's borders right soon did they appear.

1476

Now came the gallant Volker— a high-born minstrel he—
To join with thirty liegemen the royal company.
Such splendid raiment had they, a king had worn it well.
That he would ride to Hunsland, to Gunther bade he tell.

1477

Now who was this same Volker I fain would let you know:
He was of noble lineage; to him did fealty owe
In the Burgundian country, full many a noble knight.
Because he play'd the fiddle he was the Minstrel hight.

1478

Then Hagen chose the thousand: they were to him well-known;
And what in hard-fought battles their strength of hand had done,
And all they e'er had ventured, that had he seen full well.
No man of aught save valour in all their deeds could tell.

1479

The envoys of Kriemhilda were sore discomfited,
For they of both their rulers the wrath began to dread;
And leave they daily sought for, that they might thence begone.
But Hagen would not grant it: through cunning that was done.

1480

He said unto his masters: “We must be on our guard
Lest we to go allow them, before we are prepared
Within a week thereafter to Etzel’s land to go.
If any ill-will bear us, thus shall we better know.

1481

“So shall not Dame Kriemhilda be taking heed hereto,
That any, by her counsel, should evil to us do.
And if it be her purpose her own may be the pain:
With us to Hunsland take we so many chosen men.”

1482

Their bucklers, then, and saddles, and all of such like gear
As they to Etzel’s country had in their minds to bear,
By many valiant liegemen for use were ready made.
The envoys of Kriemhilda were unto Gunther bade.

1483

And when the heralds enter’d, unto them Gernot said:
“The king will take the offer to us by Etzel made;
And we will come right gladly unto his festival,
And see again our sister: of that doubt not at all.”

1484

Then spake to them King Gunther: “Can ye not tell us, pray,
When is this merry-making? or rather, on what day
’Twere best that we come thither?” ’Twas Schwemmelin replied:
“Ye must be there for certain at next Midsummer-tide.”

1485

The king unto them granted, if haply they were will’d
(For not yet had they done it) to see the Dame Brunhild,
That they with his approval might to her presence go.
It was gainsaid by Volker: for her sake did he so.

1486

“In sooth the Lady Brunhild is not now in the mood
For you to look upon her,” so spake the warrior good.
“Wait ye until to-morrow, then her they’ll let you see.”
So hoped they to behold her; but it was not to be.

1487

The mighty prince then order’d (he held those envoys dear)
Out of his own great kindness, that folk should thither bear
His gold upon broad bucklers; great store thereof he had.
And by his kinsmen also rich gifts to them were made.

1488

For Giselher and Gernot, Gere and Ortwein, too,
That they were kindly-hearted right plainly then did shew.
They such abundant largess unto the envoys gave,
That, fearful of their rulers, none of it would they have.

1489

Then Werbelin the herald unto the king did say:
“Your gifts, Lord King, so please ye, let in your kingdom stay;
We may not take them with us; my lord bade us take heed,
Lest gifts by us be taken: nor is there any need.”

1490

Then did the Lord of Rhineland this thing unkindly take,
That they a great king’s treasure of small account should make;
So were they bound to take it, his gold and habiting,
And unto Etzel’s country were fain with them to bring.

1491

They would see Uté also ere they set forth again.
So Giselher the ready brought both the minstrelmen
Unto his mother Uté. This word the lady sent:
That if Kriemhild were honour’d her mother was content.

1492

Then bade the queen be given of gold and broidery,
All for the sake of Kriemhild— so dear to her was she—
And for the sake of Etzel, unto the minstrels both.
They readily might take it: ’twas done in honest troth.

1493

The messengers’ leave-taking was done; and now they had
Parted from men and maidens; and so with hearts right glad
They rode on into Swabia; thus far ’twas Gernot’s will
His heroes should escort them, that none might do them ill.

1494

When they, who thus did guard them, parted and homewards rode,
In Etzel's power a safeguard they found on ev'ry road,
Whence none essay'd to rob them of horse or wearing gear.
And so to Etzel's country they speedily drew near.

1495

Where'er they found acquaintance, to them the news they said:
How the Burgundian people, ere many days were sped,
Unto the Hun-folk's country were coming from the Rhine.
The news was carried also to Bishop Pilgerin.

1496

As they by Bechelaren along the highway went,
To Rüdeger folk told it— as naught could well prevent—
And also to Gotlinda, the margrave's wedded wife.
That she was soon to see them was joy unto her life.

1497

Folk saw how with the tidings the minstrels swiftly rode,
Until they found King Etzel at Gran, where he abode.
And greeting upon greeting which unto him were sent
They to the king deliver'd; ruddy with joy he went.

1498

And when the queen the tidings did fairly understand,
That verily her brothers were coming to the land,
In mood she was right happy; and both the minstrelmen
With costly gifts rewarded: and honour had she then.

1499

“Now Schwemmelin and Werbel, each one of you,” said she,
“Tell me which of my kinsmen will at our feasting be,
Of whom the best and dearest unto our land we bade?
And, when the news was told him, tell me what Hagen said?”

1500

They said: “One morning early he came to the debate,
And not a good word from him we early had or late;
And when the ride to Hunsland was praised by all the folk
Grim Hagen looked not elsewise than if of death they spoke.

1501

“Your brothers here are coming, the noble kings all three,
In high and lordly humour. But who with them may be
That news I cannot give you, seeing I do not know;
But Volker the bold minstrel hath vow’d with them to go.”

1502

“Him could I spare right blithely,” in answer spake the queen:
“Since many a time and often here Volker have I seen.
But fain I am of Hagen, the hero excellent;
That here we soon shall see him doth give me much content.”

1503

Then went the royal lady where she the king did find;
How gently Dame Kriemhilda unto him spake her mind!
“How do the tidings please thee, my lord beloved,” she said,
“Now all my heart hath yearned for shall be accomplishéd.”

1504

“Thy will is eke my pleasure,” thus did the king reply,
“Nor any of my kindred so glad to see were I,
If e’er they should be coming hither unto my land.
For sake of them that love thee is all my trouble bann’d.”

1505

King’s officers then straightway commandment gave to all
That seats should be made ready in palace and in hall,
Meet for the guests belovéd who would be there anon.
By them, ere long, for Etzel was pleasure all fordone.

Adventure XXV

How the Lords All Went to the Huns

1506

Now let us leave the story of how they prosper'd there.
Ere then did never warriors of higher courage fare
In such like state and splendour through any king's domain.
Of armour and apparel all had as they were fain.

1507

The warden of the Rhineland equipp'd his warriors bold,
A thousand knights and sixty, so is the story told,
With men-at-arms nine thousand for this great festival.
They whom they left behind them ere long bewail'd them all.

1508

Their riding gear they carried to Worms across the court.
Whereon an aged bishop of Spires spake in this sort

Unto the comely Uté: “Our friends have mind to fare
Unto this high assembly: God guard their honour there!”

1509

Thereon unto her children did noble Uté say:
“Ye should, my noble heroes, be here content to stay:
I dreamt a dream this morning, of great dismay and dread;
How all the winged creatures within this land were dead.”

1510

“Who puts his faith in dreamings,” then Hagen made reply,
“Knows not the proper meaning that may within them lie,
When honour, peradventure, may wholly be at stake.
I’m willing that my masters for court their leave should take.”

1511

“We should indeed with gladness ride unto Etzel’s land:
There kings can have the service of many a hero’s hand,
When there we take our part in Kriemhilda’s revelry.”
Hagen the journey counsell’d: he rued it presently.

1512

He would have been against it, if Gernot had not sought
With ill-adviséd speeches to set him so at naught:
Reminding him of Siegfried, the Lady Kriemhild’s lord;
Said he: “This ride to Hagen is therefore untoward.”

1513

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: “Through fear I’ll not forego!
If such your will is, heroes, ’twere well to buckle to.
Gladly will I ride with you, e’en unto Etzel’s realm.”
Soon by his hand were shatter’d full many a shield and helm.

1514

The boats were ready waiting, and many a man was there:
Whate’er they had of clothing on board forthwith they bare.
Unwearyingly wrought they until the fall of eve;
And full of joy and gladness at length their homes they leave.

1515

Their tents and wooden cabins were pitch’d upon the green
Along the further Rhine-bank. When finish’d this had been,
The king’s fair wife besought him a while there to abide
For one night would she lay her his manly form beside.

1516

With trumpeting and fluting the early morning brake,
To warn them to be starting: then did they ready make.
If any had a sweetheart her to his heart he laid;—
For them a bitter parting King Etzel’s wife soon made!

1517

The sons of the fair Uté for vassal had a man
As bold as he was faithful; now, when the march began,
He to the king, in secret, did thus his mind declare.
Said he: “It needs must grieve me that to this feast ye fare.”

1518

This man by name was Rumold, a knight of ready hand.
“To whom,” so spake he, “leave ye your people and your land?
Alas, that none can turn you, ye warriors, from your mood!
This message of Kriemhilda’s to me ne’er boded good.”

1519

“To thee my realm be trusted, and eke my little son,
Serve faithfully the ladies; so let my will be done.
Shouldst thou see any mourner, ’tis thine to cheer his life.
No harm will e’er befall us by cause of Etzel’s wife.”

1520

The horses were awaiting the kings and eke their men;
With loving kiss departed full many a husband then,
Whose heart was full of courage, and body strong with life:
Soon to be sadly wept for by many a comely wife.

1521

Who saw the eager warriors unto their horses go,
Saw likewise many a lady there standing in her woe.
That they for long were parting too surely did they feel,
Foreboding great disaster. Heart never thus had weal.

1522

Now quickly the Burgundians did on their journey ride.
Then was there much disturbance through all the country wide;
On either side the mountains both women wept and men.
Howe’er their people bare it forth fared they blithely then.

1523

The warriors of Niblung to ride with them had come,
A thousand men in hauberks, who left behind at home
Full many a lovely lady, ne'er to be seen again.
Still wrought the wounds of Siegfried in Kriemhild bitter pain.

1524

Their course they now directed, King Gunther's gallant men,
Up through the East Franks' country, towards the River Main;
And thither led them Hagen, who knew the road of old.
Their marshal was Sir Dankwart, Burgundian hero bold.

1525

As they from Eastern Franks' land to Schwanefeld rode on,
Well might they be to all men by noble bearing known,
These princes and their kinsmen, heroes deserving fame.
The king on the twelfth morning unto the Danube came.

1526

Then Hagen, knight of Tronjé, rode of them all foremost;
Good heart and courage gave he unto the Niblung host.
The warrior bold dismounted, down on the sand stood he,
And hastily his warhorse made fast unto a tree.

1527

The stream was overflowing, no skiff was there to see,
The Nibelungs misdoubted, in great anxiety,
How they should e'er get over; the flood was all too wide.
The gallant knights dismounted hard by the river-side.

1528

“Much damage,” said Sir Hagen, “may here be done to thee,
Ruler of the Rhineland! Look for thyself and see;
The river is o’erflowing, and mighty is its flood.
I trow we lose ere nightfall here many a hero good.”

1529

“What art thou casting at me, Hagen?” the great king spake.
“Seek not again to daunt us for thine own honour’s sake.
The ford thou shalt find for us, which to that land doth cross,
That we both steeds and raiment may take there without loss.”

1530

“My life to me,” quoth Hagen, “is not yet such a load
That I should wish to drown me in this wide, rushing flood!
For by my hands I’d sooner that many a man should die
In Etzel’s country yonder: good-will thereto have I.

1531

“Proud warriors and goodly, stay by the water then,
Whilst I along the river myself seek ferrymen,
Who presently will take us across to Gelfrat’s land.”
Then took the doughty Hagen his good shield in his hand.

1532

Well clad was he in armour; his shield he did thereon,
And on his head his helmet; brightly enow it shone.
Above his harness wore he a sword so broad of blade
That wounds right deep and ghastly with either edge it made.

1533

Then up and down the river he sought some ferryman;
He heard a splash of water; to hearken he began.
'Twas made by elfin women within a fountain fair,
Who fain to cool their bodies were bathing themselves there.

1534

As soon as Hagen saw them he slyly towards them crept.
No sooner had they seen him than off they swiftly leapt.
That thus they had escaped him did please them mightily;
He took their raiment from them, no further harm did he.

1535

Then spake one of the mermaids, Hadburga was she hight:
"O Hagen, noble warrior, we'll tell to thee aright,
How thou upon this journey unto the Huns shalt thrive,
If thou, bold thane, our raiment again to us wilt give."

1536

They floated like to sea-birds before him on the flood.
It seemed to him their foresight must needs be sure and good.
Whatever they should tell him he, therefore, would believe.
To whatsoe'er he ask'd them, wise answers they would give.

1537

Said she: "To Etzel's country ye certainly may take
This ride; and I am ready my faith thereon to stake,
That ne'er did heroes journey to any kingdom yet—
In truth ye may believe it— who did such honour get."

1538

This saying made Sir Hagen within his heart right gay,
Then gave he them their garments and made no more delay.
When they their wondrous raiment forthwith had donn'd again,
The way to Etzel's country aright they did explain.

1539

Then spake the other mermaid, her name was Siegelind:
"Thee, Hagen, son of Aldrian, to warn I have a mind.
False was it what my sister to get her clothing said:
For comest thou to Hunsland, thou'lt sorely be betray'd.

1540

"Ay! homeward shouldst thou turn thee; yet is there time to spare:
Seeing that ye, bold heroes, have thus been bidden there,
That all of you may perish within King Etzel's land.
Whoe'er goes riding thither hath Death at his right hand."

1541

But Hagen spake in answer: "Ye fool me needlessly;
What rhyme or reason is it that all of us should die
Among the Hunfolk yonder, through hate of any man?"
More fully then their meaning to tell him they began.

1542

And one of them spake further: "It must in sooth be so,
That none with life escapeth who to that land doth go,
Save only the king's chaplain; that can we surely tell;
He unto Gunther's kingdom will come back safe and well."

1543

Then, in grim mood, bold Hagen answer unto her made:
“’Twere hard to tell my masters what thou just now hast said,
That yonder ’mid the Hunfolk we all must lose our lives.
Show us across the water, thou wisest of all wives!”

1544

She said: “Against this journey since thou wilt nothing hear,
There yonder in a hostel, unto the river near,
A ferryman is dwelling— and none there is elsewhere.”
Then knowing what he wanted he would not tarry there.

1545

But one of them call’d after the knight discomfited:
“Nay, wait awhile, Sir Hagen, thou wilt too fast ahead!
Hear better how we tell you to cross the sands aright;
The warden of the marchland by name is Else hight.

1546

“He hath a brother also, Gelfrat the knight is he,
A great lord in Bavaria. Not easy will it be
For you to pass his marches. Ye ought to well beware—
And with the boatman also ye needs must deal with care.

1547

“So grim is he of humour, he will not let you go,
Unless unto the hero some good intent ye show:
Would ye by him be ferried, give him the payment due.
This land he hath in keeping, and is to Gelfrat true.

1548

“And if he come not quickly shout to him o’er the flood,
Say ‘Amelrich’ your name is;— he was a hero good,
Who, by his foes’ contrivance, was driven from this land—
Whene’er his name is spoken the steersman is at hand.”

1549

The haughty Hagen bow’d him before these womenfolk:
But listening in silence no word again he spoke.
Then higher up the river he walk’d, along the sand;
And there, across the water, he saw a hostel stand.

1550

Then lustily began he to call across the flood:
“Now, steersman, fetch me over!” shouted the warrior good;
“Of ruddy gold an armlet I’ll give thee for reward.
The matter of my journey, I tell thee, presses hard.”

1551

The boatman was so wealthy to serve he would not brook,
Wherefore a fee but seldom from anyone he took;
His underlings were likewise of high and haughty mood.
So, still, alone stood Hagen on this side of the flood.

1552

Then with such might he shouted that, lo, from shore to shore
The river rang: the hero of strength had such great store:
“Now Amelrich come fetch ye, Lord Else’s man am I,
Who had to leave this country by force of enmity.”

1553

High on his sword an armlet towards him did he hold—
All bright and shining was it, compact of ruddy gold—
That he, therefore, might row him across to Gelfrat's land.
Then took the haughty boatman himself the oar in hand.

1554

The ferryman was churlish and obstinate of will—
The lust of great possession doth often end in ill—
He wished to earn from Hagen that band of gold so red:
But from the warrior's weapon grim death he got instead.

1555

The ferryman pull'd stoutly unto the hitherside;
But when the man he found not, whose name he had heard cried,
Then was he wroth in earnest. At Hagen's face look'd he,
And thus unto the hero he spake right bitterly:

1556

"It may be that thou bearest the name of Amelrich;
To him of whom I mind me thou art in no wise like;
By father and by mother he brother was to me.
And as thou hast betray'd me, thou here canst bide!" said he.

1557

"Not I, by God Almighty!" thereon, did Hagen speak:
"I am a stranger warrior, and help for others seek.
Take now in friendly fashion this wage I offer you
To put me o'er the water; I am your friend right true."

1558

The ferryman made answer: “Nay, that shall never be!
My well-belovéd masters have many an enemy;
Therefore I row no strangers across unto their land.
If life thou prizest, quickly step out upon the sand.”

1559

“Now, do not so,” quoth Hagen, “for sorry is my mood,
But take from me in kindness this band of gold so good,
A thousand men and horses across the stream to row.”
The boatman grim gave answer: “That will I never do.”

1560

A sturdy oar he lifted, mighty and broad of blade,
And struck a blow at Hagen; an erring stroke he made,
And in the boat he stagger’d and on his knee fell down.
A ferryman so gruesome Hagen had never known.

1561

And when the haughty stranger still more he would provoke,
A steering board he wielded, and into splinters broke
About the head of Hagen. A stalwart man was he;
Whence came to Else’s boatman much sorrow presently.

1562

In anger fiercely raging, Hagen reach’d out his hand
In haste to seize his scabbard, wherefrom he drew a brand,
And smote his head from off him, and dash’d it to the ground.
Among the proud Burgundians the news flew quickly round.

1563

But at the self-same moment when he the boatman slew,
The skiff stream-downwards drifted, which gave him cause to rue;
For ere in hand he brought it to weary he began,
Then mighty was the rowing of royal Gunther's man.

1564

With sturdy strokes the stranger turn'd it about again,
Until within his hand-grasp the stout oar broke in twain.
He would, to reach the warriors, a sandy beach have found:
And having not another, how quickly now he bound

1565

The splinters with his shield-strap! 'twas but a slender band.
Towards a coppice steering, he brought the boat to land.
There on the bank-side standing he found his masters three,
And liegemen came to meet him— a goodly company.

1566

Him with kind welcome greeted these noble knights and good.
But, when they look'd within it, the wherry reek'd with blood
That from the great wound spurted as he the boatman slew;
Then from the warriors Hagen had questions not a few.

1567

No sooner had King Gunther seen the hot blood all red
Within the vessel washing, than, straightway, thus he said:
"Come, why not tell me, Hagen, where is the boatman gone?
I ween your strength so mighty hath him of life fordone."

1568

With lying words he answer'd: "As I the boat there found
A desert heath alongside, my hand the rope unbound;
But never of a boatman have I to-day had sight,
Nor here by fault on my part, hath any had despite."

1569

Then one of the Burgundians, the noble Gernot, said:
"To-day I needs must sorrow for friends soon to be dead;
Since we have found no boatman waiting for us at hand,
How are we to come over? For that in fear I stand."

1570

Right loudly then cried Hagen: "Lay down upon the green,
Ye squires, the horses' trappings: I mind me I have been
The best of all the rowers that on the Rhine were found.
I'll wager I can bring you across to Gelfrat's ground."

1571

That they might be the sooner ferried across the flood,
They drave the horses in it; whose swimming was so good,
That, strong as was the current, they cross'd it none the less;
Though some far downwards drifted in very weariness.

1572

Their gold and all their baggage unto the ship they bore,
Since from this journey's ending they now could turn no more.
And Hagen was the captain; he ferried to the strand
Full many a gallant warrior into the unknown land.

1573

Of noble knights a thousand first brought he to the shore,
And after these his warriors, and ever there were more:
Of men-at-arms nine thousand he ferried safe to land,
Nor all day long did weary the gallant Tronian's hand.

1574

When he the whole in safety across the flood had brought,
The warrior bold and eager of that strange story thought
Which the wild water-maidens erewhile to him had said.
Then for King Gunther's chaplain the days were wellnigh sped!

1575

Amidst the chapel baggage he sought and found the priest,
Who on his hand was leaning, that on the Pyx did rest.
But little that avail'd him when Hagen him did spy:
The all-forsaken chaplain must suffer grievously.

1576

Out of the skiff he swung him, ere yet a moment pass'd,
Though many voices shouted: "Stay him, good sirs, avast."
Young Giselher fell a-cursing in anger at the sight;
Yet would not Hagen heed him, but did it in despite.

1577

Then spake the noble Gernot, the lord of Burgundy:
"This chaplain's death, O Hagen, now what avails it thee?
Had any other done it it would have pleased you ill.
For what default or reason sought'st thou the priest to kill."

1578

As best he could he floated, and well escaped had he,
Had any dared to help him; but that was not to be,
Because the mightful Hagen was of too angry mood:
He thrust him under water— that seem'd to no one good.

1579

Now when the wretched chaplain no help saw in his need,
Backward again he turn'd him; sore was his plight indeed.
Yet though to swim he knew not, God help'd him with His hand,
That safe and sound in body he got once more to land.

1580

There stood the hapless chaplain and shook his raiment out;
And thereby well knew Hagen that now there was no doubt
But true the tale was, told him by those wild water-wives.
Thought he: "Then all these warriors perforce must lose their lives."

1581

When that the three kings' lieges the ship had all unstored,
And unto land had carried whate'er they had on board,
Hagen to pieces hew'd it and flung it in the flood.
Whereover marvell'd greatly those warriors bold and good.

1582

"Why dost thou thus, O brother?" to him did Dankwart say:
"How shall we cross the water when on our homeward way,
We ride again from Hunsland unto the Rhine country?"
"Look you," to him said Hagen, "that thing can never be!"

1583

Then spake the lord of Tronjé: “This do I with the thought
That, should we on this journey have any cravens brought,
Who fain would basely leave us, through cowardice of mind,
They must a shameful ending here in this river find.”

1584

A man there was amongst them from Burgundy who came,
By might of hand a hero, and Volker was his name.
Right cunningly he utter’d all that was in his mind,
And whatsoe’er did Hagen this minstrel good did find.

1585

The chargers now were ready, each packhorse had its load.
So far, the host no damage had suffered on the road
To daunt them, or to trouble, except the chaplain’s loss;
Who needs must to the Rhineland on foot the country cross.

Adventure XXVI

How Gelfrat Was Slain by Dankwart

1586

When they were all come over unto the further strand,
The king began to question: “Who will throughout this land
Show us the proper pathways— lest we should stray afar?”
Then spake the valiant Volker: “Alone for that I’ll care.”

1587

“Now bide ye yet,” said Hagen, “if squire you be or knight,
A friend’s word should be follow’d; that seems to me but right.
I have unwelcome tidings to make known unto ye:
No more shall we return to the land of Burgundy!

1588

“To-day, at early morning, told me mermaidens two,
That we should home return not. Now rede I what to do:

Look to your weapons, heroes, ye needs must well beware;
Here have we mighty foemen, and warily must fare.

1589

“I thought to catch her lying, that wily mermaiden:
She swore that none among us should ever come again
Alive unto our country, except the priest alone:
Whom therefore I this morning have done my best to drown.”

1590

Then quickly flew these tidings, from troop to troop they spread;
From the keen heroes’ faces for grief the colour fled;
To sorrow then began they that this court-ride should lead
To bitter death as ending: in sooth, they had good need.

