



The Story of Siegfried

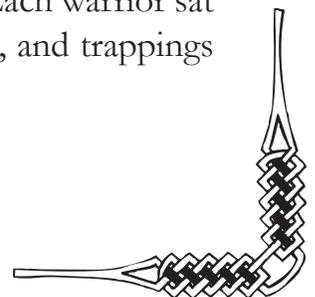
Adventure 17: How Siegfried Lived in Nibelungen Land

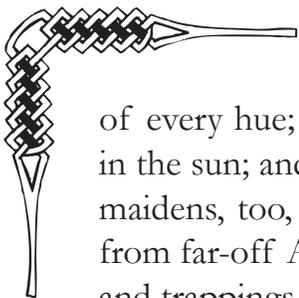
by James Baldwin

When the twelve-days' high-tide at King Gunther's home-coming had been brought to an end, and the guests had all gone to their homes, Siegfried, too, prepared to bid farewell to the Rhineland kings, and to wend to his own country. But he was not to go alone; for Kriemhild, the peerless princess, was to go with him as his bride. They had been wedded during the merry festivities which had just closed, and that event had added greatly to the general joy; for never was there a fairer or a nobler pair than Siegfried the fearless, and Kriemhild the peerless. "It grieves my heart to part with you," said Gunther, wringing Siegfried's hand. "It will fare but ill with us, I fear, when we no longer see your radiant face, or hear your cheery voice."

"Say not so, my brother," answered Siegfried; "for the gods have many good things in store for you. And, if ever you need the help of my arm, you have but to say the word, and I will hasten to your aid."

Then the Burgundian kings besought the hero to take the fourth part of their kingdom as his own and Kriemhild's, and to think no more of leaving them. But Siegfried would not agree to this. His heart yearned to see his father and mother once again, and then to return to his own loved Nibelungen Land. So he thanked the kings for their kind offer, and hastened to make ready for his intended journey. Early on Midsummer Day the hero and his bride rode out of Gunther's dwelling, and turned their faces northward. And with them was a noble retinue of warriors,—five hundred brave Burgundians, with Eckewart as their chief,—who had sworn to be Queen Kriemhild's vassals in her new, far-distant home. Thirty and two fair maidens, too, went with her. And with Siegfried were his Nibelungen earls. As the company rode down the sands, and filed gayly along the river-road, it seemed a lovely although a sad sight to their kinsmen who gazed after them from the castle-towers. Fair and young were all the folk; and the world, to most, was still untried. And they rode, in the morning sunlight, away from their native land, nor recked that never again would they return. Each warrior sat upon a charger, richly geared with gilt-red saddle, and gorgeous bridle, and trappings



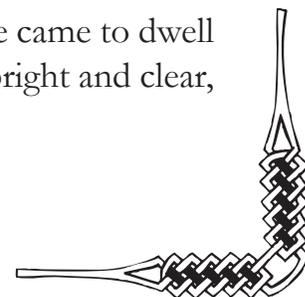


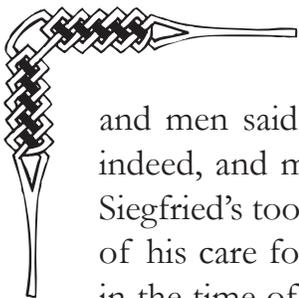
of every hue; and their war-coats were bright and dazzling; and their spears glanced in the sun; and their golden shields threw rays of resplendent light around them. The maidens, too, were richly dight in brodered cloaks of blue, and rare stuffs brought from far-off Araby; and each sat on a snow-white palfrey geared with silken housings, and trappings of bright blue.

For some days the company followed the course of the river, passing through many a rich meadow, and between lovely vineyards, and fields of yellow corn. Then they rode over a dreary, barren waste, and through a wild greenwood, and reached, at last, the hills which marked the beginning of King Siegmund's domains. Then Siegfried sent fleet heralds before them to carry to his father the tidings of his coming with his bride, fair Kriemhild. Glad, indeed, were old King Siegmund and Siegfried's gentle mother when they heard this news.

