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Walter Gorman Reed



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See Sandbach, The Ribbleshead
and Endrean in England & America

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London 1903



The
 Heroic Life and Exploits
of
 I E G F R I E D
the
 Dragon Slayer.

AN OLD GERMAN STORY.

With Eight Illustrations designed by

WILHELM KAULBACH.



LONDON :

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Siegfried the Dragon-flayer.

FIRST ADVENTURE.

*Of King Siegmund, and of Heroes, Dwarfs, Giants,
and Dragons of ancient Times.*

IN times of old there lived, in the Low Countries, a King named Siegmund, who was mighty in power and rich in honour. His castles were strong, and his men-at-arms were brave; he had swords glancing as the sun, and shields of silver white as the moon, festal robes embroidered with gold, precious jewels, noble steeds, and herds of fat cattle. But his greatest and noblest treasure was a lofty and truly royal mind, for King Siegmund was wise in counsel, brave in battle, and upright in judgement. He listened willingly to the advice of the wise and aged among his people, and was never displeased even if they spoke with rudeness and reproach. His heart was not set upon wealth or treasures: as the majestic sun fills hill

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and vale with warmth and light, as the cheerful May decks the fields and woods with flowers, so from his gentle hand flowed gifts and favours in rich abundance to reward true merit, to honour the deeds of fathers or kindle the heroism of their sons. To every wanderer his kingly hall stood open, to every one he proffered the hand of welcome; he entertained all as became his royal dignity, and at parting he offered to every one a gift in token of remembrance.

Thus King Siegmund was famed throughout all Germany, and along the Rhine, from north to south, the keen edge of his sword and the glitter of his gold-wrought shield were the theme of heroic song. Far and wide, too, whoever had complaint to make against injustice or oppression, whoever desired to acquire honour and renown, repaired to Xanthe at Königsburg on the Rhine, where Siegmund sat amid his heroes at an iron table. On his right hand was Siegelinde, his beauteous queen and his companion, who shared his happiness, consoled him in adversity, and tended his wounds with her gentle hand. All the people honoured and loved the wife and brave King Siegmund and the gentle and fair Siegelinde.

But since the day when they both sat upon the royal throne in honour and splendour on the banks of the Rhine, many generations have descended to that silent and narrow house whence none return. Nor in any of the lands where German songs are sung, does there stand any oak so old that it might say, "When I was young and in my early vigour, many

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hundred years ago, the noble King Siegmund and his faithful train of followers rode past me to the chase and the battle." For in the time of King Siegmund there still stood in the old primeval forests, broad and high, the ancient "thunder-oaks" of heathen times, which at a much later period were cut down by Bonifacius, that highly favoured man of God, and his holy companions, when they brought to our forefathers in their dark forests the light of the Christian faith, and suffered for this with joyful courage the death of martyrs.

Dark and fearful were those ancient forests, as tradition tells, where stood the oaks and the blood-stained altars of the Pagan gods in the days of King Siegmund. None dared wander there without his sword at his side and his spear in his hand. The hunter might pursue the beasts of prey through the lonely woods and vales for many a day and neither meet a human being nor find a path. The stars of heaven and the course of the waters were his only guides in the vast wilderness. Ravenous wild beasts of enormous strength and fearful nature, such as are now no longer seen, the urochs and the bear, the lion and the wolf, prowled through the woods, and filled the air with their fierce and hungry cries, making the forests re-echo with their sounds. And when the lofty oaks rustled, and the branches cracked and snapped asunder, and the winds moaned and whistled in angry sounds from the rocks and caves, it seemed as if the spirit of the storm had come with horse and hound, to chase the wild inhabitants of the forests.

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In the air there dwelt a yet more savage race of birds, who built their nests high upon the rocks, and thence descending upon the woods contested with the wolves their prey, and carried off men and beasts in their talons as food for their young. Poisonous vapours brooded over the vast and bottomless morasses, in which basked serpents and adders, as long as trees, of every kind and form. In the hollow rocks and caves lurked snakes and dragons, their bodies clad in scales black as night, whose pestilential breath finged and burned like fire. But worst of all, fierce and evil Giants were in alliance with this hellish dragon brood. They were a dark and wicked race, who, created before heaven or earth, refused to bow the knee, and set their foot on the necks of weaker mortals, compelling them to do what their impious arrogance required. For their hearts were dark as the woods of old, and wild as the savage animals that dwelt therein; and, like the snakes and dragons in the poisonous swamps, they had grown amid all horrible vices to a fearful size, and mocked at heaven, and thought only of evil.

In those sad times the poor Dwarfs were compelled to suffer most from the wicked Giants. These were a people weak and small of stature, but who from time immemorial had handed down among themselves many a tradition of old; and possessed much secret knowledge of the powers of plants and stones. Thus they had become experienced in many mysterious arts, and were rendered cunning, shy, and reserved by the

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severe oppression they endured. They dwelt chiefly in the deep shafts of mines, and there wrought trusty weapons and rich ornaments from the precious metals and brilliant jewels. The Giants, however, kept watch over their abodes, and forced them to work night and day. If the poor little Dwarfs wished to repose, they angrily thrust down their large stakes of iron, or trod them to death like rats. Then the affrighted Dwarfs dared no longer venture into the light of day, but hid themselves in the deepest recesses.

The cunning Dwarfs were therefore bitter foes of the arrogant Giants and warm friends to the Heroes. These were men of the sword, and endowed by heaven with courage and strength to fight against the Giants and poisonous serpents, to clear the forests and swamps, so that the seed of a milder and more holy doctrine might be sown there. The Dwarfs often furnished the Heroes with sharp swords and stout shields, and taught them many of their arts, that they might gain the victory over their oppressors.

This was therefore a time of wild strife and combat, and the best treasure which a man could have was an active courage, a stout heart, and a trusty sword. All these the Heroes possessed, and to them belonged the noble race of Siegmund, the King of the Low Countries, famed in ancient song and story.

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SECOND ADVENTURE.

Of Siegfried the Swift, how he grew up to be a Hero, and of his throwing the Spear.

NOW King Siegmund with his consort, the beautiful Siegelinde, had a youthful son, who was fair and strong and of a lofty spirit. While an infant on his mother's lap, his clear blue eyes glanced brightly as those of an eagle, and whoever beheld him could at once perceive that in him the heroic spirit of his race existed, and that his name would one day be mentioned with honour. He was quick as lightning in all his actions, whence they named him Siegfried the Swift.

From his childhood he was carefully instructed by the Heroes at the round iron table of his fire in all the duties of a Hero; yet he scarcely required this care, for his own courage impelled him from the earliest dawn of day to practise every kind of weapon, and endure the hardest toils. In the evening he listened with eager curiosity while the old Heroes, grown gray in fights, recounted the adventures that had befallen them in their wanderings in foreign lands, or while they extolled the great names and deeds of ancient times, and taught him maxims

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befitting a noble and high-minded Hero. From his earliest childhood his daring courage spoke forth in all his language and discourse.

Siegfried had once gone into the forest, accompanied by one of his venerable tutors in song and war, and two young companions, to hew some trees for the handles of their spears. As evening drew on, the aged man seated himself on a high rock, whence he could survey the country round, with its dark forests, its green meadows and golden fields of corn. He took one boy after another in turn upon his knee, held him firmly before him and looked at him sternly, as if about to throw him over the precipice. The two other lads trembled at his angry look, as at a gleam of lightning; but Siegfried gazed on him with a fearless smile and open eye, like a young falcon when looking for the first time at the sun. The old man set him down, and was pleased, for he felt that the blood of the ancient heroes flowed in the boy's veins, and that he would one day, in like manner, look with a steady eye upon the flaming swords when they should gleam around him.

One of the boys looked at the goats that grazed near them; the other looked up at the wild fruits of the forest; but Siegfried remained seated on the old warrior's knee, playing with the handle of the hero's sword, which his young hands could scarcely lift. Then said one of the boys, as he looked at the wide landscape before him, "Now if I had anything to wish for, it should be that all the valley of the Rhine, from the lofty

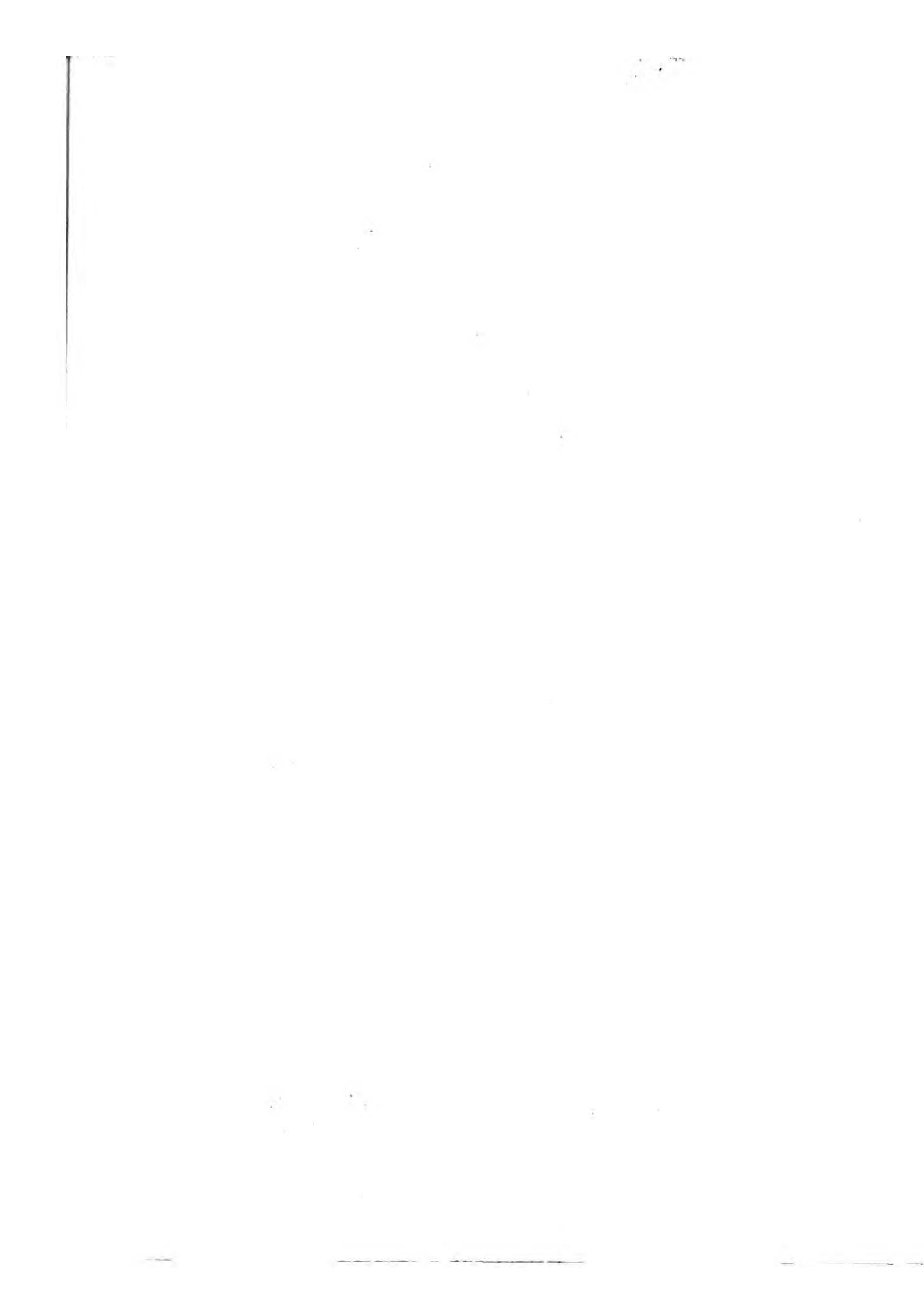
8 *Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.*

mountains in the south to the sea in the north, were one large field of grain, and that I had in every part my farmyards and granaries and barns, so that no King might be richer than I.” “And I,” said the other boy, “would wish that the whole vale beneath us were one vast meadow, and that my herds, horses, oxen and cows were grazing on it in such numbers that no one could count them from morning to night.” Siegfried listened, but was silent, until the old man asked him what his wish would be. “I should wish for a good, sharp sword, like thine,” exclaimed Siegfried boldly; “and I would brandish it like a King upon this high rock, and if foes and giants and dragons should come, I would smite them with the sword, that not one should return home; and so many brave and noble heroes should stand by me, that all your granaries and herds should not suffice us when we partook our meal together. And I would go forth with them and free every country, from east to west, of monsters and oppressors of every kind.” Thus spoke Siegfried, and the old man smiled approvingly, for he thought him that the boy had spoken well.

When he returned home, the young King’s son could not sleep for thinking how he should one day be a renowned hero like his forefathers, who had worn the crown with honour, and had done mighty and valiant deeds; so that their fame was extolled throughout all lands, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

Siegfried’s masters in warlike exercises took increasing plea-





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sure in the lad, whose eye was keen as his arm was strong and his feelings noble. None could shoot the eagle as he soared high in the air like him, nor spear the mighty boar with so sure a stroke: yet all were fond of him, for he excelled them all no less in magnanimity and gentleness than in strength of arm. If in their exercises he overthrew one of his companions, he was himself the first to help him up again, and comfort him; so that no one envied him, for none was so generous and noble-hearted as he.

Thus the young Hero grew up and prospered, and could soon wield his falchion better even than his instructors; no wild beast was there in the woods around that he would have shrunk from attacking, and no hero drank from the cup of King Siegmund to whom he would have yielded in fight, although he was as yet but a mere stripling. Now it happened that he was one evening amusing himself in a meadow on the banks of the Rhine, in front of his father's castle, with some of his young companions—in wrestling, racing, throwing the spear, and other martial games. There was not however one who could throw his spear so swiftly but that Siegfried could run after it, catch it in its flight, and bring it back to its owner. There was one alone among them who at all approached him in speed: to him he said, "Hark ye, my friend, I will dart my spear into yonder oak, and before thy hand has touched the spear, either in the air or in the tree, I will have drained my drinking-horn to thy health. If I succeed, thy noble falcon

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shall be mine ; if thou winnest, thy prize shall be my drinking-horn."

All who heard this deemed it a foolish offer, for the drinking-horn was of ivory, richly adorned with gold and silver, and with ancient stories skilfully depicted on it. Ten noble falcons would not have matched its worth. " Surely," thought they all, " he has quaffed his last draught out of that drinking-horn. The oaks in yon meadow are not far off, and the other lad will have brought the spear ere he shall have put the horn to his lips."

The other lad thought so likewise, and gladly prepared for the trial. Siegfried now filled his horn, while all around stood anxiously watching him. With one hand he swept the fair curls from his brow, with the other he poised his spear, as if aiming at the nearest oak in the meadow. Near him stood the runner, while around him his companions watched his motions as he bent backwards and forwards to balance the spear, all full of curiosity to see how the affair would end. Siegfried now drew back, and with a mighty effort hurled the spear, smiling as he threw it; the spear flew whistling across the broad Rhine, and pierced deep into a distant oak on the opposite side. His competitor had already set off running towards the oaks on the meadow; he thought he was in advance of the spear, but turning round, he saw all his companions laughing and pointing to the distant oak. Instantly he sprang into the river, and swam straight as an arrow to where the spear had flown. Siegfried,

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Smiling, emptied his richly ornamented horn to the success of the swimmer, and bade his comrades do the like. They drank, and exclaimed, "Hail to young Siegfried! since the days of the heroes of old, no spear has been better thrown in the lands of Germany, and long will it be remembered from north to south!"

Presently the swimmer returned with the spear, took his falcon, and offered it to Siegfried as his prize. But Siegfried presented to him the full drinking-horn, saying, "Scarcely along the whole course of the Rhine could a swimmer be found to excel thee; but thou hast tasted water enough, so refresh thee from the horn." After he had drank, Siegfried placed the falcon on his own arm, playfully put the gold band of his horn in his beak, took the hood from his eyes, and let him loose. The falcon flew with the horn into the blue sky: wheeling round and round, as if seeking his prey, he floated with outstretched and almost motionless wings over the Königsburg. Then said Siegfried smiling, "Call thy falcon off, or he will pounce upon my mother's white doves on the castle roof, and then he will never dare come into her sight again." His companion did so, and at his whistle the falcon descended straight down, and settled on the shoulder of his former master. But Siegfried said, "See! the faithful creature will not acknowledge me as his rightful master; he thinks I have won the wager wrongfully, and he has therefore brought the drinking-horn as the prize which of right belongs to thee. His decision


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shall prevail; keep the horn, and when in the social banquet thou drinkest from it, thou and thy race to all futurity shall think of me and of my casting the spear!"

So spake Siegfried, and all who heard him were well pleased with his speech, and said one to another, "He has thrown the spear like a hero, and spoken as became a King's son."

THIRD ADVENTURE.

Of the Emperor Otnit and Wolfdietrich, and how Siegfried asked permission to go out into the World.

N the evening they all returned singing to the Königsburg, where they sat down to table in the large hall. They ranged themselves around the fire; one cut himself arrows, another sharpened his sword, or polished his shield, or set his hunting-gear in order. Meantime much was said, both mirthful and grave, of battles and hunting, of feasts and festivals. Siegfried alone sat silent by the fire, played with the burning brands, and looked thoughtfully on the flames as if dreaming.

The evening was far advanced, when one of the party took down a horn from the wall, and began to blow on it, whilst an aged minstrel sang a song of the Emperor Otnit, which began thus:—

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“ No longer may I tarry,”
The Emperor Otnit said,
“ For I must fight the Dragon
In yonder forest shade.”

In vain around him clinging
Fast hung his anxious wife,
He leaves her in her sorrow,
And hastens to the strife.