1591

Nigh Moeringen the place was where they the flood had cross’d.
The ferryman of Else there, too, his life had lost.
And thereupon said Hagen: “Seeing that I have made
Foes on the road, I doubt not that we shall be waylaid.

1592

“To-day that self-same boatman at early dawn I slew;
Ye know right well the story. Now buckle quickly to,
That if this day should Gelfrat or Else here essay
To fall upon our people, they shall the damage pay.

1593

“For such bold men I know ye, this cannot fail to be.
’Twere well to let your horses, therefore, go quietly,
That none should deem we’re passing along the roads in flight.”
“That counsel will I follow,” said Giselher the knight.

1594

“But who shall now our people across the country show?”
They answer’d: “That shall Volker, for right well doth he know
The highways and the byways, a gallant minstrel he.”
Before their wish was utter’d, the fiddler they could see

1595

Standing well-arm’d before them. He bound his helmet on,
And on his battle-mantle the glorious colour shone.
As signal, on a lance-shaft, a pennon red he bore.
But with the kings, thereafter, he fell on trouble sore.

1596

Meanwhile the boatman’s murder became to Gelfrat known
By message all undoubted; and eke the news had gone
To Else the most mighty; and sore aggrieved were they.
They sent to call their chieftains, who came without delay.

1597

In space of time the shortest— I would to you make known—
Were seen unto them riding men, who erewhile had done
Sore scathe and dread achievements in direst stress of war.
Of such there came to Gelfrat seven hundred men or more.

1598

Their foemen fierce to challenge to ride they then began,
Led by their lords aforesaid. Too readily they ran
To catch the doughty strangers and wipe away their shame.
Of their retainers many by death thereafter came.

1599

Meanwhile, Hagen of Tronjé for that had taken care;
(How could a hero better for all his friends beware?)
Together with his liegemen the watch by night kept he,
As did his brother Dankwart: ’twas done right prudently.

1600

The day its course had ended and light they had no more.
He fear’d for friends and comrades with heavy dread and sore.
Their road throughout Bavaria beneath their shields they track’d,
And ere they long had ridden the heroes were attack’d.

1601

On both sides of the roadway behind them, coming fast,
They heard the tramp of horse-hoofs, too noisy in their haste.
Then spake the gallant Dankwart: “Here will they fall on us!
Now fasten on your helmets— ’twere wise to wait them thus.”

1602

They halted on their journey, naught else was to be done.
They saw how in the darkness the polish’d bucklers shone,
Until at last would Hagen no longer brook delay:
“Who hunts us on the highway?” to him must Gelfrat say.

1603

In this wise then the Margrave— he of Bavaria—spake:
“Our foemen we are seeking, and now are on their track.
I know not who hath slain me my ferryman this day,
He was a skilful hero, and sorrow well I may.”

1604

To him spake he of Tronjé: “And was that boatman thine?
He would not take us over. The guilt thereof is mine,
For then I slew the warrior; in sooth, there was good need,
Since at his hands I elsewise had got my death instead.

1605

“I offer’d him for guerdon good gold and raiment fine
To ferry us, O hero! unto this land of thine,
Which anger’d him so sorely that he at me a blow
Aim’d with a sturdy barge-pole; then I grew fierce enow,

1606

“And clutching at my broadsword, I paid him back again
With blows that deeply wounded; so was the hero slain.
Amends therefore I’ll make thee, howe’er thou thinkest good.”
Then fell the two to wrangle: both were of stubborn mood.

1607

“Full well I knew,” said Gelfrat, “that when this way did ride
Gunther and his retainers, much ill would us betide
Through Hagen, lord of Tronjé. Not hence alive goes he;
For my poor boatman’s murder he must the forfeit be.”

1608

Above their bucklers bent they their lances for the thrust,
Sir Gelfrat and Sir Hagen; each at the other must.
Then Else, too, and Dankwart came riding gallantly,
To try each other's mettle; the fight raged fiercely.

1609

How otherwise might heroes more featly try their strength?
By a hard lance-thrust smitten Hagen the bold, at length,
From off his horse fell backwards, by Gelfrat's hand laid low
His saddle-bow was broken and downfall he must know.

1610

Among the yeomen's lances arose a clashing sound.
Then up again rose Hagen, who, whilom on the ground
From Gelfrat's blow, had fallen upon the meadow-grass.
His mood, methinks, to Gelfrat of sort ungentle was.

1611

Who held in charge their horses, that is to me unknown;
The twain were now dismounted and on the sand stood down—
Hagen, to wit, and Gelfrat, who at each other flew;
The folk of either aided who of the combat knew.

1612

How mightfully soever Hagen on Gelfrat leapt,
The noble margrave parried; and with one stroke he swept
A great piece off his buckler— that sparks therefrom were shed;
Whereby King Gunther's vassal was wellnigh stricken dead.

1613

Thereon he unto Dankwart to call aloud began:
“Dear brother, help me quickly! for, lo, a mighty man
Hath got me at his mercy; he’ll make an end of me!”
Then spake the valiant Dankwart: “To that I soon will see.”
1614

Then nearer sprang the hero and struck so fell a blow
With keen edge of his weapon, that dead he laid him low.
Then fain had Else taken some vengeance for the wight;
But he and all his people went off in sorry plight.
1615

His brother had been slaughter’d; himself, too, had a wound;
Full eighty of his warriors lay there upon the ground
In grim Death’s grip forever; needs must the hero then
Turn round and flee for safety before King Gunther’s men.
1616

Now while they of Bavaria along the road did flee,
The horrid sounds of slaughter were heard unceasingly.
So did the men of Tronjé after their foemen chase,
Who of defeat had dreamt not; too soon it came to pass.
1617

And while they still were fleeing, Dankwart the thane call’d out:
“Upon the road right quickly we ought to turn about
And let them run at leisure: all wet they are with blood!
Unto our friends return we; in sooth I deem it good.”
1618

Now when they were returnéd to where the fight had been,
Spake Hagen, lord of Tronjé: “Ye heroes, be it seen
What damage we have suffer’d, and who to us is lost;
By reason of this battle which Gelfrat’s wrath hath cost.”

1619

A loss of four they reckon’d; these must they grieve for well.
But fully they aveng’d were: for against them there fell
Of the Bavarian warriors a hundred men and more;
Whereby the Tronians’ bucklers were dimm’d and wet with gore.

1620

Just then a gleam of moonlight between the clouds did break.
“Now look ye well that no one,” so to them Hagen spake,
“Betray to my dear masters what we have done this day;
Let them until the morning free from all trouble stay.”

1621

When they who had been fighting had now caught up the rest,
With weariness the people were grievously distress’d.
“How long,” were many asking, “must we be riding yet?”
And doughty Dankwart answer’d: “No lodging can we get.

1622

“Until the dawn of morning ye all must onwards ride.”
Volker the quick, who all things did for the folk provide,
Bade some one ask the marshal: “Where shall we go towards,
That we may rest our horses and eke our well-loved lords?”

1623

Then spake the doughty Dankwart: “In sooth I cannot say,
But there must be no resting before the dawn of day;
Then, wheresoe’er we find it, upon the grass we’ll lie.”
Some, when they heard this bidding, were sore aggrieved thereby.

1624

So were they undiscover’d by the warm blood-stains red,
Until the sun uprising with his bright beams had shed
The day-dawn o’er the mountains; then first the king did see
That they had fought. The hero spake to them wrathfully:

1625

“How now? ye have, friend Hagen, methinks but small regard
For this my presence with you, seeing ye thus have dared
To stain with blood your armour! now who hath done this thing?”
“’Twas Else, who set on us last night,” he told the king.

1626

“His ferryman the cause was that we were set upon;
My brother came, and Gelfrat was by his hand fordone;
Then Else fled before us, by direst need bested.
Four men we lost; a hundred of them we left for dead.”

1627

The place at which they rested I know not to declare;
But all the country people ere long became aware
That sons of noble Uté to court were on their way:
And thus a hearty welcome at Passau soon had they.

1628

The Bishop Pilgrin, uncle of these high rulers three,
Was in his heart well-pleaséd his sister's sons to see,
With such a host of warriors, thus come to his domain.
That he meant well unto them, was very quickly plain.

1629

Right gladly were they welcomed by friends upon the way;
But since there was at Passau no room for them to stay,
They needs must cross the water, where open field they found;
There tents and wooden cabins they set up on the ground.

1630

There must they stay and rest them for space of one whole day
And eke the night that follow'd. How fairly served were they!
To Rüdeger's dominions thence had they to ride on.
To him the tidings also were very quickly known.

1631

When now the wayworn riders had taken needful rest,
And nearer were approaching the country of their quest,
They found upon the marches a knight who sleeping lay,
From whom Hagen of Tronjé a stout sword took away.

1632

Ay, Eckewart the name was of that same warrior good;
Much grief had he thereover, and sorry was his mood
That he had lost the weapon through heroes passing there.
Ill-watch'd found they the borders of margrave Rüdeger.

1633

“Woe’s me for this dishonour,” thereon said Eckewart,
“This journey of Burgundians I rue with all my heart.
Since ever I lost Siegfried, my luck hath all been gone.
Alack, the day, Lord Rüdeger, what ill to thee I’ve done!”

1634

Now Hagen heard right plainly the noble warrior’s woe.
His sword again he gave him and six red armlets, too.
“Take these as pledge, O hero, that thou my friend wilt be;
Good knight thou art, though lonely thou sleptst upon the lea.”

1635

“God for thy rings requite thee,” said Eckewart thereto;
“Thy journey into Hunsland yet sorely do I rue.
Thou took’st the life of Siegfried; here art thou held in hate.
To guard thyself be careful: in good faith rede I that.”

1636

“Now God alone must keep us!” Hagen for answer gave.
“In truth no greater trouble these warriors now have
Than that, for kings and liegemen, on lodgings we may light,
Where we in this same country may lay our heads to-night.

1637

“The horses have been ruin’d by roads so far about;”
Thus spake the warrior Hagen, “our stores are all run out;
None can be had for money; a worthy host we need,
Who ere this day is ended will kindly give us bread.”

1638

Spake Eckewart in answer: “A host to you I’ll show:
And such a one ne’er bade you into his house to go,
In any land whatever, as ye may meet with here
If ye, good thanes are willing to visit Rüdeger.

1639

“He dwells hard by the highway: of hosts he is the best
That ever had a rooftree. His heart is aye possest
Of kindness, as of flowers are meadows in sweet May;
If he can succour heroes, glad will he be the day.”

1640

“Wilt thou then,” said King Gunther, “be now my messenger,
And see if for my pleasure, my kind friend Rüdeger
Shelter unto my kinsfolk and all our men will give?
So will I do my utmost to serve him while I live.”

1641

“I’ll gladly be the envoy,” then answer’d Eckewart.
With right good will so did he upon the errand start.
To Rüdeger declared he what he was bade to say,
Who no such joyful tidings had heard for many a day.

1642

Folk saw to Bechelaren a knight ride hastily.
Him Rüdeger himself saw: “On yonder road,” said he,
“Comes Eckewart fast riding, of Kriemhild’s lieges one.”
He fancied that the foemen some harm to him had done.

1643

Then went he to the gateway where he the envoy found
Who laid aside his weapon from off his belt unbound.
The message that he carried he sought not to withhold
From host and friends about him; but straight his story told.

1644

Unto the margrave spake he: “I come at the command
Of Gunther, king and ruler of the Burgundian land,
And Giselher his brother, and likewise Gernot, too;
Each of these warriors sendeth his greeting unto you.

1645

“The like doth also Hagen, as Volker doth as well,
With true and ready service. And more I have to tell:
That—as the royal marshal sends word to you by me—
The good men much are needing your hospitality.”

1646

With smiling lips unto him made Rüdeger reply:
“Glad am I at your tidings, that kings so great and high
Deign to bespeak my service: they shall not be denied.
If they will cross my threshold ’twill give me joy and pride.”

1647

“Dankwart the marshal likewise begs you by me to tell
If you can furnish house-room for all the rest as well:
For sixty valiant warriors, a thousand knights right good,
And men-at-arms nine thousand?” Then joyful was his mood.

1648

“Now be these guests right welcome,” made answer Rüdeger,
“And all these noble warriors, unto my dwelling here;
To them, as yet, at no time have I a service done.
So ride to meet them, kinsmen and lieges everyone.”

1649

Then quickly to their horses hurried each squire and knight.
Whate’er their master bade them to all of them seem’d right;
And they in service hasted the readier for that.
Naught wist yet dame Gotlinda, who in her chamber sat.

Adventure XXVII

How They Came to Bechelaren

1650

Away then went the margrave to where the ladies were,
His wife and eke their daughter;— to them the tidings fair
That had but now been brought him he told right speedily:
That soon their lady's brothers beneath their roof would be.

1651

"My own and well-lov'd sweetheart," so Rüdeger then spake,
"These noble kings and mighty we must right welcome make,
Since they and all their followers are on their way to court.
And Hagen, Gunther's liegeman, thou must greet in good sort.

1652

"With him there comes another, by name one Dankwart hight;
And yet a third call'd Volker, a well-bred, courtly knight.

These six must thou, Gotlinda, and thou, my daughter, kiss,
And let not any warrior a fitting welcome miss.

1653

This promised both the ladies and did themselves prepare,
And sought from out their coffers for raiment rich to wear,
That they to meet the warriors in fit attire might go.
Amidst the comely damsels there was a great to-do.

1654

Of painted women's faces one found there few enough.
They wore upon their foreheads bright bands of golden stuff,
Like costly chaplets fashion'd, that thus their lovely hair
The wind should not dishevel: 'tis truth that I declare.

1655

Now let us leave the ladies in all this business.
Across the open country all eager was the press
Of Rüdeger's retainers to where the princes stay'd;
Within the margrave's county right welcome were they made.

1656

As soon as towards him coming the margrave them espied,
How Rüdeger the valiant in words of gladness cried:
"Be ye, my lords, right welcome, and likewise all your men;
How glad am I to see you here in my own domain!"

1657

In trust, with no misliking, the warriors to him bow'd;
That he all goodwill bore them to all he plainly show'd.
Apart he greeted Hagen, a friend of old was he;
And did the like to Volker, the knight of Burgundy.

1658

Dankwart he also greeted; whereon that bold thane spake:
"Since thou wilt give us shelter, pray, who shall undertake
To cater for our people whom we have brought so far?"
Then answer'd him the margrave: "This night be free from care.

1659

"And as to all your people, and aught that in your band,
Horses be it, or raiment, hath come unto this land,
So safely will I guard them and all from loss insure,
That ye shall have no damage, nay, not by a single spur.

1660

"So pitch your tents, ye yeomen, upon the open ground,
For any loss ye suffer I'm willing to be bound.
Take off the horses' bridles and let them freely run."
The like to them but seldom a host ere then had done.

1661

Right glad of heart the guests were. When all had come to pass,
The lords rode off together. Then down upon the grass
On all sides lay the yeomen, and right good rest they had;
I ween in all the journey they ne'er so softly laid.

1662

The noble margrave's lady without the castle gate
Had gone with her fair daughter. One saw there with her wait
A crowd of lovely women, and many a maiden fair.
Who wore a store of armlets, and raiment rich and rare.

1663

The precious gems glowed brightly, and might be seen afar
Upon their rich apparel; so finely clad they were.
And now the guests arriving dismounted speedily.
Ay me! what gallant breeding showed they of Burgundy!

1664

Of maidens six-and-thirty and many another dame,
As ever eye could wish for so fair in form they came,
And went towards the strangers with many a gallant man.
Ah, then in sooth fair greetings of noble dames began!

1665

Then kiss'd the margrave's daughter the three kings fittingly,
As also did her mother; Hagen was standing by,
Her father bade her kiss him; she cast a look at him,
And fain had she not done it— she thought he look'd so grim.

1666

Yet straightway must she do it, since so the master said;
Her cheeks were changed in colour to mingled white and red.
Then Dankwart likewise kiss'd she, and then the Minstrel too;
By reason of his valour such greeting was his due.

1667

The margrave's youthful daughter took presently the hand
Of Giselher, the warrior from the Burgundian land:
Her mother, too, did likewise to Gunther, the brave king.
So went they with the heroes in gladness revelling.

1668

The host along with Gernot went into a wide hall,
Where they were quickly seated, both knights and ladies all:
Good wine was call'd for straightway, which to the guests they gave.
Ay, surely never heroes could better treatment have.

1669

With many an eager eye-glance the men look'd lovingly
On Rüdeger's young daughter: she was so fair to see.
Ay, in his thoughts embraced her full many a warrior good,
And right well she deserved it; but she was proud of mood:

1670

Think might they as it pleased them, such thing could not be done.
And to and fro men's glances meanwhile oft lit upon
Right many a dame and maiden; plenty were seated there.
Goodwill the noble minstrel unto the host did bear.

1671

According to the custom they sever'd then in two,
The warriors and the ladies to separate rooms withdrew.
In the wide hall the tables in order straight were set,
And soon the stranger guest-folk with royal service met.

1672

To do her guests more honour the noble margravine
Sat down with them at table; her daughter was unseen,
Left with the younger children, where fittingly she sat;
The guests, who miss'd her presence, were sorely vext thereat.

1673

When meat and drink abundant had been enjoy'd by all
The ladies fair were usher'd again into the hall.
There lack'd not mirthful story, nor jesting manifold:
Busy of tongue was Volker, a knight of mood right bold.

1674

Thus spake the noble minstrel, aloud that all might heed:
"Most rich and noble margrave, God hath with you indeed
Dealt graciously, in granting so fair a dame for wife,
And likewise in bestowing on you a joyous life.

1675

"If haply," said the minstrel, "I were a prince of blood,
And wore the crown of kingship, surely for wife I would
Make choice of your fair daughter, for her my heart doth woo:
Lovesome she is to look on and good and noble too."

1676

Then said to him the margrave: "How could it ever be,
That any king should ask for my daughter dear of me?
We are but stranger-people, my wife as well as I:
What boots it that the damsel so fair is bodily?"

1677

To him made answer Gernot, that man of breeding high:
“If I would have a sweetheart, my heart to satisfy,
So would I such a woman be ever glad to wed.”
Then Hagen put his word in, with kindly speech, and said:

1678

“’Tis still to be remember’d Lord Giselher should wed:
Of ancestry so noble the margravine is bred,
That I and all his liegemen would serve her willingly,
If with a crown upon her she came to Burgundy.”

1679

To Rüdeger this counsel in every way seem’d good,
As likewise to Gotlinda: ay, both were glad of mood.
And soon the chiefs so order’d that she was bride beloved
Of Giselher the noble, as well a king behoved.

1680

When aught is bound to happen who may the same gainsay?
Forthwith they bade the damsel to court to take her way.
They took an oath to give him the winsome maid to wife,
And he, on his side, promised to love her as his life.

1681

They gave the maiden warrant for castles and for land,
The noble king confirm’d it by oath and his right hand,
As likewise did Lord Gernot, that thus it should be done.
Then spake to them the margrave: “Though castles I have none,

1682

“Yet you will I at all times in faithful friendship hold:
I give unto my daughter of silver and of gold
As much as five score horses may carry at their best,
That so well-pleased, in honour, the hero’s kin may rest.”

1683

The pair were thereon bidden within a ring to stand,
According to the custom. Of many youths a band,
In mood for merry-making, stood opposite the twain,
And thought what they were minded, as youngsters still are fain.

1684

When they began to question, and ask’d the winsome maid
If she would have the warrior, she was a whit dismay’d:
And yet she still was minded to take the goodly wight;
She blush’d but at the question, as any maiden might.

1685

Then Rüdeger her father bade her to answer “Yea!”
That she would gladly take him. Whereon, without delay,
His white hands stretch’d towards her to fold her lovingly,
Young Giselher came forward— short though their joy must be!

1686

“Ye noble kings and mighty,” thereon the margrave spake;
“When home again your journey to Burgundy ye take,
Then I (as is the custom) will give my child to you,
That ye may take her with you.” That they engaged to do.

1687

Noisy as were the revels, at last they had an end.
The damsels to their chambers were bidden then to wend;
In sleep the guests, too, rested till daybreak did appear;
Then victuals were made ready; for all the host took care.

1688

When they their fast had broken fain would they forward go
Towards the Hunnish country. “I pray you, do not so,”
Besought their host right noble; “awhile ye yet must stay;
Since I no guests so welcome have seen for many a day.”

1689

To this made Dankwart answer: “That surely will not do.
Whence will you get the victuals, the bread and wine thereto,
Which for so many warriors you needs must have this day?”
The host, on hearing, answer’d: “It boots no more to say;

1690

“My well-lov’d lords, so please ye, I will not be denied;
Ay, for a fortnight will I the meat and drink provide
For you and all the people that hither you have brought;
For never hath King Etzel from me yet taken aught.”

1691

Howe’er they sought to help it, needs must they there abide
Until the fourth day’s dawning: then did a thing betide,
Done of the master’s bounty, and noiséd far and near:
On every guest bestow’d he a horse and wearing gear.

1692

This could not last much longer: thence must they forward fare.
But Rüdeger the valiant could naught withhold or spare
To testify his bounty: what any fain would take,
That was denied to no one; all happy would he make.

1693

Then forth before the gateway their noble equerries
Led out the saddled horses. In readiness for these
The throng of foreign warriors came out; their shields in hand
They bore, for they were eager to ride to Etzel's land.

1694

Thereon the master offer'd his gifts to one and all,
Ere yet the royal strangers were come without the hall.
With bounty and great honour he knew the way to live;
And even his fair daughter to Giselher would give.

1695

Anon he gave to Gunther, that hero of great fame,
What he, the mighty monarch, might well wear without shame—
Though gifts he took but seldom— a coat of mail, to wit.
O'er Rüdeger's hand did Gunther bow low in thanks for it.

1696

Then gave he unto Gernot a sword, a good one too,
Which afterwards in battle right gallantly he drew:
That such a gift he gave him well pleased the margrave's wife.
'Twas doom'd to cost, soon after, good Rüdeger his life.

1697

Gotlinda offer'd Hagen, as courteous custom bade,
Some tokens of her kindness, since such the king had had,
Lest he without her aidance should on his road be sped
Unto the royal revels; but this he soon gainsaid.

1698

"Of all the things that ever I saw," so Hagen spake,
"Not one have I more envy hence as my own to take,
Than yonder shield that hanging upon the wall I see:
That would I gladly carry to Etzel's land with me."

1699

The margravine no sooner had heard what Hagen said,
Than bygone woes were waken'd, and tears she needs must shed.
Upon the death of Nudung she sorrowfully thought,
How Witege had slain him: thus grief upon her wrought.

1700

She spake unto the warrior: "I'll give the shield to thee,
But would to God in Heaven that still ahve were he
Who on his arm once bare it! In fight he was laid low,
And I must aye bewail him: hence comes, poor me, my woe!"

1701

Then from her seat uprose she, the noble margravine;
And so, the buckler grasping her snow-white hands between,
The dame to Hagen bore it, and he thereof took hold:
It was a gift of honour unto that warrior bold.

1702

A case of polish’d leather upon its surface lay,
A better shield and brighter ne’er shone in light of day,
With noble gems bestudded; had any wanted it
To buy, perchance its value a thousand marks had quit.

1703

Then, by command of Hagen, they bore the shield away.
And now to court did Dankwart begin to wend his way.
On him the margrave’s daughter apparel rich bestow’d,
In which ere long in Hunsland right gloriously he rode.

1704

Now all these friendly tokens they were endow’d withal,
Into the hands of any had never come at all,
Save by the master’s bounty, offer’d with such good will.
Such foes ere long became they that him they needs must kill!