"Oh, happy is the day!" cried the king. "Thrice happy be the day that shall see fair Kriemhild a crowned queen, and Siegfried a king in the throne of his fathers!" And they showered upon the heralds who had brought the happy news rich fees of gold and silver, and gave them garments of silken velvet. And on the morrow they set out, with a train of earl-folk and lovely ladies, to meet their son and his bride. For one whole day they journeyed to the old fortress of Santen, where in former days the king's dwelling had been. There they met the happy bridal-party, and fond and loving were the hearty greetings they bestowed upon Kriemhild and the radiant Siegfried. Then, without delay, they returned to Siegmund's kingly hall; and for twelve days a high tide, more happy and more splendid than that which had been held in Burgundy, was made in honor of Siegfried's marriage-day. And, in the midst of those days of sport and joyance, the old king gave his crown and sceptre to his son; and all the people hailed Siegfried, king of the broad Lowlands, and Kriemhild his lovely queen. Old stories tell how Siegfried reigned in peace and glad contentment in his fatherland; and how the joyous sunshine shone wherever he went, and poured a flood of light and warmth and happiness into every nook and corner of his kingdom; and how, at length, after the gentle Sigelind had died, he moved his court to that other country of his,—the far-off Nibelungen Land. And it is in that strange, dream-haunted land, in a strong-built mountain fortress, that we shall next find him.

Glad were the Nibelungen folk when their own king and his lovely wife came to dwell among them; and the mists once more were lifted, and the skies grew bright and clear,

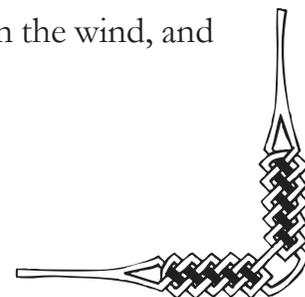


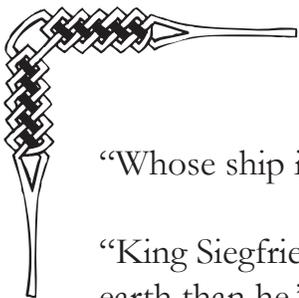


and men said that the night had departed, and the better days were near. Golden, indeed, and most glorious, was that summer-time; and long to be remembered was Siegfried's too brief reign in Nibelungen Land. And, ages afterward, folk loved to sing of his care for his people's welfare, of his wisdom and boundless lore, of his deeds in the time of warring, and the victories gained in peace. And strong and brave were the men-folk, and wise and fair were the women, and broad and rich were the acres, in Siegfried's well-ruled land. The farm-lands were yellow with the abundant harvests, fruitful orchards grew in the pleasant dales, and fair vineyards crowned the hills. Fine cities sprang up along the seacoast, and strong fortresses were built on every height. Great ships were made, which sailed to every land, and brought home rich goods from every clime,—coffee and spices from India, rich silks from Zazemang, fine fruits from the Iberian shore, and soft furs, and ivory tusks of the sea-beast, from the frozen coasts of the north. Never before was country so richly blessed; for Siegfried taught his people how to till the soil best, and how to delve far down into the earth for hidden treasures, and how to work skilfully in iron and bronze and all other metals, and how to make the winds and the waters, and even the thunderbolt, their thralls and helpful servants. And he was as great in war as in peace; for no other people dared harm, or in any way impose upon, the Nibelungen folk, or any of his faithful liegemen.

It is told how, once on a time, he warred against the Hundings, who had done his people an injury, and how he sailed against them in a long dragon-ship of a hundred oars. When he was far out in the mid-sea, and no land was anywhere in sight, a dreadful storm arose. The lightnings flashed, and the winds roared, and threatened to carry the ship to destruction. Quickly the fearful sailors began to reef the sails, but Siegfried bade them stop.

“Why be afraid?” he cried. “The Norns have woven the woof of every man's life, and no man can escape his destiny. If the gods will that we should drown, it is folly for us to strive against fate. We are bound to the shore of the Hundings' land, and thither must our good ship carry us. Hoist the sails high on the masts, even though the wind should tear them into shreds, and split the masts into splinters!” The sailors did as they were bidden; and the hurricane caught the ship in its mighty arms, and hurried it over the rolling waves with the speed of lightning. And Siegfried stood calmly at the helm, and guided the flying vessel. Presently they saw a rocky point rising up out of the waters before them; and on it stood an old man, his gray cloak streaming in the wind, and his blue hood tied tightly down over his head.





“Whose ship is that which comes riding on the storm?” cried the man.

