



SIEGFRIED AND THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

RICHARD WAGNER

Global Grey ebooks

**RICHARD WAGNER'S
THE RING OF THE NIBLUNG
SIEGFRIED & THE
TWILIGHT OF THE GODS**
TRANSLATED BY MARGARET ARMOUR
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR RACKHAM

1910

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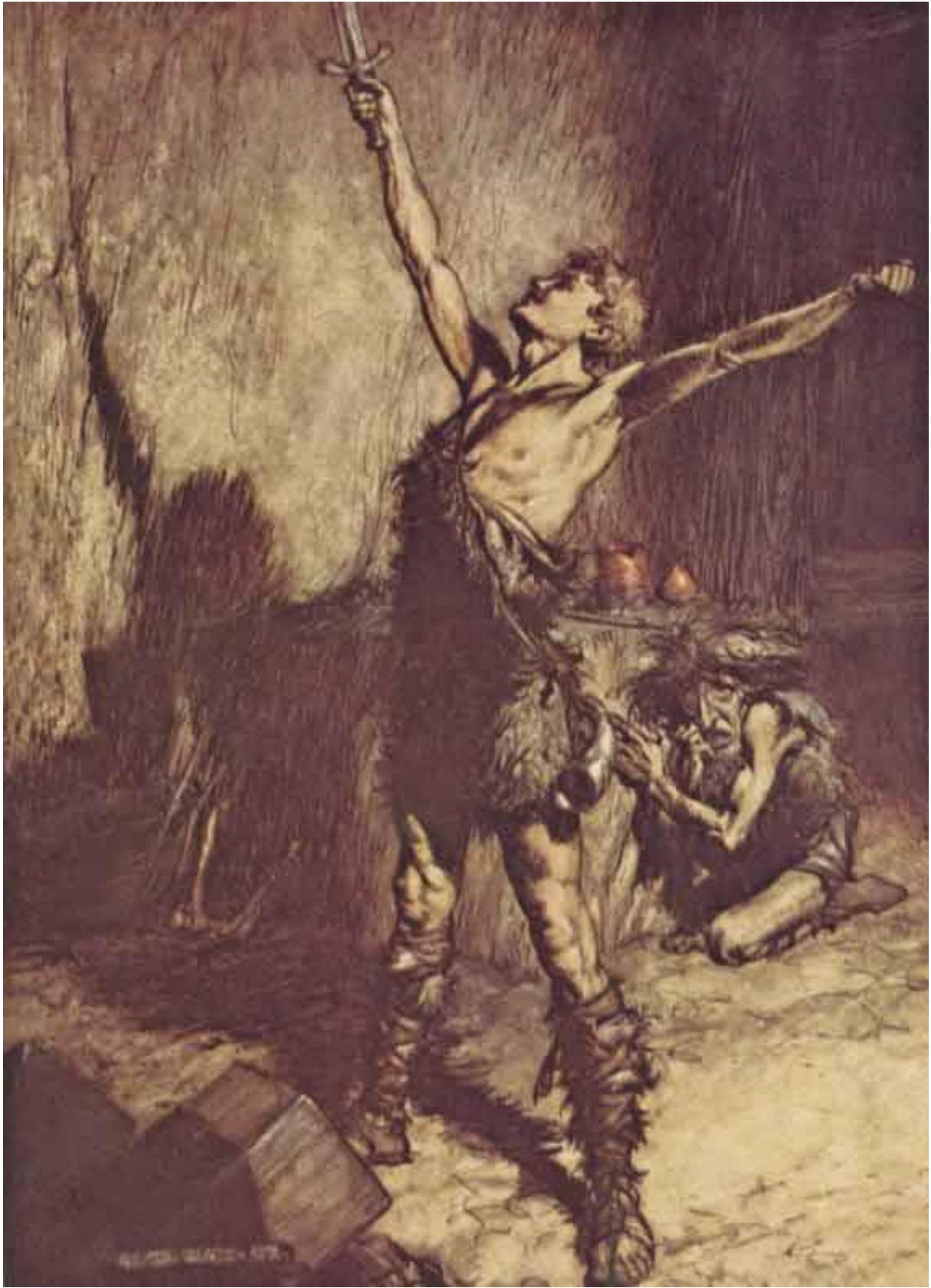
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THE FIRST ACT

[A rocky cavern in a wood, in which stands a naturally formed smith's forge, with big bellows. Mime sits in front of the anvil, busily hammering at a sword.]

Mime

[Who has been hammering with a small hammer, stops working.]

Slavery! worry!
Labour all lost!
The strongest sword
That ever I forged,
That the hands of giants
Fitly might wield,
This insolent urchin
For whom it is fashioned
Can snap in two at one stroke,
As if the thing were a toy!

[Mime throws the sword on the anvil ill-humouredly, and with his arms akimbo gazes thoughtfully on the ground.]

There is one sword
That he could not shatter
Nothung's splinters
Would baffle his strength,
Could I but forge
Those doughty fragments
That all my skill
Cannot weld anew.
Could I but forge the weapon,
Shame and toil would win their reward!

[He sinks further back, his head bowed in thought.]

Fafner, the dragon grim,
 Dwells in the gloomy wood;
 With his gruesome and grisly bulk
 The Nibelung hoard
 Yonder he guards.
 Siegfried, lusty and young,
 Would slay him without ado;
 The Nibelung's ring
 Would then become mine.
 The only sword for the deed
 Were Nothung, if it were swung
 By Siegfried's conquering arm
 And I cannot fashion
 Nothung, the sword!

*[He lays the sword in position again, and goes on hammering in deep
 dejection.]*

Slavery! worry!
 Labour all lost!
 The strongest sword
 That ever I forged
 Will never serve
 For that difficult deed.
 I beat and I hammer
 Only to humour the boy;
 He snaps in two what I make,
 And scolds if I cease from work.

[He drops his hammer.]

Siegfried

*[In rough forester's dress, with a silver horn hung by a chain, bursts in
 boisterously from the wood. He is leading a big bear by a rope of bast, and
 urges him towards Mime in wanton fun.]*

Hoiho! Hoiho!

[*Entering.*]

Come on Come on!
Tear him! Tear him!
The silly smith!

[Mime drops the sword in terror, and takes refuge behind the forge; while Siegfried, shouting with laughter, keeps driving the bear after him.]

Mime

Hence with the beast!
I want not the bear!

Siegfried

I come thus paired
The better to pinch thee
Bruin, ask for the sword!

Mime

Hey! Let him go!
There lies the weapon;
It was finished to-day.

Siegfried

Then thou art safe for to-day!



Mime at the anvil

[He lets the bear loose and strikes him on the back with the rope.]

Off, Bruin!

I need thee no more.

[The bear runs back into the wood.]

Mime

[Comes trembling from behind the forge.]

Slay all the bears

Thou canst, and welcome

But why thus bring the beasts

Home alive?

Siegfried

[Sits down to recover from his laughter.]

For better companions seeking

Than the one who sits at home,

I blew my horn in the wood,

Till the forest glades resounded.

What I asked with the note

Was if some good friend

My glad companion would be.

From the covert came a bear

Who listened to me with growls,

And I liked him better than thee,

Though better friends I shall find.

With a trusty rope

I bridled the beast,

To ask thee, rogue, for the weapon.

[He jumps up and goes towards the anvil.]

Mime

[Takes up the sword to hand it to Siegfried.]

I made the sword keen-edged;
In its sharpness thou wilt rejoice.

[He holds the sword anxiously in his hand; Siegfried snatches it from him.]

Siegfried

What matters an edge keen sharpened,
Unless hard and true the steel?

[Testing the sword.]

Hei! What an idle,
Foolish toy!
Wouldst have this pin
Pass for a sword?

[He strikes it on the anvil, so that the splinters fly about. Mime shrinks back in terror.]

There, take back the pieces,
Pitiful bungler!
'Tis on thy skull
It should have been broken!
Shall such a braggart
Still go on boasting,
Telling of giants
And prowess in battle,
Of deeds of valour,
And dauntless defence?--
A sword true and trusty
Try to forge me,
Praising the skill
He does not possess?
When I take hold
Of what he has hammered,
The rubbish crumbles



Mime and the infant Siegfried

At a mere touch!
 Were not the wretch
 Too mean for my wrath,
 I would break him in bits
 As well as his work--

The dotting fool of a gnome!
 And end the annoyance at once!

[Siegfried throws himself on to a stone seat in a rage. Mime all the time has been cautiously keeping out of his way.]

Mime

Again thou ravest like mad,
 Ungrateful and perverse.
 If what for him I forge
 Is not perfect on the spot,
 Too soon the boy forgets
 The good things I have made!
 Wilt never learn the lesson
 Of gratitude, I wonder?
 Thou shouldst be glad to obey him
 Who always treated thee well.

[Siegfried turns his back on Mime in a bad temper, and sits with his face to the wall.]

Thou dost not like to be told that!

[He stands perplexed, then goes to the hearth in the kitchen.]

But thou wouldst fain be fed.
 Wilt eat the meat I have roasted,
 Or wouldst thou prefer the broth?
 'Twas boiled solely for thee.

[He brings food to Siegfried, who, without turning round, knocks both bowl and meat out of his hand.]

Siegfried

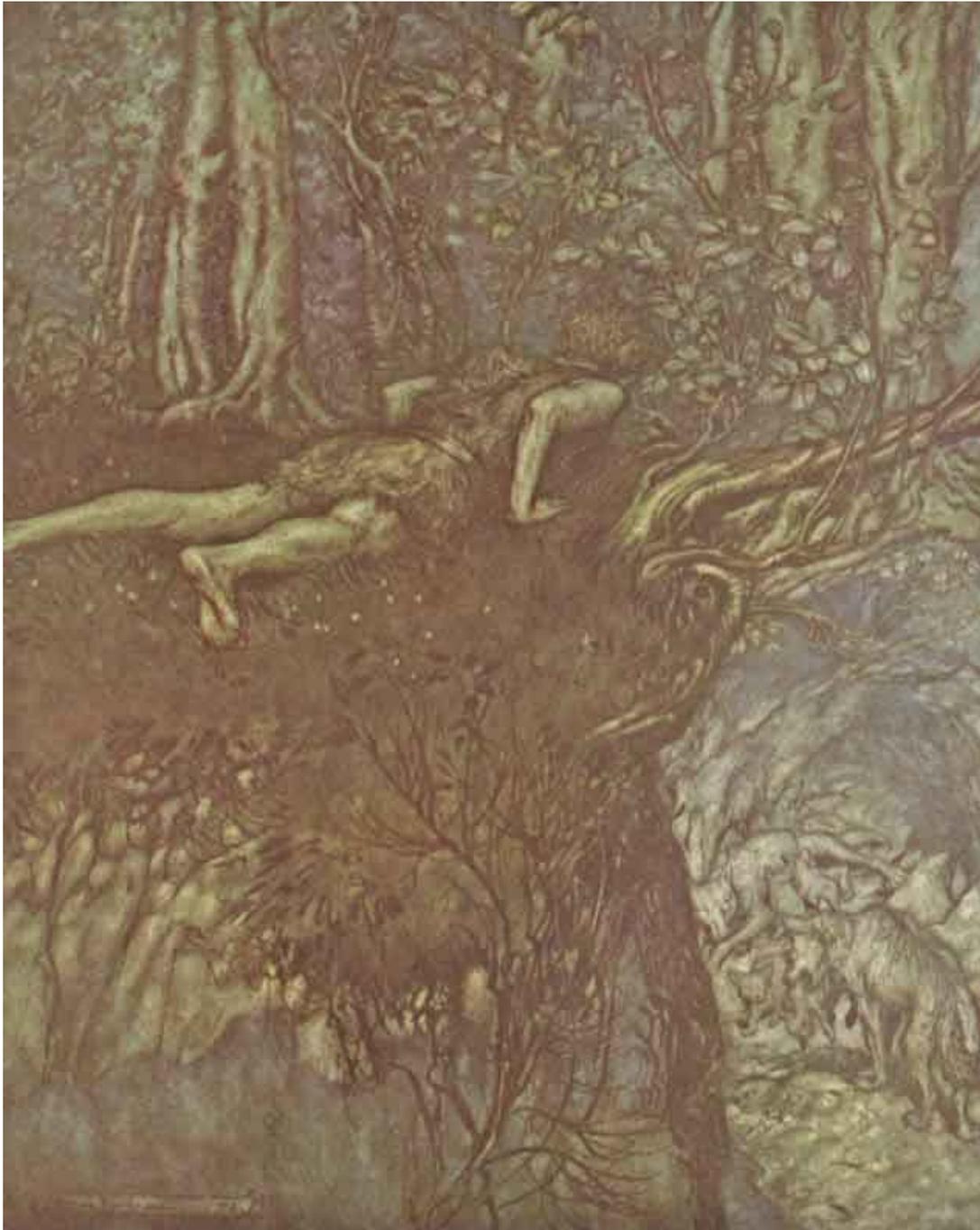
Meat I roast for myself
Sup thy filthy broth alone!

Mime

[In a wailing voice, as if hurt.]

This is the reward
Of all my love!
All my care
Is paid for with scorn.

When thou wert a babe
I was thy nurse,
Made the mite clothing
To keep him warm,
Brought thee thy food,
Gave thee to drink,
Kept thee as safe
As I keep my skin
And when thou wert grown
I waited on thee,
And made a bed
For thy slumber soft.
I fashioned thee toys
And a sounding horn,
Grudging no pains,
Wert thou but pleased.
With counsel wise
I guided thee well,
With mellow wisdom
Training thy mind.
Sitting at home,



"And there I learned, What love was like"

I toil and moil;
To heart's desire
Wander thy feet.
Through thee alone worried,
And working for thee,

I wear myself out,
A poor old dwarf!

[Sobbing.]

And for my trouble
The sole reward is
By a hot-tempered boy

[Sobbing.]

To be hated and plagued!

Siegfried

[Has turned round again and has quietly watched Mime's face, while the latter, meeting the look tries timidly to hide his own.]

Thou hast taught me much, Mime,
And many things I have learned;
But what thou most gladly hadst taught me
A lesson too hard has proved--
How to endure thy sight.
When with my food
Or drink thou dost come,
I sup off loathing alone;
When thou dost softly
Make me a bed,
My sleep is broken and bad;
When thou wouldst teach me
How to be wise,
Fain were I deaf and dumb.
If my eyes happen,
To fall on thee,
I find all thou doest
Amiss and ill-done;
When thou dost stand,
Waddle and walk,
Shamble and shuffle,

With thine eyelids blinking,
 By the neck I want
 To take the nodder,
 And choke the life
 From the hateful twitcher.
 So much, O Mime, I love thee!
 Hast thou such wisdom,
 Explain, I pray thee,
 A thing I have wondered at
 Though I go roaming
 just to avoid thee,
 Why do I always return?
 Though I love the beasts
 All better than thee--

Tree and bird
 And the fish in the brook,
 One and all
 They are dearer than thou--
 How is it I always return?
 Of thy wisdom tell me that.

Mime

[Tries to approach him affectionately.]

My child, that ought to show thee
 That Mime is dear to thy heart.

Siegfried

I said I could not bear thee
 Forget not that so soon.

Mime

[Recoils, and sits down again apart, opposite Siegfried.]

The wildness that thou shouldst tame
 Is the cause, bad boy, of that.

Young ones are always longing
 After their parents' nest;
 What we love we all long for,
 And so thou dost yearn for me
 'Tis plain thou lovest thy Mime,
 And always must love him.
 What the old bird is to the young one,
 Feeding it in its nest
 Ere the fledgling can flutter,
 That is what careful, clever Mime
 To thy young life is,
 And always must be.

Siegfried

Well, Mime, being so clever,
 This one thing more also tell me

[*Simply.*]

The birds sang together
 So gaily in spring,

[*Tenderly.*]

The one alluring the other
 And thou didst say,
 When I asked thee why,
 That they were wives with their husbands.

They chattered so sweetly,
 Were never apart;
 They builded a nest
 In which they might brood;
 The fluttering young ones
 Came flying out,
 And both took care of the young.
 The roes in the woods, too,
 Rested in pairs,

The wild wolves even, and foxes.
 Food was found and brought
 By the father,
 The mother suckled the young ones.
 And there I learned
 What love was like;
 A whelp from its mother
 I never took.
 But where hast thou, Mime,
 A wife dear and loving,
 That I may call her mother?

Mime

[*Angrily.*]

What dost thou mean?
 Fool, thou art mad!
 Art thou then a bird or a fox?

Siegfried

When I was a babe
 Thou wert my nurse,
 Made the mite clothing
 To keep him warm;
 But tell me, whence
 Did the tiny mite come?
 Could babe without mother
 Be born to thee?

Mime

[*Greatly embarrassed.*]

Thou must always
 Trust what I tell thee.
 I am thy father
 And mother in one.

Siegfried

Thou liest, filthy old fright!
 The resemblance 'twixt child and parent
 I often have seen for myself.
 I came to the limpid brook,
 And the beasts and the trees
 I saw reflected;
 Sun and clouds too,
 just as they are,
 Were mirrored quite plain in the stream.
 I also could spy
 This face of mine,
 And quite unlike thine
 Seemed it to me;
 As little alike
 As a fish to a toad:
 And when had fish toad for its father?

Mime

[*Very angrily.*]

How canst thou talk
 Such terrible stuff?

Siegfried

[*With increasing animation.*]

Listen! At last
 I understand
 What in vain I pondered so long:
 Why I roam the woods
 And run to escape thee,
 Yet return home in the end.

[*He springs up.*]



Siegfried sees himself in the stream

I cannot go till thou tell me
What father and mother were mine.

Mime

What father? What mother?
Meaningless questions!

Siegfried

[Springs upon Mime, and seizes him by the throat.]

To answer a question
Thou must be caught first;
Willingly
Thou never wilt speak;

Thou givest nothing
Unless forced to.
How to talk
I hardly had learned
Had it not by force
Been wrung from the wretch.
Come, out with it,
Mangy old scamp!
Who are my father and mother?

Mime

[After making signs with his head and hands, is released by Siegfried.]

Dost want to kill me outright!
Hands off, and the facts thou shalt bear,
As far as known to myself.
O ungrateful
And graceless child,
Now learn the cause of thy hatred!

Neither thy father
Nor kinsman I,
And yet thou dost owe me thy life!
To me, thy one friend,
A stranger wert thou;
It was pity alone
Sheltered thee here;
And this is all my reward.
And I hoped for thanks like a fool!



Mime finds the mother of Siegfried in the forest

A woman once I found
 Who wept in the forest wild;
 I helped her here to the cave,
 That by the fire I might warm her.
 The woman bore a child here;
 Sadly she gave it birth.
 She writhed about in pain;
 I helped her as I could.
 Bitter her plight; she died.
 But Siegfried lived and throve.

Siegfried

[*Slowly.*]

My poor mother died, then, through me?

Mime

To my care she commended thee;
 'Twas willingly bestowed.
 The trouble Mime would take!
 The worry kind Mime endured!
 "When thou wert a babe
 I was thy nurse " . . .

Siegfried

That story I often have heard.
 Now say, whence came the name
 Siegfried?

Mime

'Twas thus that thy mother
 Told me to name thee,
 That thou mightst grow
 To be strong and fair.
 "I made the mite clothing
 To keep it warm " . . .

Siegfried

Now tell me, what name was my mother's?

Mime

In truth I hardly know.
 "Brought thee thy food,
 Gave thee to drink " . . .

Siegfried

My mother's name thou must tell me.

Mime

Her name I forget. Yet wait!
 Sieglinde, that was the name borne

By her who gave thee to me.
 "I kept thee as safe
 As I keep my skin" . . .

Siegfried

[*With increasing urgency.*]

Next tell me, who was my father?

Mime

[*Roughly.*]

Him I have never seen.

Siegfried

But my mother told it thee, surely.

Mime

He fell in combat
 Was all that she said.
 She left the fatherless
 Babe to my care.
 "And when thou wert grown
 I waited on thee,
 And made a bed
 For thy slumber soft" . . .

Siegfried

Still, with thy tiresome
 Starling song!
 That I may trust thy story,
 Convinced thou art not lying,
 Thou must produce some proof.

Mime

But what proof will convince thee?

Siegfried

I trust thee not with my ears,
 I trust thee but with mine eyes:
 What witness speaks for thee?

Mime

*[After some thought takes from the place where they are concealed the two,
 pieces of a broken sword.]*

I got this from thy mother:
 For trouble, food, and service
 This was my sole reward.
 Behold, 'tis a splintered sword!
 She said 'twas borne by thy father
 In the fatal fight when he fell.

Siegfried

[Enthusiastically.]

And thou shalt forge
 These fragments together,
 And furnish my rightful sword!
 Up! Tarry not, Mime;
 Quick to thy task!
 If thou hast skill,
 Thy cunning display.

Cheat me no more
 With worthless trash
 These fragments alone
 Henceforth I trust.
 Lounge o'er thy work,
 Weld it not true,
 Trickily patching
 The goodly steel,
 And thou shalt learn on thy limbs

How metal best should be beat!
I swear that this day
The sword shall be mine
My weapon to-day I shall win!

Mime

[*Alarmed.*]

What wouldst thou to-day with the sword?

Siegfried

Leave the forest
For the wide world,
Never more to return.
Ah, how fair
A thing is freedom
Nothing holds me or binds!
No father have I here,
And afar shall be my home
Thy hearth is not my house,
Nor my covering thy roof.
Like the fish
Glad in the water,
Like the finch
Free in the heavens,
Off I will float,
Forth I will fly,
Like the wind o'er the wood
Wafted away,
Thee, Mime, beholding no more!

[*He runs into the forest.*]

Mime

[*Greatly Alarmed.*]

Stop, boy! Stop, boy!
 Whither away?
 Hey! Siegfried!
 Siegfried! Hey!

[He looks after the retreating figure for some time in astonishment; then he goes back to the smithy and sits down behind the anvil.]

He storms away!
 And I sit here:
 To crown my cares
 Comes still this new one;
 My plight is piteous indeed!
 How help myself now?
 How hold the boy here?
 How lead the young madcap
 To Fafner's lair?
 And how weld the splinters
 Of obstinate steel?
 In no furnace fire
 Can they be melted,
 Nor can Mime's hammer
 Cope with their hardness.

[Shrilly.]

The Nibelung's hate,
 Need and sweat
 Cannot make Nothung whole,
 Never will weld it anew.

[Sobbing, he sinks in despair on to a stool behind the anvil.]

Wanderer (Wotan)

[Enters from the wood by the door at the back of the cave. He wears along dark blue cloak, and, for staff, carries a spear. On his head is a round, broad-brimmed slouched hat.]



Mime and the Wanderer

All hail, cunning smith!
 A seat by thy hearth
 Kindly grant
 The wayworn guest.

Mime

[*Starting up in alarm.*]

Who seeks for me here
 In desolate woods,
 Finds my home in the forest wild?

Wanderer

[*Approaching very slowly step by step.*]

Wanderer names me the world, smith.
 From far I have come;
 On the earth's back ranging,
 Much I have roamed.

Mime

If Wanderer named,
 Pray wander from here
 Without halting for rest.

Wanderer

Good men grudge me not welcome;
 Many gifts I have received.
 By bad hearts only
 Is evil feared.

Mime

Ill fate always
 Dwelt by my side;
 Thou wouldst not add to it, surely!

Wanderer

[Slowly coming nearer and nearer.]

Always searching,
 Much have I seen;
 Things of weight
 Have told to many;
 Oft have rid men
 Of their troubles,
 Gnawing and carking cares.

Mime

Though thou hast searched,
 And though much thou hast found,
 I need neither seeker nor finder.
 Lonely am I,
 And lone would be;
 Idlers I harbour not here.

Wanderer

[Again coming a little nearer.]

There were many
 Thought they were wise,
 Yet what they needed
 Knew not at all;
 Useful lore was
 Theirs for the asking,
 Wisdom was their reward.

Mime

[More and more anxious as he sees the Wanderer approach.]

Idle knowledge
 Some may covet;
 I know enough for my needs.

[The Wanderer reaches the hearth.]

My own wits suffice,
 I want no more,
 So, wise one, keep on thy way.

Wanderer

[Sitting down at the hearth.]

Nay, here at thy hearth
 I vow by my head
 To answer all thou shalt ask.
 My head is thine,
 'Tis forfeit to thee,
 Unless I can give
 Answers good,
 Deftly redeeming the pledge.

Mime

[Who has been staring at the Wanderer open mouthed, now shrinks back; aside, dejectedly.]

Now how to get rid of the spy?
 The questions asked must be artful.

[He summons up courage for an assumption of sternness; aloud.]

Thy head for thy
 Lodging pays:
 'Tis pawned; now seek to redeem it.
 Three the questions
 Thou shalt be asked.

Wanderer

Thrice then I must answer.

Mime

[Pulls himself together and reflects.]

Since, far on the back
 Of the wide earth roving,
 Thy feet have ranged o'er the world,
 Come, answer me this:
 Tell me what race
 Dwells in the earth's deep gorges.

Wanderer

In the depths of earth
 The Nibelungs have their home;
 Nibelheim is their land.
 Black elves they all are;
 Black Alberich
 Once was their ruler and lord.
 He subdued the busy
 Folk by a ring
 Gifted with magical might;
 And they piled up
 Shimmering gold,
 Precious, fine-wrought,
 To win him the world and its glory.
 Proceed with thy questions, dwarf.

Mime

[Sinks into deeper and deeper meditation.]

Thou knowest much,
 Wanderer,
 Of the hidden depths of earth.
 Now, answer me this:
 Tell me what race
 Breathes on earth's back and moves there.