1705

Then did the ready Volker, his fiddle in his hand,
With courtly mien approaching before Gotlinda stand.
Sweet tunes for her he fiddled, and sang his roundelay,
Thus would he from Bechlaren take leave to ride away.

1706

The margravine then bade men to her a chest to bear;
Of kindly gifts and bounty ye now again must hear.
Therefrom she took twelve armlets and put them o’er his hand:
“These must you carry with you away to Etzel’s land.

1707

“And for my sake must wear them whene’er you go to court;
That when you come back hither I may have good report
How you have done me service at that great festival.”
E’en as the lady bade him he well accomplish’d all.

1708

The host said to the strangers: “Ye will the better fare
If I myself shall lead you, and bid you how beware
Lest anyone should do you a hurt upon the road.”
Then of his sumpter-horses each quickly had its load.

1709

There stood the host all ready, and eke five hundred men
With horses and apparel. These led he with him then
Unto the royal wedding— a joyous merry train;
Alive to Bechelaren not one came back again!

1710

With many loving kisses the host his farewells said,
As Giselher did also, by honour ever led.
The women fair they fondled with arms around them thrown;
For which would many a damsel be weeping soon, alone.

1711

On all sides were the windows thrown open to the air.
The host with his retainers to mount all eager were.
I ween their hearts foreboded the mighty ills to be;
For many dames were weeping and maidens fair to see.

1712

For dear friends left behind them, plenty at heart were sore,
Whom they at Bechelaren would look on nevermore;
Yet gaily rode they onwards, and down across the sand
Along the Danube river, unto the Hunnish land.

1713

Then Rüdeger the noble, well versed in chivalry,
Spake unto the Burgundians: “We ought not, verily,
To hide that we are coming unto the Hunfolk near;
Such good news hath King Etzel ne’er had the chance to hear.”

1714

Down through the Austrian kingdom the messenger rode fast;
Soon to the folk on all sides from mouth to mouth it pass’d,
That coming were the heroes from Worms beyond the Rhine.
No tidings the king’s lieges could more to joy incline.

1715

The messengers sped forwards and now the tidings bare
Of how the Niblung warriors within the Huns’ land were.
“Thou shouldst right well receive them, Kriemhilda, lady mine;
To thee come in great honour these brothers dear of thine.”

1716

Meanwhile, as dame Kriemhilda beside a window-sill
Stood watching for her kinsmen— as friends for others will,
Lo, from her father’s country there saw she many a man.
The king, who heard the tidings, to laugh for glee began.

1717

“Now joy of all who love me be mine!” Kriemhilda said,
“For hither come my kinsmen with many a shield new-made,
And many a bright steel hauberk. Who would have gold of me,
Let him my wrongs remember, my friend he e’er shall be!”

Adventure XXVIII

How the Burgundians Came to Etzel's Stronghold

1718

As soon as the Burgundians were come to Hunnish land,
Of Bern[2] a chieftain heard it— the aged Hildebrand.
Unto his lord he told it; to him 'twas all unmeet;
Yet bade he them with kindness the valiant knights to greet.

1719

The ready Wolfhart bade them to bring the horses out.
Then rode along with Dietrich full many a warrior stout,
As towards the open country to welcome them he went.
There had they pitch'd already full many a noble tent.

1720

When Hagen, lord of Tronjé, them from afar espied,
Unto his masters turning, in courteous words he cried:

“Now, please ye, gallant warriors, dismount on to your feet,
And them whom you would welcome go forth yourselves to meet.
1721

“The company that cometh is right well known to me:
They are the doughty warriors from Amelung country,
And he of Bern doth lead them; they are of courage high.
’Twere better not to flout them when folk to serve ye try.”
1722

Then down from horse alighted (as was indeed but right)
All they who came with Dietrich, full many a squire and knight.
They walk’d towards the strangers, where they the chiefs could see,
And courteously greeted the men of Burgundy.
1723

When noble Dietrich saw them their way towards him make,
Perchance ye fain would hearken to what the warrior spake
Unto the sons of Uté. Their journey grieved him sore:
The truth, he thought, Sir Rüdeger had known and told before.
1724

“Be welcome, sirs, right welcome, Gunther and Giselher,
And Gernot, too, and Hagen; and, not the less, Volker
And swift and ready Dankwart! Have ye not understood
That o’er her Niblung hero Kriemhilda yet doth brood?”
1725

“Then let her brood for ever!” Hagen in answer said,
“For many a long year is it since he was stricken dead.
To love the King of Hunsland is now her duty plain:
Siegfried hath long been buried; he comes not back again.”

1726

“Now let us, an’ it please you, leave Siegfried’s wounds alone;
Whilst Dame Kriemhilda liveth evil may still be done.”
So did the noble Dietrich, the knight of Bern, declare.
“Thou Mainstay of the Niblungs, to guard thyself beware!”

1727

“And wherefore should I guard me?” the high-born king replied;
“Tidings we had from Etzel (what should I ask beside?)
That, came we hither riding, ’twould give him much content
My sister Kriemhild, likewise, hath many a message sent.”

1728

“If I may give you counsel,” so Hagen to them spake,
“Beg that the noble Dietrich and his good warriors make
Some better declaration of what they have in mind,
And tell us to what humour Dame Kriemhild is inclined.”

1729

Then the three mighty chieftains to speak apart withdrew,
Gunther to wit, and Gernot, and the lord Dietrich, too:
“Now, knight of Bern, pray tell us, thou noble warrior good,
What of the queen thou knowest, and what may be her mood.

1730

The knight of Bern made answer: “What can I tell you more?
I hear her ev’ry morning weeping and wailing sore—
This wedded wife of Etzel— in manner piteous,
To the great God of Heaven, for stalwart Siegfried’s loss.”

1731

“It may not be averted,”— that boldest man declared,
Volker, the fiddle-player— “the doom whereof we’ve heard;
To court we’re bound to journey, there for ourselves to see
What fate for us good warriors among the Huns shall be.”

1732

So hence the bold Burgundians to court rode on their way
After their country’s fashion, in glorious array.
And many a bold man marvell’d among the Hunfolk there
At Hagen, lord of Tronjé, what kind of man he were.

1733

For since was told the story, (that was enough alone,)
How he the Netherlander Siegfried to death had done—
The stoutest of all warriors, the husband of Kriemhild—
With questions about Hagen the court was wellnigh fill’d.

1734

Of goodly growth and presence the hero was, no doubt;
Broad-shouldered and deep-chested; his hair was fleck’d about
With streaks of grisly colour; long in the shank was he,
And stony was his visage; he walk’d right royally.

1735

Then quarters were appointed for the Burgundian men.
The whole of Gunther's followers were sunder'd from him then.
This by the queen was compass'd, with hatred for him fill'd;
Hence all the yeomen, later, were in their hostel kill'd.
1736

Since Dankwart, Hagen's brother, the marshal had been made,
The king with zeal commended the men to him; and bade
That he would seek their comfort and let them have their fill.
This chief of the Burgundians bore all of them goodwill.
1737

And now came Queen Kriemhilda with all her company
That she might greet the Niblungs with feignéd courtesy.
But Giselher, her brother, she kiss'd and took his hand.
This Hagen saw, and tighter he laced his helmet's band.
1738

"In view of such a greeting," thus Hagen blurted out,
"A prompt and ready warrior may well have some misdoubt!
To kings and to their vassals greetings unlike befall:
We've made no lucky journey to this high festival."
1739

"To those who fain would see thee," said she, "now welcome be:
Thou shalt not have a greeting for friendship's sake from me.
Say what it is thou bringest from Worms beyond the Rhine,
That thou so great a welcome shouldst have from me and mine."
1740

“If I had heard the tidings,” so Hagen spake again,
“That you for gifts were looking at hands of every thane,
Had I myself been wealthy I would have twice bethought
Or ever to this country my gifts for you I brought.”

1741

“’Tis rather you, who tidings to me should give: to wit,
The Nibelungen treasure, what have ye done with it?
It was mine own possession, and that right well you knew:
’Twas this ye should have brought me to Etzel’s land with you.”

1742

“I’ faith, my Lady Kriemhild, ’tis now full many a day
Since when at my disposal the Niblung treasure lay;
At bidding of my masters ’twas sunk in the Rhine-tide:
There till the Day of Judgment, in sooth, it may abide.”

1743

Then spake the queen in answer: “’Tis even as I thought!
Right little of it have you for me to this land brought,
Although ’twas mine, and whilom within my power it lay;
Since when I’ve spent thereover full many a dreary day.”

1744

“The devil a bit I bring you!” Sir Hagen fell to swear:
“I have my shield to carry, and that’s enough to bear,
Together with my mail-coat; my helm’s a trifling thing,
My sword I have in hand though, so naught for you I bring.”

1745

Thereon the queen spake loudly unto those warriors all:
“Let no man any weapon carry into the hall;
Give them to me, ye heroes, I’ll keep them safe for you!”
“Nay, by my troth,” cried Hagen, “that will we never do!
1746

“I covet not the honour, gentle princess and fair,
That thou unto the hostel my shield thyself shouldst bear.
Nor other of my weapons: thou hast a queen become;
So taught me not my father; I will be chambergroom.”
1747

“O woe on all my sorrow!” Kriemhilda loudly said,
“How is it that my brother and Hagen are afraid
To leave their shields in keeping? They have been warn’d, I see;
And knew I who had done it, I’d give him death for fee.”
1748

Thereon Lord Dietrich answer’d, and said to her in scorn:
“’Twas I that took upon me these noble kings to warn;
And Hagen warn’d I likewise, the brave Burgundian.
Come on, thou devil’s daughter, do me the worst you can!”
1749

Ashamed and sore confounded at this was Etzel’s wife:
For bitterly with Dietrich she feared to be at strife.
She found no word to answer, but went away in haste,
Whilst but a few sharp glances upon her foes she cast.
1750

Then hand by hand two warriors took each of other hold:
The one was noble Dietrich, the other Hagen bold.
Then spake in courtly manner that knight of spirit high:
“Your coming to the Hunfolk doth grieve me, verily,

1751

“Seeing the queen hath spoken such words to you but now.”
Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: “’Twill matter not, I trow.”
In such wise with each other, parley’d the two brave men.
Meanwhile King Etzel saw them, and fell to questioning then.

1752

“I would that some one told me,” the mighty sovereign said,
“Who is that warrior yonder, to whom Sir Dietrich bade
So heartily a welcome? Of courage high is he;
Whoever were his father, a hero must he be!”

1753

Then one of Kriemhild’s liegemen to answer him began:
“He is by birth of Tronjé, his sire was Aldrian.
How blithe so e’er he bears him, he hath a spirit grim.
You shall yourself discover I tell no lies of him.”

1754

“How shall I have occasion to know he is so stern?”
(The many sly devices as yet he had to learn,
Wherewith, to catch her kinsmen, the queen sought to contrive
That none of them from Hunsland again might come alive.)

1755

“Well knew I that same Aldrian, a liegeman of mine own,
And here with me he won him much honour and renown.
’Twas I a knight who dubb’d him, and gave him of my gold;
My faithful Helka bore him much kindness, too, of old.

1756

“And all, by that same token, of Hagen know I well.
Into my hands for hostage two goodly children fell,
He and the Spanish Walther; who being to manhood bred,
I sent back Hagen; Walther with Hildegunda fled.”

1757

He thought of the old stories and all that happ’d of yore,
His olden friend of Tronjé he gladly saw once more,
Who in his youth good service to him ne’er fail’d to lend.
Soon he in age repaid him by death of many a friend.

Adventure XXIX

How He Stood Not Up Before Her

1758

This famous pair of warriors asunder then withdrew,
Hagen, the lord of Tronjé, and noble Dietrich, too.
Whereon across his shoulder look'd Gunther's man around
In hope to see a comrade, whom in a trice he found;

1759

For there Sir Volker standing by Giselher he saw;
He begg'd that cunning minstrel aside with him to draw,
For well was he acquainted with his unyielding mood.
In sooth, he was in all points a warrior bold and good.

1760

They left the lords together standing in the courtyard.
'Twas seen how they twain only, and not another, fared

Across the court wide-stretching before a palace great;
Those chosen men of valour had fear of no man's hate.

1761

They sat upon a settle against the palace front,
Hard by a hall which Kriemhild herself to use was wont.
Brightly upon their bodies their noble raiment shone,
And plenty who beheld them would gladly them have known.

1762

Like wild beasts of the forest those haughty heroes then
Were gaped upon and gazed at by all the Hunnish men.
The wife of Etzel spied them athwart a window-pane:
Whereby the fair Kriemhilda was sorely grieved again.

1763

It brought to mind her sorrow; she fell to weeping then,
Whereat was mickle marvel among King Etzel's men:
What could have thus so quickly troubled their lady's mood?
She answer'd: "That hath Hagen, ye heroes bold and good."

1764

They spake unto the lady: "How can this thing have been
When we ourselves but lately have you so happy seen?
None can have been so hardy such evil to have wrought:
Else bid us to avenge it; his life shall go for naught."

1765

“For ever would I serve him who would my wrongs repay,
To give him all he ask’d for I would be ready aye.
Upon my knees I beg you,” so spake the royal wife,
“Avenge me now on Hagen, that he may lose his life.”

1766

Then sixty gallant warriors girded their armour on,
Who, for the love of Kriemhild, were keen to set upon
And make an end of Hagen— the ever valiant one—
And likewise of the minstrel. ’Twas all with forethought done.

1767

But when the queen beheld them, how small a band they made,
In grim and gloomy humour she to the heroes said:
“Ye must leave unaccomplish’d what ye would take in hand:
Ay, never against Hagen so few will dare to stand!

1768

“How strong and bold soever Hagen of Tronjé be,
The man who sits beside him is stronger far than he,
Volker, the fiddler, namely; he is an evil wight.
These heroes to encounter ye will not find so light.”

1769

When they had heard this warning still more took heart of grace—
Four hundred gallant warriors. That queen of noble race
Had set her heart upon it to do her foes despite:
Whence soon was mickle sorrow made ready for each knight.

1770

Now when she saw her liegemen with arms and armour clad,
Unto the ready warriors the noble lady bade:
“Abide ye here a little, ay, stand ye quiet so;
I mean to put my crown on, and to my foemen go.

1771

“And hark while I upbraid him for what he did to me,
This Hagen, lord of Tronjé, King Gunther’s knight in fee.
So arrogant I know him, he’ll give me not the lie;
And eke care I as little what he shall get thereby.”

1772

Then look’d the fiddle-player, the minstrel bold, and lo,
He saw the noble lady along a stairway go,
That led down from the palace. And when he that espied,
The ever valiant Volker unto his comrade cried:

1773

“Now look ye there, friend Hagen, how yonder cometh nigh
She who into this country hath lured us faithlessly.
With king’s wife saw I never so many men around,
Bearing in hand their weapons, as for a battle bound.

1774

“Know’st thou, friend Hagen, whether they hatred to thee bear?
If so, I fain would counsel that thou the better care
Shouldst take of life and honour: ay, that, methinks, were good!
Unless I am mistaken, they are in wrathful mood.

1775

“And some there are among them so exceeding broad of breast
That who would rest in surety hath little time to waste.
I ween, beneath their clothing, their hauberks bright they wear;
But whom therewith they threaten I nowise can declare.”

1776

Then spake in mood of anger Hagen, the valiant one:
“For me, right well I know it, the whole of this is done—
That thus their unsheath’d weapons they carry in the hand;
Yet will I, notwithstanding, ride to Burgundian land!

1777

“Now say if thou, friend Volker, thine aid to me wilt lend,
If so be Kriemhild’s liegemen to fight with me intend?
That let me hear you promise, as I am dear to you;
And evermore I’ll answer to you with service true.”

1778

“Ay, surely will I help thee,” the gallant minstrel spake:
“Saw I a king come hither, attack on us to make
With all his warriors round him, so long as I should live
I would not fail to help thee, and not a foot would give.”

1779

“Thy service, noble Volker, may God in Heaven requite.
What further can I ask for, if thou by me wilt fight?
Since thou art fain to aid me, as I am glad to hear,
These blades may come and welcome with all their warlike gear.”

1780

“Now from the seat upstand we,” then said the man of song:
“She is a sovereign lady; and let her pass along.
Let us that honour pay her, she is of noble birth,
Thereby our own condition shall seem of greater worth.”

1781

“For love of me, I pray thee, do it not,” Hagen spake:
“Lest otherwise these warriors perchance the deed mistake
And think that I had risen, through fear, upon my feet.
For such as her and her kind I’ll never leave my seat!

1782

“For both of us ’twere better, methinks, to let it be.
Why should I do her honour who bears such hate to me?
Nay, that will I do never as long as I have life;
Nor care I for the hatred of royal Etzel’s wife!”

1783

The overweening Hagen across his knees laid down
A bare and shining weapon, upon whose pommel shone
A very brilliant jasper, greener than any sward.
Kriemhilda well remember’d that it was Siegfried’s sword.

1784

When she that sword remember’d a grief it needs must be;
The hilt of it was golden, its sheath red broidery.
It brought to mind her sorrow; her tears began to fall;
I ween the hardy Hagen had therefor done it all.

1785

Upon the bench towards him the valiant Volker drew
A fiddle-bow, a strong one, and long and mighty, too,
Which to a sword had likeness, right keen and broad of blade
The pair of doughty heroes thus sat there undismay'd.

1786

The valiant twain so lordly seem'd, in their own conceit,
They did not deem it fitting to stand up from their seat
For fear of man or woman. Whereon, with foe-like mien,
Nigh to their feet, to greet them, came up the noble queen.

1787

She spake: "Now tell me, Hagen, who sent to bid you here,
That riding in our country thou darest to appear?
Thou, too, who so well knowest what thou hast done to me?
Hadst thou been well adviséd thou best hadst let it be."

1788

"No one hath sent to fetch me," Hagen in answer said:
"But hither to this country three warriors you bade;
My masters they are calléd, to them I service owe.
On any royal journey I scarce could fail to go."

1789

Said she: "Now tell me further, how was it thou didst that
For which thou hast deservéd my everlasting hate?
Thou was it who didst Siegfried, my well-loved husband, slay;
Whom I must mourn for ever until my dying day."

1790

He spake: “What boots that further? Of talk we have no need.
I am that self-same Hagen who did to death Siegfried,
The mighty-handed hero. How dearly he repaid
The flouts which Dame Kriemhilda on fair Brunhilda laid!

1791

“It is not to be doubted, O great and mighty queen,
Of all your baleful sorrows that I have guilty been.
Now be it man or woman, let them avenge who will;
Though I should then gainsay you, I’ve done you grievous ill.”

1792

Said she: “Now hark ye, warriors, he doth not e’en deny
That he hath work’d my sorrow! What may befall thereby
To him, ye men of Etzel, of no account I hold.”
Then look’d on one another those haughty thanes and bold.

1793

It doubtless had befallen, whichever had begun
The strife, that these two comrades the honour would have won;
Seeing how oft in battle they gallantly had fought.
In dread the others shrank from the deed they had in thought.

1794

Then spake one of the warriors: “Why look ye so on me?
From what I erewhile promised I would that I were free!
For sake of no one’s largesse would I forego my life.
Ay! to our ruin go we, led by King Etzel’s wife.”

1795

Whereafter spake another: “To that same thought I hold;
Were anyone to give me whole towers of good red gold,
I’d care not to contend with that fiddler willingly,
For dread of the swift glances that in his eyes I see.
1796

“Hagen have I known also, and from his early youth:
Thus little can be told me about that knight, forsooth!
In two-and-twenty battles I’ve seen him, in the strife;
Whereby hath heartfelt sorrow befallen many a wife.
1797

“On many a foray went they, he and the Spaniard,
When they were here with Etzel; ofttimes a battle hard
They fought for the king’s honour; and many such befell;
Whereof one must of Hagen much to his honour tell.
1798

“At that time this same warrior was but a child in years.
They who were then but youngsters, how gray are now their hairs!
Now he is come to wisdom, a man of ruth is he.
And eke he wieldeth Balmung, won by foul treachery.”
1799

With that the thing was settled— that none should strike a blow.
Whereby the queen was stricken unto the heart with woe.
The heroes all disbanded: fearful lest death indeed
Be dealt them by the fiddler: in sooth they had good need.
1800

Then spake anon the fiddler: “We have right plainly seen
That foemen here beset us, as we forewarn’d have been.
Now to the court return we and seek the sovrans there:
That no one, then, our masters to meet in strife may dare.

1801

“How oft a man, faint-hearted, will let a chance slip by,
When if a friend beside him upheld him cheerfully
And with good understanding, he would not do the same.
Right many a man by forethought is saved from loss and shame.”

1802

“Where you go I will follow,” Hagen was quick to say;
Then back into the courtyard forthwith they took their way,
Where still in grand assembly waited the knightly crowd.
And then the valiant Volker began to speak aloud

1803

And say unto his masters: “How long here will ye stay
To let yourselves be crowded? To court ye should away,
And from the king discover what he in mind may have.”
Then might one see forgather the heroes good and brave.

1804

The prince of Bern, Sir Dietrich, took hold of by the hand
Gunther, the mighty ruler of the Burgundian land.
Irnfried was fain with Gernot, that right bold man, to fare,
And Rüdeger went walking to court with Giselher.

1805

Howe’er the rest companion’d, and so to court pass’d on,
Betwixt Volker and Hagen of parting there was none,
Save only in one struggle, which ended their two lives,
And caus’d sad weeping later to many noble wives.

1806

Upon the kings attending one saw to court go then
Their nobly-born retainers, a thousand gallant men;
And sixty warriors also along with them had come;
The same that valiant Hagen had brought with him from home.

1807

And Haward eke and Iring, a pair of chosen worth,
By one another walking, went with the sovrans forth.
Dankwart and also Wolfhart, a thane of courage rare;
These well before the others upheld their honour there.

1808

When came the lord of Rhineland within the palace door,
Etzel, the mighty monarch refrained himself no more,
But from his seat upsprang he, seeing him entering,
A better greeting never was given by a king.

1809

“Be welcome, my lord Gunther, and you, lord Gernot, too,
And Giselher, your brother. My zealous service true,
I have already sent you to Worms beyond the Rhine.
And all your followers also shall welcome be as mine.

1810

“I bid a hearty welcome to you, ye knightly pair,
To Volker the right valiant and eke to Hagen there,
From me and from my lady, unto this land of mine.
She messengers in plenty hath sent ye to the Rhine.”

1811

Hagen of Tronjé answered: “So heard I, more than once!
And had I for my masters not come unto the Huns,
Yet would I you to honour have ridden to this land.”
The noble host then kindly his guests took by the hand;

1812

And to the seat he brought them where he himself had sat,
Then to the guests they offer’d (they busily did that),
In wide-mouth’d golden goblets, wine, mead and mulberry,
And bade to the newcomers a welcome heartily.

1813

Then spake the royal Etzel: “I will to you confess
Naught in this world could give me a greater happiness
Than ye have given me, heroes, in coming thus to me;
Whereby the queen is also from mickle grief set free.

1814

“And ofttimes have I marvell’d what was the fault in me—
So many guests right noble have I been wont to see—
That ye unto my country to come did never deign?
But now that I have seen you to joy is turn’d my pain.”

1815

Said Rüdeger in answer (a knight of noble mood):
“Well may you see them gladly; their faith indeed is good,
And all my lady’s kinsfolk the same can well uphold;
They bring unto your palace full many a warrior bold.”

1816

The even of Midsummer, at mighty Etzel’s court
These princes made their entry; and seldom hath report
Told of such royal welcome as on these chiefs he spent.
Now was it time for eating; and all to table went.

1817

Amidst his guests more nobly a host ne’er took his seat.
For them there was abundance whereof to drink and eat,
And everything they wanted it was all ready made;
For truly of these heroes great marvels had been said.