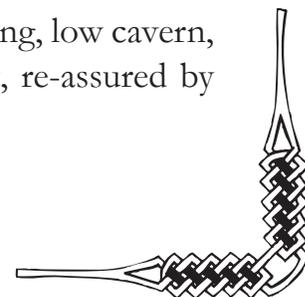
“King Siegfried’s ship,” answered the man at the prow. “There lives no braver man on earth than he.” “Thou sayest truly,” came back from the rock. “Lay by your oars, reef the sails, and take me on board!” “What is your name?” asked the sailor, as the ship swept past him.

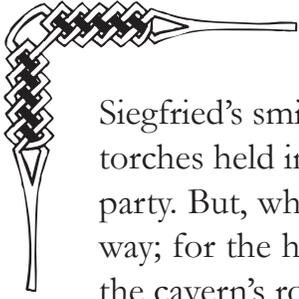
“When the raven croaks gladly over his battle-feast, men call me Hnikar. But call me now Karl from the mountain, Fengr, or Fjolner. Reef, quick, your sails, and take me in!” The men, at Siegfried’s command, obeyed. And at once the wind ceased blowing, and the sea was calm, and the warm sun shone through the rifted clouds, and the coast of Hundings Land lay close before them. But when they looked for Fjolner, as he called himself, they could not find him. One day Siegfried sat in his sun-lit hall in Nibelungen Land; and Kriemhild, lovely as a morning in June, sat beside him. And they talked of the early days when alone he fared through the mid-world, and alone did deeds of wondrous daring. And Siegfried bethought him then of the glittering Hoard of Andvari, and the cave and the mountain fortress, where the faithful dwarf Alberich still guarded the measureless treasure.

“How I should like to see that mountain fastness and that glittering hoard!” cried Kriemhild. “You shall see,” answered the king. And at once horses were saddled, and preparations were made for a morning’s jaunt into the mountains. And, ere an hour had passed, Siegfried and his queen, and a small number of knights and ladies, were riding through the passes. About noon they came to Alberich’s dwelling,—a frowning fortress of granite built in the mountain-side. The gate was opened by the sleepy giant who always sat within, and the party rode into the narrow court-yard. There they were met by Alberich, seeming smaller and grayer, and more pinched and wan, than ever before.

“Hail, noble master!” cried he, bowing low before Siegfried. “How can Alberich serve you to-day?” “Lead us to the treasure-vaults,” answered the king. “My queen would fain feast her eyes upon the yellow, sparkling hoard.”

The dwarf obeyed. Through a narrow door they were ushered into a long, low cavern, so frowning and gloomy, that the queen started back in affright. But, re-assured by





Siegfried's smiling face, she went forward again. The entrance-way was lighted by little torches held in the hands of tiny elves, who bowed in humble politeness to the kingly party. But, when once beyond the entrance-hall, no torches were needed to show the way; for the huge pile of glittering gold and sparkling jewels, which lay heaped up to the cavern's roof, lighted all the space around with a glory brighter than day.

"There is the dwarf's treasure!" cried Siegfried. "Behold the Hoard of Andvari, the gathered wealth of the ages! Henceforth, fair Kriemhild, it is yours—all yours, save this serpent-ring."

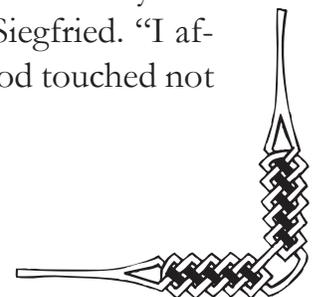
"And why not that too?" asked the queen; for she admired its glittering golden scales, and its staring ruby eyes. "Alas!" answered he, "a curse rests upon it,—the curse which Andvari the ancient laid upon it when Loki tore it from his hand. A miser's heart—selfish, cold, snaky—is bred in its owner's being; and he thenceforth lives a very serpent's life. Or, should he resist its influence, then death through the guile of pretended friends is sure to be his fate."

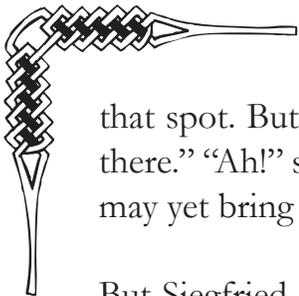
"Then why," asked the queen,—"why do you keep it yourself? Why do you risk its bane? Why not give it to your sworn foe, or cast it into the sea, or melt it in the fire, and thus escape the curse?"