Wanderer



*"In dragon's form
Fafner now watches the hoard"*

On the earth's broad back
 The race of the giants arose;
 Riesenheim is their land.
 Fasolt and Fafner,
 The rude folk's rulers,
 Envied the Nibelung's might.

So his wonderful hoard
 They won for themselves,
 And with it gained the ring too.
 The brothers quarrelled
 About the ring,

And slain was Fasolt.
 In dragon's form
 Fafner now watches the hoard.

One question threatens me still.

Mime

[*Quite lost in thought.*]

Much, Wanderer,
 Thou dost know
 Of the earth's back rude and rugged.
 Now answer aright:
 Tell me what race
 Dwells above in the clouds.

Wanderer

Above in the clouds
 Dwell the Immortals;
 Walhall is their home.
 They are light-spirits;
 Light-Alberich,
 Wotan, rules as their lord.
 From the world-ash-tree's

Holiest bough once
 Wotan made him a shaft.
 Though the stem rot,
 The spear shall endure,
 And with that spear-point
 Wotan rules the world.
 Trustworthy runes
 Of holy treaties
 Deep in the shaft he cut.
 Who wields the spear
 Carried by Wotan

The haft of the world
 Holds in his hand.
 Before him kneels
 The Nibelung host;
 The giants, tamed,
 Bow to his will.
 All must obey, and for ever,
 The spear's eternal lord.

[He strikes the ground with the spear as by accident, and a low growl of thunder is heard, by which Mime is violently alarmed.]

Confess now, cunning dwarf,
 Are not my answers right,
 And is not my head redeemed?

Mime

[After attentively watching the Wanderer with the spear, becomes very frightened, seeks in a confused manner for his tools, and looks timidly aside.]

Both thou hast won,
 Wager and head;
 Thy way now, Wanderer, go.

Wanderer

Knowledge useful to thee
 Thou wert to ask for;
 Forfeit my head if I failed.
 Forfeit be thine,
 Knowest thou not
 The thing it would serve thee to know.
 Greeting thou
 Gavest me not;
 My head into thy hand
 I gave
 That I might rest by thy hearth.
 By wager fair
 Forfeit thy head,
 Canst thou not answer
 Three things when asked
 So sharpen well, Mime, thy wits!

Mime

[Very much frightened, and after much hesitation, at last composes himself with timid submission.]

Long it is
 Since I left my land;
 Long it seems to me
 Since I was born.
 I saw here the eye of Wotan
 Shine, peering into my cave;
 His glance dazes
 My mother-wit.
 But well were it now to be wise.
 Come then, Wanderer, ask.
 Perhaps fortune will favour
 The dwarf, and redeem his head.

Wanderer

[Comfortably sitting down again.]

Then first, honest dwarf,
 Answer this question:
 Tell the name of the race
 That Wotan treats most harshly,

[Very softly, but audibly.]

And yet loves beyond all the rest.

Mime

[With more cheerfulness.]

Though unlearnèd
 In heroes' kinship,
 This question I answer with ease.
 The Wälsungs are Wotan's
 Chosen stock,
 By him begotten
 And loved with passion,
 Though they are shown no grace.
 Siegmund and Sieglinde
 Born were to Wälse,
 A wild and desperate
 Twin-born pair;
 Siegfried had they as son,
 The strongest shoot from the tree.
 My head, say, is it
 Still, Wanderer, mine?

Wanderer

[Pleasantly.]

How well thou knowest
 And namest the race!
 Rogue, I see thou art clever.
 The foremost question
 Thou hast solved;

The second answer me, dwarf.
 A crafty Niblung
 Shelters Siegfried,
 Hoping he will slay Fafner,
 That the dwarf may be lord of the hoard,
 The ring being his.
 Say, what sword,
 If Fafner to fall is,
 Must be by Siegfried swung?

Mime

[Forgetting his present situation more and more, rubs his hands joyfully.]

Nothung is
 The name of the sword;
 Into an ash-tree's stem
 Wotan struck it;
 One only might bear it:
 He who could draw it forth.
 The strongest heroes
 Tried it and failed;
 Only by Siegmund
 Was it done;
 Well he fought with the sword
 Till on Wotan's spear it was split.
 By a crafty smith
 Are the fragments kept,
 For he knows that alone
 With the Wotan sword
 A brave and foolish boy,
 Siegfried, can slay the foe.

[Much pleased.]

A second time
 My head have I saved?

Wanderer

[*Laughing.*]

The wisest of wise ones
 Thou must be, surely;
 Who else could so clever be!
 But wouldst thou by craft
 Employ the boy-hero
 As instrument of thy purpose,
 With one question more
 I threaten thee.
 Tell me, thou artful
 Armourer,
 Whose skill from the doughty splinters
 Nothing the sword shall fashion.

Mime

[*Starts up in great terror.*]

The splinters! The sword!
 Alas! my head reels!
 What shall I do?
 What can I say?
 Accursèd sword!
 I was mad to steal it!
 A perilous pass
 It has brought me to.
 Always too hard
 To yield to my hammer!
 Rivet, solder--
 Useless are both.

[*He throws his tools about as if he had gone crazy, and breaks out in utter despair.*]

The cleverest smith
 Living has failed;

And, that being so,
 Who shall succeed?
 How rede aright such a riddle?

Wanderer

[Has risen quietly from the hearth.]

Three things thou wert to ask me;
 Thrice was I to reply.
 Thy questions were
 Of far-off things,

But what stood here at thy hand--
 Needed much--that was forgot
 Now that I guess it,
 Thou goest crazed,
 And won by me
 Is the cunning one's head.
 Now, Fafner's dauntless subduer,
 Hear, thou death-doomed dwarf.
 By him who knows not
 How to fear
 Nothung shall be forged.

[Mime stares at him; he turns to go.]

So ward thy head
 Well from to-day.
 I leave it forfeit to him
 Who has never learned to fear.

[He turns away smiling, and disappears quickly in the wood. Mime has sunk on to the bench overwhelmed.]

Mime

[Stares before him into the sunlit wood, and begins to tremble more and more violently.]

Accursèd light!
The air is on fire!
What flickers and flashes?
What buzzes and whirs?
What sways there and swings
And circles about?
What glitters and gleams
In the sun's hot glow?
What rustles and hums
And rings so loud?
With roll and roar
It crashes this way!
It bursts through the wood,
Making for me!

[He rises up in terror.]

Its jaws are wide open,
Eager for prey;
The dragon will catch me!
Fafner! Fafner!

[He sinks shrieking behind the anvil.]

Siegfried

[Behind the scenes, is heard breaking from the thicket.]

Ho there! Thou idler!
Is the work finished?

[He enters the cave.]

Quick, come show me the sword.

[He pauses in surprise.]

Where hides the smith?
Has he made off?

Hey, there! Mime, thou coward!
Where art thou? Where hidest thou?

Mime

[In a small voice, from behind the anvil.]

'Tis thou then, child?
Art thou alone?

Siegfried

[Laughing.]

Under the anvil?
Why, what doest thou there?
Wert thou grinding the sword?

Mime

[Comes forward, greatly upset and confused.]

The sword? The sword?
How could I weld it?

[Half aside.]

By him who knows not
How to fear
Nothung shall be forged.
Too wise am I
To attempt such work.

Siegfried

[Violently.]

Wilt thou speak plainly
Or must I help thee?

Mime

[As before.]

Where shall I turn in my need?
My wily head
Wagered and lost is,

[Staring before him.]

And forfeit to him it will fall
Who has never learned to fear.

Siegfried

[Vehemently.]

Dost thou by shuffling
Seek to escape?

Mime

[Gradually recovering himself.]

Small need to fly
Him who knows fear!
But that lesson was one never taught thee.
A fool, I forgot
The one great thing;
What thou wert taught
Was to love me,
And alas I the task proved hard.
Now how shall I teach thee to fear?

Siegfried

[Seizes him.]

Hey! Must I help thee?
What work hast thou done?

Mime

Concerned for thy good,
In thought I was sitting:
Something of weight I would teach thee.

Siegfried

[Laughing.]

'Twas under the seat
That thou wert sitting;
What weighty thing foundest thou there?

Mime

[Recovering himself more and more.]

Down there I learned how to fear,
That I might teach thee, dullard.

Siegfried

[With quiet wonder.]

This fear then, what is it?

Mime

Thou knowest not that,
Yet wouldst from the forest
Forth to the world?

What help in the trustiest sword,
Hadst thou not learned to fear?

Siegfried

[Impatiently.]

What absurd
Invention is this?

Mime

[Approaching Siegfried with more and more confidence.]

'Tis thy mother's wish
Speaking through me.

I must fulfil
 The promise I gave her:
 That the world and its wiles
 Thou shouldst not encounter
 Until thou hadst learned how to fear.

Siegfried

[*Vehemently.*]

Is it an art?
 Why was I not taught?
 Explain: this fearing, what is it?

Mime

In the dark wood
 Hast thou not felt,
 When shades of dusk
 Fall dim and drear,
 When mournful whispers
 Sigh afar,
 And fierce growling
 Sounds at hand,
 When strange flashes
 Dart and flicker,
 And the buzzing
 And clamour grow--

[*Trembling.*]

Hast thou not felt grim horror--
 Hold every sense in its clutches?--

[*Quaking.*]

When the limbs shiver,
 Shaken with terror,

[*With a quivering voice.*]

And the heart, filled with dismay,
 Hammers, bursting the breast--
 Hast thou not yet felt that,
 A stranger art thou to fear.

Siegfried

[*Musing.*]

Wonderful truly
 That must be.
 Steadfast, strong
 Beats my heart in my breast.
 The shiver and shudder,
 The fever and horror,
 Burning and fainting,
 Beating and trembling
 Ah, how glad I would feel them,

[*Tenderly.*]

Could I but learn this delight!
 But how, Mime,
 Can it be mine?
 How, coward, could it be taught me?

Mime

Following me,
 The way thou shalt find
 I have thought it all out.
 I know of a dragon grim
 That slays and swallows men:
 Fear thou wilt learn from Fafner,
 When I lead to where he lies.

Siegfried

Where has he his lair?

Mime

Neidhöhl'
 Named, it lies east
 Towards the end of the wood.

Siegfried

It lies not far from the world?

Mime

The world is quite close to the cave.

Siegfried

That I may learn what this fear is,
 Lead me there straightway;
 Then forth to the world!
 Make haste! Forge me the sword.
 In the world fain I would swing it.

Mime

The sword? Woe's me!

Siegfried

Quick to the smithy!
 Show me thy work!

Mime

Accursèd steel!
 Unequal my skill to the task;
 The potent magic
 Surpasses the poor dwarf's strength.
 'Twere more easily done
 By one who never felt fear.

Siegfried

Artful tricks
 The idler would play me;
 He is a bungler;
 He should confess,
 And not seek to lie his way out.
 Here with the splinters!
 Off with the bungler!

[Coming to the hearth.]

His father's sword
 Siegfried will weld:
 By him shall it be forged.

[Flinging Mime's tools about, he sets himself impetuously to work.]

Mime

If thou hadst practised
 Thy craft with care,
 Thou wouldst have profited now;
 But thou wert far
 Too lazy to learn,
 And now at need canst do nothing.

Siegfried

Where the master has failed
 What hope for the scholar,
 Had he obeyed him in all?

[He makes a contemptuous grimace at him.]

Be off with thee
 Meddle no more,
 In case with the steel I melt thee.

[He has heaped a large quantity of charcoal on the hearth, and keeps blowing the fire, while he screws up the pieces of the sword in a vice and files them to shavings.]

Mime

[Who has sat down a little way off, watches Siegfried at work.]

Why file it to bits?
There is the solder
All fused, ready to hand.

Siegfried

Off with the pap,
I need it not;
With paste I fashion no sword!

Mime

Now the file is ruined,
The rasp is useless;
Why grind thus the steel to splinters?

Siegfried

It must be shivered
And ground into shreds;
Only so can splinters be patched.

[He goes on filing with great energy.]

Mime

[Aside.]

I see a craftsman
Is useless here;
By his own folly the fool is best served.
Look how he toils
With lusty strokes;
The steel disappears,
And still he keeps cool.

[Siegfried has blown the fire to a bright flame.]



The forging of Nothung

Though I am as old
As cave and wood,
The like I never yet saw!

[While Siegfried continues to file the piece of the sword impetuously, Mime seats himself a little further off.]

He will forge the sword--
I see it plain--
Boldly weld it anew.

The Wanderer was right.
Where shall I hide
My luckless head?
If nothing teaches him fear,
Forfeit it falls to the boy.

[Springing up and bending down in growing agitation.]

But woe to Mime!
If Siegfried learn fear,
The dragon will never be slain;
And, if so, how gain the ring?
Accurst dilemma!
Would I escape,
I must find out some way
Of subduing the boy for myself.

Siegfried

[Has now filed down the pieces, and puts the filings in a crucible, which he places on the fire.]

Hey, Mime! The name!--
Quick, name the sword
That I have pounded to pieces.

Mime

[Starts and turns towards Siegfried.]

Nothung, that is
 The name of the sword;
 'Twas thy mother told me the tale.

Siegfried

[During the following song keeps blowing the fire with the bellows.]

Nothung! Nothung!
 Conquering sword!
 What blow, I wonder, broke thee.
 Thy keen-edged glory
 I chopped to chaff;
 The splinters now I am melting.
 Hoho! Hoho!
 Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!
 Bellows blow!
 Brighten the flame!
 In the woods
 A tree grew wild;
 It fell, by my hand hewn down.
 The brown-stemmed ash
 To charcoal I burned;
 Now it lies heaped high on the hearth.
 Hoho! Hoho!
 Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!
 Bellows blow!
 Brighten the flame!
 How bravely, brightly
 The charcoal burns!
 How clear and fair its fire!
 With showering sparks
 It leaps and glows,--
 Hohei! Hoho! Hohei!--
 Dissolving the splintered steel!
 Hoho! Hoho!
 Hohei! Hohei! Hoho!

Bellows, blow!
 Brighten the flame!
 Hoho! Hoho!
 Hoho, hohei! Hohei!
 Nothung! Nothung!
 Conquering sword!

Thy steel chopped to chaff is fused;
 In thine own sweat
 Thou swimmest now,

[He pours the glowing contents of the crucible into a mould, which he holds up.]

But soon my sword thou shalt be!

Mime

[During the pauses in Siegfried's song, still aside, sitting at a distance.]

The sword he will forge
 And vanquish Fafner,
 So much I can clearly foresee;
 Hoard and ring
 The victor will have;
 How to win them both for myself!
 By wit and wiles
 They shall be captured,
 And safe shall be my head.

[In the foreground, still aside.]

After the fight, when athirst,
 For a cooling draught he will crave;
 Of fragrant juices
 Gathered from herbs
 The draught I will brew for him.
 Let him drink but a drop,

And in slumber
Softly lapped he shall lie:
With the very sword
That he fashioned to serve him
He shall be cleared from my way,
And treasure and ring made mine.

[He rubs his hands with satisfaction.]

Ha! dull didst hold me,
Wanderer wise!
Does my subtle scheming
Please thee now?

Have I found
A path to peace?

[He springs up joyfully, fetches several vessels, shakes spices and herbs from them into a pot, and tries to put it on the hearth.]

Siegfried

[Has plunged the mould into a pail of water. Steam and loud hissing ensue as it cools.]

In the water flowed
A flood of fire;
Furious with hate,
Grimly it hissed;
Though scorching it ran,
In the cooling flood
No more it flows;
Stiff, stark it became,
Hard is the stubborn steel;
Yet warm blood
Shall flow thereby!
Now sweat once again,
That swift I may weld thee,
Nothung, conquering sword!

[He thrusts the steel into the fire, and blows the bellows violently, While doing so he watches Mime, who, from the other side of the hearth, carefully puts his pot on the fire.]

What does the booby
Make in his pot?
While I melt steel,
What art thou brewing?

Mime

A smith is put to shame,
And learns from the lad he taught;
All the master's lore is useless now;
He serves the boy as cook.
Steel thou dost brew into broth;
Old Mime boils thee
Eggs for thy meal.

[He goes on with his cooking.]

Siegfried

Mime, the craftsman,
Learns to cook now,
And cares no longer to forge;
I have broken
All the swords that he made me;
What he cooks my lips shall not touch.

[During the following he takes the mould from the fire, breaks it, and lays the glowing steel on the anvil.]

To find out what fear is
Forth he will guide me;
A far-off teacher shall teach me;
Even what he does best
He cannot do well;
In everything Mime must bungle!

[*During the forging.*]

Hoho! Hoho! Hohei!
 Forge me, my hammer,
 A trusty sword.
 Hoho! Hahei!
 Hoho! Hahei!
 Blood-stained was once
 Thy steely blue,
 The crimson trickle
 Reddened thy blade.
 How cold was thy laugh!
 The warm blood cooled at thy touch!
 Heiaho! Haha!
 Haheiaha!
 Now red thou comest
 From the fire,
 And thy softened steel
 To the hammer yields.
 Angry sparks thou dost shower
 On me who humbled thy pride.

Heiaho! Heiaho!
 Heiahohohohoho!
 Hahei! Hahei! Hahei!
 Hoho! Hoho! Hohei!
 Forge me, my hammer,
 A trusty sword!
 Hoho! Hahei!
 Hoho! Hahei!
 How I rejoice
 In the merry sparks!
 The bold look best
 When by anger stirred!
 Gay thou laughest to me,
 Grimly though thou dost pretend!

Heiaho, haha, haheiaha!
 Both heat and hammer
 Served me well;
 With sturdy strokes
 I stretched thee straight;
 Now banish thy modest blush,
 Be as cold and hard as thou canst.
 Heiho! Heiaho!
 Heiahohohoho! Heiah!

[He swings the blade, plunges it into the pail of water, and laughs aloud at the hissing.]

Mime

[While Siegfried is fixing the blade in the hilt, moves about in the foreground with the bottle into which he has poured the contents of the pot. Aside.]

He forges a sharp-edged sword:
 Fafner, the foe
 Of the dwarf, is doomed;
 I brewed a deadly draught:
 Siegfried must perish
 When Fafner falls.
 By guile the goal must be reached;
 Soon shall smile my reward!
 For the shining ring
 My brother once made,

 And which with a potent
 Spell he endowed,
 The gleaming gold
 That gives boundless might--
 That ring I have won now,
 I am its lord.

[He trots briskly about with increasing satisfaction.]

Alberich even,
 Whom I served,
 Shall be the slave
 Of Mime the dwarf.
 As Nibelheim's prince
 I shall descend there,
 And all the host
 Shall do my will;
 None so honoured as he,
 The dwarf once despised!
 To the hoard will come thronging
 Gods and men;

[With increasing liveliness.]

The world shall cower,
 Cowed by my nod,
 And at my frown
 Shall tremble and fall!
 No more shall Mime
 Labour and toil,
 When others win him
 Unending wealth.
 Mime, the valiant,
 Mime is monarch,
 Prince and ruler,
 Lord of the world!
 Hei, Mime! Great luck has been thine!
 Had any one dreamed of this!

Siegfried

[During the pauses in Mime's song has been filing and sharpening the sword and hammering it with the small hammer. He flattens the rivets of the hilt with the last strokes, and now grasps the sword.]

Nothing! Nothing!
 Conquering sword!

Once more art thou firm in thy hilt.
Severed wert thou;
I shaped thee anew,
No second blow thy blade shall shatter.
The strong steel was splintered,
My father fell;
The son who now lives
Shaped it anew.
Bright-gleaming to him it laughs,
And for him its edge shall be keen.

[Swinging the sword before him.]

Nothung! Nothung!
Conquering sword!
Once more to life I have waked thee.
Dead wert thou,
In fragments hewn,
Now shining defiant and fair.
Woe to all robbers!
Show them thy sheen!
Strike at the traitor,
Cut down the rogue!
See, Mime, thou smith;
Thus sunders Siegfried's sword!

[He strikes the anvil and splits it in two from top to bottom, so that it falls asunder with a great noise. Mime, who has mounted a stool in great delight, falls in terror to a sitting position on the ground. Siegfried holds the sword exultantly on high. The curtain falls.]

THE SECOND ACT

A deep forest

[Quite in the background the entrance to a cave. The ground rises towards a flat knoll in the middle of the stage, and slopes down again towards the back, so that only the upper part of the entrance to the cave is visible to the audience. To the left a fissured cliff is seen through the trees. It is night, the darkness being deepest at the back, where at first the eye can distinguish nothing at all.]

Alberich

[Lying by the cliff, gloomily brooding.]

In night-drear woods
By Neidhöhl' I keep watch,
With ear alert,
Keen and anxious eye.
Timid day,
Tremblest thou forth?
Pale art thou dawning
Athwart the dark?

[A storm arises in the wood on the right, and from the same quarter there shines down a bluish light.]

What comes yonder, gleaming bright?
Nearer shimmers
A radiant form;
It runs like a horse and it shines;
Breaks through the wood,
Rushing this way.

Is it the dragon's slayer?
Can it mean Fafner's death?

[The wind subsides; the light vanishes.]

The glow has gone,
 It has faded and died;
 All is darkness.
 Who comes there, shining in shadow?

Wanderer

[Enters from the wood, and stops opposite Alberich.]

To Neidhöhl'
 By night I have come;
 In the dark who is hiding there?

[As from a sudden rent in the clouds moonlight streams forth and lights up the Wanderer's figure.]

Alberich

[Recognises the Wanderer and shrinks back at first in alarm, but immediately after breaks out in violent fury.]

'Tis thou who comest thus?
 What wilt thou here?
 Go, get thee hence!
 Begone, thou insolent thief!

Wanderer

[Quietly.]

Schwarz-Alberich
 Wanders here?
 Guardest thou Fafner's house?

Alberich

Art thou intent
 On mischief again?
 Linger not here!
 Off with thee straightway!
 Has grief enough

Not deluged the earth through thy guile?
Spare it further
Sorrow, thou wretch!

Wanderer

I come as watcher,
Not as worker.
The Wanderer's way who bars?

Alberich

Thou arch, pestilent plotter!
Were I still the blind,
Silly fool that I was,
When I was bound thy captive,
How easy were it
To steal the ring again from me!
Beware! For thy cunning
I know well,

[*Mockingly.*]

And of thy weakness
I am fully aware too.
Thy debts were cancelled,
Paid with my treasure;
My ring guerdoned
The giants' toil,
Who raised thy citadel high.
Still on the mighty
Haft of thy spear there
The runes are written plain
Of the compact made with the churls;
And of that
Which by labour they won
Thou dost not dare to despoil them:
Thy spear's strong shaft

Thou thyself wouldst split;
 The staff that makes thee
 Master of all
 Would crumble to dust in thy hand.

Wanderer

By the steadfast runes of treaties
 Thou hast not,
 Base one, been bound;
 On thee my spear may spend its strength,
 So keen I keep it for war.

Alberich

How dire thy threats!
 How bold thy defiance!
 And yet full of fear is thy heart!
 Foredoomed to death
 Through my curse is he
 Who now guards the treasure.
 What heir will succeed him?
 Will the hoard all desire
 Belong as before to the Niblung?--
 That gnaws thee with ceaseless torment.
 For once I have got it
 Safe in my grasp,
 Better than foolish giants
 Will I employ its spell.
 The God who guards heroes
 Truly may tremble!
 I will storm
 Proud Walhall with Hella's hosts,
 And rule, lord of the world!

Wanderer

[Quietly.]

Thy design I know well,
 But little I care:
 Who wins the ring
 Will rule by its might.

Alberich

Thou speakest darkly,
 But to me all is plain.
 Thy heart is bold
 Because of a boy,

[Mockingly.]

A hero begot of thy blood.
 Hast thou not fostered a stripling
 To pluck the fruit thou durst not

[With growing violence.]

Pluck frankly for thyself?

Wanderer

[Lightly.]

With me
 'Tis useless to wrangle;
 But Mime thou shouldst beware;
 For thy brother brings here a boy
 To compass the giant's doom.
 He knows not of me;
 He works for Mime alone.
 And so I say to thee,
 Do as seems to thee best.

[Alberich makes a movement expressive of violent curiosity.]

Take my advice,
 Be on thy guard:

The boy will hear of the ring
When Mime tells him the tale.

Alberich

[*Violently.*]

Wilt thou hold thy hand from the hoard?

Wanderer

Whom I love
Must fight for himself unaided;
The lord of his fate,
He stands or falls:
All my hope hangs upon heroes.

Alberich

Does none but Mime
Dispute me the ring?

Wanderer

Only thou and Mime
Covet the gold.

Alberich

And yet it is not to be mine?

Wanderer

[*Quietly coming nearer.*]

A hero comes
To set the hoard free;
Two Nibelungs yearn for the gold.
Fafner falls,
He who guards the ring;
Then a hand, seizing, shall hold it.

More wouldst thou learn,
There Fafner lies,
Who, if warned of his death,
Gladly would give up the toy.
Come, I will wake him for thee.

[He goes towards the cave, and, standing on the rising ground in front of it, calls towards it.]

Fafner! Fafner!
Wake, dragon! Wake!

Alberich

[With anxious amazement, aside.]

Does the madman mean it?
Am I to have it?

Fafner's voice

Who troubles my sleep?

Wanderer

[Facing the cave.]

A well-wisher comes
To warn thee of danger;
Thy doom can he averted,
If thou wilt pay the price
With the treasure that thou guardest.

[He leans his ear towards the cave, listening.]

Fafner's voice

What would he?

Alberich

[Has come to the Wanderer and calls into the cave.]

Waken, Fafner!
 Dragon, awake!
 A doughty hero comes
 To try his strength against thine.

