

W o r m s.

Siegfried.

After Siegfried had returned from the Nibelungenlande, and brought with him great treasures, he thought he would again sally forth to search for fresh adventures. This time he wished to go towards the south, for he had heard of Worms, in Upper-Rhine, and of Gunther the powerful king of Burgundy, and of his sister, whose beauty was said to excel all that one had ever seen of admirable beauty.

With 12 selected horsemen and numerous retinue, he set-out, and made his entry in the most splendid manner into the finely situated Rhine-town. Clothed in red garments, embroidered with gold, and richly ornamented with splendid silver-helms on their heads; shields of the same metal and carrying glittering arms, they rode on fiery noble chargers, so that different persons regarded with astonishment the strange guests. At the court of Königsburg, noble pages and servants received the procession, and announced to the king, that Siegfried, son of the king of the Netherlands was arrived to salute him. As soon as the king, who had already heard of the mighty Dragonslayer, learned his arrival he advanced towards him, and conducted him and suite to the knight's saloon, where all

the notables of the kingdom were assembled, as well as the different members of the royal family. Siegfried was astonished at the gigantic figures he saw here, especially at the members of the royal-house, among whom particularly the brothers of Gunther, Gernot, and Gieselher, as well as their mother Ute. To the combat exercised young men in the retinue of the king, belonged the knight Hagen of Troneck, his brother Dankwart, Ortwin of Metz, Volker of Alzey, Rumold, Sindold, Hunold, and many other chosen swords, as Siegfried, by questioning, declared that he was come, because he had heard, here at the court was to be seen the most valourous king of the world surrounded by the most daring young men, and because he intensely longed for a battle for Life and Death, and for Kingdom and Crown, then regarded the bold with angry looks, and there would certainly have been an unequal struggle, if the King's brother Gernot had not interfered, and by soft words and regaling with sweet wine directed their thoughts to other subjects. But more than this, worked on Siegfried the remembrance of the beautiful Chriemhilde whom he desired to see. He placed himself at table and caroused gallantly with the king and his courtiers.

Siegfried passed a whole year, in the most agreeable manner with festivals and tournaments. He conquered in all warlike exercises the most

powerful opponents, and the renown of his dexterity in battle spread far into the country. In the chase too, he displayed his bodily strength in overthrowing the Boar, and wrestling with the Bear. To complete his happiness failed only the sight of Chriemhildens, which was not yet allowed him, although she, behind the silk curtains of her chamber, had often listened to and pleasingly regarded Siegfried, when he pranced his horse in the court of the palace, or broke a lance with others.

One day, appeared at Gunther's court ambassadors from Leudeger, the Saxon sovereign, and Leudegast the Danish king. They came to announce war, and to inform that within 12 weeks their sovereigns with mighty armies would march to the Rhine, and would attack the Burgundians. This embassy caused the king much anxiety, because he knew the great power of his enemies, but Siegfried calmed him by the promise that he at the head of his 12 young men, would move out with the Burgundian army, and that he certainly should succeed in repelling the Saxons and Danes. After the ambassadors were dismissed, Gunther armed himself with all his might. People were chosen as standard-bearers, and the army was soon together. After the king, at the advice of Siegfried, had consented to remain at home; the troops marched out against Saxony. There stood the collected power of the enemy already

encamped, and many bitter engagements took place. One day, the valiant Siegfried perceived the Danish king Leudegast in golden armour and immediately dashed at him. A furious combat began, but the gigantic power of Siegfried struck the northern combattant deep wounds, and unhorsed him. Several Danish combattants came to the assistance of their vanquished sovereign, these however were put to flight by the hero Siegfried, who then took the Danish king prisoner and sent him to Worms.

After this heroic feat of arms Siegfried tried to engage the Saxon king. As he soon afterwards saw him behind his army, he hurried through the drawn-up warriors, direct to Leudeger. This a still more redoubtable combattant than Leudegast, received Siegfried with flourishing sword, and both delivered mighty blows. After a mutually useless attack, the Saxon king recognised that he fought with Siegfried, the son of King Siegebert, and considered it not advisable to continue the combat. He therefore called to his men to surrender, and delivered himself with 500 of his troops, to the Burgundian. All these prisoners and many thousand wounded, made by Balmung's sword fell into Siegfrieds power, were sent to Worms, where the message of Victory excited great Joy.

The war was now finished, and the valiant troops returned to the Rhine with song and music.