Siegfried answered by telling how, when in the heyday of his youth, he had slain Fafnir, the keeper of this hoard, upon the Glittering Heath; and how, while still in the narrow trench which he had dug, the blood of the horrid beast had flown in upon him, and covered him up.

"And this I have been told by Odin's birds," he went on to say, "that every part of my body that was touched by the slimy flood was made forever proof against sword and spear, and sharp weapons of every kind. Hence I have no cause to fear the stroke, either of open foes or of traitorous false friends."

"But was all of your body covered with the dragon's blood? Was there no small spot untouched?" asked the queen, more anxious now than she had ever seemed to be before she had known aught of her husband's strange security from wounds. "Only one very little spot between the shoulders was left untouched," answered Siegfried. "I afterwards found a lime-leaf sticking there, and I know that the slimy blood touched not





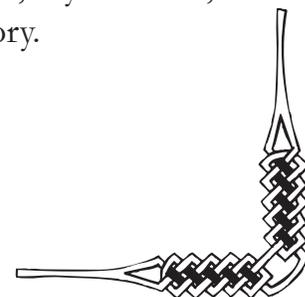
that spot. But then who fears a thrust in the back? None save cowards are wounded there.” “Ah!” said the queen, toying tremulously with the fatal ring, “that little lime-leaf may yet bring us unutterable woe.”

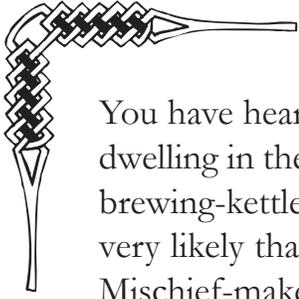
But Siegfried laughed at her fears; and he took the serpent-ring, and slipped it upon his forefinger, and said that he would wear it there, bane or no bane, so long as Odin would let him live.

Then, after another long look at the heaps of glittering gold and priceless gem-stones, the company turned, and followed Alberich back, through the gloomy entranceway and the narrow door, to the open air again. And mounting their steeds, which stood ready, they started homewards. But, at the outer gate, Siegfried paused, and said to the dwarf at parting,—

“Hearken, Alberich! The Hoard of Andvari is no longer mine. I have made a present of it to my queen. Hold it and guard it, therefore, as hers and hers alone; and, whatever her bidding may be regarding it, that do.” “Your word is law, and shall be obeyed,” said the dwarf, bowing low.

Then the drowsy gate-keeper swung the heavy gate to its place, and the kingly party rode gayly away. On their way home the company went, by another route, through the narrow mountain pass which led towards the sea, and thence through a rocky gorge between two smoking mountains. And on one side of this road a great cavern yawned, so dark and deep that no man had ever dared to step inside of it. And as they paused before it, and listened, they heard, away down in its dismal depths, horrid groans, sad moanings, and faint wild shrieks, so far away that it seemed as if they had come from the very centre of the earth. And, while they still listened, the ground around them trembled and shook, and the smoking mountain on the other side of the gorge smoked blacker than before. “Loki is uneasy to-day,” said Siegfried, as they all put spurs to their horses, and galloped swiftly home. It was the Cavern of the Mischief-maker which the party had visited; and that evening, as they again sat in Siegfried’s pleasant hall, they amused themselves by telling many strange old tales of the mid-world’s childhood, when the gods, and the giants, and the dwarf-folk, had their dwelling on the earth. But they talked most of Loki, the flame, the restless, the evil-doer. And this, my children, is the story that was told of the Doom of the Mischief-maker. The Story.

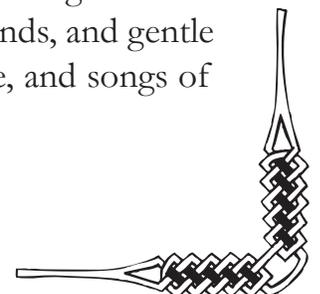


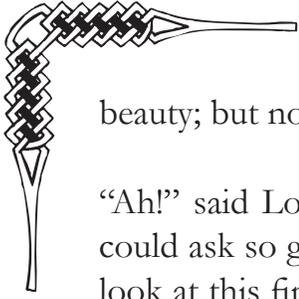


You have heard of the feast that old AEGir once made for the Asa-folk in his gold-lit dwelling in the deep sea; and how the feast was hindered, through the loss of his great brewing-kettle, until Thor had obtained a still larger vessel from Hymer the giant. It is very likely that the thief who stole King AEGir's kettle was none other than Loki the Mischief-maker; but, if this was so, he was not long unpunished for his meanness.

