

The Nibelungenlied
The Brunhild Adventures (6-12)

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ADVENTURE VI

How Gunther Fared To Isenland (1) for Brunhild.

New tidings came across the Rhine. 'Twas said that yonder many a fair maid dwelt. The good king Gunther thought to win him one of these; high therefore rose the warrior's spirits. There lived a queen beyond the sea, whose like men knew not anywhere. Peerless was her beauty and great her strength. With doughty knights she shot the shaft for love. The stone she hurled afar and sprang far after it. He who craved her love must win without fail three games from this high-born dame. When the noble maid had done this passing oft, a stately knight did hear it by the Rhine. He turned his thoughts upon this comely dame, and so heroes must needs later lose their lives.

One day when the king and his vassals sate and pondered to and fro in many a wise, whom their lord might take to wife, who would be fit to be their lady and beseem the land, up spake the lord of the Rhinlands: "I will go down to the sea and hence to Brunhild, however it may go with me. For her love I'll risk my life. I

will gladly lose it and she become not my wife."

"Against that do I counsel you," spake then Siegfried, "if, as ye say, the queen doth have so fierce a wont, he who wooeth for her love will pay full dear. Therefore should ye give over the journey."

Then spake King Gunther: "Never was woman born so strong and bold that I might not vanquish her with mine own hand."

"Be still," spake Siegfried, "ye little know her strength."

"So will I advise you," spake Hagen then, "that ye beg Siegfried to share with you this heavy task. This is my rede, sith he doth know so well how matters stand with Brunhild."

The king spake: "Wilt thou help me, noble Siegfried, to woo this lovely maid? And thou doest what I pray thee and this comely dame become my love, for thy sake will I risk both life and honor."

To this Siegfried, the son of Siegmund, answered: "I will do it, and thou give me thy sister Kriemhild, the noble queen. For my pains I ask no other meed."

"I'll pledge that, Siegfried, in thy hand," spake then Gunther, "and if fair Brunhild come hither to this land, I'll give thee my sister unto wife. Then canst thou live ever merrily with the

fair."

This the noble warriors swore oaths to do, and so the greater
grew their hardships, till they brought the lady to the Rhine.
On this account these brave men must later be in passing danger.
Siegfried had to take with him hence the cloak which he, the bold
hero, had won 'mid dangers from a dwarf, Alberich he hight.
These bold and mighty knights now made them ready for the
journey. When Siegfried wore the Cloak of Darkness he had
strength enow: the force of full twelve men beside his own. With
cunning arts he won the royal maid. This cloak was fashioned so,
that whatsoever any wrought within it, none saw him. Thus he won
Brunhild, which brought him dole.

"Now tell me, good Knight Siegfried, before our trip begin, shall
we not take warriors with us into Brunhild's land, that we may
come with passing honors to the sea? Thirty thousand men-at-arms
can soon be called."

"However many men we take," quoth Siegfried, "the queen doth use
so fierce a wont that they must perish through her haughty pride.
I'll give thee better counsel, O brave and worthy king. Let us
fare as wandering knights adown the Rhine, and I will tell thee
those that shall be of the band. In all four knights, we'll
journey to the sea and thus we'll woo the lady, whatever be our
fate thereafter. I shall be one of the four comrades, the second
thou shalt be. Let Hagen be the third (then have we hope of
life), Dankwart then the fourth, the valiant man. A thousand

others durst not match us in the fight."

"Gladly would I know," spake then the king, "ere we go hence ('t would please me much), what garments we should wear before Brunhild, which would beseem us there. Pray tell this now to Gunther."

"Weeds of the very best which can be found are worn all times in Brunhild's land. We must wear rich clothes before the lady, that we feel no shame when men shall hear the tidings told."

The good knight spake: "Then will I go myself to my dear mother, if perchance I can bring it to pass that her fair maids purvey us garments which we may wear with honor before the high-born maid."

Hagen of Troneg spake then in lordly wise: "Wherefore will ye pray your mother of such service? Let your sister hear what ye have in mind, and she'll purvey you well for your journey to Brunhild's court."

Then sent he word to his sister, that he would fain see her, and Knight Siegfried, too, sent word. Ere this happed the fair had clad her passing well. That these brave men were coming, gave her little grief. Now were her attendants, too, arrayed in seemly wise. The lordings came, and when she heard the tale, from her seat she rose and walked in courtly wise to greet the noble stranger and her brother, too.

"Welcome be my brother and his comrade. I'd gladly know," so spake the maid, "what ye lords desire, sith ye be thus come to court. Pray let me hear how it standeth with you noble knights."

Then spake king Gunther: "My lady, I'll tell you now. Maugre our lofty mood, yet have we mickle care. We would ride a-wooing far into foreign lands, and for this journey we have need of costly robes."

"Now sit you down, dear brother," spake the royal maid, "and let me hear aright who these ladies be whom ye fain would woo in the lands of other kings."

By the hand the lady took the chosen knights and with the twain she walked to where she sate afore upon a couch, worked, as well I wot, with dainty figures embossed in gold. There might they have fair pastime with the ladies. Friendly glances and kindly looks passed now full oft between the twain. In his heart he bare her, she was dear to him as life. In after days fair Kriemhild became strong Siegfried's wife.

Then spake the mighty king: "Dear sister mine, without thy help it may not be. We would go for knightly pastime to Brunhild's land, and have need of princely garb to wear before the dames."

Then the noble maiden answered: "Dear brother mine, I do you now to wit, that whatever need ye have of help of mine, that stand I ready to give. Should any deny you aught, 't would please

Kriemhild but ill. Most noble knights, beseech me not with such concern, but order me with lordly air to do whatso ye list. I stand at your bidding and will do it with a will." So spake the winsome maid.

"We would fain, dear sister, wear good attire, and this your noble hand shall help to choose. Your maidens then must make it fit us, for there be no help against this journey." Then spake the princess: "Now mark ye what I say. Silks I have myself; see ye that men do bring us jewels upon the shields and thus we'll work the clothes. Gunther and Siegfried, too, gave glad assent.

"Who are the comrades," spake the queen, "who shall fare with you thus clad to court?"

He spake: "I shall be one of four. My liegemen twain, Dankwart and Hagen, shall go with me to court. Now mark ye well, my lady, what I say. Each of us four must have to wear for four whole days three changes of apparel and such goodly trappings that without shame we may quit Brunhild's land."

In fitting wise the lords took leave and parted hence.

Kriemhild, the queen, bade thirty of her maidens who were skillful in such work, come forth from out their bowers. Silks of Araby, white as snow, and the fair silk of Zazamanc, (2) green as is the clover, they overlaid with precious stones; that gave garments passing fair. Kriemhild herself, the high-born maiden, cut them out. Whatso they had at hand of well-wrought linings

from the skin of foreign fish, but rarely seen of folk, they covered now with silk, as was the wont to wear. (3) Now hear great marvels of these shining weeds. From the kingdom of Morocco and from Libya, too, they had great store of the fairest silks which the kith of any king did ever win. Kriemhild made it well appear what love she bore the twain. Sith upon the proud journey they had set their minds, they deemed ermine to be well fit. (4) Upon this lay fine silk as black as coal. This would still beseem all doughty knights at high festal tides. From out a setting of Arabian gold there shone forth many a stone. The ladies' zeal, it was not small, forsooth; in seven weeks they wrought the robes. Ready, too, were the weapons for the right good knights.

When now they all stood dight, (5) there was built for them in haste upon the Rhine a sturdy little skiff, that should bear them downward to the sea. Weary were the noble maids from all their cares. Then the warriors were told that the brave vestures they should wear were now prepared; as they had craved it, so it now was done. Then no longer would they tarry on the Rhine; they sent a message to their war-companions, if perchance they should care to view their new attire, to see if it be too long or short.

All was found in fitting measure, and for this they gave the ladies thanks. All who saw them could not but aver that never in the world had they seen attire more fair. Therefore they wore it gladly at the court. None wist how to tell of better knightly weeds. Nor did they fail to give great thanks. Then the lusty knights craved leave to go, and this the lordings did in courtly

wise. Bright eyes grew dim and moist thereat from weeping.

