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DAS NIBELUNGEN LIED

OR

LAY OF THE LAST NIBELUNGERS.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

AFTER

Professor Carl Tachmann's

COLLATED AND CORRECTED TEXT

BY JONATHAN BIRCH.



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BOOKSELLER TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

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THIS FIRST

AND ONLY TRANSLATION

OF

THE NIBELUNGEN LIED

IS DEDICATED,

by *Special Permission,*

TO

HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY

FREDERICK WILLIAM IV.,

THE WISE, THE ENERGETIC, THE GOOD

KING OF PRUSSIA,

BY

HIS MAJESTY'S

GRATEFUL, LOYAL,

AND MOST DEVOTED SERVANT,

Jonathan Birch.

871171



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PATRONS.

HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF PRUSSIA.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE CHARLES OF PRUSSIA.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS PRINCE BIRON OF COURLAND.

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND.

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF ARGYLE.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF WESTMORLAND.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF CRAVEN.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF ELLESMERE.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE BARON VON HUMBOLDT.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE CHEVALIER BUNSEN, *Prussian Ambassador.*

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

THE CONSUL GENERAL THEREMIN.

CHEVALIER HEBELER, *Consul General for Prussia.*

PROFESSOR C. LACHMANN.

PROFESSOR J. GRIMM.

PROFESSOR W. GRIMM.

INTRODUCTION.

*LEGENDS of bygone times reveal wonders and prodigies,
Of heroes worthy endless fame, — of matchless braveries, —
Of jubilees and festal sports, — of tears and sorrows great, —
And knights who daring combats fought: — the like I now relate.*

*In Burgundie there lived and throve, a truly handsome maid:
Such as in all the countries round — was not, might well be said.
Chriemhilda fair, the maiden hight, — a beauteous dame was she;
On her account did many a knight, lose life and high degree.*

*Three rich and nobly-meaning kings, her kin and guardians were;
Gunter and Gernot twain were named — both knights beyond compare;
The third one Giseller was called, — young, strong, and versed in arms.
— These brother-princes heeding watched — an only sister's charms.*

*In Rhenish-Burgundie they dwelt, — at Worms was held their court:
There — from far lands frank-fee to do, did lofty knights resort,
Who served life-long with loyalty, and honourable fames:
Until right woefully they fell — through strife of royal dames.*

*Queen Utie was their mother dear — a wealthy dame was she!
 Their father, royal Dankrath was : — he left unto the three
 When near his end an ample realm, — ere then a stalwart man!
 Who in his early manhood-days — chivalric honours wan.*

*Now these joint-kings of Burgundie — as I've just told to you,
 Were strong and very valiant men, with subjects bold and true,
 And knights they had of great renown — no better could there be
 For strength of arm and daring deed: the pride of chivalry!*

*E'en such was Hagen, Tronyie's chief; — and such his brother-kin
 Bold Dankwart — he so swift of foot! — and Metz born Ortewin;
 Besides — the margraves eminent, Garie and Eckewart;
 And Volcher brave of Alzeie, so skilled in every art.*

*Rumolt — chief-steward was, and eke a knight of good report:
 Sindolt and Hunolt likewise held — high office at the court:
 Moreover, there were many else of far extended fame
 Within the realm; — but they are sooth too manifold to name.*

*Dankwart was marshal, — and his kin (own sister's son more'er)
 The valiant Ortewin of Metz, was royal Gunther's sewer.
 Sindolt cupbearer to the kings — was knight of great import;
 And chamberlain was Hunolt keen: all honouring the court.*

THE LAY OF THE LAST NIBELUNGERS.

L E G E N D I.

Showing how Chriemhilda dreamed — also treating of prince Siegfried's departure from the Netherlands and arrival at Worms.

1.

13

CURIEMHILDA, innocent as fair — dreamed as night whiled away,
That she a noble falcon mewed for many an anxious day;
But soaring it was fiercely clutched, by wrathful eagles twain:
— That she, entranced, must see it torn, did cause her heartfelt pain.

2.

14

Awake — she to her mother went, and told her frightful dream;
To solve it thus, and then and there, — it Utie did beseem:
'The falcon thou didst foster so, a noble knight may be?
'Heaven guard his life! or ere long time, he'll die through treachery.'

3.

15

'Oh, hint not at the nuptial-tie — dear mother! unto me,
'For I, by every wooing knight would unaccosted be:
'My beauty — as a royal maid, I'll carry to the grave, —
'That so no husband bring me woe — however bland and brave.'

4.

16

‘Reject not so decidedly.’— she said with tenderness:
‘Wouldst, while on earth my graceful child! true joy of heart possess?
‘Such only flows from husband’s love,— thou’lt be a matchless wife!
‘God grant to thee a valiant chief— of rare and spotless life.’—

5.

20

Just then there lived i’th’ Netherlands, a rich king’s son and heir:
(King Siegismund his father was—the queen, Sieglinda fair)
Their castle-burgh—a noble pile, was far and widely famed:
It beetled o’er the lower Rhine; and Santen it was named.

6.

21

Now tell I how that valiant knight— of beauty passing great,
Preserved himself from spot or stain, despite an adverse fate.
Potential, and of high repute, soon waxed the daring man:
Hella! what lasting wreaths of fame, he very quickly wan.

7.

22

This worthy prince was Siegfried called—a knight right well inclined,
Who visited surrounding realms, with dauntlessness of mind;
And through abounding strength he rode, o’er strange and distant ground.
Hella! what brave and active knights, in Burgundie he found.

8.

45

Seldom to grief or passing pang, did Siegfried’s heart give birth;
Yet oftentimes the prince had heard of maiden of high worth,
Who dwelt in Burgundie, and was—the fairy form of thought:
She—who ere long to him much joy, and eke much sorrow brought.

9.

46

The praises of her beauty had been sounded far and near;
Also the maiden’s lofty mind and virtuous character
Were known to many a valiant knight, who nuptial blessings sought:
All this brought hosts of wooing guests, unto king Gunther’s court.

10.

47、

Howe'er with zeal the suitoring crowd, conversed of love and bliss;
 Chriemhilda's heart remained untouched—it never throbbed a 'yes!'
 In favour of a single knight—whatever his renown:
 He who hereafter gained her hand, was yet to her unknown!

11.

49

When that his friends and comrades saw, his purpose was to wed;
 They counselled that the maid which he unto high-altar led,
 Should be of dignity—that so—his birth might not be shamed:
 Then said the gallant Siegfried—'Chriemhilda! is she named.'

12.

51

The rumour of this heart-affair, soon reached king Siegmund's ears
 —It being buzzed about the court: his mind was filled with fears
 When all the story was disclosed—for he was sore afraid
 His son would resolutely woo, that famed and splendid maid.

13.

52

And when 'twas told to Siegelind—the queen so rich and mild;
 She great anxiety endured, 'bout him, her gallant child:
 For well she knew king Gunther's court,—also his stalwart men;
 All therefore tried to turn his mind from wooing there and then.

14.

53

At length thus spake sir Siegfried—'O father! dear to me;
 'Unleagued to any noble dame I'll now and ever be,
 'If in my courtship I'm restrained from wooing her I love.'
 He so resolved, and kept his word: to warp him many strove.

15.

54

'If that be thy well-weighed intent,' said Siegmund in good part:
 'Then acquiesce I in thy wish, with all a parent's heart;
 'And will thy firm resolve to speed—do what a monarch can:
 —Thou'lt find at royal Gunther's court, full many a haughty man.'

16.

55

‘If no one else — there’s Hagen bold, a most imperious chief!
‘Who under show of courtly ways, can work a world of grief:
‘Therefore I well may bode mishap,— and keenly feel afraid
‘That ill befall when we demand, the fair and stately maid.’

17.

56

‘Such shall not frustrate our intent’:— said Siegfried with disdain;
‘For what by mildness I can’t win — or by bold courtship gain,
‘I will possess in spite of fate by prowess of my hands:
‘—I’ll wrest from him by force of arms, his subjects and his lands.’

18.

57

Then spake the royal Siegmund: ‘Thy speech gives pain to me;
‘For should that threat by chance get wind, within fair Burgundie,
‘Thou wouldst not be allowed to go — with lieges or alone:
‘Gunther and Gernot are to me, since early days, well known.

19.

58

‘None should attempt by force to woo that beauty of Burgund!
‘— So have I cautiously been told’:— added king Siegmund.
‘But wilt thou with some chosen knights, pay visit to that land,
‘The friends we have will readily— perform what I command!

20.

59

‘That’s not my purpose, honoured sire!’— rejoined keen Siegfried;
‘With large array to mount the Rhine, there will be little need.
‘Not by display of valiant men will I the maiden gain,—
‘To vanquish her by other’s strength— would give my honour pain.

21.

60

‘I’ll gain her by this hand of mine,— or ill must overwhelm:
‘With ten and one accomplished knights, I’ll visit Gunther’s realm:
‘The which, most kind and honoured sire, I humbly beg of thee,’
— King Siegmund gave them suits of fur, of great variety.

22.

68

Now did arrive the time when they should start for Burgundie,
Which filled the hearts of sires and dames with keenest agony
Lest some of them should not return—unto their country more.
—The knights bid rein the neighing steeds, their arms the sumpters bore.

23.

71

Those heroes felt the farewell-pang—and many a maiden cried.
—I'm of opinion such fond hearts too truly prophesied,
That many of their darling friends would meet untimely fate.
They had full cause to weep and wail—for theirs proved misery great.

24.

72

On morning of the seventh full day—these bold knights did appear
Fore Worms upon the Rhenish strand: their very splendid gear
Was woven suits of ruddy gold;—their bridlery did shine:
—Sir Siegfried and his gallant knights advanced in equal line.

25.

73

Their bucklers were of firmest make—embossed and large of bound;
The brilliant helms of Siegfried's men, flashed dazzling rays around,
As they their stately progress made—into king Gunther's land;
—So gloriously attired and horsed—was never knightly band.

26.

74

Their swords of more than usual length, did reach unto the spur,
And each selected warrior poised a stout steel headed spear;
Two spans in girth at handle-end, had that which Siegfried bore,
With its keen edges might be made gashes for spouting gore.

27.

75

The gilded reinings of their steeds each held in dexter hand;
The poitrell bands were made of silk:—so trod they Gunther's land.
There, did the people one and all, begin to stare and peer:
Many of Gunther's serving-men ran out as they drew near.

28.

76

The stately men of Burgundie — esquire as well as knight,
 Advanced to meet them as was fit; — moreo'er 'twas courtly right
 That they with promptitude should greet, such visit to their lord:
 They eased the strangers of their steeds and shields with one accord;

29.

77

And would the horses to the stalls with courtesy convey, —
 But Siegfried checked their good intent, and thus to them did say
 'Let 'bide the steeds belonging to myself and valiant band!
 'It may so be we ride anon — away, from Gunther's land.

30.

78

' — To him who knows and will reply — I beg that he informs,
 'Where the bold potentate resides, if not just now at Worms?
 ' — Gunther, that good and wealthy king, of fruitful Burgundie!
 Thereon one spake with ready word — and much civility:

31.

79

'If you would speak our sovereign lord, — that can forthwith befall:
 'I saw him not an hour ago, within the castle-hall
 'Amidst his chiefs for valour famed: — advance and enter in!
 'You'll find with him some splendid knights; whose favour you may win!'

32.

80

The tidings reached king Gunther's ears as he in council sat,
 How dauntless knights to Worms had come — but whence none told, and that
 Their whole appointments were superb — dresses and armoury!
 Moreo'er they were unknown to all, within fair Burgundie.

33.

81

The king did marvel very much, who these strange knights could be,
 And why arrayed in coats-of-mail — of such resplendency,
 Moreover that their bucklers were so new and compassing;
 — That none thereof could give him 'count, did sorely vex the king.

34.

82

Therefore to Gunther thus did speak the Metz born Ortewin,
 (Renowned and wealthy knight was he — and Hagen's near akin)
 'Since then unrecognized they are by any that here be, —
 'Let page be sent to Hagen bold, that he the men may see.

35.

83

'My uncle doth the kingdoms know — of every foreign land:
 'To him they will not strangers prove — he'll tell us whence the band.'
 The king desired that he should come, together with his men:
 — The stately Hagen and his knights, soon came within his ken.

36.

84

Of why the king had sent for him? proud Hagen question made.
 'Because are come unto our court — strange knights,' king Gunther said,
 'Whom none about us know to name! — now Hagen, if aware
 'Of who they are, or whence they come? — the truth to me declare.'

37.

85

'That will I do!' brave Hagen said: — then to the window went,
 And towards the spot where stood the guests, his rolling eyeballs bent.
 — Their dresses and war-implements did please him well I ween;
 Yet he confessed, in Burgundie the like he had not seen.

38.

86

Said he, 'come how or whence they may, unto our Rhenish states,
 'They are forsooth true princes born — or royal delegates!
 'Stout are the horses they have rode, and their apparel's good:
 'From whatsoever land they come — they are of gentle blood!

39.

87

'I'm fain to own, though travelled much, beyond our Burgundie,
 'It ne'er befell by any chance, that I did Siegfried see:
 'Yet will I vouch on best belief — not doubting I am right,
 'That yonder stately striding chief — is he, that valiant knight!

40.

102

‘Therefore I counsel that the prince be courteously received;
‘And we deserve not such rebuke as he deals out when grieved.
‘— Besides, his form of finest mould, induces courtesy!
‘— He has effected by his arm — rare feats of potency.’

41.

103

Then said the ruler of the Rhine: ‘His coming here is good!
‘That he is bold, and high of mind, I long have understood.
‘Much graciousness he shall receive, whilst on our Rhenish ground.’
— Then went the royal Gunther forth, to where he Siegfried found.

42.

104

So well did Gunther and his chiefs, receive the val’rous knight —
That nothing lacked of courtesy from warriors left and right:
Sir Siegfried also bowed to them — with graceful courteousness,
Because their welcome bore the stamp, of hearty openness.

43.

105

‘I marvel much’ — king Gunther said, with kindly courtesy:
‘What has induced prince Siegfried — to visit Burgundie;
‘Or rather, what the hero seeks at Worms upon the Rhine?’
The guest made answer to the king — ‘the reason I’ll assign.’

44.

106

‘I oftentimes did hear with joy whilst in my fatherland,
‘That at your court upon the Rhine — and midst your vassal band,
‘Lived bravest knights, and that just now, at Worms resided some
‘Who are the pride of chivalry! — to see them I am come.

45.

107

‘I’ve also heard that Gunther brave — is famed for martial sport,
‘And that no king of modern times deserves such high report:
‘The people, too, along the Rhine, much praise on him bestow;
‘I therefore purpose staying here — until that truth I know.

46.

108

‘Myself, a knight — but soon a crown must press upon my brow!
 ‘Hence I would have that you admit, and publicly avow,
 ‘That I with valid right possess — the people and the land.
 ‘— My honour and my head are staked on prowess of my hand.

47.

109

‘If you have daring — as ’tis said by widely spread report, —
 ‘Then, without leave or counselling of any one, or court,
 ‘I’ll wrest from you in mortal fight — all that you’ve made your own:
 ‘— Your lands and burghs must subject be — to me, and me alone.’

48.

118

The chief of Metz, brave Ortewin — now loudly called for swords,
 He — Tronyie Hagen’s sister’s son — was more for deed than words:
 — That Hagen so long silent was, astounded Ortewin.
 — Brave Gernot thought it time to soothe — and thus he did begin.

49.

119

Addressing him of Metz, he said: ‘thy violence suppress!
 ‘Such shall not royal Siegfried receive through wantonness:
 ‘We yet may part on kindly terms, with proper courtesy.
 ‘— ’Twere better he remained our friend — than leave with enmity.’

50.

120

Then did the stalwart Hagen say: ‘sooth pain to me has flowed,
 ‘Eke to your band of gallant knights — that he to Rhine has rode
 ‘Evil to breed, and strife to stir: — unwise is such assay:
 ‘Our liege lords have not treated him — in rude unseemly way!’

51.

121

Sir Siegfried — the valiant knight, to Hagen then replied:
 ‘If what I’ve said displeases so, sir Hagen’s lofty pride,
 ‘Then will I give e’en him to know — how that these hands of mine
 ‘Are ready agents to effect — great doings on the Rhine!’

52.

123

‘Unseemly were hostilities!’ said Gernot calmly:
‘’Twould bring sure death to many a knight, of well tried bravery;
‘Causing to us but little fame — to you small gain I ween!’
— Stout Siegfried — king Siegmund’s son, rejoined in accents keen;

53.

124

‘How! — hesitates sir Hagen brave? — and eke sir Ortewin? —
‘Why haste they not unto the field with all their friends and kin,
‘Of which they have such multitudes, — why are they all so mute?’
— None spake — for Gernot had advised avoidance of dispute.

54.

126

Then said Burgundia’s wealthy king: — ‘that which affords our land
‘(And you with noble feelings ask) be your’s, at your command:
‘We’ll share with you our best, and be — as of one brotherhood!’
Thereat was lofty Siegfried — of somewhat gentler mood.

55.

127

Then was brought in and aptly placed — their knighthood’s costly gear;
And rooms appointed him and his — such as did meet appear:
— The servants too of Siegfried, were bedded daintily.
After that time the stranger was — well liked in Burgundie.

56.

129

The king and his attendants made amusements freely flow:
In all the high-athletic sports — Siegfried ranked first I trow,
For what he did — the like could none — he was so very strong:
Whether they urged the whizzing shaft — or whistling pebble flung!

L E G E N D II.

Showing how the Saxons and Danes declare war against the Burgundians during Siegfried's visit to Gunther: Siegfried aids the Burgundians, and captures two kings.

57.

138

Now, at king Gunther's court arrived, accounts from distant lands,
By messengers who were dispatched pursuant of commands
From chiefs unknown who bore them hate, and were to war inclined.
The folk when they the message heard — experienced grief of mind.

58.

139

Give ear, and I will tell to you, who these same bold knights were:
The one a chieftain rich and proud, hight Saxon Ludeger:
The other was of Dennemark — yclept king Ludegast.
They brought with them upon the march, friends who were ne'er surpassed.

59.

140

These messengers, as said before — in furtherance of command
From his antagonists, — with speed arrived in Gunther's land.
The gaping people flocked to know, if they brought tidings good:
Anon the men were ushered in, and 'fore King Gunther stood.

60.

141

The king received them courteously: — 'I greet ye! so draw near:
'Of whence you come — and by whom sent? — I'm now prepared to hear.
'Speak boldly out, and tell the truth!' the messengers recoiled,
For they presaged from Gunther's look — that Gunther's anger boiled.

61.

142

Said they: 'since you permission grant, that we with truth relate
 'The message which we hither bring:—we'll nothing fail to state.
 'The mighty lords who sent us here, to publish their commands,
 'Are Ludeger and Ludegast!— who mean to waste your lands.

62.

143

'Their scourging wrath you've merited,— so heard we in debate—
 'And therefore do those potentates intend you direful hate:
 'They purpose to invade your realm, by march direct on Worms,
 'Well aided by a host of knights:— therefore bethink of terms.

63.

144

'Within twelve weeks for certainty—hostilities begin!
 'So, have you friends and stout allies, call their assistance in,
 'That they may help you save your burghs from certain overthrow:
 '—Within the town of Worms there'll be, right gory work I trow!

64.

145

'Should you however be for peace?—let such resolve appear,
 'Ere those indomitable foes arrive on your frontier—
 'Bringing the scourges fire and sword, and much of rending grief:
 '—To struggle will affect the life of many a valiant chief.'

65.

146

Said Gunther with much policy—'tarry a while, I pray,
 'That I this matter ponder o'er, and measure what I say:
 'Besides, I've loyal kin and friends, with whom I council hold,—
 '—Eke to my martial chiefs must be the weighty message told.'

66.

151

The embassy was fitly lodged within the town of Worms;
 And though opposed—they were received, on hospitable terms:
 —Gunther therein displayed much skill, and proper welcoming;
 —Gaining thereby full time to know, what help his friends would bring.

67.

152

The king's heart was right sorrowful, and careworn was his mien,
 When by a young and dauntless knight he happened to be seen;
 Who, knowing nought of what had passed, or what disturbed him so,
 Did beg of Gunther to impart—the news, and whence his woe.

68.

153

'I marvel much:' so said the knight—'at what I'm forced to see!
 'What's got the unembarrassed look, and bland hilarity,
 'Wherewith you blessed your splendid court—and gave to all delight?'
 —Thus answered Gunther, Burgund's king, and most accomplished knight.

69.

154

'I cannot tell to all the world, the woe that weighs me down;
 'No, I must carry in my breast—what much affects my crown.
 '—Heart-sorrows can alone be told to kin and trusty friends!'
 Sir Siegfried's colour went and came: which sympathy portends.

70.

155

Said he: 'I've not denied you aid—or sought to shun assent!—
 'Without request I'll strive to wend, the cause of your lament.
 'Seek you the help of potent friends?—I'll prove a comrade fast:
 'If feud?—I'll end it gloriously, or in it breathe my last.'

71.

156

'God prosper you, lord Siegfried! your words much comfort bring:
 'E'en should your strength and bravery, avail not'—said the king—
 'I still shall know by what you've said—you bear me true regard:
 '—If I survive this state of things—rely on high reward!—

72.

157

'Now will I tell you what it is—has made me so distraught:
 'From twain sworn foes of potency, a message has been brought,
 'That they intend to visit me, with hostile horse and foot!
 'This land to such embarrassment—was ne'er by knighthood put.'

73.

158

‘Let not such message trouble you!’ the valiant Siegfried said:
‘Becalm your now excited mind, and do as I’ll persuade.
‘Leave unto me to gain for you renown in this affray:
—‘Meantime, do you appoint your knights to join without delay.

74.

160

‘Then, trust to me one thousand men of valour—fully armed,
‘Because no more than lieges twelve, have I at my command.
‘With them I undertake to chase those foemen from your realm;
—‘You’ll find that Siegfried bears for you, right loyal spear and helm!

75.

162

‘Moreover bid the men return, unto their warlike lords,
‘Reporting, that they’ll see us soon, on faith of knightly words!
‘And that you mean to shield your burghs upon no other terms.’
— Gunther then summoned all his friends, to meet forthwith at Worms.

76.

163

To court once more the heralds went—leave-absence to receive;
And glad were they to turn again—towards home without aggrieve.
Rich gifts king Gunther ordered them, before they did depart,
Moreover guides to guard them back: such put them in good heart.

77.

164

‘Say you’—said Gunther buoyantly—‘unto my potent foes,
‘That it were fitting they postponed the journey they propose!
‘But if they still have mind to come, as uninvited guests,
‘They’ll find my host prepared for war—awaiting my behests.’

78.

165

The rich gifts for the messengers were sent unto their Inn:
Of treasure, Gunther had enough for stranger, friend, and kin:
Good sooth! the heralds had no cause such largess to decline:
Thereon with leave they joyously departed from the Rhine.

79.

166

Soon as those emissaries came within the Dane-king's tent,
 And Ludegast had heard from them the answer that was sent,
 With all then passing on the Rhine and at the Burgund court;
 He grieved to think that Gunther should have answered in like sort.

80.

167

They further said, 'in Gunther's pay is many a valiant knight;
 'And 'mongst the rest, of high repute for superhuman might—
 'One Siegfried o' the Netherlands—of rank and bearing too!'
 —King Ludegast was much disturbed when he that tidings knew.

81.

168

Soon as the Danish chieftains heard what was to apprehend,
 They doubly pressed their friends at home, increase of force to send:
 So that ere long king Ludegast had twenty thousand men
 The Burgund war to enter on—all ready there and then.

82.

169

Moreover Saxon Ludeger recruited more and more,
 Until he forty thousand had upon his muster-score
 To overrun the peaceful realm of vine-clad Burgundie:
 Also king Gunther was alert—to muster speedily.

83.

173

'I counsel that at Worms you stay!' said Siegfried to the king,
 'Since all your knights do ride with me—unto this combatting.
 'There, calm the ladies of your house, and be of lofty mind;—
 'I trust myself to guard your realm, and fame,—as you will find!

84.

174

'To those who threat a visiting, and say they'll hither roam,
 'I'll prove a warden vigilant, and make them keep at home.
 '—We'll march forthwith, and carry war beyond their boundary;
 'So shall their insolence descend to keen anxiety.'

85.

175

King Gunther's men through Hestia rode, on way to Saxony;
Where afterwards a fight began of dread intensity:
By fire, and sword, and foraging, the Saxon land was scourged,
Both Dane and Sax soon found themselves beyond their liking urged.

86.

178

Said Siegfried, 'I will on before — that I the foe may see!
'Filling myself the foremost post, I'll search advisedly
'Until for certain I do know, where those stout knights abide.'
Sieglinda's son was quickly armed — and well equipped to ride.

87.

180

From rising ground he saw advance great numbers o'er the field,
They came in force like breadths of corn which to the breezes yield;
— Full forty thousand martial men, and that not at the most:
Sir Siegfried saw with joyous heart the foemen's numerous host.

88.

181

Also a knight belonging to the enemy, was there,
Who had selected that same height for vigilant beware:
He Siegfried saw — and Siegfried him, — both glared intensely hard:
Then each with growing wrath began to stand upon his guard.

89.

182

I'll tell you of the stranger, who kept watch upon the height.
He had upon his arm a shield of gold, which shone most bright;
'Twas Ludegast the Danish king, who heeding watched his host:
— The gallant Siegfried rode at him, without or word, or boast.

90.

183

And Lud'gast simultaneously designing so on him,
Each plied with spur his charger's side: one purpose governed them!
Their shields by dint of dextrous strength threw off the pointed lance:
— The Dane-king, ere the combat closed, befell right woeful chance.

91.

184

Their steeds, responding to the spur, left arrow-speed behind,
 So that those hostile heroes met like adverse gusts of wind;
 Then did they both with knightly art wheel round:— and, without words,
 The wrathful twain, as if agreed, drew forth their flaming swords.

92.

185

The heavy blows, which Siegfried dealt, thorough the landscape rung:
 They started from king Lud'gast's helm, as though he brand had swung,
 A crowd of sparks,— which seemed to flow from mighty Siegfried's arm:
 —Each smite told keener on the foe, and caused him fresh alarm.

93.

186

Eke Ludegast dealt out such strokes as might make brave knight yield,
 But Siegfried, with wondrous skill, took each upon his shield;
 Then thirty men of Lud'gast's band, perceiving what was done,
 Made haste to help,— but ere they came, the dual-fight was won.

94.

188

He sued for life, and tendered straight his burghs and ample lands:
 Said he, 'king Ludegast submits to your more potent hands!'
 —Just then arrived the Danish knights, who long had seen the spite
 Wherewith the two had combatted upon th' adjacent height.

95.

190

Now, of those thirty, twenty nine, he very quickly slew:
 The one he spared, who gladsomely back to his comrades flew
 Taking a woe-begone account of what had happened, I ween:
 —The truth of the report he brought— might on his helm be seen!

96.

191

The men of Denmark loudly wailed, when told of who were dead,
 And more so when they were informed 'The king is captive led!'
 —When such his martial brother heard— he raved like one insane:
 For loss of him to Ludeger, was more than hundreds slain.

97.

193

The Burgund knights were told to bind the banner to the spear:
And Siegfried shouted to his friends, 'cheer up! the foe is near!
'If I do live—before the light of this day's sun be gone,
'We'll give some Saxon mothers cause, to wish they ne'er had borne.

98.

194

'Ye warriors of the fruitful Rhine! be bold and follow me;
'Certes I lead you to the foe—king Lud'gers yeomanry.
'There will you see helm-hewing rare, by most heroic hands:
'—We turn not till we've drubbed the foe, and scattered all his bands!'

99.

196

They now advanced a thousand strong,—thereto twelve heroes good:
The dust began to rise in clouds throughout the line of road
Whereon they marched to meet the foe—some took the open field:
Then saw one many a glittering spear, and many a fulgent shield.

100.

198

King Gunther's captains led their men with courage to the fight:
Anon, sir Siegfried arrived, with that small band of might
Which from the Netherlands he brought, when he to Burgund came:
—That day saw many a gory hand grasp at the wreath of fame!

101.

201

The knights of Denmark, nothing loath, fought bravely in the field;
One heard their blows fall heavily on many a Burgund shield:
And many a broken keen-edged sword upon the grass did lie.
—The brave of Saxony, likewise, did combat manfully.

102.

202

Whenever Gunther's knights pressed on—they gave the foe no law,
And everywhere, when faulchions flashed, one gaping gashes saw.
The horses flanks, and saddle-cloths, dripped streams of living blood:
Right dauntlessly for honour's sake, the warring knighthood stood.

103.

203

Thus were the hosts on either side engaged in desperate deed,
 When they o' th' Netherlands came up at height of coursers' speed,
 Led by their brave and potent lord, who dashed amid the foe:
 The twelve with Siegfried laid on — right gallantly, I trow.

104.

204

None of the knights of Burgundie dared follow in his wake:
 One plainly saw, where'er he rode, was left a crimson lake,
 Fed by the sanguine gashes, which he dealt to all around.
 At length he Lud'ger at the head of his brave liegemen found.

105.

206

When potent Lud'ger was aware, who 'twas that led the band,
 And still was dealing slaughter out with 'Balmung' in his hand,
 Strewing with dead and dying men the ground o'er which he rode;
 The Saxon king o'erboiled with wrath,—which dreadful clash forebode!

106.

207

Then followed a tremendous rush, and clashing clank of sword;
 For all the knights on either side—mixed, as of one accord;
 That made the chiefs more urgent still, to battle hand to hand
 (The bands on either side gave space) their rage defied command!

107.

209

King Lud'ger wielded well his glave, and smote with giant force:
 So that beneath him trembled much sir Siegfried's stalwart horse!
 Although it staggered with each blow—it did its lord sustain.
 —Siegfried the hero, through this fight, did dreaded name attain.

108.

214

Just then king Ludeger perceived, that on opponent's arm
 Was shield with blazoned crown thereon,—such put him in alarm;
 —He knowing of a truth that now he fought with Siegfried,
 Shouted aloud to all his friends—and thus expressed his need.

109.

215

‘Comrades, and all beneath my rule, desist from further strife,
 ‘For I’ve encountered Siegmund’s son—I’ve seen him on my life!
 ‘Siegfried the strong I’ve recognized beyond a shade of doubt:
 ‘The de’il himself has sent him here—my Saxon troops to rout!’

110.

216

To strike the flag, and stay the fight, was done at his command:
 He sued for peace,—the which, ere long, was granted to his band,
 Upon condition that himself should Gunther’s prisoner be:
 —All this did Siegfried’s prowess gain from king of Saxony.

111.

217

After collective council held—the contest wholly ceased,
 And many a battered helm and shield, from duty was released.
 Then ’twas observed, that most of them were largely stained with gore,
 Drawn by the brave of Burgundie, from Dane and Saxon store.

112.

219

The Danish chivalry rode home, without success or fame;
 And the stout Saxons, truth to tell, acquired no glorious name:
 Such as was worthy gen’ral praise!—that vexed the matchless knight
 —The Burgund heroes mourned such friends, as perished in the fight.

113.

220

Weapons and spoils of war anon, were sent off to the Rhine;
 All nobly struggled for, and gained, by energy of thine—
 Sir Siegfried!—and were in troth, thy loyal valour’s dower:
 —Such was admitted readily, by all Burgundia’s power.

114.

222

The running-youths like lightning flew:—their tidings when received
 Filled those with active joy and love, who just before had grieved;
 Such gladsome issue had the news—that mirth and glee prevailed.
 —The very ladies of the court would have the news detailed!

115.

224

When from her chamber Chriemhild saw a running youth draw near;
 In accents only known to her — she thus his heart did cheer,
 ‘If thou dost bring me pleasing news, I’ll give thee gold to spend!
 ‘And if it prove the pious truth — I’ll always be thy friend!’

116.

226

‘Illustrious daughter of a king! — the honest truth I’ll tell:
 ‘None rode into the battle-throng so bravely and so well,
 ‘As that right noble stranger-knight, who came from Netherland:
 ‘ — The greatest deeds that then tookplace, were done by Siegfried’s hand!

117.

229

‘Before him fell in mortal strife betrothed of many a bride:
 ‘His blows cleft helm and head at once, of those who dared abide.
 ‘The pools he left of reeking gore — might hero fill with fright:
 ‘ — In every way and everywhere, he proved the choicest knight.

118.

233

‘Most gracious and exalted dame! — the fame-feats of the war,
 ‘From first to last, and last to first — all which the people saw —
 ‘Were done in manner chivalric by gallant Siegfried’s hand:
 ‘Moreo’er he sends of highest rank stout captives to this land.

119.

236

‘By skill and strength he soon subdued the warlike Danish king:
 ‘Stout Ludegast retains the wounds of that days combatting!
 ‘Also his brother captive is — the Saxon Ludeger.
 ‘Still hearken, lady, to the tale of humble messenger!

120.

237

‘The Dane and Sax were both enthralled by valiant Siegfried’s hand:
 ‘So large a trophy-train ne’er reached famed Worms upon the strand,
 ‘As that now drawing near the Rhine, won by his braveries.’
 — The truthful tidings did, indeed, the fair Chriemhilda please!

121.

241

Then said the lovely-one, 'good sooth! thou hast brought joy to me,
'And for thy recompense shalt have rich suit of livery,—
'Moreo'er ten ruddy marks of gold I add unto the same.'
—No wonder messenger with glee takes news to wealthy dame.

122.

242

Now was dealt out to him the coin, also the splendid dress:
The comely waiting-maids thereon, did to the windows press,
To see if on the public road they horsemen could espie:
—A troop of those victorious knights soon met enquiring eye!

123.

243

The healthful and the strong came first,—the wounded later came:
Who well might hear the joy of friends without a sense of shame!
King Gunther rode to meet his guests, with heart to glee inclined:
—So ended happily the war, that long had grieved his mind.

124.

244

He welcomed his victorious men,—the stranger troop also—
In manner such as did beseem so rich a king, I trow;
Thanking them all most graciously (that seemed his present care)
For having fought, and nobly won, a battle so severe.

125.

245

Then did king Gunther ask report from heroes at his side,
Of those who, in this Saxon war, had nobly fought and died:
By such it did appear that he had lost but sixty men:
—As we bear loss of heroes now—so bore they losses then.

126.

246

The stout and healthy brought with them full many a fractured shield,
And many a helm that battered was, to make its owner yield.
The warriors rode up to the hall—and there they did alight:
To kindest welcoming was joined loud shoutings of delight.

127.

247

The knights were quartered daintily at hostels in the town;
 And nobler guests were entertained by him who wore the crown.
 He towards the maimed and sickly knights displayed peculiar care,
 Making his grief for wounded foe in kindly acts appear.

128.

248

Then said the king to Ludegast, 'you're welcome, sir, to Worms!
 'Through fault of thine I've suffered much — and might force pinching terms!
 'But I'm repaid, if quiet now prove permanently gained.
 — 'Heaven recompense my gallant friends, who so my cause sustained.'

129.

249

'You well may thank them, potent sir!' said Lud'ger somewhat sore;
 'For such high captives never came to Burgundie before!
 'That we get gentle service done — full payment we propose;
 'And beg that you'll vouchsafe to act right knightly towards your foes.'

130.

250

'I will,' said Gunther, 'that you both have body liberty,
 'Remaining truly here at Worms — on own-word custody;
 'And that you do not plot escape from this our Burgund-land,
 'In enmity, — thereof give pledge!' — King Lud'ger gave his hand.

131.

257

Sir Siegfried now would bid farewell to Burgundie and crown:
 When that his will and purpose was unto king Gunther known,
 He begged of him most pressingly to tarry yet a space:
 — The knight agreed, not having seen as yet Chriemhilda's face.

132.

258

So rich was gallant Siegfried, that gift might cause offence;
 Yet none had greater title to reward and recompense! —
 But he found grace and favour with the king, and those beside,
 Who saw him in the battle's din, when cropping foemen's pride.

Yes — 'twas the hope of seeing her, beyond a passing doubt,
Which caused him stay; — and his desire ere long was brought about
Just as he wished: — he saw the maid, so beauteous and so bland!
— Then rode he, full of inward joy, homewards to Siegmund's land.

LEGEND III.

Showing how Siegfried was introduced to Chriemhilda for the first time.

134.

264

One saw knights daily, more and more, come riding by the Rhine;
All guests, who to the festival did joyously incline.
To those, who came from special love unto the Rhenish kings,
Were dealt out many a gallant horse, and very splendid things.

135.

265

Exalted sittings were prepared, which shone with cloth of gold,
Embroidered o'er by maidens' hands—sooth, so have we been told,—
For dukes and princes thirty two, who to the feast did ride:
—To charm by glance and rich attire, the courtly ladies vied.

136.

266

Gis'ler, the young and graceful king, proved very active then:
For he, and Gerenot the brave, assisted by their men,
Received the home and stranger guests, who visit came to pay:
—They greeted every knight, I ween, in very courteous way.

137.

267

Then saddlery of ruddy gold, and shields of dazzling sheen,
Eke garments of the costliest sort, by every one were seen,
As the high-guests approached the Rhine, to join the festival:
—Then saw one many an ailing man enjoy the sight withal.

138.

268

Such knights as still bedridden lay from wounds received of late,
Were forced to languish for a time, despite their dying state;
And moaning o'er the sickly ceased, who kept the lazar-house:
For every mind was occupied, with that far famed carouse.

139.

270

On morning of a Whitsun day, approaching might be seen,
A host of rich and valiant knights, superbly dressed I ween:
Five thousand, at the very least, rode to the jousting field;
There, groups of knights in rivalry did mimic lances wield.

140.

271

King Gunther had in mind to work on Siegfried a surprize;
Who, though he never yet had seen Chriemhilda with his eyes,
Loved her with all his heart and soul!—that to the king was known:
—The beauty of Chriemhilda's face was to a proverb grown!

141.

272

Sir Ort'win to the coming feast king Gunther's thoughts did call;
Said he, 'if 'tis your royal will to raise this festival—
'Then let the ladies of your house before the guests appear,
'In all their loveliness of form, and splendiddness of gear!

142.

273

'What adds most lustre to a feast, and most enchants bold knight:
'Is it not woman when adorned, dispensing glances bright?
'I therefore hope that you'll present Chriemhilda to your guests.'
—His counsel was in unison with many a knight's request.

143.

274

'I favour your advice, sir knight!' said Gunther pleasantly;
Then those who heard the king so speak were filled with heartfelt glee:
Anon to Utie and Chriemhild, went page with joyous face,
Requesting them, with all their maids, the banqueting to grace.

144.

275

Then were the presses, chests, and drawers, rummaged for dresses new;
 And all, that splendour could advance, was quickly brought to view.
 Of clasp and bracelets, fringe and lace—there was a goodly show:
 For dames and maids attired themselves, right sumptuously I trow.

145.

277

The bland king then commandment gave, that five score valiant men
 Should tend upon his sister fair, and Utie there and then!
 They carried, every one of them, drawn sword in dexter hand:
 And were all members of the court, as held in Burgund-land.

146.

278

Now saw one Utie and Chriemhild, in featly majesty:
 She, for attendants, had of dames a goodly company—
 More than a hundred, by the mass— all clad in garments gay;
 Also there followed many a maid the fair Chriemhild that day.

147.

279

One viewed them as from palace door the stately line came out:
 Then was the pressure very great, amongst the brave without,
 Who full of expectation stood—hoping most ardently
 For lucky moment, when they could the splendid maiden see.

148.

280

Now came she—like the morning star, bright harbinger of day,
 Emerging from the clouds of eve!—then fled like dream away
 From many a heart the yearning wish, that long had nestled there.
 —Siegfried beheld in pomp of form, Chriemhild! the much loved fair.

149.

281

Full many a gem on her attire cast dazzling rays around;
 And on her rose-and-lily check—the sheen of love was found.
 Whatever minstrel's mind might wish, he must admit, I ween,
 That on the earth there never yet was such pure beauty seen.

150.

282

Like as the silver tinting moon bedims the starry crowds,
When, with its clear and gentle light, it climbs o'er murky clouds;
E'en so, in truth, did she outshine the best of womankind!
Such bright formation well might raise each hero's heart and mind.

151.

283

The rich young pages gaily marched before the bland princess;
Then did the knights no more observe the ways of courtliness,
But crowded with rude force to see the much admired fair.
—Sir Siegfried felt alternately—great love, and great despair.

152.

284

And thus unto himself did say, 'how could I ever be
'So witless as to think of her?—'twas sheer insanity!
'But if I shun thee, lovely-one! then were I better dead.'
Sir Siegfried with such searching thoughts grew pallid, and then red.

153.

285

Now might be seen Sieglinda's son, dejected and forlorn,
Resembling what on parchment is by cunning limner drawn:
So graceful and so bland was he, that all the world might say,
'We ne'er looked on so brave a knight—as we beheld to day!'

154.

286

Those who attended on the fair—commanded as of right,
To clear the way and keep aloof: that did each courtly knight.
Old warriors seemed full glad of heart, when in their ken she came.
And joyfulness suffused the face of many a stately dame.

155.

287

Then said sir Gernot to the king, as midst his guests he stood:
'Now Gunther, brother wellbeloved, and sov'reign brave and good!
'Do honour to the valiant chief, who rendered us great aid,
'In presence of these noble knights:—none will such act upbraid.

156.

288

‘Command that Siegfried be led unto our sister fair!
 ‘That she the valiant hero greet, who made our cause his care.
 ‘The grateful welcome of the maid, who ne’er pledged knight before,
 ‘May make good Siegelinda’s son, our champion evermore.’

157.

289

The king’s attendants then went forth to where he stood alone,
 And said to him in courtly words, and very kindly tone:
 ‘The king expects your presence at the now assembled court,
 ‘That from his sister you receive high thanks for what you’ve wrought.

158.

290

The hero felt within himself exceeding much delight
 — For in his heart unchecked love exerted all its might —
 In that he soon should, face to face, the fair Chriemhilda meet.
 With graceful loveliness the maid did brave sir Siegfried greet.

159.

292

He bowed with gentle courtesy — and thanked with bashful pride:
 Conjoint embarrassment was felt, which each desired to hide;
 Yet tender glances passed between the maiden and the knight:
 But such took place quite stealthily — as though they did not right.

160.

293

Whether he pressed her lily hand with fervency of heart,
 I cannot tell, — because that act the legends don’t impart:
 Yet will I never doubt, that such took place beneath disguise;
 — Two loving hearts had not done well, had they done otherwise.

161.

294

In summer and its blithest time — the genial month of May!
 His heart could not encompass more, than it did on that day,
 Of gladness and of earthly bliss: for she stood by his side,
 Whom he, in all the warmth of youth, aspired to make his bride.

162.

295

Then to himself said many a knight—‘how happy should I be
‘To walk beside Chriemhilda fair, like Siegfried, lovingly:
‘Or be on more confiding terms;—that were love’s labour paid.’
—No hero ever so deserved, a true and royal maid.

163.

296

The guests from whatsoever land, the banquet thither drew,
Observed but carelessly what passed— their eyes dwelt on those two!
—Now ’twas allowed, that she should kiss the bland and handsome knight;
Who ne’er until that hour had known such fulness of delight.

164.

297

The king of Denmark then spoke the anguish that he bore:
‘To bring about this greeting scene—brave men were wounded sore!
‘And, as ’tis openly made known, by bold sir Siegfried’s hand,—
‘Forfend him, God! from visiting, again, our Danish land.’

165.

298

Then was it said, and buzzed around—‘give space unto Chriemhild!’
And many a truly courteous knight, who well his station filled,
Escorted her unto the church:—there, did the knight receive
From those, who churchly usage knew, side hint the maid to leave.

166.

299

She entered now the minster-nave with many a dame and maid:
Where she appeared so beautiful, and dazlingly arrayed,
That many a lofty hope took flight, through wonder and surprize:
—Chriemhild was born to be the mark for every hero’s eyes!

167.

300

Siegfried himself could hardly wait, until the mass was done;
He well might thank his destiny forever and anon,
That on him kindly looked the maid—who in his heart had place!
She no less found, that in her heart the knight had much agrace.

168.

301

When mass was over, and the fair from minster-porch would go,
 The dauntless man invited was — to join again, I trow.
 Then came it in the maiden's mind to thank the valiant knight,
 For that, beyond all other chiefs, he smote the foe in fight!

169.

302

'Reward you God! — sir Siegfried:' so spake the youthful dame:
 'In that you've done so gloriously — that all our chiefs of fame
 'Do hold you in such high respect; — I joy in what I hear!'
 — Sir Siegfried from that moment held the maiden passing dear.

170.

303

'So will I ever do and serve!' said loyal Siegfried:
 'And never shall my drowsy head the downy pillow heed,
 'Until I've done their every wish if life be spared to me!
 'This pledge of services I make — through purest love of thee.'

171.

304

Now during twelve successive days, as each morn did arrive,
 One saw the lovely maid and knight — as if by chance contrive,
 That side by side they'd walk to court — she waving royal right!
 This gentle act alone took place from great love to the knight.

172.

305

Gladness, high banqueting and mirth, and joyous shouts withal,
 One daily saw and heard proceed from royal Gunther's hall:
 Where, eke before so well as in, sat many a valiant man.
 Hagen, and Ortewin of Metz, the tilting feats began.

173.

306

Whatever games the guests desired — having for knighthood charms,
 Were ready: planned and disciplined by them, so versed in arms.
 Then were brave knights to princely guests thro' tourney feats made known:
 King Gunther's land abounded in — jousters of great renown.

174.

307

The convalescing wounded now took leave to venture out;
Right tired of bed and bandaging, they yearned for gentle bout,
With courtly pages—shield and shaft—onslaught and quick defence!
Plenty there were inclined thereto: their muscles still were tense.

175.

308

The royal host, at this high feast, commanded that his foes
Should be provided with the best, and have whate'er they chose.
So did the king ward off reproach, such as good king molests.
One saw the host with gladsome mien rejoin his princely guests.

176.

309

Said he, 'right bold and noble knights! before you do depart,
Accept of sundry largesses as tokens of my heart.
My wish is, that each one of you remain my cordial friend!
Nor doubt if needs be that I can both succour and defend.

177.

310

Then did the Danish knights speak out, and earnestly did say,
'Before unto our native land we Danes do ride away,
'Vouchsafe to us a firm made peace—for that concerns us most:
'Through your redoubted knights have we lost many of our host.'

