



The Story of Siegfried

Adventure 16: How Brunhild Was Welcomed Home

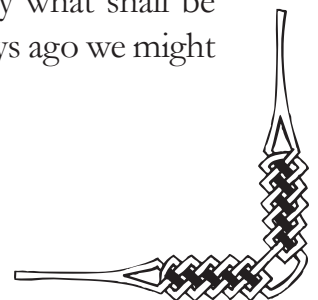
by James Baldwin

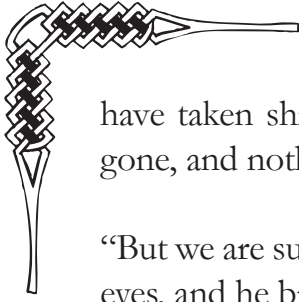
When the next morning's sun arose, and its light gilded the mountain peaks, and fell in a flood of splendor down upon the rich uplands and the broad green fields of Nibelungen Land, Siegfried, with his earls and mighty men, rode through the valley, and down to the seashore. There a pleasant sight met his eyes: for the little bay was white with the sails of a hundred gold-beaked vessels which lay at anchor; and on the sandy beach there stood in order three thousand island warriors,—the bravest and the best of all the Nibelungens,—clad in armor, and ready to hear and to do their master's bidding. And Siegfried told them why he had thus hastily called them together; and he gave to each one rich gifts of gold and jewels and costly raiment. Then he chose from among them one thousand of the most trustworthy, who should follow him back to Isenland; and these went aboard the waiting vessels, amid the cheers and the farewells of their comrades who were left behind. And when every thing was in readiness, the anchors were hoisted and the sails were set, and the little fleet, wafted by pleasant winds, sailed out of the bay, and eastward across the calm blue sea. And Siegfried's vessel, with a golden dragon banner floating from the masthead, led all the rest. On the fourth day after Siegfried's departure from Isenland, Dankwart and grim old Hagen sat in a room of the castle at Isenstein. Outside and below they heard the fair-haired warriors of Queen Brunhild pacing to and fro, and ready, at a word, to seize upon the strangers, and either to put them to death, or to drive them forever from the land. Old Hagen's brows were closely knit, and his face was dark as a thunder-cloud, and his hands played nervously with his sword-hilt, as he said,—

“Where now is Gunther, the man whom we once called king?”

“He is standing on the balcony above, talking with the queen and her maidens,” answered Dankwart.

“The craven that he is!” cried Hagen hoarsely. “Once he was a king, and worthy to be obeyed; but now who is the king? That upstart Siegfried has but to say what shall be done, and our master Gunther, blindly and like a child, complies. Four days ago we might





have taken ship, and sailed safely home. Now our vessel is gone, the boasted hero is gone, and nothing is left for us to do but to fight and die.”

“But we are sure of Odin’s favor,” returned Dankwart; and a wild light gleamed from his eyes, and he brandished his sword high over his head.

“A place in Valhal is promised to us; for, him who bravely dies with his blood-stained sword beside him and his heart unrent with fears, the All-Father’s victory-wafters will gently carry home. Even now, methinks, I sit in the banqueting-hall of the heroes, and quaff the flowing mead.”

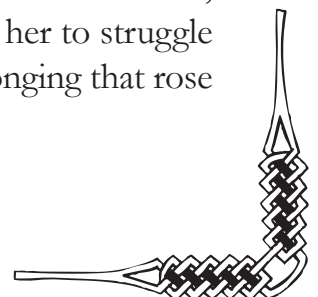
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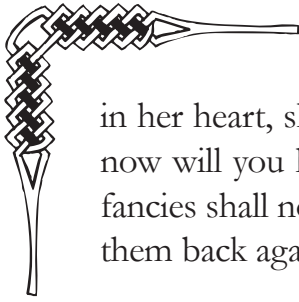
In the mean while Gunther stood with Queen Brunhild at an upper window, and looked out upon the great sea that spread forever and away towards the setting sun. And all at once, as if by magic, the water was covered with white-sailed ships, which, driven by friendly winds and the helping hands of Ægir’s daughters and the brawny arms of many a stalwart oarsman, came flying towards the bay.