In Worms Siegfried and his men were joyfully received; and the fair of the town handed them garlands of flowers and laurels. Only Chriemhilde still did not appear, however, as soon after the return of the victorious army a great festival was celebrated; Gunther did not longer resist Siegfried's entreaty to persuade the sister, and the much praised came to the festival surrounded with the splendour of her beauty. All the knights and magnates of the kingdom who had not seen the Beauty were astonished at the maiden's grace and charm; but the most, Siegfried, who was beside himself, and inflamed with love for the king's sister. From this moment he was her constant companion, and thought no more of returning home.

The report spread that in the extreme north, on Island was living a queen whose beauty exceeded all others in the world, and was at the same time endowed with such bodily strength, that she unhorsed the most powerful combattant. She would give her hand, it was said to that knight who could conquer her in wrestling, however many had lost their lives in the attempt.

As Gunther learned this, he felt much desire to go to Iceland, and try his chance with the Queen. However his vassals dissuaded him from the dangerous undertaking, but Siegfried promised not only to accompany him, but good success if the King would give him Chriemhilden for

wife. Gunther was satisfied with this proposal, and it was resolved that besides Hagen, Dankward and Siegfried, not any other knight should accompany the king. Immediately all was arranged in secret, and the 4 brave combattants with chosen servants embarked and sailed to the distant island.

On the 12th day, they came to the longed for coast, and disembarked near Isenstein, the capital of Iceland, and the residence of Brunhilden. The Queen herself stood surrounded by her ladies on the balcony of a castle, on the sea, and saw the arrival of the strangers. Already at a distance she shone in infinite sweetness, and king Gunther could not wait for the time to see her, face to face. When he had announced himself at the court, splendid carriages, came to fetch the arrivals, and each could admire, after his pleasure, the glittering court, and the beautiful, but at the same time gigantically strong sovereign.

As soon as Brunhild learned for what purpose Gunther was arrived, she had everything prepared for the approaching struggle, and named the day on which it should take place. If Siegfried had not excited the king's courage, he would have been discouraged, and not have ventured the battle, for he thought of those conquered by the powerful queen, and he feared to share the destiny of the conquered.

On the appointed day, Siegfried clandestinely visited the ship, put on the celebrated Tarnkappe, which he had formerly taken in the Nibelungenlande, and which possessed the property of making its wearer invisible, and then repaired to the field of battle, where the whole court was already assembled. The queen appeared in splendid armour, sword and spear were carried behind her, so heavy, that 4 men could scarcely carry them. King Gunther came glitteringly arrayed, and the first game began. As Brunhilde would throw the immense spear and sword, Siegfried stepped to his side, and seized the royal shield. „Stand firm“, spoke he, „I am here invisibly for your assistance, only make the movements of the battle; I will do all for you.“ These words encouraged the king very much, he took his position and awaited the throwing of the spear. The throw was so powerful that from it 2 men fell to the ground, but they quickly rose again, and Siegfried who did not wish to wound the queen turned Gunther's spear, and threw it, with such strength at Brunhilden that she also fell to the ground. But as the throws were not deciding, so began slinging with heavy stones, Brunhilde threw one 500 feet. Siegfried thereupon seized a stone of equal weight, and in throwing still further, he decided Gunther's victory.

Gunther immediately advanced to the conquered, who blushed with anger, and said: „Now,

beautiful Brunhilde, you will give me your hand and accompany me to the Rhine.“ „That will“, not happen she said, „before I have asked the advice of my generals, and knights whom I have had invited here.“ Such an answer appeared suspicious to the king, and as he informed Siegfried, who meantime had secretly taken off the cap, this said: „The Queen has some bad intention; I shall immediately depart and fetch assistance, in a few day I shall be returned again.“ With these words he hastened away, embarked and sailed secretly to the country of the Nibelungen, where he had formerly experienced Adventures.

After a short passage, he landed there, and went to a castle, which he saw in the distance. After knocking and demanding admittance, the door opened, a gross giant came out, and ran against him. A terrible combat ensued, but Siegfried in wrestling, threw him to the ground, and bound him fast. By the terrible howling of the giant, the dwarf Alberich hastened to the place, and seeing his friend bound on the ground, he attacked Siegfried running at him with a long spear. The hero would not kill the, to him well-known, guardian of the Nibelungen treasure; therefore he ran against the aggressor, seized him by the ring, he wore on his body, as well as by the long beard, and bound him too. Alberich seeing himself vanquished, regarded the Victor

and in again recognising Siegfried, he said: „It appears, that I am destined to be your subject, therefore I will now obey you, free me from my bands and command your servant.“ „For which you swear“, answered immediately Siegfried, „to place a thousand fighting men at my orders, with the necessary ships to carry them to their destination, and deliver to me the Nibelungen refuge?“ Alberich swore to do so, and Siegfried set the 2 captives at liberty.

