



The Story of Siegfried

Adventure 20: How the Hoard was Brought to Burgundy

by James Baldwin

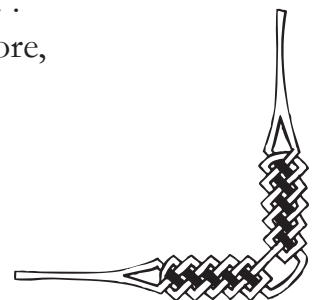
And what was done on the morrow?

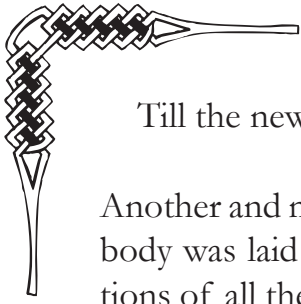
Too sad is the tale of Kriemhild's woe and her grief for the mighty dead. Let us pass it by in tearful, pitying silence, nor wish to awaken the echoes of that morning of hopeless anguish which dawned on the cold and cheerless dwelling of the kings. For peace had fled from Burgundy, nevermore to return.

Siegfried was dead. Faded, now, was the glory of the Nibelungen Land, and gone was the mid-world's hope. It is told in ancient story, how men built a funeral-pile far out on the grassy meadows, where the quiet river flows; and how, in busy silence, they laid the sun-dried beams of ash and elm together, and made ready the hero's couch; and how the pile was dight with many a sun-bright shield, with war-coats and glittering helms, and silks and rich dyed cloths from the South-land, and furs, and fine-wrought ivory, and gem-stones priceless and rare; and how, over all, they scattered sweet spices from Araby, and the pleasantest of all perfumes. Then they brought the golden Siegfried, and laid him on his couch; and beside him were his battered shield, and Balmung with its fire-edge bare. And, as the sun rose high in heaven, the noblest earl-folk who had loved Siegfried best touched fire to the funeral-pile. And a pleasant breeze from the Southland fanned the fire to a flame, and the white blaze leaped on high, and all the folk cried out in mighty agony to the gods.

Such was the story that men told to each other when the world was still young, and the heroes were unforgotten. And some said, too, that Brunhild, the fair and hapless queen, died then of a broken heart and of a hopeless, yearning sorrow, and that she was burned with Siegfried on that high-built funeral-pile.

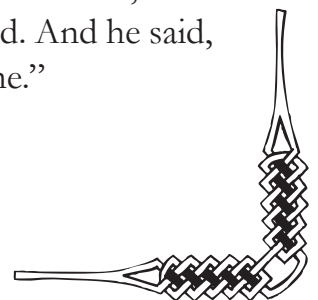
"They are gone,—the lovely, the mighty, the hope of the ancient earth:
It shall labor and bear the burden as before the day of their birth: . . .
It shall yearn, and be oft-times holpen, and forget their deeds no more,

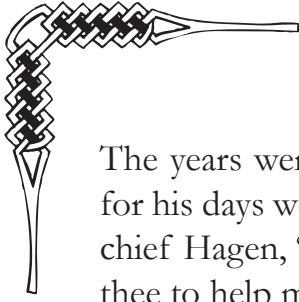




‘Till the new sun beams on Balder and the happy sealess shore.’

Another and much later story is sometimes told of these last sad days,—how the hero’s body was laid in a coffin, and buried in the quiet earth, amid the sorrowful lamentations of all the Rhineland folk; and how, at Kriemhild’s earnest wish, it was afterwards removed to the place where now stands the little minster of Lorsch. As to which of these stories is the true one, it is not for me to say. Enough it is to know that Siegfried was dead, and that the spring-time had fled, and the summer-season with all its golden glories had faded away from Rhineland, and that the powers of darkness and of cold and of evil had prevailed. To this day the city where was the dwelling of the Burgundian kings is called Worms, in remembrance of the dragon, or worm, which Siegfried slew; and a figure of that monster was for many years painted upon the city arms, and borne on the banner of the Burgundians. And, until recently, travellers were shown the Reisen-haus,—a stronghold, which, men say, Siegfried built; and in it were many strange and mighty weapons, which, they claim, were wielded by the hero. The lance which was shown there was a great beam nearly eighty feet in length; and the war-coat, wrought with steel and gold, and bespangled with gem-stones, was a wonder to behold. And now, in the Church of St. Cecilia, you may see what purports to be the hero’s grave. And a pleasant meadow, not far from the town, is still called Kriemhild’s Rose-garden; while farther away is the place called Drachenfels, or the dragon’s field, where, they say, Siegfried met Fafnir. But whether it is the same as the Glittering Heath of the ancient legend, I know not. And what became of the Hoard of Andvari? The story is briefly told.[EN#36] When the days of mourning were past, and the people had gone back sadly to their homes, Queen Kriemhild began to speak of returning to the land of the Nibelungens. But Ute, her aged mother, could not bear to part with her, and besought her to stay, for a while at least, in the now desolate Burgundian castle. And Gernot and Giselher, her true and loving brothers, added their words of entreaty also. And so, though heart-sick, and with many misgivings, she agreed to abide for a season in this cheerless and comfortless place. Many days, even months, dragged by, and still she remained; for she found it still harder and harder to tear herself away from her mother, and all that her heart held dear. Yet never, for three years and more, did she even speak to Gunther, or by any sign show that she remembered him. And, as for Hagen, no words could utter the deep and settled hate she felt towards him. But the dark-browed chief cared nought either for love or hate; and he walked erect, as in the days of yore, and he smiled and frowned alike for both evil and good. And he said, “It was not I: it was the Norns, who wove the woof of his life and mine.”