Kriemhild spake: "Dear brother, ye might better tarry here a while and pay court to other dames, where ye would not so risk your life; then would I say well done. Ye might find nearer home a wife of as high a birth."

I ween their hearts did tell them what would hap. All wept alike, no matter what men said. The gold upon their breasts was tarnished by their tears, which thick and fast coursed downward from their eyes.

She spake: "Sir Siegfried, let this dear brother of mine be commended to your fealty and troth, that naught may harm him in Brunhild's land." This the full brave knight vowed in Lady Kriemhild's hand.

The mighty warrior spake: "If I lose not my life, ye may be free from every care, my lady. I'll bring him to you sound again hither to the Rhine; that know of a surety." The fair maid bowed her thanks.

Men bare their gold-hued shields out to them upon the sands and brought them all their harness. One bade lead up the steeds, for they would ride away. Much weeping then was done by comely dames. The winsome maids stood at the easements. A high wind stirred the ship and sails; the proud war fellowship embarked upon the Rhine.

Then spake King Gunther: "Who shall be the captain of the ship?"

"That will I," quoth Siegfried, "I wot well how to steer you on the flood. That know, good knights, the right water ways be well known to me."

So they parted merrily from out the Burgundian land. Siegfried quickly grasped an oar and from the shore the stalwart man gan push. Bold Gunther took the helm himself, and thus the worshipful and speedy knights set forth from land. With them they took rich food and eke good wine, the best that could be found along the Rhine. Their steeds stood fair; they had good easement. Their ship rode well; scant harm did hap them. Their stout sheet-rope was tightened by the breeze. Twenty leagues they sailed, or ever came the night, with a good wind, downward toward the sea. These hard toils later brought the high-mettled warriors pain.

Upon the twelfth-day morning, as we hear say, the winds had borne them far away to Isenstein in Brunhild's land. To none save Siegfried was this known; but when King Gunther spied so many castles and broad marches, too, how soon he spake: "Pray tell me, friend Siegfried, is it known to you whose are these castles and this lordly land?"

Siegfried answered: "I know it well. It is the land and folk of Brunhild and the fortress Isenstein, as ye heard me say. Fair

ladies ye may still see there to-day. Methinketh good to advise you heroes that ye be of one single mind, and that ye tell the selfsame tale. For if we go to-day before Brunhild, in much jeopardy must we stand before the queen. When we behold the lovely maiden with her train, then, ye far-famed heroes, must ye tell but this single tale: that Gunther be my master and I his man; then what he craveth will come to pass." Full ready they were for whatever he bade them vow, nor because of pride did any one abstain. They promised what he would; wherefrom they all fared well, when King Gunther saw fair Brunhild. (6)

"Forsooth I vow it less for thy sake than for thy sister's, the comely maid, who is to me as mine own soul and body. Gladly will I bring it to pass, that she become my wife."

ENDNOTES:

- (1) "Isenland" translates here M.H.G. "Islant", which has, however, no connection with Iceland in spite of the agreement of the names in German. "Isen lant", the reading of the MSS. B_{Jh}, has been chosen, partly to avoid confusion, and partly to indicate its probable derivation from "Isenstein", the name of Brunhild's castle. Boer's interpretation of "Isen" as 'ice' finds corroboration in Otfried's form "isine steina" ('ice stones', i.e. crystals) I, 1. 70. Isenstein would then mean Ice Castle. In the "Thidreksaga" Brunhild's castle is called "Saegarthr" ('Sea Garden'), and in a fairy tale (No. 93 of Grimm) "Stromberg",

referring to the fact that it was surrounded by the sea.

Here, too, in our poem it stands directly on the shore.

(2) "Zazamanc", a fictitious kingdom mentioned only here and a few times in Parzival, Wolfram probably having obtained the name from this passage. (See Bartsch, "Germanistische Studien", ii, 129.)

(3) "Wont to wear". In the Middle Ages costly furs and fish-skins were used as linings and covered, as here described, with silk or cloth. By fish such amphibious animals as otter and beaver were often meant.

(4) "Well fit". In this passage "wert", the reading of A and D, has been followed, instead of unwert of B and C, as it seems more appropriate to the sense.

(5) "Dight", 'arrayed'; used by Milton.

(6) "Brunhild". The following words are evidently a late interpolation, and weaken the ending, but have been translated for the sake of completeness. They are spoken by Siegfried.

ADVENTURE VII

How Gunther Won Brunhild.

Meanwhile their bark had come so near the castle that the king saw many a comely maiden standing at the casements. Much it irked King Gunther that he knew them not. He asked his comrade Siegfried: "Hast thou no knowledge of these maidens, who yonder

are gazing downward towards us on the flood? Whoever be their lord, they are of lofty mood."

At this Sir Siegfried spake: "I pray you, spy secretly among the high-born maids and tell me then whom ye would choose, and ye had the power."

"That will I," spake Gunther, the bold and valiant knight. "In yonder window do I see one stand in snow-white weeds. She is fashioned so fair that mine eyes would choose her for her comeliness. Had I power, she should become my wife."

"Right well thine eyes have chosen for thee. It is the noble Brunhild, the comely maid, for whom thy heart doth strive and eke thy mind and mood." All her bearing seemed to Gunther good.

When bade the queen her high-born maids go from the windows, for it behooved them not to be the mark of strangers' eyes. Each one obeyed. What next the ladies did, hath been told us since. They decked their persons out to meet the unknown knights, a way fair maids have ever had. To the narrow casements they came again, where they had seen the knights. Through love of gazing this was done.

But four there were that were come to land. Through the windows the stately women saw how Siegfried led a horse out on the sand, whereby King Gunther felt himself much honored. By the bridle he held the steed, so stately, good and fair, and large and strong,

until King Gunther had sat him in the saddle. Thus Siegfried served him, the which he later quite forgot. Such service he had seldom done afore, that he should stand at any here's stirrup. Then he led his own steed from the ship. All this the comely dames of noble birth saw through the casements. The steeds and garments, too, of the lusty knights, of snow-white hue, were right well matched and all alike; the bucklers, fashioned well, gleamed in the hands of the stately men. In lordly wise they rode to Brunhild's hall, their saddles set with precious stones, with narrow martingales, from which hung bells of bright and ruddy gold. So they came to the land, as well befit their prowess, with newly sharpened spears, with well-wrought swords, the which hung down to the spurs of these stately men. The swords the bold men bore were sharp and broad. All this Brunhild, the high-born maid, espied.

With the king came Dankwart and Hagen, too. We have heard tales told of how the knights wore costly raiment, raven black of hue. Fair were their bucklers, mickle, good and broad. Jewels they wore from the land of India, the which gleamed gloriously upon their weeds. By the flood they left their skiff without a guard. Thus the brave knights and good rode to the castle. Six and eighty towers they saw within, three broad palaces, (1) and one hall well wrought of costly marble, green as grass, wherein Brunhild herself sate with her courtiers. The castle was unlocked and the gates flung wide. Then ran Brunhild's men to meet them and welcomed the strangers into their mistress' land. One bade relieve them of their steeds and shields.

Then spake a chamberlain: "Pray give us now your swords and your shining breastplates, too."

"That we may not grant you," said Hagen of Troneg; "we ourselves will bear them."

Then gan Siegfried tell aright the tale. "The usage of the castle, let me say, is such that no guests may here bear arms. Let them now be taken hence, then will all be well."

Unwillingly Hagen, Gunther's man, obeyed. For the strangers men bade pour out wine and make their lodgings ready. Many doughty knights were seen walking everywhere at court in lordly weeds. Mickle and oft were these heroes gazed upon.

Then the tidings were told to Lady Brunhild, that unknown warriors were come in lordly raiment, sailing on the flood. The fair and worthy maid gan ask concerning this. "Pray let me hear," spake the queen, "who be these unknown knights, who stand so lordly in my castle, and for whose sake the heroes have journeyed hither?"