The following day, the Dwarf came with a thousand of the best giants of the country, all splendidly accoutred, and placed them under Siegfried's command. They carried the Nibelung treasure which had been concealed in the rocky clefts, and after embarking, the fleet sailed to Iceland.

Queen Brunhilde stood on the parapet of her palace as the ships arrived; she recognised Siegfried from afar, who with all the giants stood on the deck, and inquired of Gunther the meaning of the fleet. He answered it was his suite which he had left on his way to her. Brunhilde now saw, that all resistance was useless against such a power, and consented to accompany him to the Rhine. In all haste preparations were made, then with a numerous, and splendid court-suite; and after a touching farewell from all, the Queen entered the ship, and sailed towards her new home, accompanied by Gunther and

his companions; as well as the warriors of the Nibelung country.

As soon as the fleet had reached the mouths of the Rhine, Siegfried, with some servants landed, to hurry on horseback to Worms, for the purpose of announcing the return of the King. Here the Hero's narrative caused much joy; and the beautiful Chriemhilde who received Siegfried particularly friendly presented him, as a token of her favour, a number of gold buckles set with precious-stones. The preparations for the reception of the King and his bride occupied all persons. Dame Ute was the most active, and all was carried-out according to her directions.

On the day the ship was expected, a number of splendid tents was erected on the banks of the Rhine, and in them was held a grand festival, then the whole court, Chriemhilden, Siegfried on splendidly caparisoned steeds rode out to meet the New-comers. As soon as the ship with the royal flag was seen, a shout of Jubilee arose from the people collected on the banks; and with continued cries of joy from the crowd, the sovereign pair with suite landed. Gunther conducted his bride to the bank, who was embraced and welcome by Dame Ute, and Chriemhilden. Then the others disembarked and reposed in the tents, and the procession was arranged for a solemn entrance into the town. In the royal palace all was prepared for the Marriage and delicate

Wedding-feast. As the newly married, with the guests had seated themselves at the magnificently illuminated Saloon. Siegfried stepped before Gunther and said: „Now, my king, I remind you of your promise, to give me Chriemhilde as wife.“ And the king turned to his sister and said: „I have promised you as wife to a noble cavalier, will you be his wife?“ „Yes“, answered she, „inasmuch as it is Siegfried the bravest of all combatants to whom you have destined me.“

As Siegfried heard this he could not resist from embracing Chriemhilde, and thanked the king who rose, and announced to all the guests that Siegfried and Chriemhilde were about to be married. All were joyful, with the exception of Brunhilde who deeply loved Siegfried, however she appeared contented, and the two lovers were then united.

Siegfried enjoyed with Chriemhilde the happiness of Love, but from the first it was not so well with Gunther. As he entered with Brunhilde the bridal-chamber, and strove for the reward of his love, she resisted and requested him to desist, for she intended to remain a virgin. As he, nevertheless was the more violent, she seized him with much strength, and so bound him that he could not move, and then hung him on a wall, where she left him till the next morning, when he was freed. The king was extremely angry at this disgrace, and complained to Siegf-

fried, who promised to assist him the next night; clothed with the invisible cap, he slipped unobserved into the royal sleeping apartment, threw Brunhilde violently to the floor, tore away the magical girdle, and wonderful ring which lent her great strength, and retired unobserved. The Queen believing herself conquered by her husband, resigned herself to Gunther's will and rewarded his love.

After some time Siegfried felt a great desire to remove, with his wife, to his father's court. After being overwhelmed with presents; and given a splendid suite by the king they embarked, and after 9 days they arrived at the Castle in Xanten. The parents felt great joy in seeing the long missed son, with his beautiful wife, and celebrated magnificent Festivals during several days. King Siegfried being old and requiring rest, transferred his kingdom to his son, and this he governed with justice and clemency.