178.

311

The wounds of Ludegast had healed, and he his friends could meet;
Eke Ludeger recovered was from toils of the defeat:
Some few perforce remained behind—for they were under ground.
Then did king Gunther go to where he bold sir Siegfried found.

179.

312

Said he unto that matchless knight, 'now give me counsel wise.
'Our captive guests will ride towards home, when morn salutes the skies,
'And wish a lasting treaty with myself and lieges true;
'Advise me therefore, Siegfried, on what I'd better do?

180.

313

‘The offer that those warriors make I now will tell to you:
 ‘They willingly propose to give, as debt and ransom too,
 ‘So much of gold, as well can bear five hundred sumpters strong.’
 Sir Siegfried promptly answer gave: ‘to take their gold were wrong!’

181.

314

‘’Twere better that you sent them hence, without or let, or pay;
 ‘Save that the warrior kings give pledge, binding, that from this day
 ‘They never will for doubtful cause make war upon your lands:
 ‘And be the only pledge required—the voucher of their hands!’

182.

315

‘Thy counsel I adopt, sir knight!—unhindered shall they go.’
 —The prisoner kings were soon informed of their good-luck, I trow.
 No one desired to share the gold, of which they offer made.
 At home their trusty friends felt grief, and for their lives afraid.

183.

316

Then many gold-piled shields were brought by Gunther's high behests,
 Which he unweighed distributed—amongst his friends and guests:
 To each five hundred marks at least; but I opine much more.
 —’Twas Gerenot who counselled him so nobly on that score!

184.

317

Now asked they leave—for time was come, when ’twas their wish to ride:
 One saw the princely guests go to Burgundia's hope and pride!
 And then to where rich Utie sat, the highly honoured queen.
 —Never did knights departure take, with better grace, I ween!

185.

318

Room after room was quickly void, as they rode groupingly;
 But there remained beside the Rhine the royal family,
 And many a comely vassal lord—bland courtesies to do:
 They every day came once, at least, within Chriemhilda's view.

186.

319

Now would sir Siegfried the brave take leave of Burgund's court,
Despairing to obtain the maid — the burden of his thought!
Gunther with heart-felt sorrow heard, that he was so inclined:
— The young king Giselher it was, who caused him change his mind.

187.

320

'Whereto will noble Siegfried, and why from Worms now ride?
'Disdain not my request, sir knight, but with our chiefs abide,—
'With Gunther our most sovereign lord, and Gunther's retinue:
'Besides, here dwell a host of dames, who may be seen by you.'

188.

321

Then said sir Siegfried to his knights — 'we saddle not to day!
'I've changed my plan, and purpose now much longer here to stay:
'Return your shields!—that I would ride, the whole of you do know:
'Sir Gis'ler proves that I my wish with honour can forego.'

189.

322

Thus did the hero Siegfried, yield to his friend's invite:
For sure no spot beneath the sun could proffer such delight,
As flowed to him whilst sojourning in happy Burgundie—
Each several day on equal terms fair Chriemhild he did see.

L E G E N D IV.

Showing how Gunther accompanied by Siegfried and others, made a voyage to Isenland; that he might woo the queen Brunhilda.

190.

325

There was, famed daughter of a king, who dwelt far o'er the sea;
With her none other maid could vie, in form or dignity.
Beyond all measure she was fair, and prowess-full, I ween:
With wooing knights her hand she staked on cast of javelin keen—

191.

326

Eke pond'rous stone she far could hurl, and bound beyond the mass:
—Such knights as suited for her love, had Brunhild to surpass.
Three several games the wooer brave must win ere she would wed:
Failed he in one—forthwith was he dispatched by loss of head!

192.

328

That known, quoth Gunther of the Rhine—'I'll straightways cross the sea,
'And 'fore the fair Brunhild appear,—whate'er the upshot be!—
'I'll risk for her rewarding love, my diadem and life,
'Content to suffer, if I fail in making her my wife.'

193.

331

Now said the king unto the knight—'wilt thou my helpmate be
'To woo the dame?—and do my will, in way so earnestly,
'That I do win the lovely maid for my affianced wife?—
'Then will I jeopardize for you—my honour and my life!'

194.

332

'That will I do,' said Siegfried — 'if thou forthwith accord
 'To me thy sister on success:— I ask as my reward
 'Chriemhild the beautiful and good, eke qucen illustrious!
 '— That only recompense I claim, should fortune favour us.'

195.

333

'Such vouch I unto thee, sir knight — and give thereto my hand:
 'More'er, if qucen Brunhild we bring into our Burgund land,
 'Then doth the fair Chriemhild become sir Siegfried's wedded wife:
 'Heaven grant to you in household peace a long and happy life!'

196.

334

Thereon did swear a solemn oath those heroes celebrate:
 Through which their keen wife-wooing toils did much accumulate,
 Ere that the beauteous queen was brought to Worms, — as I am told.
 — The gallant knights full soon endured vexations manifold.

197.

335

Sir Siegfried did not fail to take with him the veiling-cloak,
 Which he in early combat wan by strength and 'Balmung's' stroke
 From that renowned and potent dwarf, sir Albric of the hoard.
 Brave and frank knights prepared themselves, with speed to go on board.

198.

365

The gilded shields were carried down to where was moored the ship,
 Also the helms and other arms, selected for the trip:
 The steeds were brought to palace-door — the noble knights would go.
 Then gushed from ev'ry female eye the scalding tears of woe.

199.

366

Full many a pretty damsel at the jutting windows stood
 To see the ship get under sail — the wind was fresh and good,
 And soon the gallant band of knights rode smoothly on the Rhine:
 Then did king Gunther gaily ask, 'who steers this ship of mine?'

200.

365

To clear the quay sir Siegfried took a boathook stout in hand:
And ashen oar was handled by the ruler of the land,
To help shove off, that so they might the deeper current gain:
That object, by united strength, they quickly did attain.

201.

369

On board there was an ample store of viands and of wine:
Surely the best this earth affords, comes from the river Rhine.
The ship moved steadily along,—the horses quiet stood,
And had a long and genial rest: no ill chanced them or stud.

202.

371

On morning of the twelfth full day — e'en so have I been told —
The wind had wafted them to where a coast loomed very bold.
Towards Isenstein — in Brunhild's land — the gallant bark drew nigh:
That was unknown to all on board, save Siegfried's piercing eye.

203.

385

Eighty-six turrets could be seen from outer side of wall:
Within, three several palaces; and one most spacious hall
Composed throughout of marble blocks, as green as spring-tide grass!
Therein, Brunhilda sat in state, amidst a courtly mass.

204.

389

The castle-gate was soon unlocked, and wide the portals thrown:
When Brunhild's liegemen sprang to meet the chivalry unknown,
That so they might quick welcome give into their lady's land:
They stilled their steeds, and took their shields with courtesy of hand.

205.

395

When that the royal-daughter saw sir Siegfried 'mongst the rest,
She thus in words of kindness the valiant knight addressed:
'Welcome to me, sir Siegfried! welcome to Isenland!
'The purport of thy coming here, I fain would understand.'

206.

401

‘Behold!’ said he, ‘the king of Rhine — Gunther the rich and strong!
‘Whose only object is thy love, which he’ll possess erelong.
‘With him on that account, forsure, I left my native home:
‘Had he not been my sov’reign lord, I certes had not come.’

207.

402

Said she, ‘if sooth he be thy lord, and thou his liegeman true,
‘And he be able to effect, the games I have in view —
‘Coming off conqueror therein — then will I be his wife.
‘Should I gain one, — then all of you make forfeiture of life!

208.

404

‘He must the stone with potence hurl, and bound to where it lies;
‘Moreo’er, with me the jav’lin throw: — to ponder well were wise!
‘For ’twere light thing through games like these to lose both life and fame!
‘He yet has time to change his mind.’ so said the royal dame.

209.

405

The fleet sir Siegfried thereon went unto the Burgund king,
And bade him frankly tell the queen his thoughts and purposing:
Said he, ‘thou safely may’st assume a very dauntless air,
‘For I thy life through craft of mine will guard in this affair.’

210.

406

Then said king Gunther to the queen: ‘most beautiful Brunhild!
‘I take your terms however stern, — nay, had you harsher willed,
‘I had consented to them straight through ardent love of thee:
‘My head upon’t, I win the games — thou must my consort be!’

211.

407

When beauteous queen Brunhilda heard what Gunther had to say,
She ordered, as besecmed her power, the games without delay:
And for that purpose, bade them take her war-gear to the field:
The vest of mail was ruddy gold, and gems adorned the shield.

212.

410

Whilst that took place, was Siegfried — the man of stratagem —
Gone to the vessel at the quay, unmissed by all of them;
And there the veiling-cloak he found, which forthwith he put on:
He sought it where it hidden was — then was he seen by none.

213.

411

Without delay he hurried back, to where he champions saw,
Who summoned were to watch the games, and mete out wager-law;
Invisibly he went about — for none the knight could see —
Mixing with those of Brunhild's band: he acted cunningly.

214.

418

Then was there weighty javelin brought unto the matchless queen:
'Twas sharp, and strong, and huge withal — yet light to her, I ween;
For 'twas the one she always used, nor ever threw it wide:
Moreo'er it had keen blades of steel, let in on either side.

215.

425

That Brunhild's strength was passing great, I am prepared to own:
To her was brought within the ring — a very pond'rous stone:
It was of large circumference, eke nearly round and strong —
A dozen knights could hardly lug the cumbrous stone along.

216.

427

She quickly bared her lily arm, by pushing up her sleeve,
And featly buckled on the shield, her wonders to achieve:
She poised the jav'lin high in air: — then did the match commence.
The stranger guests did greatly fear Brunhilda's vehemence.

217.

428

And had not Siegfried arrived to aid him in his need,
King Gunther's life had not been worth the ransom of a bead:
But he invisibly had come, and now did twitch his hand;
Sir Gunther shrunk, surmising not 'twas Siegfried's touch so bland.

218.

429

Said Siegfried: 'give here the shield — I'll wield it in the fray!
'And you with strict attention mark, whatever I may say:
'Make you the dumb-show requisite — myself the work will do.'
Soon as he recognised his friend, he calmer moment knew.

219.

430

The maiden hurled with potent arm the keen edged javelin
At Gunther's heart; — the whizzing spear with vigour entered in
The ample shield which Siegfried bore upon his stalwart arm:
Sparkles flew from its polished steel — like fire when urged by storm.

220.

431

The javelin's keenly cutting head went through the well wrought shield,
So that his very hauberk-rings a host of sparks did yield:
The vengeance of the throw was such, as made them reel i'troth!
Had not the veiling-cloak availed — 't had been the death of both.

221.

432

The purple blood outflowed from mouth of Siegfried the knight,
Who soon recovering from the shock, did then with all his might
Wrench from the shield the cutting spear Brunhilda had just thrown,
And hurled it at the haughty queen with force beyond his own.

222.

433

It drove out sparkles from her mail, as if upraised by wind:
Brunhilda fell through desp'rate throw of son of queen Sieglind.
For she had not the giant strength such hurling to sustain:
Certes, king Gunther had no hand in that throw's might-and-main,

223.

434

The beauteous Brunhild very soon her footing re-attained:
Said she, 'my thanks to Gunther brave — he has this wager gained.'
She fully thought that her defeat by his great strength was done:
But no; her overthrow was deed of much more mighty one!

224.

133

Then sprang she full of spite to where the cumbrous granite lay ;
Which having raised from off the ground, and poised for the affray,
She with exceeding power the stone astounding distance flung,
And sprang to reach it with a bound — her golden armour rung!

225.

436

The stone was hurled twelve fathoms length before it touched the ground :
Though far the throw, more distant still the active maid did bound :
Thereon did Siegfried run to where he saw the missile go :
Gunther did featly posturize, whilst Siegfried made the throw.

226.

437

The good Sieglinda's only son was daring, strong and tall!
He cast the stone beyond her mark, and further leaped withal :
Through his keen subtilties he had obtained such art and strength,
That he king Gunther with him took — the whole of his leap's length.

227.

438

Then said Brunhilda with loud voice unto the courtiers round,
As she the king full stalwart saw alight as from the bound :
'Draw nearer, friends and champions brave — my court, and servants too !
'Henceforth ye are, without reserve, king Gunther's lieges true.'

228.

439

Thereon they all with one accord put off their weaponry,
And homage did unto the chief of fruitful Burgundie —
Gunther the rich king of the Rhine! — right valiant knights were they.
All did believe the games were won by his sole potency.

229.

440

He very kindly bowed to them — having most courtly ways ;
Then cordially did take his hand, the maiden worthy praise :
She gave him rights, and power to rule within her ample land.
All joyous were, and glad to greet a king so brave and bland.

230.

442

The active knight, sir Siegfried, did wisely from them slip,
To hide his potent veiling-cloak again within the ship:
That done, he hied him to the hall—where many ladies were,
And eke like other knights, full soon, assumed a jocund air.

231.

443

‘Thus far we gloriously have sped!’ said Siegfried to Brunhild.
‘You’ll no more show such haughtiness, or be so wayward willed!
‘For you have found there lives who can o’er-master strength of thine.
‘—Now, noble lady, please you go with us unto the Rhine.

L E G E N D V.

Showing how the marriages of Gunther with Brunhilda, and Siegfried with Chriemhilda, vary as to consequences.

232.

572

The king sat at the festive board beside the queen Brunhild,
Who ne'er had felt such inward pang as when she saw Chriemhild
Seated by Siegfried the bold: — to weep the maid began,
And o'er her splendid damask cheek the burning tear-drop ran.

233.

573

To her the king with anxious look: — 'what ails my lovely queen?
'What trouble fills those eyes with tears, dimming their vivid sheen?
'Methinks she has more cause for joy, since unto her belong
'My lands and cities far and near — eke liegemen bold and strong.'

234.

574

'I have great cause for grief and tears!' the maiden queen rejoined:
'Touching thy sister's abject lot I bear a troubled mind.
'Do I not see her sitting there, allied to liege of thine? —
' — That she is so unmeetly matched, is cause of my repine.

235.

575

Then said king Gunther earnestly, 'be silent on that score!
'Some other time I'll tell my queen of that same marriage more,
'And why I gave the fair Chriemhild unto sir Siegfried:
'She in repute may live with him, and 'midst high honours speed.'

236.

581

Soon came attending men and maids — it being now high night:
Moreo'er rich-suited chamberlains, each bearing taper-light:
On that the lieges of the kings divided their array:
It then was seen, that many a knight, with Siegfried went away.

237.

582

Soon to their nuptial chambers came the wedded heroes twain:
— Each thought within himself, forsure, by tenderness to gain
His fair wife's confidential love, and pass a happy night;
Sir Siegfried's honeymoon commenced with unalloyed delight.

238.

583

I'll say no more of how that prince enchanted his loved mate;
But haste to tell how Gunther fared: he more or less elate
Lay by Brunhild—his beauteous wife. If that I guess aright,
Full many a lord and wedded dame enjoyed more quiet night.

239.

584

In flaxen robe of purest white Brunhilda sought her bed:
The noble Gunther's thoughts ran high—for to himself he said:
'Now have I all that e'er I hoped, or wished for, or admired!'
—No wonder beauty such as her's, the gallant chief inspired.

240.

585

The kindly king, with cautious hand, o'er veiled the taper's flame,
And with much gentleness approached where lay the royal dame.
Right courteously beside the queen his comely form he placed,
And soon with confidential arm, his splendid wife embraced.

241.

587

But in the joyance of his love he chanced her robe to tear,
Which mightily enraged the maid: — thereon the haughty fair
Snatched at a girdle she had worn — a stout silk-plaited thong,
And with it practised on her spouse a very grievous wrong.

242.

588

She bound king Gunther's hands and feet — nimbly and tight withal,
Then bore him to a giant nail, and hung him 'gainst the wall;
And, lest her sleep should be disturbed, all wooing words forbade.
— He nearly lost his royal life — through wayward strength of maid!

243.

589

At dawn began to supplicate — he, who should ruler be.
'O free me from this galling cord, fair maid of potency:
'And I'll not tender dalliance urge on your sobriety;
'Moreover seldom press your couch, or near you seek to lie.'

244.

592

Thereon she loosed the fettering cord — without endearing mien:
He ne'ertheless approached again the couch that held his queen,
But laid him 'down so far apart, as not to touch her dress:
Such was her will, — and he forebore display of tenderness!

245.

593

Erelong came 'tiring page and maid, with costly robes of state —
Such as were suited for that morn — all new and adequate.
However gay the people were — the king felt sick at heart;
Their jubilating joy, to him, no gladness did impart!

246.

594

Conformably to usage old, and custom widely known,
King Gunther and Brunhild agreed, in nowise to postpone
Their visit to the minster's choir, where holy mass was sung:
To them came Siegfried and Chriemhild — much crowding quailed the throng.

247.

595

By rules and regulations fit, the suits which pomp require
Were brought them ready to put on: eke crowns and gemmed attire.
Then where they churchly sanctified — that done commensurate,
One saw the handsome regal four wear diadems of state.

248.

596

Esquires were duly dubbed that day — six hundred full I ween:
They got their swords, and knightly spurs, in honour of the queen.
Thereon was jubilating great in Gunther's favoured land:
One heard mime-lances rattle loud in each brave swordman's hand.

249.

597

The ladies at the windows sat to view the busy field—
Whence vivid rays of dazzling sheen shot out from polished shield:
'Twas then one saw that Burgund king had left his liegemen true;
For every sport they entered on aggrieved his grief anew.

250.

598

Unlike was his and Siegfried's lot — their state of mind also:
That noble-hearted knight knew well, the cause of Gunther's woe,
And forthwith to the sad king sped, enquiring wistfully:
'How fared your mightiness last night — may such be known to me?

251.

599

The host in sorrow made reply — 'good sooth, I've hate and strife
'Brought to my house — whereas I thought, I wooed a gentle wife.
'When I from her most kindness hoped, she 'gan me to assail,
'And bandaged me with silken cord — then hung me on a nail!

252.

600

'And there I dangled full of fears — 'twas verily bright day
'Ere she vouchsafed me any help: meanwhile she sleeping lay!
'Now be my plaint, also its cause, a sacred trust for thee.'
'I mourn' — said Siegfried — 'o'er the past! and will act prudently.

253.

601

'Cheer up, brave king! dispel your grief; no longer mope and sigh:
'I'll bring about, this very night, that she so quiet lie,
'As never more to slight your love by deeds disorderly!'
Sir Siegfried's words consoled the chief for past disloyalty.

254.

602

The knight then said, 'when supper's o'er — I'll to your sleeping place,
 'My veiling-cloak will featly serve to mask my form and face:
 'And that no one may be aware of crafty trick I do,
 'Dismiss betimes the chamberlains, from 'tendances on you.

255.

603

'Unseen I'll quench the lampen lights, the pages hold in hand, —
 'That I'm arrived you'll thereby know; moreover understand
 'How willingly I service do! — I'll manage so your wife,
 'That she'll thenceforth submissive prove — or sacrifice my life!'

256.

604

'So that your loyalty be stanch!' said Gunther to the knight,
 'You have my leave to do with her — whatever you think right —
 'E'en to curtailment of her life! — should that chance intervene,
 'I'd bear her loss without regret: O! she's a ruthless queen.' —

257.

605

The anxious king could hardly wait until the supper's end.
 Brunhilda's maids at length appeared, their mistress to attend:
 Also Chriemhilda was inclined to seek serene repose:
Hella! to compliment the queens, what gallant knights uprose.

258.

609

But Siegfried lingered at the board — in confidential way
 Beside his fair and loving wife; — no qualmy pangs felt they:
 She fondled much his manly hand with hers so small and white,
 When lo! she knew not when or how, — he'd vanished from her sight.

259.

610

Having so strangely disappeared, whilst with his hand she played;
 The noble princess of his knights, intense enquiry made:
 Said she, 'I marvel very much what's got your sov'reign lord;
 'Who has withdrawn his hand from mine?' — no quick reply was heard.

260.

611

She said no more:—Siegfried had left, unmarked by eye of sense
(When that the chamberlains appeared with lights to marshal thence:)
And now was putting out the lamps the pages bore in hand:
A signal which Burgundia's king did rightly understand.

261.

612

He, knew thereby the knight was come:—then 'gan he to dismiss
The maids and dames who tending were: that being done, I wis,
The noble king with his own hand made fast the chamber door;
And twofold sturdy bolts were shot, to make it more secure.

262.

613

Behind the tapestry with speed, the chamber light was slipped,
And gentle toyance soon began (it could not well be skipped)
Between sir Siegfried the strong—and she the handsome maid.
—That such gave Gunther joy and pain, may verily be said.

263.

616

His conduct was as had he been Burgundia's king august,
Embracing her with courteous arm; but she the knight did thrust
From her soft couch o'er settle-bank, with scornful might and main:
Against a tressel came his head—which made it ring again!

264.

617

Sir Siegfried nothing cowed thereby, was soon upon his feet—
Determined to o'erpower her strength:—no sooner did they meet
And he his prowess would exert, than she did work him woe:
Such like defence will never more be tried by wife I trow.

265.

619

She threw her arms around the prince with energy and spite,
Intending to intral the king as on the former night;
That she soft slumbers might enjoy without unruly mate:
Remembrance of torn sleeping-robe gave vengeance to her hate.

266.

620

Little availed his strength and art, when pinioned by such power:
 She clutched him so potentially, as almost made him cower:
 Nay, by exertion of her might—(it must e'en so befall)—
 She bore, and squeezed him near to death 'twixt oaken press and wall.

267.

621

'Ah!' thought half stifled Siegfried—'must I then lose my life
 By potency of wayward maid?—then will full many a wife
 Enforce at every trick and turn, her whims with evil fraught
 Upon her rightful wedded lord,—who had not thereon thought.

268.

622

The king heard all that then took place, and trembled for the knight,
 Who felt abashed at being foiled, as very well he might;
 So calling up his utmost power—he burst her arms apart:
 The struggle then waxed desperate, they felt nor bruise nor smart.

269.

625

The maiden loosed the girdle strings which dangled by her side,
 Hoping therewith to bind the knight—but that his strength defied;
 He caught and threw her with such force, as made all crack, I ween:
 So closed the strife, and she erelong was Gunther's wife and queen.

270.

626

—Said she, 'most kind and gen'rous king—take not my life away;
 'Atonement may be made methinks, for what I did assay:
 'I never more will warfare wage, or scorn your noble love!
 'For now I find that you can rule, and wayward wife improve.'

271.

627

Sir Siegfried then did step aside (the maid lay spiritless)
 As though he had bethought himself, of more appropriate dress!
 But as he went he drew a ring from maiden's hand, I trow
 With such soft cunning, that the queen ne'er felt the jewel go.

272.

628

Moreo'er he took the girdle strong on which she placed such stress!
I know not if the same was ta'en from very wantonness:
Suffice—he gave it to his wife; the gift caused deadly spite.
He gone, king Gunther sought the queen, and passed a happy night.

273.

629

Anon she had no greater strength than any other dame:
But royal Gunther's love she found display more ardent flame.
What if she tried again for rule?— would it of profit prove?
— This change was brought about, I ween, by Gunther's generous love.

L E G E N D VI.

Showing how Siegfried and Chriemhilda are invited to Worms, where a desperate quarrel takes place between Brunhilda and Siegfried's wife.

274.

663

Reports now reached the upper Rhine, which much the folk alarmed,
Of how the knights in Siegmund's land were ever fully armed,
And ready at their monarch's call to meet a daring foe;
King Gunther and his nobles brave, resolved the like to do.

275.

664

Siegfried besides his father's realm, held sway o'er Niblungen,
And was more rich and powerful than any of his kin
Through Schilbung's most heroic knights, and now united land:
—Such made sir Siegfried the bold, o'er-rule with loftier hand.

276.

665

A greater hoard of gems and gold than ever hero wan
(Save Schilbungen from whom it came) had he that dauntless man:
Which, near a mountain in keen fight his stalwart hand acquired.
—Full many a champion, stout in war, through his good sword expired.

277.

666

Great were his victories, and fame! — had he such glory lacked.
The world in justice must have said, 'he was in very fact
'The noblest and the best of knights that e'er crossed back of steed:'
His mighty strength was feared by all, — good sooth! they well had need.

278.

667

Full oft had Gunther's consort thought, with much asperity:
 'How comes it that the dame Chriemhild carries herself so high?
 'Is not her husband Siegfried, of Gunther's lieges, one?
 'Long time methinks that famous knight has scanty service done.'

279.

668

Such thoughts she harboured in her breast, and kept them hidden there:
 Sore vexed was she that they to Worms neglected to repair.
 Besides, he no fee-service did, as liegeman for his land;
 On what account such homage failed, she fain would understand.

280.

669

So, cunningly she pressed the king, to know if it might be,
 That she again the fair Chriemhild in Burgundie could see?
 —But secretly made known to him her feelings on that score:
 He not affirming such broad hint—thus treated her implore,

281.

670

'Think you that they can be constrained' (so did his answer run)
 'To visit us in Burgundie?—the thing's not to be done.
 'Their country is so far from hence, 'twere folly to invite:'
 Opposingly, the queen rejoined with haughtiness and spite,

282.

671

'The vassal, be he who he may, or what his bold career;
 'Dares not his liege-lord disobey when summoned to appear!'
 Gunther could not refrain to smile at Brunhild's feudal law.
 —Service—was alien to his thoughts, whene'er he Siegfried saw.

283.

672

Then said she, 'dear and potent king—vouchsafe to me this boon:
 'Let Siegfried the valiant chief, and fair Chriemhilda, soon
 'Come as akin and bidden guests, unto our Burgundie,
 '—Nothing on earth will e'er afford such perfect joy to me.

284.

673

‘Thy sister’s most engaging ways — and kindly tempered mind,
 ‘So often as I think thereon, I feel their influence kind;
 ‘Gladly remembering how we sat, when I became your wife!
 ‘Chriemhilda may have rightly done to pledge herself for life.’

285.

674

She begged so long and ardently, that Gunther made reply,
 ‘Know then: — I none of all my friends would see so willingly! —
 ‘Your wish may therefore be fulfilled. — I’ll messengers of mine
 ‘Send and request of them to come on visit up the Rhine :

286.

676

‘Moreover’ said the yielding king — ‘thirty of my best men,
 ‘Shall ride unto the Netherlands:’ those knights came, there and then,
 And were dispatched to Siegfried with biddings and salutes:
 — For very joy, the queen Brunhild did give them splendid suits.

287.

677

Then said the king — ‘my trusty knights, this message must ye take;
 “King Gunther cordial greeting sends” (mind you no error make!)
 “To brave and potent Siegfried — and to his sister dear:”
 ‘Adding, that none can love them more, or wish them better cheer.

288.

678

‘And further beg, that both of them, our longings to appease,
 ‘Make haste to Worms; where we engage to do our best to please.
 ‘— Before on-coming equinox, shall they and lieges true
 ‘Find here assembled guests, who will becoming honours do.

289.

679

‘Also, to royal Siegismund, “the king best service sends!”
 ‘Informing him, that self and kin will ever prove his friends;
 ‘Moreover, on my sister urge — that she in nowise fail
 ‘To come unto her kindred dear: — high-feasts, she used to hail!’

290.

680

Brunhild, queen Utie, and such dames as then were at the court,
Sent greetings by the valiant knights who were to make report—
Unto much honoured dames and maids, and many a courtly man.
— At Gunther's wish, the messengers, to fit themselves began.

291.

681

The knights already were attired: their steeds and garmentry
In 'count and quantity were come:— so left they Burgundie.
Then made they speed to reach the place whereto they should resort.
Gunther commanded that the knights should have a due escort.

292.

682

In course of one and twenty days — they reached king Siegmund's land,
And in king Niblung's castle-burgh — pursuant of command —
(It stood within the Norway-march) they found the gallant king:
The steeds and riders were full tired, from distant journeying.

293.

683

Sir Siegfried and his queen Chriemhild were quickly made aware,
Of how brave knights to burgh were come, whose weaponry and gear
Were such as they in Burgundie most usually display:
— Chriemhilda sprang from off the couch, where she reposing lay,

294.

684

Bidding her 'tendant serving-maid, straight to the window go:
She, saw the valiant count Garie within the court below,
Likewise his band of trusty knights, sent on the embassy.
Hella! what pleasing news foreran, the queen's long agony!

295.

685

Thereon said Chriemhild to the king— 'lo! where the knighthood stand,
'Who with count Garie here have come from distant Burgund land,
'Sent by my brother Gunther good, to us on lower Rhine.'
Said Siegfried, 'they shall welcome find in this broad realm of mine.'

296.

686

The maids and pages flocked to where the Burgund knights were seen,
 And singly got in social talk,—they spoke the best I ween
 Of all they knew, and thought would please the new come messengers.
 — King Siegmund too, was glad to see those noble visitors.

297.

687

Apartments were dealt out forthwith, to Garie and his men;
 And their brave steeds were ta'en away:—the messengers went then
 To where king Siegfried and Chriemhild were seated in much state.
 — Free entry being granted them, they had no cause to wait.

298.

688

The brave host and his lovely wife, respecting laws and rights,
 Stood, whilst they courtly audience gave to Garie and his knights
 Who came from Burgundie, and were, king Gunther's liegemen true.
 — To where sir margrave Garie stood, the pages settle drew.

299.

689

Said he, 'may't please you! we'll disclose our message e'er we sit,
 'That so, e'en weary travellers, no duteous form omit.
 'Bearers we are of friendly news—such as to us did give
 'King Gunther, and Brunhild his queen; who in great splendour live.

300.

693

'They are,' continued Garie bold (he was of noble mind),
 'With all exaltedness of soul, to joyousness inclined;
 'And by us invitations send to grand festivities:—
 '— That they desire your presence much—is passing all surmise.

301.

694

'Also, they beg that queen Chriemhild may come along with you,
 'Soon as bleak winter's frosts and snows have vanished from our view.
 'They both expect ere equinox — your highnesses to see.'
 Said potent Siegfried, 'methinks! such jaunt can hardly be.'

302.

696

Garie rejoined, 'our queen Brunhild, and all the dames at court,
 'Rejoice already in the hope, that you'll thereto resort:
 'Expectancy of seeing both, makes them of buoyant mood.'
 — The pleasing news Chriemhilda heard, and thought it very good.

303.

697

Garie was of her near akin: the host now bade him sit:
 Nor longer was delayed to hand the 'wassail cup and bit';
 Moreo'er, the messengers to see, came royal Siegismund,
 Who thus addressed in gentle words the warriors of Burgund.

304.

698

'Liegemen of Gunther and brave knights, I gladly welcome ye!
 'Since that my son received for wife, the maid of Burgundie;
 'It much had pleased me, had you paid more visits to this land,
 'In that you bear towards us in sooth — right friendly heart and hand.'

305.

699

The knights replied — 'if so your wish, we'll come with readiness.'
 — Such kind reception freed them from, much of their weariness.
 Each messenger was now required, to take himself a seat;
 And in profusion were served out, most costly wines and meat.

306.

700

The embassy was forced to stay for nine full days I trow;
 At length the watchful messengers 'gan restlessness to show,
 Because they were not yet dismissed, to ride to Burgundie:
 — The reason was, the king would erst, some absent nobles see;

307.

701

To whom he said, 'good counsel give! — I'm bidden up the Rhine
 'By Gunther, king of Burgundie, a valued friend of mine;
 'Also by divers more akin — unto state-festival!
 '— I certes am inclined to go, but that 'tis far withal.

308.

702

‘They also ask, that queen Chriemhild consent with me to ride:
 ‘Good counsel give my trusty friends!—do you the case decide.
 ‘For sake of them I’d war-march make through thirty hostile lands!
 ‘—They free-will services might claim at royal Siegfried’s hands.’

309.

703

The chiefs replied, ‘since you incline unto the great convive,
 ‘We willingly at your request this caution-counsel give:
 ‘Ride you escorted by brave knights—a thousand if not more:
 ‘So will you enter Burgund-land with dignity, and power.’

310.

704

Then spake the good lord Siegmund—late king of Netherland:
 ‘Why was the matter kept from me when you the journey planned?
 ‘—If that I do not much intrude—I’ll ride along with you!
 ‘And with my hundred gallant knights increase the retinue.’

311.

705

‘And wilt thou ride along with us?—my dear and honoured sire!
 ‘Then shall I feel increase of joy, and your resolve admire.
 ‘Within twelve current days from this, we leave these fertile meads.’
 —To all who chose to ride with him, he gave new clothes, and steeds!

312.

706

When that the noble Siegfried had shaped his mind to go;
 The stranger-knights were made aware, that they might ride, I trow,
 Bearing the news to his wife’s kin who dwelt in Burgundie,
 That they with joyousness prepared, at Gunther’s feast to be.

313.

707

King Siegfried and the fair Chriemhild, as ancient records say,
 Gave to the messengers much more than they could take away
 Unto their distant Rhenish homes: he was a wealthy man!
 —The sturdy sumpters being packed, were driven to the van.

314.

708

Siegfried and Siegmund clothed their folk, in manner splendidly;
And Eckewart the courtly count, did order speedily
Female attire of ev'ry sort — the best that was in hand,
Or could be bought, or made within the breadth of Siegfried's land.

315.

709

Saddles and shields were then prepared, with gladsome diligence:
And to such dames and gallant knights, as rode with Siegfried thence,
Was given whate'er they might require, or fancy could suggest:
— He took with him to Rhenish Worms full many a stately guest.

316.

710

The messengers did ride apace, along the public way:—
At length did enter Burgundie, the count and his array,
And were right joyfully received: they now alighted all
From neighing horse and trampling steed, before king Gunther's hall.

317.

711

The young and old (as custom is in many a foreign land)
Were busy asking 'what's the news?'—said Garie, brave and bland,
'When I've my mission told the king—the latest you will ken!
—He, and his comrades went forthwith, to where the king was then.

318.

712

King Gunther, from excess of joy, sprang from his regal chair;
And for that they were quickly back—Brunhilda spake them fair.
Then said the ruler to the knights—resuming chair of state:
'How fares the valiant Siegfried who did us service great?'

319.

713

Quoth margrave Garie—'they, indeed, for very joy waxed red—
'Siegfried, so well as queen Chriemhild.—never did message spread
'More gladness, or was better ta'en when widely understood,
'Than yours—by Siegfried and Chriemhild—and Siegmund the good.'

320.

714

Then said the queen Brunhild unto the noble Rhenish count:
 'Does Chriemhild come?— and has her form, which she erewhile was wont
 'To guard and foster with such care, maintained its comeliness?'
 '—She will undoubtedly appear!' said Garie with address.

321.

715

Queen Utie wished the gallant count should visit her also:
 — Without enquiry one may guess, what she desired to know;
 Namely, how with Chriemhild it fared, and if her health did thrive?
 — He told her how he found the queen, and that she'd soon arrive.

322.

716

Nor failed they to inform the court— touching the gifts received
 In clothes, and gold, and ornaments, from rich king Siegefried.
 — The whole was openly displayed before the court and kings,
 Who praised the act, and much admired the very splendid things.

323.

717

'He well may give!' stern Hagen said, 'with very sumptuousness;
 'For he can't spend a titling of the wealth he doth possess.
 'The 'hoard of Niblungen' he has, — made his, by his own hands.
 'What if that hoard should some day get into our Burgund land!'

324.

718

The household of the Rhenish king were very much elate,
 At prospect of their coming soon.— then worked without abate
 The craftsmen of the brother-kings, as could they never tire.
 — Full many a stately chair was made, pursuant of desire.

325.

721

Now pass we o'er the toils and plagues of servants and their aids,
 To treat of how the queen Chriemhild together with her maids
 Rode from the land of Niblungen unto fair Burgundie.
 — Never did sturdy sumpters' backs bear such rich garmentry!

326.

722

Many a featly packing-chest was sent on by the road.
Sir Siegfried and his knightly friends, their pawing steeds bestrode:
And fair Chriemhilda mounted horse with bosom buoyancy!
— Hereafter all was changed, and they, felt heart-despondency.

327.

723

They left behind them Siegfried's child, — his son by queen Chriemhild:
There must have been good cause, I ween, or they had not so willed.
— From their state-progress did occur for him disaster sore:
Poor innocent! — he never saw father or mother more!

328.

724

King Siegmund and his hundred knights did also with them ride:
Ah, — had he known or but surmised, what horrors would betide
After that time, from that same feast, — he ne'er had rode thereto.
— His grief for loss of loving friends was manifold and true.

329.

725

Runners — were ordered on before, the tidings to convey:
Their progress known, queen Utie's friends, and Gunther's court-array,
Rode off to meet the royal guests — a splendid company!
Gunther himself at home prepared, to greet them royally.

330.

726

He went unto the chambers where Brunhilda held command:
'How did my sister welcome you — when you came to this land?
' — In selfsame way must you receive the gallant Siegfried's wife.'
'That will I readily' said she, 'my love towards her is rife!'

331.

728

Thereon she told her dames and maids immediately to seek,
The best apparel they possessed, — or richer sort bespeak:
For such her retinue should wear in presence of the guests!
— They followed willingly I trow, — their mistress's behests.

332.

730

The royal strangers were received with jubilating joy!—
 None thought that Chriemhild heretofore, did such bland wit employ
 To welcome unto Burgundie king Gunther's wife Brunhild:
 The hearts of all who saw the sight, were with true gladness filled.

333.

731

In view, arrived lord Siegfried, with many a famous knight:
 One saw that hero's train advance — wending now left, now right,
 Over the intervening fields, joined by a multitude:
 There, none could 'scape the crowding strong, or stifling dust elude.

334.

732

When Siegismund and Siegfried towards Gunther drew more near,
 He greeted them with kindest look, and words that bode good cheer.
 'Right cordially I welcome you — so do my other friends!
 'Forsure, your coming to our court, good-will, with gladness blends.'

335.

733

'God prosper you!' said Siegismund, the venerated man:
 'Since that my son, brave Siegfried, you high-prized friendship wan,
 'It's ever been my full intent to visit Burgundie.'
 — Said Gunther king of upper Rhine — 'I thank your courtesy!'

336.

735

Now did the wife of either king — approach to greet I ween,
 And many saddles lost their loads: for maids of sprightly mien
 Aided by watchful heroes' arms, jumped boldly to the grass:
 Right active were such noble knights, as well love pretty lass!

337.

736

The twain of lovely queens did then — salute by close embrace;
 One saw high joyfulness appear on many a chieftain's face,
 For that the meeting had gone off so very lovingly.
 Accomplished knights did wait upon — fair dames, attentively.

338.

737

The retinue on either side, held out the friendly hand,
And seemed reciprocally moved by impulse pure and bland,
Whilst loving kisses passed between the ladies of each court.
— Gunther and Siegfried's valiant knights, felt gladdened in right sort.

339.

738

They whiled no longer on that spot — but rode forthwith to Worms:
The royal host would amply prove by kindnesses and forms,
That they were worthily received by him in Burgundie.
— Some knightly pastimes much amused the maidens of degree.

340.

740

Stout shields did ring and rattle loud, before the castle gate,
From warded thrust and well aimed blow: the host and guests did wait
Long time, to see and praise the sport, ere they did enter in:
The hour passed rapidly away 'midst the amusing din!

341.

741

Now to the Rhine-king's palace broad, the cavalcadors moved:
New housings of great brilliancy, and cut the most approved,
Were seen o'er saddles (whereon rode the stately dames and maids)
Hanging down low: — then did advance king Gunther's courtly aids.

342.

742

Erelong, the noble guests were shown to resting-rooms, I ween:
One saw Brunhilda now and then, cast glances searching keen
At queen Chriemhild, whose colour was more brilliant than before:
— Her lustrous beauty far outshone the burnished gold she wore.

343.

744

The company within, and out, were feasted bounteously; —
Never did guests from distant lands receive more courtesy! —
Their will, they'd but to utter once, and what they willed was there!
King Gunther's treasure was so great, that all got sumptuous fare.

344.

745

The serving-men, with readiness, displayed their waiting-wit;
 And royal Gunther at the board amongst his guests did sit.
 Sir Siegfried was appointed to where he had sat ere then:
 Unto the table went with him a host of stately men.

345.

746

Twelve hundred knights with Siegfried sat, each one of lofty mien,
 In circle at the banqueting:—then did Brunhild the queen
 Bethink herself, that no king's liege was ever half so grand!
 Still was she towards him so inclined, that she no mischief planned.

346.

747

One evening, while as yet the king remained at festive board,
 Were many costly dresses soiled;—for wine on them was poured
 By sewers who oft to table went, stout tankards to re-fill:—
 Then, was abundant service done by most officious skill!

347.

748

As usual at grand banquetings—where mirth to wine gives zest,
 The dames and maidens were besought to take themselves to rest.
 Then did the host shew every one—hail from what land he would—
 His grace and hospitality,—by doings passing good!

348.

749

Soon as the nightly hours were fled, and morning dawned again,
 The sumpter-chests were rummaged o'er, and many a dress was ta'en
 Sparkling with gems and jewelry, by gentle ladies hands,
 To be then worn, pursuant of their mistress's commands.

349.

750

And ere it might be called broad-day, there came from palace-hall
 Full many a knight and spruce esquire:—just then was heard o'er all
 The matin mass 'fore Gunther sung by many a pious lip:
 He after, lauded youthful knights—for their bold horsemanship.

350.

751

Anon, was trumpet's clangour heard in many a mighty blast,
And sound of hoarsely rumbling drums, and pipes of shrillest cast,
Echoed through all the streets of Worms; and waked the public road.
— The stately knights with one accord their prancing steeds bestrode.

351.

752

Then did take place grand tournament, effected by brave knights;
In which was many a tilting bout, with all its thrusts and smites.
Such heartened up more stripling blood, and divers jousts were run
By youthful knights who ne'er before—in public—feat had done.

352.

753

Within the jutting window sat the twain queens to look on,
Eke dames and pretty noble maids: their clothes with jewels shone.
Thence saw they all the jousting sports—and what not more beside;
— The host and his selected friends, themselves, began to ride.

353.

754

Sweetly the time did while away—for no one marked the hour;
Anon, was heard the bell to prayers, sounding from minster-tower:
Spruce grooms brought out the palfrey stud, that all mightride from thence;
And the two queens were tended on by knights of consequence.

354.

755

They all alighted near church door—where greensward was close shorn:
Brunhild as yet unto her guests had not shown spleen or scorn.
Then entered they the minster-choir, wearing their crowns of state:
From that day friendship had an end!—the cause was envious hate.

355.

756

Soon as the mass was sung and o'er, they mounted steed again,
And rode off with much stateliness:—one saw the queens and train
Go briskly to the banqueting, within the ample hall,
Untill the eleventh day had come, did last that festival.

356.

757

One day—'twas just at vesper hour, unusual noise was heard,
 Proceeding from the castle-court, where all would have the word:
 They were engaged on tilting bouts—the time to while away.
 To see them many a man ran out, eke many a lady gay.

357.

758

Together sat, in pensive mood, the two illustrious queens,
 Watching the twain accomplished knights display their ways and means.
 At length Chriemhilda silence broke: 'such is my Siegesfried,
 'That o'er these lands he ought to sway by right of martial deed!'

358.

759

Thereto said queen Brunhild with scorn, 'such chance could never be,
 'Unless of all the peopled world none lived but you and he:
 '—Then, might this realm beyond a doubt fall to his keen embrace!
 'But whilst my Gunther lives and moves—that never can take place.'

359.

760

Chriemhild rejoined with emphasis, 'behold him standing there!
 '—Now moving gracefully before those knights beyond compare,
 'Like as the brightly shining moon leads on the starry host!—
 'Possessing such a perfect chief, have I not cause to boast?'

360.

761

Then said Brunhild, 'however great your husband be in deed,
 'Or beauty, or in stateliness—yet must you let precede
 'My Gunther, bravest of the brave,—your brother high by birth.
 'He ought, and ever shall be placed 'fore all kings of the earth.'

361.

762

Then said Chriemhilda, bridling up, 'right worthy is my man!
 'And I have grounds for all the praise I've given to him, or can.
 'His many glorious feats are famed, through countries far and near:
 'Trust me, Brunhild! king Siegfried is Gunther's full compeer.

362.

763

‘You might, methinks, put trust in me, and not show wilfulness:
 ‘For what I’ve said, I’ve certain ground—his own words, nothing less!
 ‘I heard them each acknowledge it, when first I both did see—
 ‘Then,—when it was king Gunther’s will, to match himself ’gainst me.

363.

764

‘When that he had my unpledged love so knightly won i’th’ ring,
 ‘I heard sir Siegfried own that he was liegeman to the king!
 ‘Therefore his vassal doing fee, I’ve held him ever since.’
 ‘Then were I,’ said the fair Chriemhild, ‘allied to a pretence!

364.

765

‘But that can’t be:—does Brunhild think, when suitors were so rife,
 ‘My brother would with base intent—make me his vassal’s wife?
 ‘—Henceforth I beg of queen Brunhild—and that in friendship too—
 ‘That she desist from sland’rous tales, marring our interview.’

365.

766

‘I’ll not desist!’ said queen Brunhild, ‘but reassert my rights:
 ‘What? dost thou think that I’ll resign so many useful knights
 ‘Who with this spouse of thine, to us—are vassals owing gage?’
 Thereat, the beautiful Chriemhild could not suppress her rage:

366.

767

‘You must desist—to make such claim, shows principle impure:
 ‘No service you shall have from him.—he’s more deserving sure
 ‘Than Gunther, noble good and brave, and eke my brother kind.
 ‘Desist, Brunhild, for what you’ve said, I most insulting find.

367.

768

‘Moreo’er—if he thy liegeman were, is it not marvellous,
 ‘That you possessing regal right of rule o’er both of us,
 ‘He, for a train of many years, no services should do?
 ‘By right of rank I’ll brook no more, such haughtiness from you!’

368.

769

Then said king Gunther's wife with spleen, 'yourself you overrate!
 'Sooth, I will test the matter home, and clearly demonstrate
 'Which of us two most homage gets, when we in public meet.'
 — Both wives now felt their once calm hearts with vengeful choler beat.

369.

770

Chriemhild rejoined with growing wrath, 'so must, so shall it be!
 'Since you pronounce my honoured lord but liegeman of degree,
 'This day before the retinues of both the kings I'll show,
 'That I, preceding Gunther's wife—to minster-church will go!'

370.

