

Heathen elements existing in the Nibelungenlied.

(Compared with the older Edda).

by

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Abbreviations.

N: Nibelungenlied, Karl Bartsch.

E: Translation of the older Edda by Hugo Gering

Roman numerals refer to the number of the  
adventure and the arabic numerals to the stanza.

The fifth and sixth centuries form the basis for nearly all the Germanic sagas. Although we have a few glimpses of the Germans previous to this time, none of the historical characters of the earlier period are preserved in the national saga. During this period occurred the Migrations. Impelled partly from a love of wandering about, and partly because of conflicts with other tribes and nations, they sought a permanent home. Amid these changing conditions, many brave deeds took place, which later became the subject of song and story.

These historical sagas have not come down to us as they really happened, but they have been united with the old pre-historic myths of the people. The Nibelungensaga is one of the most important of these combinations of myth and history, for from it, many years later, grew the great national epic, the Nibelungenlied.

This saga is composed of two parts, on the onehand, the mythical story of Siegfried, and on the other the story of the overthrow of the Burgundians, which is based on historical facts. The origin of the myth is unknown to us, for it goes far back into the unrecorded life of the German forefathers. The rest of the saga, however, is based on the overthrow of the Burgundians by the Huns, which we know occurred in the year 437. The destruction of this tribe naturally made

a very great impression on the minds of the people who lived at that time, and it was not soon to be forgotten. But as time passed, the story began to assume the form of a legend, and became attached to the mythical story of Siegfried.

It is not surprising that this combination took place. The similarity of the names in the myth and in the historical events is one explanation. In the myth we find the names Gibeke and Gunther which correspond to the Burgundian Gibica and Gundarhari. Gibeke is the name of a dwarf king and we still hear of the Gibichensteine. When we take into consideration the fact that Siegfried's opponents were dwarfs, we can see how the historical and mythological elements are interwoven. Gunther has drawn Attila (Etzel) into the story. Siegfried is killed by the Burgundian kings, and they in turn are conquered by Attila, so there must be a connection made between the two. In the Edda Attila is represented as Brunhild's brother and the fact that his wife kills him is historical.

Another explanation for this combination is the fact that the early German literature passed through three stages of development. The first was the purely mythological stage, in which the legends were mere creations of the mind. Following this, the legends began to be associated with the deeds of great heroes and we have a form of myth which was known as the "heldensaga". The third stage in the development occurred

during the period of the Migrations, when the "helden-saga" began to be amalgamated with the events of history which were taking place at that time. The characters were not only endowed with historical names but also were placed in historical surroundings. This united saga became the possession of all the Germanic peoples and was taken with them wherever they went, and was again influenced by the characteristics of its new home.

The oldest monument or remnant of this saga which has come down to us is the Icelandic Eddas. These were written down in the latter part of the ninth century, while the Nibelungenlied was not written until the thirteenth century. The difference in the time of these two writings may seem at first thought, rather puzzling but it is not when we consider the facts of the case. Why was the German epic not written down until nearly four centuries after the writing of the Eddas? If we stop to think, we will find that the foundations for both were formed in the heroic events which occurred in the fifth and sixth centuries, namely, during the Migrations. Let us consider the events which happened during these centuries and it will not be so hard to understand. In the ninth and tenth centuries, all the writings were in Latin. In addition to this, Germany had become christianized, and as a matter of course, the clergy endeavored to do away with all pagan literature. Consequently, the sagas

and the legends of the earlier period of heathenism were looked down upon and the people had very little chance to become acquainted with them.

Another fact which tended to do away with the heathen literature was the rise of chivalry and knighthood. Although the knights as well as the clergy began to devote themselves to literature and writing after the middle of the twelfth century, a new ideal permeates their works, namely, that of the knight. Before this time there had been great fighters and their deeds had been the subject of song, but now instead of being only a brave, strong man, the hero was also an arbiter of manners and an example of the social ideal.

Thus it came about that the Nibelungenlied, although based on legend and saga, took on a new aspect and was largely influenced both by knighthood and by Christianity. Nevertheless, in spite of the new influences which were at work upon the writings of this period, there still existed in the Nibelungenlied a great number of the old heathen ideas, and not only the chief characters, but the general impressions received from this story are practically the same as those which we receive from the Edda.

The purpose of this paper shall be to pick out and illustrate with quotations from the Nibelungenlied, those things which have come down in it practically unchanged. I shall first give a synopsis

of the story as it appears in the Edda and then as it is in the middle-high-german epic.

Synopsis of the "Sigurd" myth as it in the Edda.

The three gods, Odin, Loki, and Hoenir, set out to explore the world and came to the cascade of the dwarf Andvari, where they found an otter devouring a salmon. They kill it and taking its skin with them, they seek shelter in the house of Hreidmar. He recognizes the skin as that of his son Otter and demands that they fill it and cover it with gold as a ransom. Loki went in search of the gold and caught the dwarf Andvari in the shape of a pike, whom he compels to pay the ransom. He gives Loki enough gold to fill the skin and to cover all but one hair. In order to cover this, Loki compels him to give up a magic ring which has the power of replenishing the gold. When he gives this up, the dwarf pronounces a curse upon the hoard and upon everyone who comes into possession of it. Loki returns with his ransom and gives it to Hreidmar. His two sons, Fafnir and Regin demand their share of the treasure, but the father refuses to give it to them and he is murdered in his sleep by Fafnir. Regin demands his share but Fafnir threatens to kill him and changes himself into a dragon in order to guard the hoard. Regin flees and takes refuge in the land of the Franks where the young Sigurd is placed in his charge. Regin tells him of the hoard and Sigurd demands that Regin make him a sword. Regin does

this but it breaks when Sigurd strikes it on the anvil. Then Regin welds together the broken pieces of the sword Gram, which had belonged to Sigurd's father. This sword did not break and the boy goes to the land where Fafnir lay watching the treasure. He digs a pit and when the dragon appears, deals it a death blow. Later, while Sigurd is roasting Fafnir's heart, he touches it to see if it is cooked enough. In so doing he burns his finger and puts it into his mouth. Immediately he is able to understand the language of the birds. They warn him against Regin and Sigurd slays him and then goes away with the hoard on his horse Grani. He finds Brunhild, a Valkyrie, upon a hill, in an enchanted sleep, and surrounded by a wall of fire. She has sworn never to marry anyone except the man who is brave enough to ride through the flames for her. Sigurd does this and frees her from her sleep and gives her the magic ring as a token of their plighted troth. Going to the court of Giuki, a