Fafner's voice

I want a meal.

Wanderer

Bold is the boy and strong;
 Sharp-edged is his sword.

Alberich

The ring he seeks,
 Nothing besides.

Give me the ring, and so
 The strife shall be stayed.
 Still guarding the hoard,
 In peace shalt thou live long!

Fafner

[*Yawning.*]

I have and I hold:--
 Let me slumber!

Wanderer

[*Laughs aloud and then turns again to Alberich.*]

Well, Alberich! That ruse failed,
 But call me rogue no more.
 This one thing thou shouldst
 Never forget:
 Each according to his kind must act;
 Nothing can change him.
 I leave thee the field now;

Show a bold front,
 And try thy luck with thy brother;
 Thou knowest his kind perhaps better.
 And things unknown
 Thou also shalt learn!

[He turns away, and disappears quickly in the wood. A storm arises and a bright light breaks forth; then both quickly cease.]

Alberich

[Looks after the Wanderer as he gallops off.]

Away on his shining
 Horse he rides,
 And leaves me to care and scorn!
 Laugh on! Laugh on,
 Ye light-minded
 And high-spirited
 Race of immortals!
 One day ye shall perish
 And pass!
 Until the gold
 Has ceased to gleam,

 Will wise Alberich watch,
 And his hate shall prevail.

[He slips into the chasm at the side. The stage remains empty. Dawn.]

As the day dawns Siegfried and Mime enter. Siegfried carries his sword in a sword-belt of rope. Mime examines the place carefully. At last he looks towards the background, which remains in deep shadow, whist the rising ground in the middle becomes, after a time, more and more brightly illuminated by the sun.

Mime

Our journey ends here;
 Here we halt.

Siegfried

[Sits down under the lime-tree and looks about him.]

So here I shall learn what fear is?
 A far way thou hast led me;
 We have wandered lone together
 A whole night long in the woods.
 This is the last
 Of thee, Mime!
 Can I not master
 My lesson here,
 Alone I will push forward
 And never see thee again.

Mime

Lad, believe me,
 If thou canst not
 Learn it here and now,
 No other place,
 No other time
 Ever will teach thee fear.
 Dost thou see
 That cavern yawning dark?
 Yonder dwells
 A dragon dread and grim,
 Horribly fierce,

 Enormous in size,
 With terrible jaws
 That threaten and gape;
 With skin and hair,
 All at a gulp,
 The brute could swallow thee whole.

Siegfried

[Still sitting under the lime tree.]

'Twere well to close up his gullet;
His fangs I will therefore avoid.

Mime

Poison pours
From his venomous mouth;
Were he to spue out
Spittle on thee,
Thy body and bones would decay.

Siegfried

That the poison may not consume me,
I will keep out of its reach.

Mime

A serpent's tail
Sweeping he swings;
Were that about thee wound
And folded close,
Thy limbs would be broken like glass.

Siegfried

That his swinging tail may not touch me,
Warily then I must watch.
But answer me this:
Has the brute a heart?

Mime

A pitiless, cruel heart.

Siegfried

It lies, however,
Where all hearts lie,
Brute and human alike?

Mime

Of course! There, boy,
 The dragon's lies too.
 At last thou beginnest to fear?

Siegfried

[Who till now has been lying indolently stretched out, sits up suddenly.]

Nothung into
 His heart I will thrust!
 Is that what is meant by fearing?
 Hey, old dotard!
 Canst thou teach me
 Nothing but this
 With all thy craft,
 Linger no longer by me:
 No fear is here to be learnt.

Mime

Wait awhile yet!
 What I have told thee
 Seems to thee empty sound;
 When thou hast heard
 And seen him thyself,
 Thy senses will swoon, overwhelmed?
 When thine eyes grow dim,
 And when the ground rocks,
 When in thy breast
 Thy heart beats loud,

[Very friendly.]

Thou wilt remember who brought thee,
 And think of me and my love.

Siegfried

Thy love is not wanted!
 Hast thou not heard?

Out of my sight with thee;
 Let me alone!
 Begin again talking of love,
 And on the instant I go!
 The horrible winking,
 The nods and blinking
 When shall I see
 The last of them,
 And rid be at length of the fool?

Mime

Well, I will off,
 And rest there by the spring.
 Thou must stay here,
 And as the sun scales the sky
 Watch for the foe:
 From his cave
 He lumbers this way,
 Winds and twists
 Past this spot,
 To water at the fountain.

Siegfried

[Laughs.]

Liest thou by the spring,
 Unchecked thither the brute shall go;
 He shall swallow thee
 Down with the water,
 Ere with my sword
 To the heart I stab him!
 So heed well what I say:
 Rest not beside the spring.
 Seek somewhere else
 A far-off spot,
 And nevermore return.

Mime

Thou wilt not refuse
Cooling refreshment
When the fierce fight is over?

[Siegfried motions him angrily away.]

Call on me too
Shouldst thou need counsel,

[Siegfried repeats the gesture with more violence.]

Or if felled on a sudden by fear.

[Siegfried rises and drives him away with furious gestures.]

Mime

[Aside, as he goes away.]

Fafner and Siegfried--
Siegfried and Fafner--
Might each the other but slay!

[He disappears in the wood on the right.]

Siegfried

[Stretches himself at his ease under the lime-tree, and looks after Mime as he departs.]

He is no father of mine!
How merry of heart I feel!
Never before
Seemed the forest fair;
Never day
Wore as lovely a smile,
For the loathed one has gone at last,
To be looked on by me no more.

[He meditates in silence.]

My father--what was he like?--
 Ha! like me, without doubt.
 Had Mime by chance had a son,
 He would have been
 Mime's image:
 Quite as disgusting,
 Filthy and grey,
 Small and bent,
 Hunchbacked and halting,
 With ears long and hanging,
 Rheumy eyes running--
 Off with the fright!
 To see him makes me sick!

[He leans further back and looks up through the branches of the tree. Deep silence. Woodland murmurs.]

What could my mother,
 I wonder, be like;
 That is not
 So easy to picture.

[Very tenderly.]

Her clear shining eyes
 Must have been soft,
 And gentle like the roe-deer's,
 Only far fairer.

[Very softly.]

In fear and woe she bore me,
 But why did she die through me?
 Must then all human mothers
 Thus die on giving
 Birth to a son?
 That would truly be sad!
 Ah, if I only

Could see my mother!--
 See my mother,
 A woman once!

[He sighs softly, and leans still further back. Deep silence. Louder murmuring of the wood. His attention is at last caught by the song of the birds. He listens with growing interest to one singing in the branches above him.]

O lovely warbler,
 I know not thy note;
 Hast thou thy home in this wood?
 If I could but understand him,
 His sweet song might say much--
 Perhaps of my mother tell me.
 A surly old dwarf
 Said to me once
 That men might learn
 To follow the sense
 Of birds when they were singing;
 Could it indeed be done?
 Ha! I will sing
 After him,
 On the reed follow him sweetly.
 Though wanting the words,
 Repeating his measure--
 Singing what is his language-
 Perhaps I shall know what he says.

[He runs to the neighbouring spring, cuts a reed of with his sword, and quickly makes himself a pipe out of it. He listens again.]

He stops to hear,
 So now for my song!

[He blows into the pipe, breaks of, and cuts it again to improve it. He resumes his blowing, shakes his head, and cuts the pipe once more. After another attempt he gets angry, presses the pipe with his hand, and tries again. He ceases playing and smiles.]

That rings not right;
For the lovely tune
The reed is not suited at all.
I fear, sweet bird,
I am too dull;
Thy song cannot I learn.

[He hears the bird again and looks up to him.]

He listens so roguishly
There that he shames me;

[Very tenderly.]

He waits, and nothing rewards him.
Heida! Come hearken
Now to my horn;

[He flings the pipe away.]

All I do sounds wrong
on the stupid reed;
To a song of the woods
That I know,
A merry song, listen now rather.
I hoped it would bring
Some comrade to me,
But wolves and bears
Were the best that came.
Now I will see

Who answers its note:
What comrade will come to its call.

[He takes the silver hunting-horn and blows on it. During the long-sustained notes he keeps his eyes expectantly on the bird. A movement in the background. Fafner, in the form of a monstrous lizard-like dragon, has risen from his lair in the cave. He breaks through the underwood and drags himself

up to the higher ground, so that the front part of his body rests on it, while he utters a loud sound, as if yawning.]

Siegfried

[Looks round and gazes at Fafner in astonishment. He laughs.]

My horn with its note
Has allured something lovely;
A jolly companion wert thou.

Fafner

[At the sight of Siegfried has paused on the high ground, and remains there.]

What is that?

Siegfried

If thou art a beast
Who can use its tongue,
Perchance thou couldst teach me something.
Here stands one
Who would learn to fear
Say, wilt thou be his teacher?

Fafner

Is this insolence?

Siegfried

Courage or insolence,
What matter?
With my sword I will slay thee,
Wilt thou not teach me to fear.

Fafner

[Makes a laughing sound.]

Drink I came for;
Now food I find too

[He opens his jaws and shows his teeth.]

Siegfried

What a fine set of teeth
Thou showest me there!
Sweetly they smile
In thy dainty mouth!
'Twere well if I closed up thy gullet
Thy jaws are gaping too wide!

Fafner

They were not made
For idle talk,
But they will serve
To swallow thee.

Siegfried

Hoho! Ferocious,
Merciless churl!
I have no fancy
To be eaten.
Better it seems to me
That without delay thou shouldst die!



Siegfried kills Fafner

Fafner

[Roaring.]

Pruh! Come,
Boy, with thy boasts!

Siegfried

[Draws his sword.]

Beware, growler!
The boaster comes!

[He springs towards Fafner and remains defiantly confronting him. Fafner drags himself further up the knoll and spits at Siegfried from his nostrils. Siegfried avoids the poison, springs nearer, and stands on one side. Fafner tries to reach him with his tail. Siegfried, who is nearly caught, springs over Fafner with one bound, and wounds him in the tail. Fafner roars, pulls his tail angrily away, and raises the front part of his body so that he may throw its full weight on Siegfried, thus offering his breast to the stroke. Siegfried quickly looks to see where his heart is, and thrusts his sword into it up to the hilt. Fafner raises himself still higher in his pain, and, when Siegfried has let go his sword and sprung aside, he sinks on the wound.]

Siegfried

Lie there, envious brute!
Nothung's point home has speeded!

Fafner

[In a weaker voice.]

Who art thou, boy bold-hearted,
That hast pierced my breast?
Who stirred up thy childish soul
To the murderous deed?
Thy brain schemed not the harm
Wrought by thy hand.

Siegfried

Not much have I learned,
Not even who I am;

Thou thyself with thy taunting
 Stirred me to fight and to slay.

Fafner

O boy bright-eyed,
 Who knowest not yet who thou art,
 Whom thou hast murdered
 Hear from me.
 Two mighty giants there were,
 Fasolt and Fafner;
 The brothers now are both fallen.
 For the cursèd gold
 We got from the Gods
 I did Fasolt to death.
 He who now guards
 The hoard as dragon,
 Fafner, the last remaining,
 Falls, by a rosy boy slain.
 Boy in thy bloom,
 Watch and be wary:
 He who stirred thee blind to this deed
 Takes thought how to compass thy death.

[Dying.]

Mark the ending!
 Think on me!

Siegfried

Who was my father?
 Tell, if thou canst.
 Dying, thou showest,
 Wild one, much wisdom.
 Siegfried my name is; haply
 That may help thee to guess.

Fafner

Siegfried! . . .

[He raises himself and dies.]

Siegfried

The dead can tell no tidings.

My living sword, lead!

Lead onward, my sword!

[Fafner has rolled to the side in dying. Siegfried now draws the sword from his breast. In doing so his hand gets sprinkled with the blood; he draws it back quickly.]

The hot blood burns like fire!

[Involuntarily he raises his fingers to his mouth to suck the blood from them. As he looks musingly before him his attention becomes more and more attracted by the singing of the birds.]

I almost seem

To hear the birds speaking to me.

Is there a spell,

Perhaps, in the blood?

The curious bird up there--

Hark! he sings to me.

Voice of the Wood-bird

[From the branches of the lime-tree above Siegfried.]

Hei! Siegfried now owns

All the Nibelung hoard!

Oh! could he the hoard



The hot blood burns like fire!

In the cave but find!
Tarnhelm, if he could but win it,

Would help him to deeds of renown;
 And could he discover the ring,
 It would make him the lord of the world!

Siegfried

[Has listened holding his breath and beaming with delight.]

Thanks, bonnie bird,
 For the counsel good
 I follow the call!

[He turns towards the back and descends to the cave, where he at once disappears.]

Mime steals up, looking about him timidly to assure himself of Fafner's death. At the same time Alberich comes out of the cleft on the opposite side. He observes Mime, rushes on him and bars his way, as the latter turns towards the cave.

Alberich

On what errand
 Furtive and sly,
 Knave, dost thou slink?

Mime

Accursèd brother,
 That thou shouldst come!
 What brings thee here?

Alberich

Rogue, has my gold
 Provoked thy greed?
 Dost covet my goods?

Mime

Get thee gone quickly!
 This corner is mine;
 What huntest thou here?

Alberich

Have I disturbed thee,
 Thief, at thy work,
 Secret and sly?

Mime

What I have slaved
 And toiled to win
 Shall not escape me.

Alberich

Who was it robbed
 The Rhine of gold for the ring?
 And whose cunning wrought
 The spell of magical might?

Mime

Who made the Tarnhelm,
 Changing its wearer's form?
 Though thou didst want it,
 Was it designed by thee?

Alberich

And what of thyself
 Couldst aright have fashioned, thou bungler?
 The magic ring
 Forced thee to master thy craft.

Mime

And where is the ring?
 'Twas reft from thy clutch by the giants.

What thou hast lost
I will gain and keep by my guile.

Alberich

What the boy has won
Would the niggard deny him?
'Tis not thine; the hero
Who won it is now its lord.

Mime

I brought him up;
For my pains now he shall pay;
For its reward
My trouble has waited too long.

Alberich

Just for rearing him,
The old niggardly,
Beggarly knave,
Bold as brass,
A king now would become?
The ring would befit
Better a dog
Than bumpkin like thee.
Never to thee
The magical ring shall fall!

Mime

[Scratches his head.]

Well, keep it, then,
And guard with care
The gleaming gold;



The dwarfs quarrelling over the body of Fafner

Be thou lord,
 But treat me as a brother;
 Give me against it
 Tarnhelm for toy,
 Fairly exchanged;
 Divided thus,
 There will be booty for both.

[He rubs his hands confidently.]

Alberich

[With a mocking laugh.]

Share it with thee?
 And the Tarnhelm too!
 How sly thou art!
 I could never
 Sleep for a moment safely.

Mime

[Beside himself.]

What I not even
 Strike a bargain!
 I must go bare,
 Beggared of gain!
 Thou wouldst leave me with nothing!

[Shrieking.]

Alberich

Nothing, not so
 Much as a nail,
 Shall fall to thy portion.

Mime

[In a fury.]

Neither ring nor Tarnhelm
Shall thy hand touch, then;
'Tis I will not share!
I will call on Siegfried,
Summon the aid
Of his keen-edged sword;
The lad will make
Short work, dear brother, of thee!

Alberich

[Siegfried having appeared in the background.]

Turn and look there!
From the cavern hither he comes.

Mime

He will have chosen
Trivial toys.

Alberich

He bears the Tarnhelm!

Mime

Also the ring!

Alberich

Curst luck! The ring!

Mime

[Laughing maliciously.]

Get him to give thee the ring now!
'Tis I, not thou, who shall win it.

Alberich

And yet to its lord
Must it at last be surrendered!

[He disappears in the cleft.]

[During the foregoing Siegfried, with Tarnhelm and ring, has come slowly and meditatively from the cave; he regards his booty thoughtfully, and stops on the knoll in the middle of the stage.]

Siegfried

I do not know
Of what use
Ye are; I chose you
From out the heaped-up hoard
Because of friendly advice.
Meanwhile, of this day
Be ye worn as witness,
Recalling to mind
How with fallen Fafner I fought,
And yet could not learn how to fear.

[He hangs the Tarnhelm on his girdle and puts the ring on his finger. Silence. His notice is involuntarily drawn to the bird again, and he listens to him with breathless attention.]

The Wood-bird's voice

Hei! Siegfried now owns
Both the helm and the ring!
Oh! let him not listen
To Mime, the false!
He were wise to be wary of
Mime's treacherous tongue.
He will understand
Mime's secret intent,
Because he has tasted the blood.

[Siegfried's mien and gestures show that he has understood the bird's song. He sees Mime approaching, and remains without moving, leaning on his sword, observant and self-contained, in his place on the knoll till the close of the following scene.]

Mime

[Steals forward and observes Siegfried from the foreground.]

He weighs in his mind
 The booty's worth;
 Can there by chance
 Have come this way
 A Wanderer wise
 Who talked to the child,
 And taught him crafty runes?
 Doubly sly
 Be then the dwarf;
 My snares must be cunning,
 Cleverly set,
 That with cajoling
 And wily falsehoods
 The insolent boy I may fool.

[He goes nearer to Siegfried and welcomes him with flattering gestures.]

Ha! Welcome, Siegfried!
 Say, bold fighter,
 Hast thou been taught how to fear?

Siegfried

A teacher still is to find.

Mime

But the dragon grim
 Has fallen before thee?
 A fell and fierce monster was he.

Siegfried

Though grim and spiteful the brute,
 I grieve over his death,
 While there live still, unpunished,
 Blacker scoundrels than he was!
 The one who bade me slay
 I hate far more than the slain.

Mime

[*Very friendly.*]

Have patience! Thou wilt not
 Look on me long.

[*Sweetly.*]

In endless sleep
 Soon thine eyelids will be sealed.
 Thy uses are over,

[*As if praising him.*]

Done is the deed;
 The only task left
 For me is to win the booty.
 Methinks that task will not tax me;
 Thou wert always easy to fool.

Siegfried

To me thou art plotting harm, then?

Mime

[*Astonished.*]

What makes thee think that?

[*Continuing tenderly.*]

Siegfried, listen, my own one!
 I have always loathed
 Thee and all that are like thee.
 It was not from love
 That I reared thee with care:
 The gold hid in Fafner's cave
 I worked for as my reward.

[As if he were promising him something nice.]

If thou wilt not yield
 It up to me,

[As if he were ready to lay down his life for him.]

Siegfried, my son,
 Thou plainly must see

[As if in friendly jest.]

I have no choice but to slay thee!

Siegfried

That I am hated
 Pleases me;
 But must I lose my life for thy pleasure?

Mime

[Angrily.]

I never said that;
 Thou hast made a mistake.
 See, thou art weary
 From stress of strife,
 Burning with fever and thirst;
 Mime, the kind one,
 To cool thy thirst
 Brought a quickening draught.
 While thy blade thou didst melt

I brewed thee the drink;
 Touch it, and straight
 Thy sword shall be mine,
 And mine the hoard and Tarnhelm too.

[*Tittering.*]

Siegfried

So thou of my sword
 And all it has won me--
 Ring and booty--wouldst rob me?

Mime

[*Violently.*]

Why wilt mistake so my words!
 Do I drivel or dote?
 I use the utmost
 Pains with my speech,
 That what in my heart
 I mean may be hidden;

And the stupid boy
 Misunderstands what I say!
 Open thy ears, boy,
 And attend to me!
 Hear, now, what Mime means.
 Take this: the drink will refresh thee
 As my drinks oft have done.
 Many a time
 When fretful and bad,
 Though loth enough,
 The draughts I brought thou hast swallowed.

Siegfried

Of a cooling drink
 I were glad;
 Say, how has this one been brewed?

Mime

[Jesting merrily, as if describing to him a pleasant state of intoxication which the liquor is to bring about.]

Hei! just drink it!
 Trust to my skill.
 In mist and darkness
 Soon shall thy senses be sunk;
 None to watch or ward them,
 Stark-stretched shall thy limbs be.
 Thou lying thus,
 'Twere not hard
 To take the booty and hide it;
 But wert thou to awake,
 Nevermore would
 Mime be safe,
 Even owning the ring.
 So with the sword
 He has made so sharp

[With a gesture of extravagant joy.]

First I will hack
 The child's head off!
 Then I shall have both rest and the ring!

[Tittering.]

Siegfried

Thou wouldst, then, slay me when sleeping?

Mime

[Furiously.]

Do what, child? Did I say that?

[He takes pains to assume the utmost tenderness. Carefully and distinctly.]

I only mean
To chop off thy head!

[With the appearance of heartfelt solicitude for Siegfried's health.]

For even if I
Had loathed thee less,
And had not thy scoffs
And my drudgery shameful
So loudly urged to vengeance,

[Gently.]

I should never dare to pause
Till from my path I thrust thee:

[Jestingly again.]

How else could I come by the booty,
Which Alberich covets as well?

[He pours the liquid into the drinking-horn, and offers it to Siegfried with pressing gestures.]

Now, my Wälsung,
Wolf-begot,
Drink the draught and be choked,
And never drink again!

[Tittering.]

Siegfried

[Threatens him with his sword.]

Taste thou my sword,
Loathsome babbler!

[As if seized by violent loathing, he gives Mime a sharp stroke with his sword. Instantly Mime falls dead to the ground. Alberich's voice in mocking laughter from the cleft.]

Siegfried

[Looking at Mime on the ground, quietly hangs his sword again on his belt.]

Envy's wage
Pays Nothung;
'Twas for this that I forged him.

[He picks up Mime's body, carries it to the knoll, and throws it into the cave.]

In the cavern, there,
Lie on the hoard;
With steadfast guile
The gold thou hast gained:
Now let it belong to its master!
And a watchman good
I give thee, that thieves
Never may enter and steal.

[With a great effort he pushes the body of the dragon in front of the entrance to the cave, which it completely stops up.]

There lie thou too,
Dragon grim;
Along with thy foe
Greedy of gain
Thou shalt guard the glittering gold:
So both at last shall rest in peace.

[He looks down thoughtfully into the cave for a time, and then turns slowly to the front of the stage as if tired. He passes his hand over his brow.]

Hot I feel
From the heavy toil;
Fast and furious
Flows my blood,

My hand burns on my head.
High stands the sun in heaven;
From azure heights
Falls his gaze
Through a cloudless sky on my crown.

Pleasant shadows will cool me under the linden.

[He stretches himself out under the lime-tree, and again looks up through the boughs.]

If only, pretty warbler,
So long and so
Rudely disturbed,
I could once more hear thee singing!
On a branch I see thee
Merrily swaying;
Chirping and chattering,
Brothers and sisters
Are happily hovering round.

But I--I am alone,
Without brother or sister;
My mother died,
My father fell,
Unseen by their son!
The one soul I knew
Was a loathsome old dwarf;

[Warmly.]

Love he festered not
By kindness;
Many a cunning
Snare did he set me;
At last I was forced to slay him.

[He looks sorrowfully up at the branches.]

Bird sweet and friendly,
 I ask thee a boon:
 Wilt thou find for me
 A comrade true?--
 Wilt thou choose for me the right one?
 So oft I have called,
 And yet no one has come!

Thou, my friend,
 Wilt manage it better,
 So wise thy counsel has been.

[*Softly.*]

Now sing! I hearken to thy song.

The Wood-bird's voice

Hei! Siegfried has slain
 The deceitful dwarf!
 I know for him now
 A glorious bride.
 She sleeps where rugged rocks soar;
 Ringed is her chamber by fire.
 Who battles the flames,
 Wakens the bride,
 Brünnhilde, wins as reward.

Siegfried

[*Starts up impetuously from his seat.*]

O lovely song,
 Flower-sweet breath!
 Thy yearning music
 Burns in my breast!
 Like leaping flame
 It kindles my heart.
 What races so swift

Through soul and senses?
Sweetest of friends, O say!

[*He listens.*]

The Wood-bird's voice

Grieving yet glad,
Love I am singing;
Blissful, from woe
Weaving my song:
They only who yearn understand.

Siegfried

Forth, forth then,
Swift and rejoicing!
Forth from the wood to the fell!
just one thing more
I would learn, sweet singer:

Say, shall I break through the fire?
Can I awaken the bride?

[*He listens again.*]

The Wood-bird's voice.

No coward wins
Brünnhild' for bride,
Or wakes the maid:
Only a heart without fear.

Siegfried

[*Shouting with joy.*]

The foolish boy
Who has never learned fear,
Dear bird, that dullard am I!
To-day I took endless

Trouble in vain,
To find out what fear was from Fafner.
With longing I burn
Now from Brünnhild' to learn it.
What path soonest leads to the fell?

[The bird flutters up, circles over Siegfried, and flies hesitatingly before him.]

The bird to my goal will guide me.
Fly where thou wilt,
I follow thy flight!

[He runs after the bird, who for a time flies uncertainly hither and thither to tease him; at last he follows him, when, taking a definite direction towards the back, the bird flies away.]

THE THIRD ACT

A wild spot at the foot of a rocky mountain which rises precipitously at the back on the left. Night, storm, lightning and violent thunder. The latter ceases shortly, but the lightning continues to flash from the clouds for some time. The Wanderer enters and walks resolutely towards a cavernous opening in a rock in the foreground, and takes up his position there, leaning on his spear, while he calls the following towards the entrance to the cave.

Wanderer

Waken, Wala!

Wala! Awake!

From thy long sleep,

Slumberer, wake at my call!

I summon thee forth:

Arise! Arise!

From cloud-covered caves

In earth's dim abysses, arise!

Erda! Erda,

Old as the world!

From depths dark and hidden

Rise to the day!