773

Said queen Brunhild, 'since you dispute, your husband's vassallage,
 'You must henceforth detach your suite from my court-appanage,
 'When that we to the minster-church in full procession go.'
 Chriemhilda answered, 'by the mass! it shall be even so.

371.

774

'Now clothe ye well my maidens all,'—said Siegfried's loyal wife,
 'To be outshone by her escort, I would not for my life!—
 'You must display the costliest gear, to damp her jealousy:
 '—I willingly would make her feel the insult passed on me.'

372.

775

They readily such mandate took, and donned their richest clothes:
 Full many a dame and smiling maid, wore splendid robe and hose.
 The noble Gunther's beauteous wife went forward with her train,
 So richly was Chriemhild attired, that all description's vain!

373.

777

The people thought it very strange, and wondered what could cause
 The queens to separate their trains, like two competitors,
 And why they did not as before proceed in equal line:
 Thereat, did many a loyal knight feel sorrow, and repine.

374.

778

Now saw one Gunther's wife, and maids, waiting at minster-porch,
And many a knight, to while the time, ere yet they entered church,
Jeering and joking ladies fair, whom they had known before:
Just then arrived Chriemhild and suite, unto the minster's door.

375.

779

Whatever highborn maid had worn in room, or public view,
Was nothing to the splendid gear of Chriemhild's retinue.
Herself was so superbly dressed, that thirty royal wives
Could not have matched what she had on, in course of all their lives.

376.

780

Had any one desired to tell — he had poor effort made
To picture well the pride and pomp, of jewelry displayed,
Which then adorned Chriemhilda's train of noble maids and dames:
— Had it not been to vex Brunhild, she had not used those claims.

377.

781

Yet, stood before the minster-porch the twain of queens, in state;
When the proud hostess, fair Brunhild, with rudeness passing great,
Commanded Chriemhild, 'stand aside!' in tone with rancour rife:
'The queen of Burgundie must pass, before the liegeman's wife.'

378.

782

Then said Chriemhilda angrily (excited was her soul),
'Couldst thou have held thy haughty tongue, then better were thy dole:
'— Thou hast disgraced by deed of thine thy body's purity! —
'Strange, that another's wanton should a good king's consort be!'

379.

783

'Whom do you charge with wantonness?' said royal Gunther's wife.
'You! you!' rejoined Chriemhilda fair — 'thy body, beauty-rife,
'Thou gav'st to gallant Siegfried, my husband: by some plot:
'Twas not my brother Gunther who thy earliest favours got!

380.

784

‘Where were thy haughty feelings then?— ’twas base craft, on my word,
 ‘To let him woo successfully, who is but vassal lord!
 ‘—I hear you without cause complain!’—so said enraged Chriemhild.
 ‘Truly, the king shall know of this!’—rejoined the fair Brunhild.

381.

785

‘What can that hurt or trouble me? thy pride hath led thee wrong;
 ‘My bitter censure thou’st acquired— through ill-directed tongue.
 ‘This know, for an unvarnished truth reluctantly expressed:
 ‘Friendship, and confidence towards thee—no longer warm my breast.’

382.

786

Brunhilda’s tears began to flow:—but Chriemhild onward went,
 Taking precedence of the queen, with her state-complement,
 Into the minster’s choir to prayers:—a raging hate ensued;
 Full many a brilliant eye was there, by briny tears subdued.

383.

787

How ever much ‘the Lord’ was served by masses and by song,
 Brunhilda thought the service done, was every bit too long;
 For she was truly woe-begone in body, heart, and mind:
 That early brought to many a knight—the doom of all mankind!

384.

788

Brunhilda and her female train made halt without the porch:
 She thought: ‘now shall Chriemhild say more, ere she does quit the church,
 ‘Of what I have been charged withal by that tongue-wounding wife:
 ‘Has Siegfried boasted of such deed—it surely costs his life!

385.

789

On came the noble queen Chriemhild, with many a valiant knight:
 To her, enraged Brunhilda said, ‘I say you halt! of right.
 ‘You’ve taxed me with lasciviousness:— give vouchers instantly!
 ‘—From your unfounded charges I’ve received great injury.’

386.

790

Then said Chriemhild, 'unworthy dame! — you might have let me go.
'— Behold a voucher in the gold I on my finger show!
'That — brought to me lord Siegfried from bed whereon you lay.'
— Never did Brunhild in her life endure so sad a day.

387.

791

Said she, 'that ring of virgin gold was filched from me by night!
'And for these many years has been close hidden from my sight:
'Now get I on the certain track of who has been the thief.'
The twain of highly beauteous wives did fume beyond belief.

388.

792

Then said Chriemhild, 'I will not bear the odium of a thief! —
'You might have held your naughty tongue, had character been lief.
'— I further prove what I have said — by girdle I have on:
'And that I'm not with falsehood charged — Siegfried your favours won!'

389.

793

The girdle was of richest silk that came from Niniveh —
With precious jewels interwrought: 'twas dazzling bright to see.
When queen Brunhild the cord beheld, she was o'erwhelmed by tears.
The matter now of course would meet Gunther's and liegemen's ears.

390.

794

Then said Brunhilda sobbingly, 'fetch quickly unto me
'The noble monarch of the Rhine, that he hear presently
'How I've been grossly slandered by his sister, big with strife:
'She publicly asserts that I have been sir Siegfried's wife!'

391.

795

The king came promptly with his knights, and pensively beheld
His heart's-affection bathed in tears: then said he to Brunhild,
'Tell me much loved and honoured queen — what causeth grief to thee?'
She made reply with earnestness, 'I well in grief may be!

392.

796

'Thy sister with malicious spite, and consummate disdain,
 'Would rob me of my high repute—of that do I complain.
 'She says that I have wantonned with her husband Siegfried!
 Said Gunther of the Rhine, 'if so—she hath done evil deed!'

393.

797

'Moreo'er, she wears a girdle rich, which whilom I have lost,—
 'Also a golden ring much prized. I do and ever must
 'Repent that I was born:—O king! remove this scandal great;
 'Or by my troth I never will be more thy loving mate!'

394.

798

Thereon said Gunther king of Rhine, 'bid hither Siegfried!
 'Has he such brawling braggart been, he must be base indeed:
 'If not—the king of Netherlands the slander will deny!
 —The hero Siegfried very soon with many knights drew nigh.

395.

799

Lord Siegfried when he beheld the queens disconsolate
 (He knew not of the tale as yet) did thus interrogate:
 'Why loudly weep these royal wives? I'd know whereon 'tis based?
 'Or on what grounds I'm bidden here in such unseemly haste?'

396.

800

Said Gunther, kind and courteously, 'great sorrow doth prevail!
 'My wife Brunhild has told to me a truly wond'rous tale:
 'She says you've boasted openly of having her first love.
 'So has Chriemhilda told to her;—hast thou such scandal wove?'

397.

801

'Not I!' said dauntless Siegfried, 'and did she so what say,
 'She sorely shall repent thereof,—and that without delay.
 'Suffice—before these worthy knights I solemnly aver,
 'And vouch by sacred oath, that I—ne'er told the like to her!'

398.

804

Siegfried resumed, 'and should she more be cause of poignant grief
'Unto your fair and noble wife — a conduct past belief! —
'Then be assured that I shall feel most grievous heart-lament.'
The knighthood towards each other cast glances of wonderment.

399.

805

Said Siegfried, 'wives however fair should be well schooled I ween,
'That they all wantonness of speech suppress, as likewise spleen.
'Do you instruct your charming wife — forsure I'll tutor mine!
'I truly am ashamed and vexed — at this fray feminine!'

LEGEND VII.

Showing how Tronyie Hagen plans the death of Siegfried, he having obtained the secret of his vulnerable spot from Chriemhilda.

400.

806

In earnest converse went away full many a dame and man,
But queen Brunhild to sob and sigh most woefully began;
Such did amongst king Gunther's men a strong compassion rouse:
Just then came Hagen, Tronyie's chief, to visit Gunther's spouse.

401.

808

Eke Gerenot and Ortewin, with half expended breath,
Would join the council of the chiefs, concerning Siegfried's death—
Moreover Giselher so bland, the handsome Utie's son:
Who, having heard the thing discussed—thus spake his mind thereon,

402.

809

'Right noble and potential knights—why will you so decide?
'Truly sir Siegfried's services deserve not such betide,
'As that he should clandestinely be plundered of his life
'For slight offence, which keenly touched an irritated wife.'

403.

810

'Shall we then nurture bastards here?' said Hagen with great wrath:
'That, would not bring much honour to us knights of spotless birth!
'For what unjustly he has said about our monarchs wife,
'He dies! and that by Hagen's hand—or Hagen yields his life.'

404.

812

Then spake with malice preconceived,— the Metz born Ortewin:
‘May not his superhuman strength yield to keen javelin?
‘With your accord illustrious chiefs, I’ll do the daring deed!’
—The chiefs decided wickedly,— that Siegfried should bleed.

405.

813

But no one meddled more therein—save Hagen, who I wis
Day after day urged Gunther on, by wily speech like this:
‘Were we once quit of Siegfried, then would submit, I guess,
‘To you great portion of his lands.’—the king felt great distress,

406.

815

And said, ‘abandon knight I pray, your fierce and murd’rous rage:
‘The worthy chief was born, methinks, to be our shield and gage!
‘—Besides, of such o’erpow’ring strength is he, the valiant knight,
‘That if but auguring deceit,— none would his wrath excite.’

407.

816

‘Be of stout heart my honoured lord!’ said Hagen much elate:
‘I take upon myself to venge Brunhilda’s sorrows great,
‘So secretly, and yet to sure, that he shall sore repent.
‘His death by Hagen’s hand will be —but righteous chastisement.’

408.

817

Then said the king of Burgundie, ‘how bring you that about?’—
Hagen thus readily replied, ‘now will I ease your doubt!
‘We plan that messengers arrive, to all in Worms unknown,
‘Announcing publicly a war against your realm and crown.

409.

818

‘Then must you say unto your guests, to march I do propose,
‘With all my forces ’gainst the foe: that done, sir Siegfried glows
‘To take the field—and proffers help!—then loses he his life;
‘For by that stratagem I get— ‘the secret’ from his wife.’

410.

819

Untowardly, king Gunther took that counsel all too lief.
 This artful piece of treachery was practised on the chief
 In such a close and hidden way, that none the plot surmised.
 —Through spiteful quarrel of two wives — death many a knight surprised!

411.

820

On the fourth morning, thirty-two strange horsemen came to Worms.
 The news thereof was quickly spread throughout the wond'ring swarms,
 That they were come from distant foes — announcing instant war!
 Through that base lie, fair maids and wives, much grief and sorrow saw.

412.

821

Permission was accorded them — before the king to go:
 They said they were king Lud'ger's men — who met such overthrow
 In former years, by brave effect of Siegfried's potency,
 And who was brought by him, with more, enthralled to Burgundie!

413.

822

Thereon did Gunther greet those guests, and motioned them to sit:
 The spokesman said, 'grant us to stand! such would not well befit,
 'Until we've told unto the king, the errand we are on.
 'Sire, you have foes! — that's known, alas, to many a mother's son.

414.

823

'Lud'ger and Ludegast declare against you open war!
 'For that in bygone times you were their foe, and conqueror:
 'Therefore they will invade forthwith your realm of Burgundie.'
 — The king appeared to be in wrath at their hostility.

415.

824

The simulated messengers were to their chambers shewn.
 How could king Siegfried surmise conspiracy eftsoon,
 Or any of his knights suppose that treachery was meant?
 — Upon themselves hereafter fell the woes of that attent.

416.

825

Gunther, in talk with chosen friends, sought solace for his breast;
 But Tronyie Hagen would not let the anxious king have rest.
 Still Gunther's friends had verily, defeated the base plot,
 Had Hagen not, from counsel given—refused to swerve a jot.

417.

826

Siegfried one day surprised the chiefs in whispering debate;
 Then said the king o'th' Netherland's, 'I pray to me relate
 'What makes brave Gunther and his chiefs so sorrowfully throng?
 '—I proffer to support your cause, if you have suffered wrong.'

418.

827

Thereto, said Gunther of the Rhine, 'in sooth I've sadly fared!
 'For Ludeger and Ludegast have open war declared,
 'And meditate with fire and sword to desolate our land!'
 The truly valiant knight rejoined, 'that shall sir Siegfried's hand

419.

828

'Prevent with readiness, and do you honour furthermore!
 'I'll castigate those doughty knights, in manner as before,
 'Taking their castles, burghs, and lands—eke knights you so much dread,
 'E'er I consent to sheathe the sword: thereto, I pledge my head!

420.

829

'Yourself and heroes shall abide, to guard your home and fame,
 'And I will take the field alone with those who with me came.
 'That willingly I service do, shall very soon be seen.—
 'Your foes by me will be so scourged, as ne'er before has been.'

421.

830

Thereon, said Gunther, Burgund's king, 'I'm cheered by what you say:'
 As if he honestly were glad of Siegfried's pledged array.
 The king low bowed unto the knight, with consummate deceit.
 Said Siegfried, 'you may banish care!—the foe I shall defeat.'

422.

831

They and their servants movement made as if about to leave:
 But such was only done, I ween, sir Siegfried to deceive.
 Now did the king of Netherlands enjoin his men prepare
 Their coats-of-mail, their bossy shields, and implements of war.

423.

832

Then said sir Siegfried to Siegmund, 'my dear and honoured sire!
 'I counsel that you here remain: if God goodluck inspire,
 'We shall ere long be back again, unto the river Rhine:
 'At Gunther's court, whilst I'm away — right joyous days be thine!'

424.

833

The royal banner was unfurled, and they would ride from thence.
 Many of Gunther's knights knew not of that base war-pretence;
 For they had not the story heard which caused the armament.
 — One saw that many serving-men were with lord Siegfried sent.

425.

834

The battle-helms and coats-of-mail, were to the chargers bound;
 And many a knight was now equipped, to march at trumpet's sound.
 Thereon, did Tronyie Hagen go unto Chriemhild the fair
 To take his leave, — for that with them he rode to the affair.

426.

835

'Thrice happy me!' Chriemhilda said, 'that I should get for lord,
 'One, who my dearest kin and friends can such support accord,
 'As doth lord Siegfried for those, I, in my heart hold dear.
 'Therefore,' so said the loyal queen, 'I'll be of right good cheer!'

427.

836

'Brave Hagen, Tronyie's matchless chief! I prithee ruminat
 'That I have e'er befriended you, and never borne you hate.
 'I now from you expect requite, in kindness to my spouse;
 '— It should not damage him, that I, did Brunhild's anger rouse.'

428.

838

Said he, 'ere long, to queen Brunhild you will be reconciled.
'Now tell me Chriemhild, virtuous wife' (so was the fair beguiled)
'How I may favour render thee, with reference to thy lord?—
'I am his friend — your wish of course, I'll readily accord.'

429.

839

'I should not feel, or care, or fear,'— so spake the loving wife—
'That in the battle's onslaught ought might jeopardize his life,
'Would he forego the keen pursuit, his courage goads him to;
'Then, to the good and valiant knight no peril could ensue.'

430.

840

'Princess!'— said Hagen, 'you do feel no small anxiety
'Least he should be unfairly slain?— then tell I pray to me,
'In what best way I may secure your spouse 'gainst ill-betide;
'— I'll be to him a guardian true, whether he walk or ride.'

431.

841

Said she, 'thou art my cousin bold — as I thy near akin!
'Therefore on grounds of kindred-love, and loyalty within,
'I trust that thou wilt watchful heed — and guard my husband dear.'
— She told to him the secret-tale; for he had lulled her fear.

432.

842

Said she, 'my Siegfried is bold, and gifted with much strength!
'— When he the fierce hill-dragon slew, of such enormous length,
'He bathed him in the monster's blood — which gave his skin a charm:
'Since then, in warfare as in peace, — no weapon does him harm.

433.

843

'Yet have I tribulation great when he to battle goes—
'And javelins fly from every side, hurled by his foreign foes,
'That through chance-cast, or unseen stab, I lose my better-part:
'— Alas! for him what pangful cares I carry in my heart.

434.

844

‘Now tell I, on thy loyalty, my confidential friend,
 ‘(The more that thou be honour-pledged to serve me to that end)
 ‘Where Siegfried vulnerable is — to weapon’s deadly point:
 ‘Keep hid the tale — by love and faith and constancy, conjoint!

435.

845

‘When from the dragon’s wounds did flow its red and boiling blood,
 ‘And he, the knight, did bathe himself within the crimson flood;
 ‘Between his shoulders fixed a leaf, that fell from linden tree:
 ‘There is he mortal! — for that spot, I feel anxiety.’

436.

846

Said Tronyie Hagen, ‘I advise, that you forthwith do sew
 ‘Upon his garment some small mark; thereby, I well may know
 ‘How I can best protect your lord amid the conflict’s din.’
 — She purposed to preserve his life — but let foul treachery in.

437.

847

Said she, ‘with finest silk I’ll work upon his garment’s back
 ‘A little unpretending cross; he therefore will not lack
 ‘Thy guardian hand to shield him when the battle is most hot,
 ‘And he, in search of victory, amidst the foe has got.’

438.

848

‘That will I do!’ said Hagen bold, ‘my dear and honoured queen!’
 She thought that she had wisely done, and helped her spouse, I ween,
 But what she hoped would benefit — did but her lord betray.
 Stout Hagen courteously took leave — and smiling went his way.

439.

849

Thereon, the king-conspirators were in right cheerful vein.
 I guess that never valiant knight will do the like again,
 For Hagen’s treach’rous guile was such, as none had ever seen —
 Failing in loyalty and faith towards man, and lovely queen!

440.

850

Next morning, by the rise of sun, sir Siegfried rode away
With thousand of his trusty knights — right full of joy were they.
He thought on how he should revenge his friends on Ludeger:
— Stout Hagen rode so close, that he, saw what was worked by her.

441.

851

So, having satisfied himself, he slyly sent therefrom,
Order, that by two messengers, opposing news should come, —
Stating, that Gunther had received accounts from Ludeger;
Who now desired to foster peace, and not 'gainst Burgund stir!

442.

852

So vexed was Siegfried to return unto the court at Worms
Before he had a battle fought, and forced the foe to terms, —
That Gunther's men had much ado to cause him halt his ranks:
He rode forthwith unto the king — who loaded him with thanks.

443.

853

'God prosper you! sir Siegfried — my stanch and worthy friend,
'For that you did so willingly ride forth my realm to fend:
'I much your debtor must remain for that high gallantry! —
'More confidence I place in you, than Burgund's chivalry.

444.

854

'Now since we've done with sanguine war and all its dire alarms,
'I purpose that in Wasgau-wood we try the joyous charms
'Of hunting swine and bears and wolves — as I have done before.'
— Eke *that* did Hagen's heart dictate — malignant at its core!

445.

855

'And be my worthy friends and guests informed without delay,
'That I do ride at early dawn: — those who with me away,
'Must quickly be prepared to go; — who choose to stay at Worms,
'May courtly entertain the fair: — each, to my wish conforms.'

446.

856

Then said the noble Siegfried with frankest courtesy,
'Since that your highness hunting goes, I 'midst your train will be!
'But first from you a tracks-man good, and divers hounds I crave,
'That I, with gain, hunt Wasgau-wood, and every danger brave.'

447.

857

'And is one huntsman not enough,' said Gunther readily,
'I'll give you four who know the wood — its ev'ry path and tree;
'Eke holes, and dells, and open lairs, where savage game resort:
'That so you come not home again complaining of, no sport.'

448.

858

Then rode the gallant knight to where he queen Chriemhilda found.
— Hagen informed the king, I ween, before he left the ground
How he proposed to circumvent the bland and valiant prince.
— Forsure, such perfidy the world ne'er knew, before, or since.

L E G E N D VIII.

Showing how Siegfried was induced to hunt: — his success, and the merry story of the bear amongst the cooks; Siegfried's race with Hagen: also his death by Hagen's hand.

449.

859

Hagen and Gunther, two bold knights rash in resolves and deeds,
Determined in the wood to hunt, with gallant hounds and steeds,
And spears of strength well topped with steel, the ur-ox, swine, and bear:
— What could be nobler sport for those who gory warfare dare?

861

*Siegfried before he rode from thence, to Chriemhild's chamber went.
His splendid hunting-gear was packed, and on stout sumpters sent
Along with theirs: — it was their mind to cross the river Rhine.
Chriemhilda never felt such cause for sorrow, and repine.*

862

*He planted kisses on the lips of her, his bosom's wealth! —
'God grant,' he said, 'when I return, I find thee in glad health;
'And I be so in thy bright eyes: — with thine akin thou'lt find
'Abundant joy, whilst I'm away: — I can't well stay behind.'*

863

*Now crossed her mind 'the secret mark' (she feared to make all known)
Which she to Tronyie Hagen told: — then did she much bemoan
That ever it was her hard lot to have been born with life!
Right bitterly did weep and sob, that wond'rous handsome wife.*

*At length, she to the hero said, 'my lord, hunt not to day!
 'I dreamed last night that o'er a heath you would pursue the prey,
 'When twain of wildboars gave you chase: the field-flowers all turned red!
 '— On that account my tears do flow, — I'm overwhelmed by dread!*

*'I do forebode some dire mishap may spring from counsel bad;
 'For when unpurposed-ill has made another's spirit sad,
 'Revenge will rankle in the mind, and in fair bosom bide! —
 'Go not, dear lord! — remain at Worms! let my just fears decide.'*

*'My only love! dispel thy griefs; in few days I return! —
 'I know not soul in Burgundie whose hate 'gainst me doth burn;
 'All thine akin have ever shewn much courtesy to me:
 'Towards them, in sooth, I've nothing done to gender enmity.'*

*'No, no! lord Siegfried do not go, my dream is no wild tale; —
 'For I last night a second had! — I thought you passed a vale;
 'When two high cliffs together fell, and you were seen no more!
 '— Wilt thou for ever part from me? — my doating heart is sore.'*

*He threw his arms around his wife, and pressed her to his breast;
 And with the kisses of true love, her swanlike neck caressed:
 Anon, with her reluctant leave—he parted for the chase.
 — She never saw again, alive, that much loved husband's face.*

*Now rode the hunting chieftains all, far, far into a wood;
 And many a brave and lofty knight, in search of pastime good,
 Followed the king and Siegfried, with jocund heart and mind:
 — Gernot the keen, and Giseller, the hunting had declined! —*

450.

871

They formed the hearth; then took their stand before the dark-green wood,
 Just where the game were like to pass — all huntsmen brave and good!
 'Twas on an ample pasture-glade, — for there the hunt should be:
 When Siegfried came, the king was told, all, then seemed full of glee.

451.

872

The hunting-men, about the wood, their proper stations took,
 Ready to drive the game perforce: — then with right lofty look
 The potent Siegfried said, 'ye knights, of dauntlessness and fame!
 'Who shows us to the paths and dells where haunt the stoutest game?'

452.

873

'Shall we divide!' so Hagen said, 'ere ever we begin
 'To beat this portion of the wood, and see what game's therein?
 'If so't must be! — then do we ken — I, and their highnesses —
 'By tale and rank of what is slain, who the best hunter is! —

453.

874

'I therefore claim, that men and hounds be parted equally,
 'That each may hunt that portion where he hopes most game to see.
 'Who proves the better sporting-man, shall have united praise.'
 — The noble hunters loitered not — but took their diverse ways.

454.

875

Said Siegfried, 'with a single hound which has been practised well
 'In this same wood — knowing the paths, the hill-haunts, and the dell,
 'I'll take my chance! — let those who like, my share of yelpers heed!
 — With jocund face and friendly tone, so spake sir Siegfried.

455.

876

Then did an aged huntsman bring — trained beagle to the knight,
 Which quickly led them to a spot, where he with much delight
 The quarry saw: they gave them chase — as each one rose to view:
 — Just as in these our later times the stanchest huntsmen do.

456.

881

A huge wild-boar with fearful tusks, the practised beagle found, —
 He took to flight; just then I ween, there came upon the ground
 The verderer — who quick as thought attacked him on his slot:
 The boar ran at the dauntless man, with choler foaming hot.

457.

882

Sir Siegfried sprang upon the beast, and slew him with his sword:
 Not many hunters would have done the like, upon my word!
 At Siegfried's wish the hound was called, and put upon the string.
 With praises of that manly deed the spacious wood did ring.

458.

883

On every side there now was heard — tumult and high debate,
 Of people and of loud-tongued dogs — the noise was very great,
 So that the hills, the dales, and wood, loud echoes did give back:
 Two dozen hounds that day were loosed — a very royal pack!

459.

884

Many a head of venison was speared, or slain by sword.
 Now would they to the vouchers go — which guided the award
 Of who best hunting-man had been? — but that could not take place,
 As Siegfried at the fixed resort, had not yet shown his face.

460.

885

The royal sporting of that day, was done; — and yet not quite.
 Those who collected round the hearth, brought many skins to sight;
 And much of venison and beef, their stomach's to regale.
Hella! what quantities came in, the glowing cooks to quail.

461.

886

The king desired his bugle-man the sounding horn to wind;
 That all his noble friends then near, and those who lagged behind,
 Should know that he repast would take: he blew the blast 'all home'
 By which 'twas known, that king and friends, were to head-quarters come.

462.

887

Sir Siegfried to his huntsman said, 'tis time we quit the wood.
— They galloped off at spanking pace—his horse was stout and good.
The thund'ring of their hoofs aroused a full-grown grisly bear:
The knight o'ersoulder turned his head, and bid his man, beware!

463.

888

'Comrade, I warrant we shall have some glorious pastime now;
'Let loose the beagle with all speed, I've roused a bear I vow:
'The fellow shall be mine ere long, and to head-quarters ride.
'However fast he scouts away—he loses life and hide!'

464.

889

The hound was slipped—the bear took fright—and sought to get away;
Sir Siegfried hoped to ride him down, and spear him when at bay,
But he got 'mongst a fell of trees,—so that plan could not be:
'Ah,' thought the bear, 'I've done him now—he cannot follow me!'

465.

890

The knight sprang off his snorting steed—giving his man the rein,
And after the encumbered brute he ran with might and main:
Flight could not save!—sir Siegfried closed, and seized him by the nape:
Without a wound he bound him tight—preventing all escape.

466.

891

The bear could neither claw nor bite, however hard he tried:
He looped him to the saddle's crup, then mounted—on to ride.
Buoyant with joy he brought him to the hearth-spot of resort,
That others might enjoy, through him—a little novel sport.—

467.

899

He now descended from his horse, and loosed the forceful cord
That bound the bear's four paws and snout: the tethered dogs were heard;
Anon, loud yelling of them all, when that the bear they viewed:
—The brute would bolt into the wood—alarm and flight ensued.

468.

900

The bear affrighted at the noise, into the kitchen bowled;
 And cooks, and men, and basting-boys, over each other rolled!—
Hella! what cauldrons were upset, and brands dispersed about.
 The noblest roasts in ashes lay—fuming their virtues out!

469.

901

Now started up from settle-chairs, the chieftains and their men:
 The bear began to growl his rage,—the king commanded then
 That all the beagles should be slipped which on the leashes were.
 That day had been a jocund day—had it but finished there.

470.

902

With cross-bow, spear, and javelin (quiet was at an end)
 The gallant huntsmen followed straight the way the bear did tend.
 So many were the dogs of chase, that none the javelin threw:
 The tumult great was echoed back, by mountains not a few!

471.

903

The grisly monster ambled on, and kept awhile the lead;
 None could approach him save the knight—the valiant Siegfried,
 Who fell upon him sword in hand, until his life-blood flowed:
 —The bear was taken back again—to where the hearth-fire glowed.

472.

904

Those who observed the conflict dire—lauded his matchless strength.
 The sportsmen all were summoned to the festive board at length:
 They formed a goodly company, upon a level space.
 —Right knightly was the table decked—each huntsman took his place.

473.

906

Then said the brave lord Siegfried: 'I marvel without end
 'That from the royal kitchen stock they great abundance send:
 'Whereas, the blooming cellarmen, vouchsafe no cup of wine!
 'If such *your* hunter's usual fare—hunting's no sport of mine!'

474.

909

The Netherlander further said: 'a plague on suchlike love!
 'Seven sumpters bearing wine and mead— your joyousness to prove—
 'Should have been here by streak of day right daintily to dine:
 'Could that not be!— why then you should have pitched us near the Rhine!'

475.

910

There to, replied the Tronyie chief: 'noble and lofty knight!
 'I ken hard by a matchless spring, whose water runs most bright:
 'It may prove welcome beverage;— so please you we will go.'—
 That counsel caused to many a knight, untoward fate, I trow.

476.

913

Now as the chiefs would hasten towards the broad-spread linden tree,
 Said Tronyie Hagen carelessly, 'it has been told to me —
 'That none in running can outstep the fair Chriemhilda's lord
 'In wager race;— here is good ground, for proof, if he accord.'

477.

914

Sir Siegfried of the Netherlands, then said with irony:
 'Suppose yourself assay the truth— by starting fair with me
 'A running match! unto the spring, where we've to quench the thirst:
 'The highest praise be his who gains the distant object first!'

478.

915

'Well, be it so!' stout Hagen said: 'I'll test what speed you make!
 The strong lord Siegfried rejoined: 'I'll add unto the stake:
 '— If you do gain, I'll homage do, by kneeling at your feet!'
 When that king Gunther understood, his heart with rapture beat.

479.

916

Said dauntless Siegfried again — 'one resolution more:
 'I'll carry all the arms that I before the hunting bore;
 'The jav'lin and the studded shield, also my sporting gear.'—
 — He slung his quiver and his sword,— the which he held most dear.

480.

917

Now did they doff their hunting clothes with very nimble hand,
 And in two shirts as white as snow, one saw the heroes stand:
 Like two fierce panthers, they were seen to bound o'er the champaign:
 That Siegfried first reached the spring, was from a distance plain.

481.

918

He gained the race and got the praise, in view of many a one.
 His sword he quickly put aside—and quiver was undone;
 The pond'rous jav'lin he did lean against a linden-branch,
 Then to the issue of the spring, went Siegfried the stanch!

482.

919

His virtues and his courtesies, were of the highest rank:
 The regal shield he placed upon the streamlet's shelving bank.
 And though his thirst was very great,—that thirst was not relieved
 Until the Rhenish king had quaffed: poor thanks the knight received!

483.

920

The water proved enchanting cold,—and very pure, I trow:
 King Gunther kneeling plied his lips, unto the limpid flow;
 And having quenched an ardent thirst, he stood erect again;
 So, Siegfried willingly had done—but he was basely slain.

484.

921

Lo, how his virtues were repaid!—his quiver, sword and bow,
 Infernal Hagen moved away,—beyond his reach, I trow:
 And quickly coming back again to filch the javelin—
 He saw the cross upon his clothes, which Chriemhild had stitched in.

485.

922

As now lord Siegfried slaked his thirst, extended on the ground,
 Vile Hagen stabbed him through the cross—the blood sprang from the wound,
 So that the Tronyian's clothes were soiled by Siegfried's spouting gore:
 Such deed no knight will do again,—if ever done before.

486.

924

As Siegfried, fired by noble wrath, upsprang from limpid stream,
One saw from 'tween his shoulder blades the rankling jav'lin's beam.
—He ran to where he hoped to find his quiver, or his sword:—
Then, had base Hagen on the spot received his due reward.

487.

925

But ah!—the deadly-wounded prince, no trusty sword could find,
No weapon fit for righteous wrath remained for him behind!
Then seized he eagerly the shield and at proud Hagen ran.
—There was no chance by craven flight for that malignant man.

488.

926

Siegfried, though wounded unto death, so powerfully smote,
That from his shield out-started straight—jewels of highest note.
The shield was sundered through and through,—proving of little use:
Yet, did the noble stranger hope, to venge the foul abuse!

489.

927

Beneath his hands the Tronyie chief lay stretched upon the ground.
Of his hard blows the plain and hills, returned a hollow sound.
Had he been sword in hand, that chief, had surely breathed no more.
Great anguish royal Siegfried felt: the wound was very sore.

490.

928

The colour fled his florid cheeks—he could no longer stand:
His body's potency gave way,—and nerveless was his hand
So soon as death's pale seal was stamped, upon his manly face.
—Erelong, he was bemoaned by dames of comeliness and grace!

491.

929

Amid sweet field-flowers fell the king—Chriemhilda's matchless lord!
One saw his heart's blood ebb apace—through where base Hagen gored.
Urged by sharp throes and mental pangs,—he used his flitting breath
To reprimand the treach'rous few, who stratagemed his death.

492.

930

Thus spake the deadly-wounded prince — ‘O chieftains infamous!
 ‘How have ye valued my past help? — basely to serve me thus!
 ‘I ever have shown loyalty — and this is my reward! —
 ‘Evil for good, is all the boon that you to friend accord!’

493.

932

The knights all ran to where they saw the gallant Siegfried lay:
 It proved to many a worthy man a very joyless day! —
 Those who a spark of virtue claimed, bemoaned the sad befall.
 Such sympathy the matchless knight deserved from one and all.

494.

933

The Burgund king amongst the rest lamented his foul death:
 Thereon, the dying chief remarked, ‘far better save your breath,
 ‘Than moan o’er crime which you yourself — were surely privy to,
 ‘Such merits blame; — a deed so base, should have been stopped by you.

495.

934

Grim Hagen unto Gunther said: ‘of what do you complain?
 ‘Our sorrows and vexatious cares, have a sure ending ta’en!
 ‘Few now remain to cope with us, in warfare’s daring deed, —
 ‘I’m satisfied that by my hand — of him, our land is freed.’

496.

935

‘You have no cause to pride yourself,’ — said Siegfried the bold;
 ‘For had I but surmised the plot your base heart did unfold,
 ‘I should have run no risk of death — from such a thing as thee!
 ‘All my regret is for my wife — Chriemhild, so dear to me.

497.

936

‘Now must, the Lord, commiserate that e’er I had a son!
 ‘For in the course of years I know it will be dwelt upon,
 ‘That his best friend, by near akin, disgracefully was slain! —
 ‘However near my end I be; — of that I must complain.’

498.

937

Again in his extremity—thus spake the wounded knight,
 ‘Wilt thou, O king of Burgundie! once more on earth do right?—
 ‘Then let Chriemhild whom I have loved with loyalty so true,
 ‘Receive protecting graciousness—and brother-love from you.

499.

938

‘Let her by kindness know and feel—that she your sister is!
 ‘And be to her a faithful friend in all state-services.—
 ‘Long must my sire and knighthood wait return of Siegfried!—
 ‘Nothing could happen so adverse, ’mongst friends, as this foul deed.’

500.

939

The field-flowers all about, were wet, with royal Siegfried’s gore:
 He struggled manfully with death—but that was quickly o’er:
 For death’s keen scythe once on the swing, no mortal form withstands.
 —Soon died the truly gallant chief of distant Netherlands.

501.

940

When Gunther and his nobles saw, that Siegfried was dead,
 They placed him on a shield of gold;—and then to council sped,
 To ponder o’er in close conclave, how they might best succeed
 In keeping from the public ear—that Hagen did the deed.

502.

941

Then divers of that council said, ‘woe has o’ertaken us!
 ‘All in one story must agree—hiding the scandalous:—
 ‘We’ll say that Chriemhild’s royal spouse would hunt alone the wood,
 ‘And was by robbers fallen on, who slew the brave and good!’

503.

942

Then said the ireful Tronyie chief, ‘myself will take him home!
 ‘It matters not to me a doit, if to her ears it come
 ‘That he is dead, who caused Brunhild such grief and sorrow throes.
 ‘—I little care for what she says, or does, mid weeping woes!’

There—sojourned they until 'twas night,—then the broad Rhine was crossed.
It may be said that never knight such day at hunting passed.
—Amongst the slaughtered game was 'One' bemoaned by noble dames:
Resulting from that craven act—fell knights, of lofty names!—

L E G E N D IX.

Showing how Siegfried was bewailed by Chriemhilda and others — and then buried.

505.

944

Now, tell I, if thou'lt lend an ear, — of great effrontery,
And horrible revengefulness! — vile Hagen did decree
That Siegfried king of Nib'lungen — a conduct doubly base!
Should be transported to the site of Chriemhild's dwelling place.

506.

945

He bid them slyly put the corpse, close to her chamber door,
That she perforce must find it, when she left her room before
The sun was up, to go to mass, — or resting-hours were run:
A pious duty! which he knew, she seldom left undone.

507.

946

At usual time, the minster-bell summoned the good, to prayers:
Chriemhilda rose and waked her maids who slept untwitched by cares.
She bid them bring her light, and send, her robing-dame with speed.
— Her chamberlain arrived just then, and found dead Siegfried!

508.

947

He saw one much defaced by blood — whose clothing still was wet:
That it his royal master was, had scaped his eye as yet.
He entered Chriemhild's chamber door, with gleamy lamp in hand,
And by its feeble rays, full soon — she all did comprehend.

509.

918

As to the minster, with her maids, Chriemhilda would proceed,
 The chamberlain did rashly say, 'mistress! I pray you heed:
 'Before the chamber lies in gore, forsure, a murdered knight!
 'Ah me!' Chriemhilda shuddering said, 'your tidings do affright.'

510.

951. 952

Her maiden said, 'perchance it is a stranger and a guest?'
 A sudden pang made crimson gore rush from Chriemhilda's breast,
 — For she had recognized the corse, howe'er disguised by blood:
 There lay the slaughtered Siegfried—the bland, the brave, the good!

511.

953

Then spake, in most heart-rending tone, the grief-distracted queen,
 'Woe's me! that this should come to pass! — unhacked thy shield has been
 'By noble combatants in fight, — — murdered, thou liest there!
 'Would that I knew who did the deed! — his death should be my care.'

512.

954

The dames and maids all joined with her, in loud and shrill bewail;
 Proving unto their honoured queen, how sorrow did prevail
 In their kind bosoms, for the king — destroyed so dastardly.
 Hagen's revenge of Brunhild's grief — was wrath, wreaked ruthlessly!

513.

955

Then said the much-afflicted-one, 'fly at your utmost speed,
 'To wake me up king Siegfried's knights — of them I now have need!
 'Also, to royal Siegismund, my woeful sorrow tell;
 'And ask if he will join lament, for one we loved so well.'

514.

956

The waiting page made haste to where slept Siegfried's loyal men,
 And heroes brave who came with him, from distant Niblungen.
 The melancholy tidings brought, deprived them all of joy —
 They would not credit the account till tears burst from the boy!

515.

958

'Awake! awake! king Siegmund — for I am sent to thee
'By my dear mistress, queen Chriemhild, who is in agony!
'Her woe, beyond endurance strong, has fastened on her heart:
'You are besought to mourn with her — since therein you have part.'

516.

959

Lord Siegmund raised him on his couch: 'what is this news,' said he,
'Of suff'rings borne by fair Chriemhild, which you've to tell to me?' —
'The tidings' said the weeping page, 'from you I dar'n't withhold:
'They've murdered, in some wicked way, king Siegfried the bold.'

517.

960

Then said the good king Siegmund — 'hushed be thy sland'rous tongue;
'At my austere command, withhold your doubtful tale of wrong!
'Say not to me that you've been told my matchless son is slain! —
'—I could not long survive the pang of such disgraceful stain.'

518.

961

'If thou, O king! distrust my tale — yourself may witness be
'Of how Chriemhilda and her maids are in great agony,
'And mourn, in lamentations loud, the death of Siegfried!'
King Siegmund shuddered at the news — his heart began to bleed.

519.

962

He, and his hundred valiant knights — sprang each from downy bed:
They clothed themselves, and seized their swords, to be by Siegmund led.
All ran to where they heard the tones of wailing and of woe!
— King Siegfried's thousand dauntless knights came quickly there, I trow.

520.

964

Then went the king, with hurried pace, to where he Chriemhild found:
Said he: 'woe, woe! — alas, that we e'er trod this Burgund ground!
'— Who has, 'mongst friends and near akin, this deed of murder done?
'Who has deprived thee of thy lord? who, robbed me of my son?'

521.

965

'Would that I knew who did the deed!' the lofty princess said:
 'My mind and ire should ever dwell on his devoted head!
 '— Such sufferings should be brought on him, by my revengeful hate,
 'As that each friend he ever had— should feel disconsolate.'

522.

966

King Siegmund then his murdered son unto his heart did press:
 So rending-loud— his friends sent forth their wailings of distress,
 That Gunther's palaces and hall echoed their notes of pain,—
 Eke, the thick walls of ancient Worms returned those tones again.

523.

967

All that was done could not console sir Siegfried's moaning wife.
 The gory clothes were taken off the knight, deprived of life.—
 His wounds were washed, and then his corse was laid upon a bier;
 This, to his brave retainers was right melancholy cheer.

524.

968

Then said these valiant knights, who came from Nibelungen lands,
 'Revenge, you may rely upon at our full willing hands!
 'He, who has done the bloody deed— forsure, is 'neath this roof.'
 — The knights went forth to arm themselves, for sad Chriemhild's behoof.

525.

969

Those bold knights reappeared, ere long,— bearing stout spear and shield:
 Eleven hundred strong were they— a troop not like to yield,
 With good king Siegmund at their head;— he was with vengeance fired,
 And would his dear son's death avenge, as his true heart desired.

526.

970

On whom?— alas, they knew not then, who noble Siegfried slew,
 Unless 'twas Gunther, king of Rhine, and his chief retinue,
 With whom the slain lord Siegfried rode out unto the wood.
 — Chriemhilda saw them fully armed: to her it seemed not good.

527.

971

However great her sorrow was — howe'er immersed in tears,
 She felt for her true Niblung knights, the most decided fears,
 Lest by her brother's men o'erpowered they met untimely end,
 — She hemmed their rashness by advice, — as when friend cautions friend.

528.

972

Then spake the deeply-sorrowing queen, 'lord Siegmund tell to me,
 'What are your views and purposes? — act you right prudently!
 ' — King Gunther has a ready force — of many valiant men:
 'Ye are all lost, if ye attempt to strike him in his den.'

529.

973

Their shields bound on — they one and all burnt for the keen affray
 Chriemhild commanded, and besought, — in most persuasive way,
 That the brave knights of Niblungen should not in wrath depart:
 — They were all bent on keen revenge — that cut her to the heart! —

530.

974

Said she, 'my dear lord Siegmund! — 'twere better left alone
 'Until some more propitious time — when they shall well atone.
 'Hereafter, I with you will join, to work out vengeance dire:
 'He, who has done the horrid deed, shall feel Chriemhilda's ire!

531.

975

'Here on the Rhine the host is great of Gunther's daring men:
 'Therefore, I strongly counsel you, 'gainst conflict there and then.
 'For every one of you they'd have — thirty bold men, or more.
 'God helping! as they've done to us — I'll do to them, moreo'er!'

532.

976

'O, stay with me, ye warlike chiefs, and patiently endure
 'Our heavy and o'erwhelming grief — until the daylight lure:
 'Then can ye help me to enshrine king Siegmund's much loved son.'
 The brave knights said, 'illustrious queen! thy wishes shall be done.'

533.

977

—No one can full description give, or wonders truly state,
Of how bold knights, and noble dames, bemoaned sir Siegfried's fate.
Their shrieks and lamentations reached the goodly town of Worms;
And all its worthy citizens lied to the spot in swarms.

534.

978

They joined their wailings to the guests'—when they his corpse did view:
Of Brunhild's charge 'gainst Siegfried, these townsmen nothing knew,
Nor what the artful subterfuge for taking his brave life!—
With the high dames of Chriemhild's court, wept many a tradesman's wife.

535.

979

A cunning smith was ordered then—with fitness to provide
A gold-and-silver coffin straight;— full stout, and long, and wide,
Embossing it with knobs of steel—and iron bands to bind:
Thereon, were all Chriemhilda's folk, of very downcast mind.

536.

980

The cheerless night had passed away, and morn appeared again:
Then Chriemhild ordered that the bier, be to the minster ta'en,
Whereon lay Siegfried the king—her venerated lord.
All his true friends, with tearful eyes, followed of own accord.

981

*Arrived within the minster-porch— what mournful peals were rung!
One heard o'er all quiescent hymns, by holy priesthood sung.
Then came king Gunther, and his men, unto the sadd'ning scene,
Also, the wrathful Tronjyan chief: such act was base, I ween.*

983

*Said Chriemhild, 'were your griefs sincere, my husband had not died!
'That you no ruth have shown towards me, is not to be denied,—
'Since I am sundered from my lord by vilest treachery.
'O, would to God all-merciful, — the victim had been I!'*

*They both denied that they had hand in Siegfried's cruel end.
Then said Chriemhilda pointedly — 'thus may the truth be kened:
'Approach ye singly to the corpse, in presence of all here;
'That so, in manner marvellous, the verity appear!'*

*A wonder 'tis, yet true as strange, and what e'en now takes place:
Whene'er the fell assassin looks upon his victim's face,
The dead man's wounds do bleed anew — certes, so did they then!
And by the token Hagen's guilt was plain to holy men.*

*The purple gore gushed from the wounds, as it had done before;
If great lament had shown itself — now, was the wailing more.
Then said king Gunther forcibly — 'with this much be content,
'He was by forest-robbers slain! — Hagen is innocent!'*

*'Those forest-robbers are well known to me,' said sad Chriemhild,
'May vengeance by almighty God through his true friends be willed!
'Yes — Gunther brave and Hagen bold! — 'twas ye who slew the knight.'
— Then thought king Siegfried's men again, of waging mortal fight.*

537.

When it was known that priests did chant within the minster-church,
And that the knight encoffined was — what crowds went there in search!
And for his soul oblations brought — eke, sacrifice of prayers;
He did not want for friendly hearts — 'mongst enemies and snares.

538.

Afflicted Chriemhild now did say unto the chamberlain,
'You must on my account endure much trouble and much pain.
'To those who loved king Siegfried, and loyal proved to me,
'Let gold, for his dear soul's repose, be doled out bounteously.'

539.

995

No children knowing right from wrong, however small of size,
 But brought, ere he was tombed, in prayer, their infant sacrifice!
 A hundred masses — if not more, were daily for him sung:
 There flocked to see king Siegfried's bier, the old, mid-aged and young.

540.

996

When that the singing was all o'er, the people went towards town.
 Then said Chriemhilda to her friends — 'leave me not here alone,
 'To wail and watch throughout the night, the most illustrious chief:
 'With his dear life fled peace of mind — my joy is turned to grief.'