Then spake one of the courtiers: "My lady, I can well say that never have I set eyes on any of them, but one like Siegfried doth stand among them. Him ye should give fair greetings; that is my rede, in truth. The second of their fellowship is so worthy of praise that he were easily a mighty king over broad and princely

lands, and he had the power and might possess them. One doth see him stand by the rest in such right lordly wise. The third of the fellowship is so fierce and yet withal so fair of body, most noble queen. By the fierce glances he so oft doth cast, I ween he be grim of thought and mood. The youngest among them is worshipful indeed. I see the noble knight stand so charmingly, with courtly bearing, in almost maiden modesty. We might all have cause for fear, had any done him aught. However blithely he doth practice chivalry, and howso fair of body he be, yet might he well make many a comely woman weep, should he e'er grow angry. He is so fashioned that in all knightly virtues he must be a bold knight and a brave."

Then spake the queen: "Now bring me my attire. If the mighty Siegfried be come unto this land through love of mine, he doth risk his life. I fear him not so sore, that I should become his wife."

Brunhild, the fair, was soon well clad. Then went there with her many a comely maid, full hundred or more, decked out in gay attire. The stately dames would gaze upon the strangers. With them there walked good knights from Isenland, Brunhild's men-at-arms, five hundred or more, who bore swords in hand. This the strangers rued. From their seats then the brave and lusty heroes rose. When that the queen spied Siegfried, now hear what the maid did speak.

"Be ye welcome, Siegfried, here in this our land! What doth your

journey mean? That I fain would know."

"Gramercy, my Lady Brunhild, that ye have deigned to greet me, most generous queen, in the presence of this noble knight who standeth here before me, for he is my liege lord. This honor I must needs forswear. By birth he's from the Rhine; what more need I to say? For thy sake are we come hither. Fain would he woo thee, however he fare. Methink thee now betimes, my lord will not let thee go. He is hight Gunther and is a lordly king. An' he win thy love, he doth crave naught more. Forsooth this knight, so well beseen, did bid me journey hither. I would fain have given it over, could I have said him nay."

She spake: "Is he thy liege and thou his man, dare he assay the games which I mete out and gain the mastery, then I'll become his wife; but should I win, 't will cost you all your lives."

Then up spake Hagen of Troneg: "My lady, let us see your mighty games. It must indeed go hard, or ever Gunther, my lord, give you the palm. He troweth well to win so fair a maid."

"He must hurl the stone and after spring and cast the spear with me. Be ye not too hasty. Ye are like to lose here your honor and your life as well. Bethink you therefore rightly," spake the lovely maid.

Siegfried, the bold, went to the king and bade him tell the queen all that he had in mind, he should have no fear. "I'll guard you

well against her with my arts."

Then spake King Gunther: "Most noble queen, now mete out whatso
ye list, and were it more, that would I all endure for your sweet
sake. I'll gladly lose my head, and ye become not my wife."

When the queen heard this speech, she begged them hasten to the
games, as was but meet. She bade purvey her with good armor for
the strife: a breastplate of ruddy gold and a right good shield.

A silken surcoat, (2) too, the maid put on, which sword had never
cut in any fray, of silken cloth of Libya. Well was it wrought.

Bright embroidered edging was seen to shine thereon.

Meanwhile the knights were threatened much with battle cries.

Dankwart and Hagen stood ill at ease; their minds were troubled
at the thought of how the king would speed. Thought they: "Our
journey will not bring us warriors aught of good."

Meanwhile Siegfried, the stately man, or ever any marked it, had
hied him to the ship, where he found his magic cloak concealed.
Into it he quickly slipped and so was seen of none. He hurried
back and there he found a great press of knights, where the queen
dealt out her lofty games. Thither he went in secret wise (by
his arts it happened), nor was he seen of any that were there. The
ring had been marked out, where the games should be, afore many
valiant warriors, who were to view them there. More than seven
hundred were seen bearing arms, who were to say who won the game.

Then was come Brunhild, armed as though she would battle for all royal lands. Above her silken coat she wore many a bar of gold; gloriously her lovely color shone beneath the armor. Then came her courtiers, who bare along a shield of ruddy gold with large broad strips as hard as steel, beneath the which the lovely maid would fight. As shield-thong there served a costly band upon which lay jewels green as grass. It shone and gleamed against the gold. He must needs be passing bold, to whom the maid would show her love. The shield the maid should bear was three spans thick beneath the studs, as we are told. Rich enow it was, of steel and eke of gold, the which four chamberlains could scarcely carry.

When the stalwart Hagen saw the shield borne forth, the knight of Troneg spake full grim of mood: "How now, King Gunther? How we shall lose our lives! She you would make your love is the devil's bride, in truth."

Hear now about her weeds; enow of these she had; she wore a surcoat of silk of Azagoue, (3) noble and costly. Many a lordly stone shone in contrast to its color on the person of the queen.

Then was brought forth for the lady a spear, sharp, heavy, and large, the which she cast all time, stout and unwieldy, mickle and broad, which on its edges cut most fearfully. Of the spear's great weight hear wonders told. Three and one half weights (4) of iron were wrought therein, the which scarce three of Brunhild's men could bear. The noble Gunther gan be sore afraid.

Within his heart he thought: "What doth this mean? How could the devil from hell himself escape alive? Were I safe and sound in Burgundy, long might she live here free of any love of mine."

Then spake Hagen's brother, the valiant Dankwart: "The journey to this court doth rue me sore. We who have ever borne the name of knights, how must we lose our lives! Shall we now perish at the hands of women in these lands? It doth irk me much, that ever I came unto this country. Had but my brother Hagen his sword in hand, and I mine, too, then should Brunhild's men go softly in their overweening pride. This know for sure, they'd guard against it well. And had I sworn a peace with a thousand oaths, before I'd see my dear lord die, the comely maid herself should lose her life."

"We might leave this land unscathed," spake then his brother Hagen, "had we the harness which we sorely need and our good swords as well; then would the pride of this strong dame become a deal more soft."

What the warrior spake the noble maid heard well. Over her shoulders she gazed with smiling mouth. "Now sith he thinketh himself so brave, bring them forth their coats-of-mail; put in the warriors' hands their sharp-edged swords."

When they received their weapons as the maiden bade, bold Dankwart blushed for very joy. "Now let them play whatso they list," spake the doughty man. "Gunther is unconquered, since now

we have our arms."

Mightily now did Brunhild's strength appear. Into the ring men bare a heavy stone, huge and great, mickle and round. Twelve brave and valiant men-at-arms could scarcely bear it. This she threw at all times, when she had shot the spear. The Burgundians' fear now grew amain.

"Woe is me," cried Hagen. "Whom hath King Gunther chosen for a love? Certes she should be the foul fiend's bride in hell."

Upon her fair white arm the maid turned back her sleeves; with her hands she grasped the shield and poised the spear on high. Thus the strife began. Gunther and Siegfried feared Brunhild's hate, and had Siegfried not come to Gunther's aid, she would have bereft the king of life. Secretly Siegfried went and touched his hand; with great fear Gunther marked his wiles. "Who hath touched me?" thought the valiant man. Then he gazed around on every side, but saw none standing there.

"'Tis I, Siegfried, the dear friend of thine. Thou must not fear the queen. Give me the shield from off thy hand and let me bear it and mark aright what thou dost hear me say. Make thou the motions, I will do the deeds."

When Gunther knew that it was Siegfried, he was overjoyed.

Quoth Siegfried: "Now hide thou my arts; tell them not to any

man; then can the queen win from thee little fame, albeit she doth desire it. See how fearlessly the lady standeth now before thee."

Then with might and main the noble maiden hurled the spear at a shield, mickle, new, and broad, which the son of Siegelind bore upon his arm. The sparks sprang from the steel, as if the wind did blow. The edge of the mighty spear broke fully through the shield, so that men saw the fire flame forth from the armor rings. The stalwart men both staggered at the blow; but for the Cloak of Darkness they had lain there dead. From the mouth of Siegfried, the brave, gushed forth the blood. Quickly the good knight sprang back again and snatched the spear that she had driven through his shield. Stout Siegfried's hand now sent it back again. He thought: "I will not pierce the comely maid." So he reversed the point and cast it at her armor with the butt, that it rang out loudly from his mighty hand. The sparks flew from the armor rings, as though driven by the wind. Siegmund's son had made the throw with might. With all her strength she could not stand before the blow. In faith King Gunther never could have done the deed.