“What ships are those with the snow-white sails and the dragon-stems?” asked Brunhild, wondering. Gunther gazed for a moment towards the swift-coming fleet, and his eyes were gladdened with the sight of Siegfried’s dragon-banner floating from the vessel in the van. A great load seemed lifted from his breast, for now he knew that the hoped-for help was at hand. And, smiling he answered the queen,—

“Those white-sailed ships are mine. My body-guard—a thousand of my trustiest fighting-men—are on board, and every man is ready to die for me.” And as the vessels came into the harbor, and the sailors furled the sails, and cast the anchors into the sea, Siegfried was seen standing on the golden prow of his ship, arrayed in princely raiment, with his earls and chiefs around him. And their bright armor glittered in the sunlight, and their burnished shields shone like so many golden mirrors. A fairer sight had the folk of Isenstein never seen.

Long and earnestly Queen Brunhild gazed, and then, turning away, she burst into tears; for she knew that she had been again outwitted, and that it was vain for her to struggle against the Norns’ decrees. Then, crushing back the grief and the sore longing that rose



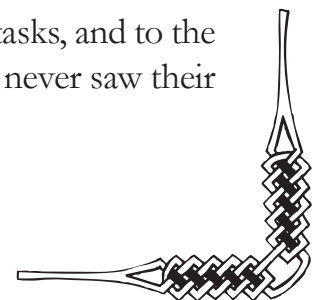


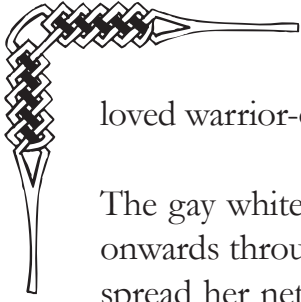
in her heart, she spoke again to Gunther, and her eyes shone stern and strange. "What now will you have me do?" she asked. "For you have fairly won me, and my wayward fancies shall no longer vex you. Shall I greet your friends with kindness, or shall we send them back again over the sea?"

"I pray you give them welcome to the broad halls of Isenstein," he answered; "for no truer, nobler men live than these my liegemen."

So the queen sent word to Siegfried and his Nibelungen warriors to leave the ships and come ashore. And she herself, as radiant now as a morning in May, went down to meet them and welcome them. Then she had a great feast made in honor of the heroes, and the long, low-raftered feast-hall rang with the sounds of merriment, instead of with the clash of arms. The fair-haired, blue-eyed warriors of the queen sat side by side with the tall strangers from over the sea. And in the high-seat was Brunhild, her face exceeding pale, yet beauteous to behold; and by her side sat Gunther, smiling and glad, and clad in his kingly raiments. And around them were the earls and chieftains, and many a fair lady of Isenland, and Hagen, smiling through his frowns, and Dankwart, now grown fearless, and Siegfried sad and thoughtful. Mirth and gladness ruled the hour, and not until the morning star began to fade in the coming sunlight did the guests retire to rest.

Only a few days longer did the heroes tarry in Isenland; for the mild spring days were growing warmer, and all faces were southward turned, and the queen herself was anxious to haste to her South-land home. When, at last, the time for leave-taking came, the folk of Isenland gathered around to bid their queen Godspeed. Then Brunhild called to Dankwart, and gave him her golden keys, and bade him unlock her closets where her gold and jewels were stored, and to scatter with hands unstinted her treasures among the poor. And many were the tearful blessings, and many the kind words said, as the radiant queen went down to the waiting, white-winged vessel, and stepped aboard with Gunther and the heroes of the Rhine. But she was not to go alone to the land of strangers; for with her were to sail a hundred fair young damsels, and more than fourscore noble dames, and two thousand blue-eyed warriors, the bravest of her land. When all had gone on board the waiting fleet, the anchors were hoisted, and the sails were unfurled to the breeze; and amid the tearful farewells of friends, and the joyful shouting of the sailors, the hundred heavy-laden vessels glided from the bay, and were soon far out at sea. And the sorrowing folk of Isenland turned away, and went back to their daily tasks, and to the old life of mingled pain and pleasure, of shadow and sunshine; and they never saw their