541.

998

The townsfolk all went straightways home, the night-hours to beguile.
 Priesthood and monks, Chriemhild besought to tarry there awhile,
 Together with the trusty men who served the murdered king:
 Their night was very sorrowful — the day no rest did bring.

542.

1000

So many of the abject poor, as thereabout were found,
 Had gold doled out from Siegfried's store, that their faint hearts might sound
 In holy requiem for the dead — who had reached earthly goal:
 Full many a thousand mark was given on score of his fled soul.

543.

1001

She gave large gifts of ruddy gold, and very fertile ground,
 To cloisters and to holy-men, wherever they were found:
 And to the poor, new garmentry — with much of silver pence.
 Chriemhilda proved, by worthy deeds — *her* love was no pretence!

544.

1002

On the third morn, as I've been told — just when high mass was sung,
 The minster's consecrated ground, so ample, broad and long,
 Was full of weeping peasantry, his obsequies to tend:
 They came to serve him after death — as friend should do for friend.

545.

1004

When holy rites were said and o'er, and all had ceased to sing;
The multitude set up a shriek that made the welkin ring!—
Now was the body carried from the minster to the grave,—
Then, nought was heard but sighs and sobs, for Siegfried the brave!

546.

1005

Loud wailing—followed they the bier, as slowly it moved on:
No cheerful aspect clothed the face of husband, wife or son.
—Before the bearers did let down the corpse of Siegfried,
Some goodly priests with solemnness did service sing and read.

547.

1006

Ere that Chriemhilda came unto the grave of her dear spouse,
Her sorrow-struggle was so fierce that death stood on her brows:
So water from the spring was fetched, her feelings to abate.
—Her soul's keen tribulation was beyond all measure, great.

548.

1007

'Twas wonderful that she survived the wringings of her heart.
Full many a kind and weeping wife — assistance did impart.
Come to herself, the princess said, 'ye men of loyalty!
'For Siegfried's sake, display your love in gracious act towards me.

549.

1008

'Vouchsafe, to dissipate my grief, this favour kindly:
'Let me once more his beauteous face for consolation see.' —
She begged so long and ardently — with eyes o'erwhelmed by tears,
That they forced ope the coffin-lid — to mitigate her cares.

550.

1009

Then to the spot where Siegfried lay, the weeping queen was led;
With her white hands she gently raised his fair and handsome head,
And planted on the knight's chill lips — her kisses, o'er and o'er!
So great her mental anguish proved, that out gushed tears of gore.

551.

1010

At length, the final parting came — the queen withdrew her hand,
And was with kindness borne away — she could no longer stand:
All body-strength forsook Chriemhild — her senses too, had fled:
— That paragon of beauty seemed as one already dead!

552.

1011

Now that the noble Siegfried was to mother-earth consigned,
One saw that *all* afflicted were in body and in mind,
Who came with him to upper Rhine from distant Nib'lung land:
And joy, too surely, fled the heart of Siegmund the bland.

553.

1012

Many there were amongst his friends, who neither ate nor drank
For full three days and eke three nights, — and those of highest rank:
But then half dead, they were compelled to take supporting food.
Erelong, their grief consumed itself — and calmer mood ensued.

L E G E N D X.

Showing how king Siegismund and his knights return home, not having induced Chriemhilda to accompany him. Moreover how 'the Nibelungen hoard' is brought to Worms, it having been Chriemhilda's marriage gift: afterwards, it is seized on by Hagen, and sunk in the river Rhine.

554.

1013

Chriemhilda's parent, Siegismund, sought audience at her hands;
And said unto the widowed queen—'now seek we our own lands!
'We are become unwelcome guests, here, on the upper Rhine;
'Therefore, Chriemhilda, ride with us, to kingdom that is mine.

555.

1015

'There, shalt thou, dearest daughter, claim the most august degree;
'And reign o'er all my Siegfried, erewhile, intended thee!
'—The kingdom, and the regal crown, shall be at thy command;
'Moreo'er, fee-service from the knights of far famed Niblung-land.'

556.

1016

Their serving-men were now informed that all would homeward ride;
Which caused much bustle, and much joy, in stables near and wide:
—Longer, amid their potent foes they had no wish to stay;
And dames and maids were told to pack their costliest array.

557.

1017

As now king Siegmund was prepared to mount his gallant steed;
Chriemhilda's mother, with much warmth, began to intercede
That she with her near relatives should live contentedly.
—The grief-worn daughter made reply, 'mother, that cannot be!

558.

1018

‘For how could I endure to have *him* ever in my sight,
 ‘Who worked on me, a hapless wife! the pressure of his spite?’
 Then said the youthful Giselher: ‘sister, so dear to me!
 ‘On score of filial piety — thou’lt with our mother be.

559.

1019

‘From those who’ve done thee grievous wrong, and saddened thy pure mind,
 ‘Thou shalt no bounty-boon receive — I, every cost will find!’
 She made reply to Giselher — ‘it may not, cannot be!
 ‘My death would follow on the spot — should I base Hagen see.’

560.

1020

‘Against such chance, my dear Chriemhild! thy brother will provide;
 ‘Thou shalt in peace and dignity, with Giselher reside,
 ‘Who will by every art and means prove kind as Siegfried.’
 Then said the joy-forsaken one, ‘thereof I have great need!’

561.

1023

Thereon, she promised Giselher — in Burgundie to stay.
 The steeds were brought to Siegmund’s knights, that they might ride away
 To their long left, and much loved homes, in far famed Niblung land:
 — The sumpters, laden with knight’s gear, one saw in court-yard stand.

562.

1024

King Siegmund went, with languid step, to where Chriemhild was then,
 And spoke thus to the widowed queen, ‘thy slaughtered Siegfried’s men
 ‘Beside their horses stand and wait for your good company:
 ‘— I have no liking, on my word, to stay in Burgundie!’

563.

1025

To him replied the mournful dame — ‘I’m urged in loving terms
 ‘By kin who have shown constancy — to stay with them in Worms:
 ‘Since in the famous Nib’lung realm, I have no kindred true.’
 — King Siegmund felt sorely hurt when he the upshot knew.

564.

1026

‘Beloved Chriemhild! be not o’erruled,’ the good king mildly said :
 ‘In prefrence to my near akin—the crown shall grace your head,
 ‘With all the rule and majesty, that ’dorned it heretofore :
 ‘You shall not feel, in those respects, the loss of Siegfried more.

565.

1027

‘And for your child’s sake, I entreat, you ride along with us :
 ‘To put him now in orphanage—were somewhat marvellous!
 ‘As he grows up towards man’s estate, he’ll comfort your sad mind :
 ‘Till then, amongst our valiant knights—you loyal friends will find.’

566.

1028

Said she, ‘my good lord Siegismund—I dare not ride with you!
 ‘But here must tarry with my kin—through love, and duty too :
 ‘Moreo’er, they’ll help me to lament the brave sir Siegfried!’
 —This unexpected piece of news, the kindly warriors grieved.

567.

1029

Then said the knights with one accord—‘alas! we must allow
 ‘That we ne’er felt such rankling pang as doth afflict us now,
 ‘For that you are resolved to bide amongst our deadly foes!’
 —Never did knighthood seek their homes, so overwhelmed by woes.

568.

1030

‘Farewell!’—said she—‘devoid of fear, you may from Burgund ride,
 ‘For I’ve arranged that they forthwith, a good escort provide,
 ‘Unto the border of your realm.—as for my darling boy,
 ‘I trust him to your love and care, with confidence and joy.’

569.

1032

‘Accursed now be the festival!’—exclaimed the king august.—
 ‘In search of pleasure never more shall happen to, I trust,
 ‘King, and the members of his house, what hath to us occurred!
 ‘—We ne’er revisit Burgundie—on pledge of royal word.’

570.

1033

Then spake sir Siegfried's valiant knights in firm and lordly strain,
 '— 'Tis not improbable that *we*, do visit Worms again
 'In search of him — whate'er his rank — who slew our much loved king,
 '— Whose kin and friends are strong enough, the scourge of war to bring.'

571.

1034

The good king kissed with tenderness, Chriemhild, — and weeping spoke,
 When he perceived she still declined her purpose to revoke:
 'Anon, we joylessly return, unto the lands I own.
 'The full weight of my soul's deep grief, is now to me erst known!'

572.

1035

Without escort they rode forthwith — from Worms across the Rhine;
 Their noble minds, to thoughts like these, did probably incline,
 'Should we by foes be fallen on, whilst passing Burgund-lands,
 'Our only trusty guards shall be — our own brave Niblung-hands!'

573.

1039

Of what more came of them, we search the legend tales in vain!
 — But in famed Worms was often heard, Chriemhilda loud complain
 That no one comforted her heart — and half distracted mind: —
 Unless 'twas Giselher, — who proved considerate and kind!

574.

1043

To where was buried her beloved — (full *rarely* 'twas not so)
 One saw her, as each day returned, in deepest sorrow go;
 There, to a gracious God she prayed for mercy on his soul:
 Right often, for the knight, big tears adown her cheeks did roll!

575.

1046

During three years and six long months, she mourned her buried lord
 With constancy, and pious love, in undisturbed accord.
 No word to Gunther ever passed her pure and hallowed tongue:
 Nór Hagen — chiefest of her foes — saw she, the whole time long.

576.

1055

No reconcilment ever cost so many tears before,
'Mongst near akin;—her loss had made her mind and bosom sore,
—She could forget the past in all—save in respect of one.
—The murderous deed had ne'er occurred—unless by Hagen done.

577.

1056

Short time elapsed before 'twas planned, and that with base accord,
That Chriemhild should lay claim unto the precious Niblung hoard;
And that it must from Niblungen, be brought to upper Rhine.
—It was her marriage-morning gift! and therefore her's t'assign.

578.

1058

When Albrich (Siegfried's treasurer) saw troop from Burgund come,
To claim the 'hoard'—he hastily, thus spake his mind to some,
'We can't withhold the treasure now, by duty or by thrift,
'From the august and widowed queen; since 'twas her marriage gift.

579.

1059

'—But they should never have the hoard, had we not to our cost
'Through matchless dauntlessness, time past, right marvellously lost
'The veiling-cloak!—which Siegfried obtained in combat sore,
'And which the fair Chriemhilda's spouse on some occasions wore.

580.

1060

'Now—has it happened woefully to Siegfried the brave,
'For that he gained our veiling-cloak, and all the hoard did crave.
'Moreover, that he did subdue the realm of Nib'lung land.'
The treasurer retired awhile—returning, keys in hand.—

581.

1061

Now did Chriemhilda's messengers stand 'fore the treasure-hill:
—With them were some of her akin. The hoard was at their will
Transported quickly to the strand, and thence 'board brigantine:
So sailed they, from the treasure-hill, unto the river Rhine!

582.

1065

At length, the mighty hoard arrived at Worms in Burgundie;
 And queen Chriemhild received the same into her custody.
 The vaults, and towers, were filled beyond what they could well contain:
 Such wondrous tale of riches, none will ever hear again!

583.

1066

Now had there been a thousand times so much as there did stand:
 And Siegfried revived—though poor as beggar's hand:
 She had not chosen Niblung's hoard,—but him restored to life.
 —Never did knight, before or since, possess so true a wife!

584.

1068

Chriemhilda now, to poor, and rich, great largesses did give,—
 Which made keen Hagen counsel thus,—‘if she perchance do live
 ‘But little while,—we all shall see, how to herself she'll gain
 ‘Liege-services from many a knight, to your great loss and pain.’

585.

1069

Gunther replied, ‘why all she has, is hers to hold or quit!
 ‘What right have I to counteract her mode of spending it?
 ‘With much ado, she has become—more reconciled to me:
 ‘And shall I interfere with her givings of jewelry?’

586.

1070

Hagen rejoined unto the king, ‘no ruler of good sense
 ‘Would e'er allow a widowed wife, such treasures to dispense!
 ‘With her great givings she will bring conspiracies to light;
 ‘Such as will set brave Burgundie in wonder and affright.’

587.

1071

Then said king Gunther, ‘be it told! I swore to her an oath,
 ‘That never more I'd do her wrong—or cause her to be wroth!
 ‘Forefend! that ever I again, should set her ire aflame.’
 Said Hagen, ‘you must clip her wings,—and I will bear the blame.’

588.

1072

That oaths of some proved valueless, was much to be deplored:
—They basely filched from widowed queen, the great and precious hoard!
Stout Hagen took the treasure-keys — and closely kept them too.
—Her brother *Gernot* was right vext, when he the tidings knew.

589.

1073

Then said the noble Giselher, 'the Tronyic Hagen's hate
'Has worked my sister grievous ill — I must such wrong abate!
'Now — were he not my near akin, I'd touch him to the life!
— Again, to overwhelming tears, was doomed sir Siegfried's wife!

590.

1075

Said she, 'dear brother! graciously, your given word respect:
'You said — my person and my goods — 'gainst all, you would protect!
He made reply unto the queen, — 'that surely shall be done
'When we return from visiting: we all ride forth anon!'

591.

1076

King Gunther with his knights and friends, rode out of Burgundie.
— Among them were the very best — for truth and honesty.
Hagen alone of all the chiefs — made choice to stay behind:
That was from hatred to Chriemhild — the hoard was in his mind!

592.

1077

Before the king and his akin, had rode back from abroad:
Base Hagen had possessed himself of all the Nib'lung-hoard!
The which he sunk beneath the waves, near Lochheim on the Rhine:
Hoping, some day, 'twould be his own: — the fates did disincline!

593.

1078

At length, the kings and chiefs returned, and with them many men,
Thereon, Chriemhilda, with much warmth, impeached him there and then,
Joined by her dames and waiting-maids, who underwent much grief.
Prince Giselher was well inclined to justice, and relief.

594.

1079

The kings and chiefs were of a mind that Hagen had done ill:
He therefore quitted Burgundie, to 'scape their rage, until
He should obtain their grace anew: — they touched not his estate!
— Henceforth, Chriemhilda entertained towards Hagen deadly hate.

595.

1081

Thus with fresh sorrows was Chriemhild oppressed, and bowed to earth:
— First, for her Siegfried's wretched end! — now, for the countless worth
Of Niblung-board! — her bitter grief experienced no allay.
— She sighed and mourned in mind and heart, unto her dying day.

LEGEND XI.

Showing how king Etzel, having become a widower through the death of queen Helcha — dispatches the margrave Rudeger to Worms to ask the hand of Chriemhilda.

596.

1083

It happened in those quiet times, when good queen Helcha died,
That Etzel — ruler of the Huns, desiring other bride,
Was by his friends and courtiers told of Burgund widow, famed
For lofty mind and perfect form — Chriemhilda, was she named.

597.

1087

The potent king thus spake his friends, 'to which of you is known
'The state that borders on the Rhine — its people — and the crown?'
Then said the margrave of Bechlarn — the noble Rudeger,
'From childhood up, I've known full well, its kings and character.'

598.

1089

Etzel rejoined, 'my trusty friend! now prithee tell to me,
'If for my realm she worthy is our consort-queen to be? —
'Should her fair form prove beautiful — as many have described,
'My worthiest friends will not regret that she's to Etzel wived.'

599.

1090

'For beauty, she may be compared to our late honoured queen,
'Helcha the most illustrious! — rely on what I've seen.
'None ever was more richly dowered to be a monarch's wife:
'— The object of her tender love will pass a happy life.'

600.

1091

King Etzel said, 'obtain her hand for him who holds thee dear!—
 'If thou, inducing free consent, do bring the match to bear, —
 'I'll recompense thee bounteously, and that without delay,
 'For having brought about my wish, in most consoling way.

601.

1092

'Our chancellor shall orders have, full amply to provide,
 'That you, and your attendants bold rejoicingly do ride;
 'Moreo'er—brave steeds and garmentry, surpassing your request:
 'I wish you lavishly to spend—when doing my behest.'

602.

1093

Thereto, said margrave Rudeger, the rich and noble knight!
 'Did I require reward or fee, 'twere veering from what's right:
 'I willingly will render aid, and do you service true, —
 'But beg to pay the utmost cost, from what I've *had* of you!'

603.

1100

Unto Bechlaren Rud'ger sent, with all becoming speed,
 To tell his margravine that he from Etzel should proceed
 On Rhenish trip, to woo for him a bride with honour clad:
 — She, thinking on the late good queen, was sorrowful, yet glad.

604.

1101

When Gotelinda fully knew the bearings of the case,
 She was in measure very sad; and tears ran down her face
 At thought of whether *this* would prove to her so good a queen:
 Whene'er her mind towards Helcha turned, her grief was great, I ween.

605.

1103

Come to Bechlarn, the good Gotlind hailed him with kindly air: —
 The youthful margravine also, his daughter passing fair,
 Was much delighted to behold her father and his men.
 — There was 'mongst merry dames and maids much gossiping just then.

606.

1104

Ere that the noble Rudeger, Vienna left behind
 For Bechlarn's towers, the sumpters stout were loaded up we find
 With choicest clothes,—and forward sent: brave guards they did not lack:
 —They travelled in such goodly mass, that thieves made no attack.

607.

1105

Having arrived at Bechlarn burgh with much rapidity,
 He bid his travelling friends alight, and gave warm hostelry
 For their brave steeds, and for themselves apartments large and good.
 —Then spake the daughter, with sweet mien, and buoyancy of mood,

608.

1107

'A kindly welcome to my sire! and to his gallant band:'
 Right quickly were glad thanks returned, by looks and accents bland
 Unto the youthful margravine, by all the retinue.
 —The count's domestic thoughts and ways, the good Gotlinda knew.

609.

1108

Now as by night in bed they lay—talking of this and that;
 Gotlinda coaxingly wove in this question with her chat:
 'To whom, dear husband, are you sent—by king of Hungarie?'—
 Said Rudeger, 'my kind Gotlind! that will I tell to thee.

610.

1109

'I am dispatched by Etzel brave, to gain him second wife;
 'For since the death of Helcha good, he leads unsocial life.
 'I go from hence unto the Rhine—Chriemhilda fair to woo:
 'He tenders her the Hunnish crown, and consort-honours too!'

611.

1110

'Heaven's will be done!' said Gotelind—'I wish it from my heart;
 'For we have heard loud praise of her come in from every part!
 '—She may a Helcha prove to us—as we life's hill go down.
 '—I'm sure she'll have our full consent, to wear the Hunnish crown.'

612.

1114

On seventh day morning rode away the margrave and all those
 Who with him came to Bechlaren; — their arms and costly clothes
 Were loaded-up: — so through Bavare they took the beaten track:
 The whole road-long, they seldom had to ward off thief's attack.

613.

1115

'Twas twelfth day morn when Rud'ger's troop put foot in Burgundie;
 The coming of such visitors could not long secret be;
 — It being known that they were rich, and persons of renown,
 They found at once good hostelry within the ample town.

614.

1117

Now were the brother-kings informed that stranger knights had come,
 Which caused, as was most like to hap — embarrassment to some.
 The kings and chieftains fain would know whence the brave knighthood were:
 Said Gunther, to the Tronyie chief, 'canst tell me who they are?'

615.

1120

Hagen, the travelled knight replied, 'it doth to me appear
 '(Although I have not seen the count for many a fleeting year)
 'That yonder stalwart nobleman — is margrave Rudeger
 'Of Hungarie — a lofty knight, renowned in peace and war!'

616.

1121

'Metlinks I can't believe mine ears,' said Gunther rapidly:
 'Has he of Bechlarn really come to us in Burgundie?'
 — Ere Gunther could his great surprise express unto the end, —
 Hagen had fully recognized his early Hunnish friend,

617.

1122

And with his squires was forward gone, to greet him there and then,
 — Whereon, descended from brave steeds five hundred gallant men.
 The Hunnish knights were well received — and welcomed by a cheer:
 — Never brought noble messengers such store of costly gear.

618.

1123

Anon, did Hagen, Tronyie's chief, exclaim with manly voice,
 'Now be the count of Bechlaren — and knighthood of his choice
 'Right welcome in God's holy name! — and their report believed.'
 — The valiant band of Hunnish knights were cordially received.

619.

1125

With thanks the friendly greeting was returned by one and all:
 Then were they led, by sundry knights, into the spacious hall
 Where Gunther sat as sovereign chief, amidst Burgundia's lords.
 — The king stood up as they approached; which with esteem accords.

620.

1127

He motioned Rud'ger to take place on settle where he sat,
 And then commanded that the sewers (who all were glad of that)
 Should serve metheglin of the best, — and highest flavoured wine:
 Such as is found upon the banks of gently flowing Rhine!

621.

1130

Then said the king, 'I can't refrain to put this question straight —
 'How fares the most illustrious pair who rule the Hunnish state —
 'Etsel the celebrated chief, and Helecha the bland?'
 — The margrave courteously replied, 'your wish be a command.'

622.

1131

Thereon, did Rudeger and knights rise from their several seats;
 And to the monarch thus did say, — 'if it your pleasure meets
 'That I make known my embassy, I nothing will omit, —
 'Detailing circumstantially the full extent of it!

623.

1132

Said he, 'whate'er the message be, which you as bearer bring,
 'I'll hear it, ere consulting with the chiefs who form this ring!
 'So now, before these lords and knights, your secret message say,
 'That you with honour may obtain your wish, without delay.'

624.

1133

Rud'ger pursued, 'the message which I bring unto the Rhine,
 'Is tender of true services — from potent lord of mine
 'To you — and to your trusty friends so many as you claim:
 'Moreover, lofty troth and faith is royal Etzel's aim!—

625.

1134

'To you, our high and mighty king makes known his sorrow keen!
 'His people are of joy bereft—dead is our gracious queen,
 'Helcha, for every virtue famed—our monarch's cherished wife!
 '—Through loss of her, has many a maid been orphanized for life.'

626.

1138

Rud'ger, the noble messenger, resumed again the word:
 'Since that your highness does permit, — more news I will afford
 'Of what my kindly potentate commissioned me to say.
 '—He constantly laments and pines for Helcha snatched away!

627.

1139

'My royal master has been told that Siegfried is dead,
 'And Chriemhild yet in widowhood; — if 'tis as hath been said,
 'And she incline to wed a king — she may wear Hunnish crown,
 'In face of Etzel's noble knights: — all this my lord makes known!'

628.

1140

Said Gunther, king of Burgundie, (he was of courteous mind)
 'Chriemhilda but effects my wish — if she prove so inclined;
 'Of her decision you shall know, ere three full days are o'er:
 '—Until I have conferred with her, I cannot promise more.'

629.

1142

The worthy margrave tarried then until three days were passed.
 Gunther meantime had council called (therein he wisely cast)
 To know if his akin, and friends, were all of one accord,
 That she should take the Hunnish king — to be her wedded lord.

630.

1143

They all, save Hagen, were agreed that she'd do right to wed.
 Then to the king of Burgundie, that haughty chieftain said,
 'If you are in your perfect mind—beware of what you do:
 'Her will, if she approve the match, must be opposed by you!'

631.

1144

'And why,' said Gunther pointedly, 'should I withhold consent?—
 'Whatever can conduce to make the widowed queen content,
 'I willingly vouchsafe to her, — she is my sister dear!
 '— Wer't for her honour — we ourselves would aiding interfere.'

632.

1145

Thereon, spake Hagen, Tronyie's chief, 'let this same matter be. —
 'If you knew Etzel king of Huns — as he is known to me,
 'And still this suit'ring match pursue, as I do hear you say;
 'You'll bring upon yourselves, forsure — a very woeful day!'

633.

1146

'How so?' quoth Gunther rapidly — 'I fear not such betide!
 'For ne'er shall thoughtless act of mine rouse Etzel's wrathful pride —
 'E'en though my sister, fair Chriemhild, his wedded queen should be.'
 Said Hagen, 'my advice will ne'er with your intent agree.'

634.

1148

Then Gis'ler said — the kindly knight and joint king of Burgund —
 'Hagen, you now may do what's just—such chance should not be shunned;
 'Make her amends for all the grief that you on her have brought;
 'What to Chriemhilda seemeth good — do you desist to thwart.'

635.

1152

Then said the stubborn Tronyie chief, 'I must not be put down!
 '— If once the haughty dame Chriemhild should wear queen Helcha's crown,
 'She'll be revenged forsure on us, in every way she can:
 'I therefore urgently advise frustration of the plan.'

636.

1153

In anger—thus spake Giselher, the handsome Utie's son,
 'Shall we then *all* at your advice the traitor's garb put on?
 '—What honour dictates for her good, must verily take place:
 'Howe'er sir Hagen counsel may—I'll serve with honest face!'

637.

1154

When *that* the wily Hagen heard, he was of restless mind:
 Then Giselher and Gerenot, knights, royal brave and kind,
 And reigning Gunther, rich in gold,—spake out with one assent:
 'If 'tis Chriemhilda's wish to wed, she shall have our consent!'

638.

1155

Said margrave Garie with delight, 'I'll in, and tell the dame;
 'That she vouchsafe encouragement to Etzel's holy flame.
 'His rule extends o'er hosts of knights—all firmly to him sworn!
 'He may reward her heart with love, for wrongs she long hath borne.'

639.

1156

Then went the count unto Chriemhild, the welcome news to take:
 He was most graciously received—and thus to her he spake,
 'You well may greet me in this wise—and might give herald's fee.
 'Good fortune smiles! and you are rid of wasting misery.'

640.

1157

'Much honoured queen!—an embassy has come to ask your hand
 'For more renowned and potent king than e'er brought foreign land
 'By martial deeds beneath his sway,—wearing the regal crown!
 '—The messengers are noble knights;—your brother makes it known.'

641.

1158

Then said the deeply sorrowing queen, 'forbid it heaven, that *you*
 'Or any of my friends should mock, or cruelly pursue
 'Me, the o'erburthened child of grief!—what shall I with the man
 'Who long ere this, the heart's pure love of loyal woman wan?'

642.

1160

None could persuade the noble queen, or her self-love arouse :
 She perseveringly cast off all thoughts of second spouse.
 The courtly knight then humbly said, 'let but thus much occur
 'If nothing more: — vouchsafe fair queen, to see the messenger!'

643.

1161

'Such favour I accord to you,' — so said the royal dame ;
 'Since that I willingly would ken that count, so known to fame
 'For virtues pure and manifold! — had it another been,
 'Of rank whate'er, or by whom sent, — I would not have been seen!'

644.

1162

Erelong, she said, 'well, be it so! tomorrow let him come,
 'And I will hear the news he brings within my sitting room.
 'I'll tell him frankly all my mind, and nothing from him keep.'
 — Her sorrow-thoughts returning then — she bitterly did weep.

645.

1163

Nothing could hap more like to please, the noble Rudeger,
 Than that the dame so soon would see king Etzel's messenger; —
 Who understood to shape his suit so wisely with the queen,
 That she consented to espouse the distant king, I ween.

646.

1164

Next morning when the early mass was in the minster sung,
 Thereto went many messengers; which much increased the throng.
 — All such as to the court would go, with Rud'ger went away:
 Thereof were divers — who forsure — were clad in garments gay.

647.

1165

Chriemhild the beautiful, and eke, the wife of purest mind,
 Tarried for Rudeger the brave — the herald passing kind;
 Who found her in the simple dress she every day did wear:
 Whereas, her dames and waiting-maids wore very splendid gear.

648.

1166

She rose to meet the margrave good—advancing to the door;
 And greeted cordially the chief who came on Etzel's score.—
 The deputation was but twelve, including Rudeger.
 Great courtesies were shown unto the princely messenger!

649.

1167

Now were Bechlaren's lord and men invited to take seat;
 Thereon, one saw two margraves stand beside Chriemhilda's feet:
 Garie and Eckewart the bold—both knights beyond compare.
 —Through sorrows pressing on the queen, none wore a jocund air.

650.

1169

Anon, thus spake the herald-count, 'daughter of famous king!
 'Myself, and all these valiant men, whom to your face I bring,
 'Request permission to stand up, whilst I the cause relate
 'Of why we rode in gladsome mood unto the Burgund state.'

651.

1170

'That be vouchsafed to you sir count,' said Chriemhild graciously;
 'Report now faithfully your charge:—methinks my mind to be
 'Inclined to hear what you've to say—being a herald good.'
 —Then did they all remark that she was of unbending mood.

652.

1171

Now said the lord of Bechlaren—the margrave Rudeger:
 'Etzel, a just and potent king—sends loyal love to her
 'Who dwells as widow in this land—yourself the lady meant!
 '—To gain your hand, our mighty chief has many heroes sent.

653.

1172

'He proffers to you tenderly much joy devoid of pain;
 'And as a pledge of his esteem and your true love to gain,
 'He says he'll place you near his heart, where good queen Helcha dwelt.
 '—The loss of one so pure and kind, he grievously has felt.'

654.

1173

Then said the widowed queen Chriemhild, 'sir margrave Rudeger!
'Did any one surmise or know the weight of woe I bear,
'He would not suitor me again to wed another man:
'O, I have lost immensely more than ever consort wan!'

655.

1174

'What dissipates our keenest grief' — so said the man of sense —
'Like soft affection and true love, obtained through confidence?
'The chosen one is then the pure selection of the heart! —
'To mind diseased, sure nothing can such healing balm impart.

656.

1175

'Now should you condescend to take this gracious lord of mine;
'Twelve ample realms dependent are on sovereign will of thine.
'Moreover, thirty dutchies broad, he tenders unto you:
'All those, and greater empire did his conquering arm subdue!

657.

1176

'Besides, you shall sole monarch be o'er many valiant men,
'Who did belong to Helcha kind — serving her there and then;
'Also a host of dames and maids of high nobility
'Shall be attendant on your word!' — so spake the embassy.

658.

1177

'Further, — our master freely gives (we've this to herald too),
'Provided you consent to wear the crown he offers you,
'All the immunities and rights that Helcha e'er possessed;
'And over Etzel's subjects all, the power of high behest.'

659.

1178

'How can I ever hope for joy' — so said the noble dame —
'From marriage to a second knight of universal fame?
'The death of one has caused such grief and sorrow unto me,
'That to my last and dying day — I've lost hilarity!'

660.

1179

The Huns with courtesy replied, 'august and honoured queen!
 'Your life with Etzel will be such, as't never yet hath been:
 'Your time will pass in social joys and eminent delights;
 'For our potential king has hosts of most accomplished knights.

661.

1180

'Queen Helcha's noble dames and maids, when added to your own,
 'Will form such brilliant appanage as never yet was known.
 '— A court, so full of rank and youth, will loftiest knights allure.
 '— Permitting our advice to rule, your happiness is sure.'

662.

1181

She said — 'midst bashfulness and sighs, — 'let now the subject rest
 'Until tomorrow's dawn appears, then be again my guest,
 'And I will give you frank reply to all that's been proposed.'
 The gallant knights, at her command, the pleasing audience closed.

663.

1183

Then came her brother Giselher — who thus do her did say,
 'Sister! it has been told to me, as matter known to day,
 'That Etzel, if thou giv'st consent, will ease thine heart of grief:
 'Whatever others may advise — I say — accept the chief!'

664.

1184

'Tis in his power to solace thee' — said Giselher once more:
 'For from the Rhone unto the Rhine — and Elbe to the sea-shore,
 'There is no regal potentate so powerful as he!
 'Right gladsome moments may accrue from preference shown to thee.'

665.

1185

Said she, 'my brother! how canst thou advise me so to act?
 'Sorrow and tears, methinks display more feeling and more fact!
 '— Moreover, how could I appear with credit at his court?
 'Since what of beauty I possessed, has been misfortune's sport.'

666.

1189

So closed that interview:— the queen from night to coming day
Was kept awake by warring thoughts, as on her bed she lay.
Her full blue eyes, the livelong night, were never free from tears,
Which only left when morning dawned, and she prepared for prayers.

667.

1191. 92

Then were king Etzel's messengers informed that they might come:
Who anxiously awaited leave to ride away towards home,—
Whether that leave resulted from sheer failure, or success:
Sir Rud'ger went to where he found Burgundia's lone princess.

668.

1193

The count, with gentleness, began to supplicate the queen,
That she would condescend to state which way her mind did lean,
And what commands he should take back unto king Etzel's land:
—Much feared he that his suitoring would fail to gain her hand.

669.

1195

Nothing that they could say availed— till margrave Rudeger
In secret whisper undertook to guarantee to her
Security from every harm, and justice for the past.
That did in measure quiet down her anguished heart at last.

670.

1196

Then to the widowed queen he said, 'now cast your griefs aside,
'And be assured:—if 'mongst the Huns, you've Rudeger allied,
'Together with his friends and kin, and eke his warriors brave,
'No power dare do you ill or hurt, without revenge as grave!'

671.

1197

That lessened more and more the grief that quailed her heart so long.
Said she, 'now swear to me in troth—that whoso does me wrong,
'You'll be the champion to enforce vengeance for injury.'
The count replied, 'much honoured dame—thereto I do agree.'

672.

1198

Then swore the margrave Rudeger and all his stalwart knights,
 That they would serve her loyally — and ever guard her rights;
 Moreover, they would never fail in royal Etzel's land,
 To honour her in every way; — 'twas vouched by Rud'ger's hand.

673.

1199

Now thought the ever constant queen — 'for that I've quickly gained
 'A host of good and trusty friends — I'll be no longer pained
 'At what the world may think or say of me, unlucky wife!
 ' — Perchance I may at last work out revenge for Siegfried's life.

674.

1200

'For since king Etzel has large force of knighthood and liegemen,
 'O'er whom I am to hold behest, — I may do marvels then;
 'Moreover, with his riches great, I presents can award.
 ' — Detested Hagen long hath ta'en from me the Niblung-ward!

675.

1204

Anon, she said, 'I'll go with you, — I, the poor widowed bride,
 'So soon as matters are arranged — to where the Huns abide
 'If I can find true friends enow to guard me to that land!
 — Such Chriemhild vouched, before the knights, by tender of her hand.

676.

1205

Then said the margrave Rudeger — 'have you but two good men
 'To go with you, I can add more! — 'twere circumspect I ken
 'That we with honourable show transport you o'er the Rhine:
 ' — You must no longer sojourn here — but Burgundie resign.

677.

1206

'I have five hundred gallant men, besides my kindred friends:
 'They'll serve you with much loyalty — and when the journey ends
 'Be as devoted to your will: — myself, will all accord,
 'At your desire — that without blame, I keep my given word!

678.

1207

'Now bid that forthwith be prepared the housings complement;
'(Sir Rud'ger's counsel, fairest queen! you never shall repent)
'And be your dames and maids equipped — so many as you have:
'— Truly, to meet us on the road, will come a knighthood brave!'

679.

1208

She had preserved from Siegfried's time — prizes of saddlery,
Such as were rode for in the race: — therefore at will could she
Furnish her maids wherewith to ride from Burgundie in state.
Hella! what costly steeds and gear the ladies did await!

680.

1209

If ever dames and courtly maids prepared rich garmentry, —
It was for this important trip: and that to high degree:
For they had heard about the king during this love affair.
— From out the cedar-chests were ta'en dresses long hoarded there.

681.

1220

Long had been trusted to the maids, for watchful custody,
The purest gold that e'er was wrought, or goldsmith's eyes did see;
Twelve chests contained the precious ore: such was on sumpters placed
With much of female pomp; — that all, might ride and be agraced.

682.

1222

Then said the yet lamenting queen, 'who are the trusty few,
'That for sheer loyalty to me — will form my retinue —
'To leave the Rhine and ride forthwith, into the Hunnish land? —
'For them is store of gold, to buy horses and clothes, off hand.'

683.

1223

Then spake, unto the noble queen, the margrave Eckewart:
'Since I your chamberlain have been, and done the courtly part,
'I ever loyally have served — as trusty knight became!
'And to my dying day will do most cordially the same.

684.

1224

'Moreo'er five hundred gallant men attendant are on me,
 'Who all shall aid you with effect, and plighted constancy:
 'Nothing, save death, can sever us from queen so fair and kind!
 — Chriemhild expressed by graceful bend — her thankfulness of mind.

685.

1225. 26

The steeds were brought to castle-yard — and all prepared to ride;
 Then, friendly moaning and lament arose on every side, —
 And farewell-tears were seen to drop from many a splendid eye.
 — In Etzel's land she found, ere long, much cause for gaiety.

686.

1232

The active Giselher then said unto his sister dear,
 'Should you in trouble ever be, or reason have for fear;
 'Let me forthwith be told thereof, and I'll be soon at hand:
 'Rashly I'll ride, to serve Chriemhild — e'en into Etzel's land.'

L E G E N D XII.

Showing how Chriemhilda was received in Hungarie by king Etzel, — and married in Vienna.

687.

1274

King Etzel's fame and sovereign sway extended far and wide,
So that in all times, at his court, was found the very pride
Of chivalry — the bravest knights that e'er were minstrel's theme
'Mongst pagans or Christ-worshippers: — they all had come with him.

688.

1275

One never failed near him to see — for so the legend saith —
Orders of christian-chivalry, eke those of pagan-faith. —
Whate'er their usages and ways, or national belief —
The tolerant spirit of the king made such no cause of grief.

689.

1277

Now when unto the king was known the whole of the report,
His heart no longer was for woe the all too sure resort;
He gladly heard that fair Chriemhild, in state, trod Hunnish ground;
So rode he gallantly to where his bride elect he found.

690.

1278

Full divers were the languages, and countries manifold,
Of those keen knights who rode before king Etzel rich and bold;
Of christians, and of pagan-men, extensive hosts were seen:
All rode, in most imposing style, to where they met the queen.

691.

1279

Squadrons there were which came from Greece, and Russia east and west;
Wallachian and Polonian knights took lead of all the rest, —
Their horses being nobly bred, and gallantly bestrode:
They all, in custom, dress, and feat, did as at home was mode.

692.

1280

From Kieff too, were many bands of very valiant men,
And gallant knights; moreover, hordes of savage Petshnegen,
Who showed from steed their archery — on birds in rapid flight:
They drew — until their arrow-heads touched bow — with nervous might.

693.

1282

King Etzel was preceded by a matchless company;
All jocund, rich, and powerful, — eke courtiers in degree:
They twenty-four brave princes were, of spotless birth and fame,
Whose highest wish was to behold the very beauteous dame.

694.

1283

Duke Ramung, of Wallachia's plains, increased the cavalcade
By seven full hundred horsemen good, as e'er bold chief obeyed:
They rode so fast that birds a-wing were often left behind! —
To them came royal Gibekie; with host of daring mind.

695.

1284

Hornboge, the ever vigilant, with thousand chosen men,
Rode from the potentate's array to where the queen was then,
And with hurrahs! saluted her — the custom of that land;
The kindred of the Hunnish king had joined the royal band.

696.

1285

Also there came from Danemark — Hawart, the bold and strong,
And Iring, — swift to will, and do — with ever truthful tongue;
Moreover, Irnfried, chieftain brave, of woody Thuringen.
They all received in courteous way the queen of Nib'lungen.

697.

1287

Now did advance king Etzel bold, and famous Dieterich,
With all his gallant men-at-arms — renowned for movements quick,
And bravery — right noble knights! — eke loyally inclined.
— All this engendered in Chriemhild much buoyancy of mind.

698.

1289

Then from her palfrey's back was helped the fair and high-born queen:
And to alight from his proud steed the potent king was seen —
Followed by all those well proved chiefs who formed his martial show;
— One saw the king, with joyous mien, unto Chriemhilda go.

699.

1290

Two princes, of unbounded wealth — so does the legend say —
Drew nigh unto the lovely dame, in most superb array;
Just then when Etzel's self advanced: — now could it be perceived,
How she that rich and stately chief with kindly kiss received.

700.

1293

Pending the time that Etzel brave with fair Chriemhilda whiled,
The youthful knights, as then was mode — the flagging hour beguiled,
Bykighthood feats which they had learned, they sought Chriemhilda's smile:
— Christian and pagan did the same — though much unlike their style.

701.

1295

The clatter of the splintered shafts occasioned tumult loud:
From burghs and castles, round about, keen knights did thither crowd,
As also royal visitors, of tourney consequence: —
Anon, the king and queen Chriemhild went jauntily from thence.

702.

1296

Upon the field hard by they saw a very sumptuous tent.
The spacious plain was strewed with booths, in ample complement,
For social converse and repose after their labours great.
— Famed heroes handed many a maid thereto, with courtly state.

703.

1299

Now was commanded that the jousts, and other sports, should cease;
 So that the hurly-burly noise gave way to sounds of peace.
 Then to the booths king Etzel's men advanced with rapid stride:
 They had allotted them forthwith, night-quarters, long and wide.

704.

1300

The busy-day was at an end, and each one sought repose
 Until the twilight of the morn told that the sun uprose!—
 Then, were the prancing steeds bestrode by many a gallant man:
Hella!—in honour of the king, they soon high-games began.

705.

1301

The king desired his Hunnish knights should show themselves well skilled.
 All rode from Tulnic to Vienne—for so the monarch willed!
 There found they many a stately dame of truly virtuous life:
 With courtly honours they received king Etzel's lovely wife.

706.

1302

Abundantly had been prepared, and eke as promptly brought,
 Of what was most admired and craved:—the knights enjoyed in thought
 The coming jubilative shouts, and cheer of nuptial-day.
 —The marriage of the king began in most auspicious way.

707.

1305

In whitsun-week the wedding knot, with all due form, was tied.
 'Twas then king Etzel made a wife of his illustrious bride,
 Within the city of Vienne:—methinks, so many knights
 Attended not when erst she wed, to do her homage-rights.

708.

1306

By gifts, she made herself beloved of those she'd never seen.
 Full many who such boons received, thus whispered of the queen,
 'We thought Chriemhilda spoiled of *all*, wherewith to make display;
 'But find that she, with largesses, can work in wondrous way.'

709.

1307

The marriage-rite hilarities endured full seventeen days.
I'm of opinion that no king did ever merit praise
For holding greater festival, — or 'tis unknown to me:
— All who attended wore, I ween, their newest garmentry.

710.

1308

Moreover, in the Netherlands — methinks, she never sat
At table with so many knights; and shrewdly augur that
Although sir Siegfried had much gold, yet to his service bound
Were ne'er so many noble chiefs, as she with Etzel found.

711.

1309

Nor ever at espousals great, were given with heart-consent
So many cloaks of choicest stuff and liberal measurement;
Nor yet so much of other clothes (they store had of attire):
— All this was done, beyond a doubt, at queen Chriemhild's desire.

712.

1310

Friends, kin, and visiters appeared imbued with equal moods,
For they displayed no wish to keep a surplus of their goods,
Giving to each one, on request, the boon he most did crave;
So that some over-generous knights gave 'till they'd nought to save.

713.

1311

Chriemhild oft pondered o'er the time when she sat near the Rhine
Beside her noble Siegfried! — then wept she tears of brine;
But she so veiled her sympathy, that none the tear observed.
— After much grief and woe — for her great honours were reserved.

714.

1315

When that the eighteenth morning came, from Vienne all rode away;
— Then many shields were split and bored by spears, in sham affray;
Which skilful heroes on the road did carry in their hands.
— So, did the potentate return unto his Hunnish lands.

715.

1316

Within famed Heimburg's ancient walls they whiled away the night.
 There, no one was aware, forsure, of the imposing might
 Which Etzel brought with him, as he progressed o'er Hunnish ground:
Hella! what comely dames and maids, at home, the knighthood found.

716.

1317

At wealthy town of Miselburg, they on the Danube went:
 The river soon was covered o'er, by man, horse, pack, and tent;
 So that one might opine, the earth had partially 'gan flow.
 Those dames fatigued by journey long — refreshing sleep did know.

717.

1318

Full many a ship and spacious craft were to each other lashed,
 That dainty dames, through tide and waves, might not be rudely splashed;
 — O'er them was providently spread full many a linen tent:
 The whole appeared like moving field, from festal landscape rent.

718.

1319

The news soon flew to Etzel's burgh, of coming-back array, —
 And man, and wife, and children felt beyond description gay:
 Queen Helcha's household, who erewhile enjoyed her bounteous care,
 Partook of, when Chriemhilda came, an undiminished share.

719.

1320

In fear — yet full expectancy, stood many a noble maid
 On whom, since good queen Helcha's death, undue affliction preyed.
 Eke Chriemhild found fair maidens seven — daughters of worthy kings.
 They much adorned the Hunnish realm, and joyous state of things.

720.

1321

The young dame Herrat had the post of mistress of the court:
 She was queen Helcha's sister's child — of excellent report,
 Eke wife to Dieterich, moreo'er, king Nentwine's daughter kind:
 Hereafter, she was much renowned for brave and lofty mind.

721.

1322

She with delight looked forward to the coming of the guests;
And had, for plenitude of cates, dealt out her high behests.
Who can describe in worthy terms king Etzel's board-display!
— Greater profusion, 'mongst the Huns, was not in Helcha's day.

722.

1325

Later, unto Chriemhilda vowed—good services to do—
The king's most near and dear akin, and eke his liegemen true.
— Such lofty homage ne'er was done to Helecha, I ween,
As *there* was tendered, until death, to Etzel's second queen.

723.

1326

Thus knew the court, and ample realm, high state of happiness:
So that, at all times, pastime was in very wakefulness,
And of a sort adapted to each person's mind or mood.
All this ensued from Etzel's love, and Chriemhild's dow'ry good.

L E G E N D XIII.

*Showing how king Etzel and queen Chriemhilda sent two minstrels to Worms,
inviting Gunther and all his court to a great festival.*

724.

1329. 38

Whate'er the lofty virtues were which Helcha did display,
The like were owned by queen Chriemhild, and practised day by day.
Her chamberlain was Eckewart — who thereby friends acquired:
None ever ventured to oppose what fair Chriemhild desired!

725.

1339

She often thought within herself — I'll some day ask the king,
As matter of pure right and grace, that he will please to bring
My friends, and near akin, into the realm of Hungarie.
The arrant purpose of the queen — none did appear to see.

726.

1341

At last, she thus addressed the king, 'my dear and honoured lord!
'The queen desires request to make, and hopes for kind accord:
'Namely, that you'll vouchsafe to prove (as she deserved your care)
'That *you* towards her good friends and kin a kindly feeling bear.

727.

1343

'My brave, and ever generous lord! — you know, 'tis my belief,
'That I have many kindred dear: — surely I'm plunged in grief,
'Because they visit not your spouse, as kindred wont to do.
'Such genders folk-report, that I as exile came to you!

728.