After 10 year's uninterrupted peace, during which his mother died, and Chriemhilde bore a son; came messengers who brought an invitation from the Queen Brunhilde to Siegfried and his wife, to repair to Worms. This invitation was sent in the most cunning intention. She had, often thought with envy, that Siegfried to whom the Nibelung country was subject, and owned the invaluable place of refuge, possessed such great power and riches. She therefore reflected

on all sorts of ruinous plans. Siegfried, Chriemhilde and the old king, accompanied by more than 100 knights, set-out on their journey and arrived happily in Worms, where they were received with royal magnificence. Feast succeeded feast, interchanged with combats and other recreations.

One day as the Queens regarded the warlike exercises from a balcony, and Chriemhilde praised the dexterity of her husband above all others, not excepting Gunther; the two high ladies fell into a dispute concerning this, which at last was so violent, that Chriemhilde mockingly reproached her sister-in-law, by saying that in the bridal-night, it was not Gunther who had overcome her, but Siegfried who had snatched away her girdle and magical ring. Raging, Brunhilde ran to her husband, and complained of what she had been obliged to hear, and although Gunther was angry that Siegfried had confided that secret to Chriemhilden, yet he was so mindful of the services rendered to him, that he should cherish hatred against him. But the more furious was the rage in the breast of Brunhilde, and she applied to the knight Hagen, whom she knew did not love Siegfried, because his strength caused himself and other combattants to be disregarded. The knights Gernot, Ortwin and several others were gained by him, who, as himself, were of the opinion that Siegfried must be punished

with death. Hagen knew that Siegfried armed with dragon's fat was insured against thrust and blow, but also that a place on his shoulder had remained free from this arming, and was vulnerable.

At the instigation of Hagen, a great hunt was arranged in the Odenwald by king Gunther, at which Siegfried was present. The strong combatant accomplished wonders, killed several boars, and wolves, and as an immense bear was being pursued he overtook it in its course, threw it to the ground, and loaded it bound, on his horse. Tired from hunting they encamped for a repast, but wine was wanting, and as the king and Siegfried felt thirsty, Hagen proposed to hasten to a near spring. This happened, they took off their swords and were soon at the place. Siegfried waited till the king had drunk, then he satisfied his thirst, but in drinking in a stooping posture, Hagen treacherously pierced him deeply in the shoulder with a hunting spear, so that a great stream of blood gushed out. Directly Siegfried seized the assassin by the shoulder, and threw him violently to the ground, however sank soon himself, and he had only still time to recommend Chriemhilde to the king Gunther, when his heroic spirit fled, and all bystanders lamented the terribly traitorous act.

The single combat.

At Worms, the old town was announced a Diet of the Empire by the emperor Max 1st to advise concerning the means to restrain the arbitrariness, and to keep peace and order. At the same time there was arranged a grand Tournament, and invitations sent to near and distant princes, knights, and nobles. Each capable of tournament, and even foreigners were to be friendly welcomed.

Among the numerous guests, who found themselves at this feast in Worms, appeared also a French knight, „Claude de Barre“, sent by his king to guard the renown of the French arms, and there was scarcely a combattant to be found, whose dexterity and strength equalled that of the Frenchman. The character of the Invincible had preceded him; and the gigantic structure of his body, confirmed this fame. Scarcely arrived, the Frenchman had his arms hung over the door of his lodging, and invited, by a Herald, every one to a life and death combat. None of the knights present, would enter the lists against the mighty one. In vain the emperor himself summoned the most vigorous combattant to meet properly the derision of the Frenchman. Nobody announced himself for the dangerous combat, and Max saw with pain the increasing haughtiness of the vain-glorious fellow. The Emperor could

not longer support the mockery of the faint-heartedness of the Germans; he himself therefore accepted the challenge, and with admiration, the people saw the arms of Oestrich and Burgundy hanging beside those of the Frenchman.

Thousands of spectators, on the fixed day for the combat, pressed round the lists, and expectantly beat every heart, as the emperor and his opponent appeared on the plain, completely equipped, and mounting splendid chargers. With immense strength, the disputants charged each other, and their lances broke without unhorsing either, then they dismounted, and seizing their swords continued the combat on foot. Blow succeeded blow, the powerful strokes of the Frenchman penetrated the Imperial armour, and blood flowed from gaping wounds. But now Max's strength seemed to double itself, and with renewed power he attacked his opponent, and applied such vigorous blows that the giant fell.

Prodigious cries of Joy filled the air, but Maximilian quickly reconciled, magnanimously offered his hand to the conquered, and invited him to the banquet, as well as to the recreations of the following day, but the humbled Frenchman thought it better, still on the same day to leave Worms.