There was great joy in the Ocean-king's hall, when at last the banquet was ready, and the foaming ale began to pass itself around to the guests. But Thor, who had done so much to help matters along, could not stay to the merry-making: for he had heard that the Storm-giants were marshalling their forces for a raid upon some unguarded corner of the mid-world; and so, grasping his hammer Mjolner, he bade his kind host good-by, and leaped into his iron car. "Business always before pleasure!" he cried, as he gave the word to his swift, strong goats, and rattled away at a wonderful rate through the air.

In old AEGir's hall glad music resounded on every side; and the gleeful Waves danced merrily as the Asa-folk sat around the festal-board, and partook of the Ocean-king's good fare. AEGir's two thralls, the faithful Funfeng and the trusty Elder, waited upon the guests, and carefully supplied their wants. Never in all the world had two more thoughtful servants been seen; and every one spoke in praise of their quickness, and their skill, and their ready obedience. Then Loki, unable to keep his hands from mischief, waxed very angry, because every one seemed happy and free from trouble, and no one noticed or cared for him. So, while good Funfeng was serving him to meat, he struck the faithful thrall with a carving-knife, and killed him. Then arose a great uproar in the Ocean-king's feast-hall. The Asa-folk rose up from the table, and drove the Mischief-maker out from among them; and in their wrath they chased him across the waters, and forced him to hide in the thick greenwood. After this they went back to AEGir's hall, and sat down again to the feast. But they had scarcely begun to eat, when Loki came quietly out of his hiding-place, and stole slyly around to AEGir's kitchen, where he found Elder, the other thrall, grieving sadly because of his brother's death. "I hear a great chattering and clattering over there in the feast-hall," said Loki. "The greedy, silly Asa-folk seem to be very busy indeed, both with their teeth and their tongues. Tell me, now, good Elder, what they talk about while they sit over their meat and ale." "They talk of noble deeds," answered Elder. "They speak of gallant heroes, and brave men, and fair women, and strong hearts, and willing hands, and gentle manners, and kind friends. And for all these they have words of praise, and songs of





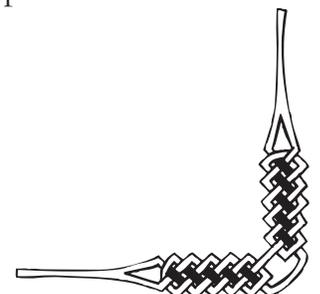
beauty; but none of them speak well of Loki, the thief and the vile traitor.”

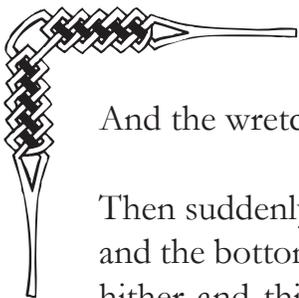
“Ah!” said Loki wrathfully, twisting himself into a dozen different shapes, “no one could ask so great a kindness from such folk. I must go into the feast-hall, and take a look at this fine company, and listen to their noisy merry-making. I have a fine scolding laid up for those good fellows; and, unless they are careful with their tongues, they will find many hard words mixed with their ale.” Then he went boldly into the great hall, and stood up before the wonder-stricken guests at the table. When the Asa-folk saw who it was that had darkened the doorway, and was now in their midst, a painful silence fell upon them, and all their merriment was at an end. And Loki stretched himself up to his full height, and said to them,— “Hungry and thirsty come I to AEGir’s gold lit hall. Long and rough was the road I trod, and wearisome was the way. Will no one bid me welcome? Will none give me a seat at the feast? Will none offer me a drink of the precious mead? Why are you all so dumb? Why so sulky and stiff-necked, when your best friend stands before you? Give me a seat among you,—yes, one of the high-seats,—or else drive me from your hall! In either case, the world will never forget me. I am Loki.”