1345

‘I pray you therefore to permit — illustrious monarch mine!
 ‘That messengers be sent unto the town of Worms on Rhine,
 ‘Inviting into Hungarie such friends as I shall name:
 ‘— Then will there journey unto us, rich knights of lofty fame.’

729.

1347

‘Is such consoling unto thee — much honoured wife of mine!
 ‘Then will I send, with right good will, invite, for friends of thine,
 ‘By minstrel-men of gentle birth, unto your Burgundie.’
 — He order gave to seek, forthwith, his men of minstrelsy.

730.

1348

Anon they came to where they found the king, in humour gay,
 Sitting beside the beauteous queen: to them he thus did say,
 ‘Ye are to be my messengers — into fair Burgundie!’
 — He bade a steward give to each new suit of garmentry.

731.

1350

Then said the very potent king — ‘these be my purposes:
 ‘You tender to our royal friends my cordial services;
 ‘And beg that they will graciously pay visit to our queen.
 ‘— Such dear and celebrated guests, I have not often seen.

732.

1351

‘And when you find that they respond unto my bidding fair,
 ‘Then say unto my consort’s kin, that they’ve no time to spare,
 ‘For that we hope to welcome them at summer festival:
 ‘My pleasure much depending on Chriemhilda’s friends, withal.’

733.

1352

Then said a man of minstrelsy — the stately Swemmeline:
 ‘When may the banqueting take place within this realm of thine?
 ‘That, to your friends in Burgundie — we certainty display.’
 Said Etzel, ruler of the Huns, ‘on coming solstice-day.’

734.

1353

‘We’ll do what you command us, sire!’ the gentle Werbel said.
 Chriemhilda then desired that both should to her rooms be led
 Full secretly,— and there she spake the minstrel messengers:
 —Erelong, fell valiant heroes through that interview of hers.

735.

1354

Said she unto the minstrel-men, ‘now shall you serve me well,
 ‘By doing strictly, and with grace, what I to you will tell;
 ‘And if adroitly you effect the whole of my desire,
 ‘You shall get store of wealth and clothes, beyond what you require.

736.

1355

‘Unto my friends beside the Rhine — so many as you see,
 ‘You must in nowise tell or hint, e’en confidentially —
 ‘That you have ever seen, or heard, that I have grief displayed.
 ‘My love and services alone, be to the knights conveyed.

737.

1356

‘Beg them without delay accept the Hunnish king’s invite,
 ‘And thereby prove unto our folk, that they’ve misjudged me quite:
 ‘— Our Huns have got into their heads, that I’m devoid of friends!
 ‘Were I a knight, I’d visit them — for so my humour tends.

738.

1375

‘Further, unto my brother say — Gernot the kind and bold —
 ‘That none of all my near akin, I in more favour hold;
 ‘And beg that he will bring with him into this land of peace,
 ‘All our best friends and relatives — my honour to increase.’

739.

1361

— Letters and messages were given unto the minstrels twain,
 Who now could ride with purses full, and choicest fare obtain.
 Of Etzel, and the lovely queen they got their absence-leave:
 Two courtly suits of costliest stuff, they also did receive. —

740.

1367

Unto Bechlaren burgh they rode in very gallant way,
 And there, as might be reckoned on, good welcoming got they.
 The margrave and the margravine their greetings sent to Worms,
 — As did Dietlind their daughter fair, in very courteous terms.

741.

1369

The road they took unto the Rhine, no legend-writer knows;
 Suffice, of things they had with them, their silver and their clothes,
 They nothing lost:—methinks, because all feared king Etzel's power;
 — In such repute stood Etzel's name, that thieves were fain to cower.

742.

1370. 73

Within twelve days, these messengers reached Worms upon the Rhine,
 Werbel, the minstrel of the Huns, and eke proud Swemmeline.
 King Gunther's household greeted them with welcome and good cheer,
 And gave them quarters of the best—eke safe place for their gear.

743.

1378

They went unto the royal host; the palace-hall was thronged:
 And were received in manner such as to their rank belonged.
 So, evermore should be the case when guests tread foreign ground.
 — What plenitude of stately knights, with Gunther, Werbel found!

744.

1379

In royal, and right friendly style, the king did greet them then:
 'Be welcome unto us at Worms, ye Hunnish minstrel-men!
 'As also those who come with you:—now say on what good plea
 'Does noble Etzel, king of Huns, send you to Burgundie?'

745.

1380

They lowly bowed unto the king:—anon spake Werbeline,
 'Good services are tendered you from royal lord of mine;
 'And from your sister fair, Chriemhild—the queen of Hungarie!
 '— We are dispatched unto the Rhine, in truth and loyalty.'

746.

1385

Said Gunther, 'Etzel's messengers I very gladly see;
 'And where they many times to come, they'd always welcome be:
 'On all occasions they should find — kind friends and pastime gay;
 'No ill-betide shall happen them, whilst by the Rhine they stay.'

747.

1386

'We have no doubt upon that score!' said noble Swemmeline;
 'But ah! — in terms full adequate refuses tongue of mine
 'Featly to represent to you, king Etzel's kind salute —
 'Eke that which your fair sister sends — who lives in high repute!

748.

1387

'She calls unto your mind, through us, your grace and loyalty!
 'And how she ever did receive your hearty sympathy.
 '— But first, we to the Rhenish king bear invitation bland,
 'That he will condescend to ride into king Etzel's land.'

749.

1390

Said Gunther, having pondered well: 'ere flits the seventh long night,
 'I will impart to you in troth, what we have found for right
 'In council of selected friends: — till then you may retire
 'Unto your hostelry, and live as princes would desire!'

750.

1397

Unto the hostelry they went — those men from Hungarie.
 Meanwhile, the king sent seek his friends — to hold a councilry;
 At which he frankly told his lords the message he'd received:
 — Asking them, 'what was best to do — so far as they believed.'

751.

1398

That Gunther with propriety might go to Etzel's land,
 Was counselled by the many friends who met at his command.
 The Tronyian chief alone opposed: he did the ride abhor.
 Said he, unto the king, aside, 'you're with yourself at war!

752.

1399

‘You cannot have forgotten yet, what we to her did do:
‘Therefore we must act cautiously, keeping the past in view.
‘I pierced her husband unto death, and that with mine own hand.
‘Shall we then trust ourselves to ride into king Etzel’s land?’

753.

1401

‘Let not those Hunnish messengers mislead by what they say,
‘They fain would make you think, Chriemhild intends not to betray.
‘Designing still to see that queen, may cost you fame and life:
‘None latent vengeance understands better than Etzel’s wife!

754.

1402

In council, Gernot thus did speak, ‘touching what Hagen saith,
‘It may proceed from conscious guilt, and fear of present death
‘Within the Hunnish sovereignty!— shall such annul our will
‘To see our sister, Etzel’s queen?— só, were we doing ill.’

755.

1405

Then spake sir Rumolt, Gunther’s sewer, a knight of high behests,
‘I counsel that you tarry here, and feast your friends and guests,
‘As best may please a sovereign’s will; your lands with products teem!
‘—Methinks, you’ve nothing there impawned, the which you would redeem.

756.

1406

‘Should Hagen’s counsel nought avail, then take advice of me;
‘In that I’ve ever served my king, with spotless honesty.
‘Remain within your peaceful realm, attachments to improve;
‘And leave king Etzel to enjoy, ’mongst Huns, Chriemhilda’s love!

757.

1407

‘Where can you live more prosperously, than here, beside the Rhine?
‘At Worms you’re safe from every foe, and drink the choicest wine.
‘With splendid garments you may dress your hale and handsome frame;
‘And when you are in suitoring mood, you can woo stately dame.

758.

1409

‘Therefore, I counsel you to stay, — rich is this land you know;
 ‘Here, may you harvest without fear the joy-seeds that you sow,
 ‘Much surer than amongst the Huns: — who knows how things are there!
 ‘Tarry at home, most honoured king! — such is knight Rumolt’s prayer!’

759.

1410

‘Once and for all, we’ll not remain!’ said Gerenot, off-hand:
 ‘Since that my sister, with much love, invites us to that land —
 ‘As also Etzel the renowned! — what have we there to fear?
 ‘— Those who decline to ride with us, can unopposed stay here.’

760.

1411

Hagen rejoined with earnestness, ‘let not my speech offend;
 ‘Whatever comes of this debate, its cause, and purposed end,
 ‘Thus counsel I with loyalty: — if you secure will be,
 ‘You must go armed, and ride full strong to Etzel’s Hungarie.’

761.

1413

‘That counsel will I follow straight!’ said Gunther, ardently,
 And sent his heralds through the land, — to all who held in fee.
 Erelong, appeared before the king three thousand knights and more.
 — They little thought the end would prove disaster steeped in gore!

762.

1415

Hagen bade marshal Dankewart — his brother brave, more’er —
 That he should bring, of their liege-knights, a troop of full fourscore
 In panoply unto the Rhine: — that gallant warrior-band
 Brought with them clothes and armoury into king Gunther’s land.

763.

1416

To them came Volcher brave and strong — a minstrel when he chose,
 With thirty knights, his lieges true, — who feared no threat’ning foes;
 Their dress was of the costliest; — no prince could better wear.
 He told the king, he’d ride with him, and Hunnish danger share.

764.

1417

Who Volcher was, and whence his men, I now will tell to you:
He was a chieftain passing bold, and had for liegemen true
Some of the most heroic knights that dwelt in Burgundie;
And as he on the viol played — the ‘fiddle-man’ hight he!

765.

1419

The messengers of queen Chriemhild thought it too long to wait:
Their fear of Hunnish Etzel's ire was surely very great, —
As each day came they anxious felt, for answer, and for leave:
But Hagen was averse thereto — and kept them, I believe!

766.

1420

Said he unto the Rhenish king — ‘we’ll be upon our guard; —
‘Not letting them depart from hence until we are prepared;
‘So that we can for certain ride on seventh night after them,
‘Defeating, by such promptitude, a purposed stratagem!

767.

1421

‘For Chriemhild would not then have time for perfecting a course
‘Of wicked plots against our lives, through aid of foreign force:
‘— Should she attempt with scanty means a wide extending plan,
‘She fails — since to the Huns we take full many a val’rous man!’

768.

1422

The saddles, shields, and other gear, fit implements of war,
Which they would take with them unto king Etzel's realm, afar,
Were now in perfect readiness for hosts of valiant men.
Chriemhilda's minstrel-messengers were led to Gunther then.

769.

1423

When that the embassy came in — the princely Gernot said:
‘Our king accepts the high invite by royal Etzel made! —
‘And say that we well pleased shall ride unto his banqueting,
‘To see our sister, fair Chriemhild — to whom our greetings bring.’

770.

1424

The king of Burgundie then said, 'can you precisely say
'When the festivities commence? or rather, on what day
'We are expected to arrive?'—said minstrel Swemmeline,
'Truly, when comes solstitial-day—ere sun is on decline.'

771.

1427

Then did the wealthy Rhenish king his bounty not withhold,
But ordered in, rich gifts to make, great store of ruddy gold
On ample shields:—he plenty had of that most precious ore!
—Unto the messengers, his friends gave divers presents more.

772.

1433

The honoured minstrel-men now took a very cordial leave
Of many a man and many a dame:—right gaily, I conceive,
They rode until they Swabia reached:—for so far, Gernot sent
An escort of his gallant knights—all evil to prevent.

773.

1434

When that the knights who guarded them returned to their abodes,
The minstrels found that Etzel's name gave safety on the roads—
So that they were not robbed of horse, or coin, or garmentry.
They rode, with pressing diligence, to king of Hungarie.

774.

1436

Arrived in sight of Bechlarn-burgh, and riding down the road,
The warder to count Rudeger the speeding horsemen showed—
And to Gotlind, the margravine, his ever honoured dame.
— That they should see the Burgund kings, was news which welcome came.

775.

1437

The minstrels plied the urging spur—their steeds got o'er the ground;
And in the noble town of Gran—they royal Etzel found;
They brought him greetings manifold, from king, and dame, and knight:
— The mighty ruler of the Huns waxed red, with sheer delight!

776.

1438

When that Chriemhilda was aware of message they had brought,
Announcing that her kin and friends would visit Etzel's court;
She was of very buoyant mood — and gave the minstrels twain,
Large gifts of gold, and costly things:—so, did she honour gain!

777.

1443

Then went the queen of Hungarie to where she found the king,
And said to him right lovingly, 'are tidings that they bring
'Right pleasing to my gentle lord, the sovereign of the state?
'All that I've wished for and desired, will now be consummate.' —

778.

1444

'Thy wish to grant, shall ever be my purpose and delight! —
'I never felt towards kin of mine a joyousness so bright,
'Whene'er they came to visit me, as that with which I'm filled:
'The hope to see thy dearest friends, my every care hath stilled'

779.

1445

The serving-men of Etzel's burgh were ordered, one and all,
To range the settle-seats and chairs in palace and in hall,
For those loved visiters who were to come anon, I trow.
— Through them the king endured, erewhile, much trouble and much woe.

L E G E N D X I V .

Showing how king Gunther and all his brothers, together with Hagen and an array of ten thousand and more knights and men, rode to visit king Etzel and queen Chriemhilda.

780.

1447

The Rhenish potentate bade arm a band of valiant knights:
Thousand and sixty chosen men—for so the legend cites!—
Besides nine thousand yeomen brave, to go to festal scene:
Those who remained at home, ere long, felt grievous care, I ween.

781.

1448

As now the instruments of war through court-yard passed to Worms,
An aged bishop, come from Spire, spake Utie in these terms,
'Our royal friends I see prepare to ride to Hungarie:—
'May heaven preserve them at the feast, from ill and jeopardy!'

782.

1449

Then did queen Utie, to her sons, with love and caution say:
'Remain, ye heroes of the Rhine!—go not from Worms away;
'For I have had distressing dream, whilst lying on my bed:
'—I dreamt that all the feathered tribes of Burgundie were dead.'

783.

1450

Said Hagen, 'they who credit dreams, and 'mured in palace live,
'Know at no time to judge aright, or worthy counsel give
'On matters appertaining to the policy of state.
'—I've counselled that my lord take leave,—and ride to Etzel straight.

784.

1451

'We all are pleased, and of one mind to go to Hungarie:
'There kings are served by valiant knights of highest chivalry.
'Moreo'er, we see and mingle in Chriemhilda's festal show.'
Hagen at that time urged the trip — which after brought him woe.

785.

1452

He would have counselled 'gainst it still, had royal Gerenot
Confined his scorn and rising wrath, to terms less searing hot:
He minded him of Siegfried — Chriemhilda's early pride!
And said, 'that's why sir Hagen bold dissuades from Hunnish ride.'

786.

1453

Said Hagen sneeringly, 'you think my counsel urged by fear!
'— If you desire so much to go, then let your will appear!
'Trust me! — I'll ride along with you into king Etzel's land.'
— Full many a shield and helm, erewhile, were clove by his brave hand.

787.

1456

The sound of trumpets and of pipes was heard at early morn
Announcing they should soon ride forth: — all bustled to adorn!
— Who sweethearts had within their arms, gave them another kiss:
They met no more — Chriemhilda's hate destroyed their happiness.

788.

1457

The sons of queenly Utie had a liegeman of great worth —
A brave and loyal man was he! — now, as they would ride forth,
He told the king, in secrecy, the feelings of his mind:
'Dread sire! I grieve because you still to journey are inclined.'

789.

1458

His name was Rumolt, and he was a knight of ready hand:
Said he, 'to whom do you commit your subjects and your land,
'That in your absence nothing hap, your courage to depress:
'The tidings that from Chriemhild came — have caused me great distress.'—

790.

1459

‘My realm unto your care I leave—also my royal boy!
 ‘And eke the ladies of our court:—such is my will and joy!
 ‘Whoever quails in heart or mind—assuage and heal their pains!
 ‘—No misbefall will chance to us where fair Chriemhilda reigns.’

791.

1460

The steeds were all caparisoned for Gunther and his men.
 With much affection, man and maid took leave, departing then:
 They still could boast of dauntless heart, and buoyancy of soul:
 Full soon did many a loyal wife moan destiny’s controul!

792.

1461

When it was seen that every knight unto his charger went,
 Then many a true and kindly dame did utter loud lament;
 For now forebodings told to them that they should meet no more.
 Keen feelings, auguring mishap, make mind and bosom sore!

793.

1462

The mettlesome young Burgund knights composed the van array:
 —Throughout the land it seemed to be a motley holiday,
 For on both sides the hills were seen women and men, who cried;
 —Whate’er the conduct of the folk—the knights did gaily ride!

794.

1464

The journey led them near unto the left bank of the Maine,
 And so along until they reached the Eastern-Frank domain.
 Hagen, who knew the ground full well, was leader of the host;
 And Dankwart swayed with worthiness the long-held marshal’s post.

795.

1465

Leaving the land of Eastern-Franks, to ride on Swancfeld,
 One might observe what conduct good and discipline they held:
 That of the kings, lords, knights, and men, was worthy highest praise.
 —On the twelfth morn, king Gunther reached the Danube’s banks and braes.

796.

1466

Hagen, the far famed Tronyie chief, rode on a space before —
He kept the Nib'lung spirit up by hopes of getting o'er.
The valiant knight alighted from his horse, and trod the ground,
And quickly, to a neighbouring tree, the gallant charger bound.

797.

1467

The river had o'erflowed its banks — no passage craft saw they:
The kings felt puzzled to get o'er, with their august array;
For tide ran rapidly, I trow — the flood was very broad.
Then from their horses backs the men leaped off, with one accord.

798.

1471

'Now tarry here beside the stream,' said Hagen, 'whilst I seek
'The ferryman more up the flood, — and 'bout our transport speak,
'By means of his stout passage-boat, into Gelpfrates land:
Hagen then took, with confidence, his trusty shield in hand.

799.

1472

He was well armed, — besides his shield, which on his arm he placed,
His polished helm, which gleamed afar, he 'neath his tonsils braced,
And o'er his mail, in baldrick bore a weighty two-edged brand;
Which through the very marrow cut, when wielded by his hand.

800.

1473

Seeking the Danube ferryman a little up the stream —
He heard a water-splashing play, and listened, as I deem.
It was occasioned by wise nymphs, disporting in a lake:
— They came to cool themselves, I ween, and joyous bath partake.

801.

1474

Sir Hagen got a glimpse of them, and slily would advance;
Apprised thereof, they quickly dived below the water's glance.
— That they so well escaped from him, produced much merriment:
He took their clothes and nothing more — the hero was content.

802.

1475

Then spake a mermaid to the knight — Hadburga was her name:
 ‘Renowned sir Hagen, hero bold! — attentive ear we claim.
 ‘If you’ll return again to us, the raiment you have got,
 ‘We’ll tell you of your Hunnish trip, and what will be your lot!’

803.

1476

They floated like aquatic birds, before him on the flood.
 Their insight into things to come, he thought both keen and good;
 And therefore was prepared, by faith — to credit what they said:
 Forthwith, they gave him wise reply, to what was in his head.

804.

1477

Said she, ‘with safety you may ride into king Etzel’s land:
 ‘I pledge thereon my truth and troth — and, in idea, my hand;
 ‘That never noble king’s array obtained in foreign state,
 ‘Such honour, and such lofty fame: — believe what I relate!’

805.

1478

The mermaid’s words made Hagen’s heart to palpitate with joy:
 He gave them back the captured clothes — and left the virgins coy.
 No sooner had they hurried on their wondrous garmentry,
 Than they foretold, in truthful words, his fate in Hungarie.

806.

1479

Loud spake another water-nymph, — this one Sieglinda hight —
 ‘I warn you, Tronyie Hagen brave, — sir Adrian’s son of might!
 ‘That to obtain the clothes, my aunt has said what is not true:
 ‘For shouldst thou journey to the Huns — that journey thou wilt rue.

807.

1480

‘Trust me — you should ride back again, there yet is time, I ween;
 ‘For you bold knights of Burgundie have only bidden been
 ‘That you should miserably die in royal Etzel’s land:
 ‘Whoever rides to Hungarie — has death within his hand!’

808.

1483

Then Hagen full of inward wrath — thus to the mermaid spake:
‘Such craven news I never can unto our rulers take,
‘As that we all shall lose our lives in Etzel’s well-ruled state.
‘—Now tell me, wisest of thy sex — how cross we stream so great?’

809.

1484

She said, ‘since you’ll not take advice, but persevere to go:
‘Across the water you will see a country inn, I trow;
‘Therein resides a ferryman,—no other one is near.’
The knight, believing what she said, no longer loitered there.

810.

1485. 86

Then one of them did loudly call—and spake the vexed chief thus;
‘Stop! stop! sir Hagen, go not hence so rapidly from us,
‘But take from me good hint, of how you reach the other side.
‘Be on your guard! for yonder man is full of wrath and pride!

811.

1487

‘Indeed his temper is so grim, he’ll thwart you doggedly,
‘Unless about the passage-freight you courtcously agree.
‘If he consents to take you o’er, begrudge not what you spend;
‘For he is warden in these parts — moreover, Gelpfrat’s friend!

812.

1488

‘Should he delay forthwith to come, then shout across the stream,
‘And say your name is Amelreich!—a knight of high esteem,
‘Who owing to o’erwhelming foes fled from his lands and fears!
‘The ferryman is sure to come — soon as that name he hears.

813.

1489

The vexed and stately Tronyie chief bent to them haughtily:
And ruminated for a while,—no question more asked he,
But went, tide upwards by the strand, keeping the water’s side,
And soon across the swollen stream the sought-for house espied.

814.

1492

He shouted out with giant might—the which, the flood along
 Returned in rattling echo-sounds,—the hero's lungs were strong,—
 'Halloo! come o'er! I'm Amelreich!—count Else's true liegeman!
 'Who through abounding enemies from Danube's marches ran.'

815.

1493

Upon the point of upraised sword, he balanced armlet wide—
 Which was of burnished gold, and beamed like sun upon the tide.
 He offered it, to be rowed o'er—into Gelpfraten's land.—
 The avaricious ferryman forthwith took oar in hand.

816.

1494

The selfsame ferryman possessed a most unrighteous mind:
 The 'grasping after more!' full oft, has heart to ill inclined.—
 He thought to pocket with much ease the keen knight's ruddy gold,
 But in the end received his death, from Tronyie Hagen bold.

817.

1496

Arrived, he said, 'tis possible you're Amelreich by name,
 'But you are not the Amelreich, for whom I hither came.
 'On father and on mother's side, he is my brother dear!
 'For that you've vilely cheated me—you sooth may tarry here.'

818.

1497

'Not so, 'fore God the bountiful!' said Hagen, with affright,
 'I plead for others, not myself—and am a stranger knight.
 'What I have tendered you in troth, take kindly as your fare
 'To row us o'er,—assuredly, I'll be your friend elsewhere.'

819.

1500

The ferry-man then seized an oar—long, tough, and very broad,—
 And struck at Hagen with great force (he held the knight abhorred)
 So that within the passage-boat, he fell upon his knee:
 So fierce a master-ferryman—the Tronyian ne'er did see.

820.

1502

Hagen, enraged, the weapon took which hung on his left side,
And sprang on board, 'twastwo-edged sword, right weighty, sharp and wide.
With it, he severed head from trunk — then cast them in the stream:
Erelong, the kings, and all the knights knew of the fray, I deem.

821.

1503

In the same moment that the knight the wrathful boatman clove,
To his surprise the boat slid back, and towards the current drove.
Ere he could right the craft again, he felt exceeding tired;—
Brave Hagen showed both power and skill, which well might be admired.

822.

1504

By dint of strength and boatman craft, he ferry back would take:
Just then within his iron hands the sturdy oar did break!
He wanted to approach the knights who stood on jutting strand:
No other tug-oar being there — he spliced it with own hand!

823.

1506

The knights, as might be thought, received the hero with great thanks,
But soon remarked much reeking blood upon the ferry's planks:
Which had gushed out from cureless wound the ferryman received.
The questions put were manifold — which much sir Hagen grieved.

824.

1508

Then said he lyingly to all — 'when erst the boat I found
'Amongst the withies tied to tree, and readily unbound,
'I saw no boatman standing by — nor have seen boatman since.
'Nought has been done on board the craft, that might make lady wince.'

825.

1509

Then said a prince of Burgundie — the valiant Gerenot —
'To mourn the death of many friends, will be to-day my lot,
'For that no passage-ferryman I on the river see:
'How we shall get across the stream, is marvellous to me!

826.

1510

Loud shouted Hagen, 'serving-grooms! now place upon the ground
 'Our saddles, and our gear of war: methinks there'll not be found
 'A better ferryman than I,—who was on Rhine the best!
 '—I'll put you over, never fear, into Gelpfraten's nest.

827.

1511

And that more quickly might be passed the now broad Danube flood,
 They swam their horses every one: their swimming was so good,
 That not a single steed was lost by reason of the tide;
 Some truly, from much weariness—landed a little wide.

828.

1512

Unto the passage-boat was ta'en their gold, and clothes of state;
 For their desire to journey on in nowise did abate:
 Hagen was master ferryman, and brought to Gelpfrat's strand
 Full many a knight:—they sprang ashore, and trod the unknown land.

829.

1513

First ferried he a thousand knights—together with four score,
 Who were his own efficient men;—and after many more.
 Nine thousand yeomen eke got o'er—right safely landed they.
 Sir Tronyie Hagen's skilful hands were active all the day.

830.

1527

'Now be ye brave!' sir Hagen said, 'ye knights and yeomenry,
 '—Forming a band of brotherhood—so seems it right to me!
 'For I unwelcome news must tell, and do so with much pain:
 '—Not one of us will reach his home in Burgundie again.

831.

1530

That awful news did rashly spread—it flew from troop to troop,
 And bleached the cheek of many a knight,—one saw proud helmets stoop
 When thoughts came o'er their wearers minds, of quickly coming death
 Through this high-festival,—they sighed, and drew the long, deep breath.

832.

1567

I cannot tell you where they camped on that or following day.
Suffice—the country folk around were told without delay,
That Utie's sons a progress made, unto high-festival:
They afterwards were well received — at town they Passau call.

833.

1571

Soon as the weary travellers had ta'en refreshing rest,
And near approach to Rud'ger's land by guiders was confest,
They found upon the marches one—who there lay fast asleep.
From him sir Hagen slyly took — what he desired to keep.

834.

1573

'O woe is me! what knighthood shame!' cried noble Eckewart:
'I'm fain to curse this Burgund ride, from bottom of my heart.
'Methinks I've lost my every joy since Siegfried is gone!
'O woe is me! — towards Rudeger, unknighly I have done.

835.

1574

Sir Hagen heard the loud lament of Eckewart the bold,
And gave him back the much prized sword, with six arm-clasps of gold:
'Take them,' said Hagen, 'as first fee, for service to be shown;
'Thou art a very valiant knight, to slumber here alone!'

836.

1575

'God bless you for these golden clasps!' the noble Eckewart said:
'Trust me, I sorrow that you ride to where Chriemhild's obeyed.
'—'Twas you who slew sir Siegfried! — and here thou art abhorred!
'—I counsel you, in faithfulness, to be upon your guard.'

837.

1576

'May heaven protect and succour us!' sir Tronyie Hagen said:
'Truly, the knights assembled here, perceive no other dread
'Than want of hostelry and food: — the kings and lieges brave
'Desire good quarters for the night: that is the boon they crave!

838.

1577

‘Our horses, from the miles we’ve rode, are in full woeful plight;
 ‘And food and forage both are spent!’ said Hagen the bold knight;
 ‘Nor find we anything to buy — of host we have great need,
 ‘Who virtue hath to harbour us, and dole out meal of bread.’

839.

1578

Sir Eckewart rejoicing said, ‘a right good host I know!
 ‘Not all the country round about so brave a one can show.
 ‘That he’ll receive you cordially, admits not of a doubt:
 ‘So if it meets with your consent — we’ll find count Rud’ger out.

840.

1579

‘He lives beside the public road: — a host less prone to art
 ‘Ne’er kept good house in ancient burgh: all virtues grace his heart,
 ‘As flowers adorn the hills and fields, in sweetest month of May!
 ‘To render kindnesses to knights — affords him joy for aye.’

841.

1580

Then said king Gunther of the Rhine, ‘wilt be my harbinger?
 ‘To know if me and mine may find friendship with Rudeger,
 ‘Whose noble hospitality is famed in other lands: —
 ‘And say, rewards shall flow to him — from me, with liberal hands.’

842.

1581

Said Eckewart, ‘with heartfelt joy your harbinger I’ll be!’
 Then with much speed he reined his steed, to ride immediately,
 And tell the margrave Rudeger of all he had perceived:
 The count had not for many a day, such pleasing news received.’

LEGEND XV.

Showing how the kings were entertained at Bechlaren, where Giseller was betrothed to Rudeger's daughter Dietlinda. The Burgundians are received by Dietrich, who warns them of Chriemhilda's hate.

843.

1582

From Bechlarn burgh might be descried, one, riding at full speed,
Whom Rud'ger quickly recognized: said he, 'on foaming steed
'Comes Eckewart the courtly knight—Chriemhilda's chamberlain!'
He thought, forsure, some ambushed foes compelled him back again.

844.

1583

Then went he to the castle gate, and there sir Eckwart found,
Who forthwith did ungird his sword and place it on the ground.
The message that he had in charge, he nowise sought to veil,
But made the valiant host and friends acquainted with the tale.

845.

1584

Said he, 'sir margrave! I'm dispatched with tidings unto thee,
'By my good lord sir Gunther bold—the king of Burgundie,
'And by his brothers Gerenot, and youthful Giseller;
'Who all commend themselves in troth—and services prefer.

846.

1585

'The same does Hagen, Tronyie's chief, and Volcher brave and true,
'So diligent in loyalty:—permit me add thereto,
'What the king's marshal Dankewart hath bid me bring to sight:
'—The worthy yeomanry have need of hostelry to night.'

847.

1586

With kindly smile count Rudeger did thus make known his mind,
 'Right welcome is the news you bring, that kings so rich and kind
 'Desire from me good services:—such will I ne'er gainsay,
 'And hope they'll make our castle-burgh their Inn upon the way.

848.

1587

'The marshal also bade me state the numbers that will come
 'To claim your hospitality—and find to night a home,
 'Are sixty knights of light array, and thousand horsemen good,
 'Besides nine thousand yeomen bold!'—the count was in gay mood.

849.

1588

'Full welcome are to me the guests!'—said Rudeger the brave—
 'And that they make my burgh their home, is just what I would crave.
 'For little service had of me, I fain would make amends!
 '—Now ride ye forth to welcome them—both serving-men and friends.

850.

1589

All ran to mount their stall-fed steeds—the knights as well as men;
 Whatever Rudeger desired, that did they there and then.
 All liked the welcoming in hand, which made their hurry great:
 Thereof Gotlinda nothing knew: she in her chamber sat.

851.

1590

Sir Rud'ger went to where he found the ladies had adjourned,
 Gotlind the good, and their fair child—whom he forthwith informed
 Of the exhilarating news which to his ears had come—
 That kindred of their honoured queen would make his burgh their home!

852.

1591

'My best beloved and sweet Gotlind!' said Rudeger with glee,
 'Receive in your most courteous way these kings of Burgundie,
 'When they and their brave men arrive, on passing to our court.
 'Also greet Gunther's liegeman bold, sir Hagen, in like sort;

853.

1592

‘With them comes eke of highest rank — the noble Dankewart,
‘And Volcher, bravest of the brave, well skilled in minstrel-art.
‘Those six you greet with kindly kiss: — so must our daughter dear!
‘In all your conduct towards these guests, let loyalty appear.

854.

1593

That promised readily the dames — who, without more ado,
Brought from their cedar chests a store of splendid gear to view,
Wherein they purposed to receive the brave and royal knights:
The busy maidens heads were filled with dresses and delights.

855.

1594

False colour on the women’s cheeks was rarely to be seen.
They wore upon their heads light bands of ruddy gold, I ween,
(Such were right-cunningly-wrought wreaths) to bind their shiny hair,
That so the wind might not disturb the object of their care.

856.

1595

Now let we, for a while at least, the ladies there remain:
Then might one see sharp galloping across the verdant plain
By margrave Rud’ger’s mounted friends, until the kings they found,
Who hearty welcoming received on treading Rud’ger’s ground.

857.

1596

When to Bechlaren’s lord approached the royal Burgund guests,
He thus, in kind and courteous terms, the kings and knights addressed,
‘Right welcome be the Rhenish kings — and eke their men-at-arms!
‘To greet such friends, on land of mine, my loyal bosom warms.

858.

1597

Then bowed to him the Burgund knights, with blandness void of guile,
Having observed undoubted truth in his benignant smile: —
He specially did Hagen greet (him he had known before)
He did the same to Volcher brave — and sev’ral chieftains more.

859.

1598

Also the noble Dankewart, who thus bespake the count:
 'In that you give us bed and board,—pray, who will take account
 'Of all the yeomanry that we have also hither brought?'
 To him sir Rudeger replied, 'I've given to them due thought.

860.

1599

'Let all the tents be pitched around this dry and open plain!
 'What here is lost, I answer for—secure is my domain.
 'Now doff the saddles—draw the bits—and let the horses graze!'
 —Seldom has host advised, methinks, doings so worthy praise.

861.

1600

The noble guests were filled with joy—the yeomen were well fed;
 Then rode to burgh the kings and knights: the men found grassy bed,
 And slept right soundly, I opine, after their weariness.
 —They never since they passed the Rhine had better fared, I guess.

862.

1601

The very noble margravine, and daughter passing good,
 Came gently walking from the burgh, and now together stood
 Surrounded by their fairest dames, and many a lovely maid.
 They costly arm and wrist-clasps wore o'er dresses of brocade.

863.

1602

The gems they wore, at distance beamed most gorgeously and bright
 From their rich settings: maids and dames were beautiful to sight!
 —The guests arrived and with much grace descended from their steeds:
Hella! what courtesy of ways Burgundian knighthood heeds!

864.

1603

Thirty and six enchanting maids and many handsome dames,
 All affable and courtly bred, and of unsullied fames,
 Advanced to meet them,—every one attended by esquire:
 Then did the ladies' welcoming, Burgundian knights inspire.

865.

1604

Good Gotelind, in courtly way, the Rhenish kings did kiss,
So did Dietlinda, her fair child: Hagen stood by, I wis:
The margrave bade her kiss that chief—her eyes his visage scanned;
So dreadful seemed that knight to her — she would have shunned command.

866.

1605

Yet must she complaisantly do, as her dear sire had said:
The fluttering colours of her cheeks varied from white to red!—
Dankwart she kissed with less dislike — then the brave ‘fiddleman’:
His strength and fame included him in this saluting plan.

867.

1606

Dietlind, the youthful margravine, now gave her lily hand
To Giselher, the youngest king of famous Burgund land:
Her mother singled Gunther out — the ruling Rhenish king.
So knights and ladies went from thence in pairs, to banqueting.

868.

1607

The host conducted Gerenot unto the spacious hall—
Heroes and ladies entering in, found seats for one and all.
Then was bright wine poured out, and served to inmate and to guest.
That knighthood never better fared, was ardently confest.

869.

1608

Many a glance from knightly eyes to Rud’ger’s daughter flew—
Who was indeed the fairest maid that eyes did ever view;
Full many a knight in thought felt blessed — and nuptially inclined:
Such love and honour she deserved—being of lofty mind!

870.

1610

Now did the sexes separate—for so was custom there:
The knights, to the baronial court,— to tiring-rooms, the fair.
Then were the tables, in the hall, o’erspread with evening meal;
In such way, that each bidden guest did Rud’ger’s bounty feel.

871.

1611

To please the kings, the margravine consented to appear
 At festal board amongst the guests:— her daughter Dietlind dear
 Remained where supped her waiting maids, and she as mistress sat
 Unseen by any visiters, — who sorrowed much thereat.

872.

1612

When appetite for food and wine had ceased in spacious hall,
 The margrave bid his chamberlain the dames and maidens call:
 Then was no lack of mirthful tale and many a quaint remark,
 In which the brave knight Volcher proved a very merry clerk.

873.

1613

Said he, the martial fiddleman, aloud, to Gotlind's spouse,
 'Most worthy margrave Rudeger! kind heaven has blessed your house
 'Right graciously in every way, vouchsafing you a wife
 'Of beauty such as few possess — thereto, a happy life.

874.

1614

'Now were I lord o'er many lands' — so said sir Volcher brave —
 'And wore the crown of sovereignty — then would I forthwith crave,
 'For wife of mine, your daughter fair: such is my heart's true mood.
 'O she is lovely to behold — moreover, nobly good!

875.

1616

'Now, if my master Giseller doth still incline to woo, —
 'She is of such high pedigree — descending from you two,
 'That I and all his trusty men her lieges true will be,
 'Should ever she be crowned at Worms — a queen of Burgundie.'

876.

1617

The brave count Rudeger felt pleased at what sprang from his heart,
 And Gotelind, the margravine, received it in good part.
 Anon, the heroes all proposed, without more argument,
 That she should be young Gisler's wife — such met with quick assent.

877.

1621

Thereon, were both — (a custom old, and practised in that land) —
 Surrounded by the younger knights, within a ring to stand,
 Who kept up merriment at cost of those to be betrothed:
 Their thoughts undoubtedly ran on what stripling never loathed.

878.

1622

When now the questioning began — the maid's consent to gain:
 As, 'will you wed this noble knight?' — she felt some mental pain,
 (Yet went her humour to accept the most accomplished prince) —
 'Twas bashfulness, which with young maids has been before and since.

879.

1623

Then did count Rud'ger counsel her boldly to answer, 'yes!
 'I take you willingly, sir knight!' — he then her hand did press
 With his white hands, and afterwards, the lovely bride embraced.
 Alas! she little gladness knew from bliss so well prefaced.

880.

1624

Then said the margrave Rudeger, 'ye kings both rich and strong!
 'When you return unto your realm — which well may be erelong —
 'I cordially will give to you the now betrothed maid,
 'That she may ride with you to Worms;' the proffer none gainsaid.

881.

1625

The joyous shouting in the hall, at length had died away:
 The maids were to their chambers gone, to get what rest they may;
 And all the guests to downy beds, for slumber until dawn.
 — Still were the cooking-folk employed, forecasting for the morn.

882.

1626

The breakfast finished, they would ride from Bechlarn's burgh anon
 To where the Hunnish realm began. 'I must insist thereon —'
 Said margrave Rud'ger earnestly — 'that you depart not yet!
 'Such noble visiters, forsure, — we seldom hither get.'

883.

1627

Said Dankwart with much friendliness, 'good sir, that cannot be.
 '— Where get you store of bread and wine, and such rare viandry,
 'To feast again so many men in like abundant way?'
 — When this the noble margrave heard — he thus to them did say,

884.

1628

'Illustrious visitors and guests — such doubt ye must not raise!
 'For I have store that well may last another fourteen days,
 'To feast yourselves and all the men you to Bechlaren bring:
 '— Little was ta'en from me away by our bold Hunnish king.'

885.

1629

However they might hesitate — in truth they tarried there
 Until the fourth day's morning came; — and then did amply share
 In the brave host's munificence, which far and wide was told.
 — He gave unto his lofty guests — horses, and cloth-of-gold!

886.

1630

This sojourn might not longer last — 'twas time for them to ride.
 — Count Rudeger could never hoard, — his bounty reached so wide,
 That whosoever asked of him, — forsure, a boon received.
 He never turned request away, but every one relieved.

887.

1631

The serving inmates of his burgh led to the outer gate
 Many superbly saddled steeds; — there stranger knights did wait,
 Bearing their shields upon their arms, full ready to escort
 The Rhenish kings to Etzel's lands — they were of good report!

888.

1632

Count Rud'ger's wealth, and lib'ral hands, were proved on one and all;
 For ev'ry knight received rich gifts, before the guests left hall.
 — The rental roll was very great, of margrave Rudeger! —
 — His daughter fair, sweet Dietelind, was bride to Giselher.

889.

1633

He gave to Gerenot a sword — a matchless one, of course,
The same that in the after fight he wielded with such force.
That gift to Gernot greatly pleased the margrave's noble wife —
But ah, count Rudeger through it did lose his valued life!

890.

1636

'Of all that hereto I have seen' — sir Tronyie Hagen said —
'I nothing wish to call my own, for ornament, or stead,
'Save yonder shield which hangs against the lofty eastern wall:
'—I willingly would bear it at king Etzel's festival!'

891.

1637

When Gotelinda, Hagen's wish explicitly did know;
It filled her mind with bygone grief — and tears began to flow.
She thought with many a mental pang on noble Nudung's death,
Whom that stern warrior Wittich slew — she grief-full drew her breath,

892.

1638

And said unto the Tronyian chief, 'the shield to you I'll give!
'O would to God, the lord of Heaven! — that Nudung still did live:
'He bore it gallantly on arm, and met his death in fight,
'—I ever must lament o'er him:— he was a valiant knight!'

893.

1639

Gotlinda rose from where she sat — and further grief concealed;
Then with her own white hands the dame took down the valued shield,
Which she did bear to Hagen brave — and placed it in his hand.
Such gift was well bestowed upon that knight of Burgund land.

894.

1640

A costly band was girt around — its colour's bright display,
No better shield e'er met, on arm, the splendid light of day!
It was adorned by precious stones: — had any one desired
To purchase such — a thousand marks of gold had been required.

895.

1642

Of all the costly gifts that were distributed to some, —
 Not any, howsoever choice, into their hands were come,
 Had it not been the count to please — who pressed them earnestly:
 Ere long, these friends were so opposed, that he through them must die!

896.

1643

Now had sir Volcher, the swift knight, with viol in his hand,
 Before the noble margravine right courtly ta'en his stand.
 He played o'er many a dainty tune, and sang his favourite song:
 Thereon, he took fair leave to go from Bechlarn with the throng.

897.

1644

But first the margravine desired, that certain case be brought,
 (Of friendly gift you now shall hear, — none better had been wrought)
 She took thereout twelve clasps of gold, and placed them in his hand:
 'These shall you heeding take with you into king Etzel's land!

898.

1645

'And for my sake you'll put them on whene'er you go to court:
 'I give them, that when some return, they bring me true report
 'Of all that passed, and how you fared at Etzel's festival.'
 — Some knight fulfilled in aftertime, what she desired withal!

899.

1646

Then said the host unto his guests, 'that you may safely ride,
 'Myself will be your guard from thieves — and eke your trusty guide.
 'So that your way you never miss, nor lose ought on the road.'
 — The sumpters, with right ready hands his serving-men did load.

900.

1647

The count and his five hundred men were ready to depart:
 On snorting steeds caparisoned they rode with joyous heart
 Unto king Etzel's festival, and good opinions earned.
 Of all who left Bechlaren burgh — not one of them returned!

901.

1648

With most affectionate salute, the good count left Gotlind;
 And so did Giselher take leave of beautiful Dietlind.
 Fair dames and maids were now embraced — and kissed without debate,
 Erelong, full many a damsel kind bewailed her wayward fate.

902.

1649

Now were the windows in the burgh wide ope on ev'ry side:
 The count and his five hundred men were seen with speed to ride.
 I guess their hearts at parting felt oppressed with gloomy care:
 Full many a dame shed briny tears — and so did virgin fair.

903.

1650

After their dearest friends and loves, did many weep and wail,
 Foreboding they might ne'er return again to Bechlarn vale.
 — Yet gallantly the knights rode on, until they reached the strand
 Of Danube's flowing stream — thence down, to Etzel's Hunnish land.

904.

1651

Then said the margrave Rudeger unto the Burgund knights,
 'Now will I not withhold from you, tidings which yield delights.
 'We are on true Hungarian ground! — so be your minds well eased;
 'King Etzel, when he hears the news, will be exceeding pleased.'

905.

1652

Then was despatched a messenger, by way of Austrian land:
 Where'er he passed, he told the folk that those so near at hand
 Were knights who came from Burgund Worms beside the river Rhine.
 Such tidings gave to Etzel's court much gladness, I opine.

906.

1656

That the Burgundian kings were come within the Hunnish land,
 Was quickly known to him of Berne — the ancient Hildebrand;
 He told it to his sovereign lord, who said, 'it gives me pain!
 He begged his master greet, with grace, the kings and all their train.

907.

1657

Then ready Wolfhart ordered out the chargers from the stalls;
 And Dietrich rode with many a knight, from Etzel's castle-walls,
 To those he should bear welcomes to — who in the fields unbent:
 Already had they pitched, around, full many a sumptuous tent.

908.

1658

As now sir Hagen from afar descried some horsemen brave,
 He to his royal Rhenish lord this gentle counsel gave:
 'Let all the knights descend, I pray, and go on foot to meet
 'Those who come here in Etzel's name, your highnesses to greet.

909.

1659

'Yonder comes on array of knights — long time well known to me.
 'Truly they are of Amelung, and highest dignity.
 'He of Verona leads them on — they haughty are and true!
 'Disdain not therefore services which they may offer you.'

910.

1660

Thereon, as courtly ways require, the Amelungs alight.
 Then stood there near to Dieterich, full many a man and knight,
 And on they walked to greet the guests, where then they might be found;
 They welcomed in most friendly terms the chiefs from Burgund ground.

911.

1661

Lord Dietrich saw that many folk advanced in courtly way.
 Now would you doubtless like to hear, what that brave knight did say
 Unto queen Utie's royal sons: — his mind was on the rack,
 For he thought Rudeger knew all — and would have kept them back.

912.

1662

'I welcome you, illustrious sirs! — Gunther, and Gerenot,
 'Sir Giselher, and Hagen brave — and Volcher not forgot!
 'Moreover Dankewart the swift! — is it to you unknown
 'That Chriemhild for her Siegfried doth still lament and moan?'

913.

1663

‘She has long time to weep and moan!’—the bold sir Hagen said:
‘Since he was slain ’fore many a year — and sojourns with the dead.
‘Twere better that she make the king her one and only dear,
‘For Siegfried will ne’er return to dry the briny tear!’

914.

1664

‘—Sir Siegfried’s wounds be undisturbed! — that’s not the question now;
‘So long as queen Chriemhilda lives, there’s danger great, I trow!
‘Brave champion of the Niblungen, be thou right politic!’ —
So spake Verona’s noble chief—the valiant Dieterich.

915.

1665

‘Why should I be upon my guard?’—said Gunther the august:
‘Etzel sent messengers to me — shall I his word distrust?
‘He invitation gave to us, to ride unto his land:
‘And from our sister we received many a message bland.’