Brunhild, the fair, how quickly up she sprang! "Gunther, noble knight, I cry you mercy for the shot." She weened that he had done it with his strength. To her had crept a far more powerful man. Then went she quickly, angry was her mood. The noble maid and good raised high the stone and hurled it mightily far from her hand. After the cast she sprang, that all her armor rang, in

truth. The stone had fallen twelve fathoms hence, but with her leap the comely maid out-sprang the throw. Then went Sir Siegfried to where lay the stone. Gunther poised it, while the hero made the throw. Siegfried was bold, strong, and tall; he threw the stone still further and made a broader jump. Through his fair arts he had strength enow to bear King Gunther with him as he sprang. The leap was made, the stone lay on the ground; men saw none other save Gunther, the knight, alone. Siegfried had banished the fear of King Gunther's death. Brunhild, the fair, waxed red with wrath. To her courtiers she spake a deal too loud, when she spied the hero safe and sound at the border of the ring: "Come nearer quickly, ye kinsmen and liegemen of mine, ye must now be subject to Gunther, the king."

Then the brave knights laid aside their arms and paid their homage at the feet of mighty Gunther from the Burgundian land. They weened that he had won the games by his own strength alone. He greeted them in loving wise; in sooth he was most rich in virtues.

Then the lovely maiden took him by the hand; full power she granted him within the land. At this Hagen, the bold and doughty knight, rejoiced him. She bade the noble knight go with her hence to the spacious palace. When this was done, they gave the warriors with their service better cheer. With good grace Hagen and Dankwart now must needs submit. The doughty Siegfried was wise enow and bare away his magic cloak. Then he repaired to where the ladies sate. To the king he spake and shrewdly did he

this: "Why wait ye, good my lord? Why begin ye not the games, of which the queen doth deal so great a store? Let us soon see how they be played." The crafty man did not as though he wist not a whit thereof.

Then spake the Queen: "How hath it chanced that ye, Sir Siegfried, have seen naught of the games which the hand of Gunther here hath won?"

To this Hagen of the Burgundian land made answer. He spake: "Ye have made us sad of mind, my lady. Siegfried, the good knight, was by the ship when the lord of the Rhineland won from you the games. He knoweth naught thereof."

"Well is me of this tale," spake Siegfried, the knight, "that your pride hath been brought thus low, and that there doth live a wight who hath the power to be your master. Now, O noble maiden, must ye follow us hence to the Rhine."

Then spake the fair-fashioned maid: "That may not be. First must my kith and liegemen learn of this. Certes, I may not so lightly void my lands; my dearest friends must first be fetched."

Then bade she messengers ride on every side. She called her friends, her kinsmen, and her men-at-arms and begged them come without delay to Isenstein, and bade them all be given lordly and rich apparel. Daily, early and late, they rode in troops to Brunhild's castle.

"Welaway," cried Hagen, "what have we done! We may ill abide the coming of fair Brunhild's men. If now they come into this land in force, then hath the noble maid been born to our great rue. The will of the queen is unknown to us; what if she be so wroth that we be lost?"

Then the stalwart Siegfried spake: "Of that I'll have care. I'll not let hap that which ye fear. I'll bring you help hither to this land, from chosen knights the which till now ye have not known. Ye must not ask about me; I will fare hence. Meanwhile may God preserve your honor. I'll return eftsoon and bring you a thousand men, the very best of knights that I have ever known."

"Pray tarry not too long," spake then the king; "of your help we be justly glad."

He answered: "In a few short days I'll come again. Tell ye to Brunhild, that ye've sent me hence."

ENDNOTES:

- (1) "Palaces". See Adventure III, note 7.
- (2) "Surcoat", which here translates the M.H.G. "wafenhemde", is a light garment of cloth or silk worn above the armor.
- (3) "Azagouc". See Zazamanc, Adventure VI, note 2. This strophe is evidently a late interpolation, as it contradicts the description given above.

(4) Weights. The M.H.G. "messe" (Lat. "masse") is just as indefinite as the English expression. It was a mass or lump of any metal, probably determined by the size of the melting-pot.

ADVENTURE VIII (1)

How Siegfried Fared To His Men-At-Arms, the Nibelungs.

Through the gate Siegfried hied him in his Cloak of Darkness down to the sand, where he found a skiff. Secretly the son of Siegmund embarked and drove it quickly hence, as though the wind did blow it on. None saw the steersman; the bark fared fast, impelled by Siegfried's mighty strength. They weened a seldom strong wind did drive it on. Nay, it was rowed by Siegfried, the son of Siegelind, the fair. In the time of a day and night with might and main he reached a land full hundred rests (2) away, or more. The people hight Nibelungs, where he owned the mighty hoard. The hero rowed alone to a broad isle, where the lusty knight now beached the boat and made it fast full soon. To a hill he hied him, upon which stood a castle, and sought here lodgment, as way-worn travelers do. He came first to a gateway that stood fast locked. In sooth they guarded well their honor, as men still do. The stranger now gan knock upon the door, the which was closely guarded. There within he saw a giant standing, who kept the castle and at whose side lay at all times his arms. He spake: "Who is it who doth knock so rudely on the gate?"

Then bold Siegfried changed his voice and spake: "I am a knight; do up the door, else will I enrage many a one outside to-day, who would liefer lie soft and take his ease."

When Siegfried thus spake, it irked the warder. Meanwhile the giant had donned his armor and placed his helm upon his head. Quickly the mighty man snatched up his shield and opened wide the gate. How fiercely he ran at Siegfried and asked, how he durst wake so many valiant men? Huge blows were dealt out by his hand. Then the lordly stranger gan defend him, but with an iron bar the warder shattered his shield-plates. Then was the hero in dire need. Siegfried gan fear a deal his death, when the warder struck such mighty blows. Enow his master Siegfried loved him for this cause. They strove so sore that all the castle rang and the sound was heard in Nibelung's hall. He overcame the warder and bound him, too.

The tale was noised abroad in all the Nibelungs' land. Alberich, the bold, a savage dwarf, heard the fierce struggle through the mountain. He armed him quick and ran to where he found the noble stranger, as he bound the mighty giant. Full wroth was Alberich and strong enow. On his body he bare helmet and rings of mail and in his hand a heavy scourge of gold. Swift and hard he ran to where Siegfried stood. Seven heavy knobs (3) hung down in front, with which he smote so fiercely the shield upon the bold man's arm, that it brake in parts. The stately stranger came in danger of his life. From his hand he flung the broken shield and

thrust into the sheath a sword, the which was long. He would not strike his servant dead, but showed his courtly breeding as his knightly virtue bade him. He rushed at Alberich and with his powerful hands he seized the gray-haired man by the beard. So roughly he pulled his beard, that he screamed aloud. The tugging of the youthful knight hurt Alberich sore.

Loud cried the valiant dwarf: "Now spare my life. And might I be the vassal of any save one knight, to whom I swore an oath that I would own him as my lord, I'd serve you till my death." So spake the cunning (4) man.

He then bound Alberich as he had the giant afore. Full sore the strength of Siegfried hurt him. The dwarf gan ask: "How are ye named?"

"My name is Siegfried," he replied; "I deemed ye knew me well."

"Well is me of these tidings," spake Alberich, the dwarf. "Now have I noted well the knightly deeds, through which ye be by right the sovran of the land. I'll do whatso ye bid, and ye let me live."

Then spake Sir Siegfried: "Go quickly now and bring me the best of knights we have, a thousand Nibelungs, that they may see me here."

Why he wanted this, none heard him say. He loosed the bonds of

Alberich and the giant. Then ran Alberich swift to where he found the knights. In fear he waked the Nibelung men. He spake: "Up now, ye heroes, ye must go to Siegfried."

From their beds they sprang and were ready in a trice. A thousand doughty knights soon stood well clad. They hied them to where they saw Sir Siegfried stand. Then was done a fair greeting, in part by deeds. Great store of tapers were now lit up; they proffered him mulled wine. (5) He gave them thanks that they were come so soon. He spake: "Ye must away with me across the flood."