He rode about the forest,
He rode the vale along,
The weary way beguiling
With many an ancient song.

In hollows and in caverns
He strove the foe to find ;
His shouts of bold defiance
Were lost upon the wind.

At length he sees a meadow,
Through which a streamlet flows,
A bird sang there so sweetly,
Inviting to repose.

The air was all enchanted,
The earth was fairy ground ;
The very winds breathed music,
And magic dwelt around.

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Upon a bed of roses
The Hero lays him low,
Nor thinks that near him lieth
His fierce and deadly foe.

In vain his hound is barking,
His steed neighs loud and deep;
Alas! their faithful warning
But sooths him in his sleep.

He dreams that he has conquer'd,
That the mighty Dragon's dead:—
The Monster howls beside him,
And wakes him from his bed.

In vain he grasped his weapon,
The Dragon o'er him stood:
Alas! that pleasant meadow
Is dyed with Otnit's blood.

When the minstrel had finished, Siegfried said, "In truth, 'tis a mournful lay, and it makes me sad to think that so bold a hero should perish so miserably in his sleep. Sing us a more cheerful song, and tell us if no one came who avenged the noble Emperor on the poisonous serpent."

"The song, it is true, is melancholy; but you youths and sons of heroes may learn from it a useful lesson, not to allow yourselves to be allured by soft voices, or lie carelessly down to

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slumber on roses when you are going to meet the foe. Yes indeed the Emperor Otnit was avenged, and that is the subject of a more cheerful song, which I will sing you as my parting song to-night." Accordingly he began again:—

SAY, who was best and bravest
Amid the battle's rage?
And who was held most famous
In the old heroic age?

The Knight most bold and famous,
Wolfdietrich he is named,
He slew full many a Dragon,
Full many a Lion tamed.

'Twas early in the morning,
The Hero, waking, cried,
"Awake! away! to battle
This moment I must ride."

'Twas thus he cried at waking,
And sprang at once to horse,
Fierce Giants and fell Dragons
Destroying in his course.

He rode a long day's journey
The woods and meadows through,
And came to Berne's fair city,
Beside the lake so blue.

Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.

He gazed upon the castle,
Where once in joyous mood
The Emperor's guests were feasted,
And drank the red grape's blood.

And hastening to the portal,
The brave Knight blew his horn,
And asked the silent watchman,
In anger and in scorn :

“ Now speak, and say this moment,
Thou watchman on the wall,
Why Otnit's dogs are howling,
Why keeps his steed the stall ?

“ Why are your halls so silent,
Your banner darkly furled ?
Has then brave Otnit perished,
The wonder of the world ?”

Responding from the turret,
The forrowing watchman said,
“ Respect our grief, and leave us,
We mourn, alas, the dead !

“ 'Twas on a fatal morning
Lord Otnit left these walls ;
For this his hounds are howling,
And silent are his halls.”

Siegfried *the Dragon-slayer.*

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“ And tell me, old man, truly,
Before I may depart,
Where dwells his lovely widow,
And weeps her bitter smart ?

“ Erewhile a hundred maidens
Her truth and beauty fang ;
A hundred heroes' fables
Their glad accordance rang.”

A voice came from those turrets,
So soft, so sad, so deep,

“ Sir Knight, depart in pity,
And leave me here to weep.

“ My grief is past my telling,
I weep both night and day,
For this is sorrow's dwelling,
And now, Sir Knight, away !

“ He only will I welcome,
I ever, ever said,
Who on the poisonous Serpent
Revenge on Osnit dead !

“ And since none dared avenge him,
I still withheld my hand ;
For this the base oppressor
Hath taken my gold and land.

Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.

“ So ride away, Sir Stranger,
For all my joys have flown ;
From early morn till even
I sit and weep alone.”

“ I ride not home, sweet Lady,
'Tis not for gold or land
I come to seek your castle,
With my trusty sword in hand ;

“ But Giants fierce and Dragons
I dare to mortal strife ;
The sufferer and the mourner
I guard with limb and life :

“ Where pain and sorrow languish
Beneath oppression's might,
Where death appears in anguish
Upon the field of fight,

“ There is my scene of labour,
'Tis there I haste with speed,
'Tis there I wield my sabre,
'Tis there I urge my steed.”

“ O ride along, Sir Stranger,
Your hand is all too weak,
Nor on the field of danger
Presume your fate to seek.”

Siegfried *the Dragon-slayer.*

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Thus spoke the weeping Lady,
A veil conceal'd her face,
While down her cheeks of beauty
Her tears each other chafe.

That moment came a falcon,
And seized upon her dove,
And bore his prey so gentle
To the blue sky far above.

His spear the Hero grasping,
He hurled it swift on high ;
It reached the falcon flying,
And pierced him in the sky.

The dove return'd uninjured,
And sought his mistress fair ;
The hawk fell in the waters,
And sank and perished there.

She gave him from her finger
A ring, a ring of gold ;
He said, " O gentle Lady,
Be kind, as I am bold."

He spoke,—she closed the casement,
He saw her parting form,
Then swiftly turned his courser
And hurried like the storm.

Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.

On either hand beside him
A dog now swiftly bounds ;
They follow him, and gladly,
For they are Ofnit's hounds.

And hasting on his sally,
He rides in joyous mood,
And finds at length the valley
Where dwells the Dragon brood.

And hark, o'er all the valley,
What fights and sounds of ire !
What mean those fearful roarings,
Those flames of deadly fire ?

A Lion fights the Dragon,
And hence those horrors came ;
The Lion breathes the roaring,
The Dragon breathes the flame.

The Lion bounds to greet him,
With teeth so sharp, so white ;
The Dragon crawls to meet him,
With fangs of deadlier might.

“ 'Tis well, my trusty Lion,”
The hero Dietrich cried,
“ I'll help thee in the conflict,
And battle by thy side.”

Siegfried *the Dragon-slayer.*

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The Hero braves the monster,
And hurls his spear with speed,
But 'gainst that scaly armour
'Tis broken like a reed.

Again he braves the monster,
And wields his sword in ire,
But it melts before his breathing,
Like lead before the fire.

Again the Lion falls
In fury to the strife;
Again Wolfdietrich rallies,
And seeks the Dragon's life.

They wrestle and they struggle,
Yet seem to strive in vain,
For neither yields the contest,
Though their blood has dyed the plain.

The Dragon with his talons
Has seized the Hero's shield;
The Lion springs upon him,
The Dragon seems to yield.

And now the Dragon seizes
The Lion in his tail,
Against its deadly pressure
Nor strength nor skill prevail.

Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.

And weaker yet, and weaker,
The brave Wolfdietrich grows,
Till the Dragon breath'd but o'er him,
And no more the Hero rose.

The monster bore the Lion
Wrapt in his scaly fold,
And in his jaws of fury
He bore the Knight so bold.

But ah! his limbs were weary,
And as he reach'd his nest
He fell for very weakness,
And sank at once to rest.

Then creeping to the Lion
Came first the Dragon's brood,
They broke his bones asunder,
And then they suck'd his blood.

They swallow first the Lion,
And, finishing their meal,
They next attack the Hero,
And lick his coat of mail;

But though they lick him over,
And moisten leg and arm,
They cannot pierce his armour,—
The Knight lies free from harm.

Siegfried *the Dragon-slayer*.

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And wearied thus and anger'd,
They feize him in their sport,
And throw him to each other,
With many a wound and hurt.

They throw him each to other,
Amid their cruel play,
Till sleep hath feized each brother,
And all in flumber lay.

So long the stars above him
Their nightly watching kept ;
So long 'mid his tormentors
The patient Hero slept.

But when the sun, arising,
Shot forth his earliest beam,
The Hero then awoke him,
As from some fearful dream.

He rose at once on waking,
And fought his sword and spear,
But Dragons dire and corfes
Alone were lying near.

But searching all around him,
What charm might aid afford,
He saw not far before him
A light and gleaming sword.

Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.

The sword was once Lord Ofnit's,
He had borne it to the strife ;
That sword alone is fated
To take the Dragon's life.

He waved it high, and swung it
So bravely and so true,
That ere the monster waken'd
His head from shoulders flew.

He then assail'd the young ones,
He first cut off their head,
And next their tongue of venom,
And then exulting said :

“ Now I return in triumph,
And ask the Lady's hand,
For Ofnit sleeps with honour—
And free is all the land.”

When the song was ended it was near midnight ; the aged man laid himself down to rest, and the others followed his example. Siegfried alone remained beside the fire ; he sat silent and motionless, watching fixedly, like a man lurking in ambush for his foe ; on a sudden he snatched up a firebrand, waved it on high, and struck at the flames violently, as if he would slay a Dragon, whilst the sparks flew about far and wide in the ancient hall.

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The youth sat thus awhile, in deep thought, when his eye fell on the wall where the deeds of his ancestors, the Kings and Heroes of old, were to be seen skilfully worked in tapestry by noble dames, how they fought with Giants and Dragons. Above the pictures hung their victorious swords, and the weapons with which they had conquered, and the tongues and teeth of the monsters they had slain.

Siegfried, however, felt as if he dared not venture to look up at the ancient and venerable Heroes, as he sat so idly there at home, and performed no deed worthy of remembrance. And as he raised his eyes, it appeared as if the faded pictures became reanimated, and were looking down upon him with reproach and scorn, and he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Ay, sit there like a girl by the fire, Siegfried, and warm thee, all the days of thy life! that is thy place, but not abroad in the field, where brave men wield the sword."

Then the youth grew angry; his eye shone bright and clear, he started up, seized the firebrand, and was about to hurl it against the figures that seemed to mock at him. But letting fall his arm, he exclaimed, "Had ye been living men and spoken to me thus scornfully, it would have availed you little, old gray-beards, that ye were my ancestors; I would have shown you that I can fight like a man. But what a fool am I to be quarrelling with old pictures on a wall! I will go forth into the world this very hour, and try the fate of battle, and win glory like my fathers, those Kings and Heroes."

He went and took his best sword, and girded it on his side. A large ancient shield which hung over the pictures he fastened about his neck, flung over his shoulders a rich cross-bow and a horn—the one that Woldietrich had borne of old,—and then threw over him the skin of a bear which he had himself overcome with his single arm, without sword or weapon. Thus armed, he entered the apartment where his father and mother slept, and stood before their couch. They asked him what he was doing so early, and if he wished to go forth to the chase. “Ay, truly, I do wish to go to the chase; but the game I seek is the fame of a Hero and the glory of the fight, and therefore am I come to ask your leave and blessing. For I can bear no longer to sit here idle, day after day, like a sick falcon, that with broken wing dares not venture from its nest; and I long to go forth into the world, to add to the glory of my race, as thou, father, and our forefathers, the Heroes and Kings from time immemorial have done in the days of your youth.”

His father listened with joy to the words of the brave youth, yet not all unmixed with a saddened feeling; but the mother fell to weeping bitterly for her loved son, at the thought of the perils that his courage urged him to seek. “Nay, thou art yet too young,” said his father; “stay here awhile with us, until thou art stronger; then I will find companions to go with thee on thy heroic course.”

“No, that may not be,” answered Siegfried; “it would be death to me to tarry longer here. Wherever I look all



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seem to mock my idle repose—night and day I have no rest, and a secret impulse drives me from my home. The thought is for ever present to my mind, that when the minstrels of future times shall sing of my ancestors and of thee, and extol your deeds, they will think of me too, and scornfully exclaim, ‘ King Siegmund had indeed a son, strong and tall as his father, but his name is lost in the darkness of night, for he accomplished no deeds that might have adorned it. He thought only of chasing the stags and timid deer in the forest, but he never ventured into the field of manly fight.’ This is my constant thought, and it cuts me to the soul more than could the keenest edge of an enemy’s sword. Rather than waste my life thus ingloriously, and die like a young oak which cannot stretch itself out in the open air, let me go forth! perchance I may return a joyous victor, or find at least a glorious death.”

When Siegfried’s fire perceived his firm resolution, he no longer withheld his consent, but gave him his hand in testimony of his approbation, saying, “ Go then, my son, and show thyself worthy of thy fathers, the hero kings; be prudent in counsel and quick in action; strong be thy arm and gentle thy mind, like the good sword, which is sharp and bending. Guard thyself against arrogance in prosperity, for that is the father of ruin; and be ashamed of cowardice in ill-fortune, for such is the mother of dishonour and destruction. Avoid the discourse and friendship of the artful and unworthy, for even the smell of poisonous flowers is deadly. Trust not, my son, the false smile of


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the wicked, for it is like the green bog in the sunshine. Maintain thyself honourably in combat, be true to thy word, firm in friendship, and spotless in life; for life soon passes away, and when death meets thee, and robs thee of sword and shield, helmet and spear, thy deeds will follow after thee, and for them thou wilt receive honour or shame, reward or punishment from thy Almighty Father, and may he accompany thee on thy way!"

Siegfried kissed his father's hand gratefully and with reverence for his wholesome instruction and advice, and promised to bear faithfully in his mind and heart all that he had said, as his best treasure. His parents then embraced and kissed him once more, and with hurried steps he left their presence and hastened out of the hall to the green wood, over which the morning sun was rising in soft beaming splendour.

FOURTH ADVENTURE.

How Siegfried the Swift went through the Wilderness, and what he encountered there.

IEGFRIED left his father's castle alone ; his companions were all still asleep, and his two faithful dogs only followed his steps. He took his way up the Rhine, towards the south, over green fields, through dark forests, and across gloomy glens. The hounds bounded on before him, chasing the beasts of prey, and rousing them before his spear. Many a poisonous serpent and many a wild bird of prey the hero slew with his arrow and transfixed to the rocks, to mark the path that he had followed. One while he would rush forth like the hurricane that roars over the wooded heights ; then again he would stand still, and sound his horn to the barking dogs, or he sang some old heroic song or cheerful hunting-tune, till the rocks re-echoed with the sound. The clear water of the forest stream was his drink, the beasts he slew and the wild fruits were his food. At night he slept on his shield beneath the old oak trees, with his naked sword by his side : at his feet lay his faithful dogs, who roused him whenever a beast of prey approached, and he rose as soon as the day began to dawn.

Onward he went, blithe and joyous, but as yet he had met

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with no Giant, nor the signs of any Dragon, for which he longed so much. This troubled him greatly, and he said to himself: "My fathers, the Heroes of old, have left me a sorry chase; the noblest game they have slain themselves, and may fairly mock at me from the old pictures; I fear, in truth, that but little hero's work is left for me." So saying, he vented his vexation on the snakes and beasts of prey, and proceeded onwards with increased haste and impatience, where the trees in the ancient forest stood the thickest, so that the sky was scarcely to be seen. Upon the ground, the roots of the trees were closely pressed together, and so strangely entwined, that Siegfried was one moment obliged to leap over and at another to creep under them.

One morning, as he was hastening on impatiently, he came to a spot where the trees stood more apart: skirting this lay a smiling mead, adorned with varied flowers and tall grass, through which ran a forest stream. Suddenly he heard a loud noise, as if some horsemen were dashing through the wood; the boughs of the trees were forcibly bent back, and a snow-white stag of unusual size made its appearance. The hair on its breast hung down with age, like a beard, and its antlers, divided into many branches, were so far parted from each other that the arms of a man were unable to stretch from end to end. What most excited Siegfried's astonishment was a brilliant crown of gold that the stag bore upon his head, as he stalked proudly along like the king of the forest. It seemed as if the animal

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had wandered for many years in solitude, with the golden crown upon his head, without seeing the face of man; for he stood quietly beside the young hero, looking steadfastly at him, as if struck with wonder. Siegfried was fain to know the meaning of the crown upon the animal's head, so he called to his dogs to take the stag alive. But no sooner did he approach than the stag bounded forward, followed by Siegfried along the vale, up and down, through meadows and fields, over streams and rocks; and every time that the young hunter thought to catch him, the stag escaped by a fresh leap. Thus they continued the chase, followed by the hounds, till the wearied animal came to the edge of a precipice. Deep beneath lay an unfathomable lake. The stag was just in the act of springing over, when Siegfried caught him with his right hand by the golden crown, and planting his left foot against his back, he pulled the stag towards him.

He now perceived that it was the same stag of which the story had oft been told him, how his grandfather had taken it when young, and had placed the golden crown with a silver rim upon his head. Siegfried broke off a point from the crown, as a remembrance, and let the affrighted animal run loose. Then he continued his course onwards through the wilderness, day after day, like a lion in quest of prey.

It happened one evening that he was in chase of a bear in a deep and shady vale. Steep and dark rose the rocky heights to the right and the left, while from a narrow opening beneath

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roared a forest stream white with foam. The full moon had already risen, and cast here and there a bright gleam over the dark glen. The projecting rocks however, with their corners and points of a thousand varied forms, half illumined, half in shade, looked so strange, that Siegfried at first fancied them no other than real Giants and Dragons and dark figures of the night, of which the old minstrels sang. His ear now caught in the far distance, amid the noise of the rushing stream, the sounds of hollow blows, as if two mighty rocks were being struck and severed from each other. He hastened towards the spot, and as he advanced they appeared to grow gradually louder and louder, until at length he seemed to be in the midst of the noisy din. Yet he fancied that they must proceed from the interior of the mountain; so he applied his ear to the side of the rock, and it seemed as if he heard rough voices discoursing in a language quite unintelligible to him, and yet he nowhere saw any entrance. Again he advanced a few yards, when suddenly the valley took a turn, and he found himself standing before a high wall of blocks of stone; rays of light gleamed through the crevices, and black smoke streamed forth: the wall was overgrown with forest-plants, and below lay enormous trunks of trees. The heavy blows of a hammer echoed from the interior, accompanied by a hollow, murmuring sound of music, as from voices. Even the rushing noise of the neighbouring waterfall was overpowered by this subterranean song, which resembled the wind when in the stillness of night





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it howls through the hollows of the rocks, and then suddenly rages with a loud roar over the ocean waves and forces them on high. When Siegfried had listened for awhile, he climbed up to the rocky heights to see who dwelt there.

