

SIEGFRIED & THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

BY RICHARD WAGNER
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY ARTHUR RACKHAM



TRANSLATED BY MARGARET ARMOUR

LONDON  WILLIAM HEINEMANN
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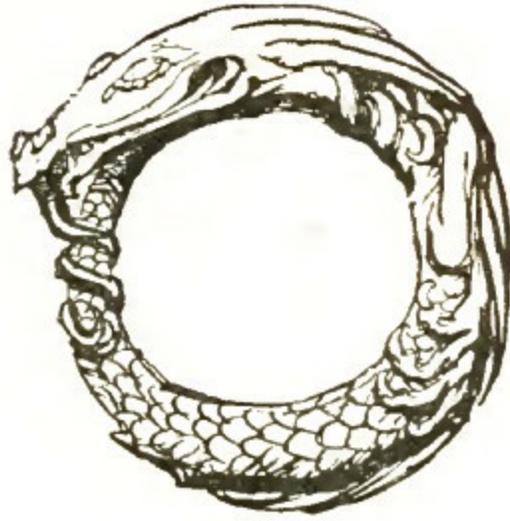
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THE RING OF THE NIBLUNG



THE RHINEGOLD: PRELUDE
THE VALKYRIE: FIRST DAY OF THE TRILOGY
SIEGFRIED: SECOND DAY OF THE TRILOGY
THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS: THIRD DAY OF THE TRILOGY

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SIEGFRIED



CHARACTERS

SIEGFRIED

MIME

THE WANDERER

ALBERICH

FAFNER

ERDA

BRÜNNHILDE

SCENES OF ACTION

I. A CAVE IN A WOOD

II. DEPTHS OF THE WOOD

III. WILD REGION AT THE FOOT OF A ROCKY MOUNTAIN;
AFTERWARDS: SUMMIT OF "BRÜNNHILDE'S ROCK"



THE FIRST ACT

A rocky cavern in a wood, in which stands a naturally formed smith's forge, with big bellows. Mime sits in front of the anvil, busily hammering at a sword.

MIME

[Who has been hammering with a small hammer, stops working.]

Slavery! worry!
Labour all lost!
The strongest sword
That ever I forged,
That the hands of giants
Fitly might wield,
This insolent urchin

For whom it is fashioned
Can snap in two at one stroke,
As if the thing were a toy!

*[Mime throws the sword on the anvil ill-humouredly, and
with his arms akimbo gazes thoughtfully on the ground.]*

There is one sword
That he could not shatter:
Nothung's splinters
Would baffle his strength,
Could I but forge
Those doughty fragments
That all my skill
Cannot weld anew.

Could I but forge the weapon,
Shame and toil would win their reward!

[He sinks further back his head bowed in thought.]

Fafner, the dragon grim,
Dwells in the gloomy wood;
With his gruesome and grisly bulk
The Nibelung hoard
Yonder he guards.

Siegfried, lusty and young,
Would slay him without ado;
The Nibelung's ring
Would then become mine.

The only sword for the deed
Were Nothung, if it were swung
By Siegfried's conquering arm;
And I cannot fashion
Nothung, the sword!

*[He lays the sword in position again, and goes on
hammering in deep dejection.]*

Slavery! worry!
Labour all lost!
The strongest sword
That ever I forged
Will never serve
For that difficult deed.
I beat and I hammer
Only to humour the boy;

He snaps in two what I make,
And scolds if I cease from work.

[He drops his hammer.]

SIEGFRIED

[In rough forester's dress, with a silver horn hung by a chain, bursts in boisterously from the wood. He is leading a big bear by a rope of bast, and urges him towards Mime in wanton fun.]

Hoiho! Hoiho!

[Entering.]

Come on! Come on!
Tear him! Tear him!
The silly smith!

[Mime drops the sword in terror, and takes refuge behind the forge; while Siegfried, shouting with laughter, keeps driving the bear after him.]





Mime at the anvil. See p. 2



MIME

Hence with the beast!
I want not the bear!

SIEGFRIED

I come thus paired
The better to pinch thee;
Bruin, ask for the sword!

MIME

Hey! Let him go!
There lies the weapon;
It was finished to-day.

SIEGFRIED

Then thou art safe for to-day!

[He lets the bear loose and strikes him on the back with the rope.]

Off, Bruin!
I need thee no more.

[The bear runs back into the wood.]

MIME *[Comes trembling from behind the forge.]*

Slay all the bears
Thou canst, and welcome;
But why thus bring the beasts
Home alive?

SIEGFRIED

[Sits down to recover from his laughter.]

For better companions seeking
Than the one who sits at home,
I blew my horn in the wood,
Till the forest glades resounded.
What I asked with the note
Was if some good friend
My glad companion would be.
From the covert came a bear
Who listened to me with growls,
And I liked him better than thee,
Though better friends I shall find.
With a trusty rope
I bridled the beast,
To ask thee, rogue, for the weapon.

[He jumps up and goes towards the anvil.]

MIME

[Takes up the sword to hand it to Siegfried.]

I made the sword keen-edged;
In its sharpness thou wilt rejoice.

[He holds the sword anxiously in his hand; Siegfried snatches it from him.]

What matters an edge keen sharpened,
Unless hard and true the steel?

[Testing the sword.]

Hei! What an idle,
Foolish toy!
Wouldst have this pin
Pass for a sword?

[He strikes it on the anvil, so that the splinters fly about. Mime shrinks back in terror.]

There, take back the pieces,
Pitiful bungler!
'Tis on thy skull
It should have been broken!
Shall such a braggart
Still go on boasting,
Telling of giants
And prowess in battle,
Of deeds of valour,
And dauntless defence?—
A sword true and trusty
Try to forge me,
Praising the skill
He does not possess?
When I take hold
Of what he has hammered,
The rubbish crumbles
At a mere touch!
Were not the wretch
Too mean for my wrath,
I would break him in bits
As well as his work—
The doting fool of a gnome!—
And end the annoyance at once!

[Siegfried throws himself on to a stone seat in a rage. Mime all the time has been cautiously keeping out of his way.]

MIME

Again thou ravest like mad,
Ungrateful and perverse.
If what for him I forge
Is not perfect on the spot,
Too soon the boy forgets
The good things I have made!
Wilt never learn the lesson
Of gratitude, I wonder?
Thou shouldst be glad to obey him
Who always treated thee well.

[Siegfried turns his back on Mime in a bad temper, and sits with his face to the wall.]

Thou dost not like to be told that!

[He stands perplexed, then goes to the hearth in the kitchen.]

But thou wouldst fain be fed.
Wilt eat the meat I have roasted,
Or wouldst thou prefer the broth?
'Twas boiled solely for thee.

[He brings food to Siegfried, who, without turning round, knocks both bowl and meat out of his hand.]

SIEGFRIED

Meat I roast for myself;
Sup thy filthy broth alone!

MIME *[In a wailing voice, as if hurt.]*

This is the reward
Of all my love!
All my care
Is paid for with scorn.
When thou wert a babe
I was thy nurse,

Made the mite clothing
To keep him warm,
Brought thee thy food,
Gave thee to drink,
Kept thee as safe
As I keep my skin;
And when thou wert grown
I waited on thee,
And made a bed
For thy slumber soft.
I fashioned thee toys
And a sounding horn,
Grudging no pains,
Wert thou but pleased.
With counsel wise
I guided thee well,
With mellow wisdom
Training thy mind.
Sitting at home,
I toil and moil;
To heart's desire
Wander thy feet.
Through thee alone worried,
And working for thee,
I wear myself out,
A poor old dwarf!

[Sobbing.]

And for my trouble
The sole reward is
By a hot-tempered boy

[Sobbing.]

To be hated and plagued!





Mime and the infant Siegfried. See p. 8.



SIEGFRIED

[Has turned round again and has quietly watched Mime's face, while the latter, meeting the look, tries timidly to hide his own.]

Thou hast taught me much, Mime,
And many things I have learned;
But what thou most gladly hadst taught me
A lesson too hard has proved—
How to endure thy sight.
When with my food
Or drink thou dost come,
I sup off loathing alone;

When thou dost softly
Make me a bed,
My sleep is broken and bad;
When thou wouldst teach me
How to be wise,
Fain were I deaf and dumb.
If my eyes happen
To fall on thee,
I find all thou doest
Amis and ill-done;
When thou dost stand,
Waddle and walk,
Shamble and shuffle,
With thine eyelids blinking,
By the neck I want
To take the nodder,
And choke the life
From the hateful twitcher.
So much, O Mime, I love thee!
Hast thou such wisdom,
Explain, I pray thee,
A thing I have wondered at:
Though I go roaming
Just to avoid thee,
Why do I always return?
Though I love the beasts
All better than thee—
Tree and bird
And the fish in the brook,
One and all
They are dearer than thou—
How is it I always return?
Of thy wisdom tell me that.

MIME

[Tries to approach him affectionately.]

My child, that ought to show thee
That Mime is dear to thy heart.

SIEGFRIED

I said I could not bear thee;
Forget not that so soon.

MIME

[Recoils, and sits down again apart, opposite Siegfried.]

The wildness that thou shouldst tame
Is the cause, bad boy, of that.
Young ones are always longing
After their parents' nest;
What we love we all long for,
And so thou dost yearn for me;
'Tis plain thou lovest thy Mime,
 And always must love him.
What the old bird is to the young one,
Feeding it in its nest
Ere the fledgling can flutter,
That is what careful, clever Mime
To thy young life is,
 And always must be.

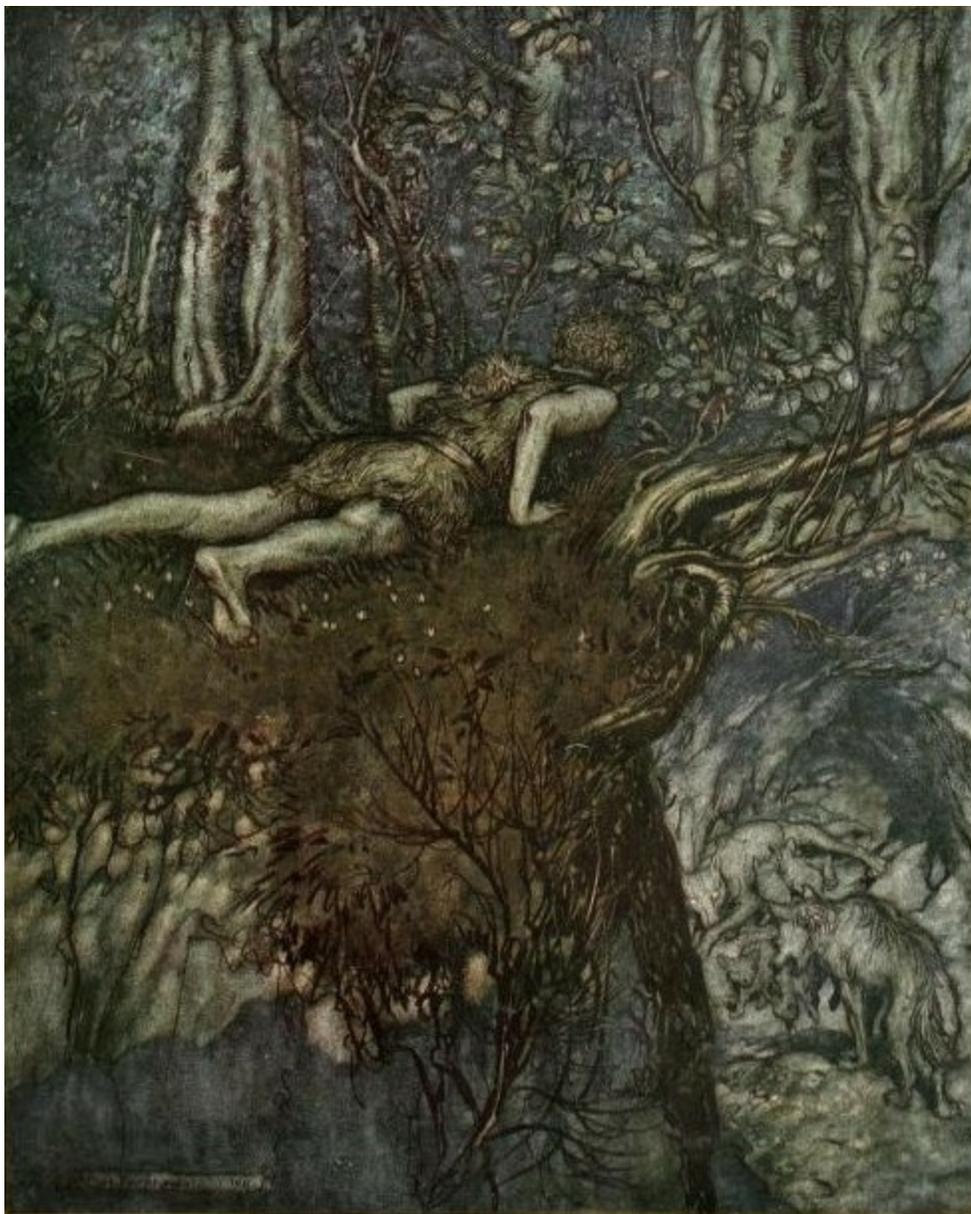
SIEGFRIED

Well, Mime, being so clever,
This one thing more also tell me:

[Simply.

The birds sang together
So gaily in spring,





"And there I learned
What love was like"
See p. 11



[*Tenderly.*

The one alluring the other;
And thou didst say,
When I asked thee why,
That they were wives with their husbands.

They chattered so sweetly,
Were never apart;
They builded a nest
In which they might brood;
The fluttering young ones
Came flying out,
And both took care of the young.
The roes in the woods, too,

Rested in pairs,
The wild wolves even, and foxes.
Food was found them and brought
By the father,
The mother suckled the young ones.
And there I learned
What love was like;
A whelp from its mother
I never took.
But where hast thou, Mime,
A wife dear and loving,
That I may call her mother?

MIME [*Angrily.*]

What dost thou mean?
Fool, thou art mad!
Art thou then a bird or a fox?

SIEGFRIED

When I was a babe
Thou wert my nurse,
Made the mite clothing
To keep him warm;
But tell me, whence
Did the tiny mite come?
Could babe without mother
Be born to thee?

MIME [*Greatly embarrassed.*]

Thou must always
Trust what I tell thee.
I am thy father
And mother in one.

SIEGFRIED

Thou liest, filthy old fright!
The resemblance 'twixt child and parent
I often have seen for myself.
I came to the limpid brook,
And the beasts and the trees
I saw reflected;

Sun and clouds too,
Just as they are,
Were mirrored quite plain in the stream.
I also could spy
This face of mine,
And quite unlike thine
Seemed it to me;
As little alike
As a fish to a toad:
And when had fish toad for its father?

MIME [*Very angrily.*

How canst thou talk
Such terrible stuff?

SIEGFRIED [*With increasing animation.*

Listen! At last
I understand
What in vain I pondered so long:
Why I roam the woods
And run to escape thee,
Yet return home in the end.

[*He springs up.*

I cannot go till thou tell me
What father and mother were mine.

MIME

What father? What mother?
Meaningless questions!

SIEGFRIED

[*Springs upon Mime, and seizes him by the throat.*

To answer a question
Thou must be caught first;
Willingly
Thou never wilt speak;
Thou givest nothing
Unless forced to.

How to talk
I hardly had learned
Had it not by force
Been wrung from the wretch.
Come, out with it,
Mangy old scamp!
Who are my father and mother?



Siegfried sees himself in the stream. See p. 12



MIME

[After making signs with his head and hands, is released by Siegfried.]

Dost want to kill me outright!
Hands off, and the facts thou shalt hear,
As far as known to myself.
O ungrateful
And graceless child,
Now learn the cause of thy hatred!

Neither thy father
Nor kinsman I,
And yet thou dost owe me thy life!
To me, thy one friend,
A stranger wert thou;
It was pity alone
Sheltered thee here;
And this is all my reward.
And I hoped for thanks like a fool!

A woman once I found
Who wept in the forest wild;
I helped her here to the cave,
That by the fire I might warm her.
The woman bore a child here;
Sadly she gave it birth.
She writhed about in pain;
I helped her as I could.
Bitter her plight; she died.
But Siegfried lived and throve.

SIEGFRIED [*Slowly*.

My poor mother died, then, through me?

MIME

To my care she commended thee;
'Twas willingly bestowed.
The trouble Mime would take!
The worry kind Mime endured!
"When thou wert a babe
I was thy nurse...."

SIEGFRIED

That story I often have heard.
Now say, whence came the name
Siegfried?

MIME

'Twas thus that thy mother
Told me to name thee,
That thou mightst grow
To be strong and fair.

"I made the mite clothing
To keep it warm..."

SIEGFRIED

Now tell me, what name was my mother's?

MIME

In truth I hardly know.

"Brought thee thy food,
Gave thee to drink..."

SIEGFRIED

My mother's name thou must tell me.

MIME

Her name I forget. Yet wait!
Sieglinde, that was the name borne
By her who gave thee to me.

"I kept thee as safe
As I keep my skin..."

SIEGFRIED

[With increasing urgency.]

Next tell me, who was my father?

MIME [*Roughly.*

Him I have never seen.

══════



Mime finds the mother of Siegfried in the forest. See p. 13



SIEGFRIED

But my mother told it thee, surely.

MIME

He fell in combat
Was all that she said.
She left the fatherless
Babe to my care.
"And when thou wert grown
I waited on thee,
And made a bed
For thy slumber soft"...

SIEGFRIED

Still, with thy tiresome
Starling song!
That I may trust thy story,
Convinced thou art not lying,
Thou must produce some proof.

MIME

But what proof will convince thee?

SIEGFRIED

I trust thee not with my ears,
I trust thee but with mine eyes:
What witness speaks for thee?

MIME

*[After some thought takes from the place where they are
concealed the two pieces of a broken sword.]*

I got this from thy mother:
For trouble, food, and service
This was my sole reward.
Behold, 'tis a splintered sword!
She said 'twas borne by thy father
In the fatal fight when he fell.

SIEGFRIED *[Enthusiastically.]*

And thou shalt forge
These fragments together,
And furnish my rightful sword!
Up! Tarry not, Mime;
Quick to thy task!
If thou hast skill,
Thy cunning display.
Cheat me no more
With worthless trash;
These fragments alone
Henceforth I trust.
Lounge o'er thy work,
Weld it not true,
Trickily patching
The goodly steel,
And thou shalt learn on thy limbs
How metal best should be beat!
I swear that this day
The sword shall be mine;
My weapon to-day I shall win!

MIME [*Alarmed.*]

What wouldst thou to-day with the sword?

SIEGFRIED

Leave the forest
For the wide world,
Never more to return.
Ah, how fair
A thing is freedom!
Nothing holds me or binds!
No father have I here,
And afar shall be my home;
Thy hearth is not my house,
Nor my covering thy roof.
Like the fish
Glad in the water,
Like the finch
Free in the heavens,
Off I will float,
Forth I will fly,
Like the wind o'er the wood
Wafted away,
Thee, Mime, beholding no more!

[He runs into the forest.]

MIME [*Greatly alarmed.*]

Stop, boy! Stop, boy!
Whither away?
Hey! Siegfried!
Siegfried! Hey!

[He looks after the retreating figure for some time in astonishment; then he goes back to the smithy and sits down behind the anvil.]

He storms away!
And I sit here:
To crown my cares
Comes still this new one;
My plight is piteous indeed!
How help myself now?
How hold the boy here?

How lead the young madcap
To Fafner's lair?
And how weld the splinters
Of obstinate steel?
In no furnace fire
Can they be melted,
Nor can Mime's hammer
Cope with their hardness.

[Shrilly.

The Nibelung's hate,
Need and sweat
Cannot make Nothung whole,
Never will weld it anew.

[Sobbing, he sinks in despair on to a stool behind the anvil.

WANDERER (WOTAN)

[Enters from the wood by the door at the back of the cave. He wears a long dark blue cloak, and, for staff, carries a spear. On his head is a round, broad-brimmed slouched hat.

All hail, cunning smith!
A seat by thy hearth
Kindly grant
The wayworn guest.

MIME *[Starting up in alarm.*

Who seeks for me here
In desolate woods,
Finds my home in the forest wild?

WANDERER *[Approaching very slowly step by step.*

Wanderer names me the world, smith.
From far I have come;
On the earth's back ranging,
Much I have roamed.

MIME

If Wanderer named,
Pray wander from here
Without halting for rest.

WANDERER

Good men grudge me not welcome;
Many gifts I have received.
By bad hearts only
Is evil feared.

MIME

Ill fate always
Dwelt by my side;
Thou wouldst not add to it, surely!

WANDERER [*Slowly coming nearer and nearer.*]

Always searching,
Much have I seen;
Things of weight
Have told to many;
Oft have rid men
Of their troubles,
Gnawing and carking cares.

MIME

Though thou hast searched,
And though much thou hast found,
I need neither seeker nor finder.
Lonely am I,
And lone would be;
Idlers I harbour not here.

WANDERER [*Again coming a little nearer.*]

There were many
Thought they were wise,
Yet what they needed
Knew not at all;
Useful lore was
Theirs for the asking,
Wisdom was their reward.

MIME

[More and more anxious as he sees the Wanderer approach.]

Idle knowledge
Some may covet;
I know enough for my needs.

[The Wanderer reaches the hearth.]

My own wits suffice,
I want no more,
So, wise one, keep on thy way.

WANDERER *[Sitting down at the hearth.]*

Nay, here at thy hearth
I vow by my head
To answer all thou shalt ask.
My head is thine,
'Tis forfeit to thee,
Unless I can give
Answers good,
Deftly redeeming the pledge.

MIME

[Who has been staring at the Wanderer open-mouthed, now shrinks back; aside, dejectedly.]

Now how to get rid of the spy?
The questions asked must be artful.

[He summons up courage for an assumption of sternness; aloud.]

Thy head for thy
Lodging pays:
'Tis pawned; now seek to redeem it.
Three the questions
Thou shalt be asked.

WANDERER

Thrice then I must answer.

MIME [*Pulls himself together and reflects.*]

Since, far on the back
Of the wide earth roving,
Thy feet have ranged o'er the world,
Come, answer me this:
Tell me what race
Dwells in the earth's deep gorges.

WANDERER

In the depths of earth
The Nibelungs have their home;
Nibelheim is their land.
Black elves they all are;
Black Alberich
Once was their ruler and lord.
He subdued the busy
Folk by a ring
Gifted with magical might;
And they piled up
Shimmering gold,
Precious, fine-wrought,
To win him the world and its glory.
Proceed with thy questions, dwarf.

MIME

[*Sinks into deeper and deeper meditation.*]

Thou knowest much,
Wanderer,
Of the hidden depths of earth.
Now, answer me this:
Tell me what race
Breathes on earth's back and moves there.

WANDERER

On the earth's broad back
The race of the giants arose;
Riesenheim is their land.
Fasolt and Fafner,
The rude folk's rulers,
Envied the Nibelung's might.
So his wonderful hoard

They won for themselves,
And with it gained the ring too.
The brothers quarrelled
About the ring,
And slain was Fasolt.
In dragon's form
Fafner now watches the hoard.
One question threatens me still.

MIME [*Quite lost in thought.*]

Much, Wanderer,
Thou dost know
Of the earth's back rude and rugged.
Now answer aright:
Tell me what race
Dwells above in the clouds.

WANDERER

Above in the clouds
Dwell the Immortals;
Walhall is their home.
They are light-spirits;
Light-Alberich,
Wotan, rules as their lord.
From the world-ash-tree's
Holiest bough once
Wotan made him a shaft.
Though the stem rot,
The spear shall endure,
And with that spear-point
Wotan rules the world.
Trustworthy runes
Of holy treaties
Deep in the shaft he cut.
Who wields the spear
Carried by Wotan
The haft of the world
Holds in his hand.
Before him kneels
The Nibelung host;
The giants, tamed,
Bow to his will.
All must obey, and for ever,

The spear's eternal lord.

[He strikes the ground with the spear as if by accident, and a low growl of thunder is heard, by which Mime is violently alarmed.]

Confess now, cunning dwarf,
Are not my answers right,
And is not my head redeemed?