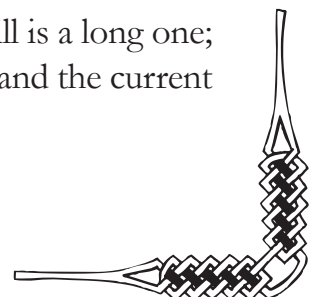


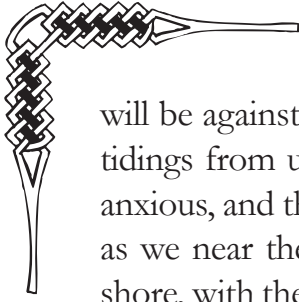
loved warrior-queen again.

The gay white fleet, with its precious cargo of noble men and fair ladies, sped swiftly onwards through Old Ægir's kingdom; and it seemed as if Queen Ran had forgotten to spread her nets, so smooth and quiet was the sea; and the waves slept on the peaceful bosom of the waters: only Ripple and Sky-clear danced in the wake of the flying ships, and added to the general joy. And on shipboard music and song enlivened the dragging hours; and from morn till eve no sounds were heard, save those of merriment and sport, and glad good cheer. Yet, as day after day passed by, and no sight met their eyes but the calm blue waters beneath, and the calm blue sky above, all began to wish for a view, once more, of the solid earth, and the fields, and the wild greenwood. But the ships sailed steadily onward, and every hour brought them nearer and nearer to the wished-for haven. At length, on the ninth day, they came in sight of a long, flat coast, stretching far away towards the Lowlands, where Old Ægir and his daughters—sometimes by wasting warfare, sometimes by stealthy strategy—ever plot and toil to widen the Sea-king's domains. When the sailors saw the green shore rising up, as it were, out of the quiet water, and the wild woodland lying dense and dark beyond, and when they knew that they were nearing the end of their long sea-voyage, they rent the air with their joyful shouts. And a brisker breeze sprang up, and filled the sails, and made the ships leap forward over the water, like glad living creatures. It was then that the thought came to King Gunther that he ought to send fleet heralds to Burgundy-land to make known the happy issue of his bold emprise, and to tell of his glad home-coming, with Brunhild, the warrior-maiden, as his queen. So he called old Hagen to him, and told him of his thoughts, and asked him if he would be that herald. "Nay," answered the frowning chief. "No bearer of glad tidings am I. To every man Odin has given gifts. To some he has given light hearts, and cheery faces, and glad voices; and such alone are fitted to carry good news and happy greetings. To others he has given darker souls, and less lightsome faces, and more uncouth manners; and these may bear the brunt of the battle, and rush with Odin's heroes to the slaughter: but they would be ill at ease standing in the presence of fair ladies, or telling glad tidings at court. Let me still linger, I pray, on board this narrow ship, and send your friend Siegfried as herald to Burgundy-land. He is well fitted for such a duty."

So Gunther sent at once for Siegfried, to whom, when he had come, he said,—

"My best of friends, although we are now in sight of land, our voyage still is a long one; for the river is yet far away, and, when it is reached, its course is winding, and the current

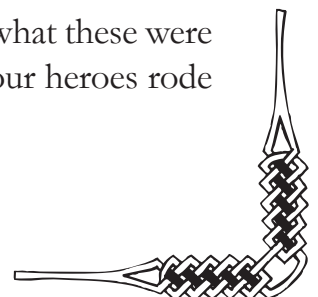


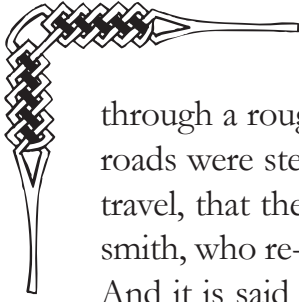


will be against us, and our progress must needs be slow. The folk at home have had no tidings from us since we left them in the early spring; and no doubt their hearts grow anxious, and they long to hear of our whereabouts, and whether we prosper or no. Now, as we near the headland which juts out dark and green before us, we will set you on shore, with the noble Greyfell, and as many comrades as you wish, to haste with all speed to Burgundy, to tell the glad news of our coming to the loved ones waiting there.” Siegfried at first held back, and tried to excuse himself from undertaking this errand,—not because he felt any fear of danger, but because he scorned to be any man’s thrall, to go and do at his beck and bidding. Then Gunther spoke again, and in a different tone.