Through a wide opening he looked into a deep and high vaulted cavern. A dark red flame was burning upon a forge in the depths of the cave, whilst men of a wild aspect lifted with large pincers the glowing iron from the fire to an anvil, where they struck it with heavy hammers. Through the hollow trunk of a tree the wind whistled into the fire, through that of another the water flowed into a vessel of rock. The dark red flame was strangely reflected in the agitated water, clear as crystal, and in the sooty faces of the smiths. On the walls hung heavy swords, old and new, of various kinds, and near them were richly ornamented shields. In the former were reflected the red and flickering flames, in the latter the rays of the silent silver moon, and they hung there and shone like large lamps. Meanwhile a shower of sparks was scattered through the cave, so that the black men seemed like evil spirits standing in the midst of the fiery element. They were of large make, but of greater breadth than height; their faces were black as the wall itself, and their eyes beamed from beneath their bushy eyebrows like the red flames of the forge; stiff and bristly, their raven black hair hung down their backs. They spoke not a word to each other, except when they laid the iron on the fire and stirred the flames.

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Close below Siegfried sat one of the men, who had an ox spitted upon an iron stake before a fire ; and every time the stake turned round, he tore off a slice and threw it into his vast mouth, to taste whether the meat were nearly done, and instantly he swallowed it down like a ravenous wolf. As soon as it was ready, he took the ox from the fire, laid it on a round iron table, and cut from it with his axe as many pieces as there were men in the cavern : he laid each piece separate, and a block of stone which stood near served as a seat. Then he lighted a fir-torch and went to another part of the cave, where he stuck the flaming torch into the wall, and poured out the drink from huge casks into iron jugs.

Siegfried observed all this, and said to himself : “ The hospitality of these people, methinks, is small and sorry enough, but their hunger is all the greater, for truly they have enormously wide jaws ; the safest thing for me will be to take my portion at once, and leave them to settle the rest among themselves.” Thereupon he stretched forth his spear towards the table, and seized the piece which lay nearest him. Long before the black man returned, Siegfried with his dogs had devoured the meat.

When all was ready, the smith took a hammer in his hand, and struck three times upon an iron shield, and instantly all the smiths ran each to his block of stone, and quickly had his piece of meat in his mouth. One of them however cried out : “ Hollo, Eckhart ! thou old glutton, what hast thou done with my meat ? ” Eckhart looked right and left, and nowhere seeing

it, he said in a muttering tone, "If ye steal the meat among you while I get ready the drink, ye may look yourselves where it is gone."

"Thou knowest full well where it is gone," said the hungry smith; "nor is this the first time thou hast taken the meat and given us the bones; and if thou canst not say where it is, I'll hammer that skull of thine until thou shalt recollect!" So saying he sprang upon Eckhart, but another held him back, and a violent quarrel arose among the smiths. Some cried out that Eckhart had stolen the meat, others said that some one else must have slipped away from the anvil and taken it; while Eckhart swore hard and fast that he had not touched it. They grew more and more furious, and were about to come to blows with their hammers, when Siegfried suddenly appeared above the cave, and called on them to desist. The noise however was so great, that they heeded his presence no more than they did that of the moon, which was silently beaming on them.

Then Siegfried, the young hero, put his horn to his lips and blew with all his might so loud a blast, that the whole cavern resounded and the shields were shaken on the walls. All were silent, as if struck by lightning: but Siegfried said to them, "Listen, ye rude and savage fellows, I tell you that ye are fools and madmen to wrangle thus with each other, for 'tis *I* that have eaten the meat; and I now pray you to welcome and entertain me becomingly as your guest."

At these bold words the smiths stood even more aghast than

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at the sound of the horn ; but they soon gave way to their rage at his presumption, and every one seized and hurled at Siegfried whatever came to hand. But quickly snatching a heavy mass of stone from the rocky wall, he cast it with such force upon the iron table that the table broke in two, and he cried, " Let none raise a hand more, or ye are all doomed to death, unless your skulls are harder than your iron." Then their leader commanded them to desist from the strife, fearing indeed that there might be some mighty Giant above their cave, who in his wrath would forthwith bury them within its walls ; and he ordered one of the smiths to admit the stranger.

The smith took a hammer, pushed away the rock from the entrance, and exclaimed, when he beheld Siegfried, " Truly I thought to see a Giant, and I find a Dwarf. Art thou the frog that has croaked so loud ? What is thy name and calling, and whence comest thou ?" Siegfried answered him proudly, " Thou hast asked me three questions, but hast forgotten the fourth—whether it pleases me to answer thee one of them ? If however a better one than thou inquire, tell him that my calling is to carry a sharp sword, to silence insolent fellows, of whom thou seemest to be one : a name I have not yet gotten, but I am come to win one ; and if thou wouldst know the road to my fire's castle, the wild beasts and birds of prey that I have hung upon the trees and fixed to the rocks in my way hither will show it thee."

" Ha ! dost thou blow again so stoutly on thy horn ?" an-

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answered the smith; "I fain would try if thy sword is really better than my hammer." So saying, he swung his hammer round, and aimed a deadly blow at Siegfried's head; but the young hero met it with his trusty sword, whose edge cleft the handle in twain, so that the iron mass fell to the earth. The smith now hurried into the cavern, followed by Siegfried and his dogs. But here Siegfried was attacked by the furious Eckhart, who rushed upon the undaunted hero, and aimed a blow at his cheek with the massy tongs; ere the blow reached him, however, Siegfried seized him with his left hand by his bristly hair, and threw him on the ground. All the smiths now fell upon the intrepid youth, to rescue their companion Eckhart; but Siegfried held him firmly by the hair, and ran with him round the cavern, followed by the smiths. But his sword, which he wielded with his right hand, kept them off, whilst his trusty dogs sprang barking at their throats and dragged them down. The whole mountain trembled with the sounds of fury, and it seemed as if the savage host within the cavern were engaged in some wild marriage-dance: at length the leader of the smiths commanded peace, and then turning angrily to Siegfried exclaimed: "Hear me, thou art in truth a most ill-mannered guest; first thou stealest our meal, and then drawest thy sword upon one of our comrades." Siegfried answered him proudly, "Truly it does thee little honour to make such war upon a guest about the bone of an ox; for in faith I give thee leave to throw me into yonder fire and burn me to ashes, if by tomor-


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row's dawn I bring thee not in its stead an entire urochs. And if thou wilt teach me the art of forging weapons, I will serve thee truly, and thy spit shall never want supplies from the forest."

This offer seemed to please the Master better, and he bade Siegfried welcome; then they all sat down together, and were soon as good friends as if nothing happened.

FIFTH ADVENTURE.

Mimer relates the Adventures of Wieland, the best of all Smiths and Armourers.

IEGFRIED took his feat boldly, among the smiths, and had an answer for every question, as if he had grown up among them in the smoky cavern. Mimer imagined he had gained in Siegfried a good workman, and told him that if he served him well he would make him as clever a smith as Wieland, the best of all armourers. Then Siegfried asked him who this Wieland was, and what he had produced. But Mimer replied in surprise, "Thou seemest to me not to have long crawled out of thy nest, if thou knowest not of Wieland, of whom every one has heard. But that is a long and wondrous history, and we have no time for it to-day ;

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for Wieland forged so many skilful things, that one can scarcely even tell of them."

Siegfried begged him again with great earnestness, and promised to bring him the fattest urochs of the forests far around. "Well then," said Mimer, "I will tell thee of Wieland; but remember, if thou keepest not thy word, I'll fix thee with my own hands to the highest rock, where thou shalt remain until the eagles and vultures bear thee away piecemeal." Siegfried laughed at this threat, and Mimer began as follows.

"Wieland, the most famous of all armourers, came from Zealand; his father was named Wade, and he was of the race of the Giants. He was once told that two Dwarfs lived in a hollow mountain, who understood everything that heart could desire to know, and were able to work in iron and silver and gold better than any one else. So Wade, the old Giant, took his son Wieland and went with him to seek the little Dwarfs in the mountain. On their way they came to a river, but neither boat nor ferryman was to be seen: so after waiting a long time, the old Giant's patience became exhausted, and he placed young Wieland on his shoulder and carried him across the river. The river was five fathoms deep, and yet the water scarcely reached the hem of his girdle.

"Thus they came safely to the skilful Dwarfs, and the old man gave them his son to instruct, and agreed to give them a mark of gold for twelve months. At parting he charged his son to be attentive and industrious, and then returned home.

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After the expiration of a twelvemonth he came again, and Wieland had served the Dwarfs so truly, and had become so clever, that they would not part with him. They begged the Giant to leave the boy twelve months longer, and they would return him his mark of gold, and teach Wieland twice as many arts. The old father thought this a good offer, and accepted it; but afterwards the Dwarfs repented having bought his services so dear, and they required that if the Giant returned not on the appointed day they should be free to cut off his son's head. The Giant agreed to this also; but at parting he called to his son to accompany him part of the way. On emerging from the mine, they proceeded a short distance, when the father stopped, and plunging his sword into a bog, covered with brushwood, said, 'If I return not on the appointed day, and the Dwarfs seek thy life, take this sword and defend thyself like a man; for that were better than that thou shouldst be miserably murdered by two such diminutive wretches. Nevertheless I cannot but think that I shall return before the appointed day.' The father and son parted, and saw one another no more.

“Wieland learned all the other arts of the Dwarfs; they were however much displeas'd at this, but consol'd themselves with reflecting that this skill would be of no great use to him, since his head was in their power.

“When the twelve months were drawing to a close, the old Giant was anxious to go to his son rather too soon than too late, for the way was long, and he fear'd to miss the appointed time.

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He therefore set out on his journey and travelled day and night until he came to the hollow mountain; and this was three days earlier than the time agreed upon. But he found the mountain closed; so, feeling extremely tired, he laid himself down to rest until it was opened, and immediately sank into a deep slumber. As he lay upon the hard rock, snoring so loud that the branches of the trees shook, the sky grew dark, a thick cloud burst, an earthquake shattered the mountain, and a cliff became loosened and fell, drowning the sleeper in the gushing waters, and burying him amidst the falling rocks and trees. Wade, the old Giant, never awoke again: some, however, say he is not yet dead, and that at times you may hear him breathe plainly, and that the whole remaining portion of the mountain trembles when he turns himself round.

“ The Dwarfs opened the mountain on the appointed day, and Wieland went up to seek his father. He could nowhere find him, and when he came to the cliff and perceived the fall he guessed what had happened. He instantly took the sword from out of the bog, returned into the mine, and slew the two Dwarfs. Then he collected together all his tools, and all the gold and silver he could find, and placing them on a horse, journeyed northwards to Denmark.

“ After three days he came to the Weser, and for a long time knew not how he should get over the deep stream. At length he felled a lofty tree, hollowed it out, and placed on the top his tools, together with the gold and silver; beneath these

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he laid his provisions, and then made himself windows of the skins of beasts and bark of trees, which were so thick that no water could penetrate them. Then he slipped himself in between, and moved about until the tree rolled down the smooth bank into the stream.

“ For eighteen days in the trunk of this tree he continued his course down the stream before he reached the land, which happened just when King Nidung’s people were rowing about on the sea with nets, to catch fish for their royal master’s table. When the fishermen drew in their nets, these were so heavy that they fancied they had caught some monstrous fish. But when they saw the tree, cut out so skilfully, they ran in haste to the King to inform him of the circumstance.

“ The King came himself, and ordered the tree to be cut asunder, to see what was inside. So they forthwith set to work with their axes. Wieland however, who was listening inside the tree, was not a little afraid lest they might hit him a fatal blow ; so he called to them to desist, saying there was a man inside. When the people heard the tree speak with a human voice, they thought the evil spirit himself was lodging in the wood, and ran away as fast as their legs would carry them.

“ Wieland now opened the tree himself, went to the King and requesting protection for his life, offered him his services. The King saw quickly that he was a stranger, and a man to command attention, and not a poor wretch or wandering beggar : he therefore granted his request, although the way in which he

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had been taken like a fish in a net appeared to him strange and wondrous. Wieland hastened back to his tree, and buried it, together with all his tools and property contained therein; but one of the king's men, named Reigin, saw him by chance while thus engaged.

“ Then Wieland served the King faithfully and well for a year; his duty was to have under his care and inspection the three knives which lay on the table before the king. He went one day to the seashore, and while he was washing these three knives, the best of them fell from his hand into the sea and was lost. He was much troubled at this, since he could not discharge even so simple an office. Then he went in haste to Amilias, the King's smith, but found him not, for he was gone to luncheon with his companions, and the smithy was empty. So Wieland went to the forge himself, and, unseen by any human being, he made a knife similar to the one he had lost: whereupon he went and stood before the King's table, and appeared as if nothing had happened.

“ Presently the King took up the new knife, and was about to cut with it a loaf of bread which lay before him on the table, when the knife went completely through the loaf and cut a piece out of the table on which the loaf lay. The King, in astonishment, inquired who had made that knife. Wieland replied, ‘ Who else but Amilias, your smith, who has made all your knives, and everything else that you have caused to be forged? Amilias confirmed what he said. But the King an-

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swered, ‘Amilias cannot make so good a blade;’ and he threatened Wieland with his wrath if he did not tell him the truth. Then he confessed to the King all that had happened, and the King said he knew full well that Amilias could not produce such workmanship. This seemed to Amilias to convey a great reproach and insult, and he rose up in anger and declared that he would challenge the stranger to forge with him; and all should then see which of the two was the better skilled in the art. Then the King commanded it to be so, and it was agreed that Amilias should make a helmet, with a breastplate and leggings of mail, and that Wieland should make a sword, and whosever’s work was best should have power to cut off the other’s head. For the performance of the task each was to be allowed the space of a twelvemonth. Two of the chief serving-men of the King stood up and bound themselves as sureties for Amilias, whose skill was so well known that it was thought impossible he should fail; whilst no one would venture to stand surety for the stranger Wieland, until at length the King himself pledged his word for him.

“ That very day Amilias proceeded to his smithy with all his workmen, and began to labour at his work, and continued thus from day to day until the twelve months were ended. Wieland, on the other hand, waited every day at the King’s table, and seemed as if he had heard nothing of the affair. Thus passed an entire half year, when the King one day asked him how he thought to gain his wager. Wieland replied, that if the King

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were pleased to command, he was ready to begin at once ; and he forthwith went to the spot where he had buried his tree. But this was broken up, and all his tools, together with the gold and silver, taken out.

“ As he stood in trouble and perplexity, looking into the water, he remembered the man who had observed him whilst engaged in burying the tree ; but he knew not his name. So he went straight to the King, told him the whole story, and added, that he was sure he should recollect the man if he were to see him again. Thereupon the King said he would see to this ; so he summoned an assemblage of his people, and collected together all the men in his kingdom ; but none knew the meaning of the royal summons. Then Wieland stood at the entrance and watched each as he arrived.

“ When the King had dismissed the assembly, Wieland went to him and said, that among those present he had neither seen the man himself nor any one like him. Whereat King Nidung waxed exceeding wrath, and said, that Wieland was not so clever as he had taken him to be, but he found that he was a daring and presumptuous fool ; and he had been himself a fool for undertaking to answer for him, and for having summoned the meeting, as the man in quest must surely have been there. So Wieland not only lost all his tools and wealth, but had also brought upon himself the King’s displeasure, which troubled him still more.

“ In this strait he went secretly and forged the image of

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a man. He put hair upon its head, painted it, and dressed it exactly as if it were a man that stood there: for the Dwarfs had also taught him this art. As soon as the figure was completed, he placed it one evening in a spot which the King would have to pass in going from the hall to his chamber. When it was time to go to rest, and the King came to this spot, followed by his attendants, he exclaimed in astonishment, ‘Welcome, Reigin! wherefore do you stand so lonely there outside? how fares it with your embassy to Sweden?’ The man however was silent—he answered not a word. The King was about to question him again, when Wieland, who bore the torch, said, ‘Truly, fire, this man is bold and haughty, he will never answer you, for I made him, and he it is who stole my tools.’ Then the King laughed at the image, and said, ‘Nay, in truth, he could not have come to the meeting.’ And when Reigin soon afterwards returned from his embassy, he restored at once to Wieland, by the King’s command, everything he had taken, saying that he had only done it in jest.

“Wieland meanwhile continued to stand each day at table behind the King, and served him, and did as if he had nothing else to think of, and thus passed other four months. Then the King warned him again, till he went to his smithy and began his work. Three times he made a sword, and every time he brought it to the King it seemed to him the best sword he had ever seen. But Wieland every time replied, that it was not yet good enough; and then he went again to

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his forge and filed it down, and made a new one of it, much better than the former. When he came to the King the third time, the sword gleamed as brightly as a diamond; it was set with gold, and had a beautiful handle. Then he went with the King to the river, threw in a flock of wool, which was three feet thick, and held the sword in the water still and steadily against the stream; and when the wool reached the sword, its edge cut it as easily as it did the water itself. On seeing this, King Nidung said with delight, that in future he would have no other sword than this in battle, for never a better could be found on earth. Whereupon Wieland replied, that he had rather the King should have it than any one else, but he must first make the sheath and belt. So the King consented, and Wieland went to the smithy, and made a second sword so like the other that no one could distinguish them. The good one he hid under the bellows of his forge, saying, ‘ Lay there, my good sword, Mimmung! who knows whether I may not want thee ere long?’