MIME

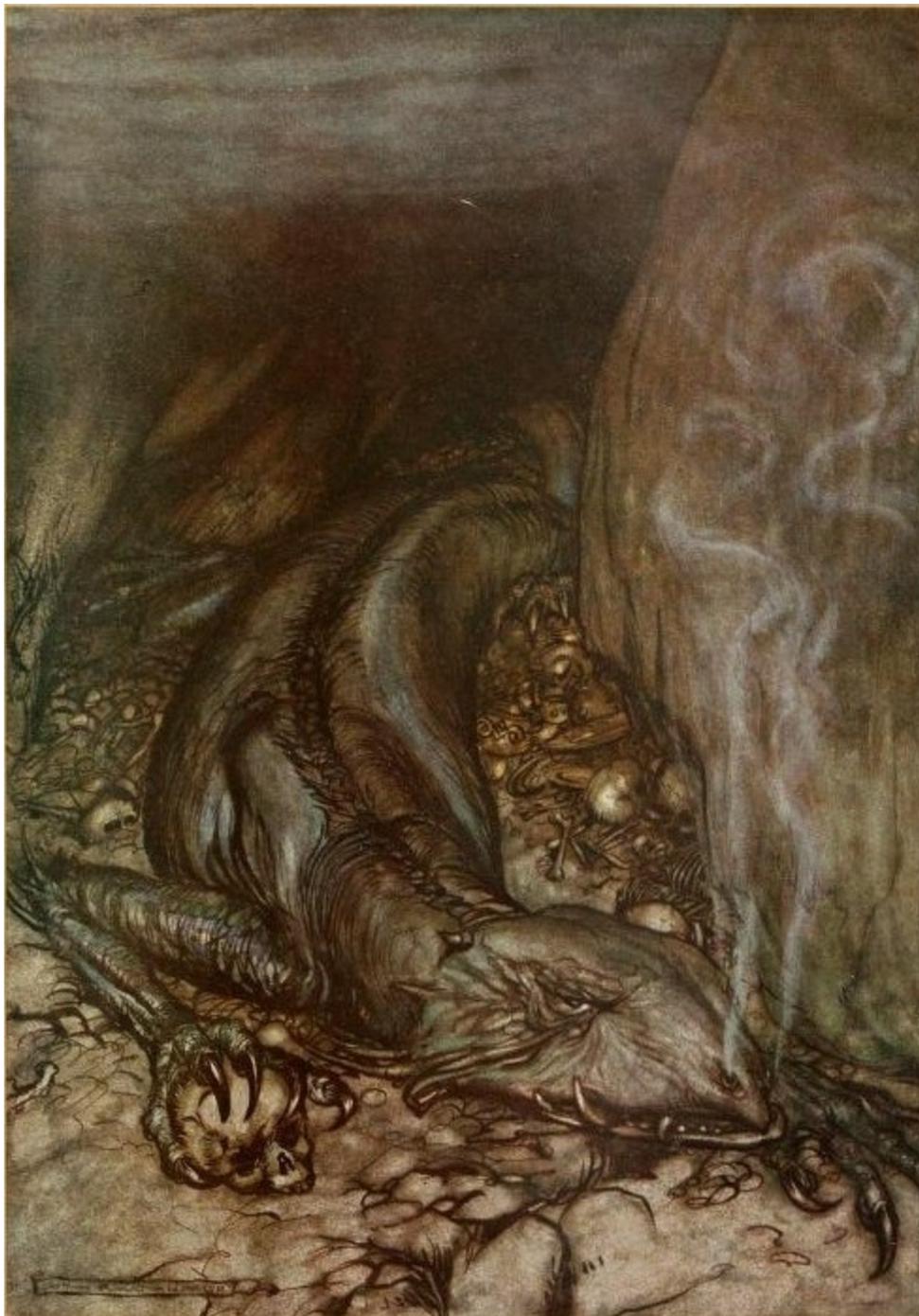
[After attentively watching the Wanderer with the spear, becomes very frightened, seeks in a confused manner for his tools, and looks timidly aside.]

Both thou hast won,
Wager and head;
Thy way now, Wanderer, go.

WANDERER

Knowledge useful to thee
Thou wert to ask for;
Forfeit my head if I failed.
Forfeit be thine,
Knowest thou not
The thing it would serve thee to know.
Greeting thou
Gavest me not;
My head into thy hand
I gave
That I might rest by thy hearth.
By wager fair
Forfeit thy head,
Canst thou not answer
Three things when asked;
So sharpen well, Mime, thy wits!

—



"In dragon's form
Fafner now watches the hoard"
See p. 21



MIME

[Very much frightened, and after much hesitation, at last composes himself with timid submission.]

Long it is
Since I left my land;
Long it seems to me
Since I was born.

I saw here the eye of Wotan

Shine, peering into my cave;
His glance dazes
My mother-wit.
But well were it now to be wise.
Come then, Wanderer, ask.
Perhaps fortune will favour
The dwarf, and redeem his head.

WANDERER [*Comfortably sitting down again.*]

Then first, honest dwarf,
Answer this question:
Tell the name of the race
That Wotan treats most harshly,

[*Very softly, but audibly.*]

And yet loves beyond all the rest.

MIME [*With more cheerfulness.*]

Though unlearnèd
In heroes' kinship,
This question I answer with ease.
The Wälsungs are Wotan's
Chosen stock,
By him begotten
And loved with passion,
Though they are shown no grace.
Siegmond and Sieglinde
Born were to Wälse,
A wild and desperate
Twin-born pair;
Siegfried had they as son,
The strongest shoot from the tree.
My head, say, is it
Still, Wanderer, mine?

WANDERER [*Pleasantly.*]

How well thou knowest
And namest the race!
Rogue, I see thou art clever.
The foremost question
Thou hast solved;

The second answer me, dwarf.

A crafty Niblung

Shelters Siegfried,

Hoping he will slay Fafner,

That the dwarf may be lord of the hoard,

The ring being his.

Say, what sword,

If Fafner to fall is,

Must be by Siegfried swung?

MIME

[Forgetting his present situation more and more, rubs his hands joyfully.]

Nothing is

The name of the sword;

Into an ash-tree's stem

Wotan struck it;

One only might bear it:

He who could draw it forth.

The strongest heroes

Tried it and failed;

Only by Siegmund

Was it done;

Well he fought with the sword

Till on Wotan's spear it was split.

By a crafty smith

Are the fragments kept,

For he knows that alone

With the Wotan sword

A brave and foolish boy,

Siegfried, can slay the foe.

[Much pleased.]

A second time

My head have I saved?





Mime and the Wanderer. See p. 17



WANDERER [*Laughing.*

The wisest of wise ones
Thou must be, surely;
Who else could so clever be!
But wouldst thou by craft
Employ the boy-hero
As instrument of thy purpose,
With one question more
I threaten thee.
Tell me, thou artful

Armourer,
Whose skill from the doughty splinters
Nothung the sword shall fashion.

MIME [*Starts up in great terror.*]

The splinters! The sword!
Alas! my head reels!
What shall I do?
What can I say?
Accursèd sword!
I was mad to steal it!
A perilous pass
It has brought me to.
Always too hard
To yield to my hammer!
Rivet, solder—
Useless are both.

*[He throws his tools about as if he had gone crazy, and
breaks out in utter despair.]*

The cleverest smith
Living has failed;
And, that being so,
Who shall succeed?
How rede aright such a riddle?

WANDERER [*Has risen quietly from the hearth.*]

Three things thou wert to ask me;
Thrice was I to reply.
Thy questions were
Of far-off things,
But what stood here at thy hand—
Needed much—that was forgot,
Now that I guess it,
Thou goest crazed,
And won by me
Is the cunning one's head.
Now, Fafner's dauntless subduer,
Hear, thou death-doomed dwarf.
By him who knows not
How to fear
Nothung shall be forged.

[Mime stares at him; he turns to go.]

So ward thy head
Well from to-day.
I leave it forfeit to him
Who has never learned to fear.

[He turns away smiling, and disappears quickly in the wood. Mime has sunk on to the bench overwhelmed.]

MIME

[Stares before him into the sunlit wood, and begins to tremble more and more violently.]

Accursèd light!
The air is on fire!
What flickers and flashes?
What buzzes and whirs?
What sways there and swings
And circles about?
What glitters and gleams
In the sun's hot glow?
What rustles and hums
And rings so loud?
With roll and roar
It crashes this way!
It bursts through the wood,
Making for me!

[He rises up in terror.]

Its jaws are wide open,
Eager for prey;
The dragon will catch me!
Fafner! Fafner!

[He sinks shrieking behind the anvil.]

SIEGFRIED

[Behind the scenes, is heard breaking from the thicket.]

Ho there! Thou idler!
Is the work finished?

[He enters the cave.]

Quick, come show me the sword.

[He pauses in surprise.]

Where hides the smith?

Has he made off?

Hey, there! Mime, thou coward!

Where art thou? Where hidest thou?

MIME

[In a small voice, from behind the anvil.]

'Tis thou then, child?

Art thou alone?

SIEGFRIED *[Laughing.]*

Under the anvil?

Why, what doest thou there?

Wert thou grinding the sword?

MIME *[Comes forward, greatly upset and confused.]*

The sword? The sword?

How could I weld it?

[Half aside.]

By him who knows not

How to fear

Nothing shall be forged.

Too wise am I

To attempt such work.

SIEGFRIED *[Violently.]*

Wilt thou speak plainly

Or must I help thee?

MIME *[As before.]*

Where shall I turn in my need?

My wily head
Wagered and lost is,

[Staring before him.]

And forfeit to him it will fall
Who has never learned to fear.

SIEGFRIED *[Vehemently.]*

Dost thou by shuffling
Seek to escape?

MIME *[Gradually recovering himself.]*

Small need to fly
Him who knows fear!
But that lesson was one never taught thee.
A fool, I forgot
The one great thing;
What thou wert taught
Was to love me,
And alas! the task proved hard.
Now how shall I teach thee to fear?

SIEGFRIED *[Seizes him.]*

Hey! Must I help thee?
What work hast thou done?

MIME

Concerned for thy good,
In thought I was sitting:
Something of weight I would teach thee.

SIEGFRIED *[Laughing.]*

'Twas under the seat
That thou wert sitting;
What weighty thing foundest thou there?

MIME

[Recovering himself more and more.]

Down there I learned how to fear,
That I might teach thee, dullard.

SIEGFRIED [*With quiet wonder.*

This fear then, what is it?

MIME

Thou knowest not that,
Yet wouldst from the forest
Forth to the world?

What help in the trustiest sword,
Hadst thou not learned to fear?

SIEGFRIED [*Impatiently.*

What absurd
Invention is this?

MIME

[*Approaching Siegfried with more and more confidence.*

'Tis thy mother's wish
Speaking through me.
I must fulfil
The promise I gave her:
That the world and its wiles
Thou shouldst not encounter
Until thou hadst learned how to fear.

SIEGFRIED [*Vehemently*

Is it an art?
Why was I not taught?
Explain: this fearing, what is it?

MIME

In the dark wood
Hast thou not felt,
When shades of dusk
Fall dim and drear,
When mournful whispers

Sigh afar,
And fierce growling
Sounds at hand,
When strange flashes
Dart and flicker,
And the buzzing
And clamour grow—

[*Trembling.*

Hast thou not felt grim horror
Hold every sense in its clutches?—

[*Quaking.*

When the limbs shiver,
Shaken with terror,

[*With a quivering voice.*

And the heart, filled with dismay,
Hammers, bursting the breast—
Hast thou not yet felt that,
A stranger art thou to fear.

SIEGFRIED [*Musing.*

Wonderful truly
That must be.
Steadfast, strong
Beats my heart in my breast.
The shiver and shudder,
The fever and horror,
Burning and fainting,
Beating and trembling—
Ah, how glad I would feel them,

[*Tenderly.*

Could I but learn this delight!
But how, Mime,
Can it be mine?
How, coward, could it be taught me?

MIME

Following me,
The way thou shalt find;
I have thought it all out.
I know of a dragon grim
That slays and swallows men:
Fear thou wilt learn from Fafner,
When I lead to where he lies.

SIEGFRIED

Where has he his lair?

MIME

Neidhöhl'
Named, it lies east
Towards the end of the wood.

SIEGFRIED

It lies not far from the world?

MIME

The world is quite close to the cave.

SIEGFRIED

That I may learn what this fear is,
Lead me there straightway;
Then forth to the world!
Make haste! Forge me the sword.
In the world fain I would swing it.

MIME

The sword? Woe's me!

SIEGFRIED

Quick to the smithy!
Show me thy work!

MIME

Accursèd steel!
Unequal my skill to the task;
The potent magic
Surpasses the poor dwarf's strength.

'Twere more easily done
By one who never felt fear.

SIEGFRIED

Artful tricks
The idler would play me;
He is a bungler;
He should confess,
And not seek to lie his way out.
Here with the splinters!
Off with the bungler!

[Coming to the hearth.

His father's sword
Siegfried will weld:
By him shall it be forged.

*[Flinging Mime's tools about, he sets himself impetuously
to work.*

MIME

If thou hadst practised
Thy craft with care,
Thou wouldst have profited now;
But thou wert far
Too lazy to learn,
And now at need canst do nothing.

SIEGFRIED

Where the master has failed
What hope for the scholar,
Had he obeyed him in all?

[He makes a contemptuous grimace at him.

Be off with thee!
Meddle no more,
In case with the steel I melt thee.

*[He has heaped a large quantity of charcoal on the hearth,
and keeps blowing the fire, while he screws up the pieces
of the sword in a vice and files them to shavings.*

MIME

[Who has sat down a little way off, watches Siegfried at work.]

Why file it to bits?
There is the solder
All fused, ready to hand.

SIEGFRIED

Off with the pap,
I need it not;
With paste I fashion no sword!

MIME

Now the file is ruined,
The rasp is useless;
Why grind thus the steel to splinters?

SIEGFRIED

It must be shivered
And ground into shreds;
Only so can splinters be patched.

[He goes on filing with great energy.]

MIME *[Aside.]*

I see a craftsman
Is useless here;
By his own folly the fool is best served.
Look how he toils
With lusty strokes;
The steel disappears,
And still he keeps cool.

[Siegfried has blown the fire to a bright flame.]

Though I am as old
As cave and wood,
The like I never yet saw!

[While Siegfried continues to file the piece of the sword impetuously, Mime seats himself a little further off.]

He will forge the sword—
I see it plain—
Boldly weld it anew.
The Wanderer was right.
Where shall I hide
My luckless head?
If nothing teaches him fear,
Forfeit it falls to the boy.

[Springing up and bending down in growing agitation.]

But woe to Mime!
If Siegfried learn fear,
The dragon will never be slain;
And, if so, how gain the ring?
Accurst dilemma!
Would I escape,
I must find out some way
Of subduing the boy for myself.

SIEGFRIED

[Has now filed down the pieces, and puts the filings in a crucible, which he places on the fire.]

Hey, Mime! The name!—
Quick, name the sword
That I have pounded to pieces.

MIME *[Starts and turns towards Siegfried.]*

Nothing, that is
The name of the sword;
'Twas mother told me the tale.

SIEGFRIED

[During the following song keeps blowing the fire with the bellows.]

Nothing! Nothing!
Conquering sword!
What blow, I wonder, broke thee.
Thy keen-edged glory
I chopped to chaff;

The splinters now I am melting.

Hoho! Hoho!

Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!

Bellows blow!

Brighten the flame!

In the woods

A tree grew wild;

It fell, by my hand hewn down.

The brown-stemmed ash

To charcoal I burned;

Now it lies heaped high on the hearth.

Hoho! Hoho!

Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!

Bellows blow!

Brighten the flame!

How bravely, brightly

The charcoal burns!

How clear and fair its fire!

With showering sparks

It leaps and glows,—

Hohei! Hoho! Hohei!—

Dissolving the splintered steel!

Hoho! Hoho!

Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!

Bellows, blow!

Brighten the flame!

Hoho! Hoho!

Hoho, hohei! Hohei!

Nothung! Nothung!

Conquering sword!

Thy steel chopped to chaff is fused;

In thine own sweat

Thou swimmest now,





The forging of Nothung. See p. 34



[He pours the glowing contents of the crucible into a mould, which he holds up.]

But soon my sword thou shalt be!

MIME

[During the pauses in Siegfried's song, still aside, sitting at a distance.]

The sword he will forge
And vanquish Fafner,
So much I can clearly foresee;

Hoard and ring
The victor will have;
How to win them both for myself!
By wit and wiles
They shall be captured,
And safe shall be my head.

[In the foreground, still aside.]

After the fight, when athirst,
For a cooling draught he will crave;
Of fragrant juices
Gathered from herbs
The draught I will brew for him.
Let him drink but a drop,
And in slumber
Softly lapped he shall lie:
With the very sword
That he fashioned to serve him
He shall be cleared from my way,
And treasure and ring made mine.

[He rubs his hands with satisfaction.]

Ha! dull didst hold me,
Wanderer wise!
Does my subtle scheming
Please thee now?
Have I found
A path to peace?

[He springs up joyfully, fetches several vessels, shakes spices and herbs from them into a pot, and tries to put it on the hearth.]

SIEGFRIED

[Has plunged the mould into a pail of water. Steam and loud hissing ensue as it cools.]

In the water flowed
A flood of fire;
Furious with hate,
Grimly it hissed;
Though scorching it ran,
In the cooling flood

No more it flows;
Stiff, stark it became,
Hard is the stubborn steel;
Yet warm blood
Shall flow thereby!
Now sweat once again,
That swift I may weld thee,
Nothung, conquering sword!

[He thrusts the steel into the fire, and blows the bellows violently. While doing so he watches Mime, who, from the other side of the hearth, carefully puts his pot on the fire.]

What does the booby
Make in his pot?
While I melt steel,
What art thou brewing?

MIME

A smith is put to shame,
And learns from the lad he taught;
All the master's lore is useless now;
He serves the boy as cook.
Steel thou dost brew into broth;
Old Mime boils thee
Eggs for thy meal.

[He goes on with his cooking.]

SIEGFRIED

Mime, the craftsman,
Learns to cook now,
And cares no longer to forge;
I have broken
All the swords that he made me;
What he cooks my lips shall not touch.

[During the following he takes the mould from the fire, breaks it, and lays the glowing steel on the anvil.]

To find out what fear is
Forth he will guide me;
A far-off teacher shall teach me;
Even what he does best

He cannot do well;
In everything Mime must bungle!

[During the forging.]

Hoho! Hoho! Hohei!

Forge me, my hammer,
A trusty sword.

Hoho! Hahei!

Hoho! Hahei!

Blood-stained was once

Thy steely blue,

The crimson trickle

Reddened thy blade.

How cold was thy laugh!

The warm blood cooled at thy touch!

Heiaho! Haha!

Haheiaha!

Now red thou comest

From the fire,

And thy softened steel

To the hammer yields.

Angry sparks thou dost shower

On me who humbled thy pride.

Heiaho! Heiaho!

Heiahohohohoho!

Hahei! Hahei! Hahei!

Hoho! Hoho! Hohei!

Forge me, my hammer,

A trusty sword!

Hoho! Hahei!

Hoho! Hahei!

How I rejoice

In the merry sparks!

The bold look best

When by anger stirred!

Gay thou laughest to me,

Grimly though thou dost pretend!

Heiaho, haha, haheiaha!

Both heat and hammer

Served me well;

With sturdy strokes

I stretched thee straight;

Now banish thy modest blush,

Be as cold and hard as thou canst.

Heiho! Heiaho!
Heiahohohohoho! Heiah!

[He swings the blade, plunges it into the pail of water, and laughs aloud at the hissing.]

MIME

[While Siegfried is fixing the blade in the hilt, moves about in the foreground with the bottle into which he has poured the contents of the pot. Aside.]

He forges a sharp-edged sword:

Fafner, the foe
Of the dwarf, is doomed;

I brewed a deadly draught:

Siegfried must perish
When Fafner falls.

By guile the goal must be reached;

Soon shall smile my reward!

For the shining ring
My brother once made,
And which with a potent
Spell he endowed,
The gleaming gold
That gives boundless might—
That ring I have won now,
I am its lord.

[He trots briskly about with increasing satisfaction.]

Alberich even,
Whom I served,
Shall be the slave
Of Mime the dwarf.
As Nibelheim's prince
I shall descend there,
And all the host
Shall do my will;
None so honoured as he,
The dwarf once despised!
To the hoard will come thronging
Gods and men;

[With increasing liveliness.]

The world shall cower,
Cowed by my nod,
And at my frown
Shall tremble and fall!
No more shall Mime
Labour and toil,
When others win him
Unending wealth.
Mime, the valiant,
Mime is monarch,
Prince and ruler,
Lord of the world!

Hei, Mime! Great luck has been thine!
Had any one dreamed of this!

SIEGFRIED

[During the pauses in Mime's song has been filing and sharpening the sword and hammering it with the small hammer. He flattens the rivets of the hilt with the last strokes, and now grasps the sword.]

Nothung! Nothung!
Conquering sword!

Once more art thou firm in thy hilt.
Severed wert thou;
I shaped thee anew,
No second blow thy blade shall shatter.
The strong steel was splintered,
My father fell;
The son who now lives
Shaped it anew.

Bright-gleaming to him it laughs,
And for him its edge shall be keen.

[Swinging the sword before him.]

Nothung! Nothung!
Conquering sword!

Once more to life I have waked thee.
Dead wert thou,
In fragments hewn,
Now shining defiant and fair.
Woe to all robbers!
Show them thy sheen!

Strike at the traitor,
Cut down the rogue!
See, Mime, thou smith;
Thus sunders Siegfried's sword!

[He strikes the anvil and splits it in two from top to bottom, so that it falls asunder with a great noise. Mime, who has mounted a stool in great delight, falls in terror to a fitting position on the ground. Siegfried holds the sword exultantly on high. The curtain falls.]



THE SECOND ACT

A deep forest

Quite in the background the entrance to a cave. The ground rises towards a flat knoll in the middle of the stage, and slopes down again towards the back, so that only the upper part of the entrance to the cave is visible to the audience. To the left a fissured cliff is seen through the trees. It is night, the darkness being deepest at the back, where at first the eye can distinguish nothing at all.

ALBERICH

[Lying by the cliff, gloomily brooding.]

In night-drear woods
By Neidhöhl' I keep watch,
With ear alert,
Keen and anxious eye.
Timid day,
Tremblest thou forth?

Pale art thou dawning
Athwart the dark?

[A storm arises in the wood on the right, and from the same quarter there shines down a bluish light.]

What comes yonder, gleaming bright?
Nearer shimmers
A radiant form;
It runs like a horse and it shines;
Breaks through the wood,
Rushing this way.
Is it the dragon's slayer?
Can it mean Fafner's death?

[The wind subsides; the light vanishes.]

The glow has gone,
It has faded and died;
All is darkness.
Who comes there, shining in shadow?

WANDERER

[Enters from the wood, and stops opposite Alberich.]

To Neidhöhl'
By night I have come;
In the dark who is hiding there?

[As from a sudden rent in the clouds moonlight streams forth and lights up the Wanderer's figure.]

ALBERICH

[Recognises the Wanderer and shrinks back at first in alarm, but immediately after breaks out in violent fury.]

'Tis thou who comest thus?
What wilt thou here?
Go, get thee hence!
Begone, thou insolent thief!

WANDERER *[Quietly.]*

Schwarz-Alberich

Wanders here?
Guardest thou Fafner's house?

ALBERICH

Art thou intent
On mischief again?
Linger not here!
Off with thee straightway!
Has grief enough
Not deluged the earth through thy guile?
Spare it further
Sorrow, thou wretch!

WANDERER

I come as watcher,
Not as worker.
The Wanderer's way who bars?

ALBERICH

Thou arch, pestilent plotter!
Were I still the blind,
Silly fool that I was,
When I was bound thy captive,
How easy were it
To steal the ring again from me!
Beware! For thy cunning
I know well,

[Mockingly.]

And of thy weakness
I am fully aware too.
Thy debts were cancelled,
Paid with my treasure;
My ring guerdoned
The giants' toil,
Who raised thy citadel high.
Still on the mighty
Haft of thy spear there
The runes are written plain
Of the compact made with the churls;
And of that
Which by labour they won
Thou dost not dare to despoil them:

Thy spear's strong shaft
Thou thyself wouldst split;
The staff that makes thee
Master of all

Would crumble to dust in thy hand.

WANDERER

By the steadfast runes of treaties

Thou hast not,
Base one, been bound;

On thee my spear may spend its strength,
So keen I keep it for war.

ALBERICH

How dire thy threats!
How bold thy defiance!

And yet full of fear is thy heart!

Foredoomed to death
Through my curse is he

Who now guards the treasure.

What heir will succeed him?

Will the hoard all desire

Belong as before to the Niblung?—

That gnaws thee with ceaseless torment.

For once I have got it

Safe in my grasp,

Better than foolish giants

Will I employ its spell.

The God who guards heroes

Truly may tremble!

I will storm

Proud Walhall with Hella's hosts,

And rule, lord of the world!

WANDERER [*Quietly*].

Thy design I know well,

But little I care:

Who wins the ring

Will rule by its might.

ALBERICH

Thou speakest darkly,

But to me all is plain.
Thy heart is bold
Because of a boy,

[Mockingly.]

A hero begot of thy blood.
Hast thou not fostered a stripling
To pluck the fruit thou durst not

[With growing violence.]

Pluck frankly for thyself?

WANDERER *[Lightly.]*

With me
'Tis useless to wrangle;
But Mime thou shouldst beware;
For thy brother brings here a boy
To compass the giant's doom.
He knows not of me;
He works for Mime alone.
And so I say to thee,
Do as seems to thee best.

[Alberich makes a movement expressive of violent curiosity.]

Take my advice,
Be on thy guard:
The boy will hear of the ring
When Mime tells him the tale.

ALBERICH *[Violently.]*

Wilt thou hold thy hand from the hoard?

WANDERER

Whom I love
Must fight for himself unaided;
The lord of his fate,
He stands or falls:
All my hope hangs upon heroes.

ALDERICH

Does none but Mime
Dispute me the ring?

WANDERER

Only thou and Mime
Covet the gold.

ALDERICH

And yet it is not to be mine?

WANDERER [*Quietly coming nearer.*]

A hero comes
To set the hoard free;
Two Nibelungs yearn for the gold.
Fafner falls,
He who guards the ring;
Then a hand, seizing, shall hold it.
More wouldst thou learn,
There Fafner lies,
Who, if warned of his death,
Gladly would give up the toy.
Come, I will wake him for thee.

*[He goes towards the cave, and, standing on the rising
ground in front of it, calls towards it.]*

Fafner! Fafner!
Wake, dragon! Wake!

ALBERICH [*With anxious amazement, aside.*]

Does the madman mean it?
Am I to have it?

FAFNER'S VOICE

Who troubles my sleep?

WANDERER [*Facing the cave.*]

A well-wisher comes
To warn thee of danger;

Thy doom can be averted,
If thou wilt pay the price
With the treasure that thou guardest.

[He leans his ear towards the cave, listening.]

FAFNER'S VOICE

What would he?

ALBERICH

[Has come to the Wanderer and calls into the cave.]

Waken, Fafner!
Dragon, awake!
A doughty hero comes
To try his strength against thine.

FAFNER'S VOICE

I want a meal.

WANDERER

Bold is the boy and strong;
Sharp-edged is his sword.

ALBERICH

The ring he seeks,
Nothing besides.
Give me the ring, and so
The strife shall be stayed.
Still guarding the hoard,
In peace shalt thou live long!

FAFNER *[Yawning.]*

I have and I hold:—
Let me slumber!

WANDERER

[Laughs aloud and then turns again to Alberich.]

Well, Alberich! That ruse failed,

But call me rogue no more.

This one thing thou shouldst

Never forget:

Each according to his kind must act;

Nothing can change him.