With song I call thee,

I sing to wake thee,

From deep dreams of wisdom

Bid thee arise.

All-knowing one!

Fount of knowledge!

Erda! Erda,

Old as the world!

Waken! Awaken, thou Vala! Awaken!

[A dim bluish light begins to dawn in the cavern. In this light Erda, during the following, rises very gradually from below. She appears to be covered with hoar-frost, which glitters on her hair and garments.]

Erda

Loud is the call;
 Strong the spell that summons;
 I have been roused
 From dark and wise dreams:
 Who wakes me from my sleep?

Wanderer

'Tis I who awake thee
 With song of magic,
 That what in slumber
 Was folded fast may rise.
 The wide earth ranging,
 Far I have roamed,
 Seeking for knowledge,
 Wisdom at fountains primeval.
 No one that lives
 Is wiser than thou;
 Thou knowest all
 In the hidden depths,
 What moves on hill,
 Dale, in water and air.
 Where life is found,
 There thou art breathing;
 And where brains ponder,
 There is thy thought.
 Men say that all
 Knowledge is thine.
 That I might ask of thee counsels
 I have called thee from sleep.

Erda

My sleep is dreaming,
 My dreaming brooding,
 My brooding wisdom's calm working.
 But while I sleep
 The Norns are wakeful:
 They twine the rope,
 And deftly weave what I know.
 The Norns thou shouldst have questioned.

Wanderer

In thrall to the world
 Sit the Norns weaving;
 They cannot alter
 What ordained is.
 But I would fain
 Be taught of thy wisdom
 How a wheel on the roll can be stayed.

Erda

Dark and troubled
 My mind grows through men's deeds.
 A God once subdued
 The Wala's self to his will.
 A wish-maiden
 I bore to Wotan;
 From fields of battle
 She brought him slain heroes;
 Bold is she
 And wise to boot:
 Why waken me?
 Why seek not counsel
 From Erda's and Wotan's child?

Wanderer

The Valkyrie, Brünnhild'?
 Meanest thou her?
 She flouted the storm-controller,
 When, sorely urged, himself he controlled.
 What the swayer and lord
 Of battles longed for,

What he refrained from
 Against his desire,
 Brünnhilde, bold,
 Rash, over-confident,
 When the fight was at fiercest,
 Strove for herself to perform.

War-father
 Punished the maid:
 He pressed slumber into her eyes,
 On the flame-girt rock she sleeps.
 The hallowed maid
 Will waken alone,
 That she may love and wed with a man.
 Small hope of answer from her.

Erda

Dazed have I felt
 Since I woke;
 Wild, confused
 Seems the world!
 The Valkyrie,
 The Wala's child,
 Bound lay, fettered by sleep,
 While her all-knowing mother slept!
 Does revolt's teacher
 Chide revolt?
 Does the deed he urged to
 Anger him, done?
 He who guards the right,

To whom vows are sacred,
 Hinders the right?--
 Reigns through falsehood?
 Let me down to the dark,
 That my wisdom may slumber!

Wanderer

I will not let thee descend,
 For a potent magic I wield.

All-wise one,
 Planted by thee
 The sting of care was
 In Wotan's dauntless heart;
 For, through thy wisdom,
 Downfall and shameful
 Doom were foretold him;
 My mind was fettered by fear.
 Now let the world's
 Wisest of women
 Answer and say
 How a God may conquer his care.

Erda

Thou art not
 What thou hast said.
 Why art thou come, wild and wayward,
 To trouble the Wala's sleep?

Wanderer

Thou art not
 What thou hast dreamed.
 Thy end draws near,
 Mother of wisdom;
 Thy wisdom at war

With me shall perish.
Knowest thou Wotan's will?

[*A long silence.*]

I tell thee
That thou mayest sleep
For evermore unvexed by care.
That the Gods are doomed,
No longer dismays me,
Since I will it so.
What, with myself at war, in anguish,
Despairing, once I resolved,
Gaily, gladly,
With delight I now do.

Mad with disgust I decreed once
The world to the Nibelung's hate,
But now to the valiant Wälsung
I leave it with joy.
One who never knew me,
Though chosen by me,
A boy bold and fearless,
Helped not by Wotan,
Has won the Nibelung's ring.
Blest in love,
Void of all envy,
On him shall fall harmless
Alberich's curse,
For no fear does he know.
Soon thy child and mine,
Brünnhild',
Shall be waked by him;
And when waked
Our child shall achieve
A deed to redeem the world.
So slumber again,

Closing thine eyelids
 Dreaming behold my downfall!
 Whatever comes after,
 The God rejoicing
 Yields to youth ever young.
 Descend, then, Erda,
 Mother of fear!
 World-sorrow!
 Descend! Descend!
 And sleep for aye!

[Erda, whose eyes are already closed, and who has gradually been sinking deeper, disappears entirely. The cavern has become quite dark again.]

Dawn lights up the stage; the storm has ceased. The Wanderer has gone close to the cave, and leans with his back again against it, facing the wings.

Wanderer

Lo! Yonder Siegfried comes.

[He remains where he is without changing his position. Siegfried's wood-bird flutters towards the foreground. Suddenly the bird stops in his direct flight, flutters to and fro in alarm, and disappears quietly towards the back.]

Siegfried

[Enters and stops.]

My bird has vanished from sight!
 With fluttering wings
 And lovely song
 Blithely he showed me the way,
 And then forsook me and fled!
 I must discover
 The rock for myself:
 The path I followed so far
 'Twere best still to pursue.

[He goes towards the back.]

Wanderer

[Still in the same position.]

Boy, pray tell me,
Whither away?

Siegfried

[Halts and turns round.]

Did some one speak?
Perhaps he knows the road.

[He goes nearer to the Wanderer.]

I would find a rock
That by flaming fire is surrounded:
There sleeps a maid
Whom I would awake.

Wanderer

Who bade thee seek
This rock flame-circled?--
Taught thee to yearn for the woman?

Siegfried

It was a singing
Woodland bird;
He gave me welcome tidings.

Wanderer

A wood-bird chatters idly
What no man understands;
How then couldst thou tell
The song's true meaning?

Siegfried

Because of the blood
 Of a dragon grim
 That fell before me at Neidhöhl'--
 The burning blood
 Had scarce touched my tongue
 When the sense of the singer grew plain.

Wanderer

Who was it urged thee on
 To try thy strength,
 And slay this dragon so dread?

Siegfried

My guide was Mime,
 A faithless dwarf:
 What fear is fain he had taught me.
 But 'twas the dragon
 Roused me himself,
 Wrathful, to strike the blow;
 For he threatened me with his jaws.

Wanderer

Who forged the sword
 So hard and keen
 That it slew the daunting foe?

Siegfried

I forged it myself
 When the smith was beaten;
 Swordless else I should have been still.

Wanderer

But who made
 The mighty splinters
 From which the sword was welded strong?

Siegfried

What know I of that?
 I only know
 That the splintered steel was useless
 Were not the sword forged anew.

Wanderer

[Bursts out laughing with gleeful good-humor.]

I fully agree.

Siegfried

[Surprised.]

At what dost thou laugh?
 Prying greybeard!
 Prithee have done;
 Keep me no longer here talking.
 Speak if thou knowest
 Whither my way lies;
 And hold thy tongue
 Unless thou canst tell.

Wanderer

Good boy, have patience!
 If I seem old,
 More need to show me due honour.

Siegfried

What an odd notion!
 My whole life long
 A hateful old man
 Has blocked my pathway;
 Him I at last swept aside.
 Standest thou longer

Trying here to stay me,
I warn thee frankly

[With a significant gesture.]

That thou like Mime shalt fare.

[He goes still nearer to the Wanderer.]

But what art thou like?
Why wearest thou
Such a monstrous hat,
And why hangs it so over thy face?

Wanderer

[Still without altering his position.]

That is the way I wear it
When against the wind I go.

Siegfried

[Inspecting him still more closely.]

But an eye beneath it is wanting.
Perchance by some one
Whose way thou didst
Too boldly bar
It has been struck out.
Take thyself off,
Or else very soon
The other thou shalt lose also!

Wanderer

I see, my son,
Where thou art blind,
And hence thy jaunty assurance.
With the eye that is
Amissing in me

Thou lookest now on the other
That still is left me for sight.

Siegfried

[Who has been listening thoughtfully, now bursts involuntarily into hearty laughter.]

Thy foolish talk sets me laughing!
But come, this nonsense must finish.
At once show me my way;
Then proceed thou too on thine own;
For me further
Use thou hast none:
So speak, or off thou shalt pack!

Wanderer

[Gently.]

Child, didst thou know
Who I am,
Thy scoffs I had been spared!
From one so dear,
Insult hard to endure is.
Long have I loved
Thy radiant race,
Though from my fury
In terror it shrank.

Thou whom I love so,
All too fair one,
Rouse my wrath not to-day;
It would ruin both thee and me.

Siegfried

Still art thou dumb,
Stubborn old man?
Stand to one side, then

That pathway, I know,
 Leads to the slumbering maid;
 For thither the wood-bird
 Was guiding when he flew off.

[It suddenly becomes dark again.]

Wanderer

[Breaking out in anger and assuming a commanding attitude.]

In fear of its life it fled.
 It knew that here
 Was the ravens' lord;
 Dire his plight were he caught!
 The way that it guided
 Thou shalt not go!

Siegfried

[Amazed, falls back and assumes a defiant attitude.]

Hoho! Interferer!
 Who then art thou
 That wilt not let me pass?

Wanderer

Fear thou the rock's defender!
 My might it is
 Holds the maiden fettered by sleep.
 He who would wake her,
 He who would win her,
 Impotent makes me for ever.

A burning sea
 Encircles the maid,
 Fires fiercely glowing
 Surround the rock;

He who craves the bride
The flames must boldly defy.

[He points with his spear towards the rocky heights.]

Look up above!
That light dost thou see?
The surging heat,
The splendour, grows;
Clouds of fire rolling,
Tongues of flame writhing,
Roaring and raging,
Come ravening down.
Thy head now
Is flooded with light;

[A flickering glow, increasing in brightness, appears on the summit of the rock.]

The fire will seize thee,
Seize and devour thee.--
Back, back, there, foolhardy boy!

Siegfried

Stand back, old babb'er, thyself!
For where the fire is burning,
To Brünnhilde yonder I go!

[He advances; the Wanderer bars his way.]

Wanderer

Hast thou no fear of the fire,
Then barred by my spear be thy path!
I still hold the haft
That conquers all;
The sword thou dost wield
It shivered long ago:

Upon my spear eternal
Break it once more.

[He stretches out his spear.]

Siegfried

[Drawing his sword.]

'Tis my father's foe,
Found here at last!
Now, then, for vengeance!

In luck am I!
Brandish thy spear:
My sword will hew it in twain!

[With one stroke he hews the Wanderer's spear in two pieces. Lightning flashes from the spear up towards the rocks, where the light, until now dim, begins to flame brighter and brighter. A violent thunder clap, which quickly dies away, accompanies the stroke.]

Wanderer

[Quietly picking up the pieces of the spear which have fallen at his feet.]

Fare on! I cannot prevent thee!

[He suddenly disappears in utter darkness.]

Siegfried

With his spear in splinters
Vanished the coward!

[The growing brightness of the clouds of fire, which keep sinking down lower and lower, attracts Siegfried's eye.]

Ha! Rapturous fire!
Glorious light!
Shining my pathway
Opens before me.

In fiery flames plunging,
 Through fire I will win to the bride!
 Hoho! Hahei!
 To summon a comrade I call!

[He sets his horn to his lips and plunges into the fiery billows, which, flowing down from the heights, now spread over the foreground. Siegfried, who is soon lost to view, seems, from the sound of his horn, to be ascending the mountain. The flames begin to fade, and change gradually into a dissolving cloud lit by the glow of dawn.]

The thin cloud has resolved itself into a fine rose-coloured veil of mist, which so divides that the upper part rises and disappears, disclosing the bright blue sky of day; whilst on the edge of the rocky height, now becoming visible (exactly the same scene as in the third Act of "The Valkyrie"), a veil of mist reddened by the dawn remains hanging, which suggests the magic fire still flaming below. The arrangement of the scene is exactly the same as at the end of "The Valkyrie." In the foreground, under a wide-spreading fir-tree, lies Brünnhilde in full shining armour, her helmet on her head, and her long shield covering her, in deep sleep.

Siegfried

[Coming from the back, reaches the rocky edge of the summit, and at first shows only the upper part of his body. He looks round him for a long time in amaze. Softly.]

Solitude blissful
 On sun-caressed height!

[He climbs to the summit, and standing on a rock at the edge of the precipice at the back, gazes at the scene in astonishment. He looks into the wood at the side and comes forward a little.]

What lies in shadow,
 Asleep in the wood?
 A charger
 Resting in slumber deep.

[Approaching slowly he stops in surprise when, still at some little distance from her, he sees Brünnhilde.]

What radiant thing lies yonder?
 The steel, how it gleams and glints!
 Is it the glare
 That dazzles me still?
 Shining armour?
 Shall it be mine?

[He lifts up the shield and sees Brünnhilde's form; her face, however, is for the most part hidden by her helmet.]

Ha! It covers a man!
 The sight stirs thoughts sweet and strange!
 The helm must lie

Hard on his head
 Lighter lay he
 Were it unloosed.

[He loosens the helmet carefully and removes it from the head of the sleeper. Long curling hair breaks forth. Tenderly.]

Ah! how fair!

[He stands lost in contemplation.]

Clouds gleaming softly
 Fringe with their fleeces
 This lake of heaven bright;
 Laughing, the glorious
 Face of the sun
 Shines through the billowy clouds!

[He bends lower over the sleeper.]

His bosom is heaving,
 Stirred by his breath;
 Ought I to loosen the breastplate?

[He tries to loosen the breastplate.]

Come, my sword,
Cleave thou the iron!

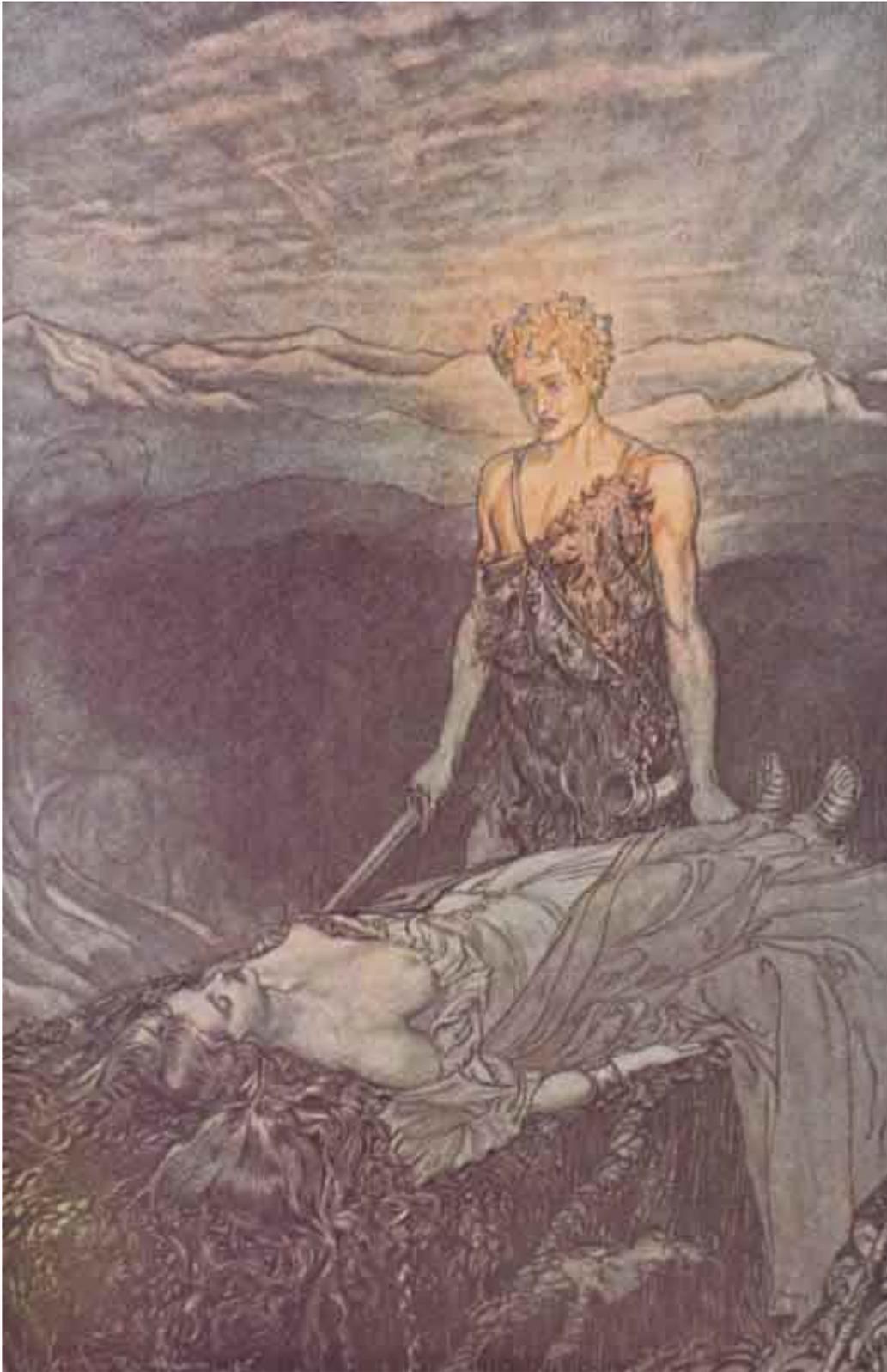
[He draws his sword and gently and carefully cuts through the rings on both sides of the breastplate; he then lifts this off along with the greaves, so that Brünnhilde now lies before him in a soft woman's robe. He draws back startled and amazed.]

That is no man!

[He stares at the sleeper, greatly excited.]

Magical rapture
Pierces my heart;
Fixed is my gaze,
Burning with terror;
I reel, my heart faints and fails!

[He is seized with sudden terror.]



*"Magical rapture
Pierces my heart
Fixed is my gaze,
Burning with terror;
I reel, my heart faints and fails!"*

On whom shall I call,
 For aid imploring?
 Mother! Mother!
 Remember me!

[He sinks as if fainting on to Brünnhilde's bosom; then he starts up sighing.]

How waken the maid,
 Causing her eyelids to open?

[Tenderly.]

Her eyelids to open?
 What if her gaze strike me blind!
 How shall I dare
 To look on their light?
 All rocks and sways
 And swirls and revolves;
 Uttermost longing
 Burns and consumes me;
 My hand on my heart,
 It trembles and shakes!
 What ails thee, coward?
 Is this what fear means?
 O mother I Mother!
 Thy dauntless child!

[Very tenderly.]

A woman lying asleep
 Has taught him what fear is at last!
 How conquer my fear?
 How brace my heart?
 That, myself, I waken,
 I must waken the sleeper!

[As he approaches the sleeping figure again he is overcome by tenderer emotions at the sight. He bends down lower; sweetly.]

Softly quivers
Her flower-sweet mouth!
Its lovely trembling
Has charmed my despair!
Ah! And the fragrant,
Blissful warmth of her breath!

[Is if in despair.]

Awaken! Awaken,
Maiden divine!

[He gazes at her.]

She hears me not.
New life from the sweetest
Of lips I will suck, then,
Even though kissing I die!

[He sinks, as if dying, on to the sleeping figure, and, closing his eyes, fastens his lips on Brünnhilde's. Brünnhilde opens her eyes. Siegfried starts up, and remains standing before her.]

Brünnhilde

[Rises slowly to a sitting posture. Raising her arms, she greets earth and sky with solemn gestures on her return to consciousness.]

Sun, I hail thee!
Hail, O light!
Hail, O glorious day!
Long I have slept;
I am awake.
What hero broke
Brünnhilde's sleep?



**"Sun, I hail thee
Hail, O light!
Hail, O glorious day!"**

Siegfried

[Awed and entranced by her look and her voice, stands as if spellbound.]

Through the fierce fires flaming
 Round this rock I burst;
 I unloosened thy helmet strong:
 I awoke thee;
 Siegfried am I.

Brünnhilde

[Sitting upright.]

Gods, I hail you!
 Hail, O World!
 Hail, O Earth, in thy glory!
 My sleep is over now,
 My eyes open.
 It is Siegfried
 Who bids me wake!

Siegfried

[Breaking forth in rapturous exaltation.]

I hail thee, mother
 Who gave me birth!
 Hail, O Earth,
 That nourished my life
 So that I see those eyes
 Beam on me, blest among men!

Brünnhilde

I hail the mother
 Who gave thee birth!
 Hail, O Earth,
 That nourished thy life!

No eye dared see me but thine;
To thee alone might I wake!

[Both remain full of beaming ecstasy, lost in mutual contemplation.]

Brünnhilde

O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Hero most blest!
Of life the awaker,
Conquering light!
O joy of the world, couldst know
How thou wert always loved!
Thou wert my gladness,
My care wert thou!
Thy life I sheltered
Before it was thine;
My shield was thy shelter
Ere thou wert born:
So long loved wert thou, Siegfried!

Siegfried

[Softly and timidly.]

My mother did not die, then?
Did the dear one but sleep?

Brünnhilde

[Smiles and stretches her hand out kindly towards him.]

Adorable child!
Nevermore thy mother will greet thee!
Thyself am I,
If I be blest with thy love.

All things I know
Known not to thee;

Yet only of my love
Born is my wisdom.

O Siegfried! Siegfried
Conquering light!
I loved thee always,
For I alone
Divined the thought hid by Wotan;
Hidden thought I dared not
So much as utter;
Thought that I thought not,
Feeling it only;
For which I worked,
Battled and strove,
Defying even
Him who conceived it;
For which in penance
Prisoned I lay,
Because thought it was not,
But felt alone!
For what the thought was--
Say, canst thou guess it?--
Was love of thee, nothing but that!

Siegfried

How wondrous sounds
Thy rapturous song!
But dark the meaning to me.

[*Tenderly.*]

Of thine eyes the splendour
I see plain,
I can feel thee breathing
Soft and warm,
Sweet can hear
The singing of thy voice,

But what thou sayest I strive
 Vainly to understand.
 I cannot grasp clearly
 Things so far distant;
 Needed is every sense
 To feel and behold thee!
 By laming fear
 Fettered am I,
 For how to fear
 Thou hast taught me at last;
 Thou who hast bound me
 In bonds of such power,
 Give me my courage again!

[He remains in great excitement with his yearning gaze fixed on her.]

Brünnhilde

[Turns her head gently aside and looks towards the wood.]

I see there Grane,
 My sacred horse;
 In gladness he grazes
 Who slept with me!
 He too has by Siegfried been waked.

Siegfried

[Without changing his position.]

My gaze on a mouth
 Most lovely is feasting;
 My lips are afire
 With passionate yearning
 For the pasture sweet that I look on!

Brünnhilde

[Points to her armour, which she now perceives.]

I see there the shield
 That sheltered heroes;
 And there is the helmet
 That hid my head:
 It shields, it hides me no more!

Siegfried

[*With fire.*]

By a glorious maid
 My heart has been hurt

Wounds in my head
 A woman has struck:
 I came without shield or helm!

Brünnhilde

[*With increased sadness.*]

I see there the breastplate's
 Glittering steel;
 A keen-edged sword
 Sundered the rings,
 From the form of the maiden
 Loosened the mail:
 Nor shelter nor shield is left
 To the weak and sorrowful maid!

Siegfried

[*With heat.*]

Through billows of fire
 I battled to thee,
 No buckler or breastplate
 Sheltered or screened;
 The flames have won
 Their way to my heart;

My blood hot-surgings
 Rushes and leaps;
 A ravens fire
 Is kindled within me:
 The flames that shone
 Round Brünnhilde's rock
 Are burning now in my breast!
 O maid, extinguish the fire!
 Calm the commotion and rage!

[He has embraced her passionately.]

Brünnhilde

[Springs up, resists him with the utmost strength of terror, and flies to the other side of the stage.]

No God's touch have I known!
 With awe the heroes
 Greeted the maiden:
 Holy came she from Walhall.
 Woe's me! Woe's me!
 Woe the affront,
 The bitter disgrace!

He wounds me sore
 Who waked me from sleep!
 He has broken breastplate and helm;
 Now I am Brünnhild' no more.

Siegfried

Thou art to me
 The dreaming maid still;
 Brünnhilde lies
 Lapped still in sleep.
 Awake, be a woman to me!

Brünnhilde

[*Bewildered.*]

Confused are my senses,
My mind is blank:
Wisdom, dost thou forsake me?

Siegfried

Said not thy song
Thy wisdom drew
Its light from thy love of me?

Brünnhilde

[*Staring before her.*]

Shadows drear-falling
Darken my gaze;
Mine eyes see dimly,
The light dies out,
Deep is the dark.
From dread-haunted mists
Fear in a frenzy
Comes writhing forth;
Terror stalks me
And grows with each stride!

[*She hides her eyes with her hands in violent terror.*]

Siegfried

[*Gently removing her hands from her eyes.*]

Dread lies dark
On eyelids bound;
With the fetters vanish
The fear and gloom;
Rise from the dark and behold
Bright as the sun is the day.

Brünnhilde

[*Much agitated.*]

Flaunting my shame,
 Bright as the sun shines the day!
 O Siegfried! Siegfried!
 Pity my woe!
 I have always
 Lived and shall live--
 Always in sweet,
 Rapturous yearning,
 And always to make thee blest!