Adventure XXX

How They Kept Watch and Ward

1818

Now was the daylight ended and night began to close.
Amid the wayworn warriors disquietude arose
For when they were to rest them and to their beds begone.
This mooted was by Hagen; and soon it was made known.

1819

Unto the host spake Gunther: “God grant you long to live!
We now would hence to slumber; we pray thee leave to give.
We’ll come to-morrow morning if thou dost order so.”
Right pleasantly agreed he, and bade his guests to go.

1820

One saw the people crowding the guests on every side.
Then Volker the undaunted unto the Hunfolk cried:

“How dare ye get in front of the warriors’ very feet?
If ye will not give over with trouble ye will meet.

1821

“A fiddle-stroke so heavy on one of you I’ll lay,
That, hath he a well-wisher, that same may rue the day.
Give place there to us warriors! ’twill be the best for you.
Folk call ye knights, but little ye have akin thereto.”

1822

Whilst spake the fiddle-player so wrathfully his mind,
The valiant Hagen turn’d him, and gave a glance behind.
Said he: “The gallant minstrel hath warn’d you properly;
Ye heroes of Kriemhilda back to your homes go ye.

1823

“The plan ye are devising will not come off, I trow.
Come back to-morrow morning if ye have aught to do,
And leave us weary strangers this night to rest in peace;
I ween that heroes ever so do in such-like case.”

1824

Anon the guests were taken into a roomy hall,
Which found they well provided, to suit the warriors all,
With richly furnish’d bedsteads, that were both wide and long.
The while Dame Kriemhild plotted to do them grievous wrong.

1825

Right goodly mats from Arras all round about were spread,
Of bright-hued wool-stuffs woven; and many a cover-bed
Wrought of Arabian samite, the finest that might be;
Whereon were borders broider'd that shone right gloriously.

1826

The coverlets of ermine did many a man espy,
And others of black sable, whereunder they might lie
And pass the night in comfort until the dawn of day.
A king and all his courtiers so softly never lay.

1827

"O woe, for this night's sojourn!" so spake young Giselher
"And woe for all my comrades who hither with us fare!
Howbeit that my sister so kind a bidding gave,
By cause of her, I fear me, we all our deaths shall have."

1828

"Now let your mind be easy," Hagen the thane answer'd:
"I will from now till morning myself keep watch and ward;
And well I swear to guard you until the break of day.
Till then be all untroubled; then, save himself who may!"

1829

Then bow'd they all before him and gave him thanks therefore,
And to their beds betook them: nor was it long before
Laid down in rest and slumber was every goodly man.
To don his arms the hero— Hagen the bold—began.

1830

Then up and spake the minstrel, Volker the gallant thane:
“If thou dost not disdain it, then, Hagen, I am fain
To-night to keep guard with thee, until the morning break.”
Right heartily the hero his thanks to Volker spake:

1831

“Now God in Heaven reward you, Volker, my comrade true!
To none in all my troubles save only unto you
Would I for aidance turn me, if need should e’er befall.
One day I will repay you, if Death do not forestall.”

1832

Then in their shining raiment they twain their bodies clad,
And each of them his buckler upon his forearm had.
They went without the castle to stand the gateway by,
And there the guests they guarded: ’twas done right faithfully.

1833

Volker the ever-ready then from his arm unbraced
His shield—it was a good one— which ’gainst the wall he placed.
Back to the hall he hasten’d, and there his fiddle seized,
And as became a hero, his friends therewith he pleased.

1834

Beneath the doorway sat he upon a seat of stone;
A braver fiddle-player in sooth had ne’er been known.
With such sweet-sounding music upon the strings he play’d,
That all the high-born strangers their thanks to Volker paid.

1835

The sweet clang of his viol made all the house resound.
His strength and skill together right excellent were found.
More softly and more sweetly to fiddle he began,
And lull'd upon their couches full many a troubled man.

1836

And when they all were sleeping, and he thereof was sure,
The thane took up his buckler upon his arm once more,
And went outside the chamber before the tower to stand,
To guard the sleeping strangers against Kriemhilda's band.

1837

When halfway spent the night was, or earlier it might be,
The gallant Volker, watching, a shining helm could see
Far off amid the darkness. 'Twas one of Kriemhild's men,
Who all to do a mischief unto the guests were fain.

1838

Then spake the fiddle-player: "My friend, Sir Hagen, there,
Together it is fitting that we this trouble share.
I've seen some folk in armour before the house but now,
Else I am much mistaken, they'll set on us, I trow."

1839

"Then hold thy peace," quoth Hagen, "and let them nearer come.
Or ever they can see us, our swords will have struck home
And split their helmets for them, with double-handed might.
We'll send them back to Kriemhild, methinks, in sorry plight!"

1840

One of the Hunnish warriors had soon enough espied
That guarded was the doorway; how suddenly he cried:
“The matter we intended, in sooth will not go well.
I see the fiddle-player standing as sentinel!

1841

“A brightly polish’d helmet upon his head hath he
Of pure, hard-temper’d metal, and strong, and blemish-free.
His hauberk’s rings are glowing as fiery embers would.
By him stands also Hagen: the guests have watchmen good.”

1842

Forthwith they turn’d them backwards. When Volker that espied,
Again to his companion in wrathful voice, he cried:
“Now let me from the palace after the warriors go;
Of Dame Kriemhilda’s liegemen somewhat I fain would know.”

1843

“Nay, do it not,” said Hagen; “I pray you by my love!
These ever-ready warriors, if from the house you move,
Would with their swords, I doubt not, bring you such straits to face,
That I should have to help you, were’t death to all my race.

1844

“For whilst we two together are busy in the fray,
Some two or four among them will to the house away,
And quickly force an entrance, and some foul mischief do
Unto our sleeping comrades, which we shall ever rue.”

1845

Then Volker spake in answer: “Let it be settled so;
But that I’ve seen them coming at least we’ll let them know,
So Kriemhild’s men hereafter shall never dare deny
That they would fain against us have wrought vile treachery.”

1846

With that, towards them Volker sent forth a lusty shout:
“Ye nimble knights, in armour why go ye thus about?
Ye warriors of Kriemhilda, if ye on foray ride,
Myself and my companion ye should have at your side!”

1847

No word there came in answer. Then wrathful wax’d his mood:
“Fie on ye, skulking rascals!” shouted the hero good;
“Would ye have caught us sleeping, and murder’d every one?
So foul a deed on heroes hath never yet been done.”

1848

Unto the queen right truly was told how lucklessly
Her messengers had prosper’d. Good cause for grief had she.
Then otherwise contrived she: so cruel was her mood;
By which ere long to perish were heroes bold and good.

Adventure XXXI

How They Went to Church

1849

“So cold I feel my armour:” quoth Volker presently,
“Methinks the night is wearing and soon will ended be;
I mark that by the breezes; ’twill very soon be day.”
Then many a man awoke they who still in slumber lay.

1850

The morning light broke over the guests within the hall.
Hagen began on all sides the warriors to call,
To know if to the Minster to matins they would fare.
Meanwhile, in Christian fashion, the bells were chiming clear.

1851

So diverse was the chanting, thereby ’twas plain to see
That Christians and heathens were not in unity.

And yet the men of Gunther to church would go withal;
They from their beds together had risen one and all.

1852

The warriors then array'd them in clothes so finely wrought,
That better raiment never by heroes had been brought
To any king's dominions. Ill did it Hagen please.
Said he: "Now should ye, heroes, don other suits than these.

1853

"Enough about the matter ye surely understand;
Ye should, instead of roses, bear weapons in the hand.
For caps beset with jewels take shining helms and good;
Since we are well-adviséd of wicked Kriemhild's mood.

1854

"This day must we do battle, I will to you declare;
Instead of silken doublets, ye should your hauberks wear,
And in the place of mantles take bucklers good and wide—
That if they seek a quarrel, the brunt ye may abide.

1855

"My well-belovéd masters, your friends and kinsmen too,
Go now unto the Minster— that should ye gladly do—
And pray to God Almighty in your distress and need:
For know now, of a surety, that Death is nigh indeed.

1856

“See, too, that ye forget not aught ill that ye have done,
And with true zeal and duty stand ye before God’s throne.
Of this, right noble warriors, I warn ye well afore,
Save God in Heaven may grant it, ye’ll hear no masses more.”

1857

They went unto the Minster, the princes with their men.
But in the hallow’d precincts bold Hagen spake again
And bade them halt, lest any should leave the company:
“None knoweth what the Hunfolk to us may do,” said he;

1858

“My friends, set down your bucklers upright before your feet,
And answer ye to any who may unkindly greet
With deep and deadly sword-stroke. Hark ye, to Hagen’s rede,
So will ye find it worthy to serve you in your need.”

1859

With that Hagen and Volker, the twain together, went
In front of the great Minster. ’Twas done with this intent,
That they might make it certain that the king’s wife would need
To crowd them as she enter’d: their mien was grim indeed.

1860

Then came the land’s Upholder, and eke his lady fair.
And deck’d about the body with raiment rich and rare
One saw the doughty warriors along with them go by;
The dust aloft was whirling from Kriemhild’s chivalry.

1861

Now when the mighty ruler in armour saw array'd
The kings and their companions, how quickly then he said:
"Why thus my friends behold I marching with helmets on?
'Twould grieve me, on my honour, had aught to them been done.

1862

"I'll gladly make atonement, however they think good;
If any here have vext them in either heart or mood,
I give them full assurance that sorely vext am I;
And whatsoe'er they bid me I'll do it readily."

1863

To this made answer Hagen: "By none have we been harm'd.
It is my masters' custom to go thus fully arm'd
To every courtly meeting— until three days have run;
To Etzel we will tell it if aught to us be done."

1864

This answer made by Hagen Kriemhilda heard right well.
How hatefully upon him her sidelong glances fell!
Yet would she not more frankly her country's customs own,
Though they to her a long time in Burgundy were known.

1865

Yet though her hate towards him so cruel was and fell,
If anyone to Etzel the truth had dared to tell,
He doubtless had prevented what came to pass ere long:
But none of them would tell it, her mastery was so strong.

1866

Then with the queen advancing there came a mighty band;
But this same pair of warriors deign'd not to take their stand
Two hand-breadths further backward, which made the Hunfolk wroth.
Ay, they must press and jostle with those bold heroes both.

1867

The chamberlains of Etzel were ill-content at this,
And would upon the warriors have somewhat wrought amiss,
If they had dared to do it the king's High Grace before.
There was a mighty jostling, but so far nothing more.

1868

When service now was ended and they would thence be gone,
All suddenly on horseback appear'd full many a Hun;
And many a beauteous lady was with Kriemhilda seen;
Full seven thousand warriors came riding with the queen.

1869

Kriemhilda with her ladies within the window sat
Along with royal Etzel: well pleased was he thereat.
Fain would they see the jousting those doughty heroes show'd:
Ay! in the lists before them what warriors strange there rode!

1870

And thither had the marshal, the right brave Dankwart, too,
Come with his squires attending: his lords' own retinue
With him, too, he had taken from the Burgundian land.
The steeds for the bold Niblungs well saddled were at hand.

1871

When they their steeds had mounted— the kings and every man—
Forthwith the stalwart Volker to counsel them began,
That all should tilt together after their country's mode;
In course of which, thereafter, the chiefs right nobly rode.

1872

For what the hero counsell'd they did not underrate.
The crowding and the shouting were both exceeding great.
Within the wide inclosure was gather'd many a man;
Then Etzel and Kriemhilda to gaze thereon began.

1873

Six hundred knights together upon the field appear'd,
The warriors of Dietrich, coming the guests toward.
They thought with the Burgundians some knightly sport to try,
And would, had he allow'd it, have done it readily.

1874

Ay me! what goodly warriors forthwith towards them made!
But when to the lord Dietrich the news thereof was said,
With Gunther's men forbade he that any sport should be.
He fear'd for his retainers: and surely need had he.

1875

When they of Bern pass'd onward, and from the place had gone,
The men from Bechelaren, of Rüdeger's, came on.
Before the hall five hundred with shield on arm rode they:
Well pleased had been the margrave could they have kept away.

1876

Then wisely, as behoved him, he rode the host throughout,
And said unto his warriors, they could no longer doubt
But that the men of Gunther ill will towards them had:
If they would leave the combat he would in truth be glad.

1877

When these now had pass'd onward— high-mettled heroes bold—
Came horsemen from Thuringia, as hath to us been told;
And then the knights of Denmark, a thousand gallant men;
One saw right many a lance-shaft fly in the onset then.

1878

Then Haward came and Irnfried unto the tournament.
The Rhinelanders a challenge to them had proudly sent.
The warriors of Thuringia were offer'd many a joust;
In many a noble buckler were lances deeply thrust.

1879

There, too, the lordly Bloedlin came with his thousands three.
By Etzel and Kriemhilda right closely watch'd was he;
For all the knightly jousting was held within their sight.
The queen rejoiced to see it for Burgundy's despite.

1880

And Gibecke and Scrutan unto the melee rode,
With Hornboge and Ramung, all in the Hunnish mode.
They held the lists, withstanding the chiefs of Burgundy;
And over the king's palace the shafts went whirling high.

1881

Whate’er was done by any was nothing else but sound.
Loud was the din that echo’d palace and hall around,
From clash of shields and bucklers, by Gunther’s liegemen made;
Whence praises and great honour unto his folk were paid.

1882

The ardour of their pastime so mighty was and great,
That from the goodly horses whereon the heroes sate
The snow-white foam was soaking through the caparisons.
In every courtly fashion they sought to meet the Huns.

1883

Then up and spake the minstrel, Volker the fiddle-player:
“I trow that to withstand us these warriors will not dare.
I’ve ever heard it said that they hate us verily;
Now is the time to show it; a better ne’er will be.

1884

“Straightway unto the stables,” so Volker loudly cried,
“We’ll have the horses taken; till towards the eventide
We’ll ride some further courses, if there be time enow.
What if to us Burgundians the queen some praise allow!”

1885

Then saw they some one coming; with stately mien rode he,
Such that no other Hunsman with him compared could be.
Belike in some high lattice a sweetheart there he had;
No knightly bride was ever than he more fairly clad.

1886

Then Volker said: “How can I pass over such a chance?
Yon darling of the ladies must feel a thrust of lance—
There’s not a man could help it! ’twill stand him in his life:
I care not though I anger thereby King Etzel’s wife.”

1887

“For love of me, forbear ye!” King Gunther quickly spake;
“These people will upbraid us if we the onset make;
Let ye the Huns begin it, more seemly ’twere, I ween.”
Now all this time King Etzel was sitting by the queen.

1888

“I’ll make the hubbub greater,” quoth Hagen, in his turn;
“We needs must let the ladies and these same champions learn
How we can sit our horses: ’twill be good sport withal,
Though little praise to any of Gunther’s men befall.”

1889

Then rode the ready Volker into the fray again:
Whereby had many a woman, ere long, right grievous pain.
The noble Hunsman’s body transfix’d he with his spear;
Which soon both wife and maiden bewail’d with many a tear.

1890

With hurtling speed did Hagen rush forward with his men,
His sixty chosen warriors; and quickly rode he then
Upon the fiddler’s footsteps, to where the joust was held.
Both Etzel and Kriemhilda plainly the whole beheld.

1891

The kings were all unwilling their minstrel brave to leave
Amid the foemen fighting, and succour none to give;
A thousand heroes therefore towards him deftly rode—
In high-accomplish'd fashion they did whate'er they would.

1892

When that the noble Hunsman in death was stricken low,
One heard among his kinsmen complaints and cries of woe.
And all the folk were asking: "Who can this deed have done?"
"Volker, the fearless minstrel, yon fiddler is the one!"

1893

For swords and bucklers called they, and held them soon in hand,
The kinsmen of this margrave of the Hungarian land.
They would have set on Volker, and slain him where he stood;
The host ran from his window with all the haste he could.

1894

Then rose a mighty tumult among the people all.
The kings and their attendants dismounted at the hall;
Behind the throng his charger sent each Burgundian;
King Etzel came: to sever the nobles he began.

1895

From one of the Hun's kinsmen, who chanced by him to stand,
He seiz'd a deadly weapon, and wrench'd it from his hand;
Then drave the people backwards, for very wroth was he:
"How vain unto these warriors had been my courtesy

1896

“If ye had slain the minstrel before my very face;”
So spake to them King Etzel: “that were a foul disgrace!
For well I marked him riding, what time he pierced the Hun,
And through no fault on his part, but by a slip, ’twas done.
1897

“To leave my guests in freedom, I charge ye to take heed.”
So gave he them safe-conduct; then led they every steed
Unto the hostel stables; and many squires they had
Right diligent in service, who did whate’er they bade.
1898

The host into the palace took with his friends his way.
No wrath in any of them would he allow to stay.
The tables were made ready, the water was brought in:
Yet bitter foes in plenty had they from o’er the Rhine.
1899

Ere all the lords were seated a good long time was spent;
Whilst tortured was Kriemhilda by cares within her pent.
She said: “I seek thy counsel, O prince of Bern, thy grace
And aid: in sooth my business is now in evil case.”
1900

Then Hildebrand made answer, a worthy warrior he:
“Whoever slays the Niblungs shall have no help from me,
Nay, not for any treasure! thereby he grief may get:
These knights of ready courage have ne’er been conquer’d yet.”
1901

And, in his courtly fashion, thereto Sir Dietrich spake:
“O mighty queen, I pray thee, thy purpose to forsake.
To me thy kinsmen never have done such injury,
That I the gallant warriors in combat would defy.

1902

“The wish doth ill beseem thee, most noble prince’s wife,
That thou anent thy kinsfolk wouldst plot against their life.
Trusting unto thy favour they came unto this land:
Siegfried is not avengéd by aid of Dietrich’s hand.”

1903

When she could find no falseness the knight of Bern within,
Then on the spot she promised to give to Bloedelin
A far-extending march-land, which Nudung own’d of yore.
As Dankwart shortly slew him, he thought of it no more.

1904

Quoth she: “Thou ought’st to aid me, my good Sir Bloedelin,
For in this very palace are now these foes of mine
Who slew my husband Siegfried, so well-beloved of me.
To him who helps avenge him, I ever bound shall be.”

1905

To her then answer’d Bloedel: “Lady, be sure of this,
To them, for fear of Etzel, I dare do naught amiss,
Since he thy kinsmen happy is ever fain to see.
And did I aught to hurt them, he ne’er would pardon me.”

1906

“Nay, rather, my lord Bloedel, your friend I’ll ever be.
Guerdon of gold and silver I will bestow on thee;
And eke a lovely damsel— Nudung’s betrothéd bride—
Whom thou mayst love and cherish right gladly at thy side.

1907

“The land, too, and the castles, all unto thee I give;
So, noble knight, thou mayest in gladness ever live,
If thou but winn’st the earldom which Nudung held in fee.
Whate’er to-day I promise, in truth I’ll give to thee.”

1908

When now the noble Bloedel the guerdon heard her tell,
And seeing that the damsel in beauty pleased him well,
By means of strife he purposed to earn this lovely wife:
But for that cause the warrior was doom’d to lose his life.

1909

Unto the queen then spake he: “Within the hall go back:
Ere any guess my purpose, an uproar I will make.
Hagen will have to answer for what to you he wrought;
King Gunther’s man, I warrant, shall bound to you be brought.”

1910

“Now arm yourselves,” cried Bloedel, “my gallant liegemen all!
We will upon the foemen within the hostel fall;
I may not be acquitted of this by Etzel’s wife.
On this must every hero among us stake his life.”

1911

When the queen found that Bloedel was on the fray intent,
She tarried there no longer, but back to table went
And sat beside King Etzel and with his men as well:
She for the guests' undoing had taken counsel fell.

1912

Since means there were not elsewise to cause the strife to start,
(Kriemhilda's olden sorrow lay graven in her heart)
She bade them bring to table King Etzel's little son:
How could a vengeful woman more cruelly have done?

1913

Then went that self-same minute of Etzel's liegemen four,
And thither from his chamber the young king Ortlieb bore
Unto the prince's table, where Hagen also sate.
(The boy was doom'd to perish through Hagen's deadly hate.)

1914

As soon as mighty Etzel espied his little son,
He turned to his wife's kinsmen and spake in kindly tone:
"Now, my good friends, behold ye, my only son is he,
And eke your sister's offspring: which well for you may be.

1915

"If he his kindred likens, he'll be a gallant wight,
Right powerful and noble, a well-grown man of might.
Should I live some while longer he'll own a dozen lands;
So look ye for good service at my young Ortlieb's hands.

1916

“I therefore fain would pray you, O well-loved friends of mine,
When ye are homeward riding unto the river Rhine,
That ye upon the journey would take your sister’s son,
And let your loving kindness unto the child be shown.

1917

“And rear him up in honour till he to manhood grow.
If any in your borders hath wrought you any woe,
When he is of full stature he will your vengeance aid.”
King Etzel’s wife Kriemhilda heard also what he said.

1918

“If unto days of manhood the child should grow and thrive,
These thanes, I trow,” said Hagen, “their trust to him will give.
Yet the young king, meseemeth, is of a weakly sort:
Folk will not often see me attending Ortlieb’s court.”

1919

The king look’d round at Hagen— this speech had vext him sore;
And though, with princely breeding, he spake thereof no more,
His heart was very heavy and troubled was his mind.
Nor was the mood of Hagen a whit to joy inclined.

1920

The princes all were sorry, together with the king,
That of his child had Hagen e’er spoken such a thing.
With ill content they bore it: nor knew they aught at all
Of what through this same warrior was shortly to befall.

Adventure XXXII

How Bloedelin Was Slain

1921

The warriors of Bloedel were ready for the fray;
Clad in their thousand hauberks they thither took their way
Where Dankwart with his yeomen still at the table sate;
There rose between the heroes a strife of deadly hate.

1922

As soon as the Lord Bloedel before the table went,
Dankwart the marshal met him on greeting due intent:
“Right welcome to our hostel, Lord Bloedelin, are ye,
Although I greatly marvel what may the reason be?”

1923

“Thou hast no need to greet me,” so answer’d Bloedelin:
“For this my coming bodeth an end to thee and thine,

Thanks to thy brother Hagen, who erewhile Siegfried slew.
That to the Huns thou'lt answer, and many another too."

1924

"Nay, say not so, Lord Bloedel," the marshal Dankwart said:
"Else must we rue too quickly this journey we have made.
I was but a small stripling when Siegfried lost his life;
I know not what against me bringeth King Etzel's wife."

1925

"No more about the matter know I to say to you,
Save that your kinsmen did it, Gunther, and Hagen too.
Look to yourselves, ye lost ones, ye go not hence away!
By death must ye the forfeit unto Kriemhilda pay."

1926

"What! and will nothing turn you?" cried Dankwart thereupon:
"Would I had ne'er besought you, that better were undone!"
Up from the table sprang he, the warrior swift and strong,
And drew a keen-edged weapon, that heavy was and long.

1927

Therewith he struck at Bloedel, with stroke of sword so fleet,
That off his head was smitten, and lay before his feet.
"Be that thy wedding-dower," the warrior Dankwart said,
"Unto the bride of Nudung, whom thou wouldst woo and wed!

1928

“To-morrow they may plight her unto another one:
If he will earn the guerdon, the like to him be done!”
A faithful-hearted Hunsman Dankwart aware had made,
How that the queen against him such grievous plots had laid.

1929

When now the men of Bloedel saw how their lord lay slain,
Then from the guests no longer their hands could they restrain.
With broadswords high uplifted they sprang in deadly mood
Upon the youthful warriors: which ere long many rued.