I leave thee the field now;

Show a bold front,

And try thy luck with thy brother;

Thou knowest his kind perhaps better.

And things unknown

Thou also shalt learn!

[He turns away, and disappears quickly in the wood. A storm arises and a bright light breaks forth; then both quickly cease.]

ALBERICH

[Looks after the Wanderer as he gallops off.]

Away on his shining

Horse he rides,

And leaves me to care and scorn!

Laugh on! Laugh on,

Ye light-minded

And high-spirited

Race of immortals!

One day ye shall perish

And pass!

Until the gold

Has ceased to gleam,

Will wise Alberich watch,

And his hate shall prevail.

[He slips into the chasm at the side. The stage remains empty. Dawn.]

As the day dawns Siegfried and Mime enter. Siegfried carries his sword in a sword-belt of rope. Mime examines the place carefully. At last he looks towards the background, which remains in deep shadow, whilst the rising ground in the middle becomes, after a time, more and more brightly illuminated by the sun.

MIME

Our journey ends here;

Here we halt.

SIEGFRIED

[Sits down under the lime-tree and looks about him.]

So here I shall learn what fear is?
A far way thou hast led me;
We have wandered lone together
A whole night long in the woods.

 This is the last
 Of thee, Mime!
 Can I not master
 My lesson here,
Alone I will push forward
And never see thee again.

MIME

 Lad, believe me,
 If thou canst not
Learn it here and now,
 No other place,
 No other time
Ever will teach thee fear.
 Dost thou see
That cavern yawning dark?
 Yonder dwells
A dragon dread and grim,
 Horribly fierce,
 Enormous in size,
 With terrible jaws
 That threaten and gape;
 With skin and hair,
 All at a gulp,
The brute could swallow thee whole.

SIEGFRIED

[Still sitting under the lime-tree.]

'Twere well to close up his gullet;
His fangs I will therefore avoid.

MIME

 Poison pours
 From his venomous mouth;

Were he to spue out
Spittle on thee,
Thy body and bones would decay.

SIEGFRIED

That the poison may not consume me,
I will keep out of its reach.

MIME

A serpent's tail
Sweeping he swings;
Were that about thee wound
And folded close,
Thy limbs would be broken like glass.

SIEGFRIED

That his swinging tail may not touch me,
Warily then I must watch.
But answer me this:
Has the brute a heart?

MIME

A pitiless, cruel heart.

SIEGFRIED

It lies, however,
Where all hearts lie,
Brute and human alike?

MIME

Of course! There, boy,
The dragon's lies too.
At last thou beginnest to fear?

SIEGFRIED

*[Who till now has been lying indolently stretched out, sits
up suddenly.]*

Nothing into
His heart I will thrust!
Is that what is meant by fearing?

Hey, old dotard!
Canst thou teach me
Nothing but this
With all thy craft,
Linger no longer by me:
No fear is here to be learnt.

MIME

Wait awhile yet!
What I have told thee
Seems to thee empty sound;
When thou hast heard
And seen him thyself,
Thy senses will swoon, overwhelmed!
When thine eyes grow dim,
And when the ground rocks,
When in thy breast
Thy heart beats loud,

[Very friendly.]

Thou wilt remember who brought thee,
And think of me and my love.

SIEGFRIED

Thy love is not wanted!
Hast thou not heard?
Out of my sight with thee;
Let me alone!
Begin again talking of love,
And on the instant I go!
The horrible winking,
The nods and blinking—
When shall I see
The last of them,
And rid be at length of the fool?

MIME

Well, I will off,
And rest there by the spring.
Thou must stay here,
And as the sun scales the sky
Watch for the foe:
From his cave

He lumbers this way,
Winds and twists
Past this spot,
To water at the fountain.

SIEGFRIED [*Laughs.*]

Liest thou by the spring,
Unchecked thither the brute shall go;
He shall swallow thee
Down with the water,
Ere with my sword
To the heart I stab him!
So heed well what I say:
Rest not beside the spring.
Seek somewhere else
A far-off spot,
And nevermore return.

MIME

Thou wilt not refuse
Cooling refreshment
When the fierce fight is over?

[*Siegfried motions him angrily away.*]

Call on me too
Shouldst thou need counsel,

[*Siegfried repeats the gesture with more violence.*]

Or if felled on a sudden by fear.

[*Siegfried rises and drives him away with furious gestures.*]

MIME [*Aside, as he goes away.*]

Fafner and Siegfried—
Siegfried and Fafner—
Might each the other but slay!

[*He disappears in the wood on the right.*]

SIEGFRIED

[Stretches himself at his ease under the lime-tree, and looks after Mime as he departs.]

He is no father of mine!
How merry of heart I feel!
 Never before
 Seemed the forest fair;
 Never day
 Wore as lovely a smile,
For the loathed one has gone at last,
To be looked on by me no more.

[He meditates in silence.]

My father—what was he like?—
Ha! like me, without doubt.
Had Mime by chance had a son,
 He would have been
 Mime's image:
 Quite as disgusting,
 Filthy and grey,
 Small and bent,
 Hunchbacked and halting,
 With ears long and hanging,
 Rheumy eyes running—
 Off with the fright!
To see him makes me sick!

[He leans further back and looks up through the branches of the tree. Deep silence. Woodland murmurs.]

What could my mother,
I wonder, be like;
That is not
So easy to picture.

[Very tenderly.]

Her clear shining eyes
 Must have been soft,
And gentle like the roe-deer's,
 Only far fairer.

[Very softly.]

In fear and woe she bore me,

But why did she die through me?

Must then all human mothers

Thus die on giving

Birth to a son?

That would truly be sad!

Ah, if I only

Could see my mother!—

See my mother,

A woman once!

[He sighs softly, and leans still further back. Deep silence. Louder murmuring of the wood. His attention is at last caught by the song of the birds. He listens with growing interest to one singing in the branches above him.]

O lovely warbler,

I know not thy note;

Hast thou thy home in this wood?

If I could but understand him,

His sweet song might say much—

Perhaps of my mother tell me.

A surly old dwarf

Said to me once

That men might learn

To follow the sense

Of birds when they were singing;

Could it indeed be done?

Ha! I will sing

After him,

On the reed follow him sweetly.

Though wanting the words,

Repeating his measure—

Singing what is his language—

Perhaps I shall know what he says.

[He runs to the neighbouring spring, cuts a reed off with his sword, and quickly makes himself a pipe out of it. He listens again.]

He stops to hear,

So now for my song!

[He blows into the pipe, breaks off, and cuts it again to improve it. He resumes his blowing, shakes his head, and cuts the pipe once more. After another attempt he gets angry, presses the pipe with his hand, and tries again. He]

ceases playing and smiles.

That rings not right;
For the lovely tune
The reed is not suited at all.
I fear, sweet bird,
I am too dull;
Thy song cannot I learn.

[He hears the bird again and looks up to him.]

He listens so roguishly
There that he shames me;

[Very tenderly.]

He waits, and nothing rewards him.
Heida! Come hearken
Now to my horn;

[He flings the pipe away.]

All I do sounds wrong
On the stupid reed;
To a song of the woods
That I know,
A merry song, listen now rather.
I hoped it would bring
Some comrade to me,
But wolves and bears
Were the best that came.
Now I will see
Who answers its note:
What comrade will come to its call.

[He takes the silver hunting-horn and blows on it. During the long-sustained notes he keeps his eyes expectantly on the bird. A movement in the background. Fafner, in the form of a monstrous lizard-like dragon, has risen from his lair in the cave. He breaks through the underwood and drags himself up to the higher ground, so that the front part of his body rests on it, while he utters a loud sound, as if yawning.]

[Looks round and gazes at Fafner in astonishment. He laughs.]

My horn with its note
Has allured something lovely;
A jolly companion wert thou.

FAFNER

[At the sight of Siegfried has paused on the high ground, and remains there.]

What is that?

SIEGFRIED

If thou art a beast
Who can use its tongue,
Perchance thou couldst teach me something.
Here stands one
Who would learn to fear;
Say, wilt thou be his teacher?

FAFNER

Is this insolence?

SIEGFRIED

Courage or insolence,
What matter?
With my sword I will slay thee,
Wilt thou not teach me to fear.

FAFNER *[Makes a laughing sound.]*

Drink I came for;
Now food I find too!

[He opens his jaws and shows his teeth.]

SIEGFRIED

What a fine set of teeth
Thou showest me there!
Sweetly they smile
In thy dainty mouth!

'Twere well if I closed up thy gullet;
Thy jaws are gaping too wide!

FAFNER

They were not made
For idle talk,
But they will serve
To swallow thee.

SIEGFRIED

Hoho! Ferocious,
Merciless churl!
I have no fancy
To be eaten.

Better it seems to me
That without delay thou shouldst die!

FAFNER [*Roaring.*]

Pruh! Come,
Boy, with thy boasts!

SIEGFRIED [*Draws his sword.*]

Beware, growler!
The boaster comes!

[He springs towards Fafner and remains defiantly confronting him. Fafner drags himself further up the knoll and spits at Siegfried from his nostrils. Siegfried avoids the poison, springs nearer, and stands on one side. Fafner tries to reach him with his tail. Siegfried, who is nearly caught, springs over Fafner with one bound, and wounds him in the tail. Fafner roars, pulls his tail angrily away, and raises the front part of his body so that he may throw its full weight on Siegfried, thus offering his breast to the stroke. Siegfried quickly looks to see where his heart is, and thrusts his sword into it up to the hilt. Fafner raises himself still higher in his pain, and, when Siegfried has let go his sword and sprung aside, he sinks on the wound.]



Siegfried kills Fafner. See p. 56



SIEGFRIED

Lie there, envious brute! Nothung's point home has speeded!

FAFNER [*In a weaker voice.*]

Who art thou, boy bold-hearted,
That hast pierced my breast?
Who stirred up thy childish soul
To the murderous deed?
Thy brain schemed not the harm
Wrought by thy hand.

SIEGFRIED

Not much have I learned,
Not even who I am;
Thou thyself with thy taunting
Stirred me to fight and to slay.

FAFNER

O boy bright-eyed,
Who knowest not yet who thou art,
Whom thou hast murdered
Hear from me.

Two mighty giants there were,
Fasolt and Fafner;
The brothers now are both fallen.

For the cursèd gold
We got from the Gods

I did Fasolt to death.

He who now guards
The hoard as dragon,

Fafner, the last remaining,
Falls, by a rosy boy slain.

Boy in thy bloom,
Watch and be wary:

He who stirred thee blind to this deed
Takes thought how to compass thy death.

[Dying.]

Mark the ending!
Think on me!

SIEGFRIED

Who was my father?
Tell, if thou canst.
Dying, thou showest,
Wild one, much wisdom.
Siegfried my name is; haply
That may help thee to guess.

FAFNER

Siegfried!...

[He raises himself and dies.]

SIEGFRIED

The dead can tell no tidings.
My living sword, lead!
Lead onward, my sword!

[Fafner has rolled to the side in dying. Siegfried now draws the sword from his breast. In doing so his hand gets sprinkled with the blood; he draws it back quickly.]

The hot blood burns like fire!

[Involuntarily he raises his fingers to his mouth to suck the blood from them. As he looks musingly before him his attention becomes more and more attracted by the singing of the birds.]

I almost seem
To hear the birds speaking to me.
Is there a spell,
Perhaps, in the blood?
The curious bird up there—
Hark! he sings to me.

VOICE OF THE WOOD-BIRD

[From the branches of the lime-tree above Siegfried.]

Hei! Siegfried now owns
All the Nibelung hoard!
Oh! could he the hoard
In the cave but find!
Tarnhelm, if he could but win it,
Would help him to deeds of renown;
And could he discover the ring,
It would make him the lord of the world!





"The hot blood burns like fire!" See p 58.



SIEGFRIED

[Has listened holding his breath and beaming with delight.

Thanks, bonnie bird,
For the counsel good:
I follow the call!

*[He turns towards the back and descends to the cave,
where he at once disappears.*

Mime steals up, looking about him timidly to assure himself of Fafner's death. At the same time Alberich comes out of the cleft on the opposite side. He observes Mime, rushes on him and bars his way, as the latter turns towards the cave.

ALBERICH

On what errand
Furtive and sly,
Knave, dost thou slink?

MIME

Accursèd brother,
That thou shouldst come!
What brings thee here?

ALBERICH

Rogue, has my gold
Provoked thy greed?
Dost covet my goods?

MIME

Get thee gone quickly!
This corner is mine;
What huntest thou here?

ALBERICH

Have I disturbed thee,
Thief, at thy work,
Secret and sly?

MIME

What I have slaved
And toiled to win
Shall not escape me.

ALBERICH

Who was it robbed
The Rhine of gold for the ring?
And whose cunning wrought
The spell of magical might?

MIME

Who made the Tarnhelm,
Changing its wearer's form?
Though thou didst want it,
Was it designed by thee?

ALBERICH

And what of thyself
Couldst aright have fashioned, thou bungler?
The magic ring
Forced thee to master thy craft.

MIME

And where is the ring?
'Twas reft from thy clutch by the giants.
What thou hast lost
I will gain and keep by my guile.

ALBERICH

What the boy has won
Would the niggard deny him?
'Tis not thine; the hero
Who won it is now its lord.

MIME

I brought him up;
For my pains now he shall pay;
For its reward
My trouble has waited too long.

ALBERICH

Just for rearing him,
The old niggardly,
Beggardly knave,
Bold as brass,
A king now would become?
The ring would befit
Better a dog
Than bumpkin like thee.
Never to thee
The magical ring shall fall!

MIME [*Scratches his head.*]

Well, keep it, then,
And guard with care
The gleaming gold;
Be thou lord,
But treat me as a brother;
Give me against it
Tarnhelm for toy,
Fairly exchanged;
Divided thus,
There will be booty for both.

[He rubs his hands confidently.]

ALBERICH *[With a mocking laugh.]*

Share it with thee?
And the Tarnhelm too!
How sly thou art!
I could never
Sleep for a moment safely.

MIME *[Beside himself.]*

What! not even
Strike a bargain!
I must go bare,
Beggared of gain!
Thou wouldst leave me with nothing!

[Shrieking.]

ALBERICH

Nothing, not so
Much as a nail,
Shall fall to thy portion.

MIME *[In a fury.]*

Neither ring nor Tarnhelm
Shall thy hand touch, then;
'Tis I will not share!
I will call on Siegfried,
Summon the aid
Of his keen-edged sword;

The lad will make
Short work, dear brother, of thee!

ALBERICH

[Siegfried having appeared in the background.]

Turn and look there!
From the cavern hither he comes.

MIME

He will have chosen
Trivial toys.

ALBERICH

He bears the Tarnhelm!

MIME

Also the ring!

ALBERICH

Curst luck! The ring!

MIME *[Laughing maliciously.]*

Get him to give thee the ring now!
'Tis I, not thou, who shall win it.

ALBERICH

And yet to its lord
Must it at last be surrendered!

[He disappears in the cleft.]

[During the foregoing Siegfried, with Tarnhelm and ring, has come slowly and meditatively from the cave; he regards his booty thoughtfully, and stops on the knoll in the middle of the stage.]

SIEGFRIED

I do not know
Of what use

Ye are; I chose you
From out the heaped-up hoard
Because of friendly advice.
Meanwhile, of this day
Be ye worn as witness,
Recalling to mind
How with fallen Fafner I fought,
And yet could not learn how to fear.

[He hangs the Tarnhelm on his girdle and puts the ring on his finger. Silence. His notice is involuntarily drawn to the bird again, and he listens to him with breathless attention.]





THE WOOD-BIRD'S VOICE

Hei! Siegfried now owns
Both the helm and the ring!
Oh! let him not listen
To Mime, the false!

He were wise to be wary of
Mime's treacherous tongue.
He will understand
Mime's secret intent,
Because he has tasted the blood.

[Siegfried's mien and gestures show that he has understood the bird's song. He sees Mime approaching, and remains without moving, leaning on his sword, observant and self-contained, in his place on the knoll till the close of the following scene.]

MIME

[Steals forward, and observes Siegfried from the foreground.]

He weighs in his mind
The booty's worth;
Can there by chance
Have come this way
A Wanderer wise
Who talked to the child,
And taught him crafty runes?
Doubly sly
Be then the dwarf;
My snares must be cunning,
Cleverly set,
That with cajoling
And wily falsehoods
The insolent boy I may fool.

[He goes nearer to Siegfried and welcomes him with flattering gestures.]

Ha! Welcome, Siegfried!
Say, bold fighter,

Hast thou been taught how to fear?

SIEGFRIED

A teacher still is to find.

MIME

But the dragon grim
Has fallen before thee?
A fell and fierce monster was he.

SIEGFRIED

Though grim and spiteful the brute,
I grieve over his death,
While there live still, unpunished,
Blacker scoundrels than he was!
The one who bade me slay
I hate far more than the slain.

MIME [*Very friendly.*]

Have patience! Thou wilt not
Look on me long.

[*Sweetly.*]

In endless sleep
Soon thine eyelids will be sealed.
Thy uses are over,

[*As if praising him.*]

Done is the deed;
The only task left
For me is to win the booty.
Methinks that task will not tax me;
Thou wert always easy to fool.

SIEGFRIED

To me thou art plotting harm, then?

MIME [*Astonished.*]

What makes thee think that?

[*Continuing tenderly.*]

Siegfried, listen, my own one!
I have always loathed
Thee and all that are like thee.
 It was not from love
 That I reared thee with care:
The gold hid in Fafner's cave
I worked for as my reward.

[*As if he were promising him something nice.*]

If thou wilt not yield
It up to me,

[*As if he were ready to lay down his life for him.*]

Siegfried, my son,
Thou plainly must see

[*As if in friendly jest.*]

I have no choice but to slay thee!

SIEGFRIED

 That I am hated
 Pleases me;
But must I lose my life for thy pleasure?

MIME [*Angrily.*]

 I never said that;
 Thou hast made a mistake.
 See, thou art weary
 From stress of strife,
Burning with fever and thirst;
 Mime, the kind one,
 To cool thy thirst
Brought a quickening draught.
 While thy blade thou didst melt
 I brewed thee the drink;
 Touch it, and straight
Thy sword shall be mine,
And mine the hoard and Tarnhelm too.

[*Tittering.*]

SIEGFRIED

So thou of my sword
And all it has won me—
Ring and booty—wouldst rob me?

MIME [*Violently.*]

Why wilt mistake so my words!
Do I drivel or dote?
I use the utmost
Pains with my speech,
That what in my heart
I mean may be hidden;
And the stupid boy
Misunderstands what I say!
Open thy ears, boy,
And attend to me!
Hear, now, what Mime means.
Take this: the drink will refresh thee
As my drinks oft have done.
Many a time
When fretful and bad,
Though loth enough,
The draughts I brought thou hast swallowed.

SIEGFRIED

Of a cooling drink
I were glad;
Say, how has this one been brewed?

MIME

[*Jesting merrily, as if describing to him a pleasant state of intoxication which the liquor is to bring about.*]

Hei! Just drink it!
Trust to my skill.
In mist and darkness
Soon shall thy senses be sunk;
None to watch or ward them,
Stark-stretched shall thy limbs be.
Thou lying thus,

'Twere not hard
To take the booty and hide it;
But wert thou to awake,
Nevermore would
Mime be safe,
Even owning the ring.
So with the sword
He has made so sharp

[With a gesture of extravagant joy.]

First I will hack
The child's head off!
Then I shall have both rest and the ring!

[Tittering.]

SIEGFRIED

Thou wouldst, then, slay me when sleeping?

MIME *[Furiously.]*

Do what, child? Did I say that?

[He takes pains to assume the utmost tenderness. Carefully and distinctly.]

I only mean
To chop off thy head!

[With the appearance of heartfelt solicitude for Siegfried's health.]

For even if I
Had loathed thee less,
And had not thy scoffs
And my drudgery shameful
So loudly urged to vengeance,

[Gently.]

I should never dare to pause
Till from my path I thrust thee:

[Jestingly again.]

How else could I come by the booty,
Which Alberich covets as well?

[He pours the liquid into the drinking-horn, and offers it to Siegfried with pressing gestures.]

Now, my Wälsung,
Wolf-begot,
Drink the draught and be choked,
And never drink again!

[Tittering.]

SIEGFRIED *[Threatens him with his sword.]*

Taste thou my sword,
Loathsome babbler!

[As if seized by violent loathing, he gives Mime a sharp stroke with his sword. Instantly Mime falls dead to the ground. Alberich's voice in mocking laughter from the cleft.]

SIEGFRIED

[Looking at Mime on the ground, quietly hangs his sword again on his belt.]

Envy's wage
Pays Nothung;
'Twas for this that I forged him.

[He picks up Mime's body, carries it to the knoll, and throws it into the cave.]

In the cavern, there,
Lie on the hoard;
With steadfast guile
The gold thou hast gained:
Now let it belong to its master!
And a watchman good
I give thee, that thieves
Never may enter and steal.

[With a great effort he pushes the body of the dragon in front of the entrance to the cave, which it completely stops]

up.

There lie thou too,
Dragon grim;
Along with thy foe
Greedy of gain

Thou shalt guard the glittering gold:
So both at last shall rest in peace.

[He looks down thoughtfully into the cave for a time, and then turns slowly to the front of the stage as if tired. He passes his hand over his brow.]

Hot I feel
From the heavy toil;
Fast and furious
Flows my blood,

My hand burns on my head.

High stands the sun in heaven;
From azure heights
Falls his gaze

Through a cloudless sky on my crown.

Pleasant shadows will cool me under the linden.

[He stretches himself out under the lime-tree, and again looks up through the boughs.]

If only, pretty warbler,
So long and so
Rudely disturbed,

I could once more hear thee singing!

On a branch I see thee
Merrily swaying;
Chirping and chattering,
Brothers and sisters

Are happily hovering round.

But I—I am alone,
Without brother or sister;

My mother died,
My father fell,

Unseen by their son!

The one soul I knew
Was a loathsome old dwarf;

[Warmly.]

Love he festered not
By kindness;
Many a cunning
Snare did he set me;
At last I was forced to slay him.

[He looks sorrowfully up at the branches.]

Bird sweet and friendly,
I ask thee a boon:
Wilt thou find for me
A comrade true?—
Wilt thou choose for me the right one?
So oft I have called,
And yet no one has come!
Thou, my friend,
Wilt manage it better,
So wise thy counsel has been.

[Softly.]

Now sing! I hearken to thy song.

THE WOOD-BIRD'S VOICE

Hei! Siegfried has slain
The deceitful dwarf!
I know for him now
A glorious bride.
She sleeps where rugged rocks soar;
Ringed is her chamber by fire.
Who battles the flames,
Wakens the bride,
Brünnhilde wins as reward.

SIEGFRIED

[Starts up impetuously from his seat.]

O lovely song,
Flower-sweet breath!
Thy yearning music
Burns in my breast!
Like leaping flame
It kindles my heart.
What races so swift

Through soul and senses?
Sweetest of friends, O say!

[He listens.]

THE WOOD-BIRD'S VOICE

Grieving yet glad,
Love I am singing;
Blissful, from woe
Weaving my song:
They only who yearn understand.

SIEGFRIED

Forth, forth then,
Swift and rejoicing!
Forth from the wood to the fell!
Just one thing more
I would learn, sweet singer:
Say, shall I break through the fire?
Can I awaken the bride?

[He listens again.]

THE WOOD-BIRD'S VOICE

No coward wins
Brünnhild' for bride,
Or wakes the maid:
Only a heart without fear.

SIEGFRIED *[Shouting with joy.]*

The foolish boy
Who has never learned fear,
Dear bird, that dullard am I!
To-day I took endless
Trouble in vain,
To find out what fear was from Fafner.
With longing I burn
Now from Brünnhild' to learn it.
What path soonest leads to the fell?

[The bird flutters up, circles over Siegfried, and flies hesitatingly before him.]

SIEGFRIED

The bird to my goal will guide me.

Fly where thou wilt,
I follow thy flight!

[He runs after the bird, who for a time flies uncertainly hither and thither to tease him; at last he follows him, when, taking a definite direction towards the back, the bird flies away.]



THE THIRD ACT

A wild spot at the foot of a rocky mountain which rises precipitously at the back on the left. Night, storm, lightning and violent thunder. The latter ceases shortly, but the lightning continues to flash from the clouds for some time. The Wanderer enters and walks resolutely towards a cavernous opening in a rock in the foreground, and takes up his position there, leaning on his spear, while he calls the following towards the entrance to the cave.

WANDERER

Waken, Wala!

Wala! Awake!

From thy long sleep,

Slumberer, wake at my call!

I summon thee forth:

Arise! Arise!

From cloud-covered caves

In earth's dim abysses, arise!

Erda! Erda,

Old as the world!

From depths dark and hidden

Rise to the day!

With song I call thee,
I sing to wake thee,
From deep dreams of wisdom
Bid thee arise.
All-knowing one!
Fount of knowledge!
Erda! Erda,
Old as the world!

Waken! Awaken, thou Vala! Awaken!

[A dim bluish light begins to dawn in the cavern. In this light Erda, during the following, rises very gradually from below. She appears to be covered with hoar-frost, which glitters on her hair and garments.]

ERBA

Loud is the call;
Strong the spell that summons;
I have been roused
From dark and wise dreams:
Who wakes me from my sleep?

WANDERER

'Tis I who awake thee
With song of magic,
That what in slumber
Was folded fast may rise.
The wide earth ranging,
Far I have roamed,
Seeking for knowledge,
Wisdom at fountains primeval.
No one that lives
Is wiser than thou;
Thou knowest all
In the hidden depths,
What moves on hill,
Dale, in water and air.
Where life is found,
There thou art breathing;
And where brains ponder,
There is thy thought.
Men say that all
Knowledge is thine.
That I might ask of thee counsel,

I have called thee from sleep.

ERBA

My sleep is dreaming,
My dreaming brooding,
My brooding wisdom's calm working.
But while I sleep
The Norns are wakeful:
They twine the rope,
And deftly weave what I know.
The Norns thou shouldst have questioned.