O Siegfried! Glorious
 Wealth of the world!
 Laughing hero!
 Life of the earth!
 Ah, forbear!
 Leave me in peace!
 Touch me not,
 Mad with delirious frenzy!
 Break me not,
 Bring me not under thy yoke,
 Undo not the loved one so dear!

Hast thou rejoiced
 Thyself to see
 Reflected clear in the stream?
 If into wavelets
 The water were stirred,
 And ruffled the limpid
 Calm of the brook,
 Thy face would not be there,
 Only water's rippling unrest.
 So untouched let me stay,
 Trouble me not,
 And thy face
 Mirrored bright in me

Will smile to thee always,
Gay and merry and glad!

O Siegfried,
Radiant child,
Love thyself
And leave me in peace;
O bring not thine own to naught!

Siegfried

I love thee;
Didst thou but love me!
Myself I have lost;
Ah, would thou wert won!
A fair-flowing flood
Before me rolls;
With all my senses
Nothing I see
But buoyant, beautiful billows.
If it refuse
To mirror my face,
Just as I am,
To assuage my fever,
Myself I will plunge
Straight in the stream:--
If only the billows
Would blissfully drown me,
My yearning lost in the flood!
Awaken, Brünnhilde!
Waken, O maid!
Laughing and living,
Sweetest delight,
Be mine! Be mine! Be mine!

Brünnhilde

[*With deep feeling.*]

Thine, Siegfried!
I was from of old!

Siegfried

[*With fire.*]

What thou hast been
That be thou still!

Brünnhilde

Thine I will
Always be!

Siegfried

What thou wilt be
Be thou to-day!
Clasped in my arms
And closely embraced,
Heart upon heart
Beating in rapture,
Glances aglow,
And breath mingled hungrily,
Eye in eye and
Mouth on mouth!
All that thou wert
And wilt be, be thou it now!
The fear and the fever would vanish
Were Brünnhild' now mine!

Brünnhilde

Were I now thine?

Heavenly calm
Is tossing and raging;
Light that was pure
Flames into passion;

Wisdom divine
 Forsakes me and flies;
 Jubilant love
 Has scared it away!

If I be thine?
 Siegfried! Siegfried!
 Canst thou not see?
 By the blaze of my eyes
 Thou art not struck blind?
 In my arms' embrace
 Thou surely must burn!

As my blood like a torrent
 Surges and leaps,
 The fire fierce-flaming
 Dost thou not feel?
 Fearest thou, Siegfried?
 Fearest thou not
 The wild, love-frenzied maid?

Siegfried

[With a shock of joy.]

Ha!
 As the blood swift-surgings is kindled,
 As our eyes devour one another,
 As our arms cling close in their rapture,
 Dauntless again
 My courage swells,
 And the fear I failed
 For so long to learn,
 The fear that I scarcely
 Learned from thee--
 The stupid boy fears
 That fear is completely forgot!

[With the last words he has involuntarily let Brünnhilde go.]

Brünnhilde

[Laughing wildly with joy.]

Oh, valorous boy!
 Oh, glorious hero!
 Unwitting source
 Of wonderful deeds!
 Laughing, laughing I love thee;
 Laughing welcome my blindness;
 Laughing let us go doomwards,
 Laughing go down to death!

Farewell Walhall's
 Radiant world,
 Its stately halls
 In the dust laid low!

Farewell, glittering
 Pomp divine!
 End in bliss,
 O immortal race!
 Norns, rend in sunder
 Your rope of runes!
 Dusk steal darkly
 Over the Gods!
 Night of their downfall
 Dimly descend!
 Now Siegfried's star
 Is rising for me;
 He is for ever
 And for aye,
 My wealth, my world,
 My all in all:
 Love ever radiant,
 Laughing death!

Siegfried

[While Brünnhilde repeats the foregoing, beginning at "Farewell Walhall's Radiant world".]

Laughing thou wakest,
Thou my delight!
Brünnhilde lives,
Brünnhilde laughs!
Hail, O day
In glory arisen!
Hail, O Sun
That shines from on high!

Hail, O light
From the darkness sprung!
Hail, O world
Where Brünnhilde dwells!

She wakes! She lives!
She greets me with laughter!
Splendour streams
From Brünnhilde's star!

She is for ever
And for aye
My wealth, my world,
My all in all,



Brünnhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms

Love ever radiant,
Laughing death!

[Brünnhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms. The curtain falls.]

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

CHARACTERS

SIEGFRIED

GUNTHER

HAGEN

ALBERICH

BRÜNNHILDE

GUTRUNE

WALTRAUTE

THE THREE NORNS

THE RHINE-MAIDENS

VASSALS

WOMEN

SCENES OF ACTION

PRELUDE: ON THE VALKYRIES' ROCK

ACT I. THE HALL OF GUNTHER'S DWELLING ON THE RHINE.

THE VALKYRIES' ROCK

ACT II. IN FRONT OF GUNTHER'S HALL

ACT III. A WOODED REGION ON THE RHINE. GUNTHER'S HALL

PRELUDE

The curtain rises slowly. The scene is the same as at the close of the second day, on the Valkyries' rock; night. In the background, from below, firelight shines. The three Norns, tall women in long, dark, veil-like drapery. The first (eldest) lies in the foreground, to the right, under the spreading pine-tree; the second (younger) is stretched on a shelving rock in front of the cave; the third (youngest) fits in the centre at the back on a rock near the peak. Motionless, gloomy silence.

The First Norn

What light glimmers there?

The Second Norn

Is it already dawn?

The Third Norn

Loge's host

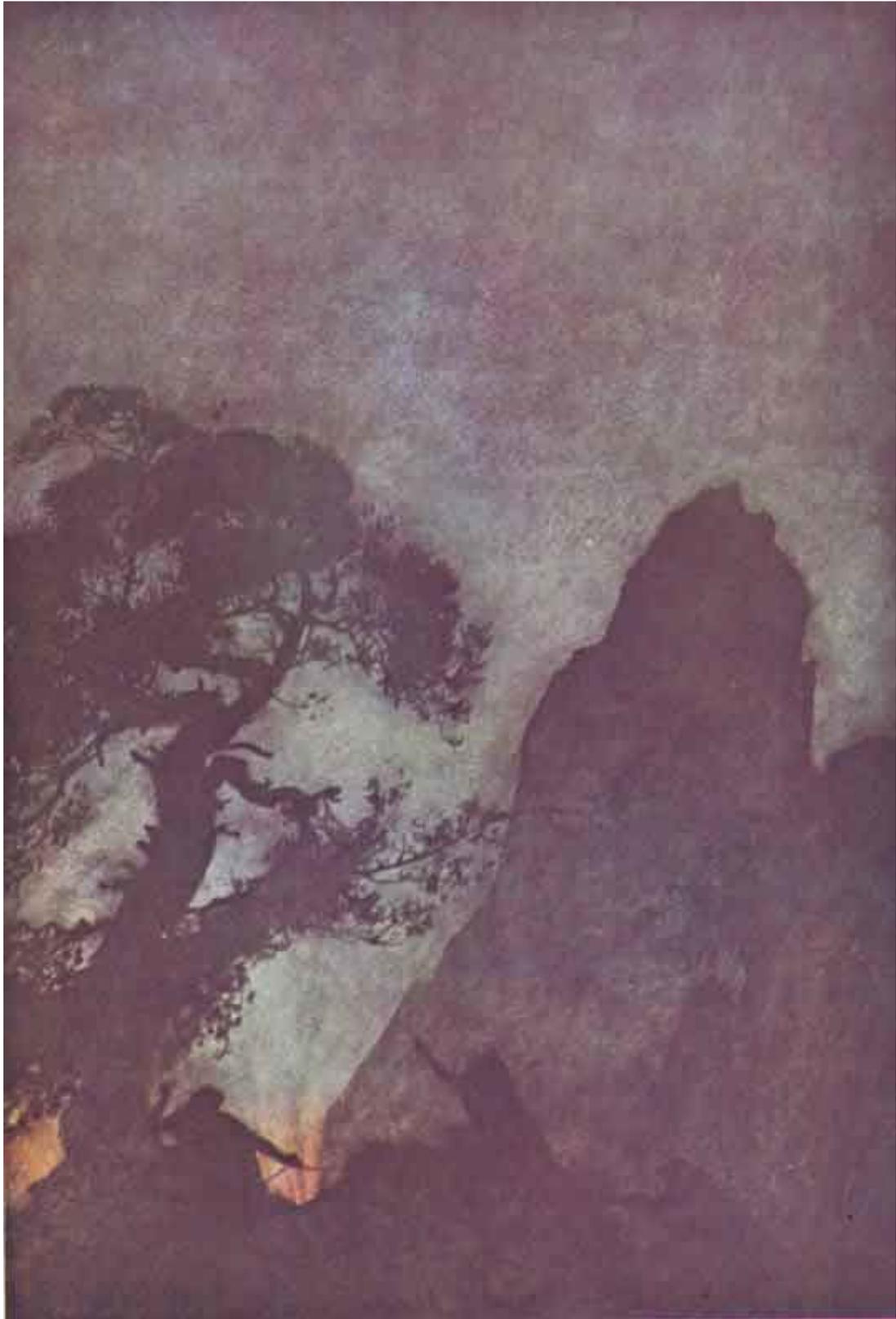
Glows in flame around the rock.

It is night.

Why spin we not, singing the while?

The Second Norn

[*To the first.*]



The three Norns

Where for our spinning and singing
 Wilt thou fasten the rope?

The First Norn

*[While she loosens a golden ropes from herself and ties one end of it to a
 branch of the pine-tree.]*

I sing and wind the rope
 Badly or well, as may be.
 At the world-ash-tree
 Once I wove,
 When from the stem
 There bourgeoned strong
 The boughs of a sacred wood.
 In the shadows cool
 A fountain flowed;
 Wisdom whispered
 Low from its wave;
 Of holy things I sang.

A dauntless God
 Came to drink at the well;
 For the draught he drank
 He paid with the loss of an eye.
 From the world-ash-tree
 Wotan broke a holy bough;
 From the bough he cut
 And shaped the shaft of a spear.

As time rolled on the wood
 Wasted and died of the wound;
 Sere, leafless and barren,
 Wan withered the tree;
 Sadly the flow
 Of the fountain failed;
 Troubled grew
 My sorrowful song.

And now no more
 At the world-ash-tree I weave;
 I needs must fasten
 Here on the pine-tree my rope.
 Sing, O sister--
 Catch as I throw--
 Canst thou tell us why?

The Second Norn

[Winds the rope thrown to her round a projecting rock at the entrance of the cave.]

Runes of treaties
 Well weighed and pondered
 Cut were by Wotan
 In the shaft,
 Which wielding, he swayed the world.
 A hero bold
 In fight then splintered the spear,
 The hallowed haft
 With its treaties cleaving in twain.
 Then bade Wotan
 Walhall's heroes

Hew down the world-ash-tree
 Forthwith,
 Both the stem and boughs sere and barren.
 The ash-tree sank;
 Sealed was the fountain that flowed.
 Round the sharp edge
 Of the rock I wind the rope
 Sing, O sister,
 Catch as I throw;
 Further canst thou tell?

The Third Norn

[Catching the rope and throwing the end behind her.]

The castle stands
 By giants upreared.
 With the Gods and the holy
 Host of the heroes
 Wotan sits in his hall;
 And round the walls
 Hewn logs are heaped,
 High up-piled,
 Ready for burning:
 The world-ash-tree these were once.
 When the wood
 Flares up brightly and burns,
 In its fire
 Shall the fair hall be consumed.
 And then shall the high Gods' downfall
 Dawn in darkness for aye.
 Know ye yet more,
 Begin anew winding the rope;
 Again I throw it
 Back from the north.
 Spin and sing, O my sister.

[She throws the rope to the second Norn, and the second throws it to the first, who loosens the rope from the bough and ties it on to another.]

The First Norn

[Looking towards the back.]

Is it the dawn,
 Or the firelight that flickers?
 Grief-darkened is my gaze.
 The holy past
 I can scarce remember,
 When Loge burst

Of old into burning fire.
Dost thou know how he fared?

The Second Norn

[Winding the rope which has been thrown to her round the rock again.]

Overcome by Wotan's
Spear and its magic,
Loge worked for the God
Then, to win his freedom
Gnawed with his tooth
The solemn runes on the shaft.
So with the potent
Spell of the spear-point
Wotan confined him
Flaming where Brünnhilde slumbered.
Canst thou tell us the end?

The Third Norn

With the broken spear's
Sharp-piercing splinters
Wotan wounded
The blazing one deep in the breast;
Ravening fire
Springs from the wound,
And this is thrown
'Mid the world-ash-tree's
Hewn logs heaped ready for burning.
Would ye know
When that will be,
Wind, O sisters, the rope!

[She throws the rope back; the second Norn winds it up and throws it again to the first.]

The First Norn

[Fastening the rope again.]

The night wanes,
 Dark grows my vision;
 I cannot find
 The threads of the rope;
 The strands are twisted and loose.
 A horrible sight
 Wildly vexes mine eyes:
 The Rhinegold
 That black Alberich stole.
 Knowest thou more thereof?

The Second Norn

[With laborious haste winds the rope round the jagged rock at the mouth of the cave.]

The rock's sharp edge
 Is cutting the rope;
 The threads loosen
 Their hold and grow slack;
 They droop tangled and frayed.
 From woe and wrath
 Rises the Nibelung's ring
 A curse of revenge
 Ruthlessly gnaws at the strands:--
 Canst thou the end foretell?

The Third Norn

[Hastily catching the rope which is thrown to her.]

The rope is too short,
 Too loose it hangs;
 It must be stretched,
 Pulled straighter, before
 Its end can reach to the north!



The Norns vanish

[She pulls hard at the rope, which breaks.]

It breaks!

The Second Norn

It breaks!

The Third Norn

It breaks!

[They take the pieces of broken rope and bind their bodies together with them.]

The Three Norns

So ends wisdom eternal!

The wise ones

Will utter no more.

Descend to Erda! Descend!

[They vanish. The dawn grows brighter; the firelight from the valley gradually fades. Sunrise; then broad daylight.]

[Siegfried and Brünnhilde enter from the cave. He is fully armed; she leads her horse by the bridle.]

Brünnhilde

Belovèd hero,

Poor my love were

Wert thou thereby

Kept from new deeds.

One single doubt

Yet makes me linger:

The fear my service

Has been too small.

The things the Gods taught me

I could give:

All the rich hoard
 Of holy runes;
 But by the hero
 Who holds my heart
 I have been robbed
 Of my maiden valour.
 In wisdom weak,
 Although strong in will;
 In love so rich,
 In power so poor--
 Must thou not scorn
 Her lack of riches
 Who, though so eager,
 Can give nothing more?

Siegfried

Wonderful woman, more
 Thy gifts than I can guard!
 O chide not if thy teaching
 Has left me still untaught.

[*With fire.*]

That Brünnhilde lives for me--
 To that lore I hold fast;
 And one lesson I have learned--
 Brünnhilde to remember!

Brünnhilde

If thou wouldst truly love me,
 Think of thyself alone,
 And of thy deeds of daring!
 The raging fire remember
 That fearless thou didst fare through
 When around the rock it burned--

Siegfried

That I might conquer Brünnhild'!

Brünnhilde

Think too of the shield-hidden maid
 Thou didst find there lapped in slumber,
 And whose helmet hard thou didst break--

Siegfried

Brünnhilde to awaken!

Brünnhilde

Those oaths remember
 That unite us;
 The faith and truth
 That are between us,
 And evermore
 The love we live for;
 Brünnhilde in thy breast
 Will deeply bum then for aye!

[She embraces Siegfried.]

Siegfried

Must I leave thee, O love,
 In thy holy fortress of fire,

[He has taken Alberich's ring from his finger, and holds it out to Brünnhilde.]

This ring of mine I give thee;
 Let it pay for thy runes.
 Of whatever deeds I did
 The virtue lies therein.
 By my hand was the dragon grim,
 Who long had guarded it, slain;
 Keep thou the gold and its might
 As token true of my love!

Brünnhilde

[Putting on the ring in rapturous delight.]

I covet it more than all else!
 For the ring take Grane, my horse.
 Through the air with me
 He galloped once boldly,
 But lost with mine
 Was his magic art;
 Upon clouds and storm,
 Through thunder and lightning
 No more
 Gallantly now will he sweep!
 But if thou lead the way,
 Even through fire
 Fearlessly Grane will follow.
 For henceforth, hero,
 Thou art his master!
 Entreat him well;
 He knows thy voice;
 O, greet him often
 In Brünnhilde's name!

Siegfried

Then every deed that I dare
 Will be achieved through thy virtue;
 All my battles thou wilt choose,
 And my victories will be thine.
 Upon thy good horse riding,
 And sheltered by thy shield,
 No longer Siegfried am I,
 But only Brünnhilde's arm

Brünnhilde

O were but Brünnhilde thy soul too!

Siegfried

Through her my courage burns high.

Brünnhilde

Then wert thou Siegfried and Brünnhild'.

Siegfried

Where I am, there thy abode is.

Brünnhilde

[*With animation.*]

Then a waste is my hall of rock?

Siegfried

Made one, both there abide.

Brünnhilde

[*Greatly moved.*]

Ye Gods, O ye holy
Race of immortals,
Feast ye your eyes
On this love-hallowed pair!
Apart--who shall divide us?
Divided--still we are one!



Siegfried leaves Brünnhilde in search of adventure.

Siegfried

Hail, O Brünnhilde,
Beautiful star!
Hail, love and its glory!

Brünnhilde

Hail, O Siegfried,
Conquering light!
Hail, life and its glory!
Hail, conquering light!

Both

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!

[Siegfried leads the horse quickly to the edge of the sloping rock, Brünnhilde following him. Siegfried disappears with the horse down behind the projecting rock, so that he is no longer visible to the audience.]

Brünnhilde is thus suddenly left standing alone on the edge of the slope, and gazes down into the valley after Siegfried. Her gestures show that Siegfried has vanished from her sight. Siegfried's horn is heard from below.

Brünnhilde listens, and steps further out on the slope. She catches sight of Siegfried in the valley again, and waves to him joyfully. Her happy smiles seem to reflect the air of the merrily departing hero.]

THE FIRST ACT

The hall of the Gibichungs on the Rhine. This is quite open at the back. A open shore stretching to the river occupies the background. Rocky heights enclose the shore. Gunther and Gutrune on a throne at one side, before which stands a table with drinking vessels on it. In front of this Hagen is seated.

Gunther

Give ear, Hagen;
Tell me the truth:
Is my fame on the Rhine
Worthy of Gibich's son?

Hagen

I envy thee
Thy fame and thy glory;
Thy great renown was foretold
To me by Grimhild' our mother.

Gunther

I envy thee,
So envy not me.
I, as first-born, rule,
But the wisdom is thine.
Half-brother's feud
Could scarce be laid better;
Asking thus of my renown,
'Tis thy wisdom that I praise.

Hagen

My words I withdraw,
Thy fame might be more:
I know of precious treasures
That the Gibichung has not yet won.

Gunther

Hide these, and I
Withdraw my praise.

Hagen

In summer's full-ripened glory
Blooms the Gibich stock,
Thou, Gunther, still unwived,
Thou, Gutrun', still unwed.

Gunther

Whom wouldst thou have me woo,
To win more wide renown?

Hagen

One I know of,
None nobler in the world.
She dwells on soaring rocks,
Her chamber is circled by fire;
And he who would Brünnhild' woo
Must break through the daunting flame.

Gunther

Suffices my strength for the task?

Hagen

For one stronger still it is decreed.

Gunther

Who is that hero unmatched?

Hagen

Siegfried, the Wälsung's son;
He is the hero bold.
A twin-born pair,

Whom fate turned to lovers,
 Siegmund and Sieglinde,
 Had as their offspring this child.
 In the woods he grew and waxed strong.
 'Tis he that Gutrun' must wed.

Gutrune

[*Shyly.*]

Tell me what deed of high valour
 Made this hero the first in renown.

Hagen

At Neidhöhle
 A huge dragon lay,
 Who guarded the Nibelung's gold.
 He was slain,
 And his horrid jaws closed
 By Siegfried's invincible sword.

From this colossal deed
 The fame of the hero dawned.

Gunther

[*Thoughtfully.*]

They say that a priceless treasure
 The Niblungs had in their hoard.

Hagen

The man who could use its spell
 Were lord of the world evermore.

Gunther

And Siegfried won it in fight?

Hagen

He has the Niblungs in thrall.

Gunther

And Brünnhild' no other can win?

Hagen

To no other will the flames yield.

Gunther

[Rises angrily from his seat.]

Why wake dissension and doubt?

Why stir up my desire

And yearning for joys

That cannot be won?

[He walks to and fro much agitated.]

Hagen

[Without leaving his seat causes Gunther to pull up as he approaches him, by a gesture of mysterious import.]

Would not Brünnhilde

Be thy bride,

Were she by Siegfried brought home?

Gunther

[Turns away doubtful and angry.]

But how could I force this man

To woo the bride for me?

Hagen

[As before.]

Thy simple prayer would force him,

Gutrun' winning him first.

Gutrune

Thou mockest, cruel Hagen!
 What arts have I to bind him?
 The greatest hero
 In all the world
 Has long ere this by the fairest
 Women on earth been loved.

Hagen

[Bending confidentially towards Gutrune.]

What of the drink in the chest?

[More secretly.]

In me who won it have more faith.
 To thee in love it will bind
 Him whom thy heart most desires.

[Gunther has come to the table again, and, leaning against it, pays close attention.]

Hither did Siegfried come,
 And taste of this potion of herbs,
 He would straight forget he had looked
 On any woman before,
 Or been by woman approached.
 Now answer:
 Think ye my counsel good?

Gunther

[Starting up suddenly.]

Now Grimhild' be praised,
 Who for brother gave us thee.

Gutrune

Siegfried fain I would behold!

Gunther

But how can he be found?

[A horn on the stage, from the background on the left, very loud but distant.]

Hagen

[Listens and turns to Gunther.]

Merrily hunting
 After renown
 Across the world
 As through a wood,
 Belike in his chase he will come
 To the Gibich's realm on the Rhine.

Gunther

Heartily welcome were he.

[A horn on the stage, nearer, but still distant. Both listen.]

A horn from the Rhine I hear.

Hagen

[Looks down the river and calls towards the back.]

A man and horse on board a boat
 His horn how gaily he winds!

[A horn on the stage sounds nearer. Gunther stops halfway listening.]

See the leisurely stroke,
 And the indolent arm
 Against the stream
 Urging the boat!
 So skilful a hand
 On the swinging oar
 Can be but his

Who the dragon slew:--
It is Siegfried-surely no other!

Gunther

Will he go by?

Hagen

[Making a trumpet of his hands, calls towards the river.]

Hoiho! Blithe hero,
Whither bound?

Siegfried

[From the distance.]

I seek the son of Gibich.

Hagen

I bid thee welcome to Gunther's hall.

[Siegfried in a boat appears at the shore.]

This way! Stop here and land!

[Siegfried brings his boat to the shore. Hagen makes it fast with the chain. Siegfried springs ashore with his horse. Gunther has come down and joined Hagen.]

Hagen

Hail, Siegfried, hero bold!

[Gutrune gazes at Siegfried from the throne in astonishment. Gunther prepares to offer him friendly greetings. All stand fixed in silent mutual contemplation.]

Siegfried

Who is Gibich's son?

[Leaning on his horse, remains quietly standing by the boat.]

Gunther

I am he thou dost seek.

Siegfried

Thy fame has reached me
From the Rhine;
Now fight with me,
Or be my friend.

Gunther

Be thou mine;
Thou art welcome!

Siegfried

Where stable my horse?

Hagen

Leave him to me.

Siegfried

[Turning to Hagen.]

My name thou knowest;
Where have we met?

Hagen

I guessed from thy strength
Who thou must be.

Siegfried

[As he hands over the horse to Hagen.]

Be careful of Grane,
For thou hast never

Led by the rein
So noble a steed.

[Hagen leads the horse away. While Siegfried looks thoughtfully after him, Gutrune, obeying a sign of Hagen's which Siegfried does not notice, goes to her room through a door on the left. Gunther comes into the hall with Siegfried, whom he has invited to accompany him.]

Gunther

My father's ancient hall,
O hero, greet in gladness!
All thou beholdest,
Where'er thou art,
Treat as thine own henceforward
Thine is my kingdom--
Land and folk;
By my body I swear it!
Yea, myself I am thine.

Siegfried

Nor land nor folk have I to give,
Nor father's house nor hall;
In my body
Is all my wealth;
As I live it grows less.
But a sword have I
Which I welded;
Let my sword be my witness!--
That and myself I bestow.

Hagen

[Who has come back and now stands behind Siegfried.]

Of the Nibelungs' treasure
Rumour names thee the lord.

Siegfried

[Turning round to Hagen.]

I almost forgot the hoard,
So lightly I prize its worth.
I left it lying in a cavern,
Where a dragon once held watch.

Hagen

And nothing took at all?

Siegfried

Only this, not knowing its use.

Hagen

It is the Tarnhelm,
The gem of the Nibelung's art;
Its use, when worn on thy head,
Is to change thy shape as thou wilt;
If fain to be borne afar,
In a flash lo! thou art there!
Didst thou take nothing besides?

Siegfried

Yes, a ring.

Hagen

Which safe thou dost hold?

Siegfried

[Tenderly.]

'Tis held by a woman fair.

Hagen

[Aside.]

Brünnhild'!

Gunther

Nay, Siegfried, let us not barter;
All I have a bauble poor,
Matched with thy treasure, would be.
I will serve thee without reward.