“Gentle Siegfried,” he said, “if you will not do this errand for my sake, I pray that you will undertake it for the sake of my sister, the fair Kriemhild, who has so long waited for our coming.”

Then willingly did the prince agree to be the king’s herald. And on the morrow the ship touched land; and Siegfried bade his companions a short farewell, and went ashore with four and twenty Nibelungen chiefs, who were to ride with him to Burgundy. And, when every thing was in readiness, he mounted the noble Greyfell, as did also each warrior his favorite steed, and they galloped briskly away; and their glittering armor and nodding plumes were soon lost to sight among the green trees of the wood. And the ship which bore Gunther and his kingly party weighed anchor, and moved slowly along the shore towards the distant river’s mouth. For many days, and through many strange lands, rode Siegfried and his Nibelungen chiefs. They galloped through the woodland, and over a stony waste, and came to a peopled country rich in farms and meadows, and dotted with pleasant towns. And the folk of that land wondered greatly at sight of the radiant Siegfried, and the tall warriors with him, and their noble steeds, and their sunbright armor. For they thought that it was a company of the gods riding through the mid-world, as the gods were wont to do in the golden days of old. So they greeted them with smiles, and kind, good words, and scattered flowers and blessings in their way. They stopped for a day in Vilkina-land, where dwelt one Eigill, a famous archer, who, it is said, was a brother of Veliant, Siegfried’s fellow-apprentice in the days of his boyhood. And men told them this story of Eigill. That once on a time old Nidung, the king of that land, in order to test his skill with the bow, bade him shoot an apple, or, as some say, an acorn, from the head of his own little son. And Eigill did this; but two other arrows, which he had hidden beneath his coat, dropped to the ground. And when the king asked him what these were for he answered, “To kill thee, wretch, had I slain my child.” After this our heroes rode

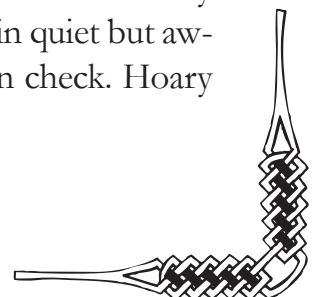


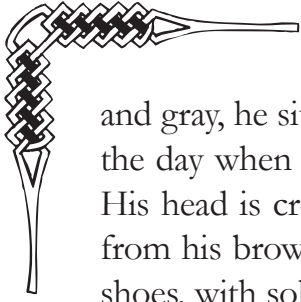


through a rough hill-country, where the ground was covered with sharp stones, and the roads were steep and hard. And their horses lost their shoes, and were so lamed by the travel, that they were forced to turn aside to seek the house of one Welland, a famous smith, who re-shod their steeds, and entertained them most kindly three days and nights. And it is said by some that Welland is but another name for Veliant, and that this was the selfsame foreman whom we knew in Siegfried's younger days. But, be this as it may, he was at this time the master of all smiths, and no one ever wrought more cunningly. And men say that his grandfather was Vilkinus, the first king of that land; and that his grandmother, Wachitu, was a fair mermaid, who lived in the deep green sea; and that his father, Wada, had carried him, when a child, upon his shoulders through water five fathoms deep, to apprentice him to the cunning dwarfs, from whom he learned his trade. And if this story is true, he could not have been Veliant. He was wedded to a beautiful lady, who sometimes took the form of a swan, and flew away to a pleasant lake near by, where, with other swan-maidens, she spent the warm summer days among the reeds and the water-lilies. And many other strange tales were told of Welland the smith: how he had once made a boat from the single trunk of a tree, and had sailed in it all around the mid-world; how, being lame in one foot, he had forged a wondrous winged garment, and flown like a falcon through the air; and how he had wrought for Beowulf, the Anglo-Saxon hero, a gorgeous war-coat that no other smith could equal. And so pleasantly did Welland entertain his guests that they were loath to leave him; but on the fourth day they bade him farewell, and wended again their way.