WANDERER

In thrall to the world
Sit the Norns weaving;
They cannot alter
What ordained is.
But I would fain
Be taught of thy wisdom
How a wheel on the roll can be stayed.

ERBA

Dark and troubled
My mind grows through men's deeds.
A God once subdued
The Wala's self to his will.
A wish-maiden
I bore to Wotan;
From fields of battle
She brought him slain heroes;
Bold is she
And wise to boot:
Why waken me?
Why seek not counsel
From Erda's and Wotan's child?

WANDERER

The Valkyrie, Brünnhild'?
Meanest thou her?
She flouted the storm-controller,
When, sorely urged, himself he controlled.
What the swayer and lord
Of battles longed for,

What he refrained from
Against his desire,
Brünnhilde, bold,
Rash, over-confident,
When the fight was at fiercest,
Strove for herself to perform.
War-father
Punished the maid:
He pressed slumber into her eyes,
On the flame-girt rock she sleeps.
The hallowed maid
Will waken alone,
That she may love and wed with a man.
Small hope of answer from her.

ERBA

Dazed have I felt
Since I woke;
Wild, confused
Seems the world!
The Valkyrie,
The Wala's child,
Bound lay, fettered by sleep,
While her all-knowing mother slept!
Does revolt's teacher
Chide revolt?
Does the deed he urged to
Anger him, done?
He who guards the right,
To whom vows are sacred,
Hinders the right?—
Reigns through falsehood?
Let me down to the dark,
That my wisdom may slumber!

WANDERER

I will not let thee descend,
For a potent magic I wield.
All-wise one,
Planted by thee
The sting of care was
In Wotan's dauntless heart;
For, through thy wisdom,
Downfall and shameful

Doom were foretold him;
My mind was fettered by fear.
Now let the world's
Wisest of women
Answer and say
How a God may conquer his care.

ERBA

Thou art not
What thou hast said.
Why art thou come, wild and wayward,
To trouble the Wala's sleep?

WANDERER

Thou art not
What thou hast dreamed.
Thy end draws near,
Mother of wisdom;
Thy wisdom at war
With me shall perish.
Knowest thou Wotan's will?

[A long silence.]

I tell thee
That thou mayest sleep
For evermore unvexed by care.
That the Gods are doomed,
No longer dismays me,
Since I will it so.
What, with myself at war, in anguish,
Despairing, once I resolved,
Gaily, gladly,
With delight I now do.
Mad with disgust I decreed once
The world to the Nibelung's hate,
But now to the valiant Wälsung
I leave it with joy.
One who never knew me,
Though chosen by me,
A boy bold and fearless,
Helped not by Wotan,
Has won the Nibelung's ring.
Blest in love,

Void of all envy,
On him shall fall harmless
Alberich's curse,
For no fear does he know.
Soon thy child and mine,
Brünnhild',
Shall be waked by him;
And when waked
Our child shall achieve
A deed to redeem the world.
So slumber again,
Closing thine eyelids;
Dreaming behold my downfall!
Whatever comes after,
The God rejoicing
Yields to youth ever young.
Descend, then, Erda,
Mother of fear!
World-sorrow!
Descend! Descend!
And sleep for aye!

[Erda, whose eyes are already closed, and who has gradually been sinking deeper, disappears entirely. The cavern has become quite dark again.]

Dawn lights up the stage; the storm has ceased. The Wanderer has gone close to the cave, and leans with his back against it, facing the wings.

WANDERER

Lo! Yonder Siegfried comes.

[He remains where he is without changing his position. Siegfried's wood-bird flutters towards the foreground. Suddenly the bird stops in his direct flight, flutters to and fro in alarm, and disappears quickly towards the back.]

SIEGFRIED *[Enters and stops.]*

My bird has vanished from sight!
With fluttering wings
And lovely song
Blithely he showed me the way,
And then forsook me and fled!
I must discover

The rock for myself:
The path I followed so far
'Twere best still to pursue.

[He goes towards the back.]

WANDERER *[Still in the same position.]*

Boy, pray tell me,
Whither away?

SIEGFRIED *[Halts and turns round.]*

Did some one speak?
Perhaps he knows the road.

[He goes nearer to the Wanderer.]

I would find a rock
That by flaming fire is surrounded:
There sleeps a maid
Whom I would awake.

WANDERER

Who bade thee seek
This rock flame-circled?—
Taught thee to yearn for the woman?

SIEGFRIED

It was a singing
Woodland bird;
He gave me welcome tidings.

WANDERER

A wood-bird chatters idly
What no man understands;
How then couldst thou tell
The song's true meaning?

SIEGFRIED

Because of the blood
Of a dragon grim
That fell before me at Neidhöhl'—

The burning blood
Had scarce touched my tongue
When the sense of the singer grew plain.

WANDERER

Who was it urged thee on
To try thy strength,
And slay this dragon so dread?

SIEGFRIED

My guide was Mime,
A faithless dwarf:
What fear is fain he had taught me.
But 'twas the dragon
Roused me himself,
Wrathful, to strike the blow;
For he threatened me with his jaws.

WANDERER

Who forged the sword
So hard and keen
That it slew the daunting foe?

SIEGFRIED

I forged it myself
When the smith was beaten;
Swordless else I should have been still.

WANDERER

But who made
The mighty splinters
From which the sword was welded strong?

SIEGFRIED

What know I of that?
I only know
That the splintered steel was useless
Were not the sword forged anew.

WANDERER

[Bursts out laughing with gleeful good-humour.]

I fully agree.

SIEGFRIED [*Surprised.*

At what dost thou laugh?

Prying greybeard!

Prithee have done;

Keep me no longer here talking.

Speak if thou knowest

Whither my way lies;

And hold thy tongue

Unless thou canst tell.

WANDERER

Good boy, have patience!

If I seem old,

More need to show me due honour.

SIEGFRIED

What an odd notion!

My whole life long

A hateful old man

Has blocked my pathway;

Him I at last swept aside.

Standest thou longer

Trying here to stay me,

I warn thee frankly

[*With a significant gesture.*

That thou like Mime shalt fare.

[*He goes still nearer to the Wanderer.*

But what art thou like?

Why wearest thou

Such a monstrous hat,

And why hangs it so over thy face?

WANDERER [*Still without altering his position.*

That is the way I wear it

When against the wind I go.

SIEGFRIED [*Inspecting him still more closely.*]

But an eye beneath it is wanting.

Perchance by some one

Whose way thou didst

Too boldly bar

It has been struck out.

Take thyself off,

Or else very soon

The other thou shalt lose also!

WANDERER

I see, my son,

Where thou art blind,

And hence thy jaunty assurance.

With the eye that is

Amissing in me

Thou lookest now on the other

That still is left me for sight.

SIEGFRIED

[Who has been listening thoughtfully, now bursts involuntarily into hearty laughter.]

Thy foolish talk sets me laughing!

But come, this nonsense must finish.

At once show me my way;

Then proceed thou too on thine own;

For me further

Use thou hast none:

So speak, or off thou shalt pack!

WANDERER [*Gently.*]

Child, didst thou know

Who I am,

Thy scoffs I had been spared!

From one so dear,

Insult hard to endure is.

Long have I loved

Thy radiant race,

Though from my fury

In terror it shrank.

Thou whom I love so,

All too fair one,
Rouse my wrath not to-day;
It would ruin both thee and me.

SIEGFRIED

Still art thou dumb,
Stubborn old man?
Stand to one side, then;
That pathway, I know,
Leads to the slumbering maid;
For thither the wood-bird
Was guiding when he flew off.

[It suddenly becomes dark again.]

WANDERER

[Breaking out in anger and assuming a commanding attitude.]

In fear of its life it fled.
It knew that here
Was the ravens' lord;
Dire his plight were he caught!
The way that it guided
Thou shalt not go!

SIEGFRIED

[Amazed, falls hack and assumes a defiant attitude.]

Hoho! Interferer!
Who then art thou
That wilt not let me pass?

WANDERER

Fear thou the rock's defender!
My might it is
Holds the maiden fettered by sleep.
He who would wake her,
He who would win her,
Impotent makes me for ever.

A burning sea

Encircles the maid,
Fires fiercely glowing
Surround the rock;
He who craves the bride
The flames must boldly defy.

[He points with his spear towards the rocky heights.]

Look up above!
That light dost thou see?
The surging heat,
The splendour, grows;
Clouds of fire rolling,
Tongues of flame writhing,
Roaring and raging,
Come ravening down.
Thy head now
Is flooded with light;

[A flickering glow, increasing in brightness, appears on the summit of the rock.]

The fire will seize thee,
Seize and devour thee.—
Back, back, there, foolhardy boy!

SIEGFRIED

Stand back, old babbler, thyself!
For where the fire is burning,
To Brünnhilde yonder I go!

[He advances; the Wanderer bars his way.]

WANDERER

Hast thou no fear of the fire,
Then barred by my spear be thy path!
I still hold the haft
That conquers all;
The sword thou dost wield
It shivered long ago:
Upon my spear eternal
Break it once more.

[He stretches out his spear.]

SIEGFRIED [*Drawing his sword.*]

'Tis my father's foe,
Found here at last!
Now, then, for vengeance!
In luck am I!
Brandish thy spear:

My sword will hew it in twain!

[With one stroke he hews the Wanderer's spear in two pieces. Lightning flashes from the spear up towards the rocks, where the light, until now dim, begins to flame brighter and brighter. A violent thunder-clap, which quickly dies away, accompanies the stroke.]

WANDERER

[Quietly picking up the pieces of the spear which have fallen at his feet.]

Fare on! I cannot prevent thee!

[He suddenly disappears in utter darkness.]

SIEGFRIED

With his spear in splinters
Vanished the coward!

[The growing brightness of the clouds of fire, which keep sinking down lower and lower, attracts Siegfried's eye.]

Ha! Rapturous fire!
Glorious light!
Shining my pathway
Opens before me.
In fiery flames plunging,
Through fire I will win to the bride!
Hoho! Hahei!
To summon a comrade I call!

[He sets his horn to his lips and plunges into the fiery billows, which, flowing down from the heights, now spread over the foreground. Siegfried, who is soon lost to view, seems, from the sound of his horn, to be ascending the mountain. The flames begin to fade, and change gradually into a dissolving cloud lit by the glow of dawn.]

The thin cloud has resolved itself into a fine rose-coloured veil of mist, which so divides that the upper part rises and disappears, disclosing the bright blue sky of day; whilst on the edge of the rocky height, now becoming visible (exactly the same scene as in the third Act of "The Valkyrie"), a veil of mist reddened by the dawn remains hanging, which suggests the magic fire still flaming below. The arrangement of the scene is exactly the same as at the end of "The Valkyrie." In the foreground, under a wide-spreading fir-tree, lies Brünnhilde in full shining armour, her helmet on her head, and her long shield covering her, in deep sleep.

SIEGFRIED

[Coming from the back, reaches the rocky edge of the summit, and at first shows only the upper part of his body. He looks round him for a longtime in amaze. Softly.

Solitude blissful
On sun-caressed height!

[He climbs to the summit, and, standing on a rock at the edge of the precipice at the back, gazes at the scene in astonishment. He looks into the wood at the side and comes forward a little.

What lies in shadow,
Asleep in the wood?
A charger
Resting in slumber deep.

[Approaching slowly he stops in surprise when, still at some little distance from her, he sees Brünnhilde.

What radiant thing lies yonder?
The steel, how it gleams and glints!
Is it the glare
That dazzles me still?
Shining armour?
Shall it be mine?

[He lifts up the shield and sees Brünnhilde's form; her face, however, is for the most part hidden by her helmet.

Ha! It covers a man!
The sight stirs thoughts sweet and strange!
The helm must lie
Hard on his head;
Lighter lay he

Were it unloosed.

[He loosens the helmet carefully and removes it from the head of the sleeper. Long curling hair breaks forth. Tenderly.]

Ah! how fair!

[He stands lost in contemplation.]

Clouds gleaming softly
Fringe with their fleeces
This lake of heaven bright;
Laughing, the glorious
Face of the sun
Shines through the billowy clouds!

[He bends lower over the sleeper.]

His bosom is heaving,
Stirred by his breath;
Ought I to loosen the breastplate?

[He tries to loosen the breastplate.]

Come, my sword,
Cleave thou the iron!

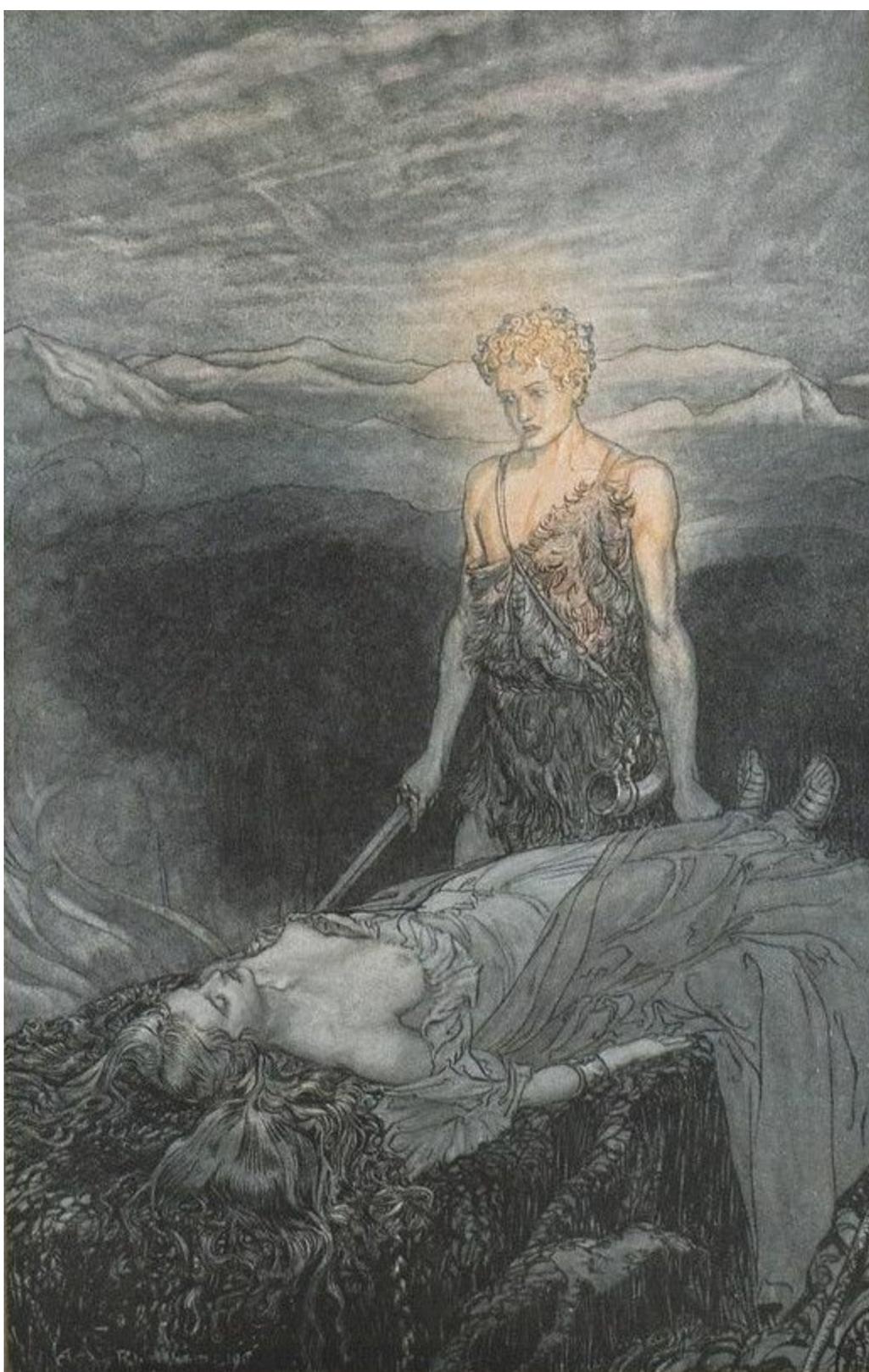
[He draws his sword and gently and carefully cuts through the rings on both sides of the breastplate; he then lifts this off along with the greaves, so that Brünnhilde now lies before him in a soft woman's robe. He draws back startled and amazed.]

That is no man!

[He stares at the sleeper, greatly excited.]

Magical rapture
Pierces my heart;
Fixed is my gaze,
Burning with terror;
I reel, my heart faints and fails!

[He is seized with sudden terror.]



"Magical rapture
Pierces my heart;
Fixed is my gaze,
Burning with terror;
I reel, my heart faints and fails!"
See p. 86



On whom shall I call,
For aid imploring?
Mother! Mother!

Remember me!

[He sinks as if fainting on to Brünnhilde's bosom; then he starts up sighing.]

How waken the maid,
Causing her eyelids to open?

[Tenderly.]

Her eyelids to open?
What if her gaze strike me blind!
How shall I dare
To look on their light?
All rocks and sways
And swirls and revolves;
Uttermost longing
Burns and consumes me;
My hand on my heart,
It trembles and shakes!
What ails thee, coward?
Is this what fear means?
O mother! Mother!
Thy dauntless child!

[Very tenderly.]

A woman lying asleep
Has taught him what fear is at last!
How conquer my fear?
How brace my heart?
That, myself, I waken,
I must waken the sleeper!

[As he approaches the sleeping figure again he is overcome by tenderer emotions at the sight. He bends down lower; sweetly.]

Softly quivers
Her flower-sweet mouth!
Its lovely trembling
Has charmed my despair!
Ah! And the fragrant,
Blissful warmth of her breath!

[As if in despair.]

Awaken! Awaken,
Maiden divine!

[He gazes at her.]

She hears me not.
New life from the sweetest
Of lips I will suck, then,
Even though kissing I die!

[He sinks, as if dying, on to the sleeping figure, and, closing his eyes, fastens his lips on Brünnhilde's. Brünnhilde opens her eyes. Siegfried starts up, and remains standing before her.]

BRÜNNHILDE

[Rises slowly to a sitting posture. Raising her arms, she greets the earth and sky with solemn gestures on her return to consciousness.]

Sun, I hail thee!
Hail, O light!
Hail, O glorious day.
Long I have slept;
I am awake.
What hero broke
Brünnhilde's sleep?

SIEGFRIED

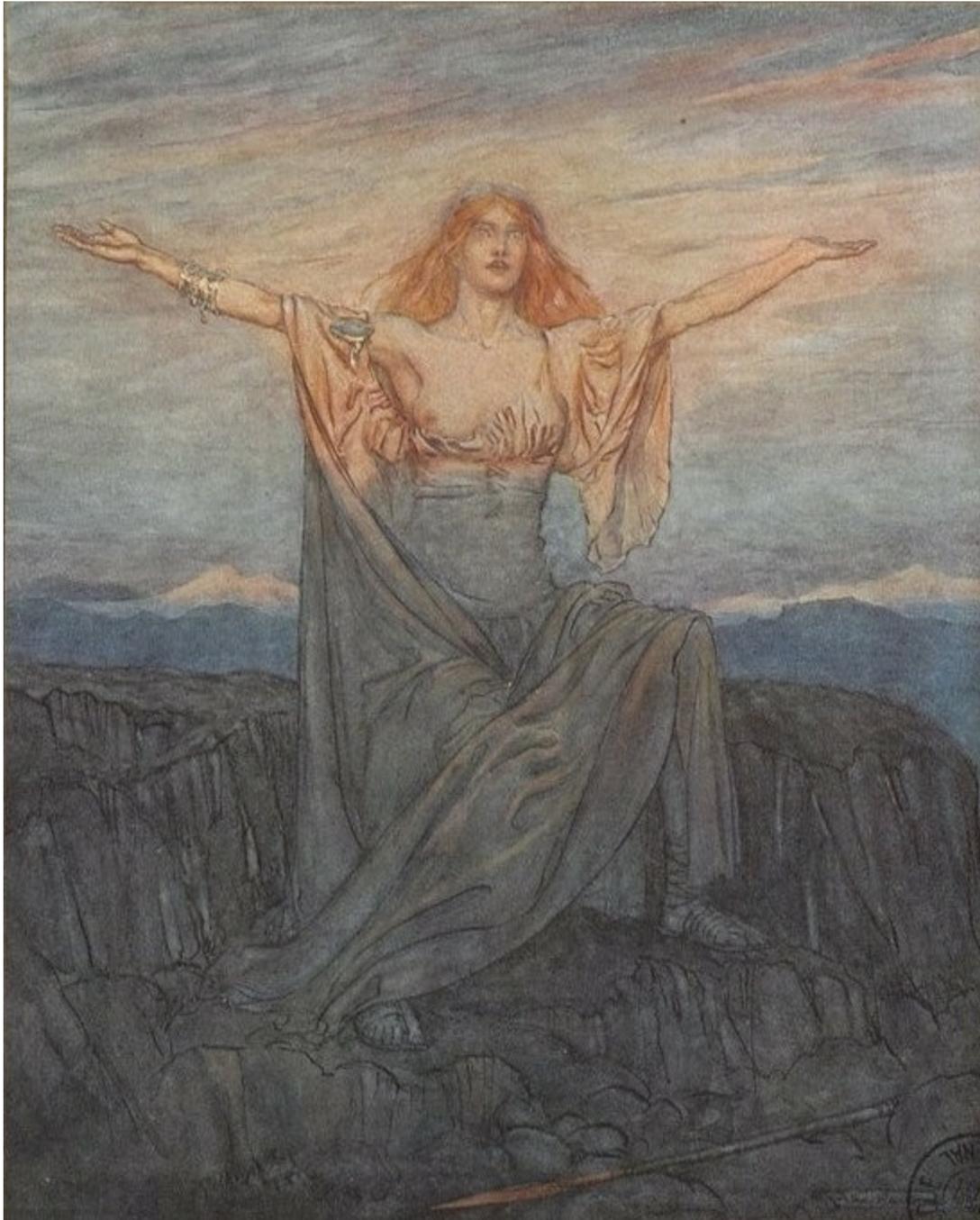
[Awed and entranced by her look and her voice, stands as if spellbound.]

Through the fierce fires flaming
Round this rock I burst;
I unloosened thy helmet strong:
I awoke thee.
Siegfried am I.

BRÜNNHILDE *[Sitting upright.]*

Gods, I hail you!
Hail, O World!
Hail, O Earth, in thy glory!

My sleep is over now,
My eyes open.
It is Siegfried
Who bids me wake!



"Sun, I hail thee!
Hail, O light!
Hail, O glorious day!"
See p. 88



SIEGFRIED

[Breaking forth in rapturous exaltation.]

I hail thee, mother
Who gave me birth!
Hail, O Earth,
That nourished my life
So that I see those eyes
Beam on me, blest among men!

BRÜNNHILDE

I hail the mother
Who gave thee birth!
Hail, O Earth,
That nourished thy life!
No eye dared see me but thine;
To thee alone might I wake!

[Both remain full of beaming ecstasy, lost in mutual contemplation.]

BRÜNNHILDE

O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Hero most blest!
Of life the awaker,
Conquering light!
O joy of the world, couldst know
How thou wert always loved!
Thou wert my gladness,
My care wert thou!
Thy life I sheltered
Before it was thine;
My shield was thy shelter
Ere thou wert born:
So long loved wert thou, Siegfried!

SIEGFRIED *[Softly and timidly.]*

My mother did not die, then?
Did the dear one but sleep?

BRÜNNHILDE

[Smiles and stretches her hand out kindly towards him.]

Adorable child!
Nevermore thy mother will greet thee!

Thyself am I,
If I be blest with thy love.
All things I know
Known not to thee;
Yet only of my love
Born is my wisdom.

O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Conquering light!
I loved thee always,
For I alone
Divined the thought hid by Wotan:
Hidden thought I dared not
So much as utter;
Thought that I thought not,
Feeling it only;
For which I worked,
Battled and strove,
Defying even
Him who conceived it;
For which in penance
Prisoned I lay,
Because thought it was not,
But felt alone!
For what the thought was—
Say, canst thou guess it?—
Was love of thee, nothing but that!

SIEGFRIED

How wondrous sounds
Thy rapturous song!
But dark the meaning to me.

[Tenderly.

Of thine eyes the splendour
I see plain,
I can feel thee breathing
Soft and warm,
Sweet can hear
The singing of thy voice,
But what thou sayest I strive
Vainly to understand.
I cannot grasp clearly
Things so far distant;

Needed is every sense
To feel and behold thee!
By laming fear
Fettered am I,
For how to fear
Thou hast taught me at last;
Thou who hast bound me
In bonds of such power,
Give me my courage again!

[He remains in great excitement with his yearning gaze fixed on her.]

BRÜNNHILDE

[Turns her head gently aside and looks towards the wood.]

I see there Grane,
My sacred horse;
In gladness he grazes
Who slept with me!
He too has by Siegfried been waked.

SIEGFRIED

[Without changing his position.]

My gaze on a mouth
Most lovely is feasting;
My lips are afire
With passionate yearning
For the pasture sweet that I look on!

BRÜNNHILDE

[Points to her armour, which she now perceives.]

I see there the shield
That sheltered heroes;
And there is the helmet
That hid my head:
It shields, it hides me no more!

SIEGFRIED *[With fire.]*

By a glorious maid
My heart has been hurt
Wounds in my head
A woman has struck:
I came without shield or helm!

BRÜNNHILDE [*With increased sadness.*

I see there the breastplate's
Glittering steel;
A keen-edged sword
Sundered the rings,
From the form of the maiden
Loosened the mail:
Nor shelter nor shield is left
To the weak and sorrowful maid!

SIEGFRIED [*With heat.*

Through billows of fire
I battled to thee,
No buckler or breastplate
Sheltered or screened;
The flames have won
Their way to my heart;
My blood hot-surgings
Rushes and leaps;
A ravaging fire
Is kindled within me:
The flames that shone
Round Brünnhilde's rock
Are burning now in my breast!
O maid, extinguish the fire!
Calm the commotion and rage!

[He has embraced her passionately.]