[Hagen has gone to Gutrune's door, and now opens it.]

Gutrune

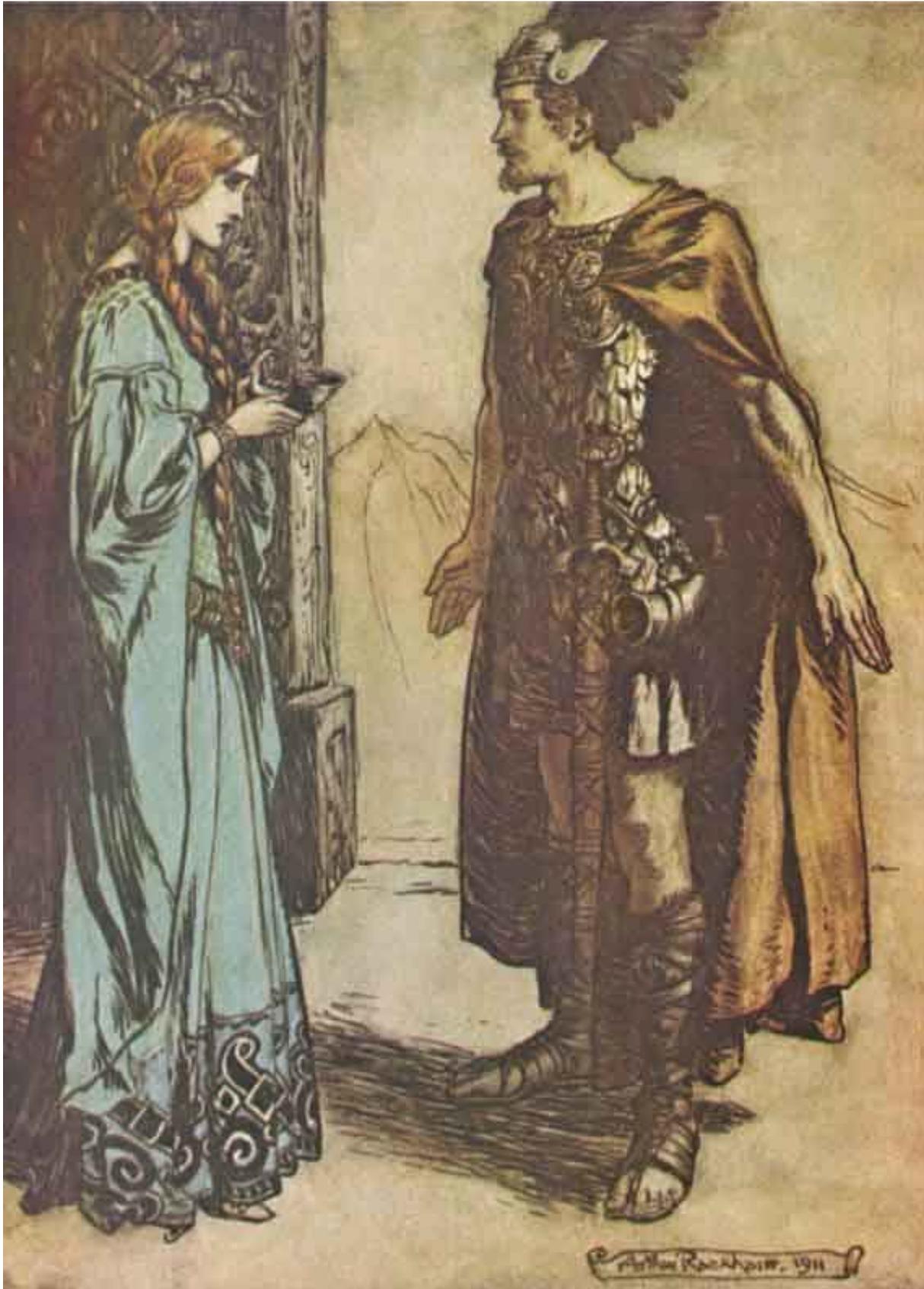
[Enters carrying a full drinking horn, with which she approaches Siegfried.]

Welcome, O guest,
To Gibich's house!
'Tis his daughter gives thee to drink.

Siegfried

[Bows in a friendly manner and takes the horn, which he holds thoughtfully before him.]

Were all forgot
Thou gavest to me,
One lesson



Siegfried hands the drinking-horn back to Gutrune and gazes at her with sudden passion

I will never forget;
 So this first draught
 With love undying,
 Brünnhild', I drink to thee!

[He puts the drinking-horn to his lips and takes a long draught; then he hands it back to Gutrune, who, ashamed and confused, casts down her eyes. Siegfried gazes at her with sudden passion.]

Siegfried

O thou who dost scorch
 And blind with thine eyes,
 Why sink them abashed by my gaze?

[Gutrune, blushing, looks up at him.]

O lovely maid,
 Lower thine eyes;
 My heart is aflame,
 Burnt by their light;
 They kindle my blood; it flows
 In devouring torrents of fire.

[With a trembling voice.]

Gunther, what name is thy sister's?

Gunther

Gutrune.

Siegfried

[Softly.]

Can those be good runes
 That in her eyes I am reading?

[He ardently seizes Gutrune's hand.]

With thy brother I was fain to serve;
 His pride my prayer scorned.
 Were I to pray the same of thee,
 Wouldst thou like him be proud?

[Gutrune, involuntarily meets Hagen's eye. She bows her head humbly, and, expecting her feeling of unworthiness with a gesture, leaves the hall with faltering steps.]

Siegfried

[Attentively watched by Hagen and Gunther, gazes after Gutrune as if entranced.]

Gunther, hast thou a wife?

Gunther

I am not wed,
 Nor, it would seem,
 Likely to find a wife!
 My heart on one I have set
 Whom there is no way to win.

Siegfried

[Turns with animation to Gunther.]

In what canst thou fail
 With me for friend?

Gunther

On rocky heights her home;
 Surrounded by fire her hall;

Siegfried

[Interrupting in wondering haste.]

"On rocky heights her home
 Surrounded by fire her hall" . . .?

Gunther

He only who braves the fire . . .

Siegfried

"He only who braves the fire" . . . ?

[As if making an intense effort to remember something.]

Gunther

May Brünnhilde's wooer be.

[Siegfried shows by a gesture that at the mention of Brünnhilde's name all remembrance of her has faded.]

I dare not essay the dread mountain
The flames would not fall for me.

Siegfried

[Awakens from his dreamy state, and turns to Gunther high spirited and gay.]

For thee I will win her,
Of fire I have no fear;
For thy man am I,
And my strength is thine,
If Gutrun' I win as my wife.

Gunther

Gutrune gladly I grant thee

Siegfried

Thou shalt have Brünnhilde then.

Gunther

But how wilt deceive her?

Siegfried

I will wear the Tarnhelm,
And appear in thy form.

Gunther

Then let the oath now be sworn!

Siegfried

Blood-brotherhood
Sworn be by oath!

[Hagen fills a drinking-horn with fresh wine; he holds it out to Siegfried and Gunther, who cut their arms with their swords and hold them for a short pace over the horn; then they each lay two fingers on the horn, which Hagen continues to hold between them.]

Siegfried and Gunther

Quickening blood
Of blossoming life
Lo! I drop in the horn!
Bravely mixed
In brotherly love,

Bloom our blood in the draught!
Troth I drink to the friend
Glad and free
To-day from the bond
Blood-brotherhood spring!
But if broken the bond,
Or if faithless the friend,
What in drops to-day
We drink kindly
In torrents wildly shall flow,
Paying treachery's wage.
So--sealed be the bond!
So--pledged be my faith!

[Gunther drinks and hands the horn to Siegfried, who finishes the draught, and holds out the empty horn to Hagen. Hagen breaks the horn in two with his sword. Gunther and Siegfried join hands.]

Siegfried

[Observes Hagen, who, while the oath was being sworn, has stood behind him.]

Why hast not thou plighted thy troth?

Hagen

My blood had soured the good draught.
It flows not pure
And noble like yours;
Stubborn and cold,
Slow it runs,
My cheek refusing to redden.
I hold aloof
From hot-blooded bonds.

Gunther

[To Siegfried.]

Heed not him and his spleen.

Siegfried

[Puts on his shield again.]

Up, then, and off!
Back to the boat!
Sail swift to the mountain!

[He steps nearer to Gunther and points at him.]

By the bank one night
On board thou shalt tarry,
And then bring home the bride.

[He turns to go, and beckons Gunther to follow him.]

Gunther

Wilt thou not rest awhile?

Siegfried

I am eager to be back.

[He goes to the shore to unmoor the boat.]

Gunther

Thou, Hagen, keep guard o'er the homestead.

[He follows Siegfried to the shore. Whilst Siegfried and Gunther, after laying their arms in the boat, are hoisting the sail and making ready for departure, Hagen takes up his spear and shield. Gutrune appears at the door of her chamber just as Siegfried is pushing of the boat, which immediately glides into the middle of the stream.]

Gutrune

So swiftly whither haste they?

Hagen

To woo Brünnhild' for bride.

[While he seats himself comfortably with shield and spear in front of the hall.]

Gutrune

Siegfried?

Hagen

See how he hastes,
For wife seeking to win thee!

Gutrune

Siegfried--mine?

[She returns to her room greatly excited. Siegfried has seized an oar and rows the boat down-stream, so that it is soon lost to view.]

Hagen

[Sits motionless, his back against the door-post of the hall.]

On guard here I sit
 Watching the house,
 Warding the hall from the foe;
 Gibich's son

Is sped by the wind,
 And sails away for a wife;
 A hero bold
 Of the helm has charge,
 And danger braves for his sake;
 His bride once loved
 He brings to the Rhine;
 With her he brings me--the ring.
 O merry comrades,
 Freeborn and honoured,
 Gaily speed on in your pride!
 Base though ye deem him,
 The Niblung's son
 Shall yet be your lord.

[A curtain which frames the front of the hall is drawn, and cuts the stage off from the audience.]

The curtain is raised again. The rocky height as in the Prelude. Brünnhilde sits at the entrance to the cave in silent contemplation of Siegfried's ring. Moved by blissful memories, she covers the ring with kisses. Distant thunder is heard; she looks up and listens. She turns to the ring again. A flash of lightning. Again she listens, and looks into the distance, whence a dark thundercloud is approaching the rock.

Brünnhilde

On my ear from afar
 Falls an old sound familiar.
 A horse comes flying
 Swift through the air;
 On the clouds it sweeps
 In storm to the rock.
 Who seeks the lonely one here?

Waltraute's voice

[From the distance.]

Brünnhilde, sister,
 Wake if thou sleepest!

Brünnhilde

[Starts from her seat.]

Waltraute's call!
 How welcome the sound!

[Calling to the wing, and then hastening to the edge of the rock.]

Dost thou, sister,
 Boldly swinging come this way?
 In the wood--
 Still dear to thee--
 Halt and dismount,
 And leave thy courser to rest.

[She runs into the wood, from which a loud sound like a thunder-clap is heard. She returns in great agitation with Waltraute, and remains joyfully excited without noticing the latter's anxious fear.]



Brünnhilde kisses the ring that Siegfried has left with her

Art thou so bold
That thou art come

Brünnhild' to greet,
Thy love unconquered by dread?

Waltraute

Thou alone
Art cause of my haste!

Brünnhilde

For Brünnhild's sake Warfather's ban
Hast thou thus bravely broken?
Or perchance--O say!--

[*With some hesitation.*]

Has he at last
Softened to his child?
When against the God
I sought to shield Siegmund,
Vainly--I know it--
My deed fulfilled his desire.
And I know that his anger
Was assuaged,
For albeit in slumber deep
Here to the rock I was bound,

Doomed to be thrall to the man
Who should wake the maid as he passed,
To my anguished prayer
He granted grace;
With ravening fire
He surrounded the rock,
To bar to all cowards the road.
Bane and chastisement
Turned so to blessing;
A hero unmatched
Has won me as wife;

Blest by his love,
In light and laughter I live.

[She embraces Waltraute with wild manifestations of joy, which the latter tries with anxious impatience to repress.]

Hast thou been lured by my lot,
And wouldst thou, sister,
Feast on my gladness,
Sharing in my delight?

Waltraute

[Vehemently.]

Sharing the frenzy
That has maddened thee, fool!
Far other the cause why I come,
Defying Wotan in fear.

Brünnhilde

[Here, for the first time, notices with surprise Waltraute's wildly excited state.]

Art afraid?
Anguished with terror?
So the stern one does not forgive?
Thou fearest his punishing wrath?

Waltraute

[Gloomily.]

Might I but fear it,
At an end were my distress.

Brünnhilde

I am perplexed and amazed.

Waltraute

Calm thou thy frenzy;
 Mark with care what I say!
 The fear that drove me
 Hither to thee
 Drives me back to Walhall again.

Brünnhilde

[*Alarmed.*]

What ails, then, the Gods everlasting?

Waltraute

Give earnest heed to what I tell thee!
 Since from thee Wotan parted,
 No more has he sent
 Us to battle;
 Anxious and bewildered
 We rode to the field.
 Shunned are Walhall's bold heroes
 By Warfather;
 Riding alone,
 Without pause or rest
 He wandered and roamed through the world.
 At last he returned
 With his spear splintered;
 In his hand the pieces;
 A hero had cleft it asunder.
 With silent sign
 Walhall's heroes
 Then he sent forth
 To hew down the world-ash-tree.
 He bade them pile
 The logs as they hewed them,
 Until they were heaped
 High round the hall of the blest.
 The Gods he next

Called to a council;
The high seat
He solemnly took,

Bidding them
Who gathered in fear sit beside him.
The heroes filled
The hall, ranged round in their order.
So sits he,
Speaks no word,
Upon his high seat
Grave and mute,
The splintered spear
Held fast in his hand,
Holda's apples
Touching no more.
Fear and amazement
Hold the Gods fast fettered.
He has sent his ravens
Forth to seek tidings;
If they return
And bring him comforting news,
Then the God will
With soul serene
Smile evermore and be glad.
Round his knees in sorrow
Twined lie the Valkyries;
He heeds not
Our glances beseeching;
By terror and wild anguish
We all are consumed.
Against his breast
Weeping I nestled,
Then soft grew his gaze:
He remembered, Brünnhilde, thee.



The ravens of Wotan

He closed his eyes
As if dreaming,

Heavily sighed
And whispered these words:
"If to the deep Rhine's daughters

She would restore the ring that was theirs,
From the grievous curse
Both God and world were freed!"

Then I took thought,
And from his side
Through the silent ranks
Stole noiselessly forth.
In haste, unseen,
I mounted my horse,
And stormed in tumult to thee.

Grant, O sister,
The boon I beg
What thou canst do,
Undaunted perform!
End thou the grief of the Gods!

[She has thrown herself down before Brünnhilde.]

Brünnhilde

[Quietly.]

What dreadful dream-born fancies,
Sad one, are those thou dost tell?
The high Gods' holy
And cloud-paved heaven
Is no longer my home.
I grasp not what thou art saying;
Dark its sense,

Wild and confused.



*"The ring upon my hand--
... ah, be implored!
For Wotan fling it away!"*

Within thine eyes,
 So over-weary,
 Gleams wavering fire;
 With thy wan visage,

O pale-faced sister,
 What wouldst thou, wild one, of me?

Waltraute

[*Vehemently.*]

The ring upon thy hand--
 'Tis that: ah, be implored!
 For Wotan fling it away!

Brünnhilde

The ring--away?

Waltraute

To the Rhine-daughters give it again.

Brünnhilde

The Rhine-daughters--I--the ring?
 Siegfried's love-pledge?
 Hast thou gone crazy?

Waltraute

Hear me! Hear my despair!
 On this hangs
 The world's undoing and woe.
 Throw it from thee
 Into the water;
 End the anguish of Walhall;
 The accurst thing cast in the waves!

Brünnhilde

Ha! dost thou know what 'twould mean?
 How shouldst thou,
 Maid unloving and cold!
 Much is Walhall's rapture,
 Much is the fame of the Gods;
 More is my ring.
 One glance at its shining gold,
 One flash of its sacred fire
 Is more precious
 Than bliss of all the Gods
 Enduring for aye!
 For Siegfried's dear love
 Shines from it bright and blessed.
 Love of Siegfried!
 Ah, could I but utter the rapture
 Bound up in the ring!

Go back to the holy
 Council of Gods;
 Repeat what I have told thee
 Of my ring:
 That love I will not forswear,
 Of love they never shall rob me;

Sooner shall Walhall's glory
 Perish and pass!

Waltraute

This is thy faith, then?
 To her sorrow
 Thus coldly thou leavest thy sister?

Brünnhilde

Up and away!
 Swiftly to horse!
 I will not part with the ring.

Waltraute

Woe's me! Woe's me!
 Woe to thee, sister!
 Woe to Walhall's Gods!

[She rushes away. A storm-cloud immediately rises from the wood, accompanied by thunder.]

Brünnhilde

[As she looks after the brightly lit, retreating thunder-cloud, which soon vanishes in the distance.]

Borne by the wind
 In storm and lightning,
 Haste away, cloud,
 And may I see thee no more!

[Twilight has fallen. The light of the fire gradually shines more brightly from below. She gazes quietly out on the landscape.]

Eventide shadows
 Dim the heavens,
 And more brightly
 The flames that encircle me glow.

[The firelight approaches from below. Ever-brightening tongues of flame shoot up over the edge of the rock.]

Why leap so wildly
 The billows that blaze round the rock?
 Up here to the peak
 Surges the fiery flood!

[Siegfried's horn is heard from the valley. Brünnhilde starts up in delight.]

Siegfried?
 Siegfried returned?

With his horn greeting he sends!
 Up! Out to the welcome!
 Swift to my God's embrace!

[She hastens joyfully to the edge of the crag. Flames leap up, out of which Siegfried springs forward on to a high rock, whereupon the flames immediately withdraw and again only shine up from below. Brünnhilde recoils in terror, flies to the foreground, and from there, in speechless astonishment, stares at Siegfried, who, wearing the Tarnhelm, which covers the upper half of his face, leaving only his eyes free, appears in Gunther's form.]

Brünnhilde

Betrayed! Who seeks me here?

Siegfried

[Remaining on the rock at the back, motionless and leaning on his shield, regards Brünnhilde. In a feigned (harsher) voice.]

Brünnhild'! A wooer comes
 Whom thy fire did not dismay.
 I want thee for my wife;
 Consent to follow me!

Brünnhilde

[Trembling violently.]

What man has done
 This deed undaunted
 That the boldest only dares?

Siegfried

[As before.]

A hero who will tame
 Thy pride by force at need.

Brünnhilde

A monster stands
 Upon yonder stone;
 An eagle has come
 To rend me in pieces!
 Who art thou, frightful one?
 Art thou a mortal,
 Or dost thou hie
 From Hella's dark host?

Siegfried

[As before, beginning with a slightly tremulous voice, but continuing with more confidence.]

A Gibichung am I,
 And Gunther is his name
 Whom thou must follow hence.

Brünnhilde

[Breaking out in despair.]

Wotan! Thou cruel,
 Merciless God!
 Woe! Now I see
 How thine anger works!
 To scorn and sorrow
 I am condemned.

Siegfried

[Springs down from the stone and approaches.]

Night falls apace;
 Within thy cave
 Thou must receive thy husband.

Brünnhilde

[Stretching out with a threatening gesture the finger on which she wears Siegfried's ring.]

Stand back! Fear thou this token!
 While I am shielded by this,
 Thou canst not force me to shame.

Siegfried

Wife it shall make thee to Gunther;
 With this ring thou shalt be wed.

Brünnhilde

Stand back, base robber!
 Impious thief!
 Nor dare, overbold, to draw near!
 Stronger than steel
 Made by the ring,
 I never will yield!

Siegfried

That it must be mine
 I learn from thy lips.

[He presses towards her, There is a struggle. Brünnhilde wrenches herself free, flies and turns round as if to defend herself. Siegfried seizes her again. She flies; he reaches her. They wrestle violently together. Siegfried catches her hand and draws the ring from her finger. She gives a loud scream. As she sinks helpless into his arms her unconscious look meets Siegfried's eyes. Siegfried lays her fainting on the stone bench at the entrance to the cave.]

Siegfried

Now thou art mine!
 Brünnhilde, Gunther's bride,
 Lead me the way to thy cave!"

Brünnhilde

[Stares, as if fainting, before her; exhausted.]

O woman undone,
Where now thy defence?

Siegfried

[Drives her on with a gesture of command. Trembling and with tottering steps she goes into the cave. In his natural voice.]

Now, Nothung, witness thou
That chastely I have wooed,
And loyal been to my brother;
Lie betwixt me and his bride!

[He follows Brünnhilde. The curtain falls.]

THE SECOND ACT

A open space on the shore in front of the Gibichungs' hall; to the right the open entrance to the hall, to the left the bank of the Rhine. From the latter, crossing the stage and mounting towards the back, rises a rocky height, cut by several mountain-paths. There an altar-stone to Fricka is visible, as well as one, higher up, to Wotan, and one at the side to Donner. It is night. Hagen, his arm round his spear and his shield by his side, sits against one of the pillars of the hall asleep. The moon shines out suddenly and throws a vivid light on Hagen and his immediate surroundings. Alberich is seen crouching in front of him, leaning his arms on Hagen's knees.

Alberich

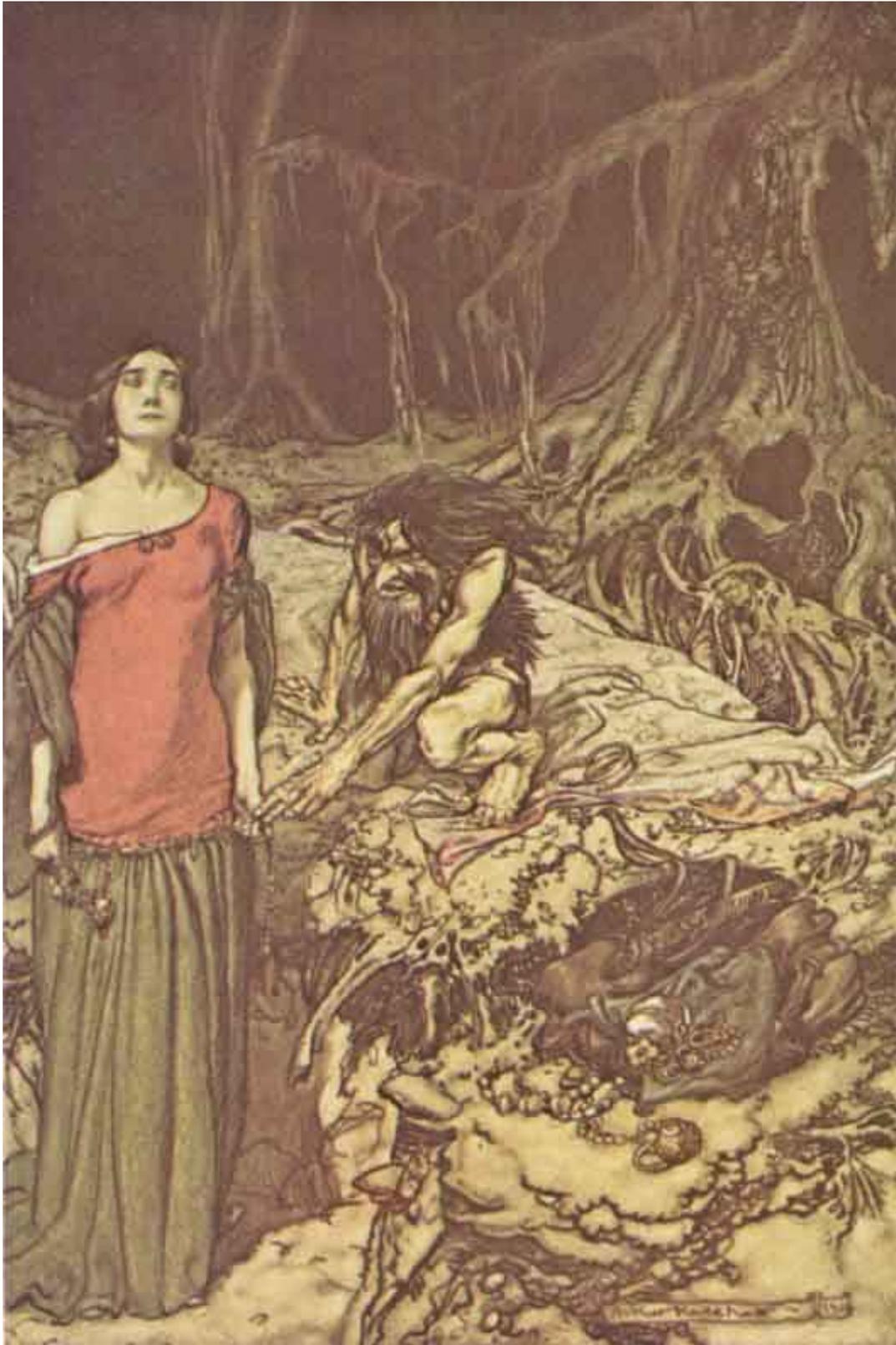
[Softly.]

Hagen, son, art asleep?
 Betrayed by drowsiness
 And rest thou dost not hear?

Hagen

[Softly, without moving, so that he seems to sleep on although his eyes are open.]

I hear thee, O baleful Niblung;
 What wouldst thou tell me while I slumber?



The wooing of Grimhilde, the mother of Hagen

Alberich

Remember the might
 Thou art endowed with,
 If thou art valiant
 As thy mother bore thee to me.