“ From this time forward he stood day by day before the King’s table, until at length the appointed day arrived. Amilias took his helmet and suit-of-mail early in the morning, put them on, and paraded with them up and down through the streets and market, before the astonished people. The armour was so strong and beautifully wrought, that all who saw it said they had never beheld the like. At the King’s table it was much admired, and Amilias was assured he could not fail to win the wager.

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“ When they rose from table, the King went with all his guests to a meadow, and Amilias seated himself, in the midst of an eager crowd of spectators, on a broad stone seat.

“ Wieland now hastened to his smithy, took his good sword Mimmung, and went with it behind the seat on which Amilias, the smith of King Nidung sat. Then he laid the edge of his sword on the stout helmet of Amilias, and asked him whether he felt anything ; to which Amilias replied, that he felt nothing at all, and bade him cut with all his might ; for that truly it must be a mighty marvel if he could injure his invulnerable helmet. Wieland then pressed upon his sword, and it cut so forcibly that at one stroke it penetrated through helmet and head, armour and body, down to his rival’s girdle. Whereupon he asked Amilias again, if he still felt nothing ; and Amilias replied that he felt as if cold water were streaming over his body. ‘ Well then,’ said Wieland, ‘ now stand up and shake thyself, and then thou wilt see how thou art.’ Now when Amilias shook himself, he fell in two pieces on either side of his seat, and never rose again ; for there was no smith so clever as to be able to join the two parts. After this proof the King desired to have the sword of Wieland ; but Wieland was cunning, and replied that he would first dry it, and fetch the sheath from the smithy ; so he went and brought the King the false sword from the forge, but he hid Mimmung again under the bellows.

“ After this Wieland remained for a long time with the





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King : he made for him all sorts of curiosities, in gold and silver and other metals, so that the fame of his skill spread far and wide. Things went on thus until a foreign army attacked the country of King Nidung, and the King took the field with his men : Wieland also girded on his good sword and went with him. And it happened on one occasion in the battle that the King was in great peril. No one came to his aid, and at length he promised to give his daughter to whosoever should assist him. Then Wieland, the clever smith, came to his aid, and performed the service required, and obtained for him the victory over his enemy. But the King, instead of keeping his promise, pretended to know nothing of it, and drove his deliverer in disgrace and shame like a dog from his court.

“ Wieland burned with indignation against the King at this treatment, and returned after some time in disguise to the court. He went into the kitchen of the palace, gave himself out for a cook, and assisted the other cooks in preparing the food for the King’s table. When the dishes were placed before the King and his daughter, the latter took a knife to carve a dish that stood before her. The knife however had this property, that its handle gave a sound if the dish was poisoned ; and this sound was now heard. Search was everywhere made to discover the criminal, but all in vain. Wieland laughed to himself, seeing that no one knew him, and went secretly to the table, took the knife, and laid another exactly like it in its place. Then he prepared a fresh dish, and poured over it such a magic syrup,

that if the maiden had eaten of it, the effect would have been to make her think it impossible to live without Wieland for her husband. The King's daughter however had conceived some suspicion, and held her knife to the dish, but it gave no sound. As she was still in doubt, she ordered another dish of poisoned meat to be brought, and as her knife would not sound, she saw plainly that there was some deception practised.

“ Thereupon the King was angry, and said, ‘ No one can so skilfully have imitated this knife as Wieland :’ so he caused him to be sought for among his people. At last they found him, and brought him before the King, who as a punishment ordered the tendons of both his feet to be cut, so that he could not get away. From that time he sat constantly in his smithy, and contrived all kinds of ingenious work for the King, but all the while meditating in his heart day and night the means of his revenge.

“ At this time he sent for his brother Eigil, who could shoot with the bow better than any other man, and had won great fame in this art. Eigil came, and on account of his skill was well received by the King. One day, however, the King was desirous to see if Eigil could really shoot as well as he had been told : so he caused Eigil's son, a boy of three years old, to be brought, and an apple laid upon his head, and then ordered Eigil to shoot away the apple. Although the King would grant him only one shot, yet he took three arrows from his quiver, and placing one arrow on the string, and taking his

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aim, he shot through the apple, which fell in halves. The King praised the shot, but asked him why he had taken three arrows for one shot? Eigil answered fearlessly, ‘Sire, I will not deceive thee; know then that, had I not hit the apple with the one, the other two were destined for thee.’ The King received this speech well, but all the others thought that Eigil had spoken very boldly.

“Wieland meantime sat in his smithy hammering away, and at every stroke of his hammer he uttered a curse against the King; until one day the two youngest sons of King Nidung came to him in the smithy with their bows, and begged him to make them some arrows. Wieland answered that he had no time: in vain they begged him again and again; until, at length, he promised to grant their request, if they would do him a little favour in return, namely, that when the snow had just fallen, they should come walking backwards into his smithy, and then he would show them a trick. The boys promised to do so, and scarcely had the first snow fallen when they came eagerly to the smithy. Wieland however took them and plunged a knife into their hearts, and buried them in a deep hole beneath his bellows. They were missed the same morning; the King thought they were gone into the woods to shoot wild beasts, or to the seaside to fish; but when dinner-time came, and they did not appear, people were sent out to seek them in every direction. They came to Wieland, and asked if the boys had not been with him; and Wieland replied that they had been

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with him indeed, but had long since gone away to the Königsburg. The messengers perceived footsteps in the snow in the direction of home; no one had suspicion of Wieland, and it was supposed that the boys had been torn to pieces by wild beasts, or drowned in the sea. After a time, when the matter was forgotten, Wieland took the boys from the hole, scraped the flesh from their bones, then took their skulls, set them in gold and silver, and made them into two large drinking-cups; then of their shoulder-blades and hip-bones he made oil-cups; the other bones he made into knife-handles and pipes. The King was delighted with these treasures, and only had them placed on the table when he had persons of distinction as his guests.

“Wieland laughed to himself at the King’s delight, and thinking that he was now sufficiently revenged, he began to consider how he could return home. Then he begged his brother Eigil to get him all kinds of feathers; so Eigil went straightways into the woods, and shot all the birds he could find, great and small. Wieland made himself a winged coat of the feathers, which looked exactly like the skin stripped off a large eagle. Then he told Eigil to put on this covering and try it. ‘Fly high and low, as you will,’ he said, ‘only in alighting go before the wind.’ Eigil did as his brother told him, and flew aloft in the air like the swiftest bird; but when he wished to alight, he fell headlong with such violence as to lose his sight and hearing. Wieland asked him if anything were wanting to

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his coat of feathers, that he had thus fallen. ‘If it were as easy to alight as to ascend,’ replied Eigil, ‘thou wouldst never more have seen me again, and I should now be in another land.’ Wieland laughed as he put the feathery covering on himself, and said, ‘Well I knew that thou wouldst never bring it me again, and therefore it was that I bade thee alight before the wind; for all the birds alight against the wind.’ Then he added, that he would forthwith fly home himself, but he desired first to take leave of the King; and if the King should command Eigil to shoot at him as he flew, he begged him, as he loved him as a brother, to aim straight at his heart.

“The two brothers now took leave of each other, and Wieland rose into the air and flew to the highest tower, and cried aloud, so that every one could hear him far and wide, praying the King to come forth, for he had something to say to him.

“Then the King came with all his attendants, and said, ‘What! art thou now become a bird, Wieland? What is thy desire, and whither art thou flying? What new miracle is this?’ ‘Ay, sire,’ answered Wieland, laughing, ‘I am a bird now, and about to fly from hence, that thou, treacherous King, mayst no longer have me in thy power.’ Thereupon he began to mock at the King, and told him how he had appeased his revenge, until the King grew frantic with rage; and when Wieland flew on high he turned to Eigil, exclaiming, ‘Come, my good Eigil, thou best of shots, send thy arrows after him,

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that he may not escape alive.' To which Eigil replied, that he would not shoot his own brother : but the King threatened him with instant death unless he did as he commanded. Then Eigil laid his arrow on the bowstring, and aimed straight at his brother's heart. But Wieland held his hammer in his right hand before his heart, and as the arrow rebounded against it, he seized it with his left. Eigil was commanded to shoot again, but Wieland did as before, and flew away, laughing scornfully, and holding an arrow in each hand. The King and all his people praised Eigil for his skill in aiming so well ; but they were still more astonished at Wieland's dexterity, saying they had never seen the like. Meanwhile he reached his father's home in Seeland, safe and sound,—what afterwards became of him I know not. But it has now grown late, and it is time for us to go to rest."

Mimer's tale was now ended, and he asked Siegfried how it had pleased him, and whether he wished to become as good a smith as Wieland. Siegfried replied, " What pleases me most is the sword Mimmung ; as to the coat of feathers, I do not need it, for I have no thought of flying from man or beast. Still methinks that Wieland won but little honour with all his skill. He treacherously slew his masters, the clever Dwarfs, and if in return for this King Nidung was treacherous to him, he revenged himself cruelly and craftily on his poor and innocent children ; nor truly doth his flight and scornful laughing beseem a hero. But had he encountered my sword, I would not have




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fat so quietly to him as Amilias, the filly smith of King Nidung : nor should his hammer have availed him much against my arrows. But if thou teachest me to make a sword like the good Mimmung sword, none shall harm a hair of thy head ; and thou mayst hang up all the precious stones and crowns in the world on the trees before thy smithy, and no one on earth shall dare to stretch out his hand to take them.”

“ That we will see tomorrow,” replied Mimer ; “ we shall then try whether you can use your hammer as well as you can your tongue ; but now you must go to rest, for it is midnight, and early in the morning we shall be strong and fresh for work.” Thereupon they all lay down to rest upon their skins of wild beasts ; but Siegfried reposed upon his shield between his two dogs, whom he bound to the handle of his spear, and he slept as soundly and tranquilly as if he had been at home in his father’s castle.

SIXTH ADVENTURE.

How Siegfried brings an Urochs to the Smiths.

EARLY the next morning, when the first rays of the sun gleamed upon the sooty faces of the sleeping smiths, Siegfried sprang up from his shield and started off with his dogs to hunt in the forest. He traversed hill and dale until he came on the track of an

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urochs; his dogs pursued it eagerly, and barked louder and louder as they approached the animal. Siegfried hastened on, and came up just as the urochs was rushing upon one of the dogs, while the other hound clung fast to its ear. The furious beast lifted one dog upon its horns and tossed it far behind him amidst the trees, whilst the other dog fell stunned upon the ground between the animal's feet.

The beast now saw the Hero advancing against him: at first he tore up the earth with his fore feet, wild with rage; then he stood still, measuring the stripling with glaring eyes, and presently dashed with fury at him.

Siegfried sprang aside, seized the creature's horns with both his hands and forced back his fallen head, till the beast reared up and was forced to stand firm and upright, as if life had departed from him. Thus Siegfried led him to the smithy. When he came before the cavern's mouth, he cried aloud, "Wake up! wake up, and receive what I promised you yesterday." So saying he thrust the beast into the cave, struck aside the stone, and placed himself in the opening to see what was passing.

The smiths leaped from their beds in consternation at the sight of the monstrous beast, and each ran to some place of safety. Some jumped aloft, and held fast on the shields and nails in the wall, others placed themselves behind an anvil; one sprang upon the forge, and another crept hastily and hid himself in the ashes beneath.

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The master alone snatched a shield from the wall, and placed himself with a heavy hammer in the centre of the cavern, facing the urochs. The animal at first stood still, as if in amazement at the strange scene, and looked around; then he ran furiously at the master, while Siegfried blew a lusty hunting strain on his horn. Before the master could swing his hammer he was laid prostrate on the ground under his shield. The beast now rushed at those who stood trembling behind the anvil, but they ran right and left, climbing along the wall to the entrance. The urochs in his fury tossed aside the anvil, and stood still before the forge, pawing the ground with his feet, and watching an opportunity to attack the man who stood upon the forge. Then the beast bellowed aloud with fury, and the man shrieked with fear; while Siegfried blew a merry strain as an accompaniment to the dance. The master having now recovered a little from his fall, stepped behind the beast, and striking its skull with the sharp end of the hammer, it fell dead upon the ground.

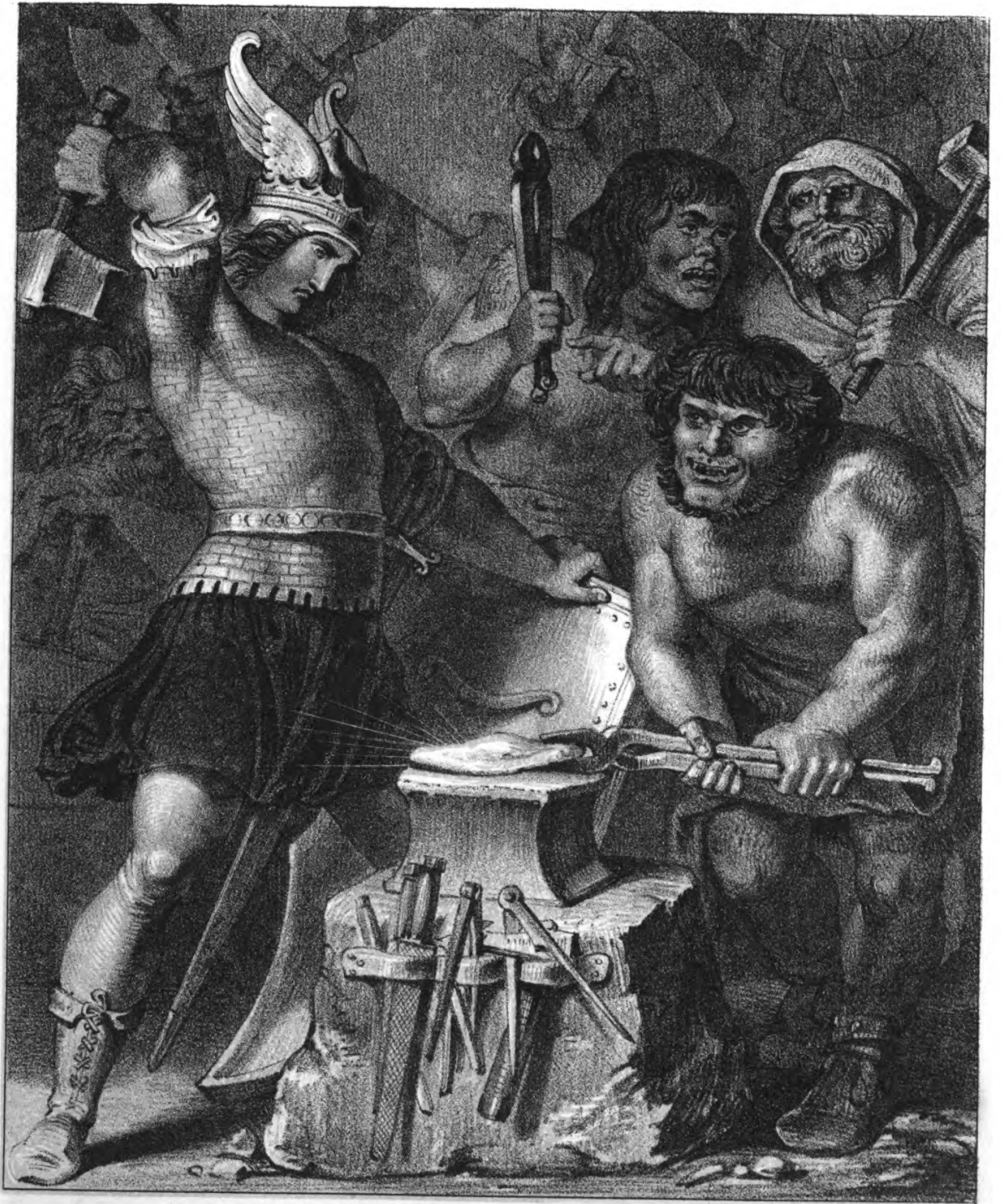
SEVENTH ADVENTURE.

How Siegfried learns to be a Smith, and how he was sent by the treacherous Mimer to the Dragon.



ALL now hastened up, and Mimer the master said angrily to Siegfried, "Another time, rather take from us than give to us, for the second was worse than the first." "Be not so angry, Master Smith," answered Siegfried, "I thought the urochs could better run to thee than I could drag him, and moreover I imagined it would be good sport for thee to give him his death-blow. Perhaps I may be able to make thee amends in the smithy, and produce something useful to thee." "If thou dost that, thou shalt have our praise," replied the master; "but we will try at once what thou canst do." Thereupon he seated himself before the forge, took a massy piece of iron, held it in the fire, and gave a weighty hammer that he could scarcely lift into Siegfried's hand.

When the iron was red hot, he took it out, laid it on the anvil, and bade Siegfried strike it. At the first blow that Siegfried struck, the stone which supported the anvil split in two, and the anvil sank into the earth; the iron and pincers too which Mimer held with both his hands flew in pieces, and the head of the hammer flew off into a corner of the cavern. Then



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said Mimer in amazement, but with increased wrath, "Never have I seen such a fearful, yet clumsy blow struck; whoever thou art, it is clear that thou wilt never do for our work." But Siegfried replied, "Did any man ever become a good shot at the first aim? what does not happen to-day, happens to-morrow; therefore I pray be not soured in temper." Then Mimer was silent, for he thought only how he might destroy Siegfried, believing that he was of the race of heroes,—a young wolf with sharp teeth, who would bring no good to him and his race.

Now Mimer the smith had a comrade whose mind was filled with impiety and vice; whatever he touched produced poisonous fruit, and to foster this was his sole delight. Therefore the curse had struck him, and he could only crawl about on his hands and knees in the form of a terrible dragon.