BRÜNNHILDE

*[Springs up, resists him with the utmost strength of terror,
and flies to the other side of the stage.]*

No God's touch have I known!
With awe the heroes
Greeted the maiden:

Holy came she from Walhall.
Woe's me! Woe's me!
Woe the affront,
The bitter disgrace!
He wounds me sore
Who waked me from sleep!
He has broken breastplate and helm;
Now I am Brünnhild' no more.

SIEGFRIED

Thou art to me
The dreaming maid still;
Brünnhilde lies
Lapped still in sleep.
Awake, be a woman to me!

BRÜNNHILDE [*Bewildered.*

Confused are my senses,
My mind is blank:
Wisdom, dost thou forsake me?

SIEGFRIED

Said not thy song
Thy wisdom drew
Its light from thy love of me?

BRÜNNHILDE [*Staring before her.*

Shadows drear-falling
Darken my gaze;
Mine eyes see dimly,
The light dies out,
Deep is the dark.
From dread-haunted mists
Fear in a frenzy
Comes writhing forth;
Terror stalks me
And grows with each stride!

[*She hides her eyes with her hands in violent terror.*

SIEGFRIED

[*Gently removing her hands from her eyes.*]

Dread lies dark
On eyelids bound;
With the fetters vanish

The fear and gloom;
Rise from the dark and behold:
Bright as the sun is the day.

BRÜNNHILDE [*Much agitated.*]

Flaunting my shame,
Bright as the sun shines the day!
O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Pity my woe!
I have always
Lived and shall live—
Always in sweet,
Rapturous yearning,
And always to make thee blest!

O Siegfried! Glorious
Wealth of the world!
Laughing hero!
Life of the earth!
Ah, forbear!
Leave me in peace!
Touch me not,
Mad with delirious frenzy!
Break me not,
Bring me not under thy yoke,
Undo not the loved one so dear!

Hast thou rejoiced
Thyself to see
Reflected clear in the stream?
If into wavelets
The water were stirred,
And ruffled the limpid
Calm of the brook,
Thy face would not be there,
Only water's rippling unrest.
So untouched let me stay,
Trouble me not,
And thy face

Mirrored bright in me
Will smile to thee always,
Gay and merry and glad!
O Siegfried,
Radiant child,
Love thyself
And leave me in peace;
O bring not thine own to naught!

SIEGFRIED

I love thee;
Didst thou but love me!
Myself I have lost;
Ah, would thou wert won!
A fair-flowing flood
Before me rolls;
With all my senses
Nothing I see
But buoyant, beautiful billows.
If it refuse
To mirror my face,
Just as I am,
To assuage my fever,
Myself I will plunge
Straight in the stream:—
If only the billows
Would blissfully drown me,
My yearning lost in the flood!
Awaken, Brünnhilde!
Waken, O maid!
Laughing and living,
Sweetest delight,
Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!

BRÜNNHILDE [*With deep feeling.*]

Thine, Siegfried!
I was from of old!

SIEGFRIED [*With fire.*]

What thou hast been
That be thou still!

BRÜNNHILDE

Thine I will
Always be!

SIEGFRIED

What thou wilt be
Be thou to-day!
Clasped in my arms
And closely embraced,
Heart upon heart
Beating in rapture,
Glances aglow,
And breath mingled hungrily,
Eye in eye and
Mouth on mouth!
All that thou wert

And wilt be, be thou it now!
The fear and the fever would vanish
Were Brünnhild' now mine!

BRÜNNHILDE

Were I now thine?

Heavenly calm
Is tossing and raging;
Light that was pure
Flames into passion;
Wisdom divine
Forsakes me and flies;
Jubilant love
Has scared it away!

If I be thine?
Siegfried! Siegfried!
Canst thou not see?
By the blaze of my eyes
Thou art not struck blind?
In my arms' embrace
Thou surely must burn!
As my blood like a torrent
Surges and leaps,
The fire fierce-flaming
Dost thou not feel?
Fearest thou, Siegfried?
Fearest thou not

The wild, love-frenzied maid?

SIEGFRIED [*With a shock of joy.*]

Ha!

As the blood swift-surgings is kindled,
As our eyes devour one another,
As our arms cling close in their rapture,
Dauntless again
My courage swells,
And the fear I failed
For so long to learn,
The fear that I scarcely
Learned from thee—
The stupid boy fears
That fear is completely forgot!

[*With the last words he has involuntarily let Brünnhilde go.*]

BRÜNNHILDE [*Laughing wildly with joy.*]

Oh, valorous boy!
Oh, glorious hero!
Unwitting source
Of wonderful deeds!
Laughing, laughing I love thee;
Laughing welcome my blindness;
Laughing let us go doomwards,
Laughing go down to death!

Farewell Walhall's
Radiant world,
Its stately halls
In the dust laid low!
Farewell, glittering
Pomp divine!
End in bliss,
O immortal race!
Norns, rend in sunder
Your rope of runes!
Dusk steal darkly
Over the Gods!
Night of their downfall
Dimly descend!

Now Siegfried's star
Is rising for me;
He is for ever
And for aye,
My wealth, my world,
My all in all:
Love ever radiant,
Laughing death!

SIEGFRIED

*[While Brünnhilde repeats the foregoing, beginning at
"Farewell Walhall's Radiant world."]*

Laughing thou wakest,
Thou my delight!
Brünnhilde lives,
Brünnhilde laughs!
Hail, O day
In glory arisen!
Hail, O Sun
That shines from on high!
Hail, O light
From the darkness sprung!
Hail, O world
Where Brünnhilde dwells!
She wakes! She lives!
She greets me with laughter!
Splendour streams
From Brünnhilde's star!





Brünnhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms. See p. 99.



SIEGFRIED

She is for ever
And for aye
My wealth, my world,
My all in all,
Love ever radiant,
Laughing death!

[Brünnhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms. The curtain falls.]



THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



CHARACTERS

SIEGFRIED
GUNTHER
HAGEN
ALBERICH
BRÜNNHILDE
GUTRUNE
WALTRAUTE
THE THREE NORNS
THE RHINE-MAIDENS
VASSALS
WOMEN

SCENES OF ACTION

PRELUDE: ON THE VALKYRIES' ROCK

- I. THE HALL OF GUNTHER'S DWELLING ON THE RHINE.
THE VALKYRIES' ROCK
- II. IN FRONT OF GUNTHER'S HALL
- III. A WOODED REGION ON THE RHINE. GUNTHER'S HALL





PRELUDE

The curtain rises slowly. The scene is the same as at the close of the second day, on the Valkyries' rock; night. In the background, from below, firelight shines. The three Norns, tall women in long, dark, veil-like drapery. The first (eldest) lies in the foreground, to the right, under the spreading pine-tree; the second (younger) is stretched on a shelving rock in front of the cave; the third (youngest) fits in the centre at the back on a rock near the peak. Motionless, gloomy silence.

THE FIRST NORN

What light glimmers there?

THE SECOND NORN

Is it already dawn?

THE THIRD NORN

Loge's host
Glow in flame around the rock.
It is night.
Why spin we not, singing the while?

THE SECOND NORN [*To the first.*]

Where for our spinning and singing
Wilt thou fasten the rope?

THE FIRST NORN

[While she loosens a golden rope from herself and ties one end of it to a branch of the pine-tree.]

I sing and wind the rope
Badly or well, as may be.
At the world-ash-tree
Once I wove,
When from the stem
There bourgeoned strong

The boughs of a sacred wood.
In the shadows cool
A fountain flowed;
Wisdom whispered
Low from its wave;
Of holy things I sang.
A dauntless God
Came to drink at the well;
For the draught he drank
He paid with the loss of an eye.
From the world-ash-tree
Wotan broke a holy bough;
From the bough he cut
And shaped the shaft of a spear.

As time rolled on the wood
Wasted and died of the wound;
Sere, leafless and barren,
Wan withered the tree;
Sadly the flow
Of the fountain failed;
Troubled grew
My sorrowful song.
And now no more
At the world-ash-tree I weave;
I needs must fasten
Here on the pine-tree my rope.
Sing, O sister—
Catch as I throw—
Canst thou tell us why?

THE SECOND NORN

*[Winds the rope thrown to her round a projecting rock at
the entrance of the cave.]*

Runes of treaties
Well weighed and pondered
Cut were by Wotan
In the shaft,
Which wielding, he swayed the world.
A hero bold
In fight then splintered the spear,
The hallowed haft
With its treaties cleaving in twain.

Then bade Wotan

Walhall's heroes

Hew down the world-ash-tree

Forthwith,

Both the stem and boughs sere and barren.

The ash-tree sank;

Sealed was the fountain that flowed.

Round the sharp edge

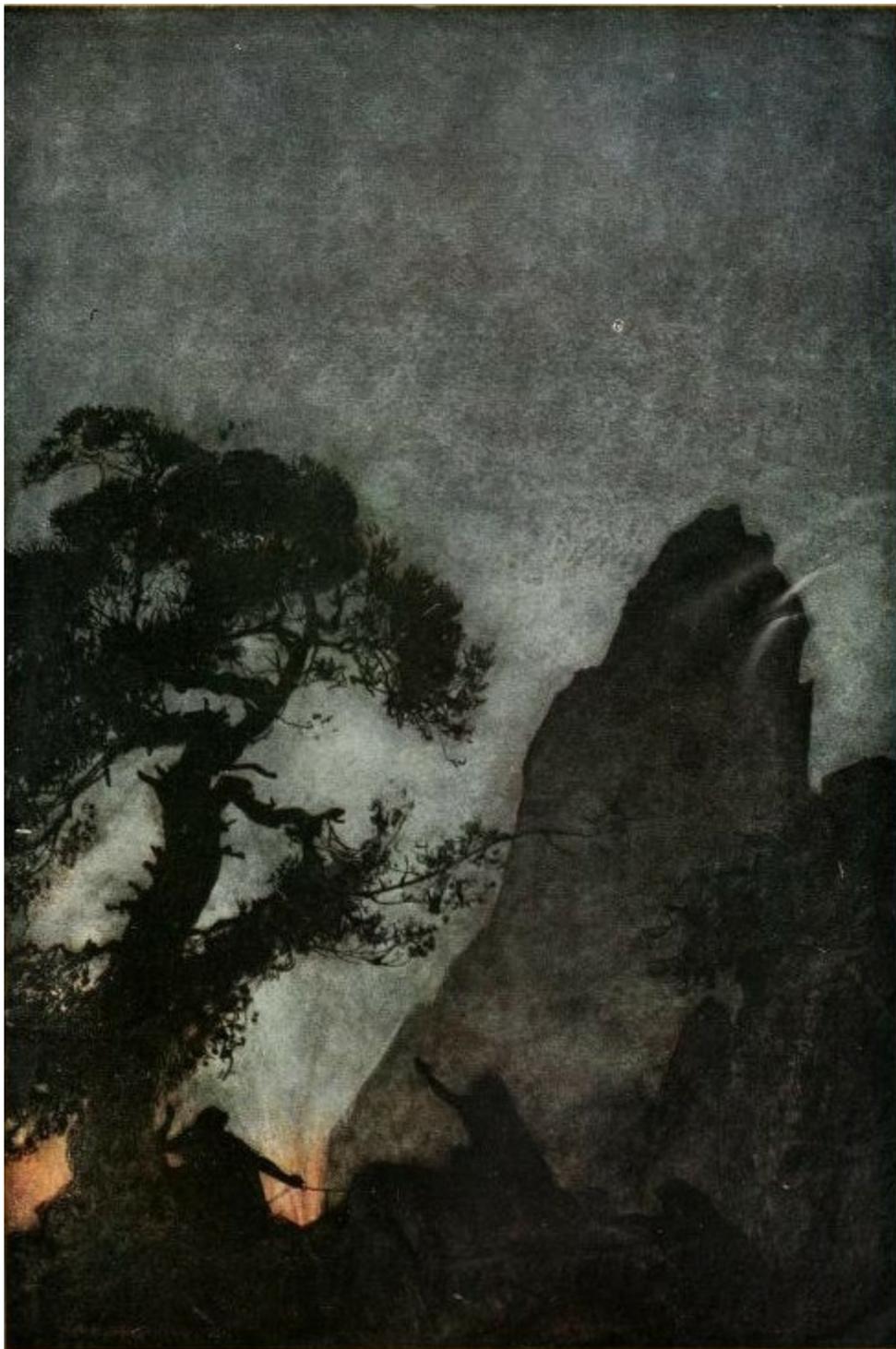
Of the rock I wind the rope:

Sing, O sister,

Catch as I throw;

Further canst thou tell?





The three Norns. See p. 103.



THE THIRD NORN

[Catching the rope and throwing the end behind her.]

The castle stands
By giants up reared.
With the Gods and the holy
Host of the heroes
Wotan sits in his hall;
And round the walls

Hewn logs are heaped,
High up-piled,
Ready for burning:

The world-ash-tree these were once.

When the wood

Flares up brightly and burns,

In its fire

Shall the fair hall be consumed.

And then shall the high Gods' downfall

Dawn in darkness for aye.

Know ye yet more,

Begin anew winding the rope;

Again I throw it

Back from the north.

Spin and sing, O my sister.

*[She throws the rope to the second Norn and the second
throws it to the first, who loosens the rope from the bough
and ties it on to another.]*

THE FIRST NORN

[Looking towards the back.]

Is it the dawn,

Or the firelight that flickers?

Grief-darkened is my gaze.

The holy past

I can scarce remember,

When Loge burst

Of old into burning fire.

Dost thou know how he fared?

THE SECOND NORN

*[Winding the rope which has been thrown to her round the
rock again.]*

Overcome by Wotan's

Spear and its magic,

Loge worked for the God;

Then, to win his freedom,

Gnawed with his tooth

The solemn runes on the shaft.

So with the potent

Spell of the spear-point
Wotan confined him
Flaming where Brünnhilde slumbered.
Canst thou tell us the end?

THE THIRD NORN

With the broken spear's
Sharp-piercing splinters
Wotan wounded
The blazing one deep in the breast;
Ravening fire
Springs from the wound,
And this is thrown
'Mid the world-ash-tree's
Hewn logs heaped ready for burning.
Would ye know
When that will be,
Wind, O sisters, the rope!

*[She throws the rope back; the second Norn winds it up
and throws it again to the first.]*

THE FIRST NORN

[Fastening the rope again.]

The night wanes,
Dark grows my vision;
I cannot find
The threads of the rope;
The strands are twisted and loose.
A horrible sight
Wildly vexes mine eyes:
Rhinegold
That black Alberich stole.
Knowest thou more thereof?

THE SECOND NORN

*[With laborious haste winds the rope round the jagged rock
at the mouth of the cave.]*

The rock's sharp edge
Is cutting the rope;
The threads loosen

Their hold and grow slack;
They droop tangled and frayed.
From woe and wrath
Rises the Nibelung's ring;
A curse of revenge
Ruthlessly gnaws at the strands:—
Canst thou the end foretell?

THE THIRD NORN

[Hastily catching the rope which is thrown to her.]

The rope is too short,
Too loose it hangs;
It must be stretched,
Pulled straighter, before
Its end can reach to the north!

[She pulls hard at the rope, which breaks.]

It breaks!

THE SECOND NORN

It breaks!

THE FIRST NORN

It breaks!

[They take the pieces of broken rope and bind their bodies together with them.]

THE THREE NORNS

So ends wisdom eternal!
The wise ones
Will utter no more.
Descend to Erda! Descend!

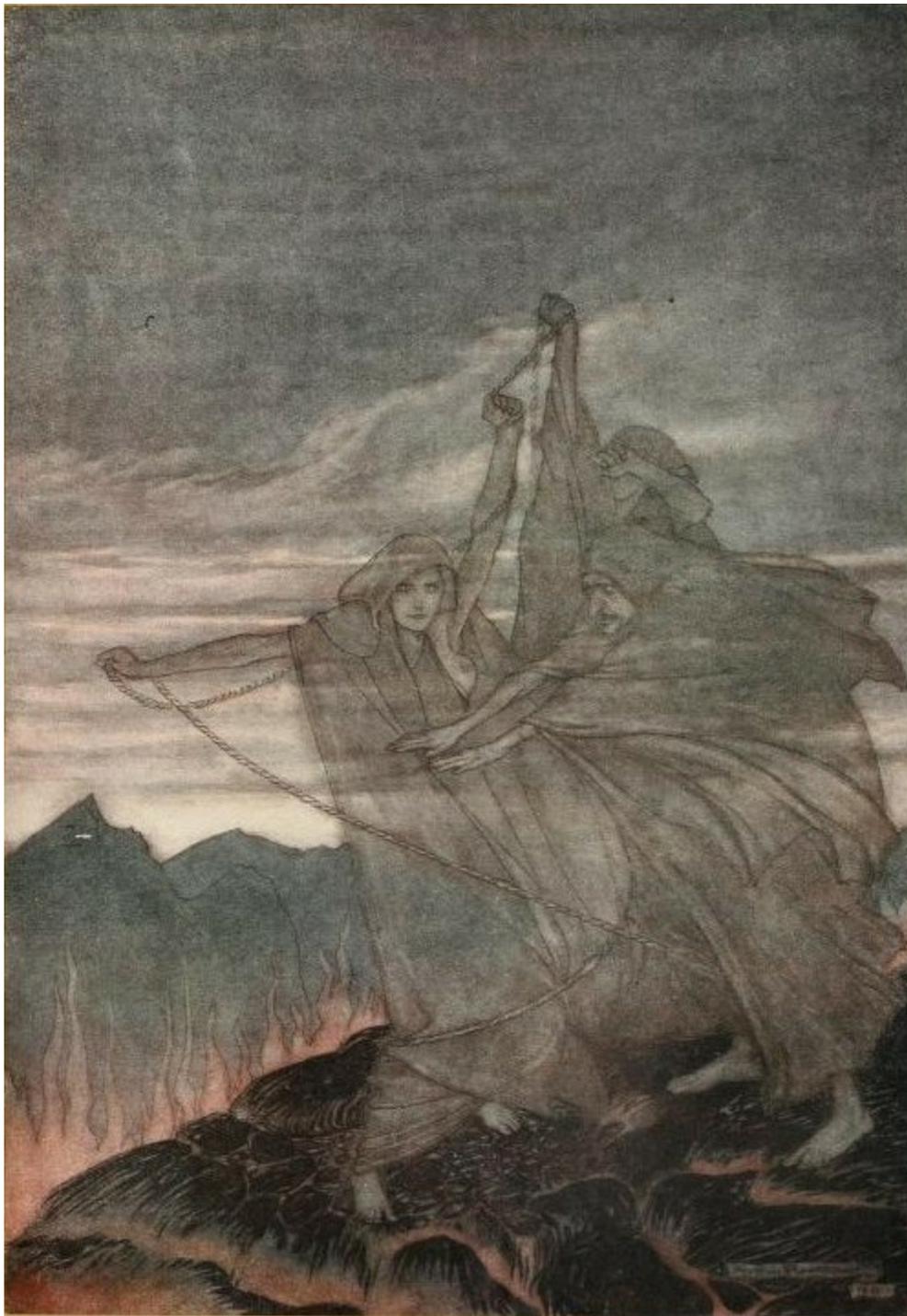
[They vanish. The dawn grows brighter; the firelight from the valley gradually fades. Sunrise; then broad daylight.]

[Siegfried and Brünnhilde enter from the cave. He is fully armed; she leads her horse by the bridle.]

BRÜNNHILDE

Belovèd hero,
Poor my love were
Wert thou thereby
Kept from new deeds.
One single doubt
Yet makes me linger:
The fear my service
Has been too small.
The things the Gods taught me
I could give:
All the rich hoard
Of holy runes;
But by the hero
Who holds my heart
I have been robbed
Of my maiden valour.
In wisdom weak,
Although strong in will;
In love so rich,
In power so poor—
Must thou not scorn
Her lack of riches
Who, though so eager,
Can give nothing more?





The Norns vanish. See p. 108.



SIEGFRIED

Wonderful woman, more
Thy gifts than I can guard!
O chide not if thy teaching
Has left me still untaught.

[With fire.

That Brünnhilde lives for me—
To that lore I hold fast;

And one lesson I have learned—
Brünnhilde to remember!

BRÜNNHILDE

If thou wouldst truly love me,
Think of thyself alone,
And of thy deeds of daring!
The raging fire remember
That fearless thou didst fare through
When around the rock it burned—

SIEGFRIED

That I might conquer Brünnhild'!

BRÜNNHILDE

Think too of the shield-hidden maid
Thou didst find there lapped in slumber.
And whose helmet hard thou didst break—

SIEGFRIED

Brünnhilde to awaken!

BRÜNNHILDE

Those oaths remember
That unite us;
The faith and truth
That are between us,
And evermore
The love we live for;
Brünnhilde in thy breast
Will deeply burn then for aye!

[She embraces Siegfried.]

SIEGFRIED

Must I leave thee, O love,
In thy holy fortress of fire,

[He has taken Alberich's ring from his finger, and holds it out to Brünnhilde.]

This ring of mine I give thee;

Let it pay for thy runes.
Of whatever deeds I did
The virtue lies therein.
By my hand was the dragon grim,
Who long had guarded it, slain;
Keep thou the gold and its might
As token true of my love!

BRÜNNHILDE

[Putting on the ring in rapturous delight.]

I covet it more than all else!
For the ring take Grane, my horse.
Through the air with me
He galloped once boldly,
But lost with mine
Was his magic art;
Upon clouds and storm,
Through thunder and lightning
No more
Gallantly now will he sweep!
But if thou lead the way,
Even through fire
Fearlessly Grane will follow.
For henceforth, hero,
Thou art his master!
Entreat him well;
He knows thy voice;
O, greet him often
In Brünnhilde's name!

SIEGFRIED

Then every deed that I dare
Will be achieved through thy virtue
All my battles thou wilt choose,
And my victories will be thine.
Upon thy good horse riding,
And sheltered by thy shield,
No longer Siegfried am I,
But only Brünnhilde's arm!



Siegfried leaves Brünnhilde in search of adventure. See p. 111.



BRÜNNHILDE

O were but Brünnhilde thy soul too!

SIEGFRIED

Through her my courage burns high.

BRÜNNHILDE

Then wert thou Siegfried and Brünnhild'.

SIEGFRIED

Where I am, there thy abode is.

BRÜNNHILDE [*With animation.*]

Then a waste is my hall of rock?

SIEGFRIED

Made one, both there abide.

BRÜNNHILDE [*Greatly moved.*]

Ye Gods, O ye holy
Race of immortals,
Feast ye your eyes
On this love-hallowed pair!
Apart—who shall divide us?
Divided—still we are one!

SIEGFRIED

Hail, O Brünnhilde,
Beautiful star!
Hail, love and its glory!

BRÜNNHILDE

Hail, O Siegfried,
Conquering light!
Hail, life and its glory!
Hail, conquering light!

BOTH

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!

[Siegfried leads the horse quickly to the edge of the sloping rock, Brünnhilde following him. Siegfried disappears with the horse down behind the projecting rock, so that he is no longer visible to the audience. Brünnhilde is thus suddenly left standing alone on the edge of the slope, and gazes down into the valley after Siegfried. Her gestures show that Siegfried has vanished from her sight. Siegfried's horn is heard from below. Brünnhilde listens, and steps further out on the slope. She catches sight of Siegfried in the valley again, and waves to him joyfully. Her happy smiles seem to reflect the air of the merrily

departing hero.





THE FIRST ACT

The hall of the Gibichungs on the Rhine. This is quite open at the back. An open shore stretching to the river occupies the background. Rocky heights enclose the shore. Gunther and Gutrune on a throne at one side, before which stands a table with drinking-vessels on it. In front of this Hagen is seated.

GUNTHER

Give ear, Hagen;
Tell me the truth:
Is my fame on the Rhine
Worthy of Gibich's son?

HAGEN

I envy thee
Thy fame and thy glory;
Thy great renown was foretold
To me by Grimhild' our mother.

GUNTHER

I envy thee,
So envy not me.
I, as first-born, rule,
But the wisdom is thine.
Half-brother's feud
Could scarce be laid better;
Asking thus of my renown,
'Tis thy wisdom that I praise.

HAGEN

My words I withdraw,
Thy fame might be more:
I know of precious treasures
That the Gibichung has not yet won.

GUNTHER

Hide these, and I
Withdraw my praise.

HAGEN

In summer's full-ripened glory
Blooms the Gibich stock,
Thou, Gunther, still unwived,
Thou, Gutrun', still unwed.

GUNTHER

Whom wouldst thou have me woo,
To win more wide renown?

HAGEN

One I know of,
None nobler in the world.
She dwells on soaring rocks,
Her chamber is circled by fire;
And he who would Brünnhild' woo
Must break through the daunting flame.

GUNTHER

Suffices my strength for the task?

HAGEN

For one stronger still it is decreed.

GUNTHER

Who is that hero unmatched?

HAGEN

Siegfried, the Wälsung's son;
He is the hero bold.
A twin-born pair,
Whom fate turned to lovers,
Siegmond and Sieglinde,
Had as their offspring this child.
In the woods he grew and waxed strong.
'Tis he that Gutrun' must wed.

GUTRUNE [*Shyly*].

Tell me what deed of high valour
Made this hero the first in renown.

HAGEN

At Neidhöhle
A huge dragon lay,
Who guarded the Nibelung's gold.
He was slain,
And his horrid jaws closed
By Siegfried's invincible sword.
From this colossal deed
The fame of the hero dawned.

GUNTHER [*Thoughtfully*].

They say that a priceless treasure
The Niblungs had in their hoard.

HAGEN

The man who could use its spell
Were lord of the world evermore.

GUNTHER

And Siegfried won it in fight?

HAGEN

He has the Niblungs in thrall.

GUNTHER

And Brünnhild' no other can win?

HAGEN

To no other will the flames yield.

GUNTHER [*Rises angrily from his seat*].

Why wake dissension and doubt?
Why stir up my desire
And yearning for joys
That cannot be won?

[He walks to and fro much agitated.]

HAGEN

[Without leaving his seat causes Gunther to pull up as he approaches him, by a gesture of mysterious import.]