Hagen

[*Still as before.*]

Though courage she bestowed,
 I have no cause to thank her
 For falling under thy spell;

Soon old, wan and pale,
 Hating the happy,
 Where is my joy?

Alberich

[*As before.*]

Hagen, my son,
 Hate thou the happy;
 This joyless and
 Sorrow-laden one,
 Him alone thou shalt love.
 Be thou strong
 And bold and wise!
 Those whom with weapons
 Of darkness we fight
 Already our hate has dismayed.
 And he who captured my ring,
 Wotan, the ravening robber,
 By one of his sons
 In fight has been vanquished;
 He has lost
 Through the Wälsung power and might.
 With the whole immortal race
 He awaits in anguish his downfall.

Him I fear no more:
 He and all his must perish!
 Hagen, son, art asleep?

Hagen

[*Remains motionless as before.*]

The might of the Gods
 Who then shall wield?

Alberich

I--and thou!
 The world we shall own,
 If in thy truth
 I rightly trust,
 Sharest thou my hate and wrath.
 Wotan's spear
 Was splintered by Siegfried,

The hero who won
 As booty the ring
 When Fafner, the dragon, he slew.
 Power supreme
 He has attained to;

[*Still mysteriously.*]

Walhall and Nibelheim bow to his will.
 On this hero undaunted
 My curse falls in vain,
 For he knows not
 The ring's true worth,
 Nor makes use
 Of its wonderful spell;
 Laughing he burns life away,
 Caring only for love.

Nothing can serve us
But his undoing!

Sleepest, Hagen, my son?

Hagen

[*As before.*]

Already he speeds
Through me to his doom.

Alberich

The golden ring--
'Tis that that we must capture!
The Wälsung
By a wise woman is loved.
If, urged by her,
To the Rhine's fair daughters
--Who bewitched me once
Below in the waves--
The stolen ring he restored,
Forever lost were the gold,
And no guile could win it again.
Wherefore with ardour
Aim for the ring.

I gat thee
A stranger to fear,
That against heroes
Thou mightst uphold me.
I had not the strength,
Indeed, to despatch,
Like the Walsung, Fafner in fight;
But I reared Hagen
To deadly hatred,
And he shall avenge me--
Shall win the ring,

Putting Wälzung and Wotan to scorn!
Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

[From this point Alberich is covered by an ever-deepening shadow. At the same time day begins to dawn.]



"Swear to me Hagen, my son!"

Hagen

[Still as before.]

The ring shall be mine yet;
Quietly wait!

Alberich

Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

Hagen

To myself swear I;
Make thy mind easy!

Alberich

[Still gradually disappearing, and his voice, as he does so, becoming more and more inaudible.]

Be true, Hagen, my son!
Trusty hero, be true!
Be true!--True!

[Alberich has quite disappeared. Hagen, who has never changed position, looks with fixed eyes and without moving towards the Rhine, over which the light of dawn is spreading.]

The gradually brightening red of dawn is reflected in the Rhine. Siegfried steps out suddenly from behind a bush close to the shore. He appears in his own shape, but has the Tarnhelm on his head still; he takes this off, and, as he comes forward, hangs it on his girdle.

Siegfried

Hoioh! Hagen!
Weary man!
Where is thy welcome?

Hagen

[Rising in a leisurely fashion.]

Hei! Siegfried?
Swift-footed hero,
Whence stormest thou now?

Siegfried

From Brünnhilde's rock.
'Twas there that I drew the breath
I called to thee with;
A quick passage I made!
Slower behind me a pair
On board a vessel come.

Hagen

Hast thou won Brünnhild'?

Siegfried

Wakes Gutrune?

Hagen

[Calling towards the hall.]

Hoiho! Gutrune!
Haste and come!
Siegfried is here.
Why dost delay?

Siegfried

[Turning to the hall.]

How Brünnhild' yielded
Ye shall both be told.

[Gutrune comes from the hall to meet him.]

Siegfried

Give me fair greeting,
Gibich's child!
I come to thee with joyful news.

Gutrune

Freia greet thee
To the honour of all women!

Siegfried

To thy lover glad
Be gracious;
For wife I have won thee to-day.

Gutrune

Comes then Brünnhild' with my brother?

Siegfried

None ever wooed with more ease.

Gutrune

Was he not scorched by the fire?

Siegfried

It had not burnt him, I trow;
But I broke through it instead,
That I for wife might win thee.

Gutrune

And no harm didst thou take?

Siegfried

I laughed 'mid the surge of the flames.

Gutrune

Did Brünnhild' think thee Gunther?

Siegfried

Like were we to a hair;
The Tarnhelm saw to that,
As Hagen truly foretold.

Hagen

I gave thee counsel good.

Gutrune

And so the bold maid was tamed?

Siegfried

Her pride--Gunther broke.

Gutrune

Did she give herself to thee?

Siegfried

Through the night the vanquished Brünnhild'
To her rightful husband belonged.

Gutrune

For her husband thou didst pass?

Siegfried

By Gutrune sojourned Siegfried.

Gutrune

But 'twas Brünnhild' lay beside thee.

Siegfried

[*Pointing to his sword.*]

Far as north from east and west,
So far was Brünnhild' removed.

Gutrune

But how got Gunther his wife from thee?

Siegfried

Through the flames of the fire as they faded,
 When day dawned, through the mist
 She followed me down the hill;
 When near the shore,
 None observing,
 I gave Gunther my place,
 And by the Tarnhelm's magic
 Wished myself straight to thee.
 A strong wind drives the lovers
 Merrily down the Rhine;
 Prepare to greet them with joy.

Gutrune

Siegfried! Such is thy might,
 I am afraid of thee!

Hagen

[Calling from the shore.]

I can see a sail in the distance.

Siegfried

Now be the envoy thanked!

Gutrune

Let us give her gracious greeting,
 That glad and gay she here may tarry!
 Thou, Hagen, prithee
 Summon the men
 To the hall here for the wedding,
 While blithe maids

To the feast I bid;
Our joy they will merrily share.

[As she goes towards the hall she turns round again.]

Wilt thou rest, wicked man?

Siegfried

Helping thee is rest enough.

[He gives her his hand and accompanies her into the hall.]

Hagen

[Has mounted a rock at the back, and starts blowing his cow-horn.]

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoho!

Ye Gibich vassals,

Up and prepare!

Woeful tidings!

Weapons! Weapons!

Arm through the land!

Goodly weapons,

Mighty weapons

Sharp for strife!

Dire the strait!

Woe! Danger! Danger!

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoho!

[Hagen remains where he is on the rock. Armed men arrive in haste by different paths; first singly, and then in larger and larger groups.]

The Vassals

Why sounds the horn?

Who calls us to arms?

We come with our arms,

We come with our weapons.

Hagen! Hagen!
 Hoiho! Hoiho!
 Who hath suffered scathe
 Say, what foe is nigh?
 Who forces war?
 Is Gunther sore pressed?
 We come with our weapons,
 With weapons keen!
 Hoiho! Ho! Hagen!

Hagen

[Still from the rock.]

Come fully armed
 Without delay!
 Welcome Gunther, your lord:
 A wife Gunther has wooed.

The Vassals

Is he in straits,
 Pressed by the foe?

Hagen

A woman hard won
 With him he brings.

The Vassals

Her kinsmen and vassals
 Follow for vengeance?

Hagen

No one follows
 But his bride.

The Vassals

Then the peril is past,
And the foe put to flight?

Hagen

The dragon-slayer
Helped him at need;
Siegfried, the hero,
Kept him from harm.

The Vassals

How then can his vassals avail him?
And why hast callèd us here?

Hagen

Sturdy oxen
Ye shall slaughter;
On Wotan's altar
Their blood be shed!

The Vassals

And after that, Hagen? Say, what next?

Hagen

After that for Froh
A boar ye shall fell,
And a full-grown and strong
He-goat for Donner;

But for Fricka
Sheep ye shall slaughter,
That she may smile on the marriage!

The Vassals

[*With increasing cheerfulness.*]

What shall we do
When the beasts we have slain?

Hagen

The drink-horn take
That women sweet
With wine and mead
Blithely have filled.

The Vassals

The drink-horn in hand,
What task awaits us still?

Hagen

Gaily carouse
Until tamed by wine:
Drink, that the Gods, duly honoured,
Grace may accord to this marriage.

The Vassals

[Burst into ringing laughter.]

Good luck and joy
Laugh on the Rhine,
If Hagen, the grim one,
So merrily jests!
To wedding-feasts
Hagen invites;
His prick the hedge-thorn,
Hagen, has lost!

Hagen

[Who has remained very grave, has come down to the men, and now stands among them.]

Now cease from laughing,
 Doughty vassals!
 Receive Gunther's bride;
 Yonder come Brünnhild' and he.

[He points towards the Rhine. Some of the men hurry to the height; others range themselves on the shore to watch the arrival. Hagen goes up to some of the men.]

Be to your lady
 Loyal and true;
 Suffers she wrong,
 Swiftly avenge her!

[He turns slowly aside and moves towards the back. The boat arrives with Gunther and Brünnhilde. Those who have been looking out from the height come down to the shore. Some vassals spring into the water and pull the boat to land. All press closer to the bank.]

The Vassals

Hail! Hail! Hail!
 Be greeted! Be greeted!
 Welcome, O Gunther!
 Hail! Hail! Hail!

Gunther steps out of the boat with Brünnhilde.

The Vassals

[Range themselves respectfully to receive them.]

Welcome, Gunther!
 Health to thee and to thy bride!

[They strike their weapons loudly together.]

Gunther

[Presenting Brünnhilde, who follows him with pale face and lowered eyes, to the men.]

Brünnhild', a peerless bride,
 Here to the Rhine I bring.
 No man ever won
 A nobler woman!
 The Gods have shown from of old
 Grace to the Gibichung stock.
 To fame unmatched
 Now may it mount!

The Vassals

[Solemnly clash their weapons.]

Hail! O hail, happy Gibichung!

Gunther

[Leads Brünnhilde who never raises her eyes, to the hall, from which Siegfried and Guttrune, attended by women, now come forth.]

Dear hero, greetings glad!
 I greet thee, fair sister!
 By him who won thee for wife
 I joyfully see thee stand.
 Two happy pairs
 Here radiant are shining:

[He draws Brünnhilde forward.]

Brünnhild'--and Gunther,
 Gutrun'--and Siegfried.

[Brünnhilde, startled, looks up and sees Siegfried. Her eyes remain fixed on him in amazement. Gunther, who has released her violently trembling hand, shows, as do all present, blank astonishment at her behaviour.]

The Vassals and Women

What ails her?
Has she gone mad?

Siegfried

Why looks Brünnhild' amazed?

[Goes a few steps towards Brünnhilde, who has begun to tremble.]

Brünnhilde

Siegfried . . . here? Gutrune . . . ?

[Scarcely able to control herself.]

Siegfried

Gunther's gentle sister,
Wed to me
As thou to him.

Brünnhilde

[With fearful vehemence.]

I? Gunther? 'Tis false.

[She sways and seems about to fall. Siegfried supports her.]

Light fades from mine eyes . . .

[In Siegfried's arms, looking faintly up at him.]

Siegfried . . . knows me not?

Siegfried

Gunther, see, thy wife is swooning!

[Gunther comes to them.]

Wake, Brünnhild', wake!
Here stands thy husband.

Brünnhilde

[Perceives the ring on Siegfried's outstretched finger, and starts up with terrible vehemence.]

Ha! The ring
Upon his hand!
He . . . Siegfried?

The Vassals

What's wrong?

Hagen

[Coming among the vassals from behind.]

Now pay good heed
To the woman's tale.

Brünnhilde

[Mastering her terrible excitement, tries to control herself.]

On thy hand there
I beheld a ring.
'Twas wrested from me
By this man here;

[Pointing to Gunther.]

'Tis not thine.
How camest thou by
The ring thou hast on?

Siegfried

[Attentively regarding the ring on his finger.]

'Twas not from him
I got the ring.

Brünnhilde

[To Gunther.]

Thou who didst seize the ring
 With which I wedded thee,
 Declare to him thy right,
 Make him yield up the pledge!

Gunther

[In great perplexity.]

The ring? No ring I gave him,
 Though thou dost know it well.

Brünnhilde

Where hast thou hid the ring
 That thou didst capture from me?

[Gunther, greatly confused, does not answer.]

Brünnhilde

[Breaking out furiously.]

Ha! He it was
 Who despoiled me of the ring-
 Siegfried, the treacherous thief!

[All look expectantly at Siegfried, who seems to be lost in far-off thoughts as he contemplates the ring.]

Siegfried

No woman gave
 The ring to me,
 Nor did I wrest it
 From a woman's grasp.
 This ring, I know,
 Was the booty won
 When at Neidhöhl' boldly I fought,
 And the mighty dragon was slain.

Hagen

[*Stepping between them.*]

Brünnhild', dauntless queen,
 Knowest thou this ring well?
 If it was by Gunther won,
 Then it is his,
 And Siegfried has got it by guile.
 For his guilt must the traitor pay.

Brünnhilde

[*Shrieking in terrible anguish.*]

Betrayed! Betrayed!
 Shamefully betrayed!
 Deceived! Deceived!
 Wrong too deep for revenge!

Gutrune

A wrong? To whom?

Vassals and Women

Deceit? To whom?

Brünnhilde

Holy Gods!
 Ye heavenly rulers!
 Whispered ye this
 In councils dark?
 If I must bear
 More than ever was borne,

 Bowed by a shame
 None ever endured,
 Teach me such vengeance
 As never was raved!
 Kindle such wrath
 As can never be calmed!

Order Brünnhild's
 Poor heart to be broken,
 Bring ye but doom
 On him who betrayed!

Gunther

Brünnhild', dear wife,
 Control thyself!

Brünnhilde

Away, betrayer!
 Self-betrayed one!
 All of you, hearken!
 Not he,
 But that man there,
 Won me to wife.

Vassals and Women

Siegfried? Gutrune's lord?

Brünnhilde

He forced delight
 And love from me.

Siegfried

Dost thou so lightly
 Hold thine honour,
 The tongue that thus defames it
 I must convict of its falsehood.
 Hear whether faith I broke!
 Blood-brotherhood
 I have sworn unto Gunther;
 Nothung, my trusty sword,
 Guarded the sacred vow;

'Twi'xt me and this sad woman distraught
Its blade lay sharp.

Brünnhilde

Behold how thou liest,
Crafty man,
Vainly as witness
Citing thy sword!
Full well I know its keenness,
And also the scabbard
Wherein so snugly
Hung on the wall
Nothung, the faithful friend,
When its lord won the woman he loved.

The Vassals and Women

[Crowd together in violent indignation.]

What! Siegfried a traitor?
Has he stained Gunther's honour?

Gunther

[To Siegfried.]

Disgraced were I
And sullied my name,
Were not the slander
Cast in her teeth!

Gutrune

Siegfried faithless?
False to his vow?
Ah, prove thou that worthless
Is her word!

The Vassals

Clear thyself straight;
 If thou art wronged
 Silence the slander;
 Sworn be the oath!

Siegfried

If I must swear,
 The slander to still,
 Which of you offers
 His sword for the oath?

Hagen

Swear the oath upon
 The point of my spear;
 Bad faith 'twill surely avenge.

[The vassals form a ring round Siegfried and Hagen. Hagen holds out the spear; Siegfried lays two fingers of his right hand upon the point.]

Siegfried

Shining steel!
 Weapon most holy,
 Witness my oath sworn for ever!
 On this spear's sharp point
 I solemnly swear;
 Spear-point, mark thou my words!
 If weapon must pierce me,
 Thine be the point!
 When by death I am stricken
 Strike thou the blow,
 If what she tells is true,
 And I broke faith with my friend!

Brünnhilde

[Strides furiously into the ring, tears Siegfried's hand from the spear, and grasps the point with her own.]

Shining steel!
 Weapon most holy,
 Witness my oath sworn for ever!
 On this spear's sharp point
 I solemnly swear!
 Spear-point, mark thou my words!
 Devoted be thy might
 To his undoing!
 Be thy sharpness blessed by me,
 That it may slay him!
 For broken his oaths have been all,
 And false is what he has sworn.

The Vassals

Help, Donner!
 Roar with thy thunder
 To silence this terrible shame!

Siegfried

Gunther, look to this woman
 Who falsely slanders thy name.
 Let her rest awhile,
 The untamed mountain maid,
 That the unbridled rage some demon
 In malice has
 Against us roused
 May have the chance to subside.
 Ye vassals, go ye your ways;
 Let the womenfolk scold.
 Like cravens gladly we yield,
 Comes it to fighting with tongues.

[He goes up to Gunther.]

Thou art not so vexed as I
 That I beguiled her ill;
 The Tarnhelm must, I fear,
 But half have hid my face.
 Still, women's wrath
 Soon is appeased:
 That I won her for thee
 Thankful thy wife will be yet.

[He turns again to the vassals.]

Follow me, men,
 With mirth to the feast!

[To the women.]

Gaily, women,
 Help at the wedding!
 Joyfully laugh
 Love and delight!
 In hall and grove
 There shall be none
 This day more merry than I!
 Ye whom love has blessed,

Like myself light-hearted,
 Follow and share in my mirth!

[He throws his arm in the highest spirits round Gutrune and draws her into the hall. The vassals and women follow, carried away by his example. All go off, except Brünnhilde, Gunther, and Hagen. Gunther, in deep shame and dejection, with his face covered, has seated himself on one side. Brünnhilde, standing in the foreground, gazes for some time sorrowfully after Siegfried and Gutrune, then droops her head.]

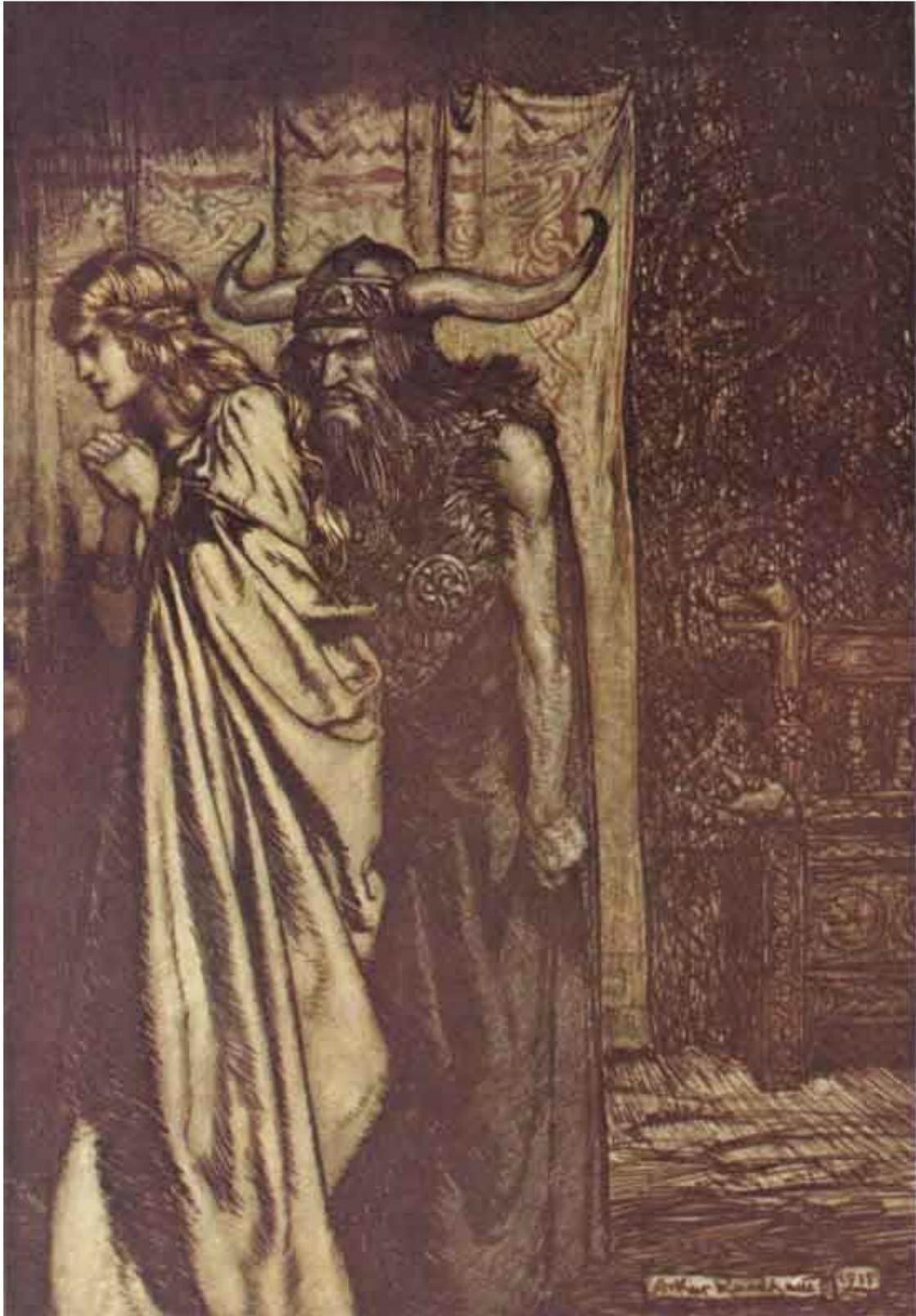
Brünnhilde

[Lost in thought.]

What dread demon's might
Moves here in darkness?
By what wizard's spell
Worked was the woe?
How weak is my wisdom
Faced by this puzzle!
And where shall I find
The runes for this riddle?
Oh, sorrow! Sorrow!
Woe's me! Woe's me!
I gave all my wisdom to him;

[With increasing emotion.]

The maid in his power
He holds.
Fast in his fetters
Bound is the booty



*"O wife betrayed,
I will avenge
Thy trust deceived"*

That, weeping her grievous shame,
 Gaily to others he gives!
 Will none of you lend a sword
 With which I may sever my bonds?

Hagen

[*Going close to Brünnhilde.*]

Leave that to me,
 O wife betrayed;
 I will avenge
 Thy trust deceived.

Brünnhilde

[*Looking round dully.*]

On whom?

Hagen

On Siegfried, traitor to thee.

Brünnhilde

On Siegfried? Thou?

[*Smiling bitterly.*]

One single flash
 Of his eye and its lightning--
 Which streamed in its glory on me
 Even through his disguise--
 And thy heart would fail,
 Shorn of its courage.

Hagen

But to my spear
 His perjury gives him.

Brünnhilde

Truth and falsehood--
 What matter words!
 To arm thy spear
 Seek for something stronger,
 Strength such as his to withstand!

Hagen

Well know I Siegfried's
 Conquering strength:
 How hard in battle to slay him;
 But whisper to me
 Some sure device
 For speeding him to his doom.

Brünnhilde

Ungrateful, shameful return!
 I taught him all
 The arts I know,
 To preserve his body from harm.

He bears unwitting
 A charmed life
 And safely walks by spells enwound.

Hagen

Then no weapon forged could wound him?

Brünnhilde

In battle none;--yet--
 Did the blow strike his back!
 Never--I knew that--
 Would he give way,
 Or turn and fly, the foe pursuing,
 So there I gave him no blessing.

Hagen

And there shall my spear strike!

[He turns quickly from Brünnhilde to Gunther.]

Up, Gunther,
Noble Gibichung!
Here stands thy valiant wife.
Why hang thy head in grief?

Gunther

[Starting up passionately.]

O shame!
Dishonour!
Woe is me!
No man has known such sorrow!

Hagen

In shame thou liest--
That is true.

Brünnhilde

[To Gunther.]

O craven man!
Falsest of friends!
Hidden behind
The hero wert thou
While won were for thee
The prize and the glory.
Low indeed
The race must have sunk
That breeds such cowards as thou!

Gunther

[Beside himself.]

Deceived am I--and deceiver!
 Betrayed am I--and betrayer!
 My strength be consumed,
 And broken my heart!
 Help, Hagen!
 Help for my honour!
 Help, for my mother was thine--
 Thee too she bore!

Hagen

No help from head
 Or hand will suffice:
 'Tis Siegfried's death we need.

Gunther

[Seized with horror.]

Siegfried's death?

Hagen

Unpurged else were thy shame.

Gunther

[Staring before him.]

Blood-brotherhood
 He and I swore.

Hagen

Who broke the bond
 Pays with his blood.

Gunther

Broke he the bond?

Hagen

In betraying thee.

Gunther

Was I betrayed?

Brünnhilde

He betrayed thee,
And me ye all are betraying!
If I were just,
All the blood of the world
Would not atone for your guilt!

But the death of one
Is all I ask for.
Dying, Siegfried
Atones for himself and you!

Hagen

[Turning to Gunther and appealing to him secretly.]

His death would profit thee;
Boundless were indeed thy might
If thou couldst capture the ring,
Which, alive, he never will yield.

Gunther

[Softly.]

Brünnhilde's ring?

Hagen

The ring the Niblung wrought.

Gunther

[Sighing deeply.]

'Twould be the end of Siegfried.

Hagen

His death would serve us all.

Gunther

But Gutrun', to whom
He has been given!
How could we look in her face
If her husband we had slain?

Brünnhilde

[Starting up furiously.]

What wisdom forewarned of,
And runes hinted darkly,
In helpless despair
Is plain to me now.

[Passionately.]

Gutrune is the spell
That stole my husband's heart away!
Woe be her lot!

Hagen

[To Gunther.]

If this grief we must give her,
Conceal how Siegfried died.

We go to-morrow
Merrily hunting;
The hero gallops ahead;
We find him slain by a boar.

Brünnhilde and Gunther

So shall it be!
Perish Siegfried!