Then Mimer considered how he could best get rid of the stout young hero, and the idea occurred to his mind of sending him to his comrade for instruction. So he said to Siegfried, "Listen, my bold young friend, you have done nothing as yet in our art; if you wish to learn how to make a good and trusty sword, you must first go to the woods, and begin by charcoal-burning." Siegfried was well content, and promised to do as he was desired, for his heart never dreamt of malice or evil.

EIGHTH ADVENTURE.

How Siegfried fights with the Dragon and bathes himself in his Blood.

MIMER now prepared Siegfried for the journey, and gave him meat and drink for the days that he was to be absent, which the Hero secured under his shield. Mimer also gave him an axe, and then showed him the way to the wood, where he intended to accomplish his destruction.

When Siegfried had come to the spot which the false master had described to him, he halted; then he went up to the trees, gave each a blow with the axe which he held in his right hand, and bending them down with his left, he thus felled them. After awhile he carried away the trees, and piling them up in a heap he made a great fire. The sun was now at the meridian; so he had recourse to his stock of provisions, and never left off until he had finished all the supply that Mimer had given him, for his chase through the forests after Giants and Dragons had given a keen edge to his appetite. After this refreshment he said to himself, as he sat on the stump of an old oak tree, "There is now no one so strong as to lift a spear against me, but he would presently lie stretched at his length upon the ground, and never desire to rise again." As he said this, the

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huge Dragon came crawling forth, with a mouth that was wide enough to swallow a man, flesh and bones and all. It had black wings like a bat, its body was swollen with poison, and resembled a toad, but its long tail was as sharp as a two-edged sword.

When Siegfried saw the monster with his sharp white teeth, he was as delighted as if a long looked for friend were coming; and he cried, "Now I may have a chance of trying my prowess as I wished!" Thereupon he ran to the fire, seized the largest tree, and hastily attacked the fierce creature with the burning brand. He rushed headlong upon him, and forced the flaming point straight into his right eye, so that the beast writhed with the anguish. Then Siegfried struck him on the head with such force, that at the first stroke he fell prostrate on the earth; and then he gave him repeated blows until the monster was dead.

Siegfried now sat down to rest, and said chuckling to himself, "If the Dragons can do no more than this creature here, it is hardly worth the trouble to attack them." He had however grown hungry again from this new toil, and he felt as if he had all this time eaten nothing; but it was now growing dark; he had no wish to return to the smithy, and knew not where to procure food. At last he bethought him to roast the heart of the Dragon for his supper. So he went at once to work, and thrust his spear down the creature's jaws and body; the trunk of a large tree served for a spit, and on it he hung the Dragon with his spear before the fire. But presently the

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scaly coat began to soften before the fire, and the blood and fat flowed in a stream like melted lead. Siegfried took the flesh of the creature in his hand, but it burned his fingers and he put them to his mouth to cool them. But when the horn became cold in his mouth it seemed as if he were biting into steel, it had become so hard. He looked at his fingers, and they were covered with horn, as with gloves of iron. When the young Hero beheld this he felt rejoiced : and quickly throwing off his clothing, he held his helmet under the melting scales till it had grown hard, and then bathed himself in the stream which flowed from the Dragon.

The horn covered his whole body except the back, between the two shoulders, where a leaf of the lime-tree had fallen, which the horn could not penetrate. This horn was like a strong coat of armour, which no weapon could penetrate, except between the shoulders where the lime leaf had fallen. And from this horny covering the hero is called Siegfried the Horny to the present day.

Then he took up an axe and cut the Dragon in pieces ; part he gave to his dogs, and the rest he threw to the birds of prey ; the head he put aside. Then he lay down again to take his meal, and the birds of the forest sung their evening song. He cut out the heart of the beast with his sword, and behold ! while he was eating, there resounded many voices as if of men around him ; whereupon he turned, and was about to invite them to his meal, but he saw nothing but trees, and birds which

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were hopping from bough to bough and seeking a place of rest. He now perceived that the voices he heard could come only from the birds; and he remembered that he had once heard an old ballad sung by a foreign minstrel, in which it was said that whoever ate the heart of a Dragon should instantly learn the language of the birds, and thus learn many a secret. He therefore desisted from eating and listened to the voices of the birds.

Presently a quail cried out to her sister, "Bilderick! Success! Success! the Dragon is conquered and killed! killed!" As she was crying thus, a chaffinch came flying by; he had not understood the quail clearly, and cried, "What, what, what? the Dragon conquered! Victory, victory, victory!" A black-bird whistled, "Yes, yes, only think of it! Siegfried has done it; hail to thee, Siegfried, Siegfried, Siegfried!" With him came three old ravens and seated themselves croaking on the bough of a withered oak; the first said to the second, "Alas! alas! thou hast again deceived us, sister; didst thou not say that we should find Siegfried dead?" "Yes," replied the other, "I heard myself this morning how Mimer laughed at Siegfried, and said, 'Go, proud boy, the ravens will soon fly off with thy bones: the Dragon will help thee to burn coals.' Thus said Mimer, and if Siegfried's arm had not been stronger than his understanding, it would have turned out so." Thereupon the third raven began, "I am afraid there will not be much for us here, for Siegfried's dogs leave little behind. However we must not despair; we shall still all be able to pick out his eyes,

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for he is too confiding, and trusts too much in men, otherwise he would have seen from Mimer's evil eyes that he meant him no good. If Siegfried does not take care, the other will plant his iron in his heart yet." "Ay, but if he is wise," replied the first raven, "he will cut off Mimer's head in time." "That I should be sorry for," said the third, "for he has given us many a good feast from dead bodies; but let us fly away before the sun sets, for yonder in the forest I know of a fallen stag,—let us go and enjoy it together." The two others accepted the invitation, and they all flew away together with a loud croak. Meantime the little birds had all become silent. Siegfried, with his dogs, continued his supper in peace; then he went to a clear stream, where he drank, and laid himself down to sleep under an oak, resting, according to his custom, upon his shield. And when he looked up at the huge trunk of the tree, and saw its wide and leafy branches, and how the winds of evening played around its top, and the stars shone through its boughs; how the birds found rest in its covering and the animals lay beneath its shelter, and the branches were ranged around its stem—and when he further reflected how many a tempest and storm it had defied, and that it now overshadowed the land like a king—then Siegfried thought how he should like to stand like an oak among men, lending shade and protection to all around;—and with this thought he fell asleep.

NINTH ADVENTURE.

*How Siegfried comes again to the Smithy, and settles Accounts
with Mimer.*

NEXT morning early, when the birds of the forest, large and small, hailed the young day with their joyous song, Siegfried arose, stuck the head of the Dragon on the point of his spear, and went straight back to the smithy. Mimer and his companions heard from afar the barking of dogs, the rustling of the bushes and the steps of the hero as he approached. They all came running out before the cave, and Eckhart said to Mimer, “Ay, master, here comes Siegfried, and on his lance he bears the Dragon’s head. Now he will serve us as he has done the Dragon—I shall stay no longer.”

“What! you cowardly fellows,” answered the angry master, “go back immediately into the cave and put the large hammer in the fire. Then we will place ourselves at the entrance to welcome him, and brand the boy on his fair forehead with the red-hot iron if he makes aught ado.”

“Nay,” replied Eckhart, “I will have nothing more to do with him, unless he were to lie asleep before me, so that I could drive a wedge into his head before he awaked! but see,

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here he comes in great anger! we are twelve in number, it is true, but were we half as many more, nothing could help us but the swiftness of our legs." So saying, Eckhart ran away the first into the thicket, and all the others after him.

Mimer remained alone, cursing and stamping. "I shall manage the boy however," said he: "for many is the piece of hard iron I have softened." So he went to meet Siegfried, and bade him welcome. Siegfried however looked at him sternly, and his anger darted like lightning from his eyes, so that Mimer was fain to look on one side, while the hero thus answered his greeting. "None of you, ye faithless ones, shall be welcome to me! I have burned the coals and I have paid his recompense to the companion you sent me, and now thou shalt receive thine; for Siegfried the Swift, the son of King Siegmund, is not accustomed to be in anybody's debt."

Mimer was not frightened at this speech, but said, "Now I plainly perceive that thou art not so valiant as I thought thee, and as thy fathers were. So much anger about a young reptile, which thy ancestors would have trodden in the dust or strangled without a word! I thought the creature would give thee a little pastime, for hadst thou only asked it, he would have helped thee in thy task. With the fire which spouted like a fountain from his jaws I have burned many coals, and roasted many a head of game, whilst thou, who thinkest thyself so wondrous bold, art afraid of it, and canst do nothing with the poor thing but kill it. I verily believe thou hast poked out its

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eyes when asleep, that thou mightest cut off its head without danger, like a lamb bound for the slaughter.”

At these words Siegfried was still more wrath, and said, laughing disdainfully, “ Only stoop, thou old reptile, and my sword shall smite through thy bald head and send thee to thy companion the dragon, that ye may amuse yourselves together, and roast and burn coals as long as you please.” So saying he grasped his sword. Mimer stepped back and said, stretching out his right hand, “ Stay! and only hear me; I will offer thee amends that shall ten times outweigh thy anger. Gold and silver thou shalt gain as none has ever done before, of all who ever wielded a sword or mounted a horse. Seest thou yonder, between two oaks, the blue mountain with the rocky peaks?—there lives my eldest brother. He watches in his cave over countless treasures, such as no king possesses; to obtain them he murdered our father. Now he is accursed, and crawls about in the form of a dragon. I will conduct thee to him, and will provide thee with good and trusty weapons. When we have killed him we will share his treasures. Wait till I fetch thee the arms.”

So saying, he went straight into the cave, and brought a helmet, shield and armour, the most beautiful Siegfried had ever seen. These he gave the hero, who was however silent and expressed not a word of pleasure. At last the smith gave him the sword, saying, “ Look-ye, this is the best of all swords; I made it for Hartuit the King in Holmgart,—take it in both


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hands and stab my brother the Dragon to the heart; his treasures will then be ours.”

Then Siegfried took the sword in both his hands, raised it on high, and said, “ Now I will try the sharpness of this sword, whether it be as good as thou hast said; and thy faithless heart, thou murderer of thy brother, shall feel it first.” Ere the last word was off his tongue, Mimer the false smith lay dead at his feet.

TENTH ADVENTURE.

Siegfried sees the great Dragon, and meets a King of the Dwarfs.

IEGFRIED now thought of pursuing his journey; but he first tore down the walls, and destroyed the entire cave, where only weapons for fraud, treachery and wickedness were forged. He left not one stone upon another, so that at the present day no one can say where stood the smithy of the Giants, where Siegfried the Swift learned the art of a smith.

With joyous courage he advanced through the dark woods and the green and sunny meadows; quickly he leaped over the roaring streams of the forest, and nothing could stop his course. But the country became daily more awful and terrific; more

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steep and lofty were the jagged rocks, more rapidly and fiercely fell the streams, the grafs and weeds in the meadows were so high that they rose far above the heads of his dogs, and beasts of prey ran about in troops. The undaunted hero proceeded onwards, till one day he heard his dogs howl mournfully. He hastened up, supposing that some venomous serpent or beast of prey had seized them. But nothing of the kind was to be seen; his dogs were standing in a meadow, the damp grafs of which was reeking with the heat of the sun. On approaching near, he saw that they were howling at some foot-tracks which they had discovered, the like of which he had never seen. They showed two large paws with long claws; and as he was inspecting them, the sun suddenly became darkened, and his dogs crept timidly up to him. He was surprised at this, for there was not a cloud in the sky. For the first time in his life he felt alarmed, when he saw a wild Dragon flying over him in the air. It was black as night, but at every breath it drew, a pointed flame of fire issued from its jaws; its head and neck were of horn, and the internal fire shone through both, with a dark red colour, and lighted its blue wings. It flew slowly and steadily, making vast circles with its long tail.

Siegfried now perceived to what creature the foot-tracks belonged; he stood under a tree and watched the flight of the monster for a long time, and thought to himself, "May the leader of battles assist me now! Yon creature is the fiend himself in a living form, for of all the Dragons depicted on my

father's walls, not one is equal to this. Grant but the victory to my good sword, that I may fight a good fight against this son of darkness!" Meanwhile the Dragon flew quietly on and disappeared behind a mountain.

Siegfried now heard on a sudden the jingling of bells and the tramp of a horse. He turned round, and before him on the meadow was a tall jet-black horse, on which was seated a very little rider. Siegfried at first thought it must be a child of three years old, and wondered that any mother could be so careless as to let the poor infant ride about in the forest on a high horse, so near the mighty Dragon. But when he saw the little rider nearer, he was astonished to perceive that he had a beard whiter than snow, which reached to his girdle. His limbs and whole frame moreover were not formed like those of a child, but were in good proportion like those of a grown-up man. He had a venerable appearance with his long beard, and looked kindly and shrewdly from his little bright eyes.

Both horse and rider were so beautifully and richly adorned that Siegfried had never seen the like in his father's castle of Konigsburg. The horse's trappings were adorned in front with gold and behind with silver, the gold inlaid with white precious stones, the silver with red; while bells of gold and silver hung on the mane, fifty on each side, giving a pleasing sound. Thrown over the horse hung a cloth of velvet, green as the grass of the meadow in spring, on which was figured the whole earth;

round it ran a sky-blue border, representing the great ocean of the world, in which swam fish of gold and silver and purple. On the green velvet were embroidered flowers of all kinds, animals and men, with pearls and diamonds, all so small and so highly adorned that a day would not suffice to examine them. The rider wore a silver helmet, on the top of which shone a carbuncle bright as the morning-star, while the casque itself was encircled by a crown of gold. His armour was of white steel; over it was spread a broad, royal mantle, fastened at the waist by a girdle of diamonds, in the form of a snake. At his side hung a small sword, with a handle of rubies. Above all glanced his shield, appearing as if formed of diamonds. In the middle shone the sun, and around it the seven stars; whilst between these ran circles of all the colours of the rainbow. The shield had this power, that when the bearer held it before him he could see everything through it without being seen himself. Siegfried stood mute, and knew not what this strange appearance meant.

“Hail to thee, valiant hero!” began the little stranger, “come hither under the trees; thou needst not fear me, I have no ill design against thee; on the contrary, I come to offer thee fidelity and service, and my aid in every danger.”

“Why,” said the hero smiling, “I had no fear of thee, little man! For thy proffered friendship however I thank thee, although thy help may avail but little in danger; thou couldst scarcely be seen in the high grass, and when standing

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by my side a stork might snap thee up, with sword and shield, taking thee for a little frog.”

At these words the little rider was somewhat displeased, and said, “Thou art thyself less than the giants, and yet thou thinkest to gain the victory over them! True, I am small of stature,—yet I know much more than thou dost, for Siegfried the son of King Siegmund knows not my name, nor does he perhaps know my power. From gratitude I am come to lead thee out of the wood, because thou hast slain the Dragon who held me and my people in slavery. For know I am named Euglein, and I am a rich and potent King of the Dwarfs of these mountains.”

“Well then, King Euglein,” answered Siegfried, “show me where I can gain honour, and my sword shall ever be devoted in gratitude to thee.”

“’Tis well,” answered the other; “and had I not come hither thy life would have been lost, for the Dragon who lives hereabouts is the most fearful of all creatures, and he it is who holds captive the beautiful King’s daughter of the Rhine. He took her from her father’s castle, and now she sits weeping and wringing her hands on the Drachenstein. No one but myself knows the way to the spot, and she will never be released unless Heaven takes pity on the poor maiden. But let us haste, or we are lost!”

Siegfried was delighted at hearing these words; he sprang from amid the trees, smote three times with his sword on a

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stone, which he cut afunder like a sponge, and then exclaimed, "May the sword of my enemies thus pierce my body if I depart hence till I have fought with the Dragon for the maiden!"

"If that be the case, give me leave," said the Dwarf in alarm, "to quit the wood and fly hence: for hadst thou traversed the whole earth from east to west, and overcome all strong men and all monsters, still must thou leave the maiden to the Dragon on the rock."

"Nay, not so, little man; thou must show me thy fidelity and give me thy assistance, and help me to win her."

"That cannot be," replied the Dwarf; "if thou wilt rush upon thy death, thou must do so alone; I will no longer keep thee company. But if thou wilt follow me, I will give thee gold and pearls and costly jewels, magic weapons and roots of healing powers, and will teach thee likewise many a maxim of ancient wisdom; but never will I guide thee to the Drachenstein."

So saying, the little man gave his horse the golden spur, but Siegfried seized the bridle, and thus in anger spoke the hero: "Thou must show me the way, or thou ridest not home with thy head upon thy shoulders!" Then he seized the Dwarf by the beard; but the little man strove and struggled with such force that Siegfried could not sufficiently admire his prodigious strength. A magic ring gave the Dwarf this supernatural power. The sweat stood upon Siegfried's forehead in great

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drops, but still he was unable to master his tiny opponent, and the contest lasted till in the struggle the ring fell from the Dwarf's finger. Then Siegfried seized the mannikin by his right foot, threw him from the saddle, and held him head downwards against a stone, saying, "On this stone I will dash out thy obstinate brains if thou lead me not to the Dragon." But the Dwarf cried out piteously and said, "Calm thy anger, thou proud hero! I will advise thee as well as I am able, if thou wilt only spare my life." With this Siegfried was satisfied, and set the Dwarf upon his legs again.

ELEVENTH ADVENTURE.

Siegfried's fight with the faithless Giants under the Drachenstein.