Then one among the Asa-folk spoke up, and said, “Let him sit with us. He is mad; and when he slew Funfeng, he was not in his right mind. He is not answerable for his rash act.” But Bragi the Wise, who sat on the innermost seat, arose, and said, “Nay, we will not give him a seat among us. Nevermore shall he feast or sup with us, or share our good-fellowship. Thieves and murderers we know, and will shun.”

This speech enraged Loki all the more; and he spared not vile words, but heaped abuse without stint upon all the folk before him. And by main force he seized hold of the silent Vidar, who had come from the forest solitudes to be present at the feast, and dragged him away from the table, and seated himself in his place. Then, as he quaffed the foaming ale, he flung out taunts and jeers and hard words to all who sat around, but chiefly to Bragi the Wise. Then he turned to Sif, the beautiful wife of Thor, and began to twit her about her golden hair.

“Oh, how handsome you were, when you looked at your bald head in the mirror that day! Oh, what music you made when your hands touched your smooth pate! And now whose hair do you wear?”





And the wretch laughed wickedly, as he saw the tears welling up in poor Sif's eyes.

Then suddenly a great tumult was heard outside. The mountains shook and trembled; and the bottom of the sea seemed moved; and the waves, affrighted and angry, rushed hither and thither in confusion. All the guests looked up in eager expectation, and some of them fled in alarm from the hall. Then the mighty Thor strode through the door, and up to the table, swinging his hammer, and casting wrathful glances at the Mischief-maker. Loki trembled, and dropped his goblet, and sank down upon his knees before the terrible Asa.

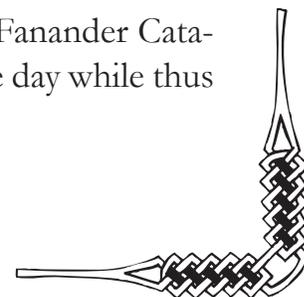
"I yield me!" he cried. "Spare my life, I pray you, and I will be your thrall forever!"

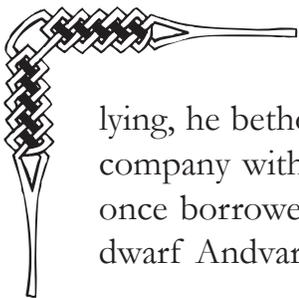
"I want no such thrall," answered Thor. "And I spare your life on one condition only,—that you go at once from hence, and nevermore presume to come into the company of Asa-folk." "I promise all that you ask," said Loki, trembling more than ever. "Let me go."

Thor stepped aside; and the frightened culprit fled from the hall, and was soon out of sight. The feast was broken up. The folk bade AEGir a kind farewell, and all embarked on Frey's good ship Skidbladner; and fair winds wafted them swiftly home to Asgard.

Loki fled to the dark mountain gorges of Mist Land, and sought for a while to hide himself from the sight of both gods and men. In a deep ravine by the side of a roaring torrent, he built himself a house of iron and stone, and placed a door on each of its four sides, so that he could see whatever passed around him. There, for many winters, he lived in lonely solitude, planning with himself how he might baffle the gods, and regain his old place in Asgard. And now and then he slipped slyly away from his hiding-place, and wrought much mischief for a time among the abodes of men. But when Thor heard of his evil-doings, and sought to catch him, and punish him for his evil deeds, he was nowhere to be found. And at last the Asa-folk determined, that, if he could ever be captured, the safety of the world required that he should be bound hand and foot, and kept forever in prison.

Loki often amused himself in his mountain home by taking upon him his favorite form of a salmon, and lying listlessly, beneath the waters of the great Fanander Cataract, which fell from the shelving rocks a thousand feet above him. One day while thus





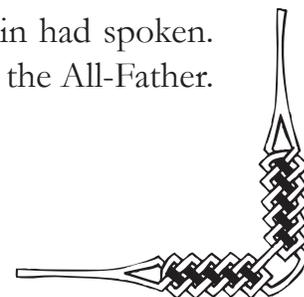
lying, he bethought himself of former days, when he walked the glad young earth in company with the All-Father. And among other things he remembered how he had once borrowed the magic net of Ran, the Ocean-queen, and had caught with it the dwarf Andvari, disguised, as he himself now was, in the form of a slippery salmon.