Purged be the shame
 He brought on me!
 Faith sworn by oath
 He has broken;
 Now with his blood
 Let him atone!
 Avenging,
 All-hearing God!
 Oath-witness,
 And lord of vows!
 Wotan, come at my call!
 Send thou thine awful
 Heavenly host
 Hither to hear
 While I vow revenge!

Hagen

Doomed let him die,
 The hero renowned!
 Mine is the hoard,
 And mine I shall hold it!
 From him the ring
 Shall be wrested!
 Niblung father!

O fallen prince!
 Night warder
 Nibelung lord
 Alberich! Hear thou thy son!

Ruling again
 O'er the Nibelung host,
 Bid them obey thee,
 The ring's dread lord!

[As Gunther turns impetuously towards the hall with Brünnhilde they are met by the bridal procession coming out. Boys and girls, waving flower-wreathed

staves, leap merrily in front. The vassals are carrying Siegfried on a shield and Gutrune on a seat. On the rising ground at the back men-servants and maids are taking implements and beasts for sacrifice, by the various mountain-paths, to the altars, which they deck with flowers. Siegfried and the vassals blow wedding-calls on their horns. The women invite Brünnhilde to accompany them to Gutrune's side. Brünnhilde stares blankly at Gutrune, who beckons her with a friendly smile. As Brünnhilde is about to step back angrily Hagen comes quickly between them and presses her to wards Gunther, who takes her hand again, whereupon he allows himself to be raised on a shield by the men. As the procession, scarcely interrupted, moves on quickly again towards the height, the curtain falls.]

THE THIRD ACT

A wild wooded and rocky valley on the Rhine, which flows past a steep cliff in the background. The three Rhine-Maidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde, rise to the surface and swim and circle as if dancing.

The Three Rhine-Maidens

[Swimming slower.]

The sun
Sends hither rays of glory;
In the depths is darkness.
Once there was light,
When clear and fair
Our father's gold shone on the billows.
Rhinegold!
Gleaming gold!
How bright was once thy radiance,
Lovely star of the waters!

[They sing and again start swimming and circling about. They pause and then, then merrily splash the waters.]

O sun,
The hero quickly send us
Who again our gold shall give us!
If it were ours,
We should no longer
Envy thine eye for its splendour.
Rhinegold!
Gleaming gold!
How glad was thy radiance,
Glorious star of the waters!

[A horn is heard.]

Woglinde

Hark! That is his horn!

Wellgunde

The hero comes.

Flosshilde

Let us take counsel.

[They all dive down quickly.]

Siegfried

[Appears on the cliff fully armed.]

Some elf has led me astray
And lured my feet from the path.
Hey, rogue! Behind what hill
Hast suddenly hidden my game?

The Three Rhine-Maidens

Siegfried!

[Rise to the surface again and swim and circle as in a dance.]

Flosshilde

What art thou scolding about?

Wellgunde

With what elf art thou so wroth?

Woglinde

Hast thou been tricked by some sprite?

All Three

Tell us, Siegfried; let us hear!

Siegfried

[*Regarding them with a smile.*]

Have ye, then, hither charmed
 The shaggy-hided fellow
 Whom I have lost?
 Frolicsome maids,
 Ye are welcome to him,
 If he is your love.

[*The maidens laugh.*]

Woglinde

What would our guerdon be,
 Siegfried, if we restored him?

Siegfried

I have caught nothing yet,
 So ask of me what you will.

Wellgunde

A golden ring
 Gleams on thy finger.

The Three Rhine-Maidens

Wilt grant it?

Siegfried

From a dragon grim
 I won the ring in fight;
 And think ye for a worthless bear-skin
 I would exchange the gold?

Woglinde

Art thou so mean?

Wellgunde

In bargains so hard?

Flosshilde

Free-handed
Thou with women shouldst be.

Siegfried

On you did I waste my goods,
My wife would have cause to scold.

Flosshilde

Is she a shrew?

Wellgunde

And beats thee sore?

Woglinde

Has the hero felt her hand?

[They laugh immoderately.]

Siegfried

Though gaily ye may laugh,
In grief ye shall be left,
For, mocking maids, this ring
Ye ask shall never be yours.

[The Rhine-Maidens have again join hands for dancing.]

Flosshilde

So fair!

Wellgunde

So strong!

Woglinde

So worthy love!

The Three

How sad he should a miser be!

[They laugh and dive down.]

Siegfried

[Comes down nearer to the river.]

Why should I stand
Their taunts and blame?
Why endure their scorn?
Did they return

To the bank again,
The ring gladly I'd give them.

[Calling loudly.]

Hey, hey! ye merry
Water-maidens,
Come back; the ring shall be yours.

[He holds up the ring, which he has taken from his finger.]

The Three Rhine-Maidens

[Rise to the surface again. They appear grave and solemn.]



*"Though gaily ye may laugh,
In grief ye shall be left,
For, mocking maids, this ring
Ye ask shall never be yours"*

Nay, hero, keep
 And ward it well,
 Until the harm thou hast felt
 That in the ring lies hid.
 Then wouldst thou fain
 Be freed by us from its curse.

Siegfried

Sing something that ye know!

[Calmly puts the ring on his finger again.]

The Three Rhine-Maidens

Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegfried!
 Dark our knowledge for thee!
 The ring thou keepest
 To thy own scathe!
 From the gleaming gold
 Of the Rhine 'twas wrought;
 He who cunningly forged it,
 And lost it in shame,
 Laid a curse on it
 Which, for all time,
 The owner thereof
 Dooms to his death.
 As the dragon fell
 So shalt thou too fall,
 And that to-day;
 Thy fate is foretold,
 Wilt thou not give to the Rhine
 The ring to hide in its waters.
 Its waves alone
 Can loose the curse.



***"Siegfried! Siegfried!
Our warning is true:
Flee, oh, flee from the curse!"***

Siegfried

Enough, O ye women
 Full of wiles!
 Was I firm when ye flattered,
 I am firmer now when ye threaten!

The Three Rhine-Maidens

Siegfried! Siegfried!
 Our warning is true:
 Flee, oh, flee from the curse!
 The Norns who weave

By night have entwined it
 In the rope
 Of Fate's decrees!

Siegfried

My sword once shattered a spear;
 And if the Norns
 Have woven a curse
 Into the strands
 Of destiny's rope,
 Nothung will cleave it asunder.
 A dragon once warned me
 Of this dread curse,
 But he could not teach me to fear.

[He contemplates the ring.]

The world's wealth
 Has bestowed on me a ring.
 For the grace of love
 Had it been yours,
 And still for love might it be got,
 But by threats to my life and my limbs--
 Had it not even
 A finger's worth--

The ring ye never shall gain.

My limbs and my life--

Look!--thus

Freely I fling away!

[He lifts a clod of earth from the ground, holds it over his head, and with the last words throws it behind him.]

The Three Rhine-Maidens

Come, sisters!

Fly from the madman!

Though dauntless and wise

He seems to himself,

He is blind and in fetters bound fast.

[Wildly excited, they swim in wide circles close to the shore.]

Oaths he swore,

And was false to his word;

[Moving quickly again.]

Runes he knows

That he cannot rede.

A glorious gift

Fell to his lot;

He flung it from him

Unawares;

And the ring that deals doom and death

Alone he will not surrender!

Farewell, Siegfried!

A woman proud

Ere night falls thy wealth shall inherit.

our cry by her will be heard.

To her! To her! To her!

[They turn quickly to their dance, and gradually swim away to the back singing.]

Siegfried

[Looks after them smiling, one foot on a piece of rock and his chin resting on his hand.]

Alike on land and water
I have studied women's ways:
Still those who mistrust their smiles
They seek with threats to frighten,
And, are their threats despised,

At once they begin to scold.
And yet--
Held I not Gutrun' dear,
Of these alluring maidens
One had surely been mine.

[He looks calmly after the Rhine-Maidens, who have disappeared, and whose voices gradually die away. Horn-calls are then heard. Siegfried starts from a reverie and sounds his horn in answer.]

Hagen's voice

[Far off.]

Hoiho!

Vassals' voices

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoiho!

Siegfried

[Having answered the call with his horn.]

Hoiho! Hoihe!

Hagen

[Appears on the height, followed by Gunther. He sees Siegfried.]

So we have found thee
Where thou wert hidden!

Hagen

Come down all! Here 'tis fresh and cool.

[The vassals now appear on the height, and come down with Hagen and Gunther.]

Hagen

Here let us rest
And see to the meal.

[They lay the game in a heap.]

Lay down the booty
And hand round the wine-skins.

[Wine-skins and drinking-horns are produced. All lie down.]

Hagen

Now be the wonders told us
Of Siegfried and his hunting
That chased the game from us.

Siegfried

No meal at all is mine;
I beg of you
To share with me your spoil.

Hagen

No luck at all?

Siegfried

I sought for forest-game,
But water-fowl only I found;
Furnished with the right equipment,

A brood of three wild water-birds
 I had caught and brought you.
 Down there on the Rhine they told me
 That slain to-day I should fall.

[Gunther starts and looks darkly at Hagen. Siegfried lies down between Gunther and Hagen.]

Hagen

A sorry chase were that
 If the luckless hunter fell
 A victim to the quarry!

Siegfried

Thirst plagues me!

Hagen

[Whilst he orders a drinking-horn to be filled for Siegfried, and hands it to him.]

It has been rumoured, Siegfried,
 That thou canst tell the meaning
 Of what the birds sing:
 Does rumour speak true?

Siegfried

I have not listened
 For long to their song.

[He takes the drinking-horn and turns with it to Gunther, to whom he offers it after he has drunk from it.]

Drink, Gunther, drink!
 Thy brother hands the draught!

Gunther

[Looks into the horn with horror. Moodily.]

A pale draught thou hast poured!

[*More gloomily.*]

Thy blood alone is there.

Siegfried

[*Laughing.*]

With thine, then, be it mingled!

[*He pours from Gunther's horn into his own so that it runs over.*]

Thus mixed the wine flows over

To Mother Earth

May it prove a cordial kind!

Gunther

[*With a deep sigh.*]

Thou over-joyous man!

Siegfried

[*Low, to Hagen.*]

His cheer Brünnhild' has marred.

Hagen

[*Low, to Siegfried.*]

She speaks less plain to him

Than speak the birds to thee!

Siegfried

Since I have heard women singing,

The birds I have clean forgot.

Hagen

But thou didst hear them once?

Siegfried

[Turning with animation to Gunther.]

Hei! Gunther!
 Moody-faced man!
 Come, I will tell thee
 Tales of my boyhood,
 If thou wouldst care to hear them.

Gunther

'Twould please me much.

[They lie down close to Siegfried, who alone fits upright.]

Hagen

Sing, hero, sing!

Siegfried

Mime was
 A surly old dwarf
 Who because of greed
 Reared me with care,
 That when the child
 Grew sturdy and bold
 He might slay a dragon grim
 That guarded treasure in the wood.

He taught me to forge
 And the art of fusing,
 But what the craftsman
 Could not achieve
 The scholar did
 By skill and by daring--
 Out of the splinters of a weapon
 Fashioned featly a sword.
 My father's blade

Forged was afresh;
 Strong and true
 Nothing was tempered,
 Deemed by the dwarf
 Fit for the fight.
 The wood then we sought, and there
 The dragon Fafner I slew.

Listen and heed
 Well to my tale;
 I have marvels to tell you.
 From the dragon's blood
 My fingers were burning,
 And these I raised to my lips;
 And barely touched
 Was the blood by my tongue,
 When what a bird was saying
 Above me I could hear.
 On a bough it sat there and sang
 "Hei! Siegfried now owns
 All the Nibelung hoard!
 Oh! could he the hoard
 In the cave but find!
 Tarnhelm, if he could but win it,
 Would help him to deeds of renown;
 And could he discover the ring,
 It would make him the lord of the world!"

Hagen

Didst thou take
 The Tarnhelm and ring?

A Vassal

Was that the end of the singing?

Siegfried

Having taken
 Tarnhelm and ring,
 Once more I listened
 And heard the sweet warbler;
 He sat above me and sang:--
 "Hei! Siegfried now owns
 Both the helm and the ring!
 Oh I let him not listen
 To Mime, the false,
 For Mime, too, covets the treasure,
 And cunningly watches and spies!
 He is bent on murdering Siegfried
 Be Siegfried wary of Mime!"

Hagen

'Twas well that he warned?

The Vassals

Got Mime due payment?

Siegfried

A deadly-brewed draught
 He brought me to drink
 But, fear-stricken,
 His tongue stammered truly:
 Nothung stretched him out dead!

Hagen

[With a strident laugh.]

The steel that he forged not
 Mime soon tasted!

[He has another drinking-horn filled, and drops the juice of a herb into it.]

The Vassals

What further did the bird tell thee?

Hagen

From my horn
 Drink, hero, first
 A magical draught is this;

It will mind thee of things long forgotten,
 And bring old days to remembrance.

[He offers the horn to Siegfried, who looks into it thoughtfully and then drinks slowly.]

Siegfried

In sorrow I listened,
 Grieving looked up;
 He sat there still and sang.
 "Hei! Siegfried has slain
 The deceitful dwarf!
 I know for him now
 A glorious bride.
 She sleeps where rugged rocks soar
 Ringed is her chamber by fire.
 Who battles the flames
 Wakens the bride,
 Brünnhilde wins as reward!"

Hagen

The wood-bird's counsel
 Didst thou follow?

Siegfried

Straight without pause
 I rose and I ran

[Gunther listens with increasing astonishment.]

Till I came to the fire-ringed rock.
 I passed through the flames,
 And for prize I found,

[More and more ecstatic.]

Sleeping, and clad in bright mail,
 A woman lovely and dear.
 The hard helmet
 I loosened with care,
 And waked the maid with my kiss.
 Ah, then the burning, sweet embrace
 Of Brünnhild's rapturous arms!

Gunther

[Springing up in greatest consternation.]

What says he?

[Two ravens fly up out of a bush, circle above Siegfried, and then fly away towards the Rhine.]

Hagen

Didst understand
 What the ravens there said?

[Siegfried starts up suddenly, and, turning his back to Hagen, looks after the ravens. Hagen thrusts his spear into Siegfried's back.]

Hagen

Vengeance--that was the word!



Siegfried's death

[Gunther and the vassals rush towards Hagen. Siegfried swings his shield on high with both hands in order to throw it on Hagen; his strength fails him; the shield drops from his grasp backwards, and he falls down upon it.]

Gunther and the Vassals

Hagen, what dost thou?

[Who have tried to hold Hagen back in vain.]

Hagen

Death to traitors!

[He turns calmly away, and is seen in the gathering twilight disappearing slowly over the height. Gunther bends over Siegfried in great grief. The vassals stand round the dying man full of sympathy.]

Siegfried

[Supported by two vassals in a sitting posture, opens radiant eyes.]

Brünnhilde,
 Heaven-born bride,
 Awake! Open thine eyelids!
 Who again
 Has locked thee in sleep
 And bound thee in slumber so fast?
 Lo! he that came
 And kissed thee awake

 Again breaks the bonds
 Holding thee fettered
 And looks on Brünnhild's delight.
 Ah I those dear eyes
 Now open for ever!
 Ah I the soft fragrance
 Borne on her breathing!
 Death, thou art welcome--

Sweet are thy terrors--
Brünnhild' greets me, my bride!

[He sinks back and dies. The rest stand round him motionless and sorrowing. Night has fallen. At a silent command from Gunther the vassals raise Siegfried's body and bear it away slowly in a solemn procession over the height. The moon breaks through the clouds, and lights up the funeral procession with increasing clearness as it reaches the top of the hill. A mist has risen from the Rhine which gradually fills the whole stage, on which the funeral procession has become invisible. After a musical interlude the mist divides again, until at length the hall of the Gibichungs, as in Act I., appears with increasing distinctness.]

It is night. The moonlight is mirrored in the Rhine. Gutrune comes out of her chamber into the hall.

Gutrune

Was that his horn?

[She listens.]

No!--he

Has not returned.

Troubled was my sleep

By evil dreams!

Then wildly neighed his horse;

Brünnhild' laughed,

And I woke up afraid.

What woman was it

I saw go down to the shore?

I fear this Brünnhild'

Is she within?

[She listens at the door at the right and calls.]

Brünnhild'! Brünnhild'!

Art awake?

[She opens the door timidly and looks into the inner room.]

No one is there!
 So it was she
 I saw go downwards to the Rhine.

[A distant horn sounds.]

Was that his horn?
 No!
 All silent!

[She looks out anxiously.]

Would but Siegfried return!

[Hagen's voice is heard outside coming nearer. When Gutrune hears it she stands for a time transfixed with terror.]

Hoiho! Hoiho!
 Awake! Awake!
 Lights! Ho! lights here!
 Burning torches!
 Home bring we
 Spoils of the chase.
 Hoiho! Hoiho!

[Increasing light from the torches is seen without. Hagen enters the hall.]

Up! Gutrun'!
 Give Siegfried greeting,
 For home to thee
 Thy hero comes.

Gutrune

[In great fear.]

What is wrong, Hagen?
 I heard not his horn.

[Men and women with lights and firebrands accompany, in great confusion, the procession returning with Siegfried's body.]

Hagen

The hero pale
 Will blow it no more;
 No more will he ride
 To battle or chase
 Or gaily go wooing fair women.

Gutrune

[With growing terror.]

What bring they here?

[The procession reaches the middle of the hall, and the vassals set down the body on a hastily improvised platform.]

Hagen

'Tis a wild boar's spoil they bring thee:
 Siegfried, thy husband slain.

[Gutrune shrieks and falls upon the corpse, General emotion and mourning.]

Gunther

[Bends over the fainting Gutrune.]

Gutrun', gentle sister!
 Open thine eyelids!
 Look up and speak!

Gutrune

[Recovering consciousness.]

Siegfried--they have slain Siegfried!

[She pushes Gunther back violently].

Hence! false-hearted brother,
 Thou slayer of my husband!
 Oh, who will help me!

Woe's me! Woe's me!
 These men have murdered my Siegfried!

Gunther

Cast not the blame on me;
 'Tis Hagen who must bear it:

He is the accursèd wild boar
 That did the hero to death.

Hagen

With me art wroth for that?

Gunther

Woe and grief
 For aye be thy portion!

Hagen

[Stepping forward with terrible defiance.]

Yes, then, 'tis true that I slew him.

I--Hagen--

Did him to death!

By my spear he falsely swore,

So by my spear he fell.

I have the sacred right

Now to demand my booty,

And what I claim is this ring.

Gunther

Away! Thou shalt not have

What forfeit falls to me.

Hagen

Ye vassals, judge of my right!

Gunther

Thou wouldst seize Gutrune's dower,
Insolent Niblung son?

Hagen

[Draws his sword.]

'Tis thus
The Niblung son demands his own.

[He rushes on Gunther, who defends himself; they fight. The vassals throw themselves between. Gunther falls slain by a stroke from Hagen.]

Hagen

Mine the ring!

[He makes a grasp at Siegfried's hand, which raises itself in menace. All stand transfixed with horror.]

Brünnhilde

[Advances firmly and solemnly from the background to the front. Still at the back.]

Silence! Your sorrow
Clamour less loud!
Now for vengeance his wife comes,
The woman all have betrayed.

[As she comes quietly forward.]

I have heard you whining
As whine children
When milk is spilt by their mother;
But lamentation
Meet for a hero unmatched
I have not heard.

Gutrune

[Raising herself suddenly from the floor.]

Brünnhilde, spite-venomed!
 Thou art the cause of our woe!
 For, urged by thee, the men have slain him;
 Cursèd hour that brought thee here!

Brünnhilde

Peace, hapless wretch!
 Thou never wert wife of his;
 His leman wert thou,
 Only that.
 But I am his lawful bride;
 To me was the binding oath sworn,
 Before thy face he beheld.

Gutrune

[Breaking out in sudden despair.]

Accursèd Hagen,
 Why didst thou give the poison
 That stole her husband away?
 O sorrow!
 Mine eyes are opened:
 Brünnhild' was the true love
 Whom through the draught he forgot.

[She turns from Siegfried in shame and fear, and, dying, bends over Gunther's body; remaining motionless in this position until the end. Hagen stands defiantly leaning on his spear and shield, sunk in gloomy thought, on the opposite side. Brünnhilde stands alone in the middle. After long and absorbed contemplation of Siegfried she turns with solemn exaltation to the men and women.]

Let great logs
 Be borne to the shore
 And high by the Rhine be heaped;
 Fierce and far
 Let the flames mount

That consume to ashes
 Him who was first among men!
 His horse lead to me here,
 That with me his lord he may follow.
 For my body longs
 To have part in his glory
 And share his honour in death.
 Obey Brünnhild's behest.

[The young men, during the following, raise a great pyre of logs before the hall, near the bank of the Rhine; women decorate this with rugs, on which they strew plants and flowers.]

Brünnhilde

[Absorbed anew in contemplation of Siegfried's dead face. Her expression brightens and softens as she proceeds.]

Sheer golden sunshine
 Streams from his face;
 None was so pure
 As he who betrayed.
 To wife forsworn,
 To friend too faithful,
 From his own true love--
 His only beloved--
 Barred he lay by his sword.
 Never did man
 Swear oaths more honest,
 No one was ever
 Truer to treaties;
 Never was love
 Purer than Siegfried's;
 Yet oaths the most sacred,
 Bonds the most binding,
 And true love were never
 So grossly betrayed!

Know ye why that was?

[Looking upward.]

Ye Gods who guard
 All vows that are uttered,
 Look down on me
 In my terrible grief,
 Your guilt never-ending behold!
 Hear my voice accusing,
 Mighty God!
 Through his most valiant deed--
 Deed by thee so desired--
 Thou didst condemn him
 To the doom
 That else upon thee had fallen.
 He, truest of all,
 Must betray me,
 That wise a woman might grow!

Know I all thou wouldst learn?

All things! All things!
 All I know now:
 All stands plainly revealed.
 Round me I hear
 Thy ravens flapping.
 By them I send thee back
 The tidings awaited in fear.
 Rest in peace now, O God!

[She signs to the vassals to bear Siegfried's body on to the pyre, at the same time she draws the ring of Siegfried's finger, and regards it musingly.]

I claim as mine
 What he has left me.
 O gold accurst!
 Terrible ring!

I now grasp thee
And give thee away.
O sisters wise,
Ye have my thanks
For your counsel good, ye who dwell
In the waters deep of the Rhine.
What ye desire
I gladly give;
From out my ashes
Take ye your treasure;
The fire by which I am burnt
Cleanses the ring of its curse.
Down in the waves
Wash it away,
And guard ever pure
The shining gold
That stolen was to your grief!

[She has put the ring on her finger, and now turns to the pile of logs on which Siegfried's body lies stretched. Taking a great firebrand from one of the men, she waves it and points to the background.]

Fly home, ye ravens,
Tell your lord the tidings
That ye have heard by the Rhine.
But fly, as ye go,
By Brünnhild's rock;
Still Loge flames there;
Bid him follow to Walhall;
For the Gods are drawing
Near to their doom.

Thus--thrown be the brand
On Walhall's glittering halls!



Brünnhilde on Grane leaps on to the funeral pyre of Siegfried

[She hurls the brand on to the pile of wood, which quickly breaks into flame. Two ravens fly up from the rock by the shore and vanish in the background. Brünnhilde perceives her horse, which has just been led in by two men.]

Grane, my horse,
Be greeted fair!

[She springs towards him, and, catching hold of him, removes his bridle and bends towards him affectionately.]

Knowest thou, my friend,
To whom we are going?
Thy lord lies radiant
There in the fire,
Siegfried, my hero blest!
Thou neigest with joy
To think thou shalt join him?

Laughing, the flames
Allure thee to follow?
Feel thou my bosom,
Feel how it burns;
Flames of fire
Have laid hold on my heart.
Ah, to embrace him,
By him be embraced,
United for ever
In love without end!
Heiajoho! Grane!
Give thy lord greeting!

[She has swung herself on to the horse, and urges it forward.]

Siegfried! Siegfried!
See! Brünnhild' greets thee, thy bride!



The Rhine-Maidens obtain possession of the ring and bear it off in triumph

[She urges her horse with one leap into the burning pile of logs. The flames immediately blaze up, so that they fill the whole space in front of the hall and seem to catch hold of the building itself. The terrified men and women press as far to the front as possible. When the whole stage appears to be filled with fire the glow gradually fades, so that there is soon nothing left but a cloud of smoke, which drifts towards the back and hangs there as a dark bank of cloud. At the same time the Rhine overflows and the flood rolls up over the fire. The three Rhine-Maidens swim forward on the waves, and now appear over the spot where the fire was. Hagen, who since the incident of the ring has been watching Brünnhilde's behaviour with growing anxiety, is much alarmed by the sight of the Rhine-Maidens. He throws away his spear, shield, and helmet, and dashes into the flood as if mad, crying out, "Back from the ring!" Woglinde and Wellgunde fling their arms round his neck and, swimming away, draw him down with them into the depths.. Flosshilde, swimming ahead of the others towards the back, joyously holds up the recovered ring.]

Through the bank of cloud on the horizon a red glow of increasing brightness breaks forth, and, illumined by this light, the Rhine-Maidens are seen merrily circling about and playing with the ring on the calmer waters of the Rhine, which has gradually retired to its natural bed. From the ruins of the fallen hall the men and women watch in great agitation the growing gleam of fire in the heavens. When this is at its brightest the hall of Walhall is seen, in which the Gods and heroes sit assembled, as described by Waltraute in the first Act. Bright flames seem to seize on the hall of the Gods. When the Gods are completely hidden by the flames the curtain falls.]