Now our heroes rode forward, with greater speed than before, across many a mile of waste land, and over steep hills, and through pleasant wooded dales. Then, again, they came to fair meadows, and broad pasture-lands, and fields green with growing corn; and every one whom they met blessed them, and bade them a hearty God-speed. Then they left the farmlands and the abodes of men far behind them; and they passed by the shore of a sparkling lake, where they heard the swan-maidens talking to each other as they swam among the rushes, or singing in silvery tones of gladness as they circled in the air above. Then they crossed a dreary moor, where nothing grew but heather; and they climbed a barren, stony mountain, where the feet of men had never been, and came at last to a wild, dark forest, where silence reigned undisturbed forever.

It was the wood in which dwells Vidar, the silent god, far from the sound of man's busy voice, in the solemn shade of century-living oaks and elms. There he sits in quiet but awful grandeur,—strong almost as Thor, but holding his mighty strength in check. Hoary

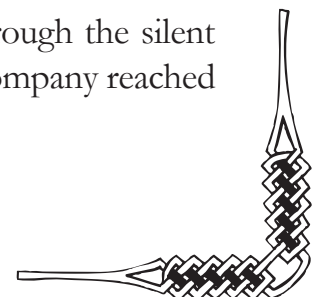


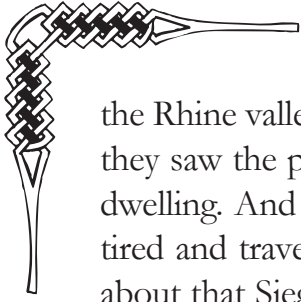


and gray, he sits alone in Nature's temple, and communes with Nature's self, waiting for the day when Nature's silent but resistless forces shall be quickened into dread action. His head is crowned with sear and yellow leaves, and long white moss hangs pendent from his brows and cheeks, and his garments are rusted with age. On his feet are iron shoes, with soles made thick with the scraps of leather gathered through centuries past; and with these, it is said, he shall, in the last great twilight of the mid-world, rend the jaws of the Fenris-wolf. "Who is this Fenris-wolf?" asked one of the Nibelungens as they rode through the solemn shadows of the wood. And Siegfried thereupon related how that fierce creature had been brought up and cared for by the Asa-folk; and how, when he grew large and strong, they sought to keep him from doing harm by binding him with an iron chain called Leding. But the strength of the monster was so great, that he burst the chain asunder, and escaped. Then the Asas made another chain twice as strong, which they called Drome. And they called to the wolf, and besought him to allow them to bind him again, so that, in bursting the second chain, he might clear up all doubts in regard to his strength. Flattered by the words of the Asas, the wolf complied; and they chained him with Drome, and fastened him to a great rock. But Fenris stretched his legs, and shook himself, and the great chain was snapped in pieces. Then the Asas knew that there was no safety for them so long as a monster so huge and terrible was unbound; and they besought the swarthy elves to forge them another and a stronger chain. This the elves did. They made a most wondrous chain, smooth as silk, and soft as down, yet firmer than granite, and stronger than steel. They called it Gleipner; and it was made of the sinews of a bear, the footsteps of a cat, the beard of a woman, the breath of a fish, the sweat of a bird, and the roots of a mountain. When the Asas had obtained this chain, they lured the Fenris-wolf to the rocky Island of Lyngve, and by flattery persuaded him to be bound again. But this he would not agree to do until Tyr placed his hand in his mouth as a pledge of good faith. Then they tied him as before, and laughingly bade him break the silken cord. The huge creature stretched himself as before, and tried with all his might to burst away; but Gleipner held him fast, and the worst that he could do was to bite off the hand of unlucky Tyr. And this is why Tyr is called the one-armed god.

"But it is said," added Siegfried, "that in the last twilight the Fenris-wolf will break his chain, and that he will swallow the sun, and slay the great Odin himself, and that none can subdue him save Vidar the Silent."