1930

Then loudly shouted Dankwart unto his followers all:
“Well see ye, noble yeomen, how things are like to fall!
Ye hapless ones, be wary, in sooth there’s need to be,
Albeit noble Kriemhild bade us right lovingly.”

1931

They to whom swords were lacking, reach’d down before each seat,
And many a long stool lifted from underneath their feet.
Then the Burgundian yeomen no longer would forbear,
And heavy stools made bruises through many a helmet there.

1932

How grimly thus the strangers essay’d their lives to save!
And so the arm’d assailants from out the house they drave;
Yet left they dead within it five hundred men or more:
And all of the defenders were red and wet with gore.

1933

These tidings of disaster were carried presently
Unto the knights of Etzel (which grieved them bitterly):
How Bloedel and his liegemen had all to death been brought,
Which deed had Hagen's brother with his retainers wrought.

1934

Ere yet the king had heard it— urg'd by the hate they bore—
The Hunfolk donn'd their armour; two thousand men or more.
And march'd against the yeomen;— what else was to be done?
And out of all the people they left alive not one.

1935

Before the house the traitors had led a mighty host;
On guard the foreign yeomen stood bravely at their post.
But what avail'd their valour? They all were doom'd to die;
And presently arose there a gruesome butchery.

1936

And here ye must a marvel of monstrous import hear:
Nine thousand yeomen lying all done to death there were;
A dozen knights moreover of Dankwart's own command.
One saw him all-forsaken amidst the foemen stand.

1937

The uproar was abated, the clash of arms was o'er.
Then look'd athwart his shoulder Dankwart the warrior;
He spake: "Woe for the comrades who from my side are gone!
Alas, that 'midst the foemen I now must stand alone!"

1938

Upon his body shower'd the sword-strokes keen and rife;—
Ere long to be bewailéd by many a hero's wife—.
His shield aloft he lifted, and held the arm-brace low;
And drench'd full many a hauberk with life-blood's crimson flow.

1939

Then cried the son of Aldrian: "Woe for the ills I bear!
Make way, ye Hunnish warriors, and let me to the air,
That the wind's breath may cool me, a battle-weary wight!"
Right royally he bore him in all the people's sight.

1940

But when the strife-worn hero outside the hostel sprang,
What fresh swords on his helmet again and ever rang!
They who had not yet witness'd what wonders wrought his hand,
Now rush'd to meet the warrior from the Burgundian land.

1941

"Now would to God," cried Dankwart, "I had a messenger
To seek my brother Hagen, and make him well aware
How I amid these warriors so sorely am bested!
Hence surely would he help me, or lie beside me dead!"

1942

Then spake the Hunnish warriors: "That herald must thou be,
When we before thy brother a corse shall carry thee!
So first shall Gunther's henchman what sorrow is be taught:
Thou hast unto King Etzel such grievous damage wrought."

1943

Said he: “Now stint your threatenings, and further backwards get,
Or verily I’ll drench you some other hauberks yet!
I will myself the story before the court lay bare,
And eke unto my masters my grievance great declare.”

1944

He laid on Etzel’s liegemen so heavily his hand,
That not a man amongst them durst him with sword withstand.
Yet in his shield their lances so quickly did they aim,
That he was fain to drop it, so heavy it became.

1945

Him, now no longer shielded, they thought to overwhelm;
Ha, but what deadly gashes he cut right through the helm!
Until before him stagger’d full many a valiant one:
Whereby much praise and honour the gallant Dankwart won.

1946

From one side and the other, upon him hurtled they;
Ay, some of them too quickly had come into the fray!
Before the foe upstood he, e’en as a woodland boar
At bay the sleuth-hounds faces: could valour e’er be more?

1947

His path was newly-sprinkled with life-blood warm and wet.
No single-handed warrior had ever striven yet
Against a host of foemen, as he had boldly done.
Folk mark’d how Hagen’s brother to court right nobly won.

1948

By sewers and by butlers was heard the clash of swords;
From many a hand the liquors were flung upon the boards,
As were the victuals also which to the hall they bare.
And stalwart foes in plenty forestall'd him at the stair.

1949

"What will ye now, ye sewers?" the weary warrior cried:
"In sooth for all the strangers, good cheer ye should provide,
And to the nobles ought ye good victuals to convey;—
And to my well-lov'd masters let me my tidings say."

1950

Whoe'er by force before him upon the stairway sprang,
On each of them so sorely his heavy sword he swang,
In very dread their safety further aloof they sought;
And so his strength of body right mickle marvels wrought.

Adventure XXXIII

How the Burgundians Fought with the Huns

1951

Within the door an entrance thus gallant Dankwart made;
The household folk of Etzel to stand aside he bade.
The whole of his apparel bespatter'd was with gore;
A mighty naked weapon within his hand he bore.

1952

Then loudly Dankwart shouted before the assembled throng:
"Bestir thee, brother Hagen, thou sittest all too long!
To thee and God in Heaven appeal I in our need:
Yeomen and knights together lie in the hostel dead."

1953

And he cried back in answer: "And who hath done it then?"
Quoth Dankwart: "The Lord Bloedel, together with his men.

But dearly hath he paid it, that would I have you know.
I smote his head from off him; mine own hand gave the blow."

1954

"'Tis but a little grievance," quoth Hagen of Tronjé;
"Whene'er one has occasion of any thane to say,
That he by hands of warrior was of his life fordone,
So much the less fair women for him have need to moan.

1955

"Now tell me, brother Dankwart, why all so red ye be?
Methinks that thou art wounded and suffer'st grievously.
If in the land he liveth who this on thee hath done,
Except the foul fiend save him, his life's as good as gone."

1956

"You see me whole and hearty; with blood my clothes are red,
But from the wounds of others it thus hath happenéd;
And they have been so many that I have slain to-day,
That verily their number on oath I could not say."

1957

He answer'd: "Brother Dankwart, see to the door do thou,
And let not of the Hunsmen a single man come through.
I'll reckon with these warriors, as need we have, in faith!
Our men-at-arms are lying in undeservéd death."

1958

“If chamberlain I must be,” the gallant man replied,
“To serve such mighty rulers, I am well satisfied.
I’ll answer for the stairway, as honour’s dear to me.”
Unto Kriemhilda’s warriors naught could more direful be.

1959

“It is to me a marvel,” Hagen thereafter spake:
“What meaneth all the fluster these Hunnish warriors make?
They think they well could spare him, who yonder door doth hold,
And hath these high concernments to the Burgundians told!

1960

“Long time about Kriemhilda have I been wont to hear,
That she her bitter sorrow was not content to bear.
Now drink we to her darling! for royal wine we’ll call!
The princeling of the Hunfolk shall be the first of all!”

1961

Then the child Ortlieb slew he, Hagen, that warrior good,
So that from sword-blade downward flow’d o’er his hands the blood;
The infant’s head was sever’d and on the queen’s lap fell.
Then rose amongst the warriors a slaughter horrible.

1962

With double-handed sword-stroke he dealt a blow at large
Against the man of learning, who had the child in charge.
His head all in a moment before the table lay:
In good sooth for the teacher it was but sorry pay!

1963

He saw by Etzel's table a certain minstrel-man,
And Hagen in his fury to fall on him began;
His left hand on the fiddle he lopp'd off suddenly:
"There's somewhat thou canst carry for news to Burgundy!"

1964

"Woe for my hand!" cried Werbel the minstrel: "wilt thou say
What evil I have done thee, Lord Hagen of Tronjé?
In all good faith I journey'd unto your master's land;
The notes how can I finger since I have lost my hand?"

1965

But little heeded Hagen, though he ne'er fiddled more.
He wreak'd within the palace a vengeance grim and sore
Upon the knights of Etzel, of whom a host he slew.
Death dealt he in the palace to people not a few.

1966

The ever-ready Volker up from the table sprang:
And in his hand right loudly his fiddle-bow outrang.
Right fearsome was the music that Gunther's minstrel play'd;
Ay! 'mid the gallant Hunsmen what enemies he made!

1967

Upsprang, too, from the table, the noble rulers three:
They gladly would have stay'd it, ere mischief worse should be.
But all their wit avail'd not the rising storm to quell,
When Volker joining Hagen to such wild raving fell.

1968

When saw the Lord of Rhineland the fight could not be stay'd,
The prince himself fought also, and many a wide wound made
Upon his foemen's bodies, their shining mail-coats through.
A hand-strong hero was he: as now all grimly knew.

1969

The stalwart Gernot likewise was forward in the strife;
Ay! he among the Hunsmen took many a hero's life,
A keen-edged weapon wielding— by Rüdeger 'twas given.
By him were Etzel's warriors right grievously bedriven.

1970

The young son of Dame Uté into the fight now dash'd,
And gloriously his broadsword right through the helmets crash'd—
To grief of Etzel's warriors of the Hungarian land.
There wrought were many marvels by gallant Gis'lher's hand.

1971

Howe'er the kings and liegemen were valiant in the fight,
Above them all right plainly did Giselher in might
Stand forth against the foemen; he was a hero good.
Such wounds he dealt, that many fell weltering in their blood.

1972

The men of Etzel also stood stoutly to the foe.
There one might see the strangers go hacking to and fro
With their bright glancing weapons, all through the royal hall.
And horrid shrieks from all sides upon the ear did fall.

1973

They who were on the outside would to their friends within;
But found that at the doorways small vantage they could win.
Out from the hall right gladly would they within it fare:
But none of them would Dankwart let up or down the stair.

1974

Thereby around the gateways a mighty press arose,
And din of helmets also beneath the broadsword blows.
And thus the gallant Dankwart fell into sore distress:
But that his brother heeded, as bound in faithfulness.

1975

For thereupon to Volker Sir Hagen cried aloud:
“Now look you yonder, comrade, how round my brother crowd
The Hunnish warriors closely, and blows upon him rain:
Friend, go and help my brother, or we shall lose the thane.”

1976

“That will I do full surely,” answer’d the minstrelman;
And straightway through the palace his fiddling he began.
His hand with his stout broadsword full often music made;
To him the Rhenish warriors unbounded thanks repaid.

1977

And soon the gallant Volker to Dankwart came and said:
“To-day no little trouble hath fallen on your head.
Your brother hath enjoin’d me to lend a helping hand:
If you’ll look to the outside, within the door I’ll stand.”

1978

Dankwart the ever-ready without the gateway stood;
Well guarded he the stairway, let any come who would.
One heard the clang of weapons in the bold hero's hand.
The like, within, did Volker of the Burgundian land.

1979

Loudly the valiant minstrel shouted across the throng:
"The hall is closed, friend Hagen, with bolt and barrier strong.
The door of Etzel's chamber is safely barr'd as well:
Two heroes' hands that hold it a thousand bolts excel."

1980

When Hagen, Lord of Tronjé, knew that the door was fast,
His shield back on his shoulders the goodly chieftain cast.
First fell he to avenging the ills upon him wrought:
Of longer life his foemen had then but little thought.

1981

The Prince of Bern no sooner had seen how matters went,
And how the mighty Hagen so many helmets rent,
Than sprang the Amelung ruler upon a bench: quoth he:
"The liquor Hagen giveth is vile as drink can be!"

1982

The host was full of sorrow— good cause had he to rue:
What friends of him belovéd before his eyes they slew!
And hardly from his foemen unscath'd himself came he;
In grief he sat—what profit was it a king to be?

1983

The mighty Queen Kriemhilda to Dietrich call'd and said;
"With all your manhood give me, O noble knight, your aid,
By all those princes' merits erewhile of Amelung land:
Should Hagen once have reach'd me, my death were close at hand."

1984

"And how am I to help you," Lord Dietrich answering said,
"Great queen, when I have reason myself to be afraid?
These followers of Gunther with wrath so sorely burn,
That I with no one's safety can now myself concern."

1985

"Nay, say not so, Lord Dietrich, thou noble knight and good,
This day make plain to all men thy kind and virtuous mood,
In that thou hence wilt help me: or I am like to die."
Her fears had brought Kriemhilda to sore anxiety.

1986

"Can I do aught to help you, I verily will try;
Since never have I witness'd, for many years gone by,
To such deep wrath enkindled so many a warrior good.
Ay! through the riven helmets I see the surging blood."

1987

This thane of proven valour with power began to shout;
Like unto horn of bison his voice rang loudly out,
Until its strength re-echoed the wide-wall'd stronghold round.
The mightiness of Dietrich was great beyond all bound.

1988

When Gunther heard the clamour proceeding from this man
Above the noise of battle, to hearken he began.
Said he: “The voice of Dietrich is to my hearing plain;
I trow that our retainers some friend of his have slain.

1989

“I see him on the table, he beckons with his hand.
Ye friends of mine and kinsfolk from the Burgundian land,
Cease fighting for a season, and let one hear and see
What to the thane hath happen’d through them who follow me.”

1990

And when the royal Gunther besought and gave command,
They, in the stress of battle, halted with sword in hand.
So great the power he wielded, not one durst strike a blow
Whilst him of Bern he challenged, with readiness enow.

1991

Said he: “Most noble Dietrich, what hath to you been done
By any of my people? I’m willing, be it known,
Amends and satisfaction right readily to give.
Were any man to wrong you, right deeply should I grieve.”

1992

Then answer’d the Lord Dietrich: “Naught hath been done to me;
But let me leave the palace with your safe-conduct free,
And get with my retainers from this fell strife away:
For that I’ll owe you service assuredly for aye.”

1993

Then unto him spake Wolfhart: “Why ask ye grace so soon?
That door, I trow, the fiddler hath not so closely done
But we can force it open enough to get away.”
“Now hold thy peace,” cried Dietrich, “the devil thou dost play.”

1994

Then spake the royal Gunther: “That will I let you do.
Out of this place depart ye, many be ye or few,
But not a single foeman— here stay they everyone.
They have anent these Hunsfolk so basely to me done.”

1995

When Dietrich heard that saying, he took beneath his arm
The noble queen, sore stricken with sorrow and alarm.
Upon his other arm he took Etzel with him then;
There also went with Dietrich six hundred goodly men.

1996

Then up and spake the margrave, the noble Rüdeger:
“If any from the palace be yet allowed to fare,
Who still are fain to serve you, to us let it be known:
For thus may peace enduring betwixt good friends be sown.”

1997

Whereto made answer Gis’lher, of the Burgundian land:
“To you shall peace and pardon be granted at our hand,
Since you and your retainers were e’er of faithful heart.
You all shall, unmolested, hence with your friends depart.”

1998

When Rüdeger the margrave departed from the hall,
Five hundred men went with him or more, belike, in all,
Who came from Bechelaren, liegemen and friends as well;
By whom unto King Gunther great mischief soon befell.

1999

Meanwhile a Hunnish warrior, who saw how Etzel went
By Dietrich's side, to profit thereby was all intent;
But with his sword the minstrel fetch'd at him such a slice,
That at the feet of Etzel his head lay in a trice.

2000

When that the country's ruler had got outside the place,
He stopp'd and look'd behind him towards where Volker was:
"Woe's me for this dread stranger; a cruel destiny
It is that all my warriors must dead before him lie!

2001

"And woe upon this feasting," the noble sovran cried,
"For one, by name of Volker, is fighting there inside
Like to a savage boar, and yet a minstrel he!
I thank my Lord and Saviour I'm from that devil free!

2002

"Right evil sound his measures, his strokes are bloody red;
Ay, and his tunes have smitten full many a hero dead.
I know not what against us this minstrel doth attest,
For never have I harbour'd so downright ill a guest!"

2003

They'd let from out the palace as many as they chose;
Then from the folk within it a fearful din arose.
The guests for what had happen'd a dire revenge would have.
Ay! Volker the undaunted, what helmets then he clave!

2004

Gunther, the noble ruler, turn'd at that noise around:
"Hear'st thou yon music, Hagen, which Volker there doth sound
Amid the Hunfolk fiddling, who through the door would go?
He hath a blood-red straker upon his fiddle-bow!"

2005

"It grieves me beyond measure," Hagen in answer spake,
"That I before that warrior a seat in hall should take.
I have been his companion, as he was likewise mine,
And we shall aye be faithful if hence we ever win.

2006

"Now mark, great king, how Volker doth thee and thine uphold
Right willingly he earneth thy silver and thy gold.
Through steel of hardest temper his fiddle-bow will smite;
He breaks from off the helmets their shining crests and bright.

2007

"I never saw a fiddler so nobly hold his own
As this same warrior Volker throughout the day hath done.
On helmet and on buckler his music ringeth clear:
A gallant horse deserves he and raiment rich to wear."

2008

Of those of Hunnish kindred who had been in that hall,
Not one was left within it alive amongst them all.
Now silenced was the uproar; for none there were to fight:
Aside was laid the weapon of every gallant knight.

Adventure XXXIV

How They Cast Forth the Dead

2009

Down sat the knights and nobles, by all their labours spent;
Before the hall together Volker and Hagen went.
These warriors over-weary lean'd on their shields for rest;
The while betwixt the couple pass'd many a ready jest.

2010

Then Giselher, the warrior from Burgundy, outspake:
"Dear friends, ye must in no wise seek yet your rest to take:
The dead folk must ye carry straight from the house away.
There'll be another onset, that can I surely say.

2011

"Beneath our feet 'tis needful they should no longer lie.
And ere by storm the Hunsmen undo us utterly,

Some wounds we yet will give them, e'en as I love to do;
For firmly am I minded," said Giselher, "thereto."

2012

"Well's me for such a master," said Hagen, thereunto;
"From none such rede were likely, save from a warrior true,
As we from my young master this very day have had:
I trow all ye Burgundians may therefore be right glad."

2013

Then follow'd they his counsel, and carried through the door
Dead warriors seven thousand and cast them therebefore.
At foot of the hall stairway they fell upon the ground;
Then rose a doleful wailing from all their kinsmen round.

2014

Some few there were among them whose wounds were not so bad
But that with gentler usage they yet might life have had,
Who from that height down falling in death must needs lie low;
For this their friends were wailing and grievous was their woe.

2015

Then spake the fiddler Volker, a goodly hero he:
"Now witness I the truth of what hath been told to me:
Base cowards are these Hunsmen, they wail like womankind!
These sorely wounded bodies they ought to tend and bind."

2016

Then deem’d a certain margrave he spake with purpose good.
He saw one of his kinsmen who lay amid the blood,
And clasp’d his arms about him and sought to drag him thence;
Then shot the ruthless minstrel and slew him with a lance.

2017

And when the others saw it, a panic seized the crowd;
They all against the minstrel began to curse aloud.
Then pluck’d he up a javelin, that temper’d was and keen,
Which by some Hun or other aim’d at himself had been.

2018

This, right across the fortress, he cast with might and main
Far o’er the crowd of people; and thereby Etzel’s men
He warn’d to take their station more distant from the hall.
The folk his mighty prowess now dreaded above all.

2019

Yet still before the palace stood many a thousand men.
Sir Volker and Sir Hagen began to parley then,
And unto the King Etzel all in their minds to tell:
Whence grievous ills thereafter those heroes bold befell.

2020

“To give the people courage,” quoth Hagen, “’tis but right
That ever should the nobles be foremost in the fight:
Not otherwise my masters have here been seen to do:
They hew right through the helmets, blood flows at every blow.”

2021

So valiant was Etzel, he straightway gripp'd his shield.
"Now prithee be thou wary," said to him Dame Kriemhild,
"Offer unto thy warriors gold overflowingly.
If Hagen yonder reach thee, death will be nigh to thee."

2022

So bold a man the king was, he was not to be stay'd;—
The like of such great princes can seldom now be said!
Needs must they by his shield-strap to draw him backward try.
Again the savage Hagen spake to him scoffingly:

2023

"It was a far-fetch'd kinship," the warrior Hagen cried,
"That Etzel and Sir Siegfried to one another tied.
He was Kriemhilda's lover ere she set eyes on thee,
Thou coward king! why shouldst thou take counsel against me?"

2024

To him so speaking hearken'd the noble sovran's wife.
Thereon within Kriemhilda was evil humour rife,
That he should dare upbraid her in face of Etzel's men:
Against the guests began she therefore to plot again.

2025

"Who Hagen, Lord of Tronjé, will do to death," she said,
"And hither at my bidding will bring to me his head,
For him the shield of Etzel I'll fill with ruddy gold,
And give him lands for guerdon, and goodly burghs to hold."

2026

“Now truly,” quoth the minstrel, “I know not what they lack!
I never yet saw heroes so sluggishly hang back
When one hath heard them offer’d so noble a reward:
From this time forth can Etzel ne’er hold them in regard.

2027

“Of those who vilely batten upon their prince’s bread
And now are fain to shun him in his most pressing need,
Of such here mark I many who would be reckon’d brave,
And stand like very cravens: shame must they ever have!”

Adventure XXXV

How Iring Was Slain

2028

Thereon the margrave Iring, who came from Denmark, cried:
“I have in all my doings on honour long relied,
And in the people’s battles oft gain’d the mastery:
Now bring to me my weapons; Hagen I will defy!”

2029

“’Gainst that will I take counsel,” Hagen in answer cried;
“So bid these Hunnish warriors stand further yet aside;
If two or three among ye should rush into this hall,
Back down the stairs disabled I’ll send them, one and all!”

2030

“For that I’ll not forego it,” said Iring, answering,
“I have ere this attempted as troublesome a thing.

With sword in hand against thee I'll hold my own alone;
What boots thy haughty bearing that thou in words hast shown?"

2031

Then quickly in his armour thane Iring was y-clad,
With Irnfried of Thuringia, a bold and gallant lad,
And eke the stalwart Haward, with full a thousand men;
Whatever part was Iring's, that would they all maintain.

2032

The fiddler saw them coming— a very host they were—
In arms along with Iring, to set upon him there.
On head, well-fasten'd, wore they right many a helmet good.
Then wax'd the gallant Volker wrathful enough in mood.

2033

"Now dost thou see, friend Hagen, how Iring yonder goes,
Who swore that thee in sword-fight he singly would oppose?
Doth falsehood fit a hero? Him I misprize therefore;
He brings with him in armour a thousand men or more!"

2034

"Now call me not a liar," the liege of Haward said,
"I'm ready to accomplish what I have promiséd;
For fear of no man living will I my word disown;
How dread so e'er be Hagen, I'll stand to him alone."

2035

Then Iring begg’d his kinsmen and followers, at their feet,
That they would let him singly in fight the warrior meet.
Unwillingly they yielded, for well enough to them
Was known the haughty Hagen, from Burgundy who came.

2036

Yet he so long besought them, that ’twas at last agreed.
For when his people saw him so bent upon the deed,
And that he strove for honour, they could but let him go;
Thereon a grim encounter befell betwixt the two.

2037

Iring, the thane of Denmark, aloft his javelin bare
And held his shield before him, that noble knight and rare;
Then up the steps to Hagen before the hall he ran:
Amongst the thanes assembled a fearful din began.

2038

Then from their hands the lances they forward hurl’d with might,
Right through the strong-bound bucklers upon the harness bright,
So that the broken spear-shafts were whirl’d high in the air.
Then clutch’d they at their broadswords that grim and gallant pair.

2039

The strength of doughty Hagen it was a mighty thing,
Yet Iring’s blows upon him made all the house to ring;
From palace and from turret echo’d their strokes again:
Yet naught avail’d the warrior his will on him to gain.

2040

So Iring turn'd from Hagen and left him scatheless yet;
Against the fiddle-player forthwith himself he set.
Him, with his sturdy sword-strokes he thought he might compel;
But these the well-skill'd chieftain knew how to parry well.

2041

Then smote the fiddler sorely, till o'er the buckler's side
By Volker's hand the plating was scatter'd far and wide;
So was he fain to leave him, a grewsome man was he;
Then Iring rush'd on Gunther, the lord of Burgundy.

2042

And stout enough for combat was either of them made.
Howe'er on one another Gunther and Iring laid,
Neither could wound the other to draw a drop of blood;
From that their armour saved them, so strong it was and good.

2043

Eke Gunther left he standing and on to Gernot ran,
And smote till from his hauberk the sparks to fly began,
And yet the sturdy Gernot, the knight of Burgundy,
So dealt on gallant Iring that he was like to die.

2044

Then from this prince he hurried— swift-footed was he too—
And four of the Burgundians the hero quickly slew;—
All noble court retainers from Worms-on-Rhine they were.
Then wrath could ne'er be greater than that of Giselher.

2045

“Now, by the Lord! Sir Iring,” cried Giselher the lad,
“For these thou needs must pay me who lie before thee dead—
By thee this moment slaughter’d;” then ran on him straightway
And smote the knight of Denmark so that he needs must stay.

2046

Beneath his hands succumbing down fell he in the blood;
And all were well persuaded that now the hero good
Ne’er more would wield a weapon in battle anywhere:
Yet Iring lay unwounded in front of Giselher.

2047

From blows upon the helmet and clashing of the sword
His wits were sorely stricken and scatter’d all abroad,
So that the gallant warrior of life took no more thought:
This by his strength of body bold Giselher had wrought.

2048

When from his head the numbness at last began to go,
Which had erstwhile come on him from that o’erwhelming blow,
Thought he: “I still am living, nor wounded anywhere;
Now know I for the first time the strength of Giselher.”

2049

On one side and the other his enemies heard he;
Were they his case aware of the worse for him ’twould be;
And likewise had he noted that Giselher was by:
He ponder’d how ’twas likely he might these foemen fly.

2050

How madly then upsprang he from out that bloody stew!
Unto his ready fleetness his thanks were surely due.
Out of the place forth rush'd he, but there saw Hagen stand,
And smote upon him swiftly with all his might of hand.

2051

Then to himself thought Hagen: "Death thee for this must have!
Unless the devil help thee, thyself thou canst not save."
Yet Iring through the helmet a wound on Hagen made:
This did the knight with Vaske, that was so good a blade.

2052

No sooner felt Sir Hagen the smarting of the wound
Than terribly his weapon he whirl'd in hand around.
Forthwith must Haward's liegeman for safety flee again,
And Hagen down the stairway to follow him was fain.

2053

Above his head bold Iring his shield made haste to lean;
And if that self-same stairway yet thrice its length had been,
Hagen had ne'er allow'd him to deal a single stroke.
Ay me! the sparks so ruddy that from his helmet broke!

2054

Yet back unto his people Iring in safety won.
Then soon unto Kriemhilda the tidings were made known
How he had wrought in battle on Hagen of Tronjé;
For which her thanks right hearty the queen began to say:

2055

“Now God reward thee, Iring, a hero good thou art;
Much hast thou me encouraged and comforted my heart.
Lo, now on Hagen’s raiment all red with blood I look!”
With her own hand Kriemhilda his shield, in kindness, took.

2056

“So much you need not thank him,” quoth Hagen; “if again
With me he’d try his fortune, it would beseem the thane.
If ever thence return’d he, a valiant man he’d be!
The wound will serve you little that he hath given to me.

2057

“That you have seen my hauberk by blood of mine made red,
Unto the death of many hath me embitteréd.
Against that liege of Haward’s I have the utmost wrath;—
Albeit the warrior Iring hath done me little scathe.”

2058

Meanwhile the man of Denmark into the wind had gone
To cool him in his hauberk— his helmet off was done.
And all the folk were saying his prowess was right good;
Whereby they made the margrave exceeding bold of mood.

2059

Then presently spake Iring: “My friends, now mark ye well
That ye must arm me quickly: I’ll try another spell,
If that o’erbearing tyrant I yet may bring to book.”
His shield was hack’d to pieces: a better one he took.

2060

Full speedily the warrior was better arm'd than e'er;
A javelin right sturdy with hate in heart he bare,
Wherewith once more with Hagen he purposed there to fight:
With foe-like mien awaited for him that murderous wight.

2061

But brook'd not the thane Hagen to stay for his advance;—
He ran full speed towards him, with blows of sword and lance,
Until he reach'd the stairs' foot: his wrath was fierce and dread,
And all the strength of Iring stood him in little stead.

2062

They slash'd right through the bucklers, till each of them began
With ruddy fire to sparkle. And ere long Haward's man
By the broadsword of Hagen was desperately smit
Through shield and armour: never mote he get well of it.

2063

When that the chieftain Iring was of the wound aware,
His shield unto his helm-band he raised, to rest it there.
He thought that with this damage he now had got his fill:
The liegeman of King Gunther had more to give him still.

2064

Before his feet did Hagen a javelin espy;
And with it straight at Iring, the Danish chief, let fly—
So well, that from his forehead the shaft thereof stuck out.
For him the warrior Hagen a cruel end had wrought.

2065

Iring must needs betake him the Danish folk unto;
But ere they loosed the helmet from off the chief, they drew
Out from his head the lance-shaft; then death to him came nigh.
His kinsfolk all were wailing: well might they, verily.

2066

Then came the queen towards him, and over him she leant,
And for the stalwart Iring gave to her sorrow vent;
She wept, his wounds beholding, and bitter was her grief.
Then spake unto his kinsmen that brave and gallant chief:

2067

“I pray thee stint thy weeping, most noble lady mine,
For what avails thy sorrow? I must my life resign
Because of wounds and damage that have been dealt on me.
No more will death allow me Etzel to serve and thee.”

2068

Then unto the Thuringians and to the Danes he spake:
“The gifts that ye were promised no hand of yours shall take
From yonder royal lady— her ruddy gold so bright!
Death’s visage must ye look on, if ye with Hagen fight.”

2069

All pallid was his colour, the seal of death he bore—
The ever-valiant Iring— to them ’twas sorrow sore.
For Haward’s gallant liegeman there was no hope of life:
And so the men of Denmark must forward go to strife.

2070

Irnfried as well as Haward sprang forth the hall before
With warriors a thousand; a horrible uproar
On every side resounded, mighty and clamouring.
And ah, at the Burgundians what lances sharp they fling!

2071

And then the gallant Irnfried straight for the minstrel made,
At whose right hand redoubted great injury he had.
For lo, the noble fiddler the landgrave sore did smite
Through firmly-fasten'd helmet: he was a grewsome wight!

2072

And thereupon Sir Irnfried the valiant minstrel smote
Till rents perforce were riven across his ring-wrought coat,
And all his breast-plate quiver'd with sparks of fiery red;
Albeit fell the landgrave before the fiddler dead.

2073

Anon were met together Haward and Hagen bold,
I wot that whoso saw them a marvel might behold!
From hand of either hero the sword-strokes follow'd free;
Foredoom'd to die was Haward by him of Burgundy.

2074

When Danesmen and Thuringians their leaders saw in death,
Then rose a frightful struggle the palace walls beneath,
Or ever they the gateway by might and main had won:
Full many a shield and helmet were shatter'd and fordone.

2075

“Give way!” then shouted Volker, “and let them all come through—
What they would fain accomplish they can in nowise do.
In but a short time after they’re bound to die within,
And what the queen hath promised by dying they can win.”

2076

Now when these haughty chieftains within the chamber went,
Of many a one amongst them the head was lowly bent,
For by their rapid sword-blows to perish he was fain.
Well fought the gallant Gernot, and Giselher the thane.

2077

There got within the palace a thousand men and four;
One saw their flashing falchions as through the air they tore.
Of all who came within it soon every warrior fell.
One might of the Burgundians full many a marvel tell.

2078

Thereafter was a silence, and all the uproar died.
While, out of hole and crevice, blood flow’d on every side
And ran into the gutters from all the corpses there.
Thus had the men of Rhineland wrought by their prowess rare.

2079

Then sat they down to rest them, those men of Burgundy.
Their weapons and their bucklers they presently laid by.
Yet still the gallant fiddler before the palace stay’d,
In case that any other to fight with him essay’d.

2080

The king lamented sorely, as likewise did his wife:
And maids and matrons also aweary were of life.
I ween that Death had taken an oath to do them ill:
Whence, by the guests to perish were many warriors still.

Adventure XXXVI

How the Queen Bade That the Hall Be Set on Fire

2081

“Now do ye off your helmets,” quoth Hagen, the bold knight,
“For I and my companion will guard ye all aright.
And should the men of Etzel a fresh attack essay,
So will I warn my masters with all the speed I may.”

2082

The head was then uncover’d of many a warrior good;
They sat upon the fallen, who lay there steep’d in blood,
And had to death been smitten so lately by their hand.
By many evil glances the noble guests were scann’d.

2083

Before the fall of evening the king his measures took—
The queen thereto assenting— that with some better luck

The Hunnish knights might venture. Full twenty thousand men
Were seen before him standing: to battle must they, then.

2084

Thereon with furious onslaught the strangers were attack'd.
And Dankwart, Hagen's brother, a man right swift to act,
Sprang from his lords, the foemen before the door to rout;—
It seem'd that he must perish, but safely gat he out.

2085

The deadly struggle lasted till stay'd it was by night.
As well became good heroes, the guests maintain'd the fight
Against the men of Etzel one whole long summer day.
And ah, what gallant warriors about them dying lay!

2086

'Twas at the summer solstice this slaughter great befell,
Whereby the Dame Kriemhilda avenged her heart-ache well
Upon her nearest kinsfolk and many another wight.
From that time royal Etzel knew nevermore delight.

2087

The day for them was ended in great anxiety.
It seem'd to them 'twere better a speedy death to die,
Than linger there, awaiting some dread, unheard-of pain.
Therefore the haughty warriors to beg a truce were fain.

2088

The king, by word, besought they to come unto them there.
These heroes, blood-bespatter'd and soil'd with armour-wear,
From out the palace follow'd the noble kings all three;
They knew not to what hearer to plead their misery.

2089

Both Etzel and Kriemhilda came thither them before.
The land was their possession: their host grew more and more.
The king spake to the strangers: "Say, what will ye of me?
A truce ye would be granted? Such thing can hardly be

2090

"After such insult grievous as ye on me have cast,
(Nor shall ye profit by it if life for me should last)
My child, that ye have slain me, and many of my kin.
Peace and atonement, surely, ye cannot hope to win!"

2091

Whereto made answer Gunther: "By dire need we were led.
My people all were lying before thy heroes dead
Within the hostel yonder: what pretext did I lend?
To thee in good faith came I, I thought thou wert my friend."

2092

Then Giselher, the youngest of the Burgundian three:
"Ye chiefs," cried he, "of Etzel, who living yet may be,
How have I wrong'd ye, warriors? In what am I to blame?
Unto this country riding in kindly mood I came."

2093

They answer'd: "Every city throughout the land with woe
Is fill'd through this thy kindness. Ay, glad were we, I trow,
If thou hadst ne'er come hither from Worms beyond the Rhine.
The country thou hast orphan'd, with brothers twain of thine."

2094

Thereon, in wrathful humour, Gunther the warrior spake:
"If of this bitter hatred an ending ye would make
With us, unhappy strangers, 'twere better for us both!
'Tis for no fault on our part what Etzel to us doth."

2095

Then to the guests the host said: "Your troubles and my own
Are nowise to be liken'd. The burden on me thrown
Of shame and loss together which I have had to bear;—
For this not one among you hence with his life shall fare."

2096

Thereon the stalwart Gernot made answer to the king:
"So then may God incline you to do a friendly thing!
An ye must slay us strangers, then let us come to you
From here unto the open. Thus honour bids you do.

2097

"Whate'er to us may happen, be it done out of hand!
So many whole men have ye who us will dare withstand,
That none of us, strife-weary, alive they'll let away.
For how long are we warriors in this distress to stay?"

2098

The warriors of Etzel would have agreed thereto
That they outside the palace be granted leave to go.
But when Kriemhilda heard it, sorely aggrieved was she.
Then for the outcast strangers no hope of peace could be.

2099

“Nay, nay, ye Hunnish warriors, the thing ye have in thought—
In good faith I advise ye— see that ye do it not.
These murder-wreaking fellows let not without the hall,
Else shall right deadly sorrows upon your kinsmen fall.

2100

“Though not another living save Uté’s sons there were—
These same, my noble brothers— and they but to the air
Came out to cool their hauberks, your hope were all forlorn;—
More valiant warriors never into this world were born.”

2101

Then Giselher, the youngest, said: “Fairest sister mine,
Right ill I did to trust you, when from beyond the Rhine
Unto this land thou bad’st me into this direful strait.
How have I from the Hunsfolk deserved this cruel fate?

2102

“To thee I e’er was faithful, I never did thee hurt.
And on the understanding I hither rode to court
That thou, most noble sister, wert well-disposed to me.
Be merciful towards us: not elsewise can it be!”

2103

“I cannot show you mercy; unmerciful am I.
For me hath Tronian Hagen wrought so much misery
It may not be atoned for as long as I have life.
Ye all must pay the forfeit;” so answer’d Etzel’s wife.

2104

“Yet will ye Hagen only to me as hostage give,
I will not say for certain I may not let you live—
Seeing ye are my brothers and of one mother bred;—
Then with these chiefs assembled I may of pardon rede.”

2105

“Now God in Heaven forefend it!” Gernot in answer said:
“Were there a thousand of us, we sooner all were dead—
Though of thy kith and kindred— ere we gave up to thee
A single man as hostage: nay, that can never be.”

2106

“Then are we doom’d to perish!” made answer Giselher;
“Yet no one shall deprive us of any knightly gear.
Here, as before, abide we, would any us assail,
For ne’er to any comrade did I in fealty fail.”

2107

Then spake the gallant Dankwart (by him ’twas meetly done):
“In sooth my brother Hagen standeth not yet alone!
They who a truce deny us may yet have cause to rue;
Of that we’ll make you certain— take ye my word as true!”

2108

The queen spake to her warriors: “Ye men of courage high,
Go closer to the stairway, avenge mine injury!
Then will I be your debtor, as I by all means should.
I would requite on Hagen his overweening mood.

2109

“Let no man leave the palace, I charge ye above all;
I will, at the four corners, have fire set to the hall:
So all the wrongs I’ve suffer’d right well avenged shall be.”
The warriors of Etzel were ready speedily.

2110

Those that without were standing they drave the hall within
By smiting and by shooting; and fearful was the din.
Yet never would the princes their faithful men forsake;
Their fealty to each other could neither of them break.

2111

Then Etzel’s wife gave bidding to set alight the hall.
And so with fire were tortured those warriors’ bodies all.
Caught by the wind, the palace was presently aflame;
I ween that people never to such dire anguish came.

2112

“Oh, woe upon this horror!” cried many a one inside:
“For us it had been better had we in battle died.
May God have pity on us! lost evermore are we!
On us the queen her anger now wreaks infernally.”

2113

Quoth one within the palace: “Needs must we all lie dead!
What profits us the greeting that from the king we had?
The burning heat so sorely with thirst doth torture me,
I trow that in this torment my life will quickly flee.”

2114

Then Hagen spake, of Tronjé: “Ye noble knights and good,
Whoe’er by thirst is troubled may quench it here with blood.
In heat like this ’tis better than wine of any kind,
And at this time, moreover, no better may ye find.”

2115

So went one of the warriors to where a corpse he found:
He knelt to where the wound was, his helmet he unbound,
And then he fell to drinking the oozing stream of blood;
Unused as he was to it, he thought it passing good.

2116

“Requite thee God, Sir Hagen,” that man so weary spake,
“Seeing that thou hast taught me so well my thirst to slake!
A better wine right seldom hath been pour’d out for me.
Live I for some while longer, I’ll aye be bound to thee.”

2117

The rest being told about it, and how he found it good,
Then were there many others who also drank the blood.
Thereby each one among them began to gain new life—
In dear ones it was paid for by many a goodly wife.

2118

Within the hall about them the sparks fell thick around,
Upon their shields they caught them and turn'd them to the ground.
The fire and smoke together distress'd them terribly.
I trow that heroes never felt greater misery.

2119

Then Tronian Hagen shouted: "Stand closer to the wall!
Let not the burning embers upon your helm-bands fall,
But in the blood more deeply trample them with your feet:
This feast the queen hath made us is but a sorry treat!"

2120

In such distressful doings the night to ending wore,
And still the gallant minstrel kept watch the house before
With Hagen his companion; upon their shields they leant,
From Etzel's folk awaiting some further detriment.

2121

Then spake the fiddle-player: "Now go we to the hall:
So shall the Huns imagine that each of us and all
Have perish'd in this torture that hath on us been done;
Yet shall they see us meet them, in battle, everyone."

2122

Then Giselher, the youngest of the Burgundians, spake:
"A cool wind is arising, I trow the day will break.
Now grant us, God of Heaven, on better times to fall!
For us my sister Kriemhild hath made ill festival."

2123

Then spake there yet another: “The dawning I can see;
And since for us naught better is ever like to be,
Do on your armour, heroes; see to your safety all;—
King Etzel’s wife, I doubt not, will quickly on us fall.”

2124

The host might well imagine that all the guests were slain
By dint of all their labours, or by the fiery pain;
Yet still of them were living six hundred gallant wights,
Than whom no king whatever had any better knights.

2125

They who the strangers guarded had fail’d not to espy
That still the guests were living, in spite of injury
And pains that had befallen the lords and liegemen too;
Quite sound they saw them pacing the chamber to and fro.

2126

’Twas told unto Kriemhilda that they were safe and well.
Whereto the queen made answer: “It ne’er were possible
That through the fiery torment any of them have stay’d!
I’d rather take for granted that all of them lie dead.”

2127

The princes and their liegemen were fain enough to live,
Had anyone been willing mercy to them to give.
None could they find of any within the Hunnish land!
So to avenge their dying they sought with willing hand.

2128

Towards the dawn of morning, they had, for greeting fair,
A dire assault of battle: in straits the heroes were.
Though thickly all amongst them stout javelins were thrown,
The brave and noble warriors like true knights held their own.

2129

The zeal of Etzel's people was quicken'd by desire,
That they from Queen Kriemhilda might earn the promised hire;
Moreover they were eager to do the king's command.
And so no few among them found speedy death at hand.

2130

Of promising and giving might wondrous tales be told.
She bade her folk on bucklers to bring the ruddy gold;
She gave to all who craved it and would accept her fee.
Ay! ne'er was greater guerdon spent for an enemy.

2131

A mighty force of warriors came in their panoply.
To them cried gallant Volker: "Here waiting still are we!
I ne'er saw knights more gladly go forth to face the foe
Than these who the king's bounty have taken, for our woe."

2132

Then many of them shouted: "Come nigh, ye heroes, pray,
That we may have our ending— ay, come without delay!
Here none there are remaining but have been doom'd to die!"
With shafts one saw their bucklers all bristling speedily.

2133

What have I more to tell you? A good twelve hundred men
Made onset sore upon them, again and yet again.
The strangers cool’d their fury by wounding many a one—
No truce could be between them; one saw the life blood run

From wounds of deadly deepness; and many were there slain;
And every man among them one heard for friends complain.
The mighty king and noble lost all his bravest there,
For whom their loving kinsfolk sore sorrow had to bear.

Adventure XXXVII

How the Margrave Rüdeger Was Slain

2135

The strangers, until morning, right gallantly had done.
By then Gotlinda's husband unto the court had gone,
And, looking round on all sides, he saw such horrors there
As moved to inward weeping true-hearted Rüdeger.

2136

"Woe's me," then said the warrior, "that e'er I saw the day!
To think that none availeth this misery to stay!
Though peace would I make gladly, the king will ne'er agree,
For more and more he dwelleth upon his injury."

2137

Good Rüdeger inquiring straightway to Dietrich sent,
If they might make between them the noble king relent.

But he of Bern made answer: “Who could avail thereto?
King Etzel wills that no one should come betwixt the two.”

2138

Now by a Hunnish warrior Sir Rüdeger was seen
With eyes bedimm’d with weeping, as they for long had been.
Unto the queen then spake he: “Now look how standeth he—
The man who hath with Etzel the most authority,

2139

“And who hath at his service the people and the land.
How many a castle is there in Rüdeger’s command,
Of which, through the king’s bounty, so many he may own!
Yet he throughout this struggle no worthy stroke hath done.

2140

“Methinks he little recketh if things go well or ill,
As long as he hath all things according to his will.
’Tis said that he is braver than other men mote be:
But that, in all this trouble, hath been full hard to see.”

2141

The warrior true-hearted, with downcast mood and grim,
Gave heed unto the speaker. The hero look’d on him,
And thought: “This shalt thou pay for! Thou say’st I am afraid?
Thou hast at court thy story somewhat too loudly said.”

2142

His fists to clench began he, and at him straight he ran,
And smote to such good purpose upon that Hunnish man
That lifeless on the instant him at his feet he laid.
But thus King Etzel's troubles were all the greater made.

2143

"Away with thee, base scoundrel!" thereon said Rüdeger;
"Of trouble and of sorrow I have enough to bear!
If I refrain from fighting, why tauntest me for that?
In sooth I have good reason to bear the strangers hate,

2144

"And all that strength avail'd me I had against them wrought,
Were't not that I the warriors myself have hither brought.
'Twas I, in sooth, who led them into my master's land:
I cannot raise against them, therefore, my luckless hand."

2145

Then answer to the margrave the great King Etzel made:
"O Rüdeger most noble, how hast thou lent us aid!
So many dead already we in the land must own,
No more of them were needed! much evil hast thou done."

2146

The noble knight made answer: "The fellow made me wroth
By casting up against me the wealth and honour both
That by thy hands so freely have been bestow'd on me:
The liar got his guerdon a whit unluckily."

2147

Now came the queen unto them, who eke had plainly seen
What, through the hero's anger, the Hun's reward had been.
Beyond all bounds complain'd she; tears from her eyes she shed.
To Rüdeger thus spake she: "How have we merited

2148

"That you the king's misfortune and mine make all the more?
At all times, noble Rüdeger, you promised heretofore
That you would in our service risk honour and eke life.
I've heard the knights award you the meed in many a strife.

2149

"The goodwill that you pledged me to you I will recall
When me you urged on Etzel, O knight excelling all,
To wit, that you would serve me till one of us was dead;
And ne'er had I, poor woman, thereof such desperate need.

2150

"In that thou speak'st not falsely; I pledged thee, noble dame,
That I for thee would venture my life and my fair fame.
To lose my soul, however, that sware I not at all:
I brought these high-born princes unto this festival!"

2151

"O Rüdeger," she answer'd, "thy steadfast loyalty
And eke thine oath forget not, that thou mine injury
Wouldst cease not to avenge me, and all my trouble sore."
Then said to her the margrave: "I ne'er have fail'd before."

2152

Then likewise mighty Etzel to supplicate began,
And on their knees before him they two besought the man.
Then seem'd the noble margrave sorely discomfited.
The ever faithful warrior right sorrowfully said:

2153

"Now God have pity on me, that I have lived for this!
Henceforward all mine honour I must for aye dismiss—
My truth and noble breeding that erst from God I got!
Woe on me, God in Heaven, that death hath saved me not!

2154

"Whichever side I part from to take the other one,
I shall have acted basely and grievous ill have done;
But if from both I sever, on all sides blame I have:
May He vouchsafe to guide me Who life unto me gave."

2155

Yet still they urged him straitly, the king and eke his wife.
Thence came it many a warrior ere long must lose his life
By Rüdeger's achieving; till eke that hero fell.
Now of his direful doing I must the story tell.

2156

He knew how this must evil and fearful sorrow bring,
And liefer would he therefore denial to the king,
And eke the queen, have given: full sorely fear'd he that
If e'er a guest he slaughter'd, the world would bear him hate.

2157

Unto the king then spake he— that man of spirit bold:
“Lord king, take back whatever from thee I have and hold,
Both land and burghs: with neither will I have aught to do,
But on my feet departing, will into exile go.”

2158

Then spake the royal Etzel: “Who then will succour me?
The land as well as castles all will I give to thee,
If thou upon my foemen avenge me, Rüdeger.
Thou’lt be a mighty sovran, of Etzel nigh the peer.”

2159

But Rüdeger made answer: “How could I this essay?
At home within my dwelling I bade them come and stay;
Of drink and meat I offer’d to them in kindly wise,
And gave them gifts: how can I now death for them devise?

2160

“The folk belike are thinking that I am cowardly!
My services in nothing to them did I deny—
Or to the noble princes, or any of their men—
That we are knit in friendship repenteth me amain.

2161

“I gave away my daughter to Giselher the thane,
In all the world she could not have look’d for better gain
In honour or good breeding, in truth or worldly gear;
I ne’er saw prince so youthful in virtuous mind his peer.”

2162

But yet again spake Kriemhild: “Right noble Rüdeger,
Now let our grievous trouble for both your pity stir,
For me and the king also; and bear ye well in mind
That never host was fated such baleful guests to find.”

2163

Then to the noble lady the margrave answer made:
“To-day, with life, must ransom by Rüdeger be paid
For what to me of kindness thou and my lord have shown:
For that cause I must perish— and it must now be done.

2164

“This very day, well know I, my castles and my land
Must, ownerless, fall to you, through what ye now command.
My wife and child commend I unto your gracious care,
And eke the hapless people that at Bechlaren are.”

2165

“Now Rüdeger, God bless thee!” the king in answer said;
He and the queen together exceeding glad were made:
“Right well unto thy people our care we both will give,
Though if good luck be with me I trust thou yet mayst live.”

2166

And so upon the venture body and soul he cast;
Whereon the wife of Etzel began to weep at last.
Said he: “What I have promised I must to you fulfil;—
Woe for my friends, whose foeman I am against my will.”

2167

Then from the king one saw him depart in mournful mood.
And to his warriors turning, who close beside him stood,
He spake: “To don your armour ’tis time, my liegemen all,
On yonder brave Burgundians, alas! I needs must fall.”

2168

They bade their folk then hasten to where their arms were found—
Haply it were a helmet, or else a buckler round—
Whatever it was they wanted, their servants brought the same
Ere long the baleful tidings to the proud exiles came.

2169

So Rüdeger in armour with men five hundred went,
Besides a dozen warriors who help unto him lent.
These would the meed of valour win in the stormy fray;—
They had but little warning that death so near them lay.

2170

Then Rüdeger in helmet one saw march on before;
Keen-edged were all the weapons the margrave’s liegemen bore
And broad the shining bucklers upon their arms as well.
’Twas all seen by the fiddler: sore ruth upon him fell.

2171

Young Giselher beheld, too, the father of his bride
With fast-bound helmet marching. That this could aught betide
Save what was good and friendly, how could he then forbode.
The noble prince was therefore exceeding glad of mood.

2172

“Now suchlike friends be welcome,” said Giselher the thane,
“Which we upon our journey have had the luck to gain.
Of my betrothéd lady we’ll profit here right well:
I’m glad, upon my honour, this plighting e’er befell.”

2173

“I know not what doth cheer you,” the minstrel answer made:
“When saw you e’er for friendship so many knights array’d,
With fasten’d helmets marching, and bearing sword in hand?
By us will Rüdeger pay for his castles and his land.”

2174

E’en as the fiddle-player of speaking made an end,
One saw the noble Rüdeger before the palace wend.
His goodly shield he lower’d and set before his feet:
He could not offer service, his friends he might not greet.

2175

Then cried the noble margrave to those within the hall:
“Be on your guard, I warn you, ye valiant Niblungs all!
Ye should have had my succour, now must ye ransom me;
Once were we friends; now will I be from the troth-pledge free.”

2176

They shudder’d at these tidings, those sorely troubled men;
For them but little comfort there was therefrom to gain,
Since he would fight against them whom they had held so dear!
From foes they had already had mickle ills to bear.

2177

“Now grant it, God in Heaven,” the warrior Gunther said;
“That you will let your pity be movéd to our aid,
And that abounding honour which hope unto us gave;
Much liefer would I trust you thus never to behave.”

2178

“I can in nowise help it,” the brave man said thereto;
“In battle I must meet you, since so I swore to do.
Now guard yourselves, bold heroes, as ye your lives hold dear:
From me the wife of Etzel would no refusal hear.”

2179

“Too late dost thou forswear us,” the great king answer made;
“Thou, Rüdeger most noble, by God shalt be repaid
For all the love and fealty that thou to us hast shown—
If thou wilt in thy kindness still to the end go on.

2180

“And we’ll be aye beholden, for all that thou didst give,
Myself and eke my kinsfolk, if thou’lt but let us live;
Those precious gifts thou gavest, what time, in good faith, here
To Etzel’s land thou ledst us: think of it, Rüdeger!”

2181

“How gladly would I do it,” said Rüdeger the thane;
“As willingly at this time as ever I was fain
My gifts in full abundance upon you to bestow;
No blame should I thereover e’er need to undergo.”

2182

“Then have thy way,” said Gernot, “O noble Rüdeger!
For never yet to strangers a welcome kindlier
By any host was bidden than thou to us didst give:
Of that thou hast the profit if we should longer live.”

2183

“Would God, most noble Gernot,” said Rüdeger again,
“That ye were back in Rhineland, and I myself were slain
With some degree of honour— since I with you must fight!
From friends have heroes never suffer’d such foul despite.”

2184

“Now God reward thee, Rüdeger,” spake Gernot in reply,
“For those rich gifts thou gavest: I grieve that thou shouldst die.
If with thee there must perish a mind so virtuous too;—
Here carry I the weapon thou gavest me, hero true!

2185

“And never hath it fail’d me in all this struggle dread,
And many a knight hath fallen, beneath its edges, dead.
Strong is it and well-temper’d, a good and handsome blade;
I ween a gift so worthy by knight will ne’er be made.

2186

“And should we not persuade thee to come unto our side,
If friends of mine thou slayest who still within abide,
With thine own sword I’ll smite thee and take away thy life:
Thee, Rüdeger, I pity, and eke thy noble wife.”

2187

“Now would to God, Sir Gernot, that thus it e’en might be,
That all your will and purpose might be fulfill’d on me,
Whereby your kinsmen longer might yet enjoy their life!
Ay! gladly would I trust you with daughter and with wife.”

2188

Then spake the young Burgundian, the child of Uté fair:
“Why do you thus, Sir Rüdeger? All these who with me are
To you are well-disposéd; an evil course you take;
Your daughter fair too early a widow you will make.

2189

“If you and your retainers in strife contend with me,
How grievously unfriendly will that appear to be!
In that beyond all others my faith in you I laid—
In such wise that your daughter my wife I would have made.”

2190

“Unto your pledge be faithful, O prince of noble race,”
Said Rüdeger, “if haply God send you from this place;
Suffer not that the maiden for me atonement make;
Be pitiful towards her, for your own virtue’s sake.”

2191

“That would I do right gladly,” young Giselher replied:
“But these my high-born kinsmen who still are here inside,
If they at your hands perish, the friendship firmly knit
With you and eke your daughter by me must be acquit.”

2192

“Then God have mercy on us!” the gallant warrior spake.
Thereon they raised their bucklers, as though a way to make,
By force, unto the strangers within Kriemhilda’s hall.
Then loudly from the stairway was Hagen heard to call:

2193

“Now for a while yet tarry, most noble Rüdeger;”
Such were the words of Hagen: “we would again confer—
Myself and eke my masters— forced by necessity:
How will it profit Etzel if we poor exiles die?

2194

“I am in grievous trouble,” yet Hagen said, “the shield
That Lady Gotelinda gave me as mine to wield,
The Huns for me have batter’d and hack’d it out of hand:
In friendliness I brought it unto King Etzel’s land.

2195

“If so be God in heaven would grant me of His grace
To hold as good a buckler once more before my face,
As that which thou dost handle, right noble Rüdeger,
No longer in the combat need I a hauberk wear.”

2196

“Right gladly would I serve thee as touching this my shield,
Durst I make thee the offer in spite of Dame Kriemhild.
But do thou take it, Hagen, and bear it on thine hand;
Ay! what if thou shouldst bring it to thy Burgundian land!”

2197

When he to give the buckler so readily agreed,
Then were there eyes in plenty that with hot tears were red.
Of gifts it was the latest that unto warrior e'er
By Rüdeger was given, the lord of Bechelar.

2198

How fierce soe'er was Hagen, however hard in mood,
Yet stirr'd that gift his pity, with which the warrior good,
So nigh to his last moments, had freely him endow'd;
And with him fell to weeping full many a chieftain proud.

2199

"Now God in Heaven reward thee, most noble Rüdeger;
The like of thee will never be met with anywhere,
Who unto exiled warriors so royally dost give:
God grant that all thy virtue for evermore may live."

2200

"Woe's me for this betiding!" said Hagen yet again:
"We've had to bear already so great a load of pain,
Must we with friends be striving? Now God our refuge be!"
Then made the margrave answer: "It grieves me bitterly."

2201

"Your gift I'll now requite you, most noble Rüdeger—
Howe'er these high-born warriors themselves towards you bear—
To wit that here in battle you ne'er shall feel my hand,
Though all by you should perish of the Burgundian land."

2202

In courtly wise he bent him, the worthy Rüdeger;
On all sides they were weeping that such heart-sorrows were
By no one to be mended:— a dread necessity!
The father of all virtues in Rüdeger would die.

2203

Then from the house-door speaking the minstrel Volker said:
“Since my companion Hagen a truce with you has made,
To you I also promise safe-conduct from my hand;
For well have you deserved it since came we to the land.

2204

“You must, most noble margrave, be messenger of mine.
These ruddy golden armlets gave me the margravine,
That I should surely wear them here at the revelry:
You must yourself behold them and witness bear for me.”

2205

“Would God in Heaven allow it,” then answer’d Rüdeger,
“The margravine should give you still more of such to wear!
Unto my wife your message right gladly will I give—
Thereof be ye not doubtful— if I to see her live.”

2206

And even whilst he promised, his buckler Rüdeger
Raised: and in mood of madness no longer could forbear,
But rush’d upon the strangers— a very warrior now;
And fast the mighty margrave dealt round him many a blow.

2207

Aloof together standing Volker and Hagen stay'd,
According to the promise the warriors twain had made.
Yet more, as gallant, found he waiting beside the door;
Whence Rüdeger the battle began with trouble sore.

2208

With murderous intention he was allow'd therein
By Gunther and by Gernot, who heroes should have been.
But Giselher aside stood, so great his sorrows were;—
For life he hoped, and therefore avoided Rüdeger.

2209

Anon the margrave's liegemen rush'd forth upon the foe;
Like warriors true one saw them after their leader go;
They bore their keen-edged weapons ready in hand to wield,
And many a helm they shatter'd and many a noble shield.

2210

Many the swift strokes also the weary warriors spent
On him of Bechelaren, that straight and surely went
Right through the bright mail armour, nigh to the very life;
And glorious deeds of daring achieved they in that strife.

2211

When Rüdeger's noble comrades within had made their way,
Volker along with Hagen rush'd swiftly to the fray:
They gave to no one quarter, save to that single man.
The blood through helmets, shatter'd by hands of either, ran.

2212

How grimly in that chamber the clang of swords uprose,
And many of the shield-plates sprang off beneath their blows;
The jewels hack'd from off them fell on the bloody floor.
In such grim humour fought they as might be never more.

2213

The lord of Bechelaren went up and down the hall,
As one who might in battle by strength accomplish all.
By Rüdeger's achievements that day it might be told
He was indeed a warrior, right praiseworthy and bold.

2214

Here also stood those warriors Gunther and Gernot too,
Who in the stress of battle full many a hero slew;
And Giselher and Dankwart— the twain reck'd not for aught—
And so full many a warrior unto his last day brought.

2215

Well Rüdeger bore witness that he was strong enow,
And brave, with proven armour; what heroes laid he low!
'Twas seen by a Burgundian: wrath strove within him deep.
On Rüdeger the noble then death began to creep.

2216

Stout Gernot 'twas, who loudly the hero challenged then.
He cried unto the margrave: "Wilt thou of all my men
Not one unscathéd leave me, most noble Rüdeger?
It moves me beyond measure; the sight I cannot bear.

2217

“Now lo! the gift you gave me to your own ruin tends,
Since you have taken from me so many of my friends.
Now turn towards me hither, thou noble, gallant man,
I’ll make your gift avail me with all the skill I can.”

2218

Or ever that the margrave had won his way to him,
Mail coats that erst were shining must needs be spoilt and dim.
Then either at the other, thirsting for honour, ran;
And each to guard his body from deadly wounds began.

2219

Yet smote their swords so keenly, against them all was vain.
And then was Gernot stricken by Rüdeger the thane
Athwart his flint-like helmet, till downward flow’d the blood;
All in a trice repaid him that gallant knight and good.

2220

Aloft the gift of Rüdeger in hand he swung: and though
His own wound, too, was deadly, he dealt on him a blow
Right through his stalwart buckler unto his helmet’s slot.
The fair Gotlinda’s husband fell dead upon the spot.

2221

In sooth a gift so precious was worse requited ne’er;
The two fell slain together, Gernot and Rüdeger,
Like-fated in the combat, each by the other’s stroke.
When this great loss to Hagen was known, his wrath outbroke.

2222

Thus spake the Tronian hero: “In evil plight are we!
In these two have we suffer’d so great an injury
As ne’er can be o’ertided by peoples or by lands;
Now hold we Rüdeger’s chieftains as bail in luckless hands.”

2223

“Woe on me for my brother, who here in death doth lie!
How cometh, every moment, some tale of misery!
And I must mourn for ever the noble Rüdeger:
The loss to me is double, and grievous ’tis to bear.”

2224

So Giselher, beholding his lady’s father dead:—
And they who still were living a grievous reckoning paid,
Death fell upon them sorely seeking to take his own;
Of them from Bechelaren there lived ere long not one.

2225

Now Giselher and Gunther and with them Hagen too,
Dankwart and Volker also— all warriors good and true—
Came forward all together, to where the twain were laid:
Then was there by the heroes great lamentation made.

2226

“Death sorely us despoileth,” spake the lad Giselher:
“But make an end of weeping, and get we to the air
To cool our mail-clad bodies, worn as we are with strife;
Here God, I ween, will grant us but scanty spell of life.”

2227

Some sitting, others leaning, one saw there many a thane.
They once again were idle: and round about them, slain,
Lay Rüdeger's companions. The uproar all was laid.
So long the silence lasted, that Etzel grew afraid.

2228

"Woe on me for such service!" then spake the royal wife:
"These folk are not so trusty that on our foeman's life
Shall vengeance due be taken by Rüdeger's command:
He means to take them safely back to Burgundian land.

2229

"What boots it us, King Etzel, that we with him and his
Have shared whate'er he wanted? The chief hath done amiss:
He who should wreak our vengeance, doth wish a peace to gain."
Thereunto answer'd Volker, the all-accomplish'd thane:

2230

"Not so, alas! the story, most noble queen, I rede;
And, dare I charge with falsehood a dame so nobly bred,
Thee, devilishly lying of Rüdeger, I heard;
For he and his companions from peace have sorely err'd.

2231

"That which the king commanded he did so zealously,
That he and all his people dead in yon chamber lie.
Now cast about, Kriemhilda, on errands whom to send!
For Rüdeger the hero hath served thee to the end.

2232

“And wilt thou not believe me, see it thou shalt anon!”
And to her heartfelt sorrow so was it straightway done:
They bore the mangled hero before the king and queen.
The thanes of Etzel never so sad a sight had seen.

2233

When they beheld the margrave thus borne before them dead,
No penman could have written, nor elsewise could be said,
How manifold the mourning of women and of men,
Who one and all bore witness unto their heart-felt pain.

2234

The sorrowing of Etzel so great was, that the noise
Was even as a lion’s— the mighty king his voice
So lifted in his anguish: eke mourn’d his wife no less:
Good Rüdeger bewail’d they with utmost bitterness.

Adventure XXXVIII

How Lord Dietrich's Warriors All Were Slain

2235

So great a sound of mourning on every side was heard,
From palace walls and turrets the echoes all were stirr'd.
By one of Dietrich's liegemen of Bern 'twas heard as well;
How swiftly then he started the direful news to tell.

2236

Unto the prince then spake he: "Hearken, my Lord Dietrich,
As long as I've been living, ne'er have I heard the like
Of such unearthly wailing as I have heard but now:
Some harm unto King Etzel himself hath come, I trow.

2237

"How else would all the people be in distress so dread?
The king, or may be Kriemhild, must one of them be dead—

Slain by those daring strangers, who bore them enmity:
And many goodly warriors are wailing bitterly.”

2238

Then spake of Bern the hero: “My trusty lieges dear,
Now be ye not too hasty! what hath befallen here
Was wrought by homeless warriors, by dire distresses driven;
And let them use the freedom that I to them have given.”

2239

Then spake the gallant Wolfhart: “I will myself be gone
And ask about the matter, what ’tis that they have done.
And then I will report it to you, my master dear,
When yonder I discover what mean the cries we hear.”

2240

Thereon Lord Dietrich answer’d: “When one has wrath to face,
Full oft, at ill-timed questions, ’tis found to be the case
That warriors too swiftly are apt offence to take:
In truth I will not, Wolfhart, that you the quest should make.”

2241

Thereon he summon’d Helfrich right speedily to go;
And from the men of Etzel he bade him get to know—
Or even from the strangers— what doings there had been;
For ne’er such great lamenting of people was there seen.

2242

The envoy made inquiry: “What hath there here been done?”
Then answer’d one among them: “Now is for ever gone
All that we had of pleasure in this Hungarian land!—
Here Rüdeger lies slaughter’d by the Burgundians’ hand.

2243

“Of those who enter’d with him not one came out again.”
Then verily to Helfrich ne’er could be greater pain.
In sooth he ne’er had carried news so unwillingly:
The messenger to Dietrich went weeping bitterly.

2244

“What hast thou,” then said Dietrich, “for us discoveréd?
And wherefore, warrior Helfrich, thy tears so freely shed?”
“Good cause have I for weeping,” answer’d the noble thane:
“Good Rüdeger is lying by the Burgundians slain.”

2245

The knight of Bern made answer: “God grant that may not be!
That were a fearful vengeance, and foul fiend’s pleasantry:
Howe’er were such requital deserved by Rüdeger?
For well am I persuaded he held the strangers dear.”

2246

Thereto made Wolfhart answer: “If they this deed have done
It verily shall cost them the life of everyone!
To us ’twould be disgraceful if this we were to stand,
For Rüdeger has served us right often with his hand.”

2247

But Amelung's chieftain bade them better inform'd to be.
Meanwhile within his window right mournfully sat he;
And Hildebrand enjoin'd he unto the guests to go,
That he whate'er had happen'd from them might surely know.

2248

That warrior bold in battle, the ancient Hildebrand,
Nor shield nor any weapon took with him in his hand;
He to the guests was going in courtesy alone.
But sore were the upbraidings made by his sister's son.

2249

For spake the fiery Wolfhart: "Wilt thou so simply go?
Then certes some misusage thou wilt not fail to know!
So, full of grief and trouble, thou needs must homeward fare:
But if thou takest thy weapons they each will have a care."

2250

Then did the ancient gird him e'en as the stripling bade.
But lo! before he knew it, in fighting gear array'd,
Were standing Dietrich's warriors, with drawn sword everyone.
This thing the hero liked not, and gladly had forgone.

2251

He asked where they were going. "Along with you we'll fare!
Perchance Hagen of Tronjé so much the less may dare
With mocking speech to meet you— which well he knows to use."
When that he heard, the warrior no longer could refuse.

2252

The gallant Volker saw them in armour fully dight,
Those knights of Bern come marching, all Dietrich's men of might;
Their swords were girt upon them, they carried shield in hand.
Unto his lords he told it of the Burgundian land.

2253

Then spake the fiddle-player: "Yonder I see them go,
The followers of Dietrich— in semblance of a foe,
With weapons and in helmets: us mean they to withstand.
I trow for us poor exiles misfortune is at hand."

2254

E'en at the self-same moment came Hildebrand to him,
And at his feet his buckler he set upon its rim.
The followers of Gunther to question then he sought:
"Alas! what harm, good heroes, to you hath Rüdeger wrought?

2255

"Me hath my master Dietrich sent unto you to say:
'If any one among you hath by his hand this day
Laid low the noble margrave— as we are told by some—
An injury so grievous we ne'er could overcome.'"

2256

Then Hagen spake of Tronjé: "No lie the tidings are;
Though fain I were to grant you, for love of Rüdeger,
That they had lied who told you, and he were still in life:
He must be ever wept for by man and maid and wife."

2257

When all knew, of a surety, that Rüdeger was dead,
The warriors bewail'd him, as love and fealty bade.
From each of Dietrich's liegemen one saw the tears-drops fall
O'er chin and beard descending: sore was the grief of all.

2258

Then Siegestab outspeaking— the duke from Bern—said he:
"Forever now is ended the hospitality
That Rüdeger aye show'd us after our days of pain.
The Comfort of the exile lies by you heroes slain."

2259

Then from among the Amelungs, the warrior Wolfwin said:
"Were I this day before me to see my father dead,
Ne'er could I feel more sorrow than at this stricken life:
Alas! who now will comfort the worthy margrave's wife?"

2260

Thereon in mood of anger the thane Sir Wolfhart cried:
"Who on so many a foray shall now the warriors guide,
As heretofore the margrave hath times right often done?
Alas, most noble Rüdeger, that thou from us art gone!"

2261

There Helferich and Wolfbrand and Helmot also were,
With all their friends, bewailing the death of Rüdeger;
And Hildebrand for sobbing could ask no more of aught.
He spake: "Now do ye, warriors, that which my lord hath sought,

2262

“Give Rüdeger’s dead body to us from out the hall,
With whom, in very sorrow, our joys are ended all;
And let us now requite him for all that he hath done
For us, in faithful friendship, and many another one.

2263

“We also here are strangers, like the thane Rüdeger,
Why do ye keep us waiting? Let us his body bear
Away, to him our service e’en after death to give:
Far rather had we done it, whilst he were yet alive!”

2264

“No service is so worthy,” then the King Gunther spake,
“As that for a dead comrade a friend doth undertake,
And steadfast faith I call it, where’er the same I find.
Ye pay him honour rightly, to you he hath been kind.”

2265

“How long must we be pleading?” Wolfhart the warrior said:
“Since our best Consolation by you is stricken dead,
And we, alas! no longer the good thereof may have,
So let us take the chieftain and lay him in his grave.”

2266

Thereto made answer Volker: “He shall be given by none!
Come to the hall and take him, here where the thane, fordone,
With deadly wounds disfigured, lies in the bloody pool:
That were to do your duty to Rüdeger in full.”

2267

Thereon bold Wolfhart answer'd: "Sir Minstrel, God doth know
No need have ye to taunt us, ye've done us harm enow.
Durst I offend my master, you'd be the worse for this,
But we must pass it over, since strife forbidden us is."
2268

Then spake the fiddle-player: "Fear claims too much, I trow,
When all that is forbidden a man must needs forego;
By me that were not reckon'd a right good hero's mood!"
The speech of his companion seemed unto Hagen good.
2269

"That shall not serve your purpose," Wolfhart in answer spake:
"I'll so untune your fiddle that you a tale may take,
Along with you, when homewards unto the Rhine you ride;
I cannot brook with honour your overweening pride."
2270

Then spake the fiddle-player: "If thou a fiddlestring
Of mine untuneful makest, thy helmet's glittering
Must speedily be lessen'd and clouded by my hand,
Howe'er betide my riding to the Burgundian land."
2271

He would have sprung upon him, if he had not been stay'd
By Hildebrand his uncle, who hands upon him laid:
"In this thy senseless anger thou wouldst, I trow, go mad,
And so my master's favour might'st never more have had."
2272

“Let go the lion, master! fierce though he be of mood,
Comes he into my clutches,” said Volker, warrior good,
“E’en though a world of people he with his hands hath slain,
I’ll kill him, that the story he ne’er may tell again.”

2273

By this was sorely quicken’d the Berners’ angry mood;
And Wolfhart clutch’d his buckler, a ready knight and good:
E’en Hke a savage lion in front of them he rush’d,
Whilst following close behind him his friends the onset push’d.

2274

Yet though he sprang so swiftly, to reach the palace wall
He could not on the stairway old Hildebrand forestall,
Who would not that another first in the fight should be.
Their guerdon from the strangers they both got presently.

2275

Then quickly upon Hagen sprang Master Hildebrand:
The clashing of the sword-blades was heard on either hand;
Their wrath was sorely kindled, as presently was plain;
A fiery stream was scatter’d from off their weapons twain.

2276

Yet quickly were they sunder’d under the stress of fight:
The men of Bern so caused it, prevailing in their might.
Whereon away from Hagen betook him Hildebrand;
And needs must gallant Volker stout Wolfhart’s onset stand.

2277

He smote the fiddle-player upon his helmet good,
So bravely that the sword-edge unto the sidebands hew'd;
The fiddler bold repaid him with all his might and main,
And laid his blows on Wolfhart, until he reel'd again.

2278

They struck from the mail-armour of fiery sparks enow;
Their hate for one another was felt in every blow;
Then came the warrior Wolfwin of Bern the twain between:
Had he not been a hero that never could have been.

2279

The warrior Gunther also gave with unstinting hand
A welcome to the heroes far-famed of Amelung land;
And Giselher the lordly made helms that shone before,
On head of many a warrior, ruddy and wet with gore.

2280

And Dankwart, Hagen's brother, a fearsome man was he:
Whatever he, already, on Etzel's chivalry
In battle had accomplish'd, e'en as the wind was naught:
The son of the bold Aldrian now like a madman fought.

2281

Richart and Gerbart likewise, Helfrich and eke Wichart,
Who oftentimes in battle right well had play'd their part,
Now plainly show'd their prowess to Gunther's fighting men;
Wolfbrand in combat proudly was seen to bear him then,

2282

And like a madman raging fought ancient Hildebrand.
Full many a doughty warrior then fell by Wolfhart's hand,
Death-stricken by his sword-blows, into the pool of blood.
Thus Rüdeger avenged they, these gallant knights and good.

2283

Then fought the noble Siegstab as of his might was due;
Ha! and upon his foemen what goodly helmets too
Were shiver'd in the battle by Dietrich's sister's son;
He could not in the struggle e'er better work have done.

2284

Thereon the sturdy Volker, as soon as he beheld
How from the tough mail-armour the blood in streamlets well'd
At gallant Siegstab's sword-strokes, the hero's wrath arose;
Forward he sprang to meet him: and so his life to lose

2285

Upon the spot had Siegstab through that same fiddle-man;
Who forthwith of his cunning to give such proof began
That by his mighty weapon quick death must needs ensue.
Old Hildebrand avenged him, as of his strength was due.

2286

"Woe, for my lord belovéd!" cried Master Hildebrand,
"Who here in death is lying stricken by Volker's hand:
Henceforth this fiddle-player shall save himself no more!"
Bold Hildebrand was wrathful as ne'er he was before.

2287

Then smote he so at Volker, that far to either wall
The bands and clasps in pieces were strown about the hall,
From helm and eke from buckler of that same minstrel bold:
And so of sturdy Volker the ending there was told.

2288

The liegemen then of Dietrich came thronging to the rout;
They smote till from the hauberks the links flew far about,
And splinter'd weapons saw one as high in air they flew;
Hot flowing blood in streamlets from out the helms they drew.

2289

When Hagen, lord of Tronjé, saw Volker lying slain,
More grievous was his sorrow than all the other pain
That in this high foregathering he had for man or kin.
What vengeance for the hero did Hagen then begin!

2290

"It shall not long advantage the old man Hildebrand
That yonder lies my helpmate slain by the hero's hand—
The veriest good comrade that ever yet I had!"
He raised his shield, and forward he rush'd with hewing blade.

2291

Meanwhile the stalwart Helfrich had stricken Dankwart low.
To Giselher and Gunther grievous it was enow
When in the stress of battle they saw him fall beneath:
With his own hands already he had avenged his death.

2292

Now all this while did Wolfhart stride up and down again,
And with his sword unresting he hew'd at Gunther's men.
A third time he the journey had made along the hall,
And many were the warriors doom'd by his hand to fall.

2293

Then Giselher the lordly to Wolfhart loudly spake:
"Woe! that so fierce a foeman 'twas e'er my luck to make!
O noble knight and gallant, now turn thyself to me,
I'll do my best to end it: it may no longer be."

2294

To Giselher, in fighting, then Wolfhart turn'd him round,
And each upon the other made many a gaping wound:
With such a mighty onset against the king he dash'd,
The blood beneath his footsteps above his head was splash'd.

2295

With swift and deadly sword-strokes the son of Uté fair
Gave greeting unto Wolfhart, the gallant hero, there.
How strong the thane soever, he was not to be saved:
So young a king could never more boldly have behaved.

2296

He struck a blow at Wolfhart, cleaving the hauberk good,
And over him and downwards, gush'd from the wound the blood
Unto the death he wounded that man of Dietrich's own;
None but a very warrior to do the like had known.

2297

As soon as gallant Wolfhart was of the wound aware,
He let his shield slip downwards; but higher in the air
A weapon strong he wielded: it was a keen one too;
Wherewith through helm and hauberk the hero Giselher slew.

2298

So had they one another to cruel death fordone,
And then of Dietrich's lieges there lived but one alone.
When Hildebrand the ancient beheld how Wolfhart fell,
I trow, until his ending, such grief he ne'er could tell.

2299

The men-at-arms of Gunther were dead now everyone,
As likewise those of Dietrich; and Hildebrand had gone
Unto the place where Wolfhart was lying in the blood:
Within his arms he folded that warrior brave and good.

2300

Fain would he from the chamber have borne him bodily,
But he was all too weighty, he e'en must let him lie.
The dying man uplifted his eyes amid the blood,
And saw well that his kinsman would help him if he could.

2301

"My well-belovéd uncle," the dying one then said,
"At this time it avails not to give me any aid.
Now ware you well of Hagen! ay, take my words for good;
For in his heart he nurses an ever cruel mood.

2302

“If after death my kinsfolk for me should mourning be,
Unto my next and dearest I bid you say for me
That they for me must weep not: need for it is there none,
Here lie I slain in honour, by kingly hands fordone.

2303

“So throughly here, moreover, have I avenged my life,
That cause indeed for wailing hath many a good knight’s wife:
If anyone should ask you so may you answer plain,
A good five score are lying whom I myself have slain.”

2304

Meanwhile had Hagen likewise upon the minstrel thought,
Whom Hildebrand the valiant unto his end had brought.
Then spake he to the warrior: “My loss thou shalt requite,
For here thou hast bereft us of many a goodly knight.”

2305

He struck a blow at Hildebrand, such that one might have told
The hissing sound of Balmung, the sword that Hagen bold
From Siegfried’s self had taken when he that hero slew;
The blow the old man parried: ay! he was valiant too.

2306

The warrior of Dietrich against the Tronian knight
His weapon broad uplifted, that keenly too could smite.
To wound the man of Gunther yet might he not prevail.
Then once again smote Hagen through well-wrought coat of mail.

2307

Now when the old Sir Hildebrand was of the wound aware,
More evil yet he dreaded from Hagen's hand to bear.
His shield the man of Dietrich threw back behind his head,
And, desperately wounded, the chief from Hagen fled.

2308

Of all the knightly warriors remain'd there but a pair—
Save Gunther's self and Hagen none others living were.
Old Hildebrand all bleeding in flight had safety sought,
And when he came to Dietrich a woeful tale he brought.

2309

He saw his master sitting with visage woe-begone—
The prince was yet more sorry when he his tale had done;
Upon the bloody hauberk of Hildebrand look'd he,
And sought of him his tidings in all anxiety.

2310

"Now tell me, Master Hildebrand, why are ye in this state,
And reeking with your life-blood? or who hath done you that?
I ween that in the palace you with the guests have fought:
So strictly I forbade it that ye in nowise ought."

2311

Unto his lord he answer'd: "'Twas Hagen did it all!
He set on me and gave me this wound within the hall,
E'en as I from the warrior to turn myself began.
And hither from that devil barely with life I ran!"

2312

Then he of Bern made answer: “Ye are but served aright!
Seeing that ye had heard me swear friendship with the knight,
And then ye break the peace-pledge granted to him by me:
Would it not ever shame me your life should forfeit be.”

2313

“Now be ye not so wrathful, my good Lord Dietrich, pray!
On me and on my kinsfolk the loss too hard doth weigh.
We purposed from the palace to carry Rüdeger;
To grant it all unwilling King Gunther’s liegemen were.”

2314

“Now woe upon such tidings! is Rüdeger then dead?
This is the greatest sorrow that e’er I sufferéd.
The noble Gotelinda is child of aunt of mine.
Ay! woe for the poor orphans who at Bechlaren pine.”

2315

His death weigh’d sorely on him, with ruth and sorrow great.
He fell to bitter weeping; sad was the hero’s strait:
“Woe for my trusty helpmate who now is lost to me!
Ay! of King Etzel’s liegeman the like I ne’er shall see.

2316

“Now must ye, Master Hildebrand, tell me the story true.
Which of the warriors was it who him so foully slew?”
“That did the stalwart Gernot by strength of arm,” he said:
“By Rüdeger’s hand the hero is also lying dead.”

2317

To Hildebrand then spake he: “Now let my liegemen know
That they must straightway arm them, for thither will I go;
And bid them bring me hither my shirt of shining mail.
From the Burgundian heroes myself I’ll have the tale.”

2318

Then Hildebrand made answer: “Who shall now go with thee?
None others hast thou living but what thou here dost see;
I am thine only liegeman; the others all are dead.”
He shudder’d at these tidings— in sooth, there was good need,

2319

For never such great sorrow he in this world had known.
He spake: “And if my liegemen are truly dead and gone,
Then am I God-forsaken, I, Dietrich, wretched wight!
Erewhile a noble sovran and full of power and might.”

2320

“How could such thing have happen’d?” spake Dietrich once again,
“These far-renownéd heroes— that all of them are slain
By men with fighting weary, in sore necessity!
But for mine evil fortune, death still afar would be.

2321

“Seeing my doom avails not to ward from me this ill,
Now tell me, of the guest-folk are any living still?”
Then Master Hildebrand answer’d: “God knoweth, only twain—
Hagen to wit, and Gunther the noble king—remain.”

2322

“Dear Wolfhart, woe betide me! if thou from me art torn,
Too quickly may I rue me that ever I was born!
And Siegestab and Wolfwin, and none the less Wolfbrand.
Who now shall help my journey back to the Amelungs’ land?

2323

“Helfrich the ever gallant, and have they laid him low?
And Gerebart and Wichart— how weep for them enow?
Of all my joy and pleasure the ending is this day:
Fain would I die for sorrow— alas that no man may!”

Adventure XXXIX

How Gunther and Hagen and Kriemhilda Were Slain

2324

Then for himself Lord Dietrich sought out a suit to wear,
And Master Hildebrand help'd him to don his fighting gear.
So sore was the lamenting made by the stalwart man,
That all the house to echo with his loud voice began.

2325

But quickly he recover'd a fitting hero's mood,
And grimly was his armour donn'd by that warrior good.
A shield compact right firmly he carried in his hand;—
Then straightway forth he sallied with Master Hildebrand.

2326

Spake Hagen, lord of Tronjé: "I see there, drawing nigh,
The noble warrior Dietrich; for that great injury

That here hath him befallen, he will upon us set.
This day ’twill be discover’d who doth the honours get.

2327

“Ay! to himself Lord Dietrich of Bern doth think that ne’er
His like, so strong of body and terrible there were!
And should he for our doings a reckoning demand,”
So Hagen spake: “against him I dare right well to stand.”

2328

They heard the words of Hagen— Dietrich and Hildebrand.
He came to where the warriors had taken both their stand
Without the house, together, leaning against the hall.
His goodly shield had Dietrich upon its rim let fall.

2329

Then Dietrich spake in answer, grievously sorrowing:
“Why hast thou done in this wise, O Gunther, mighty king,
To me who am a stranger? to thee what had I done?
All comfort that was left me is now for ever gone.

2330

“With that great deed of vengeance ye were not yet content
When Rüdeger the hero to bloody death you sent:
Now have ye taken from me my liegemen everyone;—
Ah! never to your heroes would I such scathe have done.

2331

“Now of yourselves be mindful, and of your own distress,
The death of friends and kinsfolk, your toil and weariness;
Doth it not weigh upon you, good warriors, heavily?
Alas, the death of Rüdeger is bitterness to me!

2332

“In this world never happen’d such woe to anyone.
Ye took but ill account of my sorrow and your own;
By you of all its pleasures my life henceforth is shorn;
In truth I cannot ever my kinsfolk cease to mourn.”

2333

“In sooth,” then answer’d Hagen, “So guilty are we not;
For verily your heroes came marching to this spot
Well-arm’d, for some set purpose, in such large company:
To you methinks the story was not told truthfully.”

2334

“What else should I believe then? ’twas said by Hildebrand
That when my knights besought you— the men of Amelung land—
That you would give them Rüdeger from out the palace-hall,
Naught else but jibes you offer’d to these bold heroes all.”

2335

Then spake the king of Rhineland: “They did their wish avow
Hence Rüdeger to carry; that would I not allow,
To do despite to Etzel, and not to cross your men:
Till Wolfhart words unhandsome began to utter then.”

2336

Then answer'd him the hero of Bern, "So let it be!
Yet Gunther, noble sovran, now of thy courtesy
Repay me for the sorrow that of thy doing came,
And make, bold knight, atonement, that I confirm the same.

2337

"Give up thyself as hostage, thou and thy liegeman there;
Then I myself will guard ye with all my greatest care,
Lest any of the Hunfolk should do ye aught of ill;
In me thou shalt find nothing save faith and all goodwill."

2338

But Hagen spake in answer: "Now God in Heaven forfend
That any pair of warriors themselves to thee should bend,
Who arm'd as yet so stoutly here stand before thine eyes,
And still are all unfetter'd to face their enemies."

2339

"Beware, Gunther and Hagen," then Dietrich answer made,
"How ye refuse my offer! ye twain on me have laid
So sore a load of sorrow— on heart and spirit too;
If ye amends will make me, that may ye cheaply do.

2340

I give you my true promise, and pledge it with my hand,
That I myself will with you ride home unto your land;
I'll guide you in all honour, or will myself be slain,
And will, the while I serve you, forget my bitter pain."

2341

“Now think thereon no longer,” Hagen in answer bade,
“’Twere not a fitting story about us to be said,
That two such doughty warriors had bow’d to your demand:
One sees beside you standing no one save Hildebrand.”

2342

Then upspake Master Hildebrand: “Sir Hagen, God doth know—
Seeing that one hath offer’d to make a peace with you—
The hour is nigh when fitly the offer you might take:
The peace my lord proposes ’twere well for you to make.”

2343

“I’d sooner make atonement,” in answer Hagen said,
“Ere in such coward fashion from any place I fled
As thou hast done but lately, good Master Hildebrand!
Methought against a foeman thou couldst more boldly stand!”

2344

Old Hildebrand made answer: “Why taunt’st thou me therefor?
Who sat upon his buckler the Vaske-rock before,
While friends of his so many the Spanish Walther slew?
About thyself in plenty are things that one might shew.”

2345

Then spake the noble Dietrich: “It fits not heroes good
To rail at one another as any old wives would.
You, Hildebrand, forbid I to wrangle any more:
On me, a homeless warrior, are weighing troubles sore.

2346

“Come let us hear, Sir Hagen,” to him spake Dietrich then,
“What was it ye were saying, ye ready warriors twain,
When first ye saw me coming to you in armour dight?
Ye vow’d that ye against me would singly stand in fight.”

2347

“That no man will deny you,” thane Hagen made reply,
“And with some sturdy sword-strokes here fain am I to try—
Unless the blade of Niblung within my hand should break:
Wroth am I that you purpose us two in pledge to take.”

2348

When Dietrich thus had hearken’d to savage Hagen’s mood,
Quickly his shield uplifted that gallant thane and good.
How swiftly Hagen toward him down from the stairway sprang!
The goodly sword of Niblung loudly on Dietrich rang.

2349

Then well the noble Dietrich knew that the valiant man
Right ruthless was in humour. The lord of Bern began
Against this deadly onset to guard himself aright;
To him well known was Hagen, that all-accomplish’d knight.

2350

Dread, too, had he of Balmung, a potent sword enow.
From time to time yet Dietrich gave back a wily blow,
Until at last, in fighting, Hagen o’ermaster’d he:
A single wound he dealt him; ’twas deep and long to see.

2351

Bethought him then Lord Dietrich: “Thou’rt weaken’d by the strife,
I should have little honour were I to take thy life.
Sooner will I make trial, if I may thee compel
To be to me a hostage.” With trouble this befell.

2352

He let his shield fall downwards— great was his strength of limb,
And Tronian Hagen clasp’d he close in his arms to him.
And thus was captive taken by him that gallant man;
Whereat the noble Gunther sorely to grieve began.

2353

Then Dietrich led forth Hagen, fast bound, to where her stand
The noble queen had taken; and gave into her hand
The boldest of all warriors that ever weapon bare;—
Then had she joy in plenty for all her bitter care.

2354

For thanks the wife of Etzel unto the thane bent low:
“In heart and eke in body for ever blest be thou!
Now hast thou well repaid me for my unhappy lot;
For this I’ll ever serve thee if death prevent me not.”

2355

Then answer’d the Lord Dietrich: “His life thou e’en must spare,
O noble queen! Then haply thou mayst become aware
How well he will atone for all he hath done to thee!
He must no whit be worsen’d, that him in bonds ye see.”

2356

She bade them carry Hagen to durance vile away,
And there imprison'd straitly unseen of men he lay.
Gunther the noble sovran aloud began to cry:
"Where went that chief of Bern? He hath done me injury."

2357

Then presently to meet him the noble Dietrich came.
Great was the might of Gunther, and well 'twas known to fame.
Nor did he tarry longer;— before the hall he ran.
From their two weapons' meeting a dreadful din began.

2358

Albeit that Lord Dietrich great fame long time had had,
So sore was Gunther's anger he raved like one gone mad;
For deadly foe he held him, so bitter was his pain:
'Tis reckon'd still a marvel that Dietrich was not slain.

2359

So strong and full of valour was either of the twain,
The palace walls and turrets rang with their blows again.
While on the goodly helmets with swords they hack'd and hew'd.
Then, verily, King Gunther, a royal courage shew'd.

2360

Yet he of Bern o'ercame him, as likewise he had done
To Hagen; through the hauberk the hero's blood to run
Was seen, from that sharp weapon wherewith Sir Dietrich clove.
Yet, weary as was Gunther, he valiantly strove.

2361

Bound was the noble chieftain by Dietrich's hand alone,
Although a king should never such bonds have undergone.
He thought if he should leave them, the king and vassal, free,
That all on whom they lighted by them fordone must be.

2362

Dietrich of Bern then took him a captive, closely-bound,
And by the hand he led him where he Kriemhilda found.
At sight of his affliction her sorrows greatly waned;
She spake: "Be welcome, Gunther, of the Burgundian land!"

2363

He spake: "I needs must thank thee, most noble sister mine,
Though I would fain a greeting more gracious have than thine!
O queen, well do I know thee, how wrathful is thy mood,
And that for me and Hagen thou hast no greeting good."

2364

Of Bern then spake the hero: "Never, most noble queen,
Knights of such fair demeanour, your hostages have been
As these, most gracious lady, whom now to you I give:
See that ye let the strangers for my sake safely live."

2365

She vow'd to do it gladly: so the Lord Dietrich came—
His eyes with tears o'erflowing— from those two chiefs of fame.
Soon vengeance sore upon them was wreak'd by Etzel's wife:
Of both these chosen warriors she took away the life.

2366

Her evil mood obeying, apart she made them lie,
That neither on the other from that time forth set eye,
Until in front of Hagen her brother's head she laid.
On both of them Kriemhilda her vengeance well repaid.

2367

For first the queen betook her where she might Hagen see:
And spake unto the warrior— how full of enmity!
"What thou from me hast taken if thou again wilt give,
Then home thou yet mayst journey to Burgundy alive."

2368

But Hagen grim made answer: "You throw your words away,
Most noble queen, for truly I've sworn, and now I say
The treasure I will show not, so long as either one
Be living of my masters;— I'll yield it up to none."

2369

"Then will I end the matter!" so spake the noble wife,
And forthwith bade her liegemen to take her brother's life.
They struck his head from off him, which by the hair she bore
Before the Tronian hero; then was his grief full sore.

2370

For when, with sorrow stricken, he saw his master's head,
Thereon unto Kriemhilda the warrior spake and said:
"E'en as thou saidst, the matter thou hast to ending brought,
And likewise all hath happen'd as I beforehand thought.

2371

“And now the noble sovran of Burgundy is not,
Nor Giselher the stripling, and eke the Lord Gernot,
None knoweth of the treasure save God and me alone:
And unto thee, she-devil, it never shall be known!”

2372

Said she: “An evil guerdon dost thou to me award;
Yet in mine own possession I will have Siegfried’s sword,
Which my belovéd husband, when last I saw him, bare
That day when, by your doing, began my heartfelt care.”

2373

She drew it from the scabbard— he could not hinder her—
And of his life bethought her to rid that warrior.
With both her hands she swung it, and smote his head right off:
King Etzel saw her do it, his grief was sore enough.

2374

The prince cried: “Woe betide me, lo! now, how here is slain,
And by a woman’s doing, the very noblest thane
That ever came to battle, or ever buckler bore!
Albeit I was his foeman I could not sorrow more!”

2375

Old Hildebrand cried: “Truly she shall no gainer be
That she hath dared to slay him! Whate’er befalleth me,
Although myself but lately to direst straits he brought,
For this brave Tronian’s murder I’ll yet have vengeance wrought.”

2376

Then Hildebrand right wrathful upon Kriemhilda leapt,
And at the queen with broadsword a heavy stroke he swept.
Ay, Hildebrand she dreaded with sore anxiety.
But what could it avail her to shriek thus horribly?

2377

The bodies of the slaughter'd were lying all around;
And there the noble lady lay mangled on the ground.
Dietrich along with Etzel fell bitterly to weep;
For kinsmen and for lieges they mourn'd in sorrow deep.

2378

There mickle pride and honour in death dishonour'd lay.
The people all were stricken with pity and dismay.
In sorrowing was ended the king's high festival—
As loving ever endeth in sorrow after all.

2379

I cannot tell you plainly what later may have been,
Save that in bitter weeping were knights and ladies seen—
And noble liegemen also— for friends beloved laid low.
The story now is ended: this is the Niblungs' woe.

Endnotes

1. The Hood of Darkness or Invisibility. ↩
2. I.e. Verona. ↩

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