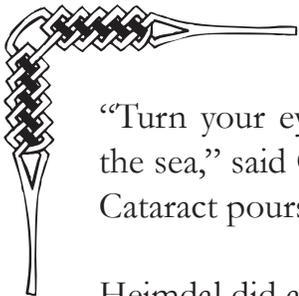
“I will make me such a net!” he cried. “I will make it strong and good; and I, too, will fish for men.” So he took again his proper shape, and went back to his cheerless home in the ravine. And he gathered flax and wool and long hemp, and spun yarn and strong cords, and wove them into meshes, after the pattern of Queen Ran’s magic net; for men had not, at that time, learned how to make or use nets for fishing. And the first fisherman who caught fish in that way is said to have taken Loki’s net as a model. Odin sat, on the morrow, in his high hall of Hlidskialf, and looked out over all the world, and saw, even to the uttermost corners, what men-folk were everywhere doing. When his eye rested upon the dark line which marked the mountain-land of the Mist Country, he started up in quick surprise, and cried out,

“Who is that who sits by the Fanander Force, and ties strong cords together?”

But none of those who stood around could tell, for their eyes were not strong enough and clear enough to see so far. “Bring Heimdal!” then cried Odin. Now, Heimdal the White dwells among the blue mountains of sunny Himminbjorg, where the rainbow, the shimmering Asa-bridge, spans the space betwixt heaven and earth. He is the son of Odin, golden-toothed, pure-faced, and clean-hearted; and he ever keeps watch and ward over the mid-world and the homes of frail men-folk, lest the giants shall break in, and destroy and slay. He rides upon a shining steed named Goldtop; and he holds in his hand a horn called Gjallar-horn, with which, in the last great twilight, he shall summon the world to battle with the Fenris-wolf and the sons of Loki. This watchful guardian of the mid-world is as wakeful as the birds. And his hearing is so keen, that no sound on earth escapes him,—not even that of the rippling waves upon the sea-shore, nor of the quiet sprouting of the grass in the meadows, nor even of the growth of the soft wool on the backs of sheep. And his eyesight, too, is wondrous clear and sharp; for he can see by night as well as by day, and the smallest thing, although a hundred leagues away, cannot be hidden from him.

To Heimdal, then, the heralds hastened, bearing the words which Odin had spoken. And the watchful warder of the mid-world came at once to the call of the All-Father.





“Turn your eyes to the sombre mountains that guard the shadowy Mist-land from the sea,” said Odin, “Now look far down into the rocky gorge in which the Fanander Cataract pours, and tell me what you see.”

Heimdal did as he was bidden.

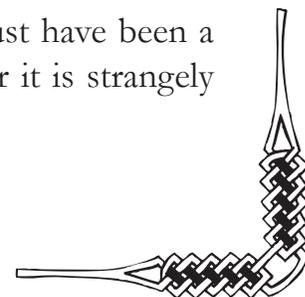
“I see a shape,” said he, “sitting by the torrent’s side. It is Loki’s shape, and he seems strangely busy with strong strings and cords.”

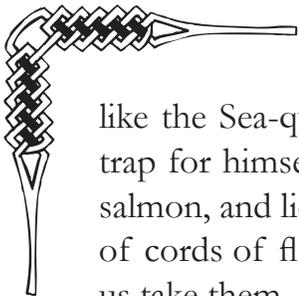
“Call all our folk together!” commanded Odin. “The wily Mischief-maker plots our hurt. He must be driven from his hiding-place, and put where he can do no further harm.” Great stir was there then in Asgard. Every one hastened to answer Odin’s call, and to join in the quest for the Mischief-maker. Thor came on foot, with his hammer tightly grasped in his hands, and lightning flashing from beneath his red brows. Tyr, the one-handed, came with his sword. Then followed Bragi the Wise, with his harp and his sage counsels; then Hermod the Nimble, with his quick wit and ready hands; and, lastly, a great company of elves and wood-sprites and trolls. Then a whirlwind caught them up in its swirling arms, and carried them through the air, over the hill-tops and the country-side, and the meadows and the mountains, and set them down in the gorge of the Fanander Force.

But Loki was not caught napping. His wakeful ears had heard the tumult in the air, and he guessed who it was that was coming. He threw the net, which he had just finished, into the fire, and jumped quickly into the swift torrent, where, changing himself into a salmon, he lay hidden beneath the foaming waters.