It was thus that the heroes conversed with each other as they rode through the silent ways of the wood. At length, one afternoon in early summer, the little company reached



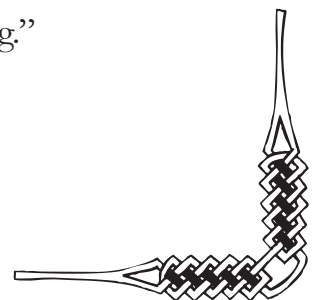


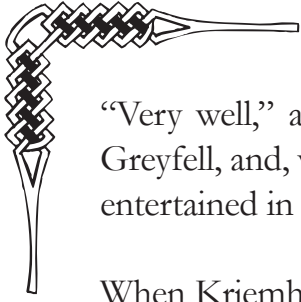
the Rhine valley; and looking down from the sloping hill-tops, green with growing corn, they saw the pleasant town of the Burgundians and the high gray towers of Gunther's dwelling. And not long afterwards they rode through the streets of the old town, and, tired and travel-stained, halted outside of the castle-gates. Very soon it became noised about that Siegfried and a company of strange knights, fair and tall, had come again to Burgundy and to the home of the Burgundian kings. But when it was certainly known that neither Gunther the king, nor Hagen of the evil eye, nor Dankwart his brother, had returned, the people felt many sad misgivings; for they greatly feared that some hard mischance had befallen their loved king. Then Gernot and the young Giselher, having heard of Siegfried's arrival, came out with glad but anxious faces to greet him. "Welcome, worthy chief!" they cried. "But why are you alone? What are your tidings? Where is our brother? and where are our brave uncles, Hagen and Dankwart? And who are those strange, fair men who ride with you? And what about Brunhild, the warrior-maiden? Alas! If our brother has fallen by her cruel might, then woe to Burgundy! Tell us quickly all about it!"

"Have patience, friends!" answered Siegfried. "Give me time to speak, and I will gladden the hearts of all the folk of Burgundy with my news. Your brother Gunther is alive and well; and he is the happiest man in the whole mid-world, because he has won the matchless Brunhild for his bride. And he is ere now making his way up the river with a mighty fleet of a hundred vessels and more than two thousand warriors. Indeed, you may look for him any day. And he has sent me, with these my Nibelungen earls, to bid you make ready for his glad home-coming."

Then, even before he had alighted from Greyfell, he went on to tell of the things that had happened at Isenstein; but he said nothing of the part which he had taken in the strange contest. And a crowd of eager listeners stood around, and heard with unfeigned joy of the happy fortune of their king. "And now," said Siegfried to Giselher, when he had finished his story, "carry the glad news to your mother and your sister; for they, too, must be anxious to learn what fate has befallen King Gunther."

"Nay," answered the prince, "you yourself are the king's herald, and you shall be the one to break the tidings to them. Full glad they'll be to hear the story from your own lips, for long have they feared that our brother would never be seen by us again. I will tell them of your coming, but you must be the first to tell them the news you bring."





“Very well,” answered Siegfried. “It shall be as you say.” Then he dismounted from Greyfell, and, with his Nibelungen earls, was shown into the grand hall, where they were entertained in a right kingly manner.

When Kriemhild the peerless, and Ute her mother, heard that Siegfried had come again to Burgundy, and that he brought news from Gunther the king, they hastened to make ready to see him. And, when he came before them, he seemed so noble, so bright, and so glad, that they knew he bore no evil tidings.

“Most noble prince,” said Kriemhild, trembling in his presence, “right welcome are you to our dwelling! But wherefore are you come? How fares my brother Gunther? Why came he not with you back to Burgundy-land? Oh, undone are we, if, through the cruel might of the warrior-queen, he has been lost to us.”