Full ready for this he found the heroes brave and good. Well thirty hundred men were come eftsoon, from whom he chose a thousand of the best. Men brought them their helmets and other arms, for he would lead them to Brunhild's land. He spake: "Ye good knights, this will I tell you, ye must wear full costly garments there at court, for many lovely dames shall gaze upon us. Therefore must ye deck yourselves with goodly weeds."

Early on a morn they started on their way. What a speedy journey Siegfried won! They took with them good steeds and lordly harness, and thus they came in knightly wise to Brunhild's land. The fair maids stood upon the battlements. Then spake the queen: "Knoweth any, who they be whom I see sailing yonder far out upon the sea? They have rich sails e'en whiter than the snow."

Quoth the king of the Rhineland: "They're men of mine, the which

I left hard by here on the way. I had them sent for, and now they be come, my lady." All eyes were fixed upon the lordly strangers.

Then one spied Siegfried standing at his vessel's prow in lordly weeds and many other men. The queen spake: "Sir King, pray tell me, shall I receive the strangers or shall I deny them greetings?"

He spake: "Ye must go to meet them out before the palace, that they may well perceive how fain we be to see them here."

Then the queen did as the king advised her. She marked out Siegfried with her greetings from the rest. Men purveyed them lodgings and took in charge their trappings. So many strangers were now come to the land, that everywhere they jostled Brunhild's bands. Now would the valiant men fare home to Burgundy.

Then spake the queen: "My favor would I bestow on him who could deal out to the king's guests and mine my silver and gold, of which I have such store."

To this Dankwart, King Giselher's liegeman, answered: "Most noble queen," spake the brave knight, "let me but wield the keys. I trow to deal it out in fitting wise; whatso of blame I gain, let be mine own." That he was bountiful, he made appear full well.

When now Sir Hagen's brother took the keys in charge, the hero's hand did proffer many a costly gift. He who craved a mark (6) received such store that all the poor might lead a merry life. Full hundred pounds he gave, nor did he stop to count. Enow walked before the hall in rich attire, who never had worn afore such lordly dress. Full sore it rued the queen when this she heard. She spake: "Sir King, I fain would have your aid, lest your chamberlain leave naught of all my store of dress; he squandereth eke my gold. If any would forfend this, I'd be his friend for aye. He giveth such royal gifts, the knight must ween, forsooth, that I have sent for death. I would fain use it longer and trow well myself to waste that which my father left me." No queen as yet hath ever had so bounteous a chamberlain.

Then spake Hagen of Troneg: "My lady, be it told you that the king of the Rhineland hath such great store of gold and robes to give, that we have no need to carry hence aught of Brunhild's weeds."

"Nay, and ye love me," spake the queen, "let me fill twenty traveling chests with gold and silk as well, the which my hand shall give, when we are come across to Gunther's land."

Men filled her chests with precious stones, the while her chamberlains stood by. She would not trust the duty to Giselher's men. Gunther and Hagen began to laugh thereat.

Then spake the queen: "With whom shall I leave my lands? This my

hand and yours must first decree."

Quoth the noble king: "Now bid draw near whom ye deem fit and we will make him steward."

The lady spied near by one of her highest kin (it was her mother's brother); to him the maiden spake: "Now let be commended to your care my castles and my lands, till that King Gunther's hand rule here."

Then twenty hundred of her men she chose, who should fare with her hence to Burgundy, together with those thousand warriors from the Nibelung land. They dressed their journey; one saw them riding forth upon the sand. Six and eighty dames they took along and thereto a hundred maids, their bodies passing fair. No longer now they tarried, for they were fain to get them hence. Ho, what great wail was made by those they left at home! In courtly wise she voided thus her land. She kissed her nearest kinsmen who were found at court. After a fair leave-taking they journeyed to the sea. To her fatherland the lady nevermore returned. Many kinds of games were seen upon the way; pastimes they had galore. A real sea breeze did help them on their voyage. Thus they fared forth from the land fully merrily. She would not let her husband court her on the way; this pleasure was deferred until their wedding-tide in the castle, their home, at Worms, to which in good time she came right joyfully with all her knights.

ENDNOTES:

- (1) Adventure VIII. This whole episode, in which Siegfried fetches men to aid Gunther in case of attempted treachery on Brunhild's part, is of late origin and has no counterpart in the older versions. It is a further development of Siegfried's fight in which he slew Schilbung and Nibelung and became the ruler of the Nibelung land. The fight with Alberich is simply a repetition of the one in the former episode.
- (2) "Rest" (M.H.G. "rast"), originally 'repose', then used as a measure of distance, as here.
- (3) "Knobs", round pieces of metal fastened to the scourge.
- (4) "Cunning" is to be taken here in the Biblical sense of 'knowing'. The M.H.G. "listig" which it here translates, denotes 'skilled' or 'learned' in various arts and is a standing epithet of dwarfs.
- (5) "Mulled wine" translates M.H.G. "lutertranc", a claret mulled with herbs and spice and left to stand until clear.
- (6) "Mark". See Adventure V, note 5.

ADVENTURE IX

How Siegfried Was Sent To Worms.

When they had thus fared on their way full nine days, Hagen of Troneg spake: "Now mark ye what I say. We wait too long with

the tidings for Worms upon the Rhine. Our messengers should be e'en now in Burgundy."

Then spake King Gunther: "Ye have told me true, and none be more fitting for this trip than ye, friend Hagen; now ride ye to my land. None can acquaint them better with our journey home to court."

To this Hagen made answer: "I am no fit envoy. Let me play chamberlan, I'll stay with the ladies upon the flood and guard their robes, until we bring them to the Burgundian land. Bid Siegfried bear the message, he knoweth how to do it well with his mighty strength. If he refuse you the journey, then must ye in courtly and gentle wise pray him of the boon for your sister's sake."

Gunther sent now for the warrior, who came to where he stood. He spake: "Sith we be now nearing my lands at home, it behooveth me to send a messenger to the dear sister of mine and to my mother, too, that we draw near the Rhine. This I pray you, Siegfried; now do my will, that I may requite it to you ever," spake the good knight.

Siegfried, the passing bold man, however said him nay, till Gunther gan beseech him sore. He spake: "Ye must ride for my sake and for Kriemhild's too, the comely maiden, so that the royal maid requite it, as well as I."

When Siegfried heard these words, full ready was the knight.

"Now bid me what ye will; naught shall be withheld. I will do it gladly for the fair maid's sake. Why should I refuse her whom I bear in heart? Whatso ye command for love of her, shall all be done."

"Then tell my mother Uta, the queen, that we be of lofty mood upon this voyage. Let my brothers know how we have fared. These tidings must ye let our friends hear, too. Hide naught from my fair sister, give her mine and Brunhild's greetings. Greet the retainers, too, and all my men. How well I have ended that for which my heart hath ever striven! And tell Ortwin, the dear nephew of mine, that he bid seats be built at Worms along the Rhine. Let my other kinsmen know that I am willed to hold with Brunhild a mighty wedding feast. And tell my sister, when she hath heard that I be come with my guests to the land, that she give fair greeting to my bride. For that I will ever render Kriemhild service."

The good Lord Siegfried soon took leave of Lady Brunhild, as beseemed him well, and of all her train; then rode he to the Rhine. Never might there be a better envoy in this world. He rode with four and twenty men-at-arms to Worms; he came without the king. When that was noised about, the courtiers all were grieved; they feared their master had been slain.

Then they dismounted from their steeds, high stood their mood.

Giselher, the good young king, came soon to meet them, and Gernot

his brother, too. How quickly then he spake, when he saw not
Gunther at Siegfried's side: "Be welcome, Siegfried; pray let me
know where ye have left the king my brother? The prowess of
Brunhild, I ween, hath ta'en him from us. Great scathe had her
haughty love then brought us."

"Let be this fear. My battle-comrade sendeth greetings to you
and to his kin. I left him safe and sound. He sent me on ahead,
that I might be his messenger with tidings hither to this land.
Pray have a care, however that may hap, that I may see the queen
and your sister, too, for I must let them hear what message
Gunther and Brunhild have sent them. Both are in high estate."

Then spake Giselher, the youth: "Now must ye go to her, for ye
have brought my much of joy. She is mickle fearful for my
brother. I'll answer that the maid will see you gladly."