Would not Brünnhilde
Be thy bride,
Were she by Siegfried brought home?

GUNTHER

[Turns away doubtful and angry.]

But how could I force this man
To woo the bride for me?

HAGEN *[As before.]*

Thy simple prayer would force him,
Gutrune' winning him first.

GUTRUNE

Thou mockest, cruel Hagen!
What arts have I to bind him?
The greatest hero
In all the world
Has long ere this by the fairest
Women on earth been loved.

HAGEN

[Bending confidentially towards Gutrune.]

What of the drink in the chest?

[More secretly.]

In me who won it have more faith.
To thee in love it will bind
Him whom thy heart most desires.

[Gunther has come to the table again, and, leaning against it, pays close attention.]

Hither did Siegfried come,
And taste of this potion of herbs,
He would straight forget he had looked
On any woman before,
Or been by woman approached.

Now answer:

Think ye my counsel good?

GUNTHER [*Starting up suddenly.*

Now Grimhild' be praised,
Who for brother gave us thee.

GUTRUNE

Siegfried fain I would behold!

GUNTHER

But how can he be found?

[A horn on the stage, from the background on the left, very loud but distant.]

HAGEN

[Listens and turns to Gunther.]

Merrily hunting
After renown
Across the world
As through a wood,
Belike in his chase he will come,
To the Gibich's realm on the Rhine.

GUNTHER

Heartily welcome were he.

[A horn on the stage, nearer, but still distant. Both listen.]

A horn from the Rhine I hear.

HAGEN

[Looks down the river and calls towards the back.]

A man and horse on board a boat!
His horn how gaily he winds!

[A horn on the stage sounds nearer. Gunther stops half-way listening.]

See the leisurely stroke,
And the indolent arm
Against the stream
Urging the boat!
So skilful a hand
On the swinging oar
Can be but his
Who the dragon slew:—
It is Siegfried—surely no other!

GUNTHER

Will he go by?

HAGEN

[Making a trumpet of his hands, calls towards the river.]

Hoiho! Blithe hero,
Whither bound?

SIEGFRIED *[From the distance.]*

I seek the son of Gibich.

HAGEN

I bid thee welcome to Gunther's hall.

[Siegfried in a boat appears at the shore.]

This way! Stop here and land!

Siegfried brings his boat to the shore. Hagen makes it fast with the chain. Siegfried springs ashore with his horse. Gunther has come down and joined Hagen.

HAGEN

Hail, Siegfried, hero bold!

[Gutrune gazes at Siegfried from the throne in astonishment. Gunther prepares to offer him friendly greetings. All stand fixed in silent mutual contemplation.]

SIEGFRIED

[Leaning on his horse, remains quietly standing by the boat.]

Who is Gibich's son?

GUNTHER

I am he thou dost seek.

SIEGFRIED

Thy fame has reached me
From the Rhine;
Now fight with me,
Or be my friend.

GUNTHER

Be thou mine;
Thou art welcome!

SIEGFRIED

Where stable my horse?

HAGEN

Leave him to me.

SIEGFRIED *[Turning to Hagen.]*

My name thou knowest;
Where have we met?

HAGEN

I guessed from thy strength
Who thou must be.

SIEGFRIED

[As he hands over the horse to Hagen.]

Be careful of Grane,
For thou hast never
Led by the rein
So noble a steed.

[Hagen leads the horse away. While Siegfried looks thoughtfully after him, Gutrune, obeying a sign of Hagen's which Siegfried does not notice, goes to her room through a door on the left. Gunther comes into the hall with Siegfried, whom he has invited to accompany him.]

GUNTHER

My father's ancient hall,
O hero, greet in gladness!
All thou beholdest,
Where'er thou art,
Treat as thine own henceforward:
Thine is my kingdom—
Land and folk;
By my body I swear it!
Yea, myself I am thine.

SIEGFRIED

Nor land nor folk have I to give,
Nor father's house nor hall;
In my body
Is all my wealth;
As I live it grows less.
But a sword have I
Which I welded;
Let my sword be my witness!—
That and myself I bestow.

HAGEN

[Who has come back and now stands behind Siegfried.]

Of the Nibelungs' treasure
Rumour names thee the lord.

SIEGFRIED

[Turning round to Hagen.]

I almost forgot the hoard,
So lightly I prize its worth.
I left it lying in a cavern,
Where a dragon once held watch.

HAGEN

And nothing took at all?

SIEGFRIED

Only this, not knowing its use.

HAGEN

It is the Tarnhelm,
The gem of the Nibelung's art;
Its use, when worn on thy head,
Is to change thy shape as thou wilt;
If fain to be borne afar,
In a flash lo! thou art there!
Didst thou take nothing besides?

SIEGFRIED

Yes, a ring.

HAGEN

Which safe thou dost hold?

SIEGFRIED [*Tenderly.*

'Tis held by a woman fair.

HAGEN [*Aside.*

Brünnhild'!

GUNTHER

Nay, Siegfried, let us not barter;
All I have a bauble poor,
Matched with thy treasure, would be.
I will serve thee without reward.

[Hagen has gone to Gutrune's door, and now opens it.]

GUTRUNE

[Enters carrying a full drinking-horn, with which she approaches Siegfried.]

Welcome, O guest,
To Gibich's house!

'Tis his daughter gives thee to drink.

SIEGFRIED

[Bows in a friendly manner and takes the horn, which he holds thoughtfully before him.]

Were all forgot
Thou gavest to me,
One lesson
I will never forget;
So this first draught
With love undying,
Brünnhild', I drink to thee!

[He puts the drinking-horn to his lips and takes a long draught; then he hands it back to Gutrune, who, ashamed and confused, casts down her eyes. Siegfried gazes at her with sudden passion.]

SIEGFRIED

O thou who dost scorch
And blind with thine eyes,
Why sink them abashed by my gaze?

[Gutrune, blushing, looks up at him.]

O lovely maid,
Lower thine eyes;
My heart is aflame,
Burnt by their light;
They kindle my blood; it flows
In devouring torrents of fire.

[With a trembling voice.]

Gunther, what name is thy sister's?

GUNTHER

Gutrune.

SIEGFRIED [*Softly.*

Can those be good runes
That in her eyes I am reading?

[*He ardently seizes Gutrune's hand.*

With thy brother I was fain to serve;
His pride my prayer scorned.
Were I to pray the same of thee,
Wouldst thou like him be proud?

[*Gutrune involuntarily meets Hagen's eye. She bows her head humbly, and, expressing her feeling of unworthiness with a gesture, leaves the hall with faltering steps.*

SIEGFRIED

[*Attentively watched by Hagen and Gunther, gazes after Gutrune as if entranced.*

Gunther, hast thou a wife?

GUNTHER

I am not wed,
Nor, it would seem,
Likely to find a wife!
My heart on one I have set
Whom there is no way to win.

SIEGFRIED

[*Turns with animation to Gunther.*

In what canst thou fail
With me for friend?

GUNTHER

On rocky heights her home;
Surrounded by fire her hall;

SIEGFRIED

[Interrupting in wondering haste.

"On rocky heights her home;
Surrounded by fire her hall"...?

GUNTHER

He only who braves the fire...

SIEGFRIED

[As if making an intense effort to remember something.

"He only who braves the fire"...?





Siegfried hands the drinking-horn back to Gutrune, and gazes at her with sudden passion. See p. 119.



GUNTHER

May Brünnhilde's wooer be.

[Siegfried shows by a gesture that at the mention of Brünnhilde's name all remembrance of her has faded.]

I dare not essay the dread mountain;
The flames would not fall for me.

SIEGFRIED

[Awakes from his dreamy state, and turns to Gunther high-spirited and gay.

For thee I will win her,
Of fire I have no fear;
 For thy man am I,
 And my strength is thine,
If Gutrun' I win as my wife.

GUNTHER

Gutrune gladly I grant thee

SIEGFRIED

Thou shalt have Brünnhilde then.

GUNTHER

But how wilt deceive her?

SIEGFRIED

I will wear the Tarnhelm
And appear in thy form.

GUNTHER

Then let the oath now be sworn!

SIEGFRIED

Blood-brotherhood
Sworn be by oath!

[Hagen fills a drinking-horn with fresh wine; he holds it out to Siegfried and Gunther, who cut their arms with their swords and hold them for a short pace over the horn; then they each lay two fingers on the horn, which Hagen continues to hold between them.

SIEGFRIED and GUNTHER

Quickening blood
Of blossoming life
Lo! I drop in the horn!
 Bravely mixed
 In brotherly love,

Bloom our blood in the draught!
Troth I drink to the friend
 Glad and free
 To-day from the bond
Blood-brotherhood spring!
But if broken the bond,
Or if faithless the friend,
 What in drops to-day
 We drink kindly
In torrents wildly shall flow,
Paying treachery's wage.
So—sealed be the bond!
So—pledged be my faith!

[Gunther drinks and hands the horn to Siegfried, who finishes the draught, and holds out the empty horn to Hagen. Hagen breaks the horn in two with his sword. Gunther and Siegfried join hands.]

SIEGFRIED

[Observes Hagen, who, while the oat was being sworn, has stood behind him.]

Why hast not thou plighted thy troth?

HAGEN

My blood had soured the good draught.
 It flows not pure
 And noble like yours;
 Stubborn and cold,
 Slow it runs,
My cheek refusing to redden.
 I hold aloof
 From hot-blooded bonds.

GUNTHER *[To Siegfried.]*

Heed not him and his spleen.

SIEGFRIED

[Puts on his shield again.]

Up, then, and off!

Back to the boat!
Sail swift to the mountain!

[He steps nearer to Gunther and points at him.]

By the bank one night
On board thou shalt tarry,
And then bring home the bride.

[He turns to go, and beckons Gunther to follow him.]

GUNTHER

Wilt thou not rest awhile?

SIEGFRIED

I am eager to be back.

[He goes to the shore to unmoor the boat.]

GUNTHER

Thou, Hagen, keep guard o'er the homestead.

[He follows Siegfried to the shore. Whilst Siegfried and Gunther, after laying their arms in the boat, are hoisting the sail and making ready for departure, Hagen takes up his spear and shield. Gutrune appears at the door of her chamber just as Siegfried is pushing off the boat, which immediately glides into the middle of the stream.]

GUTRUNE

So swiftly whither haste they?

HAGEN

[While he seats himself comfortably with shield and spear in front of the hall.]

To woo Brünnhild' for bride.

GUTRUNE

Siegfried?

Hagen

See how he hastes,
For wife seeking to win thee!

GUTRUNE

Siegfried—mine?

[She returns to her room greatly excited. Siegfried has seized an oar and rows the boat down-stream, so that it is soon lost to view.]

HAGEN

[Sits motionless, his back against the door-post of the hall.]

On guard here I sit
Watching the house,
Warding the hall from the foe:
Gibich's son
Is sped by the wind,
And sails away for a wife;
A hero bold
Of the helm has charge,
And danger braves for his sake;
His bride once loved
He brings to the Rhine;
With her he brings me—the ring.
O merry comrades,
Freeborn and honoured,
Gaily speed on in your pride!
Base though ye deem him,
The Niblung's son
Shall yet be your lord.

[A curtain which frames the front of the hall is drawn, and cuts the stage off from the audience.]

The curtain is raised again. The rocky height as in the Prelude. Brünnhilde sits at the entrance to the cave in silent contemplation of Siegfried's ring. Moved by blissful memories, she covers the ring with kisses. Distant thunder is heard; she looks up and listens. She turns to the ring again. A flash of lightning. Again she listens, and looks into the distance, whence a dark thunder-cloud is approaching the rock.

BRÜNNHILDE

On my ear from afar

Falls an old sound familiar.
A horse comes flying
Swift through the air;
On the clouds it sweeps
In storm to the rock.
Who seeks the lonely one here?

WALTRAUTE'S voice [*From the distance.*

Brünnhilde, sister,
Wake if thou sleepest!



Brünnhilde kisses the ring that Siegfried has left with her. See p. 124.



BRÜNNHILDE [*Starts from her seat.*

Waltraute's call!

How welcome the sound!

[Calling to the wing, and then hastening to the edge of the rock.

Dost thou, sister,
Boldly swinging come this way?
In the wood—
Still dear to thee—
Halt and dismount,
And leave thy courser to rest.

[She runs into the wood, from which a loud sound like a thunder-clap is heard. She returns in great agitation with Waltraute, and remains joyfully excited without noticing the latter's anxious fear.

Art thou so bold
That thou art come
Brünnhild' to greet,
Thy love unconquered by dread?

WALTRAUTE

Thou alone
Art cause of my haste!

WALTRAUTE

For Brünnhild's sake War-father's ban
Hast thou thus bravely broken?
Or perchance—O say!—

[With some hesitation.

Has he at last
Softened to his child?
When against the God
I sought to shield Siegmund,
Vainly—I know it—
My deed fulfilled his desire.
And I know that his anger
Was assuaged,
For albeit in slumber deep
Here to the rock I was bound,
Doomed to be thrall to the man
Who should wake the maid as he passed,

To my anguished prayer
He granted grace;
With ravening fire
He surrounded the rock,
To bar to all cowards the road.
Bane and chastisement
Turned so to blessing;
A hero unmatched
Has won me as wife;
Blest by his love,
In light and laughter I live.

*[She embraces Waltraute with wild manifestations of joy,
which the latter tries with anxious impatience to repress.]*

Hast thou been lured by my lot,
And wouldst thou, sister,
Feast on my gladness,
Sharing in my delight?

WALTRAUTE [*Vehemently.*]

Sharing the frenzy
That has maddened thee, fool!
Far other the cause why I come,
Defying Wotan in fear.

BRÜNNHILDE

*[Here, for the first time, notices with surprise Waltraute's
wildly excited state.]*

Art afraid?
Anguished with terror?
So the stern one does not forgive?
Thou fearest his punishing wrath?

WALTRAUTE [*Gloomily.*]

Might I but fear it,
At an end were my distress.

BRÜNNHILDE

I am perplexed and amazed.

WALTRAUTE

Calm thou thy frenzy;
Mark with care what I say!
The fear that drove me
Hither to thee
Drives me back to Walhall again.

BRÜNNHILDE [*Alarmed.*

What ails, then, the Gods everlasting?

WALTRAUTE

Give earnest heed to what I tell thee!
Since from thee Wotan parted,
No more has he sent
Us to battle;
Anxious and bewildered
We rode to the field.
Shunned are Walhall's bold heroes
By Warfather;
Riding alone,
Without pause or rest
He wandered and roamed through the world.
At last he returned
With his spear splintered;
In his hand the pieces;
A hero had cleft it asunder.
With silent sign
Walhall's heroes
Then he sent forth
To hew down the world-ash-tree.
He bade them pile
The logs as they hewed them,
Until they were heaped
High round the hall of the blest.
The Gods he next
Called to a council;
The high seat
He solemnly took,
Bidding them
Who gathered in fear sit beside him.
The heroes filled
The hall, ranged round in their order.
So sits he,

Speaks no word,
Upon his high seat
Grave and mute,
The splintered spear
Held fast in his hand,
Holda's apples
Touching no more.

Fear and amazement
Hold the Gods fast fettered.

He has sent his ravens
Forth to seek tidings;
If they return

And bring him comforting news,
Then the God will
With soul serene

Smile evermore and be glad.

Round his knees in sorrow
Twined lie the Valkyries;
He heeds not
Our glances beseeching;
By terror and wild anguish

We all are consumed.

Against his breast
Weeping I nestled,
Then soft grew his gaze:

He remembered, Brünnhilde, thee.

He closed his eyes

As if dreaming,
Heavily sighed
And whispered these words:

[Pg 128]

[Pg 129]"If to the deep Rhine's daughters

She would restore the ring that was theirs.

From the grievous curse

Both God and world were freed!"

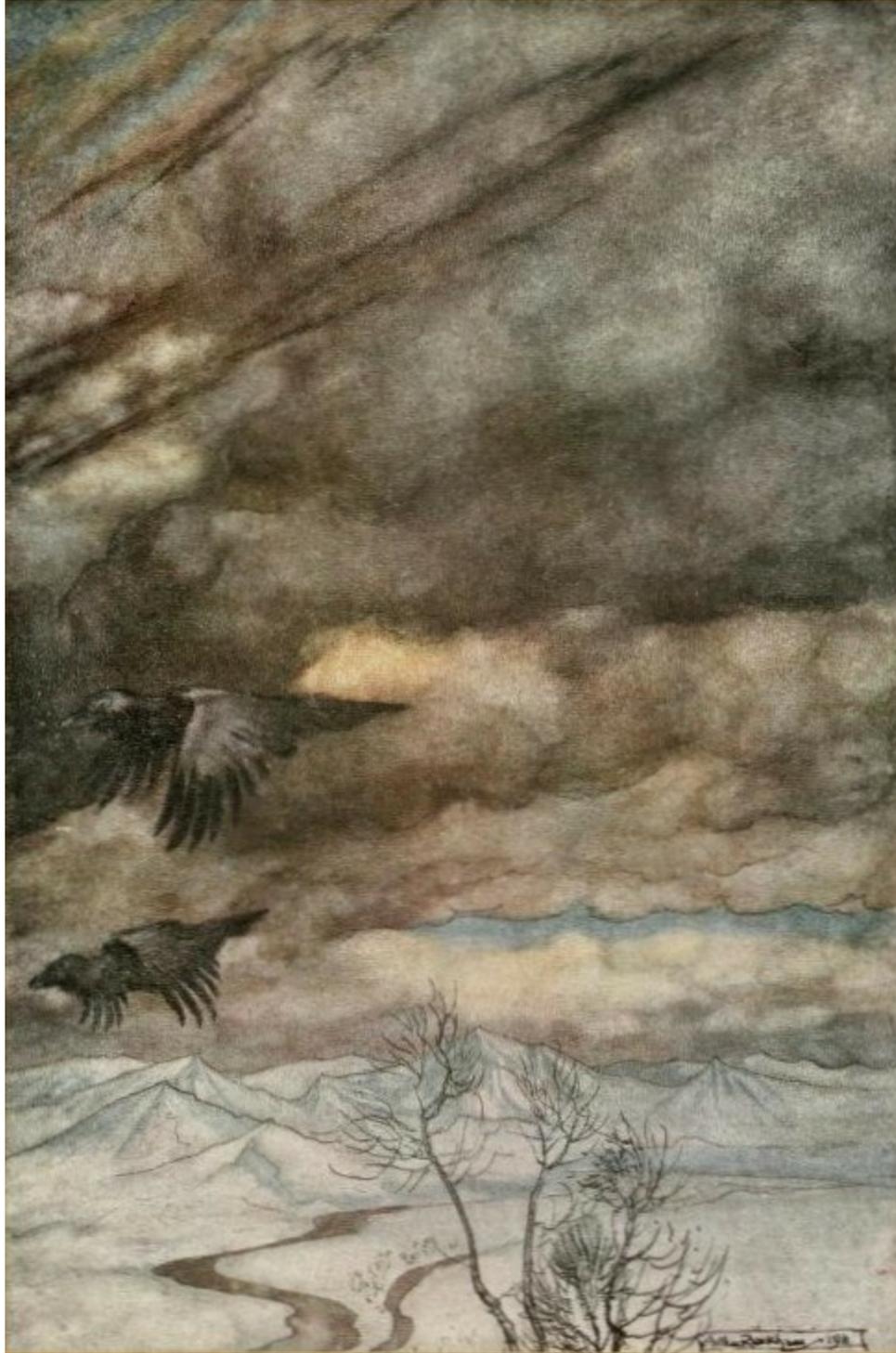
Then I took thought,
And from his side
Through the silent ranks
Stole noiselessly forth.

In haste, unseen,
I mounted my horse,

And stormed in tumult to thee.

Grant, O sister,
The boon I beg;
What thou canst do,

Undaunted perform!
End thou the grief of the Gods!



The ravens of Wotan. See p. 128.



[She has thrown herself down before Brünnhilde.]

BRÜNNHILDE [*Quietly.*

What dreadful dream-born fancies,
Sad one, are those thou dost tell?

The high Gods' holy
And cloud-paved heaven
Is no longer my home.
I grasp not what thou art saying;
Dark its sense,
Wild and confused.
Within thine eyes,
So over-weary,
Gleams wavering fire;
With thy wan visage,
O pale-faced sister,
What wouldst thou, wild one, of me?

WALTRAUTE [*Vehemently*].

The ring upon thy hand—
'Tis that: ah, be implored!
For Wotan fling it away!

BRÜNNHILDE

The ring—away?

WALTRAUTE

To the Rhine-daughters give it again.

BRÜNNHILDE

The Rhine-daughters—I—the ring?
Siegfried's love-pledge?
Hast thou gone crazy?

WALTRAUTE

Hear me! Hear my despair!
On this hangs
The world's undoing and woe.
Throw it from thee
Into the water;
End the anguish of Walhall;
The accurst thing cast in the waves!

BRÜNNHILDE

Ha! dost thou know what 'twould mean
How shouldst thou,

Maid unloving and cold!
Much is Walhall's rapture,
Much is the fame of the Gods;
More is my ring.
One glance at its shining gold,
One flash of its sacred fire
Is more precious
Than bliss of all the Gods
Enduring for aye!
For Siegfried's dear love
Shines from it bright and blessèd.
Love of Siegfried!
Ah, could I but utter the rapture
Bound up in the ring!

Go back to the holy
Council of Gods;
Repeat what I have told thee
Of my ring:
That love I will not forswear,
Of love they never shall rob me;
Sooner shall Walhall's glory
Perish and pass!





"The ring upon thy hand—
... ah, be implored!
For Wotan fling it away!"
See p. 129.



WALTRAUTE

This is thy faith, then?
To her sorrow
Thus coldly thou leavest thy sister?

BRÜNNHILDE

Up and away!
Swiftly to horse!
I will not part with the ring.

WALTRAUTE

Woe's me! Woe's me!
Woe to thee, sister!
Woe to Walhall's Gods!

[She rushes away. A storm-cloud immediately rises from the wood, accompanied by thunder.]

BRÜNNHILDE

[As she looks after the brightly lit, retreating thunder-cloud, which soon vanishes in the distance.]

Borne by the wind
In storm and lightning,
Haste away, cloud,
And may I see thee no more!

[Twilight has fallen. The light of the fire gradually shines more brightly from below. She gazes quietly out on the landscape.]

Eventide shadows
Dim the heavens,
And more brightly
The flames that encircle me glow.

[The firelight approaches from below. Ever-brightening tongues of flame shoot up over the edge of the rock.]

Why leap so wildly
The billows that blaze round the rock?
Up here to the peak
Surges the fiery flood!

[Siegfried's horn is heard from the valley. Brünnhilde starts up in delight.]

Siegfried?
Siegfried returned?
With his horn greeting he sends!
Up! Out to the welcome!
Swift to my God's embrace!

[She hastens joyfully to the edge of the crag. Flames leap up, out of which Siegfried springs forward on to a high rock, whereupon the flames immediately withdraw and

again only shine up from below. Brünnhilde recoils in terror; flies to the foreground, and from there, in speechless astonishment, stares at Siegfried, who, wearing the Tarnhelm, which covers the upper half of his face, leaving only his eyes free, appears in Gunther's form.

BRÜNNHILDE

Betrayed! Who seeks me here?

SIEGFRIED

[Remaining on the rock at the back, motionless and leaning on his shield, regards Brünnhilde. In a feigned (harsher) voice.

Brünnhild'! A wooer comes
Whom thy fire did not dismay.
I want thee for my wife;
Consent to follow me!

BRÜNNHILDE *[Trembling violently.*

What man has done
This deed undaunted
That the boldest only dares?

SIEGFRIED *[As before.*

A hero who will tame
Thy pride by force at need.

BRÜNNHILDE

A monster stands
Upon yonder stone;
An eagle has come
To rend me in pieces!
Who art thou, frightful one?
Art thou a mortal,
Or dost thou hie
From Hella's dark host?

SIEGFRIED

[As before, beginning with a slightly tremulous voice, but

continuing with more confidence.

A Gibichung am I,
And Gunther is his name
Whom thou must follow hence.

BRÜNNHILDE

[Breaking out in despair.

Wotan! Thou cruel,
Merciless God!
Woe! Now I see
How thine anger works!
To scorn and sorrow
I am condemned.

SIEGFRIED

[Springs down from the stone and approaches.

Night falls apace;
Within thy cave
Thou must receive thy husband.

BRÜNNHILDE

*[Stretching out with a threatening gesture the finger on
which she wears Siegfried's ring.*

Stand back! Fear thou this token!
While I am shielded by this,
Thou canst not force me to shame.

SIEGFRIED

Wife it shall make thee to Gunther;
With this ring thou shalt be wed.

BRÜNNHILDE

Stand back, base robber!
Impious thief!
Nor dare, overbold, to draw near!
Stronger than steel
Made by the ring,

I never will yield!

SIEGFRIED

That it must be mine
I learn from thy lips.

[He presses towards her. There is a struggle. Brünnhilde wrenches herself free, flies and turns round as if to defend herself. Siegfried seizes her again. She flies; he reaches her. They wrestle violently together. Siegfried catches her hand and draws the ring from her finger. She gives a loud scream. As she sinks helpless into his arms her unconscious look meets Siegfried's eyes. Siegfried lays her fainting on the stone bench at the entrance to the cave.]

SIEGFRIED

Now thou art mine!
Brünnhilde, Gunther's bride,
Lead me the way to thy cave!

BRÜNNHILDE

[Stares, as if fainting, before her; exhausted.]

O woman undone,
Where now thy defence?

SIEGFRIED

[Drives her on with a gesture of command. Trembling and with tottering steps she goes into the cave.]

Now, Nothung, witness thou
That chastely I have wooed,
And loyal been to my brother;
Lie betwixt me and his bride!

[He follows Brünnhilde. The curtain falls. In his natural voice.]