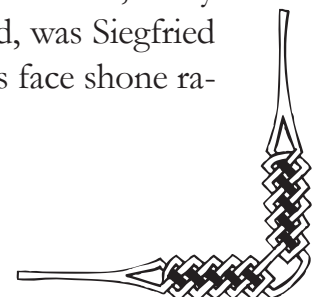
“Now give me a herald’s fees!” cried Siegfried, laughing. “King Gunther is alive and well. In the games of strength to which fair Brunhild challenged him, he was the winner. And now he comes up the Rhine with his bride, and a great retinue of lords and ladies and fighting-men. Indeed, the sails of his ships whiten the river for miles. And I am come by his desire to ask that every thing be made ready for his glad home-coming and the loving welcome of his peerless queen.”

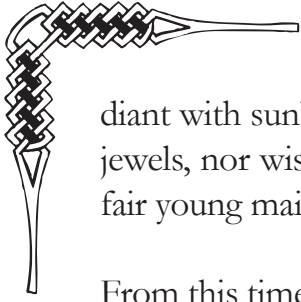
Great was the joy of Kriemhild and her queenly mother when they heard this gladsome news; and they thanked the prince most heartily for all that he had done.

“You have truly earned a herald’s fee,” said the lovely maiden, “and gladly would I pay it you in gold; for you have cheered us with pleasant tidings, and lightened our minds of a heavy load. But men of your noble rank take neither gifts nor fees, and hence we have only to offer our deepest and heartiest thanks.”

“Not so,” answered Siegfried gayly. “Think not I would scorn a fee. Had I a kingdom of thirty realms, I should still be proud of a gift from you.”

“Then, you shall have your herald’s fee!” cried Kriemhild; and she sent her maidens to fetch the gift. And with her own lily hands she gave him twenty golden bracelets, richly inwrought with every kind of rare and costly gem-stones. Happy, indeed, was Siegfried to take such priceless gift from the hand of so peerless a maiden; and his face shone ra-





diant with sunbeams as he humbly bowed, and thanked her. But he had no need for the jewels, nor wished he to keep them long: so he gave them, with gracious wishes, to the fair young maidens at court.

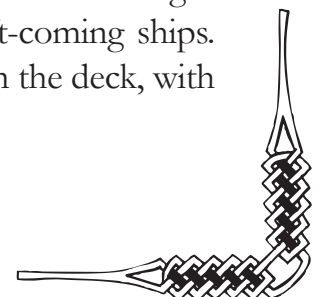
From this time forward, for many days, there was great bustle in Gunther's dwelling. On every side was heard the noise of busy hands, making ready for the glad day when the king should be welcomed home. The broad halls and the tall gray towers were decked with flowers, and floating banners, and many a gay device; the houses and streets of the pleasant burgh put on their holiday attire; the shady road which led through Kriemhild's rose-garden down to the river-banks was dusted and swept with daily care; and the watchman was cautioned to keep on the lookout every moment for the coming of the expected fleet. And heralds had been sent to every burgh and castle, and to every countryside in Burgundy, announcing the happy home-coming of Gunther and his bride, and bidding every one, both high and low, to the glad merry-making.

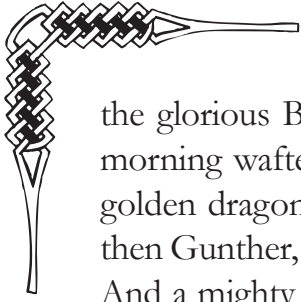
On the morning of the eleventh day, ere the sun had dried the dew from the springing grass, the keen-eyed watchman, in his perch on the topmost tower, cried out in happy accents to the waiting folk below,—

“They come at last! I see the white-winged ships still far down the stream. But a breeze springs up from the northward, and the sailors are at the oars, and swift speed the hastening vessels, as if borne on the wings of the wind. Ride forth, O ye brave and fair, to welcome the fair and the brave!”

Then quickly the king-folk, and the warriors, and fair ladies, mounted their ready steeds, and gayly through the gates of the castle they rode out river-wards. And Ute, the noble queen-mother, went first. And the company moved in glittering array, with flying banners, and music, and the noisy flourish of drums, adown the rose-covered pathway which led to the water's side. And the peerless Kriemhild followed, with a hundred lovely maidens, all mounted on snow-white palfreys; and Siegfried, proud and happy, on Greyfell, rode beside her.