916.

1666

‘I counsel you most fervently’ — rejoined sir Hagen bold:
‘That you request this wond’rous news be to its ending told
‘By the illustrious Dieterich and his retainers kind,
‘That so we learn the present state of queen Chriemhilda’s mind.’

917.

1667

Then went the kings aside, and spoke, — their talk was low and quick.
Gunther and Gerenot were twain — the third was Dieterich.
Returned, the king said, ‘now I hope Verona’s chief inclined
‘Quite unreservedly to tell the state of Chriemhild’s mind.’

918.

1668

Then said the valiant Dieterich, ‘what can I tell to thee —
‘But that I hear Chriemhild each morn, weeping right bitterly,
‘And off’ring loud complaints to God — of her distress and need,
‘Occasioned by the fatal death of potent Siegfried.’

‘Events can not be stopped or changed,’—exclaimed the fiddleman,
‘By what you know, or what you’ve told—the matter we must scan.
‘So let us ride forthwith to court, and know what fortune waits,
‘At Etzel’s and Chriemhilda’s hands—us, of the Burgund states.’

L E G E N D XVI.

Showing how the Burgundians, now often called Nibelungers, arrive in Hungary, and at the court of king Etzel; also Chriemhilda's treatment of Hagen.

920.

1653

The messengers had rode with speed, pursuant of command,
Bringing accounts that Nib'lungers now trod on Hunnish land.
'Do thou, Chriemhilda,' Etzel said, 'receive them graciously:
'This visit from thy kin and friends much honour brings to thee.'

921.

1654

Then did Chriemhilda presently unto a window wend,
And peer if she her kin could see, as friend might look for friend.
She saw far off a Burgund host — which did her mind employ.
When that the bold king Etzel heard — he laughed for very joy.

922.

1655

'God favour me my happiness!' said Etzel's queen, Chriemhild,
'Here come my kin in panoply, with many a blazing shield,
'And breast-plates that might mock the sun! — whoe'er desires my gold,
'And bears in mind the ills I've borne — in my heart's core I'll hold!'

923.

1670

Now to king Etzel's court-yard rode the kings of Burgundie;
As custom of that land, they came in pomp and majesty.
Then many a knight amongst the Huns most anxiously did peer
To get a sight of Hagen bold, who shortly should appear.

924.

1671

'Twas known through hearsays of the folk, and now brought more to view,
That he, the dauntless Tronyian chief — the brave sir Siegfried slew,
Of knighthood sure the strongest man, and queen Chriemhilda's spouse.
— Therefore did he, at Etzel's court, much questioning arouse.

925.

1672

He was a chief of stately form, and knight beyond compare:
With chest and shoulders amply broad, — a little grey his hair; —
His legs and thighs were stout and long — well suiting those who ride,
And his broad face had fiercest mien: right martial was his stride.

926.

1673

Palatial hostelry was found for Burgund's valiant knights,
But Gunther's yeomanry were placed distant from those true wights.
— That was ordained by queen Chriemhild, who bore king Gunther hate,
Thence came it, that the yeomanry so soon met woeful fate!

927.

1674

Dankwart, sir Hagen's brother famed, was marshal, as we're told;
Therefore did Gunther give in charge to him his yeomen bold,
That he might see they had enough of wine and wholesome food:
The Burgund hero loved his men with much solicitude.

928.

1688

Then gave a knight to other knight, with frankness his right hand.
— One Dietrich was, the other one — Hagen, of Tronyie land.
Said Dietrich, the accomplished chief — most confidentially,
'Your journey to our Hunnish king, much sorrow brings to me.'

929.

1690

'I willingly would understand,' — said Etzel somewhat quick,
'Who yonder chieftain well may be — to whom sir Dieterich
'Did give his hand so cordially? — he seems of highest mood:
'Eke, who his noble father was? — he may be hero good!'

930.

1691

Then one of Chriemhild's lieges true made answer, 'yonder man
 'Claims Tronyie for his native place — for father, Adrian.
 'However courteously he talks, he is a wrathful knight:
 'Your grace may have full cause, erelong, to know that I am right.'

931.

1692

— 'How can I know of certainty that he so vengeful is?' —
 The king, as yet, did nothing know of wicked plot, I wis,
 That his fair queen, against her friends, had with such malice spun:
 So that she suffered to return of all those heroes — none!

932.

1693

'I well remember Adrian! — he was my liegeman true;
 'Great praises he did gain from me — and honours not a few.
 'Myself did make a knight of him, and gold I gave apart —
 'Because he loyalty displayed, I placed him near my heart!

933.

1694

'Therefore is Hagen known to me since many a bygone day:
 '— I brought two noble striplings here, as hostages to stay —
 'Him, and young Walther, sprig of Spain! — they grew to be young men:
 'Walther escaped with Hildegund — Hagen went home agen.'

934.

1695

He pondered o'er the welcome news — and bygone times, I trow.
 Hagen in youth had been his friend — (he gladly saw him now) —
 And did him divers services of more than common worth:
 But in his ripened age he brings unto his lieges — death!

935.

1696

Anon, the valiant heroes twain agreed to separate:
 Verona's Dietrich, and the chief of Tronyie's lesser state.
 King Gunther's liegeman bold and true with searching eye looked round
 For early fellow-combatant — and soon that comrade found.

936.

1697

Beside king Giselher the young — he dauntless Volcher saw,
 (The most accomplished 'fiddleman') — and winked him to withdraw,
 Knowing that he was rash of word, when matters crooked stood:
 He was in all respects, I ween, a knight both bold and good.

937.

1698

Still stood the visiters within the spacious castle-court:
 Those two departed from the mass to find more snug resort,
 They crossed the court-yard's farther end, to where stood palace great:
 These heroes felt no fears, just then, for keenest human hate.

938.

1699

They went, and on a bench did sit (which faced a noble hall
 Wherein the fair Chriemhild abode), — that ready stood withal.
 Then did the dazzling garmentry they on their bodies wore,
 Attract the eyes of many a one — who scanned them o'er and o'er.

939.

1700

These matchless warriors twain were thus stared at by Hunnish men,
 As had they been ferocious beasts, escaped from some strong den.
 Then were they seen, from window broad, by Etzel's lofty queen:
 That put Chriemhild again in grief, and urged her vengeance keen.

940.

1701

She thought upon her many wrongs — and then to tears gave way:
 This caused profound astonishment to folk in Etzel's pay.
 'What can have overcast with gloom our queen's so joyous mood?'
 Chriemhild replied, 'sir Hagen there! ye warriors bold and good.'

941.

1702

Then said they to the weeping queen, 'what has befallen you?
 'But now, you were of sportive mind, — and beautiful to view! —
 'Has he audaciously done ought that our fair sovereign grieves,
 'Behest our vengeance! — and, forsure, he certain death receives.'

942.

1703

‘—I ever shall be grateful to those knights who venge my ills;
 ‘And whatsoever boon they crave, my mind already wills:
 ‘Upon my knees I beg from you’— so added Etzel’s wife,
 ‘Vengeance on Hagen, Tronyie’s chief! I yearn for Hagen’s life!’

943.

1704

Quickly assembled sixty men— of good repute withal;
 Who in their zeal to serve the queen would issue from the hall,
 And slaughter without more ado that most heroic man,
 Also the ‘fiddleman’ so brave:— concerted was the plan.

944.

1708

When that she found her martial friends were all in readiness,
 She did those sixty fiery knights in courtly words address:
 ‘Stay here awhile, my trusty men,— but mute as effigies!
 ‘Whilst I prepare ’neath regal crown, to meet mine enemies.

945.

1709

‘Yourselves shall from his own mouth hear, what has been done to me
 ‘By Tronyie Hagen— Gunther’s kin and liegeman of degree!
 ‘For I believe his daring soul will not prevaricate:—
 ‘I need not tell you how thereon you satisfy my hate.’

946.

1710

Then saw the viol-player bold (a very dexterous knight)
 The queen, from range of granite steps, in panoply alight;
 Which from palatial residence, to lesser court-yard led.
 Thereon, sir Volcher to his friend with earnest purpose said,

947.

1711

‘Lo, Hagen! the approach of her, and her superb escort,
 ‘Who faithlessly hath lured us to this doubtful Hunnish court:
 ‘I never saw a queen as yet have such a martial train,
 ‘Drawn sword in hand!— they are, methinks, of some encounter vain.

948.

1712

‘You know, friend Hagen, that Chriemhild bears you unbounded hate:
 ‘Be therefore on your watch that so you ward the danger great
 ‘That threatens your honour and your life!—my counsel take for good,
 ‘For if I’m not deceived, they are in very wrathful mood;

949.

1713

‘They also seem, the most of them, of very ample chest:
 ‘Who values life, prepare forthwith to sell it at the best!—
 ‘Also they have light hauberks on! it is a strange display:
 ‘Whate’er their will and purpose be, they nothing show or say.’

950.

1714

Then said in wrath sir Hagen bold,—that ever dauntless man!
 ‘I see the matter!—’tis ’gainst me a long concerted plan
 ‘That they are brightly armed and bear their naked swords in hand:
 ‘They’ll not prevent my riding back to our good Burgund land.

951.

1715

‘What say you, Volcher! may I hope to be by you up-backed,
 ‘Should I, through Chriemhild’s doughty men, be furiously attacked?
 ‘Now answer me in plainest words!—what I so much desire
 ‘My services to you I pledge—should you the same require.’

952.

1716

‘Most certainly I’ll back you up!’ said the brave fiddleman,
 ‘And were it Etzel and his host, that wildly on you ran—
 ‘I’d fight so long as breath remained, and I my glave could clinch!
 ‘Nor e’er through fear withhold my help—or from you budge an inch.’

953.

1717

—‘May God propitious prosper thee!—thou knight of matchless pow’r:
 ‘Stout Volcher fighting on my side—what can I wish for more?
 ‘Assured of your effective help, now pledged to me in words:
 ‘Those knights, if they begin, shall feel the keenness of our swords.’

954.

1718

‘Had we not better rise to greet?’ — the minstrel-hero said,
 ‘For she’s a queen who now comes on — although by anger led.
 ‘Such honour done unto her birth — and rank more lofty still,
 ‘Is due of rightful courtesy, — and gains the world’s good will.’

955.

1719

‘No, as you love me, Volcher brave!’ — the vet’ran Hagen said:
 ‘— ’T would cause each doughty knight, forsooth, to get into his head
 ‘That I did so through cowardice, and frail attempt to run;
 ‘My firm resolve is, here to sit: — rising to welcome none!

956.

1720

‘That we remain upon this seat, appeareth good to me:
 ‘What! shall then I with honours greet a deadly enemy?
 ‘No — that will Hagen never do, so long as he has life;
 ‘I care not for Chriemhilda’s wrath — nor ire of Etzel’s wife!’

957.

1721

The valiant Hagen placed his sword across his stalwart thighs:
 Upon the weighty weapon’s hilt — attractive to all eyes —
 Beamed forth a dazzling jasper-stone, as green as may-day grass:
 Chriemhilda saw it, and could vouch ’twas Siegfried’s, by the mass!

958.

1722

When that the glave she recognized, the blood rushed to her head.
 Its handle was of purest gold; the scabbard crimson red.
 — She thought upon her much loved lord — and tears gushed from her eyes.
 I guess, sir Hagen put it there to spur her agonies.

959.

1723

The ready Volcher drew his glave (which hight his ‘fiddle-bow’)
 Nearer unto the settle-bench, — ’twas stout and long: also
 Resembled much a scimitar, full broad, and keen as knife.
 So sat the warriors, — momentarily expecting deadly strife.

960.

1724

The heroes twain had confidence of such a lofty kind,
That neither of them, from the seat, to rise-up felt inclined
Fore Etzel's wife, howe'er august!—she now approached their feet,
And with much chilling haughtiness—she nodded hostile-greet.

961.

1725

Said she, 'how now, sir Hagen bold! who may have sent for thee?
'That you so daringly have rode into our Hungarie.
'You can't do otherwise than know, what you to me have done;
'—Had you possessed sound common sense—you had not hither come.'

962.

1726

'No one,' said Hagen pointedly, 'no one did send for me!
'Three knights alone invited were to ride from Burgundie.
'Those three knights are my masters brave, and I their liegeman true:
'When courtly visitings take place—I feudal service do.'

963.

1727

She said, 'now, furthermore, inform why you did perpetrate
'Such ill—that you deserve from me an everlasting hate?
'—'Twas you who murdered Siegfried, my loved and honoured lord,
'Whom I shall to my dying-day bewail in thought and word.'

964.

1728

—'What shall that 'furthermore' avail?—we've had enough from you.
'I—am the selfsame Hagen who your gallant Siegfried slew—
'That valiant and accomplished knight!—certes, he dearly paid
'For what Chriemhild insultingly to fair Brunhilda said!

965.

1729

'Nor will I hesitate to own—most rich and potent queen!
'That I'm the only leading cause of all the woe that's been.
'Therefore revenge it as you like—by woman or by knight;
'I were a liar did I say I've done you no despite.'

966.

1730

Then said he, 'knights! you all do hear that he confesseth it,
 'Namely, that he has worked me woe! — what now it may befit
 'For you to do — I dictate not: ye are king Etzel's men!'
 — The lofty and revengeful knights looked at each other then.

967.

1731

Had now the onslaught taken place, it had borne bloody hue! —
 In justice, one must give the twain the honour to them due:
 They both had oft-times braved the storm of battle with effect! —
 Whate'er the boastful Huns would do — fear made them now neglect.

968.

1732

Then said one knight unto the rest, 'why stare ye at me thus?
 'What I before was pledged to do — is now too hazardous.
 'I for no gifts and promises, will lose renown and life.
 'Comrades! we are, forsure, misled by noble Etzel's wife.'

969.

1733

Then said another doughty knight, 'just so feel I inclined:
 'For gift of castles made of gold it were not to my mind
 'To have encounter with the knight they call the 'fiddleman'!
 'Because of that fierce eye of his, which did my stature scan.

970.

1734

'I also knew from early times this potent Tronyian chief;
 'And have heard tidings of him since — most worthy of belief.
 'In two and twenty conflicts dire, the valiant knight I've seen —
 'Full many a wife has long time moaned his battle-deeds, I ween.

971.

1735

'He, and the gallant youth of Spain, when they were stopping here,
 'Did many a deed of brave report, with broad-sword and with spear,
 'In honour of our mighty king — and that on many days!
 'Therefore, in justice we must give sir Hagen valour's praise.

972.

1736

‘In those times was the knight a child — if valued by his years:—
 ‘That hair was of a brilliant brown, which now as grey appears!
 ‘The thoughtless stripling of past days, is now a stalwart man,
 ‘Besides he carries Balmung glave, which he so basely wan.’

973.

1737

So ended that revengeful plan, — involving none in strife:
 But bitter pangs of heart did feel the monarch Etzel’s wife.
 The Hunnish heroes all retired, fearing the fierce on-press
 Of that same fiddle-playing knight: they had good cause, I guess.

974.

1738

Then said the knight of minstrelsy, ‘without disguise we’ve seen
 ‘That here are deadly enemies, as we forewarned have been.
 ‘— Now will we to king Etzel’s hall, Chriemhilda there to meet;
 ‘That none may dare our sov’reign lords in hostile way to greet!’

975.

1739

Ofttimes, through undecidedness, are evils brought to bear;
 Whereas if friend stands firm to friend — ills often disappear.
 Are we of courage stout and bold — defence is nowise hard:
 Full many a mischief falls to ground, by being on one’s guard!

L E G E N D XVII.

Showing how the Burgundians were received by Chriemhild and Etzel, and how Hagen and Volcher stand sentinels at the hall-door for the protection of Gunther, his kin and knights.

976.

1675

Chriembilda, with attending train, went spitefully away
To where she found the Niblungers; and greeted the array
With false delight—Gis'ler she kissed, and warmly pressed his hand:
When that sir Tronyic Hagen saw, he tightened helmet's band.

977.

1676

'After reception such as this,' said Hagen scornfully—
'It doth behove true Burgund knights to act advisedly:
'For we have seen she greets the kings diverse from their liegemen,
'Right sorry journey we have made to festal sports, I ken.'

978.

1677

Said queen Chriemhild, 'a welcome good to those whose visits charm!
'No greetings emanate from me, a bygone love to warm;—
'Now tell me what you've hither brought from Worms upon the Rhine,
'That better welcome you receive, in this burgh-court of mine.

979.

1678

'What largesses are those which you (said Hagen questioning)
'Claim that these knights from o'er the Rhine should with them hither bring?
'I knew that you were very rich in treasures and in sway,
And therefore brought no petty gift—to mar your bright display!'

980.

1679

Said Chriemhild, 'on that weighty point, I must hear more from you;
 'Where is the hoard from Niblungen, which you from me withdrew?
 'Such was mine own by right of gift—and that you knew full well!
 'The same you should have brought with you, whatever else befel.'

981.

1680

—'Gramercy!—it is many a day—most potent Hunnish queen!
 'Since I the hoard from Niblungen have either touched or seen.
 'My masters had it sunk beneath the river Rhine, for aye;
 'And there it must remain, forsooth, until the judgment day!

982.

1682

'I bring you gifts the devil a bit!' said Hagen with a stare,
 'My buckler broad has been enough for one like me to bear—
 'Barring my trusty coat-of-mail, and helmet richly wrought;
 'And eke my matchless two edged sword,—therefore, I've nothing brought.'

983.

1683

Then said the daughter of a king, unto the knighthood all,
 'No arms or weapons may be worn within the royal hall!
 'Therefore, my worthy friends and knights, entrust them unto me!
 'By holy mass!' sir Hagen said, 'that must not, shall not be!

984.

1684

'I claim not from a princess born such condescending grace,
 'That she with my broad buckler should unto my quarters pace,
 'Minus, my other gear of war,—you are a queen august!
 'My father taught me otherwise.—I armourers distrust!'

985.

1685

'Forsooth, it gives me inward pang,' exclaimed the queen Chriemhild,
 'That Hagen and my brothers brave—do hesitate to yield
 'Their arms to my safe custody;—do they deceit espy?
 'Knew I the warning varlet base,—he should ere sunset die.'

986.

1686

With indignation then did speak the noble Dieterich,
 'Twas I, who warned the Burgund kings of friendships deadly sick,
 'And Hagen too — the bravest chief that e'er left Burgundie.
 'Now, fiendish woman! do thy threat — you dare not injure me!'

987.

1687

The queen felt woefully abashed, but still to wrath inclined:
 — She had a penetrating fear of Dieterich's master mind.
 Not uttering a single word — she rashly left the knights,
 Casting upon her foes a glance — with'ring where'er it lights.

988.

1742

Then did Verona's noble chief hold out his dauntless hand
 Unto sir Gunther rich and bold — the king of Burgund land.
 Irnfrid gave his to Gerenot, that knight of high report!
 And Rud'ger walked with Giselher: — all went to Etzel's court.

989.

1743

However others paired and went unto the broad hall-door,
 Hagen and Volcher comrades were — they never parted more,
 United in the conflict dire — and loyal unto death. —
 Their friendship brought to many a wife — wailings, and loss of breath.

990.

1744

Then followed, pair and pair, to court — the three kings' brilliant train,
 Consisting of a thousand knights of martial might and main;
 Moreover, sixty chosen men, who came along with them —
 They were from Tronyie Hagen's land — all versed in stratagem.

991.

1746

Now as sir Gunther, king of Rhine, was ent'ring palace-hall —
 Such was made known to Etzel's ears, by buzz 'mongst one and all:
 But when he saw him coming in — he sprang from seat of state,
 And gave such kindly welcoming as seldom kings await.

992.

1747

‘Welcome to me, my royal friends, Gunther and Giselher,
 ‘And your brave brother Gerenot, — whom I’ve invited here,
 ‘With greetings and good services, from Worms across the Rhine;
 ‘—Also your knights and yeomanry, I greet to realm of mine.

993.

1748

‘And be ye welcomed with full heart, ye knights of high degree,
 ‘Sir Hagen brave and Volcher bold — the knight of minstrelsy,
 ‘In my name and our loving queen’s — fair ruler of our land!
 ‘Many a messenger was sent to you, by her command.’

994.

1749

Then said sir Hagen, Tronyie’s chief, ‘we thank your courtesy!
 ‘Sooth, if I had not come with kings to your rich Hungarie,
 ‘So had I rode to honour you, alone, unto this land.’
 Thereon, the noble Etzel gave to either knight his hand.

995.

1750

He brought them to a stately seat — where erst himself had sat:
 Then to regale the guests were brought (right cheering deed was that)
 Metheglin, mora, and bright wine, in many a golden bowl:
 He welcomed all the stranger knights with honesty of soul.

996.

1751

Then said king Etzel, with much grace, ‘I truly must confess
 ‘That nothing on the face of earth does yield me happiness
 ‘More full — than that you knights are come into our Hungarie.
 ‘For thereby is my consort’s grief diminished wondrously.

997.

1752

‘It long hath been my marvelment — what cause there well could be,
 ‘That whilst so many noble guests have come to visit me,
 ‘Yourselves have never felt disposed to ride into my realms,
 ‘Now that I see you really here — true gladness overwhelms.’

998.

1753

Then added Rudeger, the knight of very lofty mood:
 'You well may prize these visiters, for they are brave and good:
 'Our queen's illustrious near akin, high honours will secure!
 'For they have brought unto your burgh some stately knights, forsure.'

999.

1754

'Twas on a bright solstitial day, 'twixt afternoon and eve,
 When they arrived at Etzel's court:—'tis seldom, I believe,
 That guests got honour in like way from king, or mighty lord;
 —The supper-meal was soon announced—with Etzel at the board.

1000.

1755

No host amidst his guests was e'er more joyous, I opine,—
 They served abundant store of meat, and plenty of good wine:
 All that the eye or tongue desired, had been produced with care.
 Rare wonders are reported of the Burgund's sojourn there.

1001.

1756

The eve had well nigh spent itself—and night was very near,
 Then 'mongst the weary travellers did wishfulness appear
 About their beds: for they desired to take refreshing rest:
 Hagen himself enquiry made—soon came the king's behest.

1002.

1757

'God bless to you the meal we've had!' said Gunther to his host:
 'We now desire to take our leave—for drowsy are the most:
 'And is't your pleasure, sire, we will return at early morn.'
 —The host dismissed his noble guests—soundly to sleep till dawn.

1003.

1758

From every side much crowding was, the visiters to see,—
 Then said brave Volcher to the Huns, a little angrily,—
 'How dare you to impede our way, ill-bred uncourteous folk!
 'Desist, or you will quickly find rude crowding is no joke.

1004.

1759

'I'll deal to one, nor ask who 'tis, with my steel fiddlebow,
 'So sharp a chop, that has her bride — she present grief will know.
 'Give place, I say! unto us knights, or by the mass, I'll strike!
 'You are like us dubbed knights, 'tis true,—in all else most unlike!'

1005.

1760

As thus the knight of minstrelsy in wrath blunt counsel gave,
 Chancing to cast his eyes around, he saw sir Hagen brave,
 Who said, 'what Volcher counsels now, is wholly for your gain:
 'Therefore, unto your quarters go,—ye men of Chriemhild's train.

1006.

1761

'Now, to attempt what you prepense, will surely bring you scorn.
 'If keen affair you want with us, choose rather early morn.
 'We now, from having journied much, desire refreshing bed;
 'You'll not agen obtain such terms — ye are, methinks, misled!

1007.

1762

Anon, the gallant guests were shown into a spacious hall,
 Where was prepared, in ample store — enough for one and all;
 Bedding, with downy feathers filled, on bedsteads long and wide:
 — Chriemhilda wished them ev'ry woe — her wrath did not subside.

1008.

1763

The quiltings were of Arras make, broad, light, and very warm,
 The testers of bright Arab silk — adding a lively charm —
 In divers colours were they wove: no better could well be!
 Moreover, ample valances of greatest brilliancy.

1009.

1764

Thereto, was many a coverlid of ermine snowy white,
 And some of dark brown sable-skins, to keep them warm at night;
 So that they rest and comfort got, until the sun was high:
 No princes, and their liegemen true, did ever better lie!

1010.

1765

‘O wail and woe! this hostelry,’ said Giselher the young;
‘And woe unto those loyal friends, who with us came along;
‘However pressing Chriemhild’s bid, and honest Etzel’s greet!
‘I feel alarm, lest through her spite — we early death do meet.’

1011.

1766

‘Dismiss your fear, my sov’reign lord!’ said Hagen the brave knight,
‘For I will do the duty of a sentinel to night;
‘And answer for your safe repose, until the coming morn:
‘So slumber ye devoid of care — nor think yourselves forlorn!’

1012.

1767

A gentle bend, and cordial thanks, proceeded from the throng,
Who confidently laid them down — it was not very long
Before most knights were sound asleep, through march they’d undergone;
— Hagen himself with rapidness put his light armour on.

1013.

1768

Then said the knight of minstrelsy, Volcher, the brave and true,
‘If you will not disdain my help, I’ll keep close watch with you,
‘Until the twilight of the morn announce on-coming day.’
Sir Hagen thanked the worthy chief, and thus to him did say,

1014.

1769

‘God prosper thee my gallant friend — thou knight beyond compare!
‘I wish for no one in the world, my jeopardies to share,
‘More than thyself, if ever I of comrade should have need.
‘Thy kindness I’ll repay in kind — or death must come with speed.’

1015.

1770

Soon clad were they in armour bright, such as they could command,
And each one took, with stealthiness, his trusty shield in hand:
They went from out the hall, and stood before the palace-door,
As guards unto the guests within — friendship could not do more.

1016.

1771

The active Volcher placed his shield outside the spacious hall,
 Intent on doing something else till danger might befall:
 He then went back to where he found the viol that delights,
 On which he played soft melodies, to lull o'erwearied knights.

1017.

1772

He sat upon a jutting stone that was beneath the door:
 Such an adept in viol-play was never seen before;
 When the sweet tones that he brought forth were heard by waking wights,
 Those homeless heroes Volcher thanked, for working such delights.

1018.

1773

The music of his viol-strings resounded far and near;—
 His strength, and his dexterity, of equal force appear:
 Sweeter and sweeter grew the tones since he to play began,
 Thereby, he lulled, to slumber sound, full many a careworn man.

1019.

1774

When Volcher found that all slept fast, from viol's magic charm;
 Then fetched he straight his shield again, and braced it on his arm,
 Taking his station, once for all, beside the palace-door,
 To guard the guests from foul attack of Chriemhild's bold threescore.

1020.

1775

About the middle of the night—it earlier might have been;
 Sir Volcher saw some burnished helms at distance from them sheen
 Through the thick gloom of stilly night,—'twas those in Chriemhild's pay
 Low'ring to work upon the guests some mischief ere 'twas day.

1021.

1776

Then said the knight of minstrelsy, 'friend Hagen, list to me!
 'Our anxious watch to night partakes, methinks, of errantry!
 'I've glimpses had of folk, who stand before yon palace wide:
 'So far as I can judge, they plan on us an ill betide!'

1022.

1777

‘Hush! hush!’ said Tronyie Hagen brave — ‘we’ll e’en await them here,
 ‘So that their helm-crests, when they come, and still are unaware,
 ‘May be by us sheer split and hacked, as they mount up the steps:
 ‘Sore wounded, shall go back again Chriemhilda’s night-adepts.’

1023.

1778

One of the doughty Hunnish knights, who cautiously did find
 The door safe-guarded by two knights — spake thus his fearful mind,
 ‘The purpose that we have in view, must founder, I foretel,
 ‘For I’ve discovered at the door — Volcher as sentinel,

1024.

1779

‘Who on his head a helmet wears that shineth like a star;
 ‘And seems braced up as if he thought of waging deadly war.
 ‘Moreo’er, his hauberk’s rings flash sparks as though it were afire:
 ‘Beside him Hagen stands, to guard the guests, with deadly ire!’

1025.

1780

On his report they hurried back: — when that sir Volcher saw,
 He said, ‘those valiant Hunnish knights do sadly hang the jaw,
 ‘If you’ll consent, I’ll after them — they are in Chriemhild’s pay —
 ‘And ask what pressing news they bring — by night, instead of day?’

1026.

1781

‘No, as you love me, Volcher brave!’ — the valiant Hagen said:
 ‘If you leave guard to go to them — those knights may take in head
 ‘To fall with overpowering force on you, when from the hall:
 ‘And whilst I aid your dauntlessness — our friends get murdered all.

1027.

1782

‘For, having got us both employed in such unequal fight,
 ‘Twere possible some three or four, amidst the gloom of night,
 ‘Enter the sleeping-hall, and cause a woeful slaughterment
 ‘Upon our weary friends within; which we should long repent.’

1028.

1782

Then spake sir Volcher, with more thought, 'well then! we'll be content
 'That they shall know we've seen them here, and fathom their intent;
 'So, dare not Chriemhild's martial train the glaring fact deny,
 'That they have purposed, 'gainst her guests, a ruthless treachery!'

1029.

1784

Thereon, did Volcher, with loud voice, shout to the Huns, now flown,
 'Why go you all so fully armed, ye knights to me well known?
 'If ye are bent on murd'rous way, bold liegeman of Chriemhild,
 'I prithee, take with you us two; we each bear sword and shield.'

1030.

1785

He got no answer from the Huns;—right wrathful was his mood.
 'Fie on you, dastard, craven crew!'—so said the warrior good;
 'You planned to murder men asleep, and sneaking sought the hall;
 'By such foul way, heroic men were seldom known to fall!'

1031.

1786

Anon, the queen received report with each particular
 Of the defeated night-attack: full pangful 'twas to her.
 — She quickly changed her mode of plot—right wrathful was her mind.
 That cost the life of many a knight, as we, ere long, shall find.

1787

*Said Volcher, the brave fiddleman,— 'my armour's chilly grown!
 'Methinks, the night is flitting fast; it seeks another zone:
 'The freshness of the air forebodes the near on-coming day.'*
 — *They then awaked some Burgund knights, who still enslumbered lay.*

1788

*Soon came the beams of rising sun into the stranger's hall;
 Then did sir Hagen boldly rouse the heroes one and all,
 Asking, who'd go to early mass, the holy chant to swell?
 — Conformably to Christian-rites was heard the matin-bell.*

*The churchly service being o'er, they all prepared to ride, —
Then saw one many a Hunnish man his gallant steed bestride.
With fair Chriemhilda went the maids pertaining to her court :
Seven thousand valiant knights did form the Hunnish queen's escort.*

*Chriemhild, and her attendant dames, within the window sat,
Beside the potent king of Huns — right pleased was he thereat ;
They had gone there to see the knights their tourney-feats display :
Hella ! what hosts of friends and guests rode gallantly that day.*

*Unto the royal tournament — of Dietrich's horsemen, came
Six-hundred brave and active knights, as e'er gained martial fame ;
They longed to have a jousting bout with those of Burgundie,
But Dietrich disinclined to show off skill or rivalry.*

*Soon as Verona's men had left the ample castle-court,
The knights of Rudeger rode up, in gay and friendly sort, —
Five hundred well bossed shields they bore : they formed before the hall.
— The count had been more inly pleased, had they not come at all.*

*Then rode the margrave Rudeger to where his brave men were,
And to them said in kindly tone — making each one aware :
' King Gunther's knights are very wrath, and in most sullen mood.
' — That you refrain from tilting bouts, I find both right and good.'*

*When those brave men who had declined, with Rud'ger rode away,
Came on the band from Thuringen — so doth the legend say :
Eke those of warlike Danemark, a thousand men and more !
— One saw bossed shields, by lances pierced, up to the welkin soar.*

1816

*Irnfrit and Hawcart rode direct into the ample lists :
With noble bearing, those of Rhine saw their antagonists ;
And many a joust was bravely made with those of Thuringen,
So that good shields were pierced and split by thrusts of Burgund men.*

1817

*Prince Blædel, with three thousand men, now rode into the court :
The eyes of Etzel and Chriemhild dwelt on their brave comport,
For they went through their jousting bouts in most chivalric way ;
The queen's applause was meant to vex the Burgund's bold array.*

1818

*Schrutaw and Gibekie now joined the gallant tournament,
Eke Hornbogie, and Ramung brave, displayed Hun management.
They halted 'fore the Burgund knights, their Rhenish skill to proof !
— Then saw one broken shafts fly o'er the huge hall's lofty roof.*

1836

*Some time elapsed before the guests were called to festal board ;
For Chriemhild's wiliness as yet had not each means explored.
Said she to princely Dieterich, ' I much do want from thee,
' Keen counsel, help, and great agrace ; for things go cross with me !'*

1838

*Said Dieterich, with frankness pure, and in his noble way,
' Desist from all revengeful plans, and cherish peace, I pray !
' Your valued friends and near akin, nor valiant Burgund knight,
' Did never wrong or injure me : — then wherefore with them fight ?'*

1840

*When that she found Verona's chief eschewed what she did crave,
She promised to sir Blædeline, king Etzel's brother brave,
A far-extending margravate — which had been Nudung's lot ;
— Hereafter, Dankwart slew that prince : — so he the gift forgot !*

1841

Said she, 'thou shalt afford me help, thou brave lord Blædeline!
 'For truly, in this palace are vouched enemies of mine,
 'Such as did bring my Siegfried unto untimely end:
 'Whoever furthers my revenge — shall be my worshipped friend!'

1842

Sir Blædel answered thus the queen, 'now be it known to you,
 'That 'gainst the guests, with Etzel's will, I may no wrath pursue,
 'For he does purpose much of joy unto your kin and friends!
 'He ne'er would pardon, should I dare to perpetrate your ends.'

1843

— 'Refuse me not! sir Blædeline, — be thou my champion bold,
 'And I will give to thee great store of silver, and of gold:
 'More'er, a dame of beauty rare, — erewhile, sir Nudung's wife,
 'Whom thou, by gentle kindnesses, canst make thine own for life.'

1844

'Besides, to thee I give such lands as to the burghs belong.
 '— Thou mayst, sir knight, live sumptuously, and years of love prolong,
 'If thou dost earn the margravate which Nudung held in fee;
 'The promises I now have made, shall be performed by me.'

1845

When Hunnish Blædel was aware of what the bribe would be,
 And that the dame, on beauty's score, deserved much chivalry;
 He thought he could, by daring deed, obtain the splendid wife.
 — It was his woe-befall to lose in that attempt his life.

1846

Said he unto the beauteous queen, 'now, go you to the hall!
 'I, ere the guests can be apprised, will kindle up a brawl:
 'The slaughtering Hagen now must reap the harvest of his plans;
 'King Gunther's liegeman I will place as captive in your hands.'

1847

'Now arm, my men!' said Blædeline, *'all you who are with me!*
'We'll storm our enemies, whilst yet they in their quarters be:
King Etzel's wife will have it so! — therefore, it must be done,
'— 'Twill be bold work, and doth require valour from every one.'

1848

When Chriemhild found that Blædeline took kindly the bait:
She to the festal board did go (to cause some fierce debate)
With Etzel, king of Hungarie, and his most courtly chiefs.
She had conspired against her guests o'erwhelming woes and griefs.

1849

As Chriemhild found herself at fault, a present coil to raise,
(She ever bore in wrathful mind her former injuries)
She ordered to the banquet-hall, king Etzel's son, with speed:
— Never did woman's spite dictate so criminal a deed.

1850

Four of king Etzel's waiting lords, pursuant of behest,
Forthwith did fetch young Orteliëb, — the little royal guest, —
And placed him at the princes' board, where Hagen sat sedate.
Poor child! thy death was premature, through woman's vengeful hate.

1851

When that the potent king observed his darling son approach,
He thus, unto his wife's akin, did friendly converse broach,
'Behold, right worthy friends from Rhine, our dear and only boy!
'The sight of him, methinks, should bring to all your hearts much joy.

1852

'If he continue thus to grow — he'll be a comely knight,
'Of noble and capacious mind, valour, and body's-might.
'Live I few years, to him I will, twelve kingdoms rich, concede.
'Then will young Ortliëb have the power to aid in time of need!

*'Now do I supplicate of you—right royal friends of mine!
'That when you are disposed to ride again unto the Rhine,
'You take with you your sister's child, that he improve his mind,
'And be ye, towards my royal boy, considerate and kind!'*

LEGEND XVIII.

Showing how Etzel's brother Blædel is killed by Dankwart, and how his knights are repulsed by the yeomanry. Etzel's knights advance on the unarmed yeomanry, and slay nine thousand. Dankwart's heroic acts.

1032.

1858

The knights of Blædel (Etzel's kin) were armed and ready all,
Wearing a thousand hauberks good:—they reached the lengthy hall,
Where Dankwart and the yeomanry were seated at the board:
Between those heroes soon took place a dreadful mis-accord.

1033.

1859

As to the table Blædel went—apparently aggrieved—
He was by Dankwart, Etzel's kin, most courteously received:
'Right welcome to this hall of ours!—august sir Blædeline:
'I marvel at your coming here—what cause may you assign?'

1034.

1860

'Oh, greet me not in kindly way!' the hero Blædel said,
'For I am come to number you amongst the warriors dead.
'Because of wronged sir Siegfried, whom your brother Hagen slew;
'That, you must answer for to me,—and other heroes too.'

1035.

1861

'Now heaven forefend! sir Blædel brave,' the marshal Dankwart said,
'Or we must grievously repent of being hither led;
'Childe Dankwart young and beardless was, when Siegfried lost his life:
'I marvel much what brings on me the grudge of Etzel's wife?'

1036.

1862

— 'I neither know, nor wish to know, ought more of that great sin!
 'Save, that 'twas worked by Gunther bold, and Hagen your akin.
 '—Defend yourself, sir stranger knight! you 'scape not, by my troth:
 'Immediate death must mitigate the queen Chriemhilda's wrath.'

1037.

1863

'What! are you really bent thereon?' said Dankwart animate.
 'Then do I sorely rue that I did stoop to palliate.'
 The agile and courageous knight — rash from his seat upsprung,
 And drew the broad and pond'rous sword that o'er his hauberk hung.

1038.

1864

With it he aimed a slashing blow, which Blöedel's neck did meet:
 It lopped off Etzel's brother's head — now lying at his feet.
 'Be that a marriage-morning gift,' said Dankewart, 'from you
 'To Nudung's widowed wife, whom thou, with guile, didst seek to woo!

1039.

1865

'Now may she be betrothed again, when comes to-morrow's morn —
 'Should one be found who risks the weight of my all-righteous scorn.'
 An honest confidential Hun had told him of a truth,
 How that Chriemhild had planned, 'gainst them, a mischief void of ruth.

1040.

1866

When Blöedel's train of warring men beheld their master fall,
 They quickly, on the visitors, would venge him one and all:
 With upraised swords they onslaught made, slashing from right to left
 The unarmed people they could reach — then many a head was cleft!

1041.

1867

Dankwart, with voice that shook the hall — thus spake his men of might,
 'Ye are a noble yeomanry! — you see their appetite.
 'Defend yourselves with what you can — then storm the enemy:
 'We'll prove to queen Chriemhilda that we scorn her treachery.'

1042.

1868

Those who no swords had at command, broke stools for weaponry;
 Others made brands of tressel-legs, and dashed to the affray.
 The Burgund heroes bravely shewed that they were not dismayed:
 Of many a form, and settle-bench, huge cudgels soon were made.

1043.

1869

How gallantly the homeless ones did fight, may well be seen:
 They quickly drove from out the house the well armed knights, I ween
 Above five hundred Huns within the ample hall lay dead,
 And Dankwart's men, with Hunnish blood, were wet and crimson red.

1044.

1870

The woeful news with speed did fly (prevention was in vain)
 Unto king Etzel's potent knights — it gave them wondrous pain
 To hear that Blædel and his men were wel'ring in their gore
 Through deed of Hagen's kin and men, — that angered them the more.

1045.

1871

Before the news reached Etzel's ears — the armed Huns had increased
 To a most overwhelming force — two thousand knights at least:
 They rushed upon the yeomanry, who thought the business done,
 And, of those valiant Burgund troops, they slaughtered every one.

1046.

1872

Those Hunnish knights had brought to hall a force of competence:
 The homeless ones, with bravery, did make a bold defence.
 But ah! what helped their unarmed strength? they all were doomed to die.
 — Erelong, proceeding from that deed — was direful butchery!

1047.

1873

Now, will I wonderments relate, if you give kindly ear:
 Nine thousand Burgund yeomanry lay dead — as doth appear:
 Besides twelve active Tronyian knights, sir Dankwart's liegemen true.
 One saw him stand alone in fight, amidst the Hunnish crew.

1048.

1874

The cries and shouts of conflict dire no longer filled the hall, —
When Dankewart, the bold and strong, rolling his eyes o'er all,
Cried out, 'Alas, my countrymen! — like heroes, ye have died:
'And I now stand amid the foe — beset on every side!'

1049.

1875

Rapid and heavy fell their blows upon the single knight;
Many a Hunnish wife did mourn her loss through Dankwart's might.
He raised his shield above his head — and slaughter dealt beneath:
The Hunnish hauberks spouted blood — the knights fell, gnashing teeth.

1050.

1876

'Alas! this bootless, bloody fray,' said Adrian's noble child: —
'Give room, ye Hunnish knights, that I may leave this slaughter wild,
'And my fight-weary body cool, without, in open air.'
Thereon, he cut himself a path unto the outer stair.

1051.

1877

As down the steps he made his way — stout blows did overwhelm;
One heard them, as they rapid fell, by clashing on his helm:
Those from without, who had not seen the prowess of his hand,
Sprang to attack, with furious force, the knight of Burgund land.

1052.

1878

'Now would to God!' said Dankwart brave, 'some messenger were near,
'To take unto my brother bold, report of what haps here —
'That I'm beset by new-come knights, when faint and out of breath:
'He'd help me from this foul affray — or fighting meet his death.'

1053.

1879

Then said the Huns, 'yourself must be the only messenger —
'And that when dead we bear you to sir Hagen, without bier;
'Thereby, will Gunther's chief liegeman eke know that we have won!
'Thou hast with single sword, sir knight, our king much damage done.'

1054.

1880

Dankwart replied, 'your threat'nings cease, and give me open way,
 'Or Hunnish blood will flow again, to drench your bright array.
 'By heavens! I'll bear the news myself unto king Etzel's court,
 'And tell my lords, by what base means you've so much evil wrought.'

1055.

1881

His dauntlessness so overawed the men in Etzel's pay,
 That they no heart had to renew with sword the dire affray;
 But hurled their javelins manifold — which piercing his broad shield,
 He cast it off: its weight had grown too cumbersome to wield.

1056.

1882

Then hoped they to o'ercome the chief, because his shield was gone;
 But with his glave he cleft the helms that o'er their bucklers shone.
 Upon his path fell many a knight, of courage and of name,
 Thus was increased the val'rous sum of noble Dankwart's fame.

1057.

1883

On both sides and aback of him the ardent foemen raced:
 But numbers found, unto their cost, that they'd made too much haste.
 He rushed before the following foe like wildboar of the wood
 Pursued by dogs:—he nobly fought, and all attacks withstood.

1058.

1884

The path he hewed was all the way welted by foemen's gore:
 No single knight, methinks, e'er did in battle-conflict more,
 Than did sir Dankwart 'gainst the foe;—as stands in legends all:
 Sir Hagen's brother gloriously dashed into Etzel's hall.

1059.

1885

The sewers and drawers heard the clank and clash of hostile brands,
 And divers, through amazement, dropped the tankards from their hands,
 Or ample dishes of baked meats—which they to hall would bring.
 —Upon the very stairs he found a hostile welcoming!

1060.

1886

‘What!—be repulsed by gallant sewers?’ the weary Dankwart said:
‘Your business is to welcome guests—and see that they’re well fed,
‘Having the banquet-boards well decked with viands and with wine.
‘Make room, I say! that news I bring unto the kings of Rhine.’

1061.

1887

Who now opposed his going up the lofty granite stairs,
Got slashes of no trivial sort, whilst they were unawares:
Which daunted them, and others so, that all were fain to scout:
—Thus, through much strength and gallantry—wonders were brought about.

1062.

1888

When now the hero Dankwart stood within the portal wide,
He bade the serving-men and sewers, fall back on either side;
Whilst from his armour dripped apace the foemen’s crimson gore:
His only weapon—two edged sword, which in his hand he bore.

1063.

1889

He then, with lusty voice, addressed the knight who sat afar:
‘My brother Hagen sits too long where eates and quiet are.
‘To you, and to our God above, I plaint my tale of pain:—
‘My knights, and all our yeomanry, have been at quarters slain.’

1064.

1890

The knight replied, in accents fierce, ‘who has that slaughter done?’—
—‘That did sir Blædel and his Huns—they’ve murdered every one.
‘But he paid dearly for the deed; and was the first who sunk:
‘With mine own hand I lopped his head from off its kindred trunk.’

1065.

1991

‘That damage is of small account,’—said Hagen, haughtily:
‘For one can say he honoured was by hero’s hand to die!
‘Fair dames and damsels much lament o’er chiefs in onslaught slain:
‘He, falling by a marshal’s hand, will cause them little pain!’

1066.

1894

Then said he, 'Dankwart, brother dear!— do you yon door defend:
 'Nor suffer Hun to pass there through— whether pledged foe, or friend:
 'Meanwhile, I'll square accounts with *these*, and balance sigh with sigh.
 '— Our yeomanry, without a crime— unarmed, were doomed to die.'

1067.

1895

'Since chamber-keeper I am named,' said noble Dankewart,
 '(As 'tis to kings, methinks, I may with honour take the part)
 'Therefore, will I defend the stairs, in bravest way I can.'
 Nought could have vexed Chriemhilda's knights more than that valiant plan.

1068.

1896

'Now have I mighty wish to know,' rejoined sir Hagen keen,
 'What Hunnish knights, in Hunnish cars, so mutteringly would screen,
 'They probably are not well pleased with him who guards the door,
 'And brought the woeful tidings here, our Burgund hearts to score.

1069.

1897

'Long time it hath been told to me, that Chriemhild harbours ire,
 'And that her old heartache requires a draught of vengeance dire.
 '— So will we drink 'affections strong' at cost of royal wine!
 '— First, shall the little Hunnish prince his portion not decline.'

1070.

1898

He slew young Ortlieb, Etzel's son— who then beside him stood—
 His sword and hand were much bestained by youthful prince's blood:
 The slash was fierce— and sent the head into his mother's lap;
 Thercon, amongst the knights, ensued a woe-begone mishap.