THE SECOND ACT

An open space on the shore in front of the Gibichungs' hall; to the right the open entrance to the hall, to the left the bank of the Rhine. From the latter, crossing the stage and mounting towards the back, rises a rocky height, cut by several mountain-paths. There an altar-stone to Fricka is visible, as well as one, higher up, to Wotan, and one at the side to Donner. It is night. Hagen, his arm round his spear and his shield by his side, sits against one of the pillars of the hall asleep. The moon shines out suddenly and throws a vivid light on Hagen and his immediate surroundings. Alberich is seen crouching in front of him, leaning his arms on Hagen's knees.

ALBERICH [*Softly*].

Hagen, son, art asleep?
Betrayed by drowsiness
And rest thou dost not hear?

HAGEN

[Softly, without moving, so that he seems to sleep on although his eyes are open.]

I hear thee, O baleful Niblung;

What wouldst thou tell me while I slumber?

ALBERICH

Remember the might
Thou art endowed with,
If thou art valiant
As thy mother bore thee to me.

HAGEN [*Still as before:*

Though courage she bestowed,
I have no cause to thank her
For falling under thy spell;
Soon old, wan and pale,
Hating the happy,
Where is my joy?

ALBERICH [*As before.*

Hagen, my son,
Hate thou the happy;
This joyless and
Sorrow-laden one,
Him alone thou shalt love.
Be thou strong
And bold and wise!
Those whom with weapons
Of darkness we fight
Already our hate has dismayed.
And he who captured my ring,
Wotan, the ravening robber,
By one of his sons
In fight has been vanquished;
He has lost
Through the Wälsung power and might.
With the whole immortal race
He awaits in anguish his downfall.
Him I fear no more:
He and all his must perish!
Hagen, son, art asleep?

HAGEN

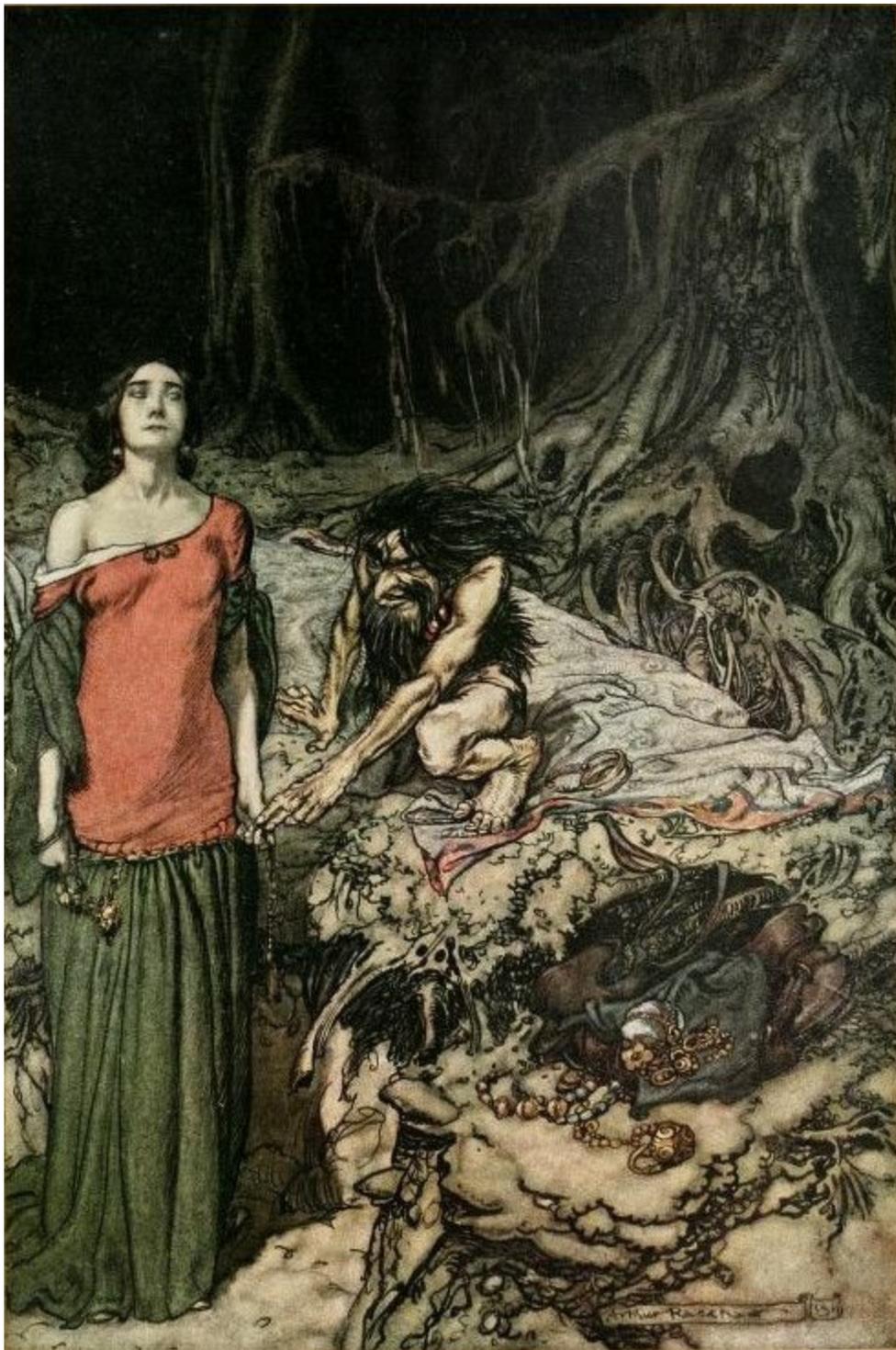
[*Remains motionless as before.*

The might of the Gods
Who then shall wield?

ALBERICH

I—and thou!
The world we shall own,
If in thy truth
I rightly trust,
Sharest thou my hate and wrath.
Wotan's spear
Was splintered by Siegfried,
The hero who won
As booty the ring
When Fafner, the dragon, he slew.
Power supreme
He has attained to;





The wooing of Grimhilde, the mother of Hagen. See p. 135



[Still mysteriously.]

Walhall and Nibelheim bow to his will.

On this hero undaunted
My curse falls in vain,
For he knows not
The ring's true worth,
Nor makes use
Of its wonderful spell;
Laughing he burns life away,

Caring only for love.
Nothing can serve us
But his undoing!

Sleepest, Hagen, my son?

HAGEN [*As before.*

Already he speeds
Through me to his doom.

ALBERICH

The golden ring—
'Tis that that we must capture!
The Wälsung
By a wise woman is loved.
If, urged by her,
To the Rhine's fair daughters
—Who bewitched me once
Below in the waves—
The stolen ring he restored,
Forever lost were the gold,
And no guile could win it again.
Wherefore with ardour
Aim for the ring.
I gat thee
A stranger to fear,
That against heroes
Thou mightst uphold me.
I had not the strength,
Indeed, to despatch,
Like the Wälsung, Fafner in fight;
But I reared Hagen
To deadly hatred,
And he shall avenge me—
Shall win the ring,
Putting Wälsung and Wotan to scorn!
Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

[From this point Alberich is covered by an ever-deepening shadow. At the same time day begins to dawn.]

HAGEN [*Still as before.*

The ring shall be mine yet;
Quietly wait!

ALBERICH

Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

HAGEN

To myself swear I;
Make thy mind easy!

ALBERICH

*[Still gradually disappearing, and his voice, as he does so,
becoming more and more inaudible.]*

Be true, Hagen, my son!
Trusty hero, be true!
Be true!—True!

*[Alberich has quite disappeared. Hagen, who has never
changed position, looks with fixed eyes and without
moving towards the Rhine, over which the light of dawn is
spreading.]*





"Swear to me, Hagen, my son!" See p. 138



The gradually brightening red of dawn is reflected in the Rhine. Siegfried steps out suddenly from behind a bush close to the shore. He appears in his own shape, but has the Tarnhelm on his head still; he takes this off and, as he comes forward, hangs it on his girdle.

SIEGFRIED

Hoioh! Hagen!
Weary man!
Where is thy welcome?

HAGEN [*Rising in a leisurely fashion.*]

Hei! Siegfried?
Swift-footed hero,
Whence stormest thou now?

SIEGFRIED

From Brünnhilde's rock.
'Twas there that I drew the breath
I called to thee with;
A quick passage I made!
Slower behind me a pair
On board a vessel come.

HAGEN

Hast thou won Brünnhild'?

SIEGFRIED

Wakes Gutrune?

HAGEN [*Calling towards the hall.*]

Hoiho! Gutrune!
Haste and come!
Siegfried is here.
Why dost delay?

SIEGFRIED *Turning to the hall.*

How Brünnhild' yielded
Ye shall both be told.

[*Gutrune comes from the hall to meet him.*]

SIEGFRIED

Give me fair greeting,
Gibich's child!
I come to thee with joyful news.

GUTRUNE

Freia greet thee
To the honour of all women!

SIEGFRIED

To thy lover glad
Be gracious;
For wife I have won thee to-day.

GUTRONE

Comes then Brünnhild' with my brother?

SIEGFRIED

None ever wooed with more ease.

GUTRONE

Was he not scorched by the fire?

SIEGFRIED

It had not burnt him, I trow;
But I broke through it instead,
That I for wife might win thee.

GUTRONE

And no harm didst thou take?

SIEGFRIED

I laughed 'mid the surge of the flames.

GUTRONE

Did Brünnhild' think thee Gunther?

SIEGFRIED

Like were we to a hair;
The Tarnhelm saw to that,
As Hagen truly foretold.

HAGEN

I gave thee counsel good.

GUTRONE

And so the bold maid was tamed?

SIEGFRIED

Her pride—Gunther broke.

GUTRONE

Did she give herself to thee?

SIEGFRIED

Through the night the vanquished
 Brünnhild'
To her rightful husband belonged.

GUTRUNE

For her husband thou didst pass?

SIEGFRIED

By Gutrune sojourned Siegfried.

GUTRUNE

But 'twas Brünnhild' lay beside thee.

SIEGFRIED [*Pointing to his sword.*]

Far as north from east and west,
So far was Brünnhild' removed.

GUTRUNE

But how got Gunther his wife from thee?

SIEGFRIED

Through the flames of the fire as they faded,
When day dawned, through the mist
She followed me down the hill;
 When near the shore,
 None observing,
I gave Gunther my place,
And by the Tarnhelm's magic
Wished myself straight to thee.
A strong wind drives the lovers
Merrily down the Rhine;
Prepare to greet them with joy.

GUTRUNE

Siegfried! Such is thy might,
I am afraid of thee!

HAGEN [*Calling from the shore.*]

I can see a sail in the distance.

SIEGFRIED

Now be the envoy thanked!

GUTRUNE

Let us give her gracious greeting,
That glad and gay she here may tarry!
 Thou, Hagen, prithee
 Summon the men
To the hall here for the wedding,
While blithe maids
To the feast I bid;
Our joy they will merrily share.

[As she goes towards the hall she turns round again.]

Wilt thou rest, wicked man?

SIEGFRIED

Helping thee is rest enough.

[He gives her his hand and accompanies her into the hall.]

HAGEN

[Has mounted a rock at the back, and starts blowing his cow-horn.]

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoho!
 Ye Gibich vassals,
 Up and prepare!
 Woeful tidings!
 Weapons! Weapons!
 Arm through the land!
 Goodly weapons,
 Mighty weapons
 Sharp for strife!
 Dire the strait!
Woe! Danger! Danger!
Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoho!

[Hagen remains where he is on the rock. Armed men arrive in haste by different paths; first singly, and then in larger]

and larger groups.

THE VASSALS

Why sounds the horn?
Who calls us to arms?
We come with our arms?
We come with our weapons.
Hagen! Hagen!
Hoiho! Hoiho!
Who hath suffered scathe?
Say, what foe is nigh?
Who forces war?
Is Gunther sore pressed?
We come with our weapons,
With weapons keen!
Hoiho! Ho! Hagen!

HAGEN [*Still from the rock.*]

Come fully armed
Without delay!
Welcome Gunther, your lord:
A wife Gunther has wooed.

THE VASSALS

Is he in straits,
Pressed by the foe?

HAGEN

A woman hard won
With him he brings.

THE VASSALS

Her kinsmen and vassals
Follow for vengeance?

HAGEN

No one follows
But his bride.

THE VASSALS

Then the peril is past,

And the foe put to flight?

HAGEN

The dragon-slayer
Helped him at need;
Siegfried, the hero,
Kept him from harm.

THE VASSALS

How then can his vassals avail him?
And why hast callèd us here?

HAGEN

Sturdy oxen
Ye shall slaughter;
On Wotan's altar
Their blood be shed!

THE VASSALS

And after that, Hagen? Say, what next?

HAGEN

After that for Froh
A boar ye shall fell,
And a full-grown and strong
He-goat for Donner;
But for Fricka
Sheep ye shall slaughter,
That she may smile on the marriage!

THE VASSALS

[With increasing cheerfulness.]

What shall we do
When the beasts we have slain?

HAGEN

The drink-horn take
That women sweet
With wine and mead
Blithely have filled.

THE VASSALS

The drink-horn in hand,
What task awaits us still?

HAGEN

Gaily carouse
Until tamed by wine:
Drink, that the Gods, duly honoured,
Grace may accord to this marriage.

THE VASSALS

[Burst into ringing laughter.]

Good luck and joy
Laugh on the Rhine,
If Hagen, the grim one,
So merrily jests!
To wedding-feasts
Hagen invites;
His prick the hedge-thorn,
Hagen, has lost!

HAGEN

*[Who has remained very grave, has come down to the men,
and now stands among them.]*

Now cease from laughing,
Doughty vassals!
Receive Gunther's bride;
Yonder come Brünnhild' and he.

*[He points towards the Rhine. Some of the men hurry to the
height; others range themselves on the shore to watch the
arrival. Hagen goes up to some of the men.]*

Be to your lady
Loyal and true;
Suffers she wrong,
Swiftly avenge her!

*[He turns slowly aside and moves towards the back. The
boat arrives with Gunther and Brünnhilde. Those who have
been looking out from the height come down to the shore.]*

Some vassals spring into the water and pull the boat to land. All press closer to the bank.

THE VASSALS

Hail! Hail! Hail!
Be greeted! Be greeted!
Welcome, O Gunther!
Hail! Hail! Hail!

[Gunther steps out of the boat with Brünnhilde.

THE VASSALS

[Range themselves respectfully to receive them.

Welcome, Gunther!
Health to thee and to thy bride!

[They strike their weapons loudly together.

GUNTHER

[Presenting Brünnhilde, who follows him with pale face and lowered eyes, to the men.

Brünnhild', a peerless bride,
Here to the Rhine I bring.
No man ever won
A nobler woman!
The Gods have shown from of old
Grace to the Gibichung stock.
To fame unmatched
Now may it mount!

THE VASSALS *[Solemnly clash their weapons.*

Hail! O hail, happy Gibichung!

GUNTHER

[Leads Brünnhilde, who never raises her eyes, to the hall, from which Siegfried and Guttrune, attended by women, now come forth. Gunther stops before the hall.

Dear hero, greetings glad!

I greet thee, fair sister!
By him who won thee for wife
I joyfully see thee stand.
Two happy pairs
Here radiant are shining:

[He draws Brünnhilde forward.]

Brünnhild'—and Gunther,
Gutrune'—and Siegfried.

[Brünnhilde, startled, looks up and sees Siegfried. Her eyes remain fixed on him in amazement. Gunther, who has released her violently trembling hand, shows, as do all present, blank astonishment at her behaviour.]

THE VASSALS and WOMEN

What ails her?
Has she gone mad?

SIEGFRIED

[Goes a few steps towards Brünnhilde, who has begun to tremble.]

Why looks Brünnhild' amazed?

BRÜNNHILDE *[Scarcely able to control herself.]*

Siegfried ... here? Gutrune....

SIEGFRIED

Gunther's gentle sister,
Wed to me
As thou to him.

BRÜNNHILDE *[With fearful vehemence.]*

I? Gunther? 'Tis false.

[She sways and seems about to fall. Siegfried supports her.]

Light fades from mine eyes. ..

[In Siegfried's arms, looking faintly up at him.]

Siegfried ... knows me not?

SIEGFRIED

Gunther, see, thy wife is swooning!

[Gunther comes to them.]

Wake, Brünnhild', wake!
Here stands thy husband.

BRÜNNHILDE

[Perceives the ring on Siegfried's outstretched finger, and starts up with terrible vehemence.]

Ha! The ring
Upon his hand!
He ... Siegfried?

THE VASSALS

What's wrong?

HAGEN

[Coming among the vassals from behind.]

Now pay good heed
To the woman's tale.

BRÜNNHILDE

[Mastering her terrible excitement, tries to control herself.]

On thy hand there
I beheld a ring.
'Twas wrested from me
By this man here;

[Pointing to Gunther.]

'Tis not thine.
How earnest thou by
The ring thou hast on?

SIEGFRIED

[Attentively regarding the ring on his finger.]

'Twas not from him
I got the ring.

BRÜNNHILDE *[To Gunther.]*

Thou who didst seize the ring
With which I wedded thee,
Declare to him thy right,
Make him yield up the pledge!

GUNTHER *[In great perplexity.]*

The ring? No ring I gave him,
Though thou dost know it well.

BRÜNNHILDE

Where hast thou hid the ring
That thou didst capture from me?

[Gunther, greatly confused, does not answer.]

BRÜNNHILDE *[Breaking out furiously.]*

Ha! He it was
Who despoiled me of the ring—
Siegfried, the treacherous thief!

[All look expectantly at Siegfried, who seems to be lost in far-off thoughts as he contemplates the ring.]

SIEGFRIED

No woman gave
The ring to me,
Nor did I wrest it
From a woman's grasp.
This ring, I know,
Was the booty won
When at Neidhöhl' boldly I fought,
And the mighty dragon was slain.

HAGEN

[Stepping between them.]

Brünnhild', dauntless queen,
Knowest thou this ring well?
If it was by Gunther won,
 Then it is his,
And Siegfried has got it by guile.
For his guilt must the traitor pay.

BRÜNNHILDE *[Shrieking in terrible anguish.]*

Betrayed! Betrayed!
Shamefully betrayed!
Deceived! Deceived!
Wrong too deep for revenge!

GUTRUNE

A wrong? To whom?

VASSALS and WOMEN

Deceit? To whom?

BRÜNNHILDE

Holy Gods!
Ye heavenly rulers!
Whispered ye this
In councils dark?
If I must bear
More than ever was borne,
Bowed by a shame
None ever endured,
Teach me such vengeance
As never was raved!
Kindle such wrath
As can never be calmed!
Order Brünnhild's
Poor heart to be broken,
Bring ye but doom
On him who betrayed!

GUNTHER

Brünnhild', dear wife,
Control thyself!

BRÜNNHILDE

Away, betrayer!
Self-betrayed one!
All of you, hearken!
Not he,
But that man there,
Won me to wife.

VASSALS and WOMEN

Siegfried? Gutrune's lord?

BRÜNNHILDE

He forced delight
And love from me.

SIEGFRIED

Dost thou so lightly
Hold thine honour,
The tongue that thus defames it
I must convict of its falsehood.
Hear whether faith I broke!
Blood-brotherhood
I have sworn unto Gunther;
Nothung, my trusty sword,
Guarded the sacred vow;
'Twixt me and this sad woman distraught
Its blade lay sharp.

BRÜNNHILDE

Behold how thou liest,
Crafty man,
Vainly as witness
Citing thy sword!
Full well I know its keenness,
And also the scabbard
Wherein so snugly
Hung on the wall
Nothung, the faithful friend,
When its lord won the woman he loved.

[Crowd together in violent indignation.]

What! Siegfried a traitor?
Has he stained Gunther's honour?

GUNTHER *[To Siegfried.]*

Disgraced were I
And sullied my name,
Were not the slander
Cast in her teeth!

GRUTUNE

Siegfried faithless?
False to his vow?
Ah, prove thou that worthless
Is her word!

THE VASSALS

Clear thyself straight;
If thou art wronged
Silence the slander;
Sworn be the oath!

SIEGFRIED

If I must swear,
The slander to still,
Which of you offers
His sword for the oath?

HAGEN

Swear the oath upon
The point of my spear;
Bad faith 'twill surely avenge.

*[The vassals form a ring round Siegfried and Hagen.
Hagen holds out the spear; Siegfried lays two fingers of
his right hand upon the point.]*

SIEGFRIED

Shining steel!

Weapon most holy,
Witness my oath sworn for ever!
On this spear's sharp point
I solemnly swear;
Spear-point, mark thou my words!
If weapon must pierce me,
Thine be the point!
When by death I am stricken
Strike thou the blow,
If what she tells is true,
And I broke faith with my friend!

BRÜNNHILDE

[Strides furiously into the ring, tears Siegfried's hand from the spear, and grasps the point with her own.]

Shining steel!
Weapon most holy,
Witness my oath sworn for ever!
On this spear's sharp point
I solemnly swear!
Spear-point, mark thou my words!
Devoted be thy might
To his undoing!
Be thy sharpness blessed by me,
That it may slay him!
For broken his oaths have been all,
And false is what he has sworn.

THE VASSALS

Help, Donner!
Roar with thy thunder
To silence this terrible shame!

SIEGFRIED

Gunther, look to this woman
Who falsely slanders thy name.
Let her rest awhile,
The untamed mountain maid,
That the unbridled rage some demon
In malice has
Against us roused
May have the chance to subside.

Ye vassals, go ye your ways;
Let the womenfolk scold.
Like cravens gladly we yield,
Comes it to fighting with tongues.

[He goes up to Gunther.]

Thou art not so vexed as I
That I beguiled her ill;
The Tarnhelm must, I fear,
But half have hid my face.
 Still, women's wrath
 Soon is appeased:
That I won her for thee
Thankful thy wife will be yet.

[He turns again to the vassals.]

Follow me, men,
With mirth to the feast!

[To the women.]

Gaily, women,
Help at the wedding!
Joyfully laugh
Love and delight!
In hall and grove
There shall be none
This day more merry than I!
 Ye whom love has blessed,
 Like myself light-hearted,
Follow and share in my mirth!

[He throws his arm in the highest spirits round Gutrune and draws her into the hall. The vassals and women follow, carried away by his example. All go off, except Brünnhilde, Gunther, and Hagen. Gunther, in deep shame and dejection, with his face covered, has seated himself on one side. Brünnhilde, standing in the foreground, gazes for some time sorrowfully after Siegfried and Gutrune, then droops her head.]

BRÜNNHILDE *[Lost in thought.]*

What dread demon's might

Moves here in darkness?
By what wizard's spell
Worked was the woe?
How weak is my wisdom
Faced by this puzzle!
And where shall I find
The runes for this riddle?
Oh, sorrow! Sorrow!
Woe's me! Woe's me!
I gave all my wisdom to him;

[With increasing emotion.]

The maid in his power
He holds.
Fast in his fetters
Bound is the booty
That, weeping her grievous shame,
Gaily to others he gives!
Will none of you lend a sword
With which I may sever my bonds?

HAGEN

[Going close to Brünnhilde.]

Leave that to me,
O wife betrayed;
I will avenge
Thy trust deceived.

BRÜNNHILDE *[Looking round dully.]*

On whom?

HAGEN

On Siegfried, traitor to thee.

BRÜNNHILDE

On Siegfried? Thou?

[Smiling bitterly.]

One single flash
Of his eye and its lightning—

Which streamed in its glory on me
Even through his disguise—
And thy heart would fail,
Shorn of its courage.

HAGEN

But to my spear
His perjury gives him.

BRÜNNHILDE

Truth and falsehood—
What matter words!
To arm thy spear
Seek for something stronger,
Strength such as his to withstand!

HAGEN

Well know I Siegfried's
Conquering strength:
How hard in battle to slay him;
But whisper to me
Some sure device
For speeding him to his doom.

BRÜNNHILDE

Ungrateful, shameful return!
I taught him all
The arts I know,
To preserve his body from harm.





"O wife betrayed,
I will avenge
Thy trust deceived"
See p. 154.



He bears unwitting
A charmed life
And safely walks by spells enwound.

HAGEN

Then no weapon forged could wound him?

BRÜNNHILDE

In battle none;—yet—
Did the blow strike his back!
Never—I knew that—
Would he give way,
Or turn and fly, the foe pursuing,
So there I gave him no blessing.

HAGEN

And there shall my spear strike!

[He turns quickly from Brünnhilde to Gunther.

Up, Gunther,
Noble Gibichung!
Here stands thy valiant wife.
Why hang thy head in grief?

GUNTHER

[Starting up passionately.

O shame!
Dishonour!
Woe is me!
No man has known such sorrow!

HAGEN

In shame thou liest—
That is true.

BRÜNNHILDE *[To Gunther.*

O craven man!
Falsest of friends!
Hidden behind
The hero wert thou
While won were for thee
The prize and the glory.
Low indeed
The race must have sunk
That breeds such cowards as thou!

GUNTHER *[Beside himself.*

Deceived am I—and deceiver!
Betrayed am I—and betrayer!
My strength be consumed,
And broken my heart!
 Help, Hagen!
 Help for my honour!
 Help, for my mother was thine—
Thee too she bore!

HAGEN

 No help from head
 Or hand will suffice:
'Tis Siegfried's death we need.

GUNTHER [*Seized with horror.*
Siegfried's death?

HAGEN

Unpurged else were thy shame.

GUNTHER [*Staring before him.*

 Blood-brotherhood
 He and I swore.

HAGEN

 Who broke the bond
 Pays with his blood.

GUNTHER

 Broke he the bond?

HAGEN

 In betraying thee.

GUNTHER

 Was I betrayed?

BRÜNNHILDE

 He betrayed thee,
And me ye all are betraying!

If I were just,
All the blood of the world
Would not atone for your guilt!
But the death of one
Is all I ask for.
Dying, Siegfried
Atones for himself and you!

HAGEN

[Turning to Gunther and speaking to him secretly.]

His death would profit thee;
Boundless were indeed thy might
If thou couldst capture the ring,
Which, alive, he never will yield.

GUNTHER *[Softly.]*

Brünnhilde's ring?

HAGEN

The ring the Niblung wrought.