WHEN the poor Dwarf had recovered his breath, he tied his horse with fear and trembling to the trunk of a tree, and then ran on before Siegfried to the Drachenstein. He passed over wild ravines, behind waterfalls, and through the hollows of rocks, till at length he came to the entrance of a cave. It looked much like Mimer's smithy, only that it was wilder and more appalling. "Here," said he, "dwells Kuperan, a King of the Giants; when he takes his stand upon the rocks and blows his horn a thousand Giants are ready at his command, and all the Dwarfs in the

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mountains around, and all the spirits of the woods and waters are subject to him, for he is of all giants the strongest and fiercest. He with his companions can overturn mountains and pour streams over the land as he pleases; he can sink ships and root up forests. He has formed an alliance with the fierce Dragon, and keeps the key which locks up the hollow cave. Hearest thou the roaring in those rocky hills, as if a mountain torrent were rushing through?—that is his snoring. It is high time that we depart, for if he awakes there will be rough sport.”

“Nay, it is for that sport,” said Siegfried, “that I have come hither.” And thereupon he went to the entrance and blew the horn which hung before it, so loud that the rocks far and near re-echoed to the sound. The Dwarf leaped in affright into a hollow tree. But the Giant slept on. Then Siegfried blew the horn a second time, with such force that all the birds in the wood were silent and flew to their nests. But the Giant never opened his eyes; he muttered only, “How loud those plaguy wasps are humming to-day.” Siegfried now turned his spear and struck the savage sleeper in the side. Without opening his eyes, the Giant struck at the spear, thinking a wasp had stung him. The iron bent in Siegfried’s hand, but the monster continued his slumber. Then the hero knelt at his head and shouted with a loud voice, “Wake up, wake up, thou prince of giants! a young wolf is in thy nest.” The monster now turned himself round and looked at the hero in

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scorn. Grim was his aspect, and his face was covered with red hair: his limbs were huge and clumsy, his eyes round, his mouth reached almost from ear to ear, and gaped like a mountain cave: two large boar's tusks stuck out, and reached up to his ill-formed nose. From his frightful appearance he bore the name of Wolfgrambear, for he was as hungry as a wolf and as savage as a bear.

“What has brought thee here, boy?” he said, grinding his teeth; “I know not whether I ought to hang thee up here in my hall by thy head or thy heels, my little fellow.”

“Heaven forbid thou shouldst do either, thou hungry vulture!” said Siegfried; “I am surely not come here to be hung; the sword is my friend, fighting my pastime, and danger my delight. So release the maiden whom thou and the Dragon are keeping in captivity, or else thou shalt sink into the earth, and the oak-trees shall grow over thy body.”

At these words the Giant was in great wrath; he snatched up a rock and hurled it at the hero; but Siegfried the Swift leaped aside with a smile, and avoided it. Raging with anger, the Giant now raised his mighty iron poleaxe to cleave him from head to foot: but Siegfried avoided the blow, and the weapon split the rock at his feet and sank deep in the earth out of the Giant's hand. As he stooped to draw it out, Siegfried sprang on him and gave him many severe cuts in his arm, while the dogs flew at him and fastened on his legs. The Giant seized the dogs one after another, and threw them far

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away into the valley ; then he seized the poleaxe anew, but the blood flowed in copious streams from many a deep wound, so that he became exhausted and fled into the middle of his cave. Here he dressed his wounds, and put on a coat-of-mail which the Dwarfs had made for him and hardened in dragon's blood. To his side he fastened a sword, broad and long, at the point of which ran a snake, and wherever it flew hissing, death entered and life departed. On his head he put a helmet of black steel in the form of a dragon ; the shield which he hung around him was inlaid with iron, and so huge that he could lift upon it a knight and his horse.

Thus armed he came out with a four-edged poleaxe, which at every stroke rang like a bell. Then he cried aloud to Siegfried, " Tell me, thou little man, what have I done to thee, that thou comest here to murder me in my sleep ? "

" Thou liest, savage monster ! have I not myself aroused thee to the fight, when I could have plunged my sword in thy heart ? "

The Giant replied, " He who led thee hither has led thee to thy death, and that thou shalt find before the sun goes down behind the hills ; and were there ten such as thou art, I would put you each on a shirt you should never get off again. "

" Come on then ! " cried Siegfried, " but take care of thyself, for many a one has boasted of doing great things when the ravens were already sitting on his helmet ready to peck at his eyes. "

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The two now rushed at each other, and dealt such weighty blows that the fire flew from their shields, and the eagle high above the rocks and the wolf in the cave below let go their prey and fled. The Giant however constantly missed his aim, for he was naturally clumsy and unwieldy, and his wounds had crippled him; but Siegfried struck blow after blow as rapidly as if he had had ten swords in his hand, and hewed pieces out of the large iron shield like a carpenter at his work. Kuperan at length had only the strap left in his hand; covered with blood, he began to reel like some mighty oak, till at length he piteously exclaimed, "Hold, hold, thy sword! short as it is, it strikes deep; I have proved thy courage, and see that I cannot gain the victory over thee. Grant me but my life, brave hero,—my weapons and myself thou mayst take as thine own."

"Then," said Siegfried, "the first thing I require of thee is to free the maiden on the rock."

"Thus ended the strife, and both swore fidelity to each other in all their dangers—the Giant that he would serve the hero faithfully, and Siegfried that he would take no revenge for the conflict.

But the Giant was deceitful, and all the while considered only how he could accomplish Siegfried's destruction. Siegfried, on the contrary, spoke to him frankly and kindly. "Thy wounds, my poor fellow, grieve me much,—I will dress them before we ascend the rock." So saying, he tore his own gar-

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ments and bound them round the wounds of the treacherous Giant, and they went on their way together. Eugelein, the dwarf-king, crept from his hollow tree and ran behind them, but without being seen, for he wore his cap of mist which rendered him invisible. Siegfried went before, followed by Kupe-ran the faithless.

The way led into a narrow rocky valley. On the further side stood, upon dry stony ground, dwarf oaks and bushes; beyond rose steep and naked rocks, half covered with trees and hollowed by falling waters. On the right descended steeply a smooth precipice of stone, and in the depth of the valley itself, foaming over rocks, rushed a wild stream. A bow-shot further on, the valley was closed by another steep precipice a hundred fathoms deep, over which the stream rushed into the depth below dashing against the rocks and masses of stone.

The Giant raised his hand, and pointing to a crevice in the rock above, said, "Seest thou the cave yonder behind the waterfall—there we must enter." While Siegfried was looking about, the false monster raised his hand and gave King Siegmund's son such a blow on his helmet, that he fell senseless on his shield and lay stretched on the ground like one dead. Then the Giant stooped to throw him over the precipice into the foaming waters beneath; but the hero's dogs flew fiercely at him, and Eugelein the nimble dwarf sprang forwards, put on his cap of mist and bore Siegfried away in safety under the trees.


The Giant was much surprised when he found that his

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enemy had disappeared. He looked round on all sides, fancying that he must have fallen over the rocks from the force of the blow, and he was about to send the hounds after him. But they, accustomed to fight with wild-beasts, drew back quickly when he stooped to seize them, and as he slowly rose they sprang barking between his legs. The Giant stooped again, seized one of them by the throat, and was going to throw him over the rock, when the other dog sprang upon his back and seized him by the right ear, so that Wolfgrambear bellowed till the valleys echoed around. Again the Giant tried to seize the dog; but by this time he had come to the place where Siegfried lay with his cap of mist, and thus instead of the dog he caught hold of the Dwarf's head, who immediately began to cry out piteously. Siegfried awoke from his swoon, sprang up, threw away the cap of mist and gave the Giant such a wound in the neck with his sharp sword, that he instantly let go the Dwarf. Then he raised his sword again to give the faithless Giant his death-blow, when the latter held out in his right hand a golden key, and said, "Hold! or I will throw away this key, and then you will never reach the King's daughter on the Drachenstein, for in the whole world there is no key but this that will open the enchanted castle." Siegfried let fall his sword, and gave the treacherous monster his life a second time.

TWELFTH ADVENTURE.

Of the great Wonders which Siegfried saw in the Dragon's Rock.

IEGFRIED, being aware of the treachery of the Giant, now made him go on before, and so they arrived at the cave, which was concealed behind the water that fell from on high. Here they were first obliged to creep down eight fathoms; then the Giant scraped away the earth and leaves from the ground and a large iron lock was visible; this he unfastened, and lifting up a heavy iron plate, under which ran a stone staircase, Kuperan bade Siegfried go before. But the hero looked angrily at him and said, "Thinkest thou I have so soon forgotten thy treachery, that thou openest a new trap for me?" Then he took the large key from the lock and pushed the Giant on with it, and made him run quickly down the steps, Siegfried and the Dwarf following after.

They passed through long passages which led right and left into the interior of the mountain, in which a person ignorant of the place would soon be lost, for one might wander there days and days without finding an outlet. The Giant would doubtless have led the hero through byeways into some abyss where he would have fallen headlong, and either have dashed out his

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brains against the rocks or perished of hunger and thirst among poisonous snakes, but the Giant was afraid of the Dwarf, who was well acquainted with the mountain.

Upon the walls Siegfried saw the blackened skeletons of various animals of frightful forms and prodigious size. The Dwarf told him these were the dragons who for centuries had lived here in alliance with the giants. Some of them still held in their claws the skeletons of those creatures that had fallen their victims; others still stretched out their jaws as if to vomit fire and poison. Going further, they came to a hall which was so lofty that the highest oak would not have reached the roof. In the middle of the apartment burned a dark red fire, and around it stood a circle of altars of stone stained with blood. "This is the great burial-place of the giants," said Eugelein; and Siegfried saw their corpses lying in two rows on stone shields, with stone clubs. On the altars near the fire the prisoners whom they took were slain as death-offerings, and their blood was drunk at the funeral feast.

They now passed through many passages, till they came to a hall which shone so bright that Siegfried was obliged to hold his shield before his eyes to prevent being dazzled. The hall looked like a vast arbour; the walls were composed of shining trees, which twined their leaves and branches close together. Fruits of silver and gold shone amid the dark green foliage, and creeping plants of all kinds wound around the stems. These however were none of the plants which grew on the soil of the

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earth above, but only rare and precious metals that lie hid in the interior of the earth. The most beautiful objects of all were the flowers, which bloomed around in a thousand varied colours. They were the precious stones that lie concealed in the mines. Elves and Dwarfs, and tiny men of elegant shape and aspect, tripped nimbly to and fro, to tend the flowers, to water the trees, and to pluck the fruits: they wore garments white as the daylight, and zealously performed their duty without looking up.

From this hall Siegfried entered a second, constructed of pure crystal. In the midst stood transparent pillars in two rows, and brilliant streams of water poured from them, forming arches of varied colours. The foot of the columns was adorned with costly shells, from which sprung up water-plants, encircling the columns with their flowers. Little water-sprites peeped out from the foliage, and held flowers in their mouths, from which they playfully spouted water. Beneath, in the green grass, sat sea-nymphs, combing their long wet hair: others were playing on harps, while their sisters danced in graceful movements around the pillars. So strange, yet so sweet, were the tunes to the songs, that whoever heard them once could never forget them.

The third hall, which succeeded this, was of blue transparent jasper. On the ceiling beamed stars of gold, and the sun and moon sat on shining horses of light and played at ball with the morning and evening stars. High above was perched a

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mighty eagle; when he expanded and flapped his wings, the breeze floated now louder, now more gently through the hall, and the birds began to sing around.

The Giant now complained that he must rest, on account of his wounds; so they seated themselves, and while Siegfried looked around in astonishment, Eugelein, the dwarf-king, said, "It may well surprise thee how a Dragon can have so many splendid apartments, since his abode is the darkness of night; but thou wilt see another chamber still which outshines this as the noon excels the morning. The halls represent the elements, and for many a century thousands of industrious Dwarfs have laboured here, and the hammer has never been out of their hands. But all this now belongs to the Dragon whom we are compelled to serve; and if thou canst not overcome him, he will kill us all with his poisonous breath, and the maiden will be irrecoverably lost.

"Yet it was not always so, as my forefathers have told me. There was a time when blessed spirits lived on earth in joy and unity, in dwellings of heavenly light. No sword or pointed dagger was then made, nor did the sweat of slavery run from man's brow. Vases for offerings alone came from our forges, from which pure incense rose up to heaven. Life was a pleasure and labour sport; and on bright and shining seats sat the Afi, the fathers of mankind, and read from iron tablets the sacred maxims of eternal wisdom and the laws of the inscrutable Deity, whose name none ventures to utter.

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“ But from the bosom of Night rose Loki, the prince of darkness. In a form of beauty, with smiling countenance and seductive speech, the arch deceiver appeared before the patriarch of our race, who believed his smooth words. They pledged a brotherly love to each other, and in token of amity they mingled their blood. This was the beginning of all evils. The deceived one knew not that the old Dragon, the enemy of gods and men, the father of darkness, had infused into him his own poisonous breath. And there also arose from the bosom of the same Night, where the fiery Dragons dwell with savage Giants, an evil enchantress, who was versed in all black arts. In pleasing form she appeared before our fathers, and on her forehead shone a rich ornament of gold, which she had formed by magic power from stolen rays of heavenly light. And as the Fathers looked in her glowing eyes, and the dazzling brilliancy of the false gold enchained their looks, the cunning deceiver whispered to them, and avarice, envy, and discord arose in their hearts. Then all oaths and vows of fidelity were forgotten, and the first battle was fought on earth. Ever since a fearful curse has rested on alluring magic gold, which was the cause of the evil.

“ The Afi, when they came to their senses, would fain have destroyed in the fire the enchantress with her treacherous wealth ; but thrice she rose from the flames uninjured, and laughed them to scorn. When after being pierced with the spear, she was again thrown into the flames, the crafty deceiver approached the fire, took her half-consumed heart from her bosom, and

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swallowed it. With the heart he became possessed of all her magic arts and power ; but he had also imbibed all her wickedness, her evil desires and savage lust ; thus the flames of vice ever burned more darkly and fiercely in his bosom, and he considered only how he might destroy both heaven and earth in one vast conflagration. But the hypocrite would not cast off his dazzling appearance, for he was bent on more surely effecting the destruction of all.

“ He now married a Giantess, a base witch, the daughter of primeval Night, who continually brooded over and foretold mischief ; and she produced three monsters, from whom all other monsters have come upon the earth. Her first child was the great serpent of the world, who, concealed at the bottom of the sea, winds his folds around the earth, holds his tail in his mouth, and swallows all that approaches him. If the water becomes too dry and shallow, he turns in raging anger and the earth trembles at his convulsions. The second monster was the great wolf of the abyss, who is equalled by no other in savage cruelty and strength. From his nostrils he snorts forth flames, his eyes scatter fire, and he threatens to swallow up both sun and moon with his dark and voracious jaws. The third child of this pair was the princess of the lower world and of death. Shuddering awe dwells in her looks, and her empire is the dark valleys where the sun never smiles and clouds and mists form eternal night. These three children Loki caused to be brought up among the Giants in the land of Night, where they

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grew to enormous size and strength. But he himself kept up intercourse in various forms with our forefathers, and sowed poison and destruction everywhere around.

Loki once went forth with Odin and Haener to wander over the earth. They came to a piece of water named the waterfall of Andvari: in the stream sat an otter, catching fish and devouring them eagerly. It was not however a real otter, but the son of a powerful enchanter, and the brother of Mimer the base smith and of Fafner the Dragon, who dwells here on the rock. Catching fish and hunting were his only pleasure, and he changed himself daily into an otter and caught fish in the stream, which he took home, where he sat in a corner and ate them. He had just snapped up a fish, when the treacherous Loki, who well knew that he was a man, caught up a stone and killed him. Loki's companions were delighted with their prey, and stripped off the skin of the otter. But it so happened that in the evening they entered the dwelling of his father, the old enchanter Reidmar, who, by the skin and by their blood-stained hands, perceived at once that they had slain his son. With the help of his sons he took away their weapons, made them prisoners, and threatened to be revenged on them, unless by way of atonement they filled the skin of the otter and covered the outside of it with gold, so that not a hair could be seen.

“ Odin and Haener were compelled to remain with him, for they sent Loki forth to get the gold, because he was the most cunning. So he went again to the waterfall and there

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made prisoner a Dwarf, who kept concealed in his cave the richest treasure known to mankind. Beside an infinite quantity of gold and diamonds, there was also a miraculous helmet, the sight of which makes all living things tremble, a tarn-cap, which bestows invisibility and strength upon the wearer, and the sword Balmung, against which no shield is proof. The most precious object however was a gold ring of wondrous power ; whoever possessed it was sure never to want gold, for it always increased according to his wish. The ring however was made of false gold, which the enchantress had brought from the bosom of Night for the purpose of deception, and it was the cause that oaths were first broken and blood was shed in the first battle. On it also rested the primeval curse, for it brought evil on whoever possessed it.

“ Loki compelled the captive Dwarf to bring the whole of the treasure from his cave ; but the magic ring he concealed under his arm ; however Loki saw the glitter of the gold, and insisted on having the ring likewise ; the Dwarf begged piteously that he would leave him this one of all his treasures ; but Loki was inexorable. Then the Dwarf went into his cave and uttered a fearful curse on the treasure, that it might bring no good fortune to any one, and on the ring, that it might cause the death of any one who possessed it.

“ Loki now returned to Reidmar, and they filled the otter’s skin with the gold, placed the animal on its feet, and covered it with gold. Reidmar examined the skin, and perceiving a single

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hair, required that this also should be covered with gold. Odin took the ring of discord from his finger, and while he was covering the hair with it, Loki repeated the curse of the Dwarf. Reidmar now allowed them to go their way, and from that time the treasure has been called the treasure of the Nibelungen, for Reidmar's family was a race of Night, and they were called the Nibelungen.

“ It was not long before the splendour of the gold ring caught the eye of Fafner, and he longed to possess it, for he was the strongest and fiercest of the brothers, and wished to call his own all that was there. He excited his brother Mimer, and they both went to their father and required their share of the recompense. Reidmar however refused to give up the gold, and concealed it under his couch, that his sons might not steal it, and night and day this treasure was his anxiety and care.