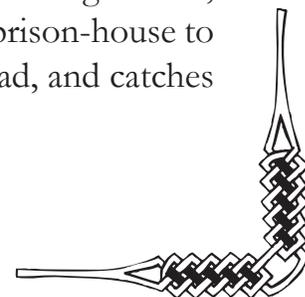
When the eager Asa-folk reached Loki’s dwelling, they found that he whom they sought had fled; and although they searched high and low, among the rocks and the caves and the snowy crags, they could see no signs of the cunning fugitive. Then they went back to his house again to consult what next to do. And, while standing by the hearth, Kwaser, a sharp-sighted elf, whose eyes were quicker than the sunbeam, saw the white ashes of the burned net lying undisturbed in the still hot embers, the woven meshes unbroken and whole.

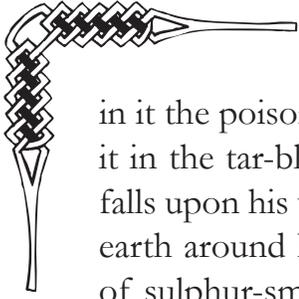
“See what the cunning fellow has been making!” cried the elf. “It must have been a trap for catching fish.” “Or rather for catching men,” said Bragi; “for it is strangely





like the Sea-queen's net." "In that case," said Hermod the Nimble, "he has made a trap for himself; for, no doubt, he has changed himself, as is his wont, to a slippery salmon, and lies at this moment hidden beneath the Fanander torrent. Here are plenty of cords of flax and hemp and wool, with which he intended to make other nets. Let us take them, and weave one like the pattern which lies there in the embers; and then, if I mistake not, we shall catch the too cunning fellow." All saw the wisdom of these words, and all set quickly to work. In a short time they had made a net strong and large, and full of fine meshes, like the model among the coals. Then they threw it into the roaring stream, Thor holding to one end, and all the other folk pulling at the other. With great toil, they dragged it forwards, against the current, even to the foot of the waterfall. But the cunning Loki crept close down between two sharp stones, and lay there quietly while the net passed harmlessly over him. "Let us try again!" cried Thor. "I am sure that something besides dead rocks lies at the bottom of the stream." So they hung heavy weights to the net, and began to drag it a second time, this time going down stream. Loki looked out from his hiding-place, and saw that he would not be able to escape again by lying between the rocks, and that his only chance for safety was either to leap over the net, and hide himself behind the rushing cataract itself, or to swim with the current out to the sea. But the way to the sea was long, and there were many shallow places; and Loki had doubts as to how old AEGir would receive him in his kingdom. He feared greatly to undertake so dangerous and uncertain a course. So, turning upon his foes, and calling up all his strength, he made a tremendous leap high into the air, and clean over the net. But Thor was too quick for him. As he fell towards the water, the Thunderer quickly threw out his hand, and caught the slippery salmon, holding him firmly by the tail. When Loki found that he was surely caught, and could not by any means escape, he took again his proper shape. Fiercely did he struggle with mighty Thor, and bitter were the curses which he poured down upon his enemies. But he could not get free. Into the deep, dark cavern, beneath the smoking mountain, where daylight never comes, nor the warmth of the sun, nor the sound of Nature's music, the fallen Mischief-maker was carried. And they bound him firmly to the sharp rocks, with his face turned upwards toward the dripping roof; for they said that nevermore, until the last dread twilight, should he be free to vex the world with his wickedness. And Skade, the giant wife of Niord and the daughter of grim Old Winter, took a hideous poison snake, and hung it up above Loki, so that its venom would drop into his upturned face. But Sigyn, the loving wife of the suffering wretch, left her home in the pleasant halls of Asgard, and came to his horrible prison-house to soothe and comfort him; and evermore she holds a basin above his head, and catches





in it the poisonous drops as they fall. When the basin is filled, and she turns to empty it in the tar-black river that flows through that home of horrors, the terrible venom falls upon his unprotected face, and Loki writhes and shrieks in fearful agony, until the earth around him shakes and trembles, and the mountains spit forth fire, and fumes of sulphur-smoke.

And there the Mischief-maker, the spirit of evil, shall lie in torment until the last great day and the dread twilight of all mid-world things. How strange and how sad, that, while Loki lies thus bound and harmless, evil still walks the earth, and that so much mischief and such dire disasters were prepared for Siegfried and the folk of Nibelungen Land!