GUNTHER *[Sighing deeply.]*

'Twould be the end of Siegfried.

HAGEN

His death would serve us all.

GUNTHER

But Gutrun', to whom
He has been given!
How could we look in her face
If her husband we had slain?

BRÜNNHILDE *[Starting up furiously.]*

What wisdom forewarned of,
And runes hinted darkly,
In helpless despair
Is plain to me now.

[*Passionately.*

Gutrune is the spell
That stole my husband's heart away!
Woe be her lot!

HAGEN [*To Gunther.*

If this grief we must give her,
Conceal how Siegfried died.
We go to-morrow
Merrily hunting;
The hero gallops ahead;
We find him slain by a boar.

BRÜNNHILDE and HAGEN

So shall it be!
Perish Siegfried!
Purged be the shame
He brought on me!
Faith sworn by oath
He has broken;
Now with his blood
Let him atone!
Avenging,
All-hearing God!
Oath-witness,
And lord of vows!
Wotan, come at my call!
Send thou thine awful
Heavenly host
Hither to hear
While I vow revenge!

HAGEN

Doomed let him die,
The hero renowned!
Mine is the hoard,
And mine I shall hold it!
From him the ring
Shall be wrested!

Niblung father!
O fallen prince!

Night warder!

Nibelung lord!

Alberich! Hear thou thy son!

Ruling again

O'er the Nibelung host,

Bid them obey thee,

The ring's dread lord!

[As Gunther turns impetuously towards the hall with Brünnhilde they are met by the bridal procession coming out. Boys and girls, waving flower-wreathed staves, leap merrily in front. The vassals are carrying Siegfried on a shield and Gutrune on a seat. On the rising ground at the back men-servants and maids are taking implements and beasts for sacrifice, by the various mountain-paths, to the altars, which they deck with flowers. Siegfried and the vassals blow wedding-calls on their horns. The women invite Brünnhilde to accompany them to Gutrune's side. Brünnhilde stares blankly at Gutrune, who beckons her with a friendly smile. As Brünnhilde is about to step back angrily Hagen comes quickly between them and presses her towards Gunther, who takes her hand again, whereupon he allows himself to be raised on a shield by the men. As the procession, scarcely interrupted, moves on quickly again towards the height, the curtain falls.]



THE THIRD ACT

A wild wooded and rocky valley on the Rhine, which flows past a steep cliff in the background. The three Rhine-Maidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde, rise to the surface and swim and circle as if dancing.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

[Swimming slower.]

The sun
Sends hither rays of glory;
In the depths is darkness.
Once there was light,
When clear and fair
Our father's gold shone on the billows.
Rhinegold!
Gleaming gold!
How bright was once thy radiance,
Lovely star of the waters!

*[They sing and again start swimming and circling about.
They pause and listen, then merrily splash the waters.]*

O sun,
The hero quickly send us
Who again our gold shall give us!
If it were ours,
We should no longer
Envy thine eye for its splendour.

Rhinegold!

Gleaming gold!

How glad was thy radiance,

Glorious star of the waters!

[A horn is heard.]

WOGLINDE

Hark! That is his horn!

WELLGUNDE

The hero comes.

FLOSSHILDE

Let us take counsel.

[They all dive down quickly.]

SIEGFRIED

[Appears on the cliff fully armed.]

Some elf has led me astray

And lured my feet from the path.

Hey, rogue! Behind what hill

Hast suddenly hidden my game?

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

[Rise to the surface again and swim and circle as in a dance.]

Siegfried!

FLOSSHILDE

What art thou scolding about?

WELLGUNDE

With what elf art thou so wroth?

WOGLINDE

Hast thou been tricked by some sprite?

ALL THREE

Tell us, Siegfried; let us hear!

SIEGFRIED

[Regarding them with a smile.]

Have ye, then, hither charmed
The shaggy-hided fellow
Whom I have lost?
Frolicsome maids,
Ye are welcome to him,
If he is your love.

[The maidens laugh.]

WOGLINDE

What would our guerdon be,
Siegfried, if we restored him?

SIEGFRIED

I have caught nothing yet,
So ask of me what you will.

WELLGUNDE

A golden ring
Gleams on thy finger.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Wilt grant it?

SIEGFRIED

From a dragon grim
I won the ring in fight;
And think ye for a worthless bear-skin
I would exchange the gold?

WOGLINDE

Art thou so mean?

WELLGUNDE

In bargains so hard?

FLOSSHILDE

Free-handed

Thou with women shouldst be.

SIEGFRIED

On you did I waste my goods,
My wife would have cause to scold.

FLOSSHILDE

Is she a shrew?

WELLGUNDE

And beats thee sore?

WOGLINDE

Has the hero felt her hand?

[They laugh immoderately.]

SIEGFRIED

Though gaily ye may laugh,
In grief ye shall be left,
For, mocking maids, this ring
Ye ask shall never be yours.

[The Rhine-Maidens have again joined hands for dancing.]

FLOSSHILDE

So fair!

WELLGUNDE

So strong!

WOGLINDE

So worthy love!

THE THREE

How sad he should a miser be!

[They laugh and dive down.]

SIEGFRIED

[Comes down nearer to the river.]

Why should I stand
Their taunts and blame?
Why endure their scorn?
Did they return
To the bank again,
The ring gladly I'd give them.



"Though gaily ye may laugh,
In grief ye shall be left,
For, mocking maids, this ring
Ye ask shall never be yours"
See p. 162

[Calling loudly.

Hey, hey! ye merry
Water-maidens,
Come back; the ring shall be yours.

[He holds up the ring, which he has taken from his finger.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

[Rise to the surface again. They appear grave and solemn.

Nay, hero, keep
And ward it well,
Until the harm thou hast felt
That in the ring lies hid.
Then wouldst thou fain
Be freed by us from its curse.

SIEGFRIED

[Calmly puts the ring on his finger again.

Sing something that ye know!

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegfried!
Dark our knowledge for thee!
The ring thou keepest
To thy own scathe!
From the gleaming gold
Of the Rhine 'twas wrought;
He who cunningly forged it,
And lost it in shame,
Laid a curse on it
Which, for all time,
The owner thereof
Dooms to his death.
As the dragon fell

So shalt thou too fall,
And that to-day;
Thy fate is foretold,
Wilt thou not give to the Rhine
The ring to hide in its waters.
Its waves alone
Can loose the curse.

SIEGFRIED

Enough, O ye women
Full of wiles!
Was I firm when ye flattered,
I am firmer now when ye threaten!

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Siegfried! Siegfried!
Our warning is true:
Flee, oh, flee from the curse!
The Norns who weave
By night have entwined it
In the rope
Of Fate's decrees!

SIEGFRIED

My sword once shattered a spear;
And if the Norns
Have woven a curse
Into the strands
Of destiny's rope,
Nothing will cleave it asunder.
A dragon once warned me
Of this dread curse,
But he could not teach me to fear.

[He contemplates the ring.]

The world's wealth
Has bestowed on me a ring.
For the grace of love
Had it been yours,
And still for love might it be got,
But by threats to my life and my limbs—
Had it not even
A finger's worth—

The ring ye never shall gain.
My limbs and my life—



"Siegfried! Siegfried!
Our warning is true:
Flee, oh, flee from the curse!"
See p. 164



Look!—thus
Freely I fling away!

[He lifts a clod of earth from the ground, holds it over his

head, and with the last words throws it behind him.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Come, sisters!
Fly from the madman!
Though dauntless and wise
He seems to himself,
He is blind and in fetters bound fast.

[Wildly excited, they swim in wide circles close to the shore.]

Oaths he swore,
And was false to his word;

[Moving quickly again.]

Runes he knows
That he cannot rede.
A glorious gift
Fell to his lot;
He flung it from him
Unawares;
And the ring that deals doom and death
Alone he will not surrender!

Farewell, Siegfried!
A woman proud
Ere night falls thy wealth shall inherit.
Our cry by her will be heard.
To her! To her! To her!

[They turn quickly to their dance, and gradually swim away to the back singing.]

SIEGFRIED

[Looks after them smiling, one foot on a piece of rock and his chin resting on his hand.]

Alike on land and water
I have studied women's ways:
Still those who mistrust their smiles
They seek with threats to frighten,
And, are their threats despised,

At once they begin to scold.

And yet—

Held I not Gutrun' dear,
Of these alluring maidens
One had surely been mine.

[He looks calmly after the Rhine-Maidens, who have disappeared, and whose voices gradually die away. Horn-calls are then heard. Siegfried starts from a reverie and sounds his horn in answer.]

HAGEN'S VOICE [*Far off.*

Hoiho!

VASSALS' VOICES

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoiho!

SIEGFRIED

[Having first answered the call with his horn.]

Hoiho! Hoihe!

HAGEN

[Appears on the height, followed by Gunther. He sees Siegfried.]

So we have found thee
Where thou wert hidden!

SIEGFRIED

Come down all! Here 'tis fresh and cool.

[The vassals now appear on the height, and come down with Hagen and Gunther.]

HAGEN

Here let us rest
And see to the meal.

[They lay the game in a heap.]

Lay down the booty
And hand round the wine-skins.

[Wine-skins and drinking-horns are produced. All lie down.]

HAGEN

Now be the wonders told us
Of Siegfried and his hunting
That chased the game from us.

SIEGFRIED

No meal at all is mine;
I beg of you
To share with me your spoil.

HAGEN

No luck at all?

SIEGFRIED

I sought for forest-game,
But water-fowl only I found;
Furnished with the right equipment,
A brood of three wild water-birds
I had caught and brought you.
Down there on the Rhine they told me
That slain to-day I should fall.

[Gunther starts and looks darkly at Hagen. Siegfried lies down between Gunther and Hagen.]

HAGEN

A sorry chase were that
If the luckless hunter fell
A victim to the quarry!

SIEGFRIED

Thirst plagues me!

HAGEN

[Whilst he orders a drinking-horn to be filled for Siegfried, and hands it to him.]

It has been rumoured, Siegfried, That thou canst tell the meaning
Of what the birds sing:
Does rumour speak true?

SIEGFRIED

I have not listened
For long to their song.

*[He takes the drinking-horn and turns with it to Gunther,
to whom he offers it after he has drunk from it.]*

Drink, Gunther, drink! Thy brother hands the draught!

GUNTHER

[Looks into the horn with horror. Moodily.]

A pale draught thou hast poured!

[More gloomily.]

Thy blood alone is there.

SIEGFRIED *[Laughing.]*

With thine, then, be it mingled!

*[He pours from Gunther's horn into his own so that it runs
over.]*

Thus mixed the wine flows over
To Mother Earth
May it prove a cordial kind!

GUNTHER *[With a deep sigh.]*

Thou over-joyous man!

SIEGFRIED *[Low, to Hagen.]*

His cheer Brünnhild' has marred.

HAGEN *[Low, to Siegfried.]*

She speaks less plain to him
Than speak the birds to thee!

SIEGFRIED

Since I have heard women singing.
The birds I have clean forgot.

HAGEN

But thou didst hear them once?

SIEGFRIED

[Turning with animation to Gunther.

Hei! Gunther!
Moody-faced man!
Come, I will tell thee
Tales of my boyhood,
If thou wouldst care to hear them.

GUNTHER

'Twould please me much.

[All lie down close to Siegfried, who alone sits upright.

HAGEN

Sing, hero, sing!

SIEGFRIED

Mime was
A surly old dwarf
Who because of greed
Reared me with care,
That when the child
Grew sturdy and bold
He might slay a dragon grim
That guarded treasure in the wood.
He taught me to forge
And the art of fusing,
But what the craftsman
Could not achieve
The scholar did
By skill and by daring—
Out of the splinters of a weapon
Fashioned featly a sword.
My father's blade

Forged was afresh;
Strong and true
Nothing was tempered,
Deemed by the dwarf
Fit for the fight.

The wood then we sought, and there
The dragon Fafner I slew.

Listen and heed
Well to my tale;

I have marvels to tell you.

From the dragon's blood
My fingers were burning,

And these I raised to my lips;
And barely touched

Was the blood by my tongue,

When what a bird was saying
Above me I could hear.

On a bough it sat there and sang:

"Hei! Siegfried now owns

All the Nibelung hoard!

Oh! could he the hoard

In the cave but find!

Tarnhelm, if he could but win it,

Would help him to deeds of renown;

And could he discover the ring,

It would make him the lord of the world!"

HAGEN

Didst thou take

The Tarnhelm and ring?

A VASSAL

Was that the end of the singing?

SIEGFRIED

Having taken

Tarnhelm and ring,

Once more I listened

And heard the sweet warbler;

He sat above me and sang:—

"Hei! Siegfried now owns

Both the helm and the ring!

Oh! let him not listen

To Mime, the false,
For Mime, too, covets the treasure,
And cunningly watches and spies!
He is bent on murdering Siegfried;
Be Siegfried wary of Mime!"

HAGEN

'Twas well that he warned?

THE VASSALS

Got Mime due payment?

SIEGFRIED

A deadly-brewed draught
He brought me to drink;
But, fear-stricken,
His tongue stammered truly:
Nothung stretched him out dead!

HAGEN

[With a strident laugh.]

The steel that he forged not
Mime soon tasted!

*[He has another drinking-horn filled, and drops the juice
of a herb into it.]*

THE VASSALS

What further did the bird tell thee?

HAGEN

From my horn
Drink, hero, first:
A magical draught is this;
It will mind thee of things long forgotten,
And bring old days to remembrance.

*[He offers the horn to Siegfried, who looks into it
thoughtfully and then drinks slowly.]*

SIEGFRIED

In sorrow I listened,
Grieving looked up;
He sat there still and sang.
"Hei! Siegfried has slain
The deceitful dwarf!
I know for him now
A glorious bride.
She sleeps where rugged rocks soar;
Ringed is her chamber by fire.
Who battles the flames
Wakens the bride,
Brünnhilde wins as reward!"

HAGEN

The wood-bird's counsel
Didst thou follow?

SIEGFRIED

Straight without pause
I rose and I ran

[Gunther listens with increasing astonishment.]

Till I came to the fire-ringed rock.
I passed through the flames,
And for prize I found,

[More and more ecstatic.]

Sleeping, and clad in bright mail,
A woman lovely and dear.
The hard helmet
I loosened with care,
And waked the maid with my kiss.
Ah, then the burning, sweet embrace
Of Brünnhild's rapturous arms!

GUNTHER

[Springing up in the greatest consternation.]

What says he?

*[Two ravens fly up out of a bush, circle above Siegfried,
and then fly away towards the Rhine.]*

HAGEN

Didst understand

What the ravens there said?

[Siegfried starts up suddenly, and, turning his back to Hagen, looks after the ravens. Hagen thrusts his spear into Siegfried's back.]

HAGEN

Vengeance—that was the word!

[Gunther and the vassals rush towards Hagen. Siegfried swings his shield on high with both hands in order to throw it on Hagen; his strength fails him; the shield drops from his grasp backwards, and he falls down upon it.]

GUNTHER and VASSALS

[Who have tried to hold Hagen back in vain.]

Hagen, what dost thou?

HAGEN

Death to traitors!

[He turns calmly away, and is seen in the gathering twilight disappearing slowly over the height. Gunther bends over Siegfried in great grief. The vassals stand round the dying man full of sympathy.]

SIEGFRIED

[Supported by two vassals in a sitting posture, opens radiant eyes.]

Brünnhilde,

Heaven-born bride,

Awake! Open thine eyelids!

Who again

Has locked thee in sleep

And bound thee in slumber so fast?

Lo! he that came

And kissed thee awake



Siegfried's death—See p. 172.



Again breaks the bonds
Holding thee fettered
And looks on Brünnhild's delight.
Ah! those dear eyes
Now open for ever!
Ah! the soft fragrance
Borne on her breathing!
Death, thou art welcome—
Sweet are thy terrors—
Brünnhild' greets me, my bride!

[He sinks back and dies. The rest stand round him motionless and sorrowing. Night has fallen. At a silent command from Gunther the vassals raise Siegfried's body and bear it away slowly in a solemn procession over the

height. The moon breaks through the clouds, and lights up the funeral procession with increasing clearness as it reaches the top of the hill. A mist has risen from the Rhine which gradually fills the whole stage, on which the funeral procession has become invisible. After a musical interlude the mist divides again, until at length the hall of the Gibichungs, as in Act I. appears with increasing distinctness.

It is night. The moonlight is mirrored in the Rhine. Gutrune comes out of her chamber into the hall.

Was that his horn?

[She listens.

No!—he
Has not returned.
Troubled was my sleep
By evil dreams!
Then wildly neighed his horse;
Brünnhild' laughed,
And I woke up afraid.
What woman was it
I saw go down to the shore?
I fear this Brünnhild'!
Is she within?

[She listens at the door at the right and calls.

Brünnhild'! Brünnhild'!
Art awake?

[She opens the door timidly and looks into the inner room.

No one is there!
So it was she
I saw go downwards to the Rhine.

[A distant horn sounds.

Was that his horn?
No!
All silent!

[She looks out anxiously.

Would but Siegfried return!

[Hagen's voice is heard outside coming nearer. When Gutrune hears it she stands for a time transfixed with terror.]

HAGEN

Hoiho! Hoiho!
Awake! Awake!
Lights! Ho! lights here!
Burning torches!
Home bring we
Spoils of the chase.
Hoiho! Hoiho!

[Increasing light from the torches is seen without. Hagen enters the hall.]

Up! Gutrun!
Give Siegfried greeting,
For home to thee
Thy hero comes.

GUTRUNE *[In great fear.]*

What is wrong, Hagen?
I heard not his horn.

[Men and women with lights and firebrands accompany, in great confusion, the procession returning with Siegfried's body.]

HAGEN

The hero pale
Will blow it no more;
No more will he ride
To battle or chase
Or gaily go wooing fair women.

GUTRUNE *[With growing terror.]*

What bring they here?

[The procession reaches the middle of the hall, and the vassals set down the body on a hastily improvised

platform.

HAGEN

'Tis a wild boar's spoil they bring thee:
Siegfried, thy husband slain.

[Gutrune shrieks and falls upon the corpse. General emotion and mourning.]

GUNTHER

[Bends over the fainting Gutrune.]

Gutrun', gentle sister!
Open thine eyelids!
Look up and speak!

GUTRUNE

[Recovering consciousness.]

Siegfried—they have slain Siegfried!

[She pushes Gunther back violently.]

Hence! false-hearted brother,
Thou slayer of my husband!
Oh, who will help me!
Woe's me! Woe's me!
These men have murdered my Siegfried!

GUNTHER

Cast not the blame on me;
'Tis Hagen who must bear it:
He is the accursèd wild boar
That did the hero to death.

HAGEN

With me art wroth for that?

GUNTHER

Woe and grief
For aye be thy portion!

HAGEN

[Stepping forward with terrible defiance.]

Yes, then, 'tis true that I slew him.

I—Hagen—

Did him to death!

By my spear he falsely swore,

So by my spear he fell.

I have the sacred right

Now to demand my booty,

And what I claim is this ring.

GUNTHER

Away! Thou shalt not have

What forfeit falls to me.

HAGEN

Ye vassals, judge of my right!

GUNTHER

Thou wouldst seize Gutrune's dower,

Insolent Niblung son?

HAGEN

[Draws his sword.]

'Tis thus

The Niblung son demands his own.

[He rushes on Gunther, who defends himself: they fight. The vassals throw themselves between. Gunther falls slain by a stroke from Hagen.]

HAGEN

Mine the ring!

[He makes a grasp at Siegfried's hand, which raises itself in menace. All stand transfixed with horror.]

BRÜNNHILDE

[Advances firmly and solemnly from the background to the

front. Still at the back.

Silence! Your sorrow
Clamour less loud!
Now for vengeance his wife comes,
The woman all have betrayed.

[As she comes quietly forward.]

I have heard you whining
As whine children
When milk is spilt by their mother;
But lamentation
Meet for a hero unmatched
I have not heard.

GUTRUNE

[Raising herself suddenly from the floor.]

Brünnhilde, spite-venomed!
Thou art the cause of our woe!
For, urged by thee, the men have slain him;
Cursèd hour that brought thee here!

BRÜNNHILDE

Peace, hapless wretch!
Thou never wert wife of his;
His leman wert thou,
Only that.
But I am his lawful bride;
To me was the binding oath sworn,
Before thy face he beheld.

GUTRUNE

[Breaking out in sudden despair.]

Accursèd Hagen,
Why didst thou give the poison
That stole her husband away?
O sorrow!
Mine eyes are opened:
Brünnhild' was the true love
Whom through the draught he forgot.

[She turns from Siegfried in shame and fear, and, dying, bends over Gunther's body; remaining motionless in this position until the end. Hagen stands defiantly leaning on his spear and shield, sunk in gloomy thought, on the opposite side. Brünnhilde stands alone in the middle. After long and absorbed contemplation of Siegfried she turns with solemn exaltation to the men and women.]

BRÜNNHILDE

Let great logs
Be borne to the shore
And high by the Rhine be heaped;
Fierce and far
Let the flames mount
That consume to ashes
Him who was first among men!
His horse lead to me here,
That with me his lord he may follow.
For my body longs
To have part in his glory
And share his honour in death.
Obey Brünnhild's behest.

[The young men, during the following, raise a great pyre of logs before the hall, near the bank of the Rhine; women decorate this with rugs, on which they strew plants and flowers.]

BRÜNNHILDE

[Absorbed anew in contemplation of Siegfried's dead face. Her expression brightens and softens as she proceeds.]

Sheer golden sunshine
Streams from his face;
None was so pure
As he who betrayed.
To wife forsworn,
To friend too faithful,
From his own true love—
His only beloved—
Barred he lay by his sword.
Never did man
Swear oaths more honest,
No one was ever

Truer to treaties;
Never was love
Purer than Siegfried's;
Yet oaths the most sacred,
Bonds the most binding,
And true love were never
So grossly betrayed!

Know ye why that was?

[Looking upward.]

Ye Gods who guard
All vows that are uttered,
Look down on me
In my terrible grief,
Your guilt never-ending behold!
Hear my voice accusing,
Mighty God!
Through his most valiant deed—
Deed by thee so desired—
Thou didst condemn him
To the doom
That else upon thee had fallen.
He, truest of all,
Must betray me,
That wise a woman might grow!

Know I all thou wouldst learn?

All things! All things!
All I know now:
All stands plainly revealed.
Round me I hear
Thy ravens flapping.
By them I send thee back
The tidings awaited in fear.
Rest in peace now, O God!

[She signs to the vassals to bear Siegfried's body on to the pyre; at the same time she draws the ring off Siegfried's finger, and regards it musingly.]

I claim as mine
What he has left me.
O gold accurst!

Terrible ring!
I now grasp thee
And give thee away.
O sisters wise,
Ye have my thanks

For your counsel good, ye who dwell
In the waters deep of the Rhine.

What ye desire
I gladly give;
From out my ashes
Take ye your treasure;

The fire by which I am burnt
Cleanses the ring of its curse.

Down in the waves
Wash it away,
And guard ever pure
The shining gold

That stolen was to your grief!

[She has put the ring on her finger, and now turns to the pile of logs on which Siegfried's body lies stretched. Taking a great firebrand from one of the men, she waves it and points to the background.]

Fly home, ye ravens,
Tell your lord the tidings
That ye have heard by the Rhine.
But fly, as ye go,
By Brünnhild's rock:
Still Loge flames there;

Bid him follow to Walhall;
For the Gods are drawing
Near to their doom.





Brünnhilde on Grane leaps on to the funeral pyre of Siegfried—See p. 182



Thus—thrown be the brand
On Walhall's glittering halls!

[She hurls the brand on to the pile of wood, which quickly breaks into flame. Two ravens fly up from the rock by the shore and vanish in the background. Brünnhilde perceives her horse, which has just been led in by two men.]

Grane, my horse,
Be greeted fair!

[She springs towards him, and, catching hold of him, removes his bridle and bends towards him affectionately.]

Knowest thou, my friend,
To whom we are going?
Thy lord lies radiant
There in the fire,

Siegfried, my hero blest!

Thou neighest with joy
To think thou shalt join him?
Laughing, the flames
Allure thee to follow?
Feel thou my bosom,
Feel how it burns;
Flames of fire
Have laid hold on my heart.

Ah, to embrace him,
By him be embraced,
United for ever
In love without end!
Heiajoho! Grane!
Give thy lord greeting!

[She has swung herself on to the horse, and urges it forward.]

Siegfried! Siegfried!

See! Brünnhild' greets thee, thy bride!





The Rhine-Maidens obtain possession of the ring and bear it off in triumph. See p. 182.



[She urges her horse with one leap into the burning pile of logs. The flames immediately blaze up, so that they fill the whole space in front of the hall and seem to catch hold of the building itself. The terrified men and women press as far to the front as possible. When the whole stage appears to be filled with fire the glow gradually fades, so that there is soon nothing left but a cloud of smoke, which drifts towards the back and hangs there as a dark bank of cloud. At the same time the Rhine overflows and the flood rolls up over the fire. The three Rhine-Maidens swim forward on the waves, and now appear over the spot where the fire

was. Hagen, who since the incident of the ring has been watching Brünnhilde's behaviour with growing anxiety, is much alarmed by the fight of the Rhine-Maidens. He throws away his spear, shield, and helmet, and dashes into the flood as if mad, crying out, "Back from the ring!" Woglinde and Wellgunde fling their arms round his neck and, swimming away, draw him down with them into the depths. Flosshilde, swimming ahead of the others towards the back, joyously holds up the recovered ring. Through the bank of cloud on the horizon a red glow of increasing brightness breaks forth, and, illumined by this light, the Rhine-Maidens are seen merrily circling about and playing with the ring on the calmer waters of the Rhine, which has gradually retired to its natural bed. From the ruins of the fallen hall the men and women watch in great agitation the growing gleam of fire in the heavens. When this is at its brightest the hall of Walhall is seen, in which the Gods and heroes fit assembled, as described by Waltraute in the first Act. Bright flames seem to seize on the hall of the Gods. When the Gods are completely hidden by the flames the curtain falls.



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