Then spake Sir Siegfried: "Howsoever I may serve her, that shall
be gladly done, in faith. Who now will tell the ladies that I
would hie me thither?"

Giselher then became the messenger, the stately man. The doughty
knight spake to his mother and his sister too, when that he saw
them both: "To us is come Siegfried, the hero from Netherland;
him my brother Gunther hath sent hither to the Rhine. He
bringeth the news of how it standeth with the king. Pray let him
therefore come to court. He'll tell you the right tidings
straight from Isenland."

As yet the noble ladies were acquaint with fear, but now for their weeds they sprang and dressed them and bade Sir Siegfried come to court. This he did full gladly, for he was fain to see them. Kriemhild, the noble maid, addressed him fair: "Be welcome, Sir Siegfried, most worshipful knight. Where is my brother Gunther, the noble and mighty king? We ween that we have lost him through Brunhild's strength. Woe is me, poor maid, that ever I was born."

Then spake the daring knight: "Now give me an envoy's guerdon, ye passing fair ladies, ye do weep without a cause. I do you to wit, I left him safe and sound. They have sent me with the tidings to you both. He and his bride do send you kindly greetings and a kinsman's love, O noble queen. Now leave off your weeping, they'll come full soon."

In many a day she had not heard a tale so glad. With her snow-white hem she wiped the tears from her pretty eyes and began to thank the messenger for the tidings, which now were come. Thus her great sorrow and her weeping were taken away. She bade the messenger be seated; full ready he was for this. Then spake the winsome maid: "I should not rue it, should I give you as an envoy's meed my gold. For that ye are too rich, but I will be your friend in other ways."

"And had I alone," spake he, "thirty lands, yet would I gladly receive gifts from your fair hand."

Then spake the courtly maid: "It shall be done." She bade her chamberlain go fetch the meed for tidings. Four and twenty arm-rings, set with goodly gold, she gave him as his meed. So stood the hero's mood that he would not retain them, but gave them straightway to her nearest maidens, he found within the bower. Full kindly her mother offered him her service. "I am to tell you the tale," then spake the valiant man, "of what the king doth pray you, when he cometh to the Rhine. If ye perform that, my lady, he'll ever hold you in his love. I heard him crave that ye should give fair greetings to his noble guests and grant him the boon, that ye ride to meet him out in front of Worms upon the strand. This ye are right truly admonished by the king to do."

Then spake the winsome maid: "For this am I full ready. In whatsoever wise I can serve the king, that will I not refuse; with a kinsman's love it shall be done." Her color heightened for very joy. Never was the messenger of any prince received more fair. The lady would have kissed him, had she but dared. How lovingly he parted from the dames!

The men of Burgundy then did as Siegfried counseled. Sindolt and Hunolt and Rumolt, the knight, must needs be busy with the work of putting up the seats outside of Worms upon the strand. The royal stewards, too, were found at work. Ortwin and Gere would not desist, but sent to fetch their friends on every side, and made known to them the feasting that was to be. The many comely maids arrayed themselves against the feast. Everywhere the

palace and the walls were decked out for the guests. Gunther's hall was passing well purveyed for the many strangers. Thus began full merrily this splendid feast.

From every side along the highways of the land pricked now the kinsmen of these three kings, who had been called that they might wait upon those who were coming home. Then from the presses great store of costly weeds was taken. Soon tidings were brought that men saw Brunhild's kinsmen ride along. Great jostling then arose from the press of folk in the Burgundian land. Ho, what bold knights were found on either side!

Then spake fair Kriemhild: "Ye maids of mine, who would be with me at the greeting, seek out from the guests the very best of robes; then will praise and honor be given us by the guests."

Then came the warriors, too, and bade the lordly saddles of pure red gold be carried forth, on which the ladies should ride from Worms down to the Rhine. Better trappings might there never be. Ho, what bright gold did sparkle on the jet-black palfreys! From their bridles there gleamed forth many a precious stone. The golden stepping-blocks were brought and placed on shining carpets for the ladies, who were gay of mood. As I have said, the palfreys now stood ready in the courtyard for the noble maids. One saw the steeds wear narrow martingales of the best of silk, of which tale might be told. Six and eighty ladies who wore fillets (1) in their hair were seen come forth. The fair ones came to Kriemhild wearing glittering robes. Then followed many a comely maid in brave attire, fifty and four from the Burgundian

land. They were eke the best that might anywhere be found. Men saw them walking with their flaxen hair and shining ribbons. That which the king desired was done with zeal. They wore before the stranger knights rich cloth of silk, the best that could be found, and so many a goodly robe, which well befit their ample beauty. One found there many clothes of sable and ermine fur. Many an arm and hand was well adorned with bracelets over the silken sleeves, which they should wear. None might tell the story of this tiring to the end. Many a hand played with well-wrought girdles, rich and long, above gay colored robes, over costly ferran (2) skirts of silken cloth of Araby. In high spirits were these maids of noble birth. Clasps (3) were sewed in lovely wise upon the dress of many a comely maid. She had good cause to rue it, whose bright color did not shine in contrast to her weeds. No kingly race hath now such fair retainers. When now the lovely maids had donned the garments they should wear, there then drew near a mickle band of high-mettled champions. Together with their shields they carried many an ashen spear.

ENDNOTES:

- (1) "Fillets" were worn only by married women.
- (2) "Ferran", a gray colored cloth of silk and wool; from O.F. "ferrandine".
- (3) "Clasps" or "brooches" were used to fasten the dresses in front.

ADVENTURE X

How Brunhild Was Received At Worms.

Across the Rhine men saw the king with his guests in many bands pricking to the shore. One saw the horse of many a maiden, too, led by the bridle. All those who should give them welcome were ready now. When those of Isenland and Siegfried's Nibelung men were come across in boats, they hastened to the shore (not idle were their hands), where the kindred of the king were seen upon the other bank. Now hear this tale, too, of the queen, the noble Uta, how she herself rode hither with the maidens from the castle. Then many a knight and maid became acquaint. Duke Gere led Kriemhild's palfrey by the bridle till just outside the castle gate. Siegfried, the valiant knight, must needs attend her further. A fair maid was she! Later the noble dame requited well this deed. Ortwin, the bold, rode by Lady Uta's side, and many knights and maidens rode in pairs. Well may we aver that so many dames were never seen together at such stately greeting. Many a splendid joust was ridden by worshipful knights (not well might it be left undone) afore Kriemhild, the fair, down to the ships. Then the fair-fashioned ladies were lifted from the palfreys. The king was come across and many a worthy guest. Ho, what stout lances brake before the ladies' eyes! One heard the clash of many hurtling shields. Ho, what costly bucklers rang loudly as they closed! The lovely fair stood by the shore as Gunther and his guests alighted from the boats; he himself led

Brunhild by the hand. Bright gems and gleaming armor shone forth in rivalry. Lady Kriemhild walked with courtly breeding to meet Dame Brunhild and her train. White hands removed the chaplets, (1) as these twain kissed each other; through deference this was done.

Then in courteous wise the maiden Kriemhild spake: "Be ye welcome in these lands of ours, to me and to my mother and to all the loyal kin we have."

Low bows were made and the ladies now embraced full oft. Such loving greeting hath one never heard, as the two ladies, Dame Uta and her daughter, gave the bride; upon her sweet mouth they kissed her oft. When now Brunhild's ladies all were come to land, stately knights took many a comely woman by the hand in loving wise. The fair-fashioned maids were seen to stand before the lady Brunhild. Long time elapsed or ever the greetings all were done; many a rose-red mouth was kissed, in sooth. Still side by side the noble princesses stood, which liked full well the doughty warriors for to see. They who had heard men boast afore that such beauty had ne'er been seen as these two dames possessed, spied now with all their eyes and must confess the truth. Nor did one see upon their persons cheats of any kind. Those who wot how to judge of women and lovely charms, praised Gunther's bride for beauty; but the wise had seen more clear and spake, that one must give Kriemhild the palm before Brunhild.