When the party reached the river-bank, a pleasant sight met their eyes; for the fleet had now drawn near, and the whole river, as far as the eye could reach, glittered with the light reflected from the shield-hung rails and the golden prows of the swift-coming ships. King Gunther's own vessel led all the rest; and the king himself stood on the deck, with



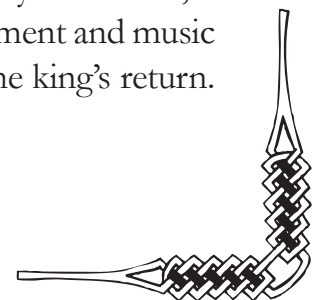


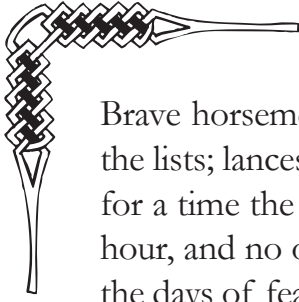
the glorious Brunhild by his side. Nearer and nearer the fresh breeze of the summer morning wafted the vessel to the shore, where stood the waiting multitude. Softly the golden dragon glided in to the landing-place, and quickly was it moored to the banks; then Gunther, clad in his kingly garments, stepped ashore, and with him his lovely queen. And a mighty shout of welcome, and an answering shout of gladness, seemed to rend the sky as the waiting hosts beheld the sight. And the queen-mother Ute, and the peerless Kriemhild, and her kingly brothers, went forward to greet the pair. And Kriemhild took Brunhild by the hand, and kissed her, and said,—

“Welcome, thrice welcome, dear sister, to thy home and thy kindred and thy people, who hail thee as queen. And may thy days be full of joyance, and thy years be full of peace!” Then all the folk cried out their goodly greetings; and the sound of their glad voices rang out sweet and clear in the morning air, and rose up from the riverside, and was echoed among the hill-slopes, and carried over the meadows and vineyards, to the farthest bounds of Burgundy-land. And the matchless Brunhild, smiling, returned the happy greeting; and her voice was soft and sweet, as she said,—

“O kin of the fair Rhineland, and folk of my new-found home! May your days be summer sunshine, and your lives lack grief and pain; and may this hour of glad rejoicing be the type of all hours to come!”

Then the lovely queen was seated in a golden wain which stood in waiting for her; and Gunther mounted his own war-steed; and the whole company made ready to ride to the castle. Never before had so pleasant a sight been seen in Rhineland, as that glorious array of king-folk and lords and ladies wending from river to fortress along the rose-strewn roadway. Foremost went the king, and by his side was Siegfried on the radiant Greyfell. Then came the queen’s golden wain, drawn by two snow-white oxen, which were led with silken cords by sweet-faced maidens; and in it, on an ivory throne deep-carved with mystic runes, sat glorious Brunhild. Behind rode the queen-mother and her kingly sons, and frowning Hagen, and Dankwart, and Volker, and all the earl-folk and mighty warriors of Burgundy and of Nibelungen Land. And lastly came Kriemhild and her hundred damsels, sitting on their snow-white steeds. And they rode past the blooming gardens, and through the glad streets of the burgh, and then, like a radiant vision, they entered the castle-halls; and the lovely pageant was seen no more. For twelve days after this, a joyful high-tide was held at the castle; and the broad halls rang with merriment and music and festive mirth. And games and tournaments were held in honor of the king’s return.





Brave horsemen dashed here and there at break-neck speed, or contended manfully in the lists; lances flew thick in the air; shouts and glad cries were heard on every hand; and for a time the most boisterous tumult reigned. But gladness and good-feeling ruled the hour, and no one thought of aught but merry-making and careless joy. At length, when the days of feasting were past, the guests bade Gunther and his queen farewell; and each betook himself to his own home, and to whatsoever his duty called him. And one would have thought that none but happy days were henceforth in store for the kingly folk of Burgundy. But alas! Too soon the cruel frost and the cold north winds nipped the buds and blossoms of the short summer, and the days of gladness gave place to nights of gloom.