“ But the ring was never out of Fafner's mind. In an evil hour he stole to his father's bed, drew the sword Balmung, and plunged it into the heart of his parent as he slept. When Reidmar the old magician saw how his unfaithful son seized upon the gold, he repeated with his dying breath the horrible curse which he had learned from Loki, and conjured his daughters to avenge his murder. The curse of a dying father had its effect, and Fafner was immediately changed into a fierce and fiery Dragon. The flames of burning lust and the poison of consuming envy darted from his jaws, and nothing since has power to assuage his

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thirst of evil, for he is ever impelled to some new deed of plunder and murder.

“ Mimer, his brother, required from him some portion of his inheritance of blood ; and when Fafner angrily refused him, he vowed his death ; and for this reason he hath sent thee to him, and longs to drink his blood and eat his heart, for he also thirsts after this accursed gold. Loki the crafty deceiver, who prepared this mischief, did not escape the fearful punishment of his wickedness. He committed many a ruthless act, and became more and more cruel and daring, till at last he perpetrated the most frightful deed that the human heart ever conceived. Odin, the father of the Afi, had a son, whose countenance shone like the sun, and whose mild and gentle looks delighted every one ; wise was his discourse, and all his sayings came to pass. Before the light which beamed from his countenance, impurity vanished and sin fled away. Hence he was named Balder the Good, and was loved and praised by all. Now Loki the evil one hated no one so much as Balder the Good, and would rather have lost his own life than that he should continue to live.

“ Evil dreams and forebodings troubled the good Balder. Fearing some dread misfortune, the Afi sent to Frigga, requesting that she would exact an oath from all and everything on earth—trees and animals, stones and diseases, poisons and snakes—that they would not injure Balder the Good, whom all so loved. All promised the goddess ; and the Afi, highly de-

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lighted, placed the illustrious youth in the midst of them, and in sport threw sharp spears and pointed stones at him. Nothing injured him, for he was sacred to all things. Loki stood by and watched the sport with envious eyes: then he assumed the form of a woman, went to Frigga and told her with feigned delight of the sport of the Afi, and cunningly asked her if all had pledged her their oath, and if none was forgotten. Frigga said, 'Eastward from Walhalla grows a miffelto,—I passed it by, for it seemed to me too tender to do any harm.' When Loki heard these words, he immediately went and cut a slip from the plant for a dart. Then he returned to the sport, and went up to Hoedur, who stood by and took no part in the pastime, because he was blind. Loki gave the dart into his hand and desired him to throw it in honour of the beloved Balder, and that he himself would guide his arm. Hoedur threw the dart, and Balder fell pierced and dead on the ground. The Afi were struck dumb with terror and grief, and each looked speechless at the other, for they saw in Balder's death a presage of their own destruction and that of the whole visible world; since the curse had come upon it through the evil one whom they had received among them, and with whom they had mingled their blood. But Odin forbade them to take revenge, because the spot was dedicated to peace.

“ With great lamentation they buried the corpse by the seaside, and all the families of mankind, even the Giants from the icebergs, came to the interment. Nanna, the wife of Balder,

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died of a broken heart, and was buried by his side. Lastly Odin approached the corse and whispered in its ear: no one knows the words of the farewell he uttered, but some say he spoke of a happy meeting again.

“ Thereupon the Afi sent Hermodur, the brother of Balder, down to the pale Goddess of the Dead, to entreat her to restore the murdered Balder to the upper world. Hermodur rode for nine nights through the deep valleys of the shades which lead to the kingdom of the Dead. Then he came to a stream, and rode over a bridge which shone with gold: it was guarded by a maiden, of a bold and confident aspect, armed with sword and shield. ‘ What wilt thou here?’ she cried. ‘ Five troops of corpses rode over yesterday, and the bridge trembled not thus; thou hast not the look of the dead.’ When Hermodur spoke to her of Balder, she bade him ride further toward Midnight. He came to a castle, leaped over the high gate, and stepped into the hall of the pale Princess of the Dead. Around her stood the maidens who accompany the dead in their journey to the tomb; behind her stood a red cock, and at her feet lay Pain, Weariness and Exhaustion. There he saw Balder and his wife sitting on high. But the princess replied to his request, ‘ Now I can prove whether it be true, as report declares, that Balder is so beloved by all. His return to the light shall be permitted if all things alive and dead lament his death.’ Balder gave his brother a miraculous ring for Odin, by way of remembrance; then they parted, and Hermodur returned.

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“ The Afi immediately sent out their messengers into the wide world to beg all creatures to release Balder with their tears. All Nature—the birds of the forest, the flowers of the meadow and the beasts of the field—lamented the murdered one, who had been their joy and delight. As the messengers were returning home with joy, they found a hideous Giantess sitting in a cave, who exclaimed, ‘ No tears will I shed for one whose life or death troubles me not : the pale Princess of the Shades may keep him ! ’ The messengers at once perceived that this was no other than the base Loki, the old murderer and liar, who thus prevented the deliverance of Balder, and they returned home sorrowful.

“ Loki however, urged by the fear of punishment and haunted by the thoughts of his own wickedness, flew off to a mountain, where he built a house with four gates, facing the four winds. All night he watched ; in the day he changed himself into a fish, and concealed himself in a waterfall. But fearing that they would catch him there, he made himself skilfully a little net, that he might practise how to escape from its meshes. But the wicked Loki was caught in his own snare, for as he was weaving it the Afi came. He quickly threw the net into the fire and leaped into the water ; but the Afi saw the enchanted net in the flames, and immediately made one exactly like it, as broad as the stream in which Loki had hidden himself. Then they stretched it out and went along the stream to catch the cunning serpent.

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“Loki swam away from the net and concealed himself between two stones, so that the net passed over him. Still they could perceive that something living had touched it: so they fastened heavy balls to it, and the net then sank so close to the ground that Loki could not creep away from it. Then he swam to the mouth of the stream, and they saw him suddenly leap over it and turn back to the waterfall. So they returned back a third time, divided themselves into two bands, and one of them, Thor the Strong, went through the middle of the stream. Loki was again driven towards the sea; he was afraid to swim into it, and leaped into the air, when, swift as lightning, Thor caught him and held him by the tail.

“They bore him immediately to a dark and deep cavern, and then piled up three stones, through which they bored a hole. A son of Loki, changed into a wolf, was there, devouring his own brother, and with the entrails of this infernal offspring they bound the father fast to the stones, for no other tie could hold him. Then a Giantess, whose father he had murdered, approached and hung over him a poisonous snake, which dropped its burning venom on his face. But the Afi allowed Sigyn his wife to attend him in his torment. She holds a cup under the snake and catches the poison: but when she goes out to empty the cup, as it becomes filled, and the poison drops like fire upon his brow, he writhes with anguish, so that the whole earth trembles. And thus he must ever lie, until that day when heaven and earth shall be destroyed; and till then the struggle

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will continue with his poisonous brood, the giants, enchanters and dragons, which our ancestors the Afi commenced, and which you the Heroes now continue.”

While King Euglein related this with a very serious and solemn air, the Giant had leaned his head on his hands and fallen fast asleep, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Siegfried could awaken him. Then they went quickly on and came to the fourth hall, which, as Euglein said, surpassed the others in miraculous splendour. Around the walls burnt fire; white flames and blue and red and green wound round in figures of varied kinds, flowers and birds and beasts. Then suddenly a thousand sparks shot forth, and transformed themselves in the air into shining stars, golden crowns, and wreaths of flowers. In the middle of the hall was a basin with a golden rim, from the midst of which grew an ash-tree that reached to the ceiling; the ground in which it stood was clear crystal, so that all its roots could be seen as if it stood mirrored in a lake. Siegfried could not sufficiently admire this tree, which the Dwarfs had so skilfully made. Green leaves and golden fruits adorned the wide-spread boughs and dropped their dews of honeyed sweetness. Above, on the summit, sat a royal eagle, with a bright and piercing glance, and spread out his broad wings; on his head stood a hawk. Below on the ground were standing, on the four sides, four stags, which stretched out their necks upwards and ate the leaves of the tree. Three roots ran from it into the crystal basin. The middle root

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went deep into the abyss below. There lay an enormous Dragon enveloped in darkness, swelling with poison and gnawing incessantly at the root. Around him crawled a thousand poisonous serpents and hungry wolves, and a dark vapour ascended from the pit. In the midst of it was a seat, on which sat a female, with a crown on her head, of pallid countenance and with a dark dress: behind her, on the back of the seat, stood a large flame-coloured cock, at whose feet grazed a raven-black horse near a rushing stream. The second root ran from the ash towards the north; there masses of ice lay piled up on each other, and therein sat great Giants around an enormous horn, from which issued a spring. Opposite to this root ran a third, which was surrounded with light, and from a spring near it came forth sky-blue water; two white swans were swimming in the water, and three beaming maidens stood on the margin, and took up water in golden vessels and sprinkled the tree. Around the spring were placed twelve royal seats or thrones, upon which sat princes and princesses with golden crowns. A squirrel ran nimbly up and down the trunk, from the eagle on the top to the serpent below.

Siegfried looked at all this with amazement, and asked the Dwarf what was the meaning of the tree. "That," replied the wise King, "is the celebrated ash-tree Ygdrasil, an image of the world. The leaves of the tree are the clouds, and the golden fruits are the stars of heaven. The eagle that floats above is the King of heaven, who with searching eye overlooks

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the world. The stem is the earth, and thence a root goes down into the depths below, where sits the princess of the lower world; near her grazes the horse who brings to her the dead from life, and behind her sits the red cock. When the cock begins to crow, the world is destroyed. The Dragon that vomits flames, and the serpents, are the subterranean fire and the fierce storms which agitate earth and sea, and the wild desires and passions which disturb the breast of man and undermine his life, and gnaw continually until the tree is destroyed. The beautiful fountain with the golden seats, near the second root, to the right, is the south portion of the world. The three maidens are the three Fates who spin the thread of life. The two swans of light are the sun and moon, and around shine the princes of heaven with their crowns.

“ The root on the left is the north portion of the earth; there stand the lofty icebergs, there rises the sea, and there lies the great horn from which, at the last day, when the six winters of the world have passed away, the summons to the last judgment will be sounded. Its call will summon all, from the highest heaven above to the deepest abyss below; the leaves of the tree will tremble with fear, and its boughs will shake, and the earth will be convulsed and the sea will roar. Then all ties will be loosened and torn asunder; the serpent of the world will rise with giant fury out of the water; the wolf will spring howling from the abyss, and open wide its jaws at heaven; the dwarfs will fight at the gates of rock; fires will rage around the tree

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of the world ; the sun and moon will be swallowed up by the wolves of darkness, and the stars will fall from the sky. The day will be turned into night, and Loki will appear with all his evil spirits from hell, and the heroes will contend with him in the last great contest of the world. The Deity, who first created all things and sent light into the world, will consume the corrupted earth with his purifying fire. When however the last battle has been fought, when the dying heroes shall have conquered the powers of darkness, and the flames have consumed the world, then a new morning will dawn in the heavens. A new and more happy earth will arise, the seeds will grow up of themselves, and sparkling waterfalls will gush forth over the smiling verdure of the meadows. Then the good will receive their reward, and will again become possessed of the brazen tablets of eternal wisdom, which they lost in the beginning of time. But the bad, the perjurers, murderers, and deceivers, will wade in streams of poison on the strand of corpses in the hall of serpents, and the old Dragon with his brood will fall into the abyss."

THIRTEENTH ADVENTURE.

How Siegfried first sees the King's Daughter and is received by her.

THUS speaking, they entered a lofty chamber by an iron door. Around, on the walls, hung in double rows helmets and shields; and between them, in wild disorder, splendid garments embroidered with gold, drinking-horns ornamented with silver, and filken banners. But all looked desolate and waste, the garments were stained with blood, the helmets and shields were rusted, over the drinking-horns large spiders had woven their nets, and the filken banners were yellow with smoke. By the general disorder it might easily be seen that it was all the produce of pillage. But the most fearful objects that met the eye in this robber's den of the Dragon were black iron pillars which ran through the hall: around them were fastened horns of the deer and the urochs, and on every point of these horns was stuck a naked skull. Siegfried, sword in hand, glanced around the apartment, but neither the Dragon nor the maiden were to be seen. It now appeared as if his ear caught the sounds of music not far from him; he went in the direction in which it came, and looked through a high vaulted gallery on

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the distant landscape ; at the end of this passage he saw a maiden seated on a rock with a harp in her hand. She looked down into the wooded valleys, and sang and played, whilst a falcon sat upon her harp, as if listening to her. Siegfried stood still with his companions and hearkened as she sang thus :—

My father sat within his hall
 And drank the red and cooling wine,
He drank from out a cup of gold
 At Worms, upon the dark green Rhine.

My mother held the filken threads
 Within her hand so lily white,
And worked upon the cloth of gold
 The deeds of hero and of knight.

My brothers threw the dice in sport,
 For swords and arms enrich'd with gold,
The while I sat within and sang
 The deeds of knight or hero bold.

But swift descending from above
 A Dragon fierce was seen to glide ;
He twined his folds around my form
 And said, " Come hence and be my bride !"

My father dropped his cup of gold,
 My mother wrang her hand so white,
My brothers drew their swords in vain,
 The Dragon bore me from their fight.

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And long may I here sit and sing
My lay upon the Drachenstein,
My song will never reach, dear friends,
To you upon the dark green Rhine.

And long may I lament in vain!
Yon valley lies so far, so deep,
I never can my woes explain,
O would I in the grave could sleep!

The singer here ceased, interrupted by her tears, but she quickly and more vigorously seized the strings and renewed her song:—

Yet say, art thou a captive
For ever doomed to be?
What hinders thee to venture—
To venture to be free?

One effort still may save thee,
Then why delay so long?
Are fear and fright such fetters?
Is the dread of death so strong?

Oh no, the father's spirit
Still liveth in the heart,
It shrinketh not from danger,
Nor dreads from life to part.

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Oh then found my harp-strings
 And echo my lay,
Ye both shall attend
 On my dangerous way.
For hence I would flee
And find myself free.

Then take me, ye breezes,
 And raise me above,
And waft me away
 To the region I love,
Where spring's soft bowers
Are filled with flowers.

Nor leave me to wander,
 Uncertain my flight,
But grant me the blessing,
 The blessing of light!
Hence, hence let me flee,
From Dragon's haunt free.

When she had ended her song, she turned to the abyss; but at this moment Siegfried sprang towards her and held her back. "Stay, thou noble daughter of a king!" he cried, "here stands Siegfried, the son of King Siegmund, who will die or plunge the Dragon into this abyss. Cease therefore from weeping; thy sorrow shall be changed to joy, and the Dragon shall crouch in the dust before thee, and shall atone for thy tears with his heart's blood."

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“ Thanks, valiant hero, for thy aid ; but haste away from hence ! thou canst not save me, but wilt only perish here, and thus increase my grief.”

“ No,” replied Siegfried, “ here will I fight for thee ; for otherwise shame would strike me to the heart, which is sharper than iron itself. When a child I made a vow never to turn my back upon fire or sword.”

“ Thou knowest not what thy tongue utters,” answered the maiden ; “ ’tis madness to contend with that horrid creature. Wilt thou place thyself on the very spot where the lightning strikes ? No sword can pierce his scales, and steel itself melts before his flaming breath. Return, and bear to my parents and brothers my last farewell !”

“ Nay, lady ; unworthy were I to be called the son of King Siegmund, nor could I ever dare to look my noble ancestors in the face and fight as they did the great battle of the world, were I to flee like a coward. Never has fear stained the honour of our race ; and when once my sword gleams in my hand, victory or death can alone return it to its scabbard !”

“ Alas,” interrupted the Dwarf, “ thy sword can little help thee ! One sword alone—Balmung, the sword of the Nibelungen, with which Fafner slew his father—has the power of giving the Dragon his death-wound. For this reason he keeps it concealed, and if the maiden cannot reveal to us this secret, all conflict is vain.” The King’s daughter said that she had never heard of this sword. “ Then much I fear,” said the

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Dwarf gloomily, “ that our death is not far distant ; for never wilt thou slay the Dragon with the sword thou bearest, and of this I will give thee a proof.”

Thereupon he sprang suddenly into the hall, and returned with a large and ancient shield, which he could only just drag after him. “ As vainly may your sword attempt to cut the dragon’s skin that is stretched over this shield, as to wound the Dragon himself.”

Then Siegfried swung his sword above his head with both hands and dealt so powerful a blow that it resounded through all the halls of the hollow mountain ; but the shield remained uninjured, and the sword broke off at the handle. At the sight of this, all were lost in amazement : the Dwarf wrung his hands, and the maiden entreated Siegfried to fly. But the hero was still undaunted, he yielded not a step, and said, “ To the brave man courage is more than a good sword, and my courage at least is yet unbroken ; my arms are still strong, and with them I will slay the Dragon ; for to the just, Heaven will give strength and victory !”

“ As thou art a bold hero,” said the Giant, who had hitherto kept silence, “ and thy magnanimity has granted me my life, thou shalt now reap the fruit of my services in return. I once slept near the Dragon, he had just had a hard battle, and threw himself down to sleep, when, in a dream, he exclaimed, ‘ Ho, ho ! they cannot kill me yet,—for they know not that the sword lies hid in yon corner ?’ I fought for the sword in that corner,

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and found it; only lift yon stone and you will see a ring, beneath which it lies.”