Maids and ladies now drew near each other. Many a comely dame

was seen arrayed full well. Silken tents and many rich pavilions stood hard by, the which quite filled the plain of Worms. The kinsmen of the king came crowding around, when Brunhild and Kriemhild and with them all the dames were bidden go to where shade was found. Thither the knights from the Burgundian land escorted them.

Now were the strangers come to horse, and shields were pierced in many royal jousts. From the plain the dust gan rise, as though the whole land had burst forth into flames. There many a knight became well known as champion. Many a maiden saw what there the warriors plied. Methinks, Sir Siegfried and his knights rode many a turn afore the tents. He led a thousand stately Nibelungs.

Then Hagen of Troneg came, as the king had counseled, and parted in gentle wise the jousting, that the fair maids be not covered with the dust, the which the strangers willingly obeyed. Then spake Sir Gernot: "Let stand the steeds till the air grow cooler, for ye must be full ready when that the king will ride. Meanwhile let us serve the comely dames before the spacious hall."

When now over all the plain the jousts had ceased, the knights, on pastime bent, hied them to the ladies under many a high pavilion in the hope of lofty joys. There they passed the hours until they were minded to ride away.

Just at eventide, when the sun was setting and the air grew chill, no longer they delayed, but man and woman hastened toward the castle. Many a comely maiden was caressed with loving glances. In jousting great store of clothes were torn by good knights, by the high-mettled warriors, after the custom of the land, until the king dismounted by the hall. Valiant heroes helped the ladies, as is their wont. The noble queens then parted; Lady Uta and her daughter went with their train to a spacious hall, where great noise of merriment was heard on every side.

The seats were now made ready, for the king would go to table with his guests. At his side men saw fair Brunhild stand, wearing the crown in the king's domain. Royal now she was in sooth. Good broad tables, with full many benches for the men, were set with vitaille, as we are told. Little they lacked that they should have! At the king's table many a lordly guest was seen. The chamberlains of the host bare water forth in basins of ruddy gold. It were but in vain, if any told you that men were ever better served at princes' feasts: I would not believe you that.

Before the lord of the Rhineland took the water to wash his hands, Siegfried did as was but meet, he minded him by his troth of what he had promised, or ever he had seen Brunhild at home in Isenland. He spake: "Ye must remember how ye swore me by your hand, that when Lady Brunhild came to this land, ye would give me your sister to wife. Where be now these oaths? I have suffered

mickle hardship on our trip."

Then spake the king to his guest: "Rightly have ye minded me.
Certes my hand shall not be perjured. I'll bring it to pass as
best I can."

Then they bade Kriemhild go to court before the king. She came
with her fair maidens to the entrance of the hall. At this Sir
Giselher sprang down the

steps. "Now bid these maidens turn again. None save my sister
alone shall be here by the king."

Then they brought Kriemhild to where the king was found. There
stood noble knights from many princes' lands; throughout the
broad hall one bade them stand quite still. By this time Lady
Brunhild had stepped to the table, too. Then spake King Gunther:
"Sweet sister mine, by thy courtesie redeem my oath. I swore to
give thee to a knight, and if he become thy husband, then hast
thou done my will most loyally."

Quoth the noble maid: "Dear brother mine, ye must not thus
entreat me. Certes I'll be ever so, that whatever ye command,
that shall be done. I'll gladly pledge my troth to him whom ye,
my lord, do give me to husband."

Siegfried here grew red at the glance of friendly eyes. The
knight then proffered his service to Lady Kriemhild. Men bade

them take their stand at each other's side within the ring and asked if she would take the stately man. In maidenly modesty she was a deal abashed, yet such was Siegfried's luck and fortune, that she would not refuse him out of hand. The noble king of Netherland vowed to take her, too, to wife. When he and the maid had pledged their troths, Siegfried's arm embraced eftsoon the winsome maid. Then the fair queen was kissed before the knights. The courtiers parted, when that had happed; on the bench over against the king Siegfried was seen to take his scat with Kriemhild. Thither many a man accompanied him as servitor; men saw the Nibelungs walk at Siegfried's side.

The king had seated him with Brunhild, the maid, when she espied Kriemhild (naught had ever irked her so) sitting at Siegfried's side. She began to weep and hot tears coursed down fair cheeks. Quoth the lord of the land: "What aileth you, my lady, that ye let bright eyes grow dim? Ye may well rejoice; my castles and my land and many a stately vassal own your sway."

"I have good cause to weep," spake the comely maid; "my heart is sore because of thy sister, whom I see sitting so near thy vassal's side. I must ever weep that she be so demeaned."

Then spake the King Gunther: "Ye would do well to hold your peace. At another time I will tell you the tale of why I gave Siegfried my sister unto wife. Certes she may well live ever happily with the knight."

She spake: "I sorrow ever for her beauty and her courtesie. I
fain would flee, and I wist whither I might; go, for never will I
lie close by your side, unless ye tell me through what cause
Kriemhild be Siegfried's bride."

Then spake the noble king: "I'll do it you to wit; he hath
castles and broad domains, as well as I. Know of a truth, he is
a mighty king, therefore did I give him the peerless maid to
love."

But whatsoever the king might say, she remained full sad of mood.

Now many a good knight hastened from the board. Their hurtling
waxed so passing hard, that the whole castle rang. But the host
was weary of his guests. Him-thought that he might lie more soft
at his fair lady's side. As yet he had not lost at all the hope
that much of joy might hap to him through her. Lovingly he began
to gaze on Lady Brunhild. Men bade the guests leave off their
knightly games, for the king and his wife would go to bed.

Brunhild and Kriemhild then met before the stairway of the hall,
as yet without the hate of either. Then came their retinue.

Noble chamberlains delayed not, but brought them lights. The
warriors, the liegemen of the two kings, then parted on either
side and many of the knights were seen to walk with Siegfried.

The lords were now come to the rooms where they should lie. Each
of the twain thought to conquer by love his winsome dame. This
made them blithe of mood. Siegfried's pleasure on that night was

passing great. When Lord Siegfried lay at Kriemhild's side and with his noble love caressed the high-born maid so tenderly, she grew as dear to him as life, so that not for a thousand other women would he have given her alone. No more I'll tell how Siegfried wooed his wife; hear now the tale of how King Gunther lay by Lady Brunhild's side. The stately knight had often lain more soft by other dames. The courtiers now had left, both maid and man. The chamber soon was locked; he thought to caress the lovely maid. Forsooth the time was still far off, ere she became his wife. In a smock of snowy linen she went to bed. Then thought the noble knight: "Now have I here all that I have ever craved in all my days." By rights she must needs please him through her comeliness. The noble king gan shroud the lights and then the bold knight hied him to where the lady lay. He laid him at her side, and great was his joy when in his arms he clasped the lovely fair. Many loving caresses he might have given, had but the noble dame allowed it. She waxed so wroth that he was sore a-troubled; he weened that they were lovers, but he found here hostile hate. She spake: "Sir Knight, pray give this over, which now ye hope. Forsooth this may not hap, for I will still remain a maid, until I hear the tale; now mark ye that."

Then Gunther grew wroth; he struggled for her love and rumbled all her clothes. The high-born maid then seized her girdle, the which was a stout band she wore around her waist, and with it she wrought the king great wrong enow. She bound him hand and foot and bare him to a nail and hung him on the wall. She forbade him love, sith he disturbed her sleep. Of a truth he came full nigh

to death through her great strength.

Then he who had weened to be the master, began to plead. "Now loose my bands, most noble queen. I no longer trow to conquer you, fair lady, and full seldom will I lie so near your side."

She reeked not how he felt, for she lay full soft. There he had to hang all night till break of day, until the bright morn shone through the casements. Had he ever had great strength, it was little seen upon him now.

"Now tell me, Sir Gunther, would that irk you aught," the fair maid spake, "and your servants found you bound by a woman's hand?"

Then spake the noble knight: "That would serve you ill; nor would it gain me honor," spake the doughty man. "By your courtesie, pray let me lie now by your side. Sith that my love mislike you so, I will not touch your garment with my hands."

Then she loosed him soon and let him rise. To the bed again, to the lady he went and laid him down so far away, that thereafter he full seldom touched her comely weeds. Nor would she have allowed it.