The years went by on leaden wings, and brought no sunlight to Gunther's dwelling; for his days were full of sadness, and his nights of fearful dreams. At length he said to chief Hagen, "If there is aught in the mid-world that can drive away this gloom, I pray thee to help me find it; for madness steals upon me."

"There is one thing," answered Hagen, "which might brighten our land again, and lift up your drooping spirits, and bring gladness to your halls."

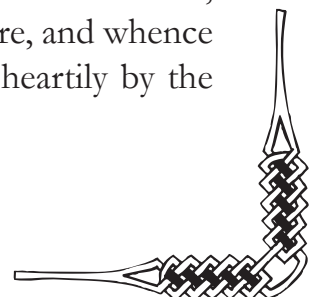
"What is that?" asked the king. "It is the Nibelungen Hoard," said the chief. "It is the wondrous treasure of Andvari, which Siegfried gave as a gift to Kriemhild. If it were ours, we might become the masters of the world."

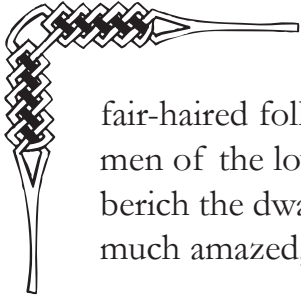
"But how can we obtain it?"

"It is Kriemhild's," was the answer. "But she does not care for it; neither could she use it if she wished. If you could only gain her favor and forgiveness, I feel sure that she would let you do with it as you wish." Then Gunther besought his younger brothers to intercede for him with Kriemhild, that she would so far forgive him as to look upon his face, and speak with him once more. And this the queen at last consented to do. And, when Gunther came into her presence, she was so touched at sight of his haggard face and whitened locks, and his earnest words of sorrow, that she forgave him the great wrong that he had done, and welcomed him again as her brother. And he swore that never would he again wrong her or hers, nor do aught to grieve her. But it was not until a long time after this, that he proposed to her that they should bring the Hoard of Andvari away from the Nibelungen Land.

"For, if it were here, dear sister," he said, "it might be of great use to you."

"Do whatever seems best to you," answered Kriemhild. "Only remember the oath that you have given me." Then Gunther, because he was anxious to see the wondrous Hoard, but more because he was urged on by Hagen, made ready to send to the Nibelungen Land to bring away the treasure by Kriemhild's command. Eight thousand men, with Gernot and Giselher as their leaders, sailed over the sea in stanch vessels, and landed on the Nibelungen shore. And when they told who they were, and whence they came, and showed the queen's signet-ring, they were welcomed heartily by the





fair-haired folk of Mist Land, who gladly acknowledged themselves the faithful liegemen of the loved Kriemhild. When the Burgundians made known their errand to Alberich the dwarf, who still held watch and ward over the mountain stronghold, he was much amazed, and he grieved to part with his cherished treasure.

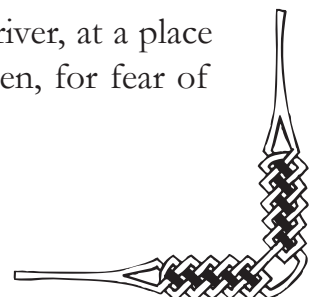
“But,” said he to his little followers, who stood around him by thousands, each anxious to fight the intruders,—”but there is Queen Kriemhild’s order and her signet-ring, and we must, perforce, obey. Yet had we again the good Tarnkappe which Siegfried took from us, the Hoard should never leave us.”

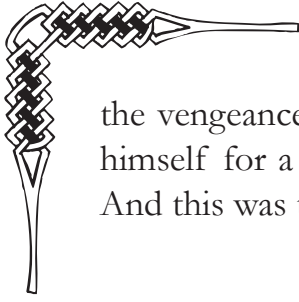
Then sadly he gave up the keys, and the Burgundians began to remove the treasure. For four whole days and nights they toiled, carrying the Hoard in huge wagons down to the sea. And on the fifth day they set sail, and without mishap arrived in good time at Worms. And many of Alberich’s people, the swarthy elves of the cave, came with Gernot to Rhineland; for they could not live away from the Hoard. And it is said, that hidden among the gold and the gem-stones was the far-famed Wishing-rod, which would give to its owner the power of becoming the lord of the wide mid-world. And the vast treasure was stored in the towers and vaults of the castle. And Queen Kriemhild alone held the keys, and lavishly she scattered the gold wherever it was needed most. The hungry were fed, the naked were clothed, the sick were cared for; and everybody near and far blessed the peerless Queen of Nibelungen Land.

Then Hagen, always plotting evil, whispered to King Gunther, and said, “It is dangerous to suffer your sister to hold so vast a treasure. All the people are even now ready to leave you, and follow her. She will yet plot to seize the kingdom, and destroy us.”

And he urged the king to take the keys and to make the Nibelungen Hoard his own.

But Gunther answered, “I have already done too great a wrong. And I have sworn to my sister never to harm her again, or to do aught that will grieve her.” “Let the guilt, then, rest on me,” said Hagen. And he strode away, and took the keys from Kriemhild by force. When Gernot and Giselher heard of this last vile act of the evil-eyed chief, they waxed very angry, and vowed that they would help their sister regain that which was her own. But the wary Hagen was not to be foiled; for, while the brothers were away from the burgh, he caused the great Hoard to be carried to the river, at a place called Lochheim, and sunk, fathoms deep, beneath the water. And then, for fear of





the vengeance which might be wreaked upon him, he fled from Rhineland, and hid himself for a while among the mountains and the barren hill-country of the South. And this was the end of the fated Hoard of Andvari.