Siegfried, overjoyed, hastened to the spot, removed the stone, raised the ring with both his hands, and beneath it, like a bright flame, lay the glittering Dragon's sword. He stooped to lift it up, but the faithless Giant took his dagger and aimed a blow at Siegfried's neck, at the spot where the linden-leaf had fallen. But just as he was succeeding in inflicting the wound, Euglein struck the Giant with his ring so violently on the knee, that he staggered, and the edge of the dagger glided off. But the Giant now seized the hero, and clasping him with both arms from behind, dragged him to the abyss, in spite of the furious attacks of the dogs.

The King's daughter fell weeping on her knees, wrung her hands, and prayed to Heaven, while the Giant laughed aloud, as if certain of victory. Siegfried however twined his arms around the body of the false monster, and pressed so strongly into his wounds, that all his strength passed away, and the Giant lost both sight and hearing. His black blood flowed in broad streams; he roared and cursed himself and the hero, on whom he still kept a firm hold with his last strength to pull him into the abyss with himself. But it was all in vain: Siegfried loosened himself from his grasp, and at length pushed him into the chasm. With a hollow sound he fell into the mighty depth below, and as he fell he broke asunder an enormous oak, which covered his corpse.

LAST ADVENTURE.

Siegfried's Fight with the Dragon.

IEGFRIED was now desirous to try the sharpness of his sword, and it glided through the Dragon's shield like water and went deep into the rock. All were full of joy when they saw this; but the wife Dwarf alone looked grave and said, "Thou hast a harder battle still to fight, and thou requirest meat and drink to refresh thee for it." Then he blew his little silver horn, and at its shrill sound there came forth from the crevices of the rocks Dwarfs, white and grey. Then they spread a carpet and brought meat and drink of all kinds, and Siegfried sat down and ate, and the maiden offered him a golden drinking-horn, saying, "Hail to the hero of the Netherlands! hail to the bold son of Siegmund! hail to the fighter with the Dragon, Siegfried!" The hero drained the cup and said, "Truly never did I feel so inspired with courage, and never longed for the chase of the boar in my father's forests as I now do for the contest with this hideous Dragon, the keeper of the treasure of the Nibelungen. If my forefathers stood here in a circle, as they stand around the walls of our halls at home, they would indeed rejoice in the contest, for the sound of my sword shall re-echo far around, and

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gladden the heart of many a hero. Come what may, I dread none on earth, and I stand here on this stone, armed and prepared with this uplifted sword to meet the fight."

As he spoke thus a roaring sound was heard, which vibrated nearer and nearer, as if the mountain were shaken and falling into ruins. Thereupon the maiden was struck with great terror; but the eyes of Siegfried glanced like two flaming swords, and he bade her be of good cheer, saying, "The Author of Light gave us life, and how shall the Dragon of darkness take it away? my sharp and gleaming sword shall dazzle him so that he shall not be able to distinguish the day from the night."

As the evening twilight arose, the Dragon came slowly onwards, hovering like a dark storm-cloud. Siegfried advanced and met him on the edge of the rock. Near him stood his two faithful dogs. The maiden drew back, and the Dwarf put on his cap of mist and crept into a crevice of the rock. Three times did the Dragon fly searching around the stone, for as yet he had not seen the hero. But just as he was about to lie down he perceived Siegfried, and sending forth furiously blue flames, he lashed the earth with his tail. In a moment the hero's shield was covered with blue flame, and became glowing hot; his dogs were about to fly at the monster, but they fell dead to the earth at his first breath. The poisonous flames darted more and more fearfully on Siegfried; and to cool himself he was forced to withdraw into the vaulted gallery of

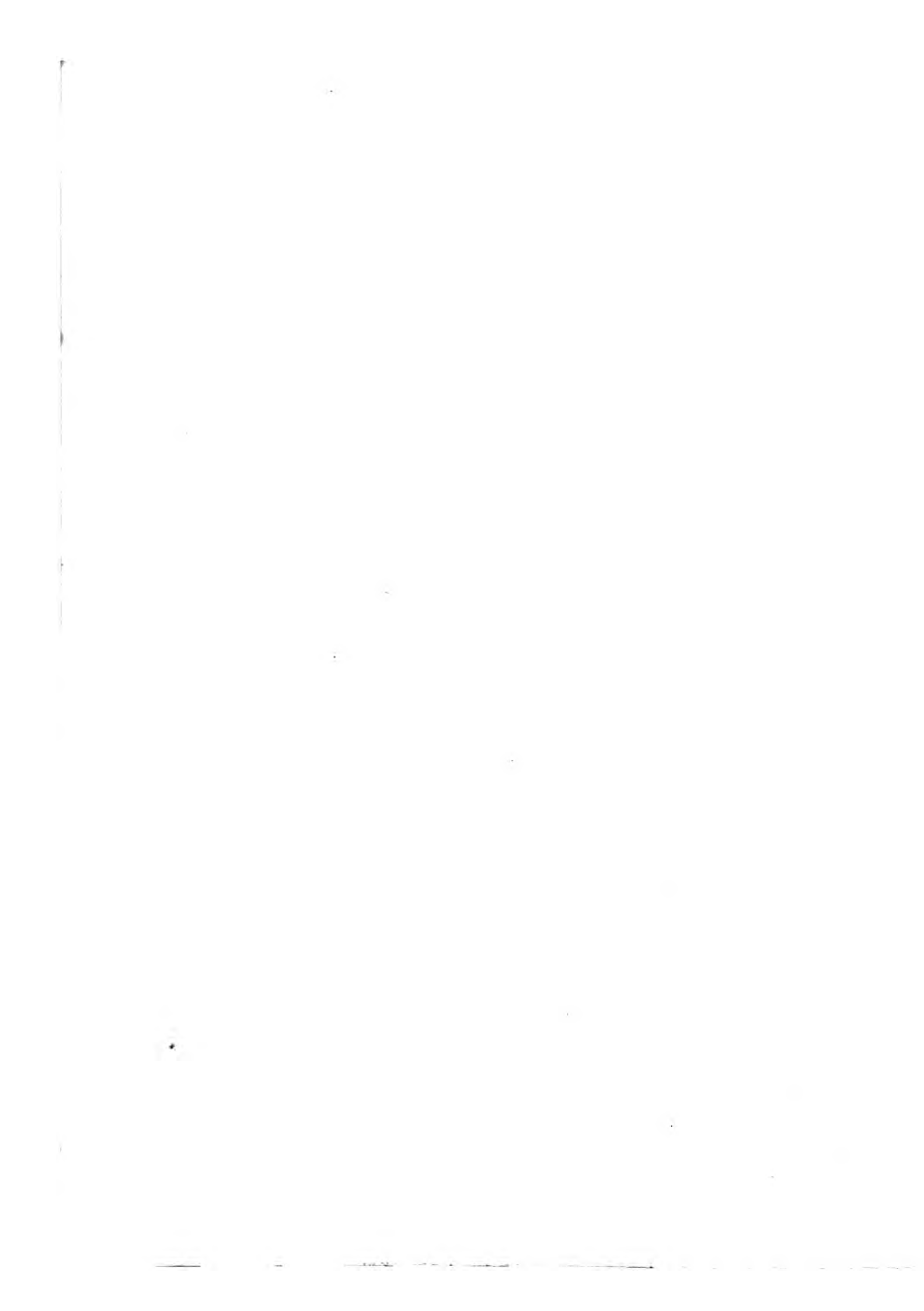
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the mountain. Thither the Dragon could not follow him, for the passage was too narrow; so he remained spouting forth fire at the entrance, and knew not how to get in; nor did Siegfried know how he should reach the Dragon with his good sword. In this difficulty he looked around and saw lying near him a huge stone, which ten men could not have lifted. Remembering his great ancestors, he seized it, and threw it in the gaping throat of the pestiferous monster; and now the flames being quenched, he darted with sword and shield upon the Dragon, and dealt him blow after blow upon the head.

But the blows of Siegfried's sword at first produced no effect, the scales were hard as diamonds, and the sword flew back. On a sudden, as he was striking with all his might, he heard a plaintive tone, which seemed like the voice of the Dwarf, as if calling for help from the Dragon's jaws. And so it was; for the Dwarf had seated himself, under his invisible cap of mist, upon the stone which Siegfried had thrown into the Dragon's mouth, and he now called out in terror lest Siegfried should kill him.

When the Dragon heard the cry of the invisible Dwarf he turned round; but at that moment Siegfried dealt him a heavy blow on his neck, at the point where the scales were a little parted. The sword struck into the neck, and the pent-up flames burst through the wound at the side, so that Siegfried was now safe from them. The little Dwarf crept quickly out of the wound. The Dragon raved still more with the





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pain; he fell on Siegfried, snatched his shield, and snapping it like a lath he flew at the hero's head. But Siegfried too was now fired with rage, and grasping his sword firmly struck off the monster's right claw. Thereupon the Dragon roared with fury, swung his tail around, and strove to entwine the hero in its folds. But Siegfried at a bound leaped high above the tail, and now ran with such force against the monster that he threw him backward on the ground; then seizing his sword with both hands, with the first blow he drove it two spans deep into his breast, at the second he cut his heart through and through, so that the sword sank deep into the stone; and as he was about to give a third blow, he himself fell senseless beside the monster, which in the death-struggle was consumed in its own fire.

Such was the great fight with the black, poisonous Dragon, who guarded the treasure of the ancient curse, by which the hero of the Low Countries acquired fame and glory above that of all his fathers. The deeds he wrought with his sharp sword at the Drachenstein have resounded for centuries from north to south in many an heroic lay by the ancient minstrels; nor can the name of Siegfried the Dragon-slayer ever pass away as long as German song is sung.

Pale as death lay the exhausted hero for a long time; then he fetched a deep breath, and slowly opened his eyes. But how great was his sorrow when he saw lying near him the King's daughter, pale and motionless as a corpse. He sprang

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up, took her in his arms, called on her by name ; but she awoke not, nor gave any signs of life. The hero began to lament aloud his misfortune, when at length Euglein the Dwarf came stealing by. He looked about on all sides, and was overjoyed when he saw that Siegfried had slain the Dragon. He immediately went to the virgin, took a root from his girdle, and with its scent awoke her to new life. The joy of Siegfried was only equalled by that of the beautiful daughter of the Rhine King ; and Euglein too was so delighted at their deliverance from the Dragon, that he begged the hero to claim from him whatever he liked, gold or diamonds, costly ornaments or weapons, for all were at his command. Siegfried thanked him for his offer, but said that his deliverance of the maiden was reward enough for him ; if however he desired to do him a favour, he would ask him, who was so well informed of the future, to tell him his destiny. The Dwarf immediately placed his bright gleaming shield on a table of stone, and held a handful of dry grass to the sun, which forthwith burst into a flame : then he strewed a precious perfume over the shield. A singular odour diffused itself around, but the Dwarf inhaled the vapour, his eyes closed, and turning a costly ring on his finger, began, as if in a deep slumber, to pronounce the following invocation :—

“ As the falcon in its motion
Flies in circles round and round,

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Seeking both o'er land and ocean
Where its prey may best be found ;

“ So the venerable sage,
Turning still his magic ring,
Sees through many a coming age
Many a dim and distant thing.”

On this he ceased awhile, then pointed with his finger to the south, then to the right and left, as if forms surrounded him on every side, and then announced the marriage of Siegfried with Kriemhilda thus :

“ Rosy gardens on the Rhine,
Meadows full of bright sunshine,
Through which wander streamlets fair,
Stags and roebucks pair and pair,
Foliage, with the feather'd throng
Warbling wild the woods among ;
While a silken thread incloses
All this fairy bow'r of roses.
Many a knight, with martial tramp,
Watches round that forest camp ;
From the branches, from the trees
Pennons wanton in the breeze.
Round the throne so fair to see,
All of gold and ivory.

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“ Ladies look on scenes so fair,
Brave knights look on ladies there ;
One his proud compeers outvies,
Like the sun in yonder skies ;
Like the moon in modest pride,
One sweet maiden is his bride ;
For to her that hero-youth
Gives a ring in pledge of truth.
All the maidens softly sigh,
All the youthful heroes cry,
Hail to Siegfried and his prize,
This, O this, is Paradise !

“ But an evil dame is nigh,
Malice in her heart and eye,
And she brings that bride so fair
Three young rosebuds sweet and rare,
Take the purest of the three,
Take, she cries, 'tis meant for thee !
But beware, sweet bride, beware,
For a thorn is lurking there ;
See, it wounds thy finger fair.
Bride, why stops thy sobbing breath ?
Bride, why art thou pale as death ?”

The Dwarf was silent for awhile, and then turning towards the west began to sing thus of Siegfried's death :

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“ Hunter’s horn and hunter’s song,
Wolves and bears together throng,
Through the wild wood runs the boar,
Hounds that follow bark and roar.

“ Foxes creep in corners fly,
Birds are twitt’ring in the sky,
Two white does in flight are seen,
And a stag in clover green.

“ Hark! a sound of hunter’s horn,
By the breezes hither borne,
Through the deep wood’s dark defiles,
Where the sunbeam never smiles.

“ Hark! three dismal ravens croak
On a dry and wither’d oak,
And their dark foreboding song
Tells a tale of death and wrong.

“ And the streamlet’s gentle flood
Flows with warm and vital blood:
Stretch’d upon the flowery heath,
See, a hero sleeps in death!

“ Howling wild his faithful hound
Licks in vain his deadly wound;
While his falcon from his breast
Drives the ravens to their nest.

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“ See, his stainless sword and shield
Lie unused upon the field ;
He hath never seen his foe,
Treach’ry laid the hero low.

“ In his halls two women fair
Sit in fierce defiance there,
Frowning darkly each at each,
Deigning not a word of speech.

“ Hastening from the neighb’ring wood
Come two knights, all stain’d with blood :
Of the women, one is glad,
But the other pale and sad.

“ One has drain’d a cup of gold,
Sinks the other pale and cold :
One the thought of rage inspires,
But revenge the other fires !”

Finally the Dwarf turned towards the north and sang with
a hollow voice the revenge of Chriemhilda :

“ Heroes feast within a palace,
Guests all wear the festive wreath ;
But their mirth is changed to malice,
And their dance to a dance of death.

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“ Shrieks of horror, shrieks of anger,
Tell the fury of their strife;
Answering fierce the trumpet's clangour,
Stern demanding life for life.

“ Sword and shield in strife are meeting,
Steel and iron sternly strive,
And of guests that late were greeting,
Few shall quit the spot alive.

“ In that hall of strife and treason
Many a bravest knight must yield;
Like the sheaves in harvest season
Corfes strew that fatal field.

“ But in death their hate is banish'd,
Foemen fall beside their foe,
And their hatred hath but vanish'd
Now that death hath laid them low.

“ Wand'ring where the dead are lying,
Say, what mystic form appears
Mid the wounded and the dying,—
'Tis a woman bathed in tears.

“ Fire has seized the hall around her,
While its vapours choke her breath,
She exclaims, while flames surround her,
We have died for Siegfried's death!”

116 *Siegfried the Dragon-slayer.*

Thus sang the Dwarf of the fate of future days. Siegfried and the maiden were deeply affected by the serious tone of his song. Although they had not understood all that he said, yet they perceived that bleeding forms looked through the mist that surrounded the whole, and that these were lighted rather by fierce and fatal lightning than by the gentle rays of sunshine and peace. When the Dwarf had ended, he took his leave, saying that he must descend deep into the mountain, whither his Dwarfs had fled, anxious for the result of the contest: for he would bring them the glad intelligence of victory. Then he bade the hero farewell, and promised, if he should require his aid, to assist him with all his power and all his wealth; adding, that he would find two horses ready for mounting at the mouth of the cave. Siegfried thanked him, and the Dwarf disappeared in a crevice of the rock.

The hero and the King's daughter rested for awhile on the summit of the Drachenstein, and looked at the far distance, over the lofty wooded tops of the mountains, over the green plains and vales, the barren heaths and silver streams. Then they examined everything in the cave, and came to the Dragon's couch, which he had made of the skins of lions. Siegfried lifted up the skins, and a dazzling light burst upon his sight, and the treasure and the ring lay before him. But he forgot the warning voice of the Dwarf, concerning the ancient curse which lay on the gold of the Nibelungen: he took the treasure of discord and envy, and hence at a later period the words of

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Euglein came to be fulfilled, and he and his whole race were annihilated by fire and sword, like those who had possessed it before. The treasure however was cast into the Rhine, where it may rest until a holy hand shall find it, over which the curse has no power.

Here, however, ends this tradition: and its sequel has been said and sung in other songs and legends, in which, reader, thou mayest hear how Siegfried celebrated in the Rose-garden of Worms his marriage with Chriemhilda, how he gloriously contended in seven conflicts, winning heroic fame, and how he was slain in the forest by the cruel Hagen at the instigation of Brunhilda, but was fatally avenged by Chriemhilda on the Giants, their brothers and relations.

But the good town of Worms, where Siegfried celebrated his marriage and where he was treacherously slain, honoured his memory by a praiseworthy custom for centuries after, out of gratitude for its deliverance from the cruel Dragon. When a minstrel sang his deeds publicly before all the people in such a manner that the judges appointed could find no fault, a piece of gold was awarded him by the council of the city. In our poor times this ancient custom no longer exists; but in former days, the city caused the figures of Siegfried and the ancient race of kings to be painted in different places, at the council-house, at the Mainz-gate, at the new tower, and at the mint, where the bones of the Dragon hung in chains of iron. Siegfried's spear was preserved, and the Rose-garden is still shown;

118 Siegfried *the Dragon-slayer*.

and when, in 1488, the Emperor Frederick the Third was at Worms, he ordered the bones of the hero to be sought for in the churchyard, but nothing was discovered. Certain it is however, that up to the present day the armorial bearing of Worms is the Giant's key which locked up the stone, and the supporter the fiery Dragon whom Siegfried slew, and that his memory lives in the songs of many a minstrel and in the hearts of the people.



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