Then their servants came and brought them new attire, of which great store was ready for them against the morn. However merry men made, the lord of the land was sad enow, albeit he wore a

crown that day. As was the usage which they had and which they kept by right, Gunther and Brunhild no longer tarried, but hied them to the minster, where mass was sung. Thither, too, Sir Siegfried came and a great press arose among the crowd. In keeping with their royal rank, there was ready for them all that they did need, their crowns and robes as well. Then they were consecrated. When this was done, all four were seen to stand joyful 'neath their crowns. Many young squires, six hundred or better, were now girt with sword in honor of the kings, as ye must know. Great joy rose then in the Burgundian land; one heard spear-shafts clashing in the hands of the sworded knights. There at the windows the fair maids sat; they saw shining afore them the gleam of many a shield. But the king had sundered him from his liegemen; whatso others plied, men saw him stand full sad. Unlike stood his and Siegfried's mood. The noble knight and good would fain have known what ailed the king. He hasted to him and gan ask: "Pray let me know how ye have fared this night, Sir King."

Then spake the king to his guest: "Shame and disgrace have I won; I have brought a fell devil to my house and home. When I weened to love her, she bound me sore; she bare me to a nail and hung me high upon a wall. There I hung affrighted all night until the day, or ever she unbound me. How softly she lay bedded there! In hope of thy pity do I make plaint to thee as friend to friend."

Then spake stout Siegfried: "That rueth me in truth. I'll do you

this to wit; and ye allow me without distrust, I'll contrive that she lie by you so near this night, that she'll nevermore withhold from you her love."

After all his hardships Gunther liked well this speech. Sir Siegfried spake again: "Thou mayst well be of good cheer. I ween we fared unlike last night. Thy sister Kriemhild is dearer to me than life; the Lady Brunhild must become thy wife to-night. I'll come to thy chamber this night, so secretly in my Cloud Cloak, that none may note at all my arts. Then let the chamberlains betake them to their lodgings and I'll put out the lights in the pages' hands, whereby thou mayst know that I be within and that I'll gladly serve thee. I'll tame for time thy wife, that thou mayst have her love to-night, or else I'll lose my life."

"Unless be thou embrace my dear lady," spake then the king, "I shall be glad, if thou do to her as thou dost list. I could endure it well, an' thou didst take her life. In sooth she is a fearful wife."

"I pledge upon my troth," quoth Siegfried, "that I will not embrace her. The fair sister of thine, she is to me above all maids that I have ever seen."

Gunther believed full well what Siegfried spake.

From the knightly sports there came both joy and woe; but men forbade the hurtling and the shouting, since now the ladies were

to hie them to the hall. The grooms-in-waiting bade the people stand aside; the court was cleared of steeds and folk. A bishop led each of the ladies, as they should go to table in the presence of the kings. Many a stately warrior followed to the seats. In fair hope the king sate now full merrily; well he thought on that which Siegfried had vowed to do. This one day thought him as long as thirty days, for all his thoughts were bent upon his lady's love. He could scarce abide the time to leave the board. Now men let fair Brunhild and Kriemhild, too, both go to their rest. Ho, what doughty knights were seen to walk before the queens!

The Lord Siegfried sate in loving wise by his fair wife, in bliss without alloy. With her snow-white hands she fondled his, till that he vanished from before her eyes, she wist not when. When now she no longer spied him, as she toyed, the queen spake to his followers: "Much this wondereth me, whither the king be gone. Who hath taken his hands from mine?"

She spake no other word, but he was gone to where he found many grooms of the chamber stand with lights. These he gan snuff out in the pages' hands. Thus Gunther knew that it was Siegfried. Well wist he what he would; he bade the maids and ladies now withdraw. When that was done, the mighty king himself made fast the door and nimbly shoved in place two sturdy bolts. Quickly then he hid the lights behind the hangings of the bed. Stout Siegfried and the maiden now began a play (for this there was no help) which was both lief and loth to Gunther. Siegfried laid

him close by the high-born maid. She spake: "Now, Gunther, let that be, and it be lief to you, that ye suffer not hardship as afore."

Then the lady hurt bold Siegfried sore. He held his peace and answered not a whit. Gunther heard well, though he could not see his friend a bit, that they plied not secret things, for little ease they had upon the bed. Siegfried bare him as though he were Gunther, the mighty king. In his arms he clasped the lovely maid. She cast him from the bed upon a bench near by, so that his head struck loudly against the stool. Up sprang the valiant man with all his might; fain would he try again. When he thought now to subdue her, she hurt him sore. Such defense, I ween, might nevermore be made by any wife.

When he would not desist, up sprang the maid. "Ye shall not rumple thus my shift so white. Ye are a clumsy churl and it shall rue you sore, I'll have you to know fall well," spake the comely maid. In her arms she grasped the peerless knight; she weened to bind him, as she had done the king, that she might have her case upon the bed. The lady avenged full sore, that he had rumped thus her clothes. What availed his mickle force and his giant strength? She showed the knight her masterly strength of limb; she carried him by force (and that must needs be) and pressed him rudely 'twixt a clothes-press and the wall.

"Alas," so thought the knight, "if now I lose my life at a maiden's hands, then may all wives hereafter bear towards their

husbands haughty mien, who would never do it else."

The king heard it well and feared him for his liegeman's life.

Siegfried was sore ashamed; wrathful he waxed and with surpassing

strength he set himself against her and tried it again with Lady

Brunhild in fearful wise. It thought the king full long, before

he conquered her. She pressed his hands, till from her strength

the blood gushed forth from out the nails: this irked the hero.

Therefore he brought the highborn maiden to the pass that she

gave over her unruly will, which she asserted there afore. The

king heard all, albeit not a word he spake. Siegfried pressed

her against the bed, so that she shrieked aloud. Passing sore

his strength did hurt her. She grasped the girdle around her

waist and would fain have bound him, but his hand prevented it in

such a wise that her limbs and all her body cracked. Thus the

strife was parted and she became King Gunther's wife.

She spake: "Most noble king, pray spare my life. I'll do thee

remedy for whatso I have done thee. I'll no longer struggle

against thy noble love, for I have learned full well that thou

canst make thee master over women."

Siegfried let the maiden be and stepped away, as though he would

do off his clothes. From her hand he drew a golden finger ring,

without that she wist it, the noble queen. Thereto he took her

girdle, a good stout band. I know not if he did that for very

haughtiness. He gave it to his wife and rued it sore in after

time.

Then lay Gunther and the fair maid side by side. He played the lover, as beseemed him, and thus she must needs give over wrath and shame. From his embrace a little pale she grew. Ho, how her great strength failed through love! Now was she no stronger than any other wife. He caressed her lovely form in lover's wise. Had she tried her strength again, what had that availed? All this had Gunther wrought in her by his love. How right lovingly she lay beside him in bridal joy until the dawn of day!

Now was Sir Siegfried gone again to where he was given fair greetings by a woman fashioned fair. He turned aside the question she had thought to put and hid long time from her what he had brought, until she ruled as queen within his land. How little he refused to give her what he should!

On the morn the host was far cheerier of mood than he had been afore. Through this the joy of many a noble man was great in all his lands, whom he had bidden to his court, and to whom he proffered much of service. The wedding feast now lasted till the fourteenth day, so that in all this while the sound never died away of the many joys which there they plied. The cost to the king was rated high. The kinsmen of the noble host gave gifts in his honor to the strolling folk, as the king commanded: vesture and ruddy gold, steeds and silver, too. Those who there craved gifts departed hence full merrily. Siegfried, the lord from Netherland, with a thousand of his men, gave quite away the garments they had brought with them to the Rhine and steeds and

saddles, too. Full well they wot how to live in lordly wise.

Those who would home again thought the time too long till the
rich gifts had all been made. Nevermore have guests been better
eased. Thus ended the wedding feast; Gunther, the knight, would
have it so.

ENDNOTES:

(1) "Chaplet" (O.F. "chaplet", dim. of "chapel", M.H.G.

"schapel" or "schapelin") or wreath was the headdress
especially of unmarried girls, the hair being worn flowing.

It was often of flowers or leaves, but not infrequently of
gold and silver. (See Weinhold, "Deutsche Frauen im
Mittelalter", i, 387.)