1071.

1899

Then Hagen slew the learned clerk who taught the prince to read;
 The Tronyie chief of matchless strength with one blow did the deed,
 — He severed from the trunk his head, which rolled beneath the board.
 — For his instructive lessons, sure, it was a sad reward!

1072.

1900

Before the board, where Etzel sat, he saw a minstrel-man,
On whom, with overwhelming wrath, the Tronyian hero ran,
Cutting his instrument in two — and with it his right hand.
'Take that' — said Hagen, 'as full pay for trip to Burgund land!'

1073.

1901

'Alas! my hand, my precious hand!' cried Werbel, minstrel true,
'Sir Tronyie Hagen, dreaded chief! what have I done to you?
'I came, on troth and loyalty, into your master's land:
'How shall I more raise pleasing sounds? I've lost my precious hand!'

1074.

1903

Volcher, the keen and ready knight, upsprung from festal board,
And soon his iron fiddle-bow, o'er all, was clashing heard.
Most dismal notes awaited on the 'fiddle-bow', by name!
Hella! what hosts of valiant Huns his enemies became.

1075.

1904

Eke, the three Burgund kings sprang up, and left the banquet-board:
They hoped to mitigate the strife — ere greater loss occurred.
But all that they could say, or do, in nowise could assuage
Sir Hagen's wrath, now furious grown, — or Volcher's deadly rage.

1076.

1905

When to the Burgund king 'twas clear, that conflict must proceed,
He drew his sword, and dealt out wounds which copiously did bleed,
Through the bright hauberks of the foe — of deepest crimson dye:
He was a ready knight at arms, and fought most gallantly.

1077.

1906

And Gernot also joined the strife — Gernot the strong and bold.
He slew, amongst the Hunnish folk, brave warriors manifold
With that keen sword, which he received from Rudeger the brave:
By it were divers Hunnish knights despatched to early grave!

1078.

1907

Queen Utie's youngest son did now rush to the sanguine fight:
His weapon gloriously did cut through many a helmet bright
Of Etzel's boldest warring knights, the pride of Hungarie!
Young Gisler's arm did wonders show at that day's butchery.

1079.

1908

However brave the rulers were, and bold each vassal knight,
One ever saw sir Giseler the foremost in the fight;
'Gainst the strong foe he was indeed courageous, stout and good:
He hurried divers, with good will, to welter in their blood.

1080.

1909

Eke Etzel's liegemen bravely strove to overpower the foe —
One saw the guests in the assault go fighting to and fro,
Their red gloves threat'ning present death in Etzel's royal hall:
— On every side one heard the sound of plaint and woe-befall.

1081.

1910

Now would the Huns who were without, get to their friends within,
But to their cost found on the stairs no 'vantage could they win.
Then would the Huns who were inside, get outside of the door:
But Dankwart let none up or down, although they urged him sore.

1082.

1911

Therefore, there was much sanguine work, the palace-door around:
Of broad-swords clashing on bright helms there was a deaf'ning sound.
Dankwart himself was much oppressed, and felt in evil sort:
When *that* his brother Hagen saw, he sent him brave support.

1083.

1912

To Volcher bold, sir Hagen called — which made the hall resound:
'Comrade, behold! how those same Huns my brother do surround,
'O'erwhelming him with heavy blows — urged on by deadly spite:
'Make haste to aid him, or, forsure, we lose that dauntless knight.'

1084.

1913

The man of minstrelsy replied, 'that will I do and more!'
Thereon, with direful energy, he fought his way to door.
His stout sword oft was heard to ring, through prowess of his hand.
—He thanks received from all the knights of vine-clad Rhenish land.

1085.

1914

Then said sir Volcher, the brave knight, unto sir Dankewart:
'You've had a day almost too hot for hero's hand and heart!
'Your brother 'twas who sent me here, to aid you in the din:
'If you will take the watch without—I'll stand on guard within.'

1086.

1915

Dankwart then boldly took his place beyond the palace-floor,
And drove all down the steps again, who would approach the door.
— One heard the weapon oftentimes sound—the which he bore in hand:
And so did his who watched within—Volcher's of Burgund-land.

1087.

1916

The minstrel knight now shouted out, o'er heads of foemen there,
'The hall is permanently closed—so, Hagen, banish care!
'King Etzel's door is faster made by Burgund heroes twain,
'Than if a thousand bolts were shot to make all entry vain!'

L E G E N D XIX.

*Showing how margrave Iring, at the instigation of queen Chriemhilda,
challenges Hagen to single combat, and is slain.*

1088.

1957

‘Right well were it,’ sir Hagen said, ‘and pleasing to the folk,
‘If rulers were to use the sword—ere common men struck stroke,
‘As now have done the worthy kings of Rhenish Burgundie,—
‘They helmets split, and hauberks cut, whence blood flows copiously.’

1089.

1958

King Etzel was no craven knight—so grasped he shield of strife:
When *that* Chriemhilda saw, she cried, ‘be chary of your life!
‘And promise to your gallant men heaped shields of ruddy gold;
‘Should Hagen chance to cross your path—your passing-bell hath tolled!’

1090.

1959

The courage of the king of Huns would urge him to the fight:
A circumstance that seldom haps with monarchs of much might.
His friends and courtiers held him back by strappings of his shield:
When that sir Hagen saw, he ’gan the weapon scorn to wield.

1091.

1960

‘The kinship very distant is,’ said Hagen, pointedly,
‘Twixt valiant Siegfried of Rhine, and you of Hungarie!
‘Both wooed Chriemhild!—but he, forsure, knew her ere seen by thee:
‘Can Etzel for such kindredship—of right, take part ’gainst me?’

1092.

1961

Chriemhilda heard with much alarm, what Tronyie Hagen said:
—It caused her great disquietude, in heart as well as head,
To think that Etzel's chiefs should hear his liberty of tongue:
Against the guests, more fierce than ere—she bolder plan begun.

1093.

1962

Said she, 'the knight, whoe'er he be, that Tronyie Hagen slays,
And at my feet the hated head, with gallant homage, lays,
Shall at my hands receive bright gold up-piled in Etzel's shield,
Besides in fee strong burghs and lands, with many a fruitful field.

1094.

1963

'Now,'—said sir Volcher to the Huns, 'what makes you hesitate?
'I never saw 'mongst champions yet such dastardly debate,
'When great and worthy largesses are held up as reward:
'Methinks, such doughty knights can ne'er be worth a king's regard.'

1095.

1965

Then loudly said sir Iring bold—a count of Denemark,
'Long time my mind on glorious deeds has set its seal and mark.
'In battle I am not unknown, for feat of highest might!
'So bring, forthwith, my armour good—I'll with sir Hagen fight!'

1096.

1966

'That will I counsel otherwise,' said Hagen, with agrace:
'If Etzel's liegemen stand far back—and ours give ample space,
'Then may a leash of Huns advance to middle of the hall,
'And I will speed them, bleeding, down the winding steps, withal!'

1097.

1967

'Such speech will not deter my will,' said Iring, in reply:
'I heretofore have fought such odds—and now again will try.
'With single sword I feel inclined to meet the potent knight:
'Such bragging ill becomes the man who wages deadly fight!'

1098.

1968

Thereon, count Iring clad himself in armour bright and good:
 And Irnfried bold, of Thuringen—a chief of highest blood,—
 Eke Hewart brave, who could command a thousand knights and more:
 They Iring backed, and ready were to aid on any score.

1099.

1969

With wonder saw the minstrel-knight great numbers now advance
 With margrave Iringen, the Dane,—all armed for circumstance.
 The dazzling helms which they had on were braced already tight.
 Brave Volcher was right wrathful grown, at such unwonted sight.

1100.

1970

‘Dost see, sir Hagen, dauntless friend! stout margrave Iring there?
 ‘Him, who so boastfully with you would single combat dare?
 ‘Is’t not a shame that knights should lie?—such baseness I deplore:
 ‘Yonder he stands ’midst well armed men—a thousand, if not more!’

1101.

1972

Most earnestly sir Iring begged his friends and liegemen true,
 That they would let him Hagen meet—alone—in open view:
 Reluctant were they to concur, for unto them was known
 The prowess of the Tronyian chief, whom he would brave alone.

1102.

1973

He supplicated them so long—that they at last agreed:
 For that his friends and kindred saw he bent was on the deed;
 And that he burnt for glorious name!—they therefore let him go.
 Full soon began a conflict fierce, ’twixt him and Chriemhild’s foe.

1103.

1974

Young margrave Iring raised aloft his well poised javelin,—
 Cov’ring his body with the shield, (so did the strife begin)—
 He ran at Hagen, who was near the middle of the hall:
 Thereon, a jubilating shout arose from one and all.

1104.

1975

They threw their jav'lines with such force, and well directed aim,
That each pierced thro' the other's shield, as would they hearts blood claim.
Their jav'lin shafts snapped short, and flew with whizzing 'gainst the roof;
Then drew the dauntless combatants their broad swords for behoof.

1105.

1976

Hagen, relying on himself—did onslaught fierce abide:
Although sir Iring's heavy blows resounded far and wide,
So that sharp echoes were returned from palace, and from tow'rs;
Yet could he not his will effect by stretch of all his powers.

1106.

1977

The margrave, therefore, Hagen left unwounded and unscathed,
And fell upon the minstrel knight, with hope much better faithed!
He thought his weighty blows would bring the active Volcher down:
But he knew how to ward them off with valour and renown.

1107.

1978

Thereon, the fiddleman began to play so rough a tune,
That all the gems in Iring's shield began to rigadoon.
Him, too, he left—for he found out, he was too skilled a man:
So, with increase of shame and rage, he at king Gunther ran.

1108.

1979

But he too proved so keen a match, in craft as well as strength,
That Iring's furious attack merged into one of length,—
And neither from the other drew one drop of crimson blood:
That happed because their armour was so very strong and good.

1109.

1980

Then left he Gunther, king of Rhine—and charged sir Gerenot,
Making his burnished coat-of-mail as were it sparkling hot;
Which so enraged the Burgund king—sir Gerenot the brave!
That Iring stout, of Denmark, from him near found his grave.

1110.

1981

Thereon, he left the princely chiefs — for quick of foot was he, —
 And fell upon four Burgund knights, whom he slew mortally.
 They were four courtly knights from Worms, and on the kings did wait:
 Thereat, was Giseller enraged, and would revenge them straight.

1111.

1982

'Now, by the Lord! sir Iring stout,' said Giseller the childe,
 'You must make retribution for the men, whom you with wild
 'Ungovernable wrath have slain;' — he then on Iring ran,
 And smote the Danish hero so, that he to reel began;

1112.

1983

And stupor-stagg'ring from the blows, he fell in Burgund blood,
 So that all thought of certainty, the Danish chieftain good
 Would never wield a sword again, in battle or in fight:
 — Yet lay he there 'fore Giseller — a stunned, but woundless knight.

1113.

1984

From weighty blows upon his helm, and clashing clank of sword,
 He lay a stunned and senseless man — gone were each thought and word!
 He was unconscious as a stone of whether life remained;
 That had sir Gisler brought about — yet was the Dane unmaimed.

1114.

1985

When that the numbness, like to death, had left his heavy head,
 Which sure resulted from the blows the youthful king had sped,
 He did bethink himself — 'I live, and am devoid of wound.
 'I now remember Gisler's strength: I fell, and must have swooned.'

1115.

1986

He was aware that on both sides his deadly foemen stood:
 Had they supposed that life remained, his death had been made good.
 He also knew, by word of mouth — that Giseller was near:
 Then did he ponder how, with life, he should from them get clear.

1116.

1987

With what alacrity the knight sprang from his bath of gore!
Well might he thank agility, for treading earth once more.
He rushed, like arrow, from the house — to where he Hagen found;
Whom he smote diversly and oft — his strength did still abound!

1117.

1988

Thought Hagen, 'for this deed of spleen thou certainly shalt die:
'If that the devil help thee not — thou at my feet must lie!'
But Iring wounded Hagen bold — by cut through helmet's crest:
'Twas 'Wasky' did that wondrous deed — of swords the very best.

1118.

1989

When Hagen found that he was touched by blade of Iring's brand,
He swung aloft the potent glave he held in his right hand:
Thereon, was Hawart's chief liegeman compelled to flee away,
And down the winding granite stairs, with lightning's speed, rushed they.

1119.

1990

Iring had quickly raised his shield, his threatened head to save;
Yet, had the stairs been thrice as long — and vengeful Hagen's glave,
The speed was such, he could not wound, much less with blows o'erwhelm;
Still did he raise some sparks upon sir Iring's steel-wrought helm.

1120.

1991

Iring got back unto his friends — in body hale and bold:
The news was quickly spread about, and to Chriemhilda told.
Of how he Tronyie Hagen keen made bleed, in open fight:
The royal daughter gave him thanks, with evident delight.

1121.

1992

'God prosper you! sir Iring good — thou most illustrious chief!
'You've comforted my heart and mind, — and much assuaged my grief:
'For I see on sir Hagen's mail the still warm dripping gore.'
— With glee she took from him the shield which in the fight he bore.

1122.

1993

'You'd better qualify your thanks,' said Hagen, expedite:
 'For it behoves the Dane to try again his fate in fight;
 'If then he should return unscathed—I'll call him warrior true.
 'The trifling wound that I've received will bring small gain to you!

1123.

1994

'That blood which drippeth from my mail, and you delighted scan,
 'Has since caused rapid death unto full many a Hunnish man.
 'Now feel I erst my anger raised 'gainst you and divers chiefs:
 'Sir Iring's blow doth me no harm,—it may increase your griefs.'

1124.

1995

Sir Iring, count of Denmark, stood where the wind he faced,
 To cool him in his hauberk stout—his helmet he unbraced.
 All spoke his praise, as one who was a champion strong and good:
 Which put the Danish margrave in a very lofty mood.

1125.

1996

Then said sir Iring to his friends—'some two or three draw nigh,
 'To arm me quickly for the fight—for I intend to try
 'If I can't vanquish that famed knight of Rhenish Burgundie.'
 His buckler being sadly hacked, more warlike one took he.

1126.

1997

Soon was sir Iring featly armed with princely battle-gear:
 In angry mood he grasped, with strength, a very weighty spear,
 With which he would, forthwith, assail the haughty Tronyian knight;
 Thereat, was Hagen full of ire, and wrath! as well he might.

1127.

1998

He waited not his coming up, but to the stairs did go,
 And rushing down assaulted him with vengeful jav'lin throw,
 And mighty blows of his broad sword: he was as one to dread.
 The margrave's strength, however great, then stood him in small stead.

1128.

1999

They smote upon each other's shield, till shields began to glow,
And heat ascend in tongues of flame: — Hewart's liegeman below,
Received from Hagen's mighty sword so terrible a smite,
That it cut through his shield and helm — sore wounded was the knight.

1129.

2000

Soon as the Danish chief perceived that he was mainly hurt,
He so ensconced his helm, by shield — that little was overt.
He thought the wound, already got, enough to work his end:
But soon he greater did receive from royal Gunther's friend.

1130.

2001

Sir Hagen, near his foot, chanced find a jav'lin keen and strong;
The which he at the Danish knight with perfect vengeance flung:
It pierced sir Iring's wounded skull, and stood out like a horn. —
Thus Hagen made an end of him, who was so nobly born.

1131.

2002

Iring had strength enough to fly once more unto his Danes;
But ere they could get off his helm, to soothe his madd'ning pains,
And free him from the jutting spear — he felt death coming o'er!
— Thereat, his friends did sigh and wail: — they could not help him more.

1132.

2003

Ere long, the fair Chriemhilda came to where sir Iring lay.
Pure sympathy, and keenest pang, for him she did display:
She weeping bent o'er Iring's wounds, and felt abundant grief.
— Then spake once more, in accents faint, that most courageous chief.

1133.

2004

'Illustrious, and admired queen! — your strong bewailings stay.
'What help the briny tears you shed? — my life is gone for aye,
'Through the deep wounds which run with gore, and cannot now be stilled:
'Death will not let me longer serve king Etzel and Chriemhild.'

1134.

2005

U^{NO} the knights of Thuringen, and Danes, he thus did say,
 ‘The largesses which Etzel’s queen did promise you to-day,
 ‘Ne’er hope to conquer, or deserve, whilst holding vital breath:
 ‘For he who fights with Hagen bold, is sure to meet with death.’

1135.

2006

The colour from his cheek had fled, — the hand of death was on
 The stout, indomitable Dane — sir Iring’s breath was gone!
 No more to animate the chief of royal Hawart’s train,
 Upon a stretcher he was borne by many a sorrowing Dane.

1136.

2007

Irnfried and Hawart, thereupon, rushed towards the spacious hall,
 With full a thousand warriors brave: — then was there shout and call
 On ev’ry side, which rent the air — the rage of opposites!
Hella! what flights of jav’lins keen assailed the Burgund knights.

1137.

2008

Irnfried, the chief of Thuringen, assaulted Volcher brave, —
 But he received great injury from his redoubted glave;
 For Volcher struck, with potent arm, the helm of Thuring knight,
 And cleft it through, — it was, indeed, a most tremendous smite.

1138.

2009

Then Irnfried smote the minstrel bold a very dreadful blow:
 It cut his hauberk rings in twain, and caused the steel below
 To flash out sparks, which made it seem as though it were alight.
 Yet must the noble Irnfried get his death from minstrel knight!

1139.

2010

Hagen, and Hawart, king of Danes, at length together came:
 Those who that ireful conflict saw, might wonders tell of same: —
 Enough, their swords fell rash and hard — wielded by either’s hand.
 But Hawart died of blows from him who was of Tronyie land.

1140.

2011

Now when the Thuringers and Danes saw that their chiefs were dead,
A fearful struggle did take place before the stairs which led
Unto the ample hall within:—the Burgunds would not yield;
Then was there desp'rate hewing of bright helm and stubborn shield.

1141.

2012

'Give way!' cried Volcher with loud voice — 'let them ascend to hall.
'What they do boldly meditate, will not occur, withal;
'For every one of them must die within of time small space!
'They meet their deaths in strife to earn what Chriemhild would agrace.'

1142.

2013

As now the Thuringers and Danes did force the palace-door,
Full many a hero, with cleft head, lay gasping on the floor;
For they were hewn down by the knights who in the broad hall were:
Gernot fought bravely hand to hand — and so did Giselher.

1143.

2014

One thousand and exactly four into the hall did get;
Then heard one how the clash of swords, did clash on clash abet.
Anon, were Thuringers and Danes — a bleeding pyramid!
— Great wonders might be told of what the valiant Burgunds did.

1144.

2015

Now was a truce to fight and din — the noise had died away!
But gore, of gallant men who fell in that renewed affray,
Run guggling through the holes which led unto the water-spout:
Such by the brave Burgundian knights — forsure, was brought about.

1145.

2016

The Rhenish warriors now sat down, to take a little rest.
Their swords and shields were put aside: no foe was manifest.
— Still was before the ample hall, Volcher, the minstrel knight,
Watching if there was any show of recommencing fight.

1146.

2017

King Etzel wailed most bitterly — and so did queen Chriemhild:
The shrieks and tears of waiting dames and maids could not be stilled.
—I guess, that death had pledged himself that they should love in vain,
And that was why so many chiefs by Burgund knights were slain.

1147.

2018

‘Now doff your helmets, and light gear!’ said Hagen, the bold knight:
‘And I, and my companion brave, will see that all goes right:
‘Should Etzel’s Huns make any show of daring fresh attack —
‘My lords may rest assured that they prompt warning shall not lack!’

1148.

2019

Many a knight of potency unbraced his helmet good;
They sat down on the foemen dead, who still lay in their blood,
On just the spot where Burgund knights had fated them to die.
—Meantime, the brave and noble guests were watched by wrathful eye.

1149.

2020

King Etzel and the queen Chriemhild did manage so their men,
That ere the evening was far spent, they did assault again.
At must’ring one might count of them — all men of Hungarie,
Full twenty thousand, if not more, — all ripe for butchery.

1150.

2022

The onslaught and defence did last till hindered by the night.
The dauntless guests, beyond all praise, with Etzel’s men did fight
The whole of one long summer’s day — so do the legends tell:
Hella! what thousands of brave men by Burgund weapons fell!

LEGEND XX.

Showing how the conflict continues until the Burgundians are all slain, save Gunther and Hagen, who surrender to Dieterich, and are treacherously killed by Chriemhilda: she herself falling by the hands of Hildebrand.

1151.

2023

The greatest slaughter that did hap, was on solstitial night,
Arising from Chriemhilda's lust for vengeance aconite
Upon her near akin and friends:— it is a tale full sad!
Through it, king Etzel never more a happy moment had.

1152.

2024

The day was passed, and night approached,—the guests felt great distress;
And thought how welcome were to them a death of suddenness
To quailing more with ruthless woes, which seemed but to increase:
The truly valiant warriors then wished ardently for peace!

1153.

2025

They, therefore, did beseech the Huns to let their king appear.
The knights were smeared with crimson gore, and stained through iron gear.
Some few then went before the hall, together with the kings,
Who knew not unto whom they could confide this state of things.

1154.

2026

King Etzel and the queen Chriemhild approached in martial state:
That country was their proper realm, therefore their train was great.
Said he unto the royal guests — 'what would you have of me?
Desire you peace?— that hardly can be granted unto ye,

1155.

2027

'After the damage manifold, which you on us have wrought:
'(Such shall not profit prove to you, if life avail me aught)
'You slew ferociously my child, and many of my friends—
'Therefore, no peace, or lasting truce, your earnest wish attends!'

1156.

2028

To him king Gunther made reply—'ours was a case of need!
'For all our yeomanry were slain—('twas your knights did the deed)
'Within their quarters:—noble king! deserved we such award?
'I came to you on faith and troth, and pledge of your regard.'

1157.

2029

Then said of Rhenish Burgundie, sir Giseller the childe,
'Ye martial knights of Etzel's land whose swords are yet unsoiled!
'What charge have you to bring 'gainst me? what have I done to you?
'I, who approached this land in peace, passed friendships to renew.'

1158.

2030

The knights rejoined, 'of thy good deeds, the burghs and country through
'Are full of plaintive sorrowing— and loudly wish that you
'Had never thought of riding here from Rhenish-Burgund state—
'—Through thee and thy two brother kings our land is desolate.'

1159.

2031

Then asked king Gunther of the Rhine, in somewhat angry mood:
'Think you to change these murd'rous ways for peace well understood
'With us, the homeless and betrayed?—then is it well for both!—
'We have not been the willing cause of noble Etzel's wrath.'

1160.

2032

Etzel replied unto his guest, 'the griefs that on you 'light,
'And mine— are far from being like,— our losses in the fight,
'Our toil, and the disgrace we've got from your stiffnecked defence,
'Must be washed out in gory stream:— not one escapes from hence!'

1161.

2033

Said Gerenot unto the king—he was a potent knight!—
‘So may the Lord o’errule your mind to grant us boon of right:
‘— Make you quick ending of the fray—and let us come to you.
‘’Tis to *your* honour that we lose our lives in open view!

1162.

2034

‘Whate’er your purpose is towards us, let it have quick effect:
‘You yet have hosts of unused men—who thereto won’t object.
‘They beating us in open fight, we gain immediate death!—
‘— How long shall we, the weary ones, dole out our blood and breath?’

1163.

2035

Upon the part of Etzel’s knights it nearly was agreed
That those same heroes of the Rhine should to the court-yard speed:
But Chriemhild hearing of their will, did feel her rage increase.
— Then were the homeless guests bereft of every ray of peace.

1164.

2036

Said she, ‘forfend! ye gallant knights— what have you now in mind?
‘My counsel is, that to such grant—you all feel disinclined:
‘For if you give those murd’rous men free egress from the hall,
‘Most certainly yourselves and friends will ready victims fall!

1165.

2037

‘Nay, were there none but Utie’s sons alive the fight to share—
‘And those three valiant brothers got fair space in open air,
‘So that their hauberks cooled again,— your lives were nothing worth.
‘More dauntless and determined knights were never seen on earth!’

1166.

2038

Then said the youthful Giseller, ‘right beauteous sister mine!
‘I little did expect that when you bid me cross the Rhine
‘To visit you in Hunnish land, you purposed treachery!
‘What have I done that I should meet my death in Hungarie?’

1167.

2039

‘To thee I’ve ever faithful been — nor grief or sorrow brought.
 — With those same kindly thoughts I rode unto your Hunnish court,
 ‘Believing that you loved me much: — I still my sister prize!
 ‘Benignly contemplate our lot — you can’t do otherwise!’ —

1168.

2040

— ‘I, who have reaped ingratitude — no boon have to impart!
 ‘Hagen has worked me deadly ills, with most malignant heart;
 ‘Such as can never be atoned, whilst I have life, I ween:
 ‘Therefore, I’ll vengeance have on all!’ — so spake king Etzel’s queen.

1169.

2041

‘Yet if sir Hagen you agree into my hands to give,
 ‘Then will I not refuse to grant, that all you three do live;
 ‘Since that ye are my brethren bold, and of one mother kind:
 ‘Of more atonement I’ll consult with these of lofty mind.’

1170.

2042

‘Forbid it loyalty and grace!’ — said Gerenot the brave:
 ‘Sooth were we yet a thousand strong, we’d sooner find a grave
 ‘(We, the near kindred of your house) than give from motive base
 ‘That knight to thee as prisoner: — such never can take place!’

1171.

2043

Said Giselher, ‘since die we must on this or that pretence,
 ‘No one shall warp us from our views of chivalrous defence;
 ‘And those who’ve heart to fight with us — will see our gallant end.
 ‘I never will unfaithful prove to one I’ve called my friend.’

1172.

2045

Thereon, said Chriemhild to the Huns, ‘ye band of warring chiefs,
 ‘— Rash to the steps! — and sword in hand, revenge my many griefs.
 ‘So recompense shall flow to you, in measure full and wide:
 ‘— I will to nothingness reduce the Tronyie Hagen’s pride!

1173.

2046

‘Let not a single knight escape, — repulse them one and all:
 ‘Meantime, I’ll give command that fire be kindled ’neath the hall:
 ‘Fit vengeance for the heartfelt pangs, that I too long have borne.’
 — King Etzel’s ready knights soon fell with rage on the forlorn.

1174.

2047

They made the Burgund knights with speed ascend the palace stair
 Through javelin cast, and smite of sword; — then loud huzzas rose there!
 The princes would not separate themselves from their array:—
 Their mutual confidence was such, that of one heart were they.

1175.

2048

King Etzel’s queen then gave command to set the hall on fire.
 Thus were they subject to new pangs at queen Chriemhild’s desire.
 The palace, blown on by the wind, was soon involved in flame:
 Such awful vengeance, I opine, ne’er threat’ned knight of fame!

1176.

2049

Within did many wail and cry, ‘alas! our stifled breath!
 ‘Much rather would we in assault encounter ready death.
 ‘The Lord have mercy on our souls! — since each must lose his life:
 ‘How ruthlessly on us outpours the wrath of Etzel’s wife!’

1177.

2050

Said one, thereon, with half clammed tongue — ‘now shall we surely die:
 ‘Despite king Etzel’s bidding fair, and after courtesy.
 ‘The heat has made my thirst so great, that I feel madd’ning woe;
 ‘I fear that I shall lose my life from this consuming foe!’

1178.

2051

To him cried Tronyie Hagen brave — the hero rash of mood —
 ‘If that thy thirst so dreadful be, take ample quaff of blood:
 ‘For that in suchlike ardent heat, is better far than wine.
 ‘There’s nothing hereabout to drink more wholesome, I opine!’

1179.

2052

The knight then went to one just dead who had been wounded sore:
 —He loosed his helmet, and knelt down amidst the clotted gore;
 And plying mouth unto the gash, he drank the flowing blood.
 —Howe'er unused to suchlike drink, he found it wondrous good.

1180.

2053

'God prosper you, sir Hagen bold!' exclaimed the weary man:
 'That through your knowledge manifold, I such choice draught e'er wan.
 'From wine my thirst has ne'er received more perfect quitude:
 'Live I much longer, you shall prove my lasting gratitude!'

1181.

2054

When that the other warriors heard the beverage was good,
 Some stilled the raging thirst they felt by draughts of human blood.
 —Therefrom such knights obtained much strength, and more of gory fame:
 Through it fell kin and loving friends of many a stately dame!

1182.

2055

Embers and flakes of fire fell thick on those within the hall,
 Which they turned off with bucklers bright, to counterwork their fall:
 The smoke, and fervency of heat, they painfully did bear:
 —Such woeful plight has never since been gallant warrior's share.

1183.

2056

Then Tronyie Hagen loudly called, 'keep to the walls, all hands!
 'That so the shower of wasting fire sear not your helmet bands;
 'And all that falls, right quickly quench, by treading it in gore:
 'Chriemhilda's festival, methinks, makes mind and body sore.'

1184.

2057

In such unparalleled distress, the hours of night had flown.
 Before the house was still on guard sir Volcher—keener grown,
 And Hagen, his companion bold, who leant upon his shield,
 Expecting greater woe from those who Etzel's weapons wield.

1185.

2058

Then said the crafty fiddleman, 'let's enter the broad hall,
 'That so the watchful Huns may think we've perished one and all
 'From the excruciating pains they've brought to bear on us:
 'Yet shall they see us knights, anon, wage warfare vigorous!'

1186.

2059

Then said sir Giselher the childe, in accents somewhat low:
 'Methinks the day's about to dawn—the breeze begins to flow.
 'Vouchsafe us, Lord, that we may live to see more kindness shared!
 'A woeful festival for us — my sister has prepared!'

1187.

2060

Another said, 'Beyond all doubt, I see the morn appear:
 'Now if this day should prove a time of equal hapless cheer,
 'Then vote I that each knight go out, and dearly sell his life;
 'For we are sure to reap new woes from Etzel's vengeful wife!'

1188.

2061

King Etzel thought that all the guests were numbered with the dead,
 Through conflagration, and the ills of faintness, thirst and dread!
 —But notwithstanding Chriemhild's hate, there lived six hundred yet:
 No monarch, in broad christendom, did better knights abet!

1189.

2062

The watchers of the Burgund guests already had espied
 That many of the liegeman lived, in spite of all they'd tried
 To practise on the kings and knights by damages and pain!
 One saw them pacing in the hall, ready to fight again.

1190.

2063

Chriemhilda quickly was informed that many yet were seen:
 'How can such thing be possible,' so said the vengeful queen:
 'As that a single one should live throughout that raging fire?
 'Much rather I'm inclined to think they died of scorplings dire.'

1191.

2064

The kings, and eke their liegemen, wished to get from thence away,
 If pity dwelt in heart of those who thereabout bore sway.
 For them, alas! no hope was found within the Hunnish land:
 Thereon, each knight pre-venge'd his death — with most determined hand.

1192.

2065

That very morning, ere 'twas light, they greeted were by noise
 Of warlike shouts and summonses: the knights were rest of joys!
 At them was hurled, through windows ope, full many a javelin:
 —Right gallant was the self-defence of those brave knights within.

1193.

2066

The rage of Etzel's Huns was such as baffled all appease:
 They would forthwith deserve and gain Chriemhilda's largesses,
 Besides attempting all the work that Etzel had required; —
 Thereby, did many gaze on death much sooner than desired!

1194.

2067

One much might tell of promises — and valour dearly bought:
 On ample bucklers, ruddy gold in wondrous heaps was brought,
 Whereof each took what he desired, without reproof, I trow.
 Never were such abundant gifts employed 'gainst cooped-up foe!

1195.

2068

Now to the palace-door advanced full many a well armed knight.
 Said Volcher brave, 'we all are here! — expecting early fight:
 'But troth! I never warriors saw, so vigilant for strife,
 'As you who have received bright gold — for Burgund hero's life!'

1196.

2069

Then many from within cried out, 'come nearer unto us:
 'Since we must die, let's die like knights, and nothing more discuss!
 'We know that none of us will live, whose death-time has arrived!'
 Then flights of Hunnish jav'lin points into their bucklers dived.

1197.

2070

What shall I further tell to you?—twelve hundred Huns and more
 Made onslaught, and received repulse — of times at least a score;
 The guests, with gashes deep and long, did cool their raging mood:
 — As peace was not to be obtained, in streams flowed Hunnish blood!

1198.

2072

The strangers did great deeds that morn—right brave was their comport.
 — Gotlinda's worthy spouse now came within the castle's court,
 And saw what havock death had made 'mongst knights on either side:
 Sir Rud'ger then was full of grief, and inwardly he cried.

1199.

2073

'O woe is me!' said Bechlarn's count, 'that ever I was born!
 'Alas, that this sad state of things should meet another morn:
 'I've tried to bring about a peace — but Etzel's mind is sore,
 'In that his losses seem to be increasing more and more.'

1200.

2074

Then sent the good sir Rudeger unto sir Dietrich bold,
 To know if they should jointly press for measures of more mould?
 The ruler of Verona said, 'who'll venture to advise?
 'King Etzel will not hear of peace — or any compromise.'

1201.

2075

Now did a knight of Hungarie observe sir Rud'ger keen, —
 How that he stood in weeping mood — as he before had seen:
 Thereon he spake unto Chriemhild, 'behold how he doth lower!
 'He whom, beyond all other men, the king hath raised to power;

1202.

2076

'Eke, who is honoured, and obeyed, throughout king Etzel's lands!
 'How happens it that Rudeger so many a burgh commands?
 'Divers undoubtedly he got at Etzel's own desire:
 'He has not struck a single blow throughout this conflict dire.

1203.

2077

'Methinks, he takes but little note of whatsoe'er befalls—
 'Having such rule, that all obey his haughty 'becks and calls';
 'He has been praised beyond most knights, for skill and dauntlessness:
 'Of neither have we seen display—in this our great distress!'

1204.

2078

The loyal Rudeger felt sad,—and when the knight had done,
 In melancholy mood he looked full wrathful on the Hun—
 And thought, 'thou shalt repent of hint that I am traitor grown:
 'Thou'st given unto thy calumny by far too loud a tone.'

1205.

2079

He clinched his fists with sinewy might—then rushed upon the Hun,
 And smote him with such giant force, that ere he felt the stun
 Of his fierce blow, the craven knight dropped lifeless at his feet!—
 —That, added to his former griefs—made Etzel's woe complete.

1206.

2080

'To hell! thou sland'rous babbling knave,' said Rudeger with scorn;
 'I am oppressed in heart and mind, as much as can be borne:
 'That I've not fought in this affair—was't plea for thee to prate?
 '—I have, alas! distressing cause these Burgund guests to hate.

1207.

2081

'And all that in my power doth lie—I'd pour out to their cost,
 'Had I not kindly welcomed them, and their undaunted host!—
 'Truly, I guard-guide was to them into my sov'reign's land:
 '—Therefore 'twere wrong, against those guests, to raise my luckless hand.'

1208.

2082

Then said Hungarian Etzel to the margrave earnestly:—
 'Most noble Rudeger! methinks—you've been small help to me.
 '—Had we not dead enough within palatial precinct-land?
 '—You have done ill to slay the knight, with all too rash a hand.'

1209.

2084

To them came now the queen Chriemhild,—she'd seen what had been done,
 How that the count in very rage, had brayed the meddling Hun.
 She loudly grieved for that event; — her eyes were tearful too:—
 Said she to noble Rudeger, 'deserved we that from you,

1210.

2085

'Thus aiding with your hand to swell the king's and my disgrace?
 'You pledged yourself by solemn oath, that you in ev'ry place
 'Would risk your honour and your life, in aidance of our cause:
 '— For gallant deeds I've heard our knights vouchsafe you great applause!

1211.

2086

'And call to mind the loyalty you swore with given hand
 'To me, when you came suit'ring for a queen of Hunnish land.
 'You vouched to serve me with all truth, unto your dying day!—
 '—I ne'er have felt such racking pang— as brings me this affray.'—

1212.

2087

— 'That I did take such oath is true — thou most illustrious wife!
 'And true I vowed to risk for you my honour and my life:
 'But I did never pledge for aye — to risk my loss of soul.
 '— I brought unto your festival these princes hale and whole!

1213.

2088

Said she, 'bethink thee, Rudeger, of thy most sacred oath,
 'How that upon your loyalty, you would revenge with wrath
 'All damages howe'er received — and all my griefs assuage!
 Then said the margrave of Bechlar'n, 'I must redeem my gage.'

1214.

2089

Thereon, the monarch of the Huns held Rud'ger in debate—
 And both did condescend, anon, the count to supplicate,
 So much so, that the worthy lord showed marks of anguish pent:
 The loyal Rudeger at last thus breathed his soul's lament.

1215.

2090

'O woe is me, forsaken one! that ever I was born.
 'O woe's the day! — that I must be of all my honour shorn:
 'Of truth and gentleness of mind, which God to me did give.
 'Oh God! that death would now appear! — I fain would cease to live.

1216.

2091

'Whichever duty I avoid — the other to fulfill,
 'I'm counted dastardly and base — or worker-out of ill;
 'Yet leave I both of them undone, I with the world have strife.
 '— May He vouchsafe to counsel me — who first did give me life!

1217.

2092

King Etzel and his beauteous queen besought the count so long, —
 That many a knight did lose his life by Rudeger the strong:
 And he, the knight beyond compare, was doomed himself to die.
 — Now will I tale unfold that shall occasion heartfelt sigh.

1218.

2093

He knew that nought remained for him save prejudice and spleen.
 — The king's most strenuous behests, and urgings of the queen,
 He willingly had left undone: — the hero was of mind
 That helped he either, he would be the horror of mankind!

1219.

2094

Then said unto the Hunnish king, the good chief, mournfully,
 'Now take again, my sov'reign kind! all that I've held in fee:
 'Of open lands, and ample burghs, I nothing will retain:
 'Unmounted I will wander forth to some far-off domain.'

1220.

2095

Quickly rejoined the king of Huns, 'but who'll serve me the while?
 '— To you I'll give the lands you hold — so that, devoid of guile,
 'You do effect that I'm revenged on these stout foes of mine:
 'Be potent monarch at my side — if so thou dost incline!'

1221.

2096

The margrave Rudeger replied, 'shall that be my behoof?
 'They were my guests upon invite, and slept beneath my roof!
 'I placed before them wine and food — and gave them presents fair:
 'How can I slaughter those who have been objects of my care?

1222.

2097

'The people jeeringly may say — the margrave's timid grown!
 '— No services I've left undone — most willingly I own —
 'Unto those noble Rhenish kings, and their right valiant train:
 'The friendship I imbibed for them, now gives me heartfelt pain.

1223.

2098

'I gave to Giseller the brave, the daughter of my love:
 'Upon the earth no better match affection could approve,
 'For sentiment, and honour pure, — riches, and loyalty:
 'Never did youthful king possess such virtuous dignity!'

1224.

2099

Then said Chriemhilda to the count, 'illustrious Rudeger!
 'Have pity on our many ills, and lend a willing ear,
 'Unto the king's and my appeal, eke his and my behests:
 'No host upon the face of earth — e'er suffered so by guests.'

1225.

2100

Then said the margrave of Bechlar'n unto the noble queen:
 'To-day will end count Rud'ger's life, as truly will be seen,
 'In payment for the kindnesses which he from both has had.
 'He dies for loyalty towards you: — with heart and conscience sad!

1226.

2101

'I know full well that ere 'tis noon, my burghs and ample lands
 'Will pass again unto the king — by means of Burgund hands:
 'I therefore to your graciousness commit my wife and child —
 'And all my loyal household, who in burgh Bechlaren whiled.'

1227.

2102

'May heaven preserve thee, Rudeger!' — said Etzel in mild strain:
 For he as well as queen Chriemhild felt confidence again:
 'Your people, on my royal word — shall find stanch friend in me!
 'If my presentiment be just — you'll live much joy to see!'

1228.

2103

Sir Rud'ger staked upon the cast his soul, as well as life.
 Then did begin to weep aloud king Etzel's beauteous wife.
 'I am compelled,' said Rudeger, 'by oath I pledged to thee!
 '—Alas, my worthy Burgund friends! — with grief I fight with ye.'

1229.

2104

O'erwhelmed by sorrow he did leave king Etzel and the queen,
 For where he found his valiant men who had long waiting been.
 Said he, 'with quickness arm yourselves, my trusty liegemen all!
 'For I am bound to make assault on those within the hall.'

1230.

2105

They hurried to the armoury, where they their weapons found:
 Then was there many a helmet bright, and many a buckler round
 Brought out to them by serving-men — whose duties thereto went:
 Full soon the strangers heard the tale of this new armament.

1231.

2106

Thus was the margrave Rudeger armed with five hundred men:
 Moreover, twelve devoted knights — aiding him there and then.
 They would the praise of valour earn, amid the onslaught's din:
 But little knew they that their doom — was loss of life within.

1232.

2107

One saw the margrave under helm unto the palace go:
 With sharp swords Rud'ger's yeomanry advanced upon the foe;
 Also upon their arms they bore bucklers of brightest sheen!
 Brave Volcher, seeing what took place, felt sorrow sadly keen.

1233.

2108

Then saw young Giseller advance the father of his bride,
With helmet braced for deeds of war: he could not well decide
What was his purpose other than 'all must be right and good!'
Which put the young and noble king into most happy mood.

1234.

2109

'God's blessings on such gallant friends!' said Giseller with glee,
'As we have gained upon our ride into this Hungarie.
'Through love unto my Dietelind, occurs this great agrace;
'I'm glad beyond all measure that betrothment did take place!'

1235.

2110

'I know not what you're glad about?' said knight of minstrelsy:
'When did you ever see advance a host of clemency
'With helmets braced, denoting war, and naked swords in hand?
'He only comes to pay, through us—his fee for burghs and land!'

1236.

2111

The minstrel knight had hardly got that speech from his bold lips,
When Rudeger advanced unto the ample palace steps:
He placed his buckler on the ground—before him—at his feet:
But with wont pledge of services his friends he did not greet.

1237.

2112

Then said the noble Rudeger to those within the hall:
'Ye valiant men of Nib'lungen! defend ye one and all!
'You whom I should have shielded here,—revenge yourselves on me.
'Erewhile, we were the best of friends!—take life for loyalty.'

1238.

2113

The Burgund knights were greatly shocked at what they saw and heard:
With them all hope of joy was gone—and gloomy thoughts occurred.
At needs-be fighting friends who were beloved by one and all—
—They had experienced toil enough from foes within the hall.

1239.

2114

‘Forbid it heaven such wrong should be!’ said Gunther of the Rhine,
 ‘As that in act you would oppose true friendship’s law divine,
 ‘And that fidelity destroy on which we based defence:
 ‘I never can believe that you will do us violence!’

1240.

2115

‘There is no shunning, no retreat!’ said Rudeger full loath:
 ‘I must make war on you, forthwith, by virtue of my oath.
 ‘Therefore, defend yourselves, bold knights, as you do well wot how?
 ‘King Etzel’s wife demands of me fulfilment of a vow!’

1241.

2116

‘Withdrawment of your pledge to us,’ said Gunther, ‘comes too late!
 ‘May God reward you, Rudeger, with honours and estate,
 ‘For all the constancy and love, that you towards us have shown,
 ‘If to the end you prove a chief to kindly actions prone!

1242.

2117

‘My friends and I will grateful be for all you’ve done — and given!
 ‘If you’ll protect our threat’ned lives — for which we long have striven.
 ‘You showered on us unwonted gifts, and brought us safely here
 ‘To Etzel’s royal festival: — remembers Rudeger?’

1243.

2118

‘That willingly would I vouchsafe,’ said Rudeger the knight,
 ‘In greater fulness than before — if presently I might
 ‘Act as my heart with fervour bids: — what you do supplicate
 ‘I’d do, and more — but that I dread Chriemhilda’s scorn and hate.’

1244.

2119

‘Renounce your bondage, Rudeger!’ said Gerenot the bold:
 ‘It never has, of worthy host, been written or been told
 ‘Of kindnesses so manifold as you’ve displayed towards us!
 ‘The like shall overflow to you, if you prove generous.

1245.

2120

‘Oh, would to God! sir Gerenot,’ the margrave Rud’ger said,
 ‘That you were safely housed at Worms, and I already dead!
 ‘Then were my honour free from sin of having fought ’gainst you:
 ‘Never were stranger knights so used—by friends they held full true!’

1246.

2121

‘Reward you God! sir Rudeger,’ said Gernot with a sigh;
 ‘For all your splendid gifts to us—it grieves me that you die—
 ‘And thereby to the world be lost such true benignity!
 ‘—The sword now girded on my thigh was boon of thine to me.

1247.

2122

‘It never has struck futile blow in all our great distress:
 ‘Through its keen edge has many a knight lost maiden’s tenderness.
 ‘It is of highly tempered steel—full strong, and poised aright:
 ‘—Forsure, such noble gift will ne’er be boon from knight to knight.

1248.

2123

‘Now, if you will not be advised—but still on warfare bent,
 ‘Of my brave friends you slaughter such as in this hall are pent;
 ‘Then with the glave that once was thine—I’ll take thy valued life:
 ‘Howe’er I after grieve for thee,—and for thy matchless wife!’—

1249.

2124

—‘Oh! would to God that that might hap, and that this kindred feud
 ‘Might end in such a peaceful way as you should then find good:
 ‘So that each friend you have, might still enjoy this passing life.
 ‘Methinks, you would protect with zeal my daughter and my wife!’

1250.

2125

Then said the qucenly Utie’s son—the pride of Burgundie!
 ‘Why will brave Rud’ger persevere? all those who came with me
 ‘Are, to a man, his ardent friends:—your purpose is not good!
 ‘—Will you reduce your lovely child so soon to widowhood?’

1251.

2126

‘That were unfriendly and unjust: — eke very sad to see,
 ‘For you and your right valiant men to wager war on me;
 ‘In that I put my trust in you, more than the world beside;
 ‘And, therefore, chose your only child to be my wedded bride.’ —

1252.

2127

‘Be faithful to your marriage vow — thou noble Giselher!
 ‘If it please God you ’scape from hence,’ — said mournful Rudeger,
 ‘Revenge not on the noble maid, the deeds of one beguiled:
 ‘By all your princely virtues, sir, — act kindly towards my child.’

1253.

2128

‘That will I promise and perform,’ — king Giselher replied:
 ‘But if of these exalted friends, by blood to me allied,
 ‘You slaughter one within the hall, — then must you speak me free
 ‘From ev’ry bond of kindred troth to fair Dietlind and thee!’

1254.

2129

‘Now may the Lord forgive our sins!’ so said the valiant man:
 Thereon, they all did raise their shields — as though it were their plan
 To storm forthwith the noble guests within Chriemhilda’s hall:
 Sir Hagen to them, from the stairs, thereon, did loudly call.

1255.

2130

‘Tarry awhile where now you are, most noble Rudeger!
 ‘For I desire to say a word before you further stir:
 ‘The troubles of the kings and self compel me thus to plead.
 ‘What good from death of bidden guests to Etzel can proceed?’

1256.

2131

‘Besides, I’m in unwont distress!’ — added sir Hagen brave,
 ‘For that same shield which Gotelind so kindly to me gave,
 ‘Has been so hacked and hewn by Huns — that shieldless is my arm.
 ‘I brought with joy into this land that guard from weapon’s harm.

1257.

2132

‘Now hope I that the Lord above will so your mind incline,
 ‘As that you give me worthy shield for shattered one of mine:
 ‘Such as yourself upon your arm so nobly now do bear.
 ‘Then need I not, in onslaught dire, a breastplate bright to wear.’

1258.

2133

— ‘Full willingly I’d give to you the trusty one I use,
 ‘If t’would not stir Chriemhilda’s wrath — and that I would not choose:
 ‘— Yet take it, Hagen!’ said the count, ‘and wield it manfully.
 ‘I wish it may protect you well — e’en back to Burgundie!’

1259.

2134

That Rudeger so courteously did give away his shield,
 Filled many an eye with gentle tears — it to the heart appealed;
 That was his last and dearest gift: — no more could bold knight earn,
 Or get from the munificence of Rud’ger of Bechlarn.

1260.

2135

However grim sir Hagen was, or ill disposed his mind,
 The gen’rous gift which Rudeger — so noble and so kind —
 When near his end, had given him — his stubborn heart subdued!
 Many a lofty knight did sigh, when that brave act he viewed.

1261.

2136

Said Hagen, ‘may the Lord of heaven, sir Rudeger protect!
 ‘When he shall die, his like on earth — we may no more expect:
 ‘For he to homeless, shieldless knight, did costly present give!
 ‘— May God vouchsafe that, when no more — his virtues still may live!’

1262.

2137

Again said Hagen, ‘this affair cuts to my stern heart’s core:
 ‘Methought, of pangs and bosom griefs, we had enough before.
 ‘The Lord have mercy on us all! — since friends with friends must fight.’
 The margrave Rudeger replied, ‘I sorrow feel — not spite!’

1263.

2138

'As for yourself, sir Rudeger!' said Hagen there and then:
 'I for your gift make this return, — whate'er befalls the men,
 'My hand, in what remains of strife, shall not be raised 'gainst thee;
 'E'en though you slaughter every one who came from Burgundie!'

1264.

2139

His thanks the margrave Rudeger returned with gentle bend:
 All those who stood around were sad — for that no more to wend
 Was this exterminating war: — soon followed wail and strife.
 A father to the virtues died, when Rud'ger lost his life!

1265.

2140

Then Volcher, from the landing place, thus spake to Rudeger:
 'Since that my comrade Hagen has made peace with you, brave sir!
 'The same indulgent terms vouchsafe to take of my right hand:
 '— You've well deserved such boon from us, since we came to this land.

1266.

2141

'And, peradventure, Rudeger kind act will do for me?
 'These armclasps made of ruddy gold Gotlinda graciously
 'Did give — that at the feast the same I openly should wear:
 '— Behold them, worthy Rudeger! — for you my witness are.'

1267.

2142

'Would to the Lord all-bountiful!' said Rudeger with pain,
 'The margravine occasion had to give you such again:
 'The tidings I with joy will bear unto my Got'lind pure,
 'Should I get back to her with life — of that you may be sure.'

1268.

2143

After these mutual vows of grace, the shield to arm he bore;
 — His mind began to feel unhinged — he lingered now no more,
 But rushed upon the guests with force, as does the boldest knight:
 And many a stout and steady blow the valiant count did smite.

1269.

2144

Volcher and Hagen moved aside as Rudeger came on,
For both those chiefs of courage good were pledged such strife to shun:
But at the door he met with knights who barred to him the way;
Thereon, the count, with skill and strength, began to cut and slay.

1270.

2145

Gernot and Gunther, wishing much to make short work withal,
Desired that no one should oppose his entrance to the hall.
Sir Gis'ler, though reluctantly, avoided Rud'ger's glave:
He for a time did much desire his precious life to save.

1271.

2146

Now did sir Rud'ger's liegemen true rush on their Burgund foes.
One saw them, like their valiant lord, deal out most dreadful blows;
The weapons which they bore in hand cut through both helm and shield:
Full many a Burgund knight was forced his vital breath to yield.

1272.

2147

Also the weary-ones did smite with strength and gallantry
Such blows, as cut right deep and clean Bechlaren's yeomanry
Through their bright iron coats-of-mail, making the blood to spout:
They, in this onslaught, wonders did within, and eke without!

1273.

2148

The whole of Rud'ger's men had got within the ample hall;
Then Hagen, and sir Volcher brave, with rage did on them fall:
They gave no quarter, save to one, and he was Rudeger!
In crimson streams the living gore gushed from their iron gear.

1274.

2149

The clashings of the hostile swords effected frightful sound:
Beneath the heavy blows up-flew the steel that bucklers bound;
And all the jewelled bosses leaped into the blood below!
The smiting proved more desperate than foe e'er dealt to foe.

1275.

2150

The lord of Bechlarn, to and fro, did divers pathways form,
 Like one who through abounding strength buffets a raging storm;
 That day revealed to all the world his combating was such,
 As verily to prove him knight of courage overmuch.

1276.

2152

He also proved to ev'ry eye his more than common strength—
 And well-wrought arms:—knight fell on knight, marking in blood his length.
 That had a Burgund chieftain watched—with rage-suspended breath!
 —Then did appear the nigh approach of noble Rud'ger's death.

1277.

2153

Stout Gernot, king of Burgundie, then cried with all his might,
 Unto Bechlaren's slaying lord, 'you'll slaughter every knight
 'That I have in my trusty train—desist, sir Rudeger!
 'It pains me so, that I must try your prowess to deter.

1278.

2154

'Now must your gift untowardly be raised with heartfelt pain
 'Against yourself—for vengeance due to me for those you've slain;
 'So wend this way thy noble front, thou good and valiant man!
 'Thy gift I'll wield in this affair—with all the skill I can.'

1279.

2155

Ere that the margrave turned him round, to wage the dual fight,
 He stained with crimson gore the mail of many a gallant knight.
 At length those aspirants of fame did on each other run,
 Using their swords and shields with skill: the battle had begun.

1280.

2156

Their weapons bore so keen an edge, that warding proved in vain.
 Sir Rud'ger smote king Gerenot a blow, with might and main,
 Upon his flint-hard helmet's dome, which made the blood spirt out:
 That quickly was returned to him—by Gerenot the stout,

1281.

2157

Who swung sir Rud'ger's gift around right royal head, I trow:
—And though endamaged unto death—he smote him such a blow
As cleft his bossed and ample shield, also his helmet's brace;—
Thereof, did noble Rudeger die in a moment's space!

1282.

2158

Never did generous gift entail on giver such sad lot!—
So fell the two illustrious chiefs—Rud'ger, and Gerenot,
In onslaught, and same minute, slain—and each by other's hand.
When Hagen that great damage saw, he thus addressed his band,

1283.

2159

Saying in grief, and grimmest mood, 'our losses give me pain,
'But most of all, these valiant men—each by the other slain!
'Lieges and lands can ne'er repair the evil that is done:
'Now are his men within our pow'r—since Rudeger is gone!'—

1284.

2160

—'Oh woe is me! my brother's slain—here death has done his worst!
'How ev'ry moment brings my ear some tale of loss accurst!
'I, Gunther, must lament the death of Rudeger the brave:
'The damage is on both sides great—and great the grief we have.'

1285.

2161

When that young Giselher beheld his brother Gernot dead—
All foes, within the ample hall, had present death to dread;
For they who were of Rud'ger's band, were hewn down there and then:
Not one escaped of all the count's beloved and loyal men!

1286.

2163

Said Giselher, 'as ever wont—death has the better share!
'—Now let us cease to weep and wail—and seek the outer air,
'That so we strife-worn knights may cool our hauberks of defence.
'It seems to me that God ordains—we 'scape not living hence!'

1287.

2164

Now saw one sternest warriors sit, or lounge, or leaning stand.
 They were again unoccupied:—all those of Rud'ger's band
 Lay stretched upon the gory floor,—the sound of blows assuaged:
 Such quiet lasted e'en until king Etzel grew enraged.

1288.

2165

'Alas! for services like these,' said wrathful Etzel's wife;
 'He has not loyalty enough, to end this galling strife
 'By causing them to pay in gore our griefs and misery:
 'Methinks, sir Rud'ger means that they get back to Burgundie.

1289.

2166

'What apt return have we, my lord! for all the largesses
 'From us obtained?—he has done ill, and skulked his services!
 'Would he not bring about a peace for those we bid him slay?'
 Thereon spake Volcher with much wrath, in his blunt honest way,

1290.

2167

'Alas! the matter stands not so—thou wife of royal knight!
 'And dared I charge with telling lies a lady of such might:
 'Then would I say, 'you hellishly have slandered Rudeger!'
 'He and his men have cheated been—touching that 'peace' affair.

1291.

2168

'So willingly he strove to do all that the king did crave—
 'That he, and all his valiant men, have found a gory grave!
 'Now must Chriembilda cast about for others to command:
 '—Rud'ger was loyal to the last, in heart as well as hand.

1292.

2169

'Is she averse to trust my word, then may she ease her doubt.'
 (To add unto her bosom pangs the thing was brought about)—
 They carried Rud'ger's corpse to where the king the same could see:
 The gallant Hunnish knights ne'er knew such heartfelt misery!

1293.

2170

Now when they saw Bechclaren's count, borne dead before their eyes:
 (But that it baffles clerkly art) description were to prize
 Of the abounding plaint that rose from women and from men,
 When from the bottom of their hearts they wept, and wept agen.

1294.

2171

King Etzel's lamentations were so very loud of tone,
 That like unto a lion's roar the echo of his moan
 Returned unto the mighty king—also unto the queen!
 They wept innumerable tears, for Rudeger, I ween.

1295.

2172

The wailing everywhere increased in volume, and on tongue,
 So that the rending shrieks of woe from tow'rs and palace rung.
 A Veronese, of Dietrich's train, heard something of this woe,
 And with the fearful news from thence on fleetest foot did go,

1296.

2173

Saying unto Verona's prince, 'give ear, lord Dieterich,
 'To what I've seen of sorrows great—such as make stout heart sick!
 'In all my life I ne'er have heard lament so loud, at least;
 'I fear me that the king himself—is dead, while at the feast.

1297.

2174

'Else how could all the people be so overcome by grief?
 'That Etzel, or the queen has died, is my most firm belief;
 'And that by workings of the guests whom danger has allied:
 'Whole bands of courtly knights I saw—weeping some woe-betide!'

1298.

2175

Then said Verona's gallant chief, 'my trusty lieges all,
 'Judge not too rashly of what's happed at that strange festival.
 'Much that the homeless-ones have done—they were compelled to do!
 'Let those who scorned the peace I urged, their vengeful wrath now rue.'

1299.

2176

Thereon said Wolfhart gallantly, 'let me go to the hall,
 'And question how the matter stands—with what there did befall.
 'Then can I bring unto my lord more clear account, I trow,
 'Of what the cause, and what the weight, of this unbounded woe.'

1300.

2177

To him replied sir Dieterich, 'when we've ourselves to blame,
 'An ill-timed question sometimes puts the parties in a flame,
 'Which causes brave knight oftentimes unwished affront to take.
 'I do decline, sir Wolfhart keen,— that you inquiry make!'

1301.

2178

Then Dietrich sent sir Helprich out—he was of noble mind—
 To see if he from Etzel's men the honest truth could find,
 Or from the guests obtain account of what was really done.
 —Never was seen, at any court, so much of woe-begone.

1302.

2179

The messenger did quickly ask, 'what may have happened here?'
 Then one from 'mongst the crowd replied, 'we witnessed disappear
 'Him who afforded us most joy, within this Hunnish land:—
 'Here lies, quite dead, sir Rudeger! o'erthrown by Burgund hand.

1303.

2180

'Not one remains to tell the tale, of those he took therein!'
 Such was to Helprich proof enough of a right grievous sin;
 He never heard a sad account with more intense surprise!
 That messenger to Dieterich went back with weeping eyes.

1304.

2181

'What information bring you then?' said valiant Dieterich:
 'And why weeps thus, so bitterly, my liegeman Helprich?'
 The noble knight replied thereto, 'great cause to moan have I:
 'The good sir Rudeger is slain — by knight of Burgundie.'

1305.

2182

Then said the hero of Verone, 'the Lord of heaven forfend!
'That were indeed a strong revenge—a lamentable end!—
'How could sir Rudeger have earned of them such base reward?
'I know that he at all times had for them sincere regard.'

1306.

2183

Then rashly spake sir Wolfhart bold, 'if so the matter stands,
'Then must they punishment receive, by slaughter of all hands;
'Were we to suffer such to pass—it were inglorious!
'There was a time when Rudeger good service rendered us.'

1307.

2184

The worthy chief of Amelung desired more proof be sought.
Then sat him down on window seat, in deep and painful thought:
Anon, said he, 'go, Hildebrand, unto the Burgund guests,
'And get from them a true account—of how the matter rests?'

1308.

2185

The dauntless warrior Hildebrand right ready was to go,
Casting aside his ample shield,—and weaponry, also:
For he would seek the royal guests in simple garb of peace:
But that displeased his sister's son—who blamed such bold caprice.

1309.

2186

Thus spake his nephew, Wolfhart grim, 'what! will you go unarmed?
'—Then do you not return again—unslandered, or unharmed!
'With insult and disgrace, perchance, they'll Hildebrand send back:
'I pray you, arm!—you then will be prepared for all attack.'

1310.

2187

Then did old master Hildebrand with Wolfhart's wish comply:
But ere he was aware of it, there stood in panoply
Beside him Dietrich's host of knights—swords drawn for keen surprise:
That caused the hero deepest pain—for he planned otherwise.

1311.

2188

Said he, 'where purpose you to go?' 'with you, brave chiefs!' said they,
 'For we would know if Hagen now hath got so much to say;
 'And hear if he gives scornful speech—as he was wont to do.'
 When that he heard, he could not well reprove the warriors true.

1312.

2189

Then saw bold Volcher coming on this fully armed array,
 Of fair Verona's splendid knights, who were in Dietrich's pay,
 With shields on arm already braced, and naked swords in hand.
 He told it quickly to his lords—the kings of Burgund land.

1313.

2190

In this guise spake the minstrel knight, 'from yonder comes amain
 'A gallant host for war, I fear—they are of Dietrich's train;
 'And have their helmets on, and braced—forsure, they purpose strife!
 'Now comes the worst—we, homeless ones, may each take leave of life!'

1314.

2191

It lasted but a little time, ere Hildebrand stepped forth,
 Placing before his feet the shield—as do such knights of worth:
 He then addressed the valiant men who where of Gunther's band:
 'Say, what did margrave Rudeger to you of Burgund land?

1315.

2192

'I am a messenger to you from Dietrich, my liege lord!
 'To know if Bechlarn's noble count was slain by Burgund sword;
 'As we has been informed by some, who well the matter know?
 '—We can't unravel this affair of complicated woe!'

1316.

2193

Then said sir Tronyian Hagen bold, 'the news may be believed;
 'Yet do I wish with all my heart that you had been deceived;
 'For then the noble Rudeger, whom man and wife must mourn,
 'Would still have lived to cheer our hearts—nor left us thus forlorn.'

1317.

2194

When now was heard that Rudeger lay numbered with the dead,
All Dietrich's knights did mourn, aloud, his noble spirit fled:
So strong their grief and sorrow were, that tears gushed out amain,
Which trickled down from eye to chin:—they all felt bosom pain!

1318.

2195

Then said duke Siegestab, a knight who from Verona came,
'Alas! the end of that pure love, and kindly friendship flame,
'Which Rudeger did manifest — after our great defeat!
'—The champion of the homeless-ones lies slaughtered at their feet.'

1319.

2196

Thereon spake one of Amelung — sir Wolfwein brave and true!
'Did I this day, in crimson gore, my slaughtered father view,
'I should not sorrow over him more than this friend of mine:
'Alas! who shall consolement take unto the margravine?'

1320.

2197

Then spake sir Wolfhart, rash and bold, in very angry mood:
'Who now will lead, to battle fields, array of heroes good?
'Which has been done so oft with fame, by margrave Rudeger!
'Alas! alas! he can no more apply the urging spur.'

1321.

2198

Helprich and Wolfbrand, knights of note, and brave sir Helmenot,
And all their friends in Dietrich's band, bewailed sir Rud'ger's lot;
For sobbing, noble Hildebrand no question more could ask:
Said he, 'now, knights! perform the will of him who set the task!

1322.

2199

'Give us, forthwith, from out the hall, the corpse of Rudeger,
'Whose death is cause of so much grief to all these men of war!
'That we repay, by obsequies, his martial feat of yore,
'And lofty friendships shown to us, as well as many more.

1323.

2200

'We, like yourselves, are strangers here, as also Rudeger:
 'Why keep us thus in sad suspense — let's take him to inter
 'Out of your way: that so, in death, to Bechlarn's martial son
 'We honour do; while yet he lived, it had been better done!'

1324.

2201

Thereon said Gunther of the Rhine, 'never was worthier deed
 'Than that which friends perform for friend, whose death has made it need:
 'I call it highest loyalty in those who can do so; —
 'You worthily that great agrace on Rudeger bestow.'

1325.

2202

'How long have we to beg and wait?' said Wolfhart, afterwards:
 'For him who was our best support, — now slaughtered by your swords:
 'So that he is no more for us the living, but the dead!
 'Give us the corpse — that we the knight may place in earthy bed.'

1326.

2203

For answer, Volcher thus replied, 'none here will bring him you!
 'Yourselves may fetch him from the hall: where he, so brave and true
 'Fell, by a death-wound deep and long, into a gory flood!
 'Such services to Rudeger are honourably good.'

1327.

2204

Then said rash Wolfhart angrily, 'sir fiddleman, God knows!
 'That we are not in mood to take affront from friends, or foes:
 'And dared I break my lord's commands, it should go ill with thee,
 'But that must be postponed — in that all strife's forbidden me.'

1328.

2205

Thereto replied the minstrel knight, 'him who is much afraid
 'To do what honour bids him do, and by 'forbid' is staid:
 'Methinks, I ne'er can estimate as of heroic mood.'
 Sir Hagen found his comrade's speech pre-eminently good!

1329.

2206

‘Will you not hold your scornful tongue?’ said Wolfhart waxing warm,
‘Then will I so untune your strings — that when by Rhine you charm,
‘On your return from festival, you’ll something have to say:
‘Your haughty insolence, forsure! with int’rest I’ll repay.’

1330.

2207

The fiddleman rejoined thereto: ‘ere you my tones o’erwhelm,
‘— Robbing the strings of harmony — the sheen upon thy helm
‘Must be made dull by smeary gore, through fiddlebow of mine.
‘Whether I ride again, or no — unto the river Rhine.’

1331.

2208

Wolfhart thereat would rush on him — furious to make attack:
But Hildebrand, his uncle brave, with prowess held him back.
‘I see,’ said he, ‘your headlong rage will bring on you disgrace,
‘And none of us will dare to meet our valiant ruler’s face.’—

1332.

2209

‘Let loose, good master Hildebrand! that lion of rash mood,
‘That so he come within my reach’—so said the fiddler good,
‘And though he may have slain a host of valiant men before,
‘I’ll smite him such a stinging blow — that he replies no more.’

1333.

2210

Thereat the knighthood of Verone were put in angry mood.
Wolfhart now raised his ample targe — he was a warrior good —
And like a hungry lion rushed upon his Burgund foe.
The band of Dietrich’s valiant knights along with him did go.

1334.

2211

With rash and springy strides, he reached the steps which led to hall;
But ancient Hild’brand, still alert, was waiting there withal;
For since to fighting it must come — himself would be the first:
— They found the Burgund guests within, quite ready for the worst.

1335.

2212

On Tronyie Hagen, quick as thought, sprang master Hildebrand.
 One heard the clashing of the glaves, wielded by either's hand:
 It well might be remarked that they were filled with reckless ire.
 From helm and targe their swords brought out bright sparks of crimson fire.

1336.

2213

But they got sundered in the din and rushings of the fight:
 That did occur through Dietrich's men, who had the greater might!
 Thus was brave master Hildebrand from Hagen borne away.
 Then rushed sir Wolfhart on his foe—he would sir Volcher slay,

1337.

2214

And smote the fiddleman with might upon his helmet's sheen;
 Through the thick helm-crest went the edge of his sharp sword, I ween.
 That was repaid by potent blow, struck by the minstrel knight:
 Thereby sir Wolfhart being stunned, more cautiously did fight.

1338.

2215

Bright fire did ev'rywhere proceed, from out their coats-of-mail;
 The grimmest hate inspired them both—yet neither could prevail.
 Then Wolfwein, gallant Veronese! those combatants did part:
 He that had never undertook—had he not owned brave heart!

1339.

2216

Gunther of Burgundie opposed, with battle-ready hand,
 The strongest heroes that did come from Amelungen land;
 And Giselher, the brother-king, smote helmets more and more:
 He, in the storm and conflict dire—made many red with gore.

1340.

2218

Helprich and Wichart, two brave knights, eke Gerbart and Ritschart,
 In many a battle's din had they performed courageous part:
 That was self evident to all who smote in Gunther's band;
 Also one saw, in this attack, much done by Wolfbrand's hand.

1341.

2219

As if enraged beyond controul, fought aged Hildebrand:
And many a brave and stubborn knight, by valiant Wolfhart's hand
Was wounded unto death, and fell amidst the clotted gore.
—So did those knights revenge the wounds of worthy Rudeger.

1342.

2220

Also duke Siegestab did fight— as well his strength allowed:
Hella! what well wrought helms he split, amidst the warring crowd.
—He a brave knight of Amelung, and Dietrich's sister's son!
—No greater feats, in this onslaught, by any one were done.

1343.

2221

When Volcher, bravest of the brave, became aware of how
Sir Siegestab, the gallant duke, did cause from hauberks flow
In streams the vital crimson blood: he proved in mighty rage,
And rushed upon the valiant duke — who soon ceased war to wage.

1344.

2222

Through minstrel-knight, sir Siegestab did quickly life depart;
For Volcher gave him such strong proofs of his superior art,
That he fell smitten by his sword on to the gory floor.
Such, rashly, Hildebrand revenged!—thereto he still had power.

1345.

2223

'O woe is me, my honoured lord!' said master Hildebrand,
'Thou liest here a lifeless corpse, slaughtered by Volcher's hand.
'Now shall the fiddleman no more such potent warfare wage!'
The valiant Hildebrand felt grief, and most destructive rage.

1346.

2224

He smote sir Volcher with such force, that from his helmet-band,
And dazzling helm, and ample shield, subservient to his hand,
Pieces and splinters flew about — surprising foe and friend.
In this dire fight with Hildebrand, brave Volcher found his end.

1347.

2225

When Dietrich's band of valiant knights pressed onward to the fight,
 Full many a helm was split in twain, and cut were hauberks bright:
 And broken sword-points oft were seen to fly into the air!
 They fetched out streams of boiling blood through many a helmet there.

1348.

2226

When now the gallant Hagen saw that Volcher brave was slain,
 No hap, throughout the festival, did bring to him such pain:
 Whether by loss of kindred near, or his own liegemen true.
 Grim Hagen's ultion of his friend was terrible to view.

1349.

2227

'Old Hildebrand shall not enjoy the triumph of his fall!
 'Truly, my helpmate by his hand writhed in this gory hall.
 'Of best companion I e'er knew—alas! I am bereft.'
 He raised his shield, and rushed along, slaying on right and left.

1350.

2229

Meantime, sir Wolfhart hewed himself a passage here and there—
 Slaying without remorse all those who Gunther's liegemen were—
 Three times had he, with slaughtering glave, circled the ample hall:
 And many a val'rous knight, through him, met early woe-befall!

1351.

2230

Then called to him sir Giseller, with loud and stunning voice,
 'Alas! that I of such brave foe must make unwilling choice!
 'Thou noble and heroic knight—turn your brave front on me;
 'I'll help thee to thine end, that so I end thy butchery.'

1352.

2231

Sir Wolfhart quickly turned about, and ran at Gisler bold:
 They fought until the two brave knights had gashes manifold.
 With such impetuosity did he press on the king,
 That from the floor, as high as head, the flowing gore did spring.

1353.

2232

With rash and heavily struck blows, sir Giseller the kind
Received the hero — Wolfhart brave! a knight of lofty mind:
However strong the warrior proved — he boldly was withstood;
Never did young king show more skill, or fight in better mood!

1354.

2233

He smote sir Wolfhart's hauberk through, however strongly made,
So that the blood from gush beneath flowed o'er his trusty blade:
Wounded unto the very death was Dietrich's liegeman true.
— He must have been a potent knight, who such keen work could do.

1355.

2234

When valiant Wolfhart felt the wound which he had just received,
He cast his buckler to the ground, and his broad glave upheaved:
It was a weapon very sharp, and very strong to view —
With it he smote sir Giseller, through helm and hauberk too.

1356.

2235

Gis'ler and Wolfhart both did die — each by the other slain:
Now lived there not another knight of all sir Dietrich's train.
When that old Hildebrand beheld the noble Wolfhart fall
He felt a pang which nothing but his own death could recall.

1357.

2236

And dead were those of Gunther's band, who came from Burgundie,
As well as all sir Dietrich's knights: then Hildebrand went he
To where sir Wolfhart still did writhe, in reeking crimson blood,
And clasped within his stalwart arms that warrior brave and good,

1358.

2237

That he might take him from the hall; — but after striving much,
He was compelled to put him down, his weightiness was such!
Then did the deadly-wounded-one open his gore-closed eyes,
And saw that 'twas his uncle brave — would help him to arise.

1359.

2238

Said he, the wounded-unto-death, 'kind uncle, all is o'er!
 'No help can you, or any one, render knight Wolfhart more!
 'One parting word I leave with the — beware of Hagen's brand:
 'He has in heart and arm a power which nothing can withstand.

1360.

2239

'If that my friends, when I am dead, do weep and wail for me:
 'Then to the best and near akin — say, with much clemency,
 'That they desist from heart-lament — nor of my fall complain,
 'For that I found a glorious death, being by king's hand slain!

1361.

2240

'And for my death, I've had revenge, so much as may atone,
 'In manner such as many a wife must woefully bemoan.
 'Should any wish from your true lips more full account to gain:
 'Say, with mine own hand, in the hall, one hundred knights I've slain.'

1362.

2241

Then did sir Hagen's thoughts again recur to Volcher brave;
 Who of his gallant life was robbed by Hildebrand's keen glave.
 Said he unto that worthy knight, 'you must my loss repay;
 'For that you've slain full many a knight, in this bemoaned affray.'

1363.

2242

Then smote he Hildebrand with might — which one with heed might hear
 Was done by 'Balmung glave': it was that part of Siegfried's gear
 Which Hagen took, when he the chief so treacherously slew:
 — Old Hildebrand did ward his blows with skill and courage too.

1364.

2243

Himself did wield a matchless sword — 'twas weighty, keen, and broad:
 With it he smote sir Hagen bold; but though it cut his guard,
 He could not wound king Gunther's man by dint of strength or art:
 Then smote sir Hagen him again — which did his hauberk part.

1365.

2244

When Hildebrand found out that he a deepish wound had got,
He thought, from Tronyie Hagen's hand, more harm would be his lot;
Therefore he used his ample targe to cover his retreat;
And though sore wounded, he did run from Hagen somewhat fleet.

1366.

2245

Now lived of all the Burgund knights, no more than these bold two:
Gunther, the king of Burgundie, and Hagen keen and true!
Sir Hildebrand, although his blood did sanguine make the ground,
Got ne'ertheless, with the sad news — to where he Dietrich found.

1367.

2246

He saw the hero quite alone, in very pensive mood:
Now must he hear of greater woe — for Hild'brand 'fore him stood.
He scanned him o'er, and found that he was much besmeared with gore:
Then asked about the cause thereof, and sundry questions more.

1368.

2247

Said he, 'now tell me, Hildebrand, how came you in such plight?
'Are you distained with own life's gore — or blood of other knight?
'With the brave guests in Etzel's hall you skirmish must have had:
'Twere better you had left undone — what sternly I forbad!'

1369.

2248

Said Hildebrand unto his lord, 'Hagen the wound did give!
'He smote me in the palace hall — and, as I hope to live,
'Just when I was about to turn from that all potent man:
'I scarce had time to save my life, — 'though from that fiend I ran.'

1370.

2249

Then said the ruler of Verone, 'you have been rightly served!
'You know that from those valiant guests my friendship never swerved;
'Also, you have infringed the peace I proffered with own breath:
'Were 't not that 'twould be lasting shame — thou shouldst atone by death.'

1371.

2250

— ‘Now deal not angrily with me, lord Dietrich kind and good!
 ‘The loss sustained is past belief, in this most frightful feud:
 ‘We purposed from the palace hall to bear the count away;
 ‘But that small boon the Burgund knights did angrily gainsay.’

1372.

2251

— ‘Alas, alas, this dreadful news! and is sir Rud’ger dead?
 ‘That is the most distressing woe, which to my ear has sped.
 ‘Gotlind, the matchless margravine, is unto me allied:
 ‘Alas! for those poor orphans too, who in Bechlarn abide!’

1373.

2252

Sir Rud’ger’s death o’erwhelmed the prince with sorrow and with grief;
 Then did the warrior’s tears gush out—which gave him some relief.
 ‘Oh woe is me! my worthy friend—what have I lost in thee!
 ‘King Etzel’s valiant knight can ne’er be mourned enough by me!’

1374.

2253

‘Now know you, master Hildebrand! the name of him to say
 ‘Who of king Gunther’s dauntless band brave Rudeger did slay?’
 Said he, ‘that did sir Gerenot, a king of Burgund land:
 ‘But he at same time lost his life—by noble Rud’ger’s hand!’

1375.

2254

Then said he to sir Hildebrand, ‘inform my martial train
 ‘That they do arm themselves, forthwith—I must the cause attain:
 ‘And order that with speed be brought the brightest arms I have,
 ‘For to the Burgund knights I’ll go, and further tidings crave.’

1376.

2255

Said Hildebrand with much surprise, ‘who shall go with my lord?
 ‘You see before you all your host—upon my knightly word!
 ‘I am the only one who lives—the rest are motionless!’
 Prince Dietrich shuddered at the news—o’er great was his distress.

1377.

2256

He never since he wielded sword had suffered such a blow:
 Said he, 'what, all my liegeman true in this affair laid low?
 'Then has my God forsaken me,—oh wretched Dieterich!
 'I was a ruler powerful, august, and chivalric!'

1378.

2257

Again said Verone's valiant chief, 'I cannot understand
 'How all the skilful knights could die, that were in my brave band,
 'From prowess of those weary-ones who stood in such bad plight:
 'Had it not been for my ill-luck—they had survived the fight.

1379.

2258

'Since that my wayward fortune will o'erwhelm me with its flow:
 'Say! of the strangers, lives there one to triumph o'er our woe?'
 Said master Hildebrand, 'God knows! there lives of them not one,
 'Save Hagen, the bold Tronyian chief—and Gunther, Dankrath's son.'

1380.

2259

—'And Wolfhart—my most gallant knight! of thee too am I shorn?
 'I almost do accurse the day that ever I was born.
 'Wolfbrand, and Wolfwein brave and strong, eke Siegstab, my right hand!
 'Who now will aid and succour me in Amelungen land?

1381.

2260

'And Helfrich, keenest man of might—is he too 'mongst the slain?
 'And Gerebart, and Wichart bold?—when cease I to complain!
 '—This is to me the final day of all my joys on earth:
 'Alas! that from excessive grief none ever meet with death.'

1382.

2261

Sir Dietrich now himself did fetch his hauberk and his shield;
 And Hildebrand did help him arm—ready his aid to yield.
 Then did the brave and stalwart chief such lamentations make,
 That, from his deep drawn sighs and groans, the house began to shake.

1383.

2262

Thereby he soon possessed again his wonted dauntlessness:
 The noble knight had armed himself amidst his soul's distress.
 An ample and well laboured targe he carried in his hand:
 So went he forth — accompanied by master Hildebrand.

1384.

2263

Then said sir Hagen, Tronyie's chief, 'I see one drawing nigh:
 'It is sir Dietrich of Verone, in hostile panoply;
 'Because of damage we have done unto his martial might.
 '— Well, be it so! — to-day will prove, who is the better knight.

1385.

2264

'Is Dietrich of Verona grown so arrogant and vain
 'As to surmise his body strength is of such might-and-main,
 'As that he can revenge on us the evil that is done?
 'Methinks, I still am man enough to cope with any one.'

1386.

2265

That speech of Hagen's Dietrich heard — eke master Hildebrand:
 They came to where the Burgund knights did then together stand,
 Which was on outside palace door — leaning against the hall:
 Sir Dietrich placed upon the ground his ample shield withal.

1387.

2266

O'erpressed by deeply seated grief, Verona's prince began:
 'Say, Gunther, monarch of the Rhine — such deed why hast thou done
 'Gainst me, a stranger in this land; how have I injured thee?
 'Of the small comfort I possessed, thou hast deprived me.

1388.

2267

'You were not satisfied therewith — that you sir Rud'ger slew,
 'By which you caused me heartfelt grief, and loss of comrade true;
 'But you must slaughter all those knights who served me loyally:
 'So had I never done towards you, howe'er the cause might be.

1389.

2268

‘Reflect upon your noble selves — and ponder o’er your case,
 ‘With death of your best friends and kin — the pressure and disgrace!
 ‘Such pondering, methinks, with you, will sorry mood impart!
 ‘Alas, alas! sir Rud’ger’s death has sadly scathed my heart.

1390.

2269

‘Nothing, forsure, could happen worse in that respect or this;
 ‘Heart-rending pangs we both have got: oh! you have done amiss!
 ‘What little joy to me remained, has been dispelled by you:
 ‘I never can bemoan enough my friends and warriors true!’

1391.

2270

‘We are not quite so much to blame,’ said Hagen in reply,
 ‘For to this hall your knighthood came in warlike panoply;
 ‘In very hostile way ’twas done: — madly they on us stormed!
 ‘Methinks, about the whole affair you have been misinformed.’—

1392.

2271

— ‘What may I credit? what believe? — ’twas Hildebrand told me:
 ‘Saying, that when my Amelung knights desired respectfully
 ‘That you would give them from the hall brave Rud’ger of Bechlarn,
 ‘They got from yours refusal straight, and words of galling scorn.’

1393.

2272

Then said king Gunther of the Rhine, ‘they haughtily would bear
 ‘Sir Rud’ger’s corse away from hence! — if I refused, howe’er,
 ‘Such was not done to cross your knights — but Etzel in despite:
 ‘Wolfhart thereon grew insolent, depending on his might.’

1394.

2273

Then said the ruler of Verone, ‘so must the matter be.
 ‘But Gunther, noble king of Rhine! by your high courtesy,
 ‘Make me amends for all the cause you’ve given me to grieve,
 ‘By such atoning deed as I with honour may receive.

1395.

2274

‘If you, and your true liegemen bold, surrender instantly,
 ‘Then will I guard and comfort you with great fidelity,
 ‘So that within the Hunnish land no person do you harm:
 ‘Thou ever shalt receive from me treatment sincere and warm.’

1396.

2275

‘Forbid it God of heaven and earth!’ said Hagen in like words,
 ‘That two such knights should render up to you their trusty swords!
 ‘The two that now before you stand, are stalwart still, and armed,
 ‘And their free agency as yet has been but little harmed.’

1397.

2276

‘You ought not to refuse the terms,’ said Dieterich the bold,
 ‘For both of you have done me wrong—keenly and manifold.
 ‘You have to grief and sorrow doomed my heart as well as mind:
 ‘Therefore that you atonement make—I just and proper find.

1398.

2277

‘I pledge to you, moreover, sire!—confirmed by my right hand,
 ‘That I myself will ride with you unto your Rhenish land,
 ‘Being your safeguard on the road—or die in your defence,
 ‘And for your sake forget, for aye, the causes of offence.’

1399.

2278

‘Withhold your importunities,’ quoth Hagen, in rude way:
 ‘’Twould do us little honour, troth! that any one should say
 ‘That two such stalwart knights had been the captives of your hand:
 ‘For all your knightly aid, methinks, is doughty Hildebrand!

1400.

2279

Thereto rejoined sir Hildebrand, ‘God knows, sir Hagen keen!
 ‘The peace my lord has offered you, is kindly intervene.
 ‘The hour approaches when the same you’d take most thankfully.
 ‘Methinks, atonement such as this right comforting should be!’

1401.

2280

'Trust me, I would accept such terms,' said Hagen scornfully,
 'Ere I, with cravenlike disgrace, from single knight would flee!
 'As did sir Hildebrand, crewhile, so readily effect.
 '—I thought he would have faced a foe with more of self respect!'

1402.

2281

For answer Hildebrand rejoined, 'reproof you should not wield!
 'Who was't that sat on Wasken-rock — leaning upon his shield,
 'When Spanish Walther havoc made 'mongst his akin and friends?
 'You've done enough for deep remorse — and all too late amends!'

1403.

2282

Thereon said valiant Dieterich, 'it ill becomes you knights
 'To bandy most affronting words — like wives in market fights:
 '—In you, brave master Hildebrand, I such disgrace forbid.
 'Alas! for me, I've weight of woe, of which I would be rid.

1404.

2283

'Now tell me Hagen, Tronyic's chief!' said Dietrich earnestly:
 'What were you heroes talking of so confidentially,
 'When that you saw me coming on, clothed in my warring gear?
 '—You said, methinks, 'to measure swords with him I do not fear.'

1405.

2284

'That, no one here will contradict!' said Hagen, the brave knight,
 'And upshot I'm prepared to try — by strenuously struck smite,
 '—If that I break not 'Balmung' keen, my Nibelungen sword.
 'I'm vexed because you wish that we should yield of own accord.'

1406.

2285

When Dietrich fully understood sir Hagen's wrathful mind,
 The vet'ran warrior to his arm the ample shield did bind:
 Then with huge strides adown the stairs Hagen to meet him ran,
 And with famed 'Balmung sword' the knight encounter fierce began.

1407.

2286

Sir Dieterich was well aware that the undaunted chief
 Fought with impetuosity — therefore, in that belief,
 He sought to ward with trusty shield his quick and pondrous blows:
 Hagen to Dietrich was well known — yet now they met as foes.

1408.

2287

He also 'Balmung' would avoid — that all too potent brand:
 Yet Dietrich now and then did use, right skilfully, his hand;
 Until at last the Tronyian knight constrained was to succumb:
 — He smote him such a deadly gash as made his stout limbs numb.

1409.

2288

Thought Dieterich, 'the man is weak through long continued strife:
 'Twould little to my fame redound, were I to take his life!
 'Therefore I'll try, by dint of strength, to make the gallant foe
 'Follow my steps as captive knight — with grief I must do so!'

1410.

2289

He cast his ample shield aside — being of wondrous strength,
 And compassed Hagen with his arms — then threw him all his length.
 So, after struggling, was o'erpowered that celebrated chief:
 The king of Burgundie now felt unutterable grief!

1411.

2290

Dietrich did bind sir Hagen's arms — then led him where he found
 Chriemhild: and gave into her hands, as captive tightly bound,
 The most indomitable knight that ever buckler bare:
 Thereat her joy was very great — of grief she'd had her share.

1412.

2291

She bent to Dietrich gladsomely — and thus to him she said:
 'Mayst thou through life feel happiness, in heart as well as head!
 'Whereas you've now consoled me for my many tears and sighs,
 'I will reward you splendidly — or death must me surprise!'

1413.

2292

Then said the noble Dieterich, 'cherish his life, I pray,
'Illustrious daughter of a king!— it may be, that some day
'He shall atone, by services, the mischief done to you:
'— He must not suffer for that he in fetters meets your view.'

1414.

2293

She ordered Hagen to be ta'en, and in confinement cast,
Where he by no one could be seen, and to the wall made fast.
— Then Gunther, king of upper Rhine, shouted with all his might:
'Where is the hero of Verone?— he must with me wage fight!'

1415.

2294

Dietrich returned forthwith to him— however disinclined.
Gunther possessed no common skill, and was of knightly mind.
He tarried not, but dashed from hall, to where he Dietrich found:
From their two swords o'er all was heard a dreadful, clashing sound.

1416.

2295

How great soe'er sir Dietrich's fame had been for many a year—
Sir Gunther's vengeful pressing on now gave him cause for fear:
Gunther did hate him from his soul, because of that last strife;
— It is a marvel unexplained— how Dietrich saved his life.

1417.

2296

They both were of such ample strength, and dauntless martial pow'rs,
That echo rattled their hard blows through palaces and tow'rs,
Which they, upon each other's helm, smote in such ireful mood.
King Gunther showed himself to be a hero bold and good!

1418.

2297

Yet Dietrich overpowered him— as he had Hagen done.
One saw the blood, from coat-of-mail, in gushing streamlet run,
From wound of the keen two edged glave which Dietrich always wore.
King Gunther still did bravely fight— though faint from loss of gore:

1419.

2298

At length the vanquished king was bound by valiant Dietrich's hand.
 — Howe'er true kings should not endure the press of fettering band,
 Still Dietrich thought, if unrestrained were Gunther and his knight,
 'Twas present death to any one, on whom they chanced to light.

1420.

2299

Dietrich then took him by the hand — thus weaponless and bound,
 Unto the spot where he, before, had queen Chriemhilda found.
 — 'Welcome to Gunther of the Rhine — hero of Burgundie!' —
 'God prosper you,' the king replied — 'if that's meant honestly.'

1421.

2300

He added, 'I must thank you much — sister, still dear to me!
 'If that same greeting unto me was purposed graciously.
 'But, since I know that you are of unbounded vengeful mood,
 'Such to sir Hagen, or to me, presages nothing good.'

1422.

2301

Then said the hero of Verone, 'illustrious Hunnish queen!
 'Never appeared, as captive bound, so brave a knight, I ween,
 'As he I've handed o'er to you — with loyal courtesy:
 'At your fair hands let him partake of favour due to me!'

1423.

2302

She said, she would perform his wish: — Dietrich then went away,
 With eyes suffused by scalding tears, from him who late held his way.
 — Chriemhilda did revenge her wrongs, in way that will affright:
 She slaughtered, without fear, or shame, the king, and loyal knight!

1424.

2303

They both were singly manacled, in fast and dreary place;
 So that those knights ne'er saw again each other, face to face,
 Save when she took her brother's head to Hagen, with own hand.
 — Chriemhilda's vengeful wrath was such, as baffles all command.

1425.

2304

Then went the queen Chriemhild to where sir Hagen met her sight:
I wot, full ruthless proved her speech unto the captive knight!
'Will you return, without delay, that which you took from me?
'Then may you reach with life your home, in distant Burgundie.'

1426.

2305

Thereto replied the angered chief, 'your prayer is made in vain,
'Most noble daughter of a king! for I an oath have ta'en
'That I will ne'er divulge the place where lies the hoard concealed.
'So long as either king doth live—it will not be revealed!'

1427.

2306

'Then will I make short work of it!' so said the lofty wife:
She gave behest that Gunther brave should forthwith lose his life.
His head was hewn from off its trunk — which by the hair she took,
And bore it to the Tronyie chief, who mournfully did look

1428.

2307

Upon the ghastly, dripping head of his much honoured king;
Then to Chriemhilda he again severe remark did bring:
'Thou hast indeed thy will fulfilled — ending with brother's blood!
'And, verily, in such a way, as I did fear you would.

1429.

2308

'Now is the noble Burgund king prepared for early grave!
'Eke Giselher, the young and good — and Gerenot the brave!
'Where the said hoard lies hid is, now, known but to God and me!
'And shall from thee, accursed wife! for ever hidden be.'

1430.

2309

Said she, 'you've foul atonement made, in purpose, deed, and word:
'Therefore will I possess myself of virtuous Siegfried's sword, —
'That which he bore on stalwart thigh, when last I saw the chief,
'Whose death has ever been to me — a keen, heart-rending grief!'

1431.

2310

She drew it from the well known sheath—Hagen could not prevent,—
 To take the warrior's life, forthwith, was her unmasked intent.
 She swung it with both hands, and smote his head from off its trunk:
 King Etzel saw the vengeful deed—and from its horror shrunk!

1432.

2311

'Alas!' the Hun king sighing said, 'how does the matter stand—
 'That he, the boldest of all knights, should fall by woman's hand?
 'He, who in onslaught was the first—the bravest that bore shield!
 'Although he was mine enemy, I fain to sorrow yield.'

1433.

2312

Then spake the ancient Hildebrand, 'she shall no gainer be
 'Through this same deed of deadly hate—whate'er becomes of me!
 'Although he brought myself unto a very gulp of breath:
 'I ne'ertheless will work revenge for valiant Hagen's death!'

1434.

2313

Thereon did master Hildebrand run at the fair Chriemhild—
 And smote so with his keen edged sword, that he the Hun queen killed:
 Truly, she felt abounding fear, and dreadfully amazed!
 —What helped it that she loudly shrieked, when he his arm upraised?

1435.

2314

—Where'er one looked, the dead were seen, lying in clotted gore.
 In pieces hewn lay Chriemhild's corse, upon the dungeon's floor.
 Dietrich and Etzel now began to grieve and weep anew:
 They inwardly bewailed the loss of friends, and liegemen true.

1436.

2315

Thus were the mighty of the earth by hand of death laid low!
 The people all bemoaned aloud—and much of grief did know.
 Thus in keen suff'rings end was made of Etzel's festival:
 As joy and woe will ever be, the heritage of all!

I cannot tidings give of what did afterwards take place,
Further than this — fair wife and knight were seen with weeping face;
And eke the trusty yeomanry wept for their friends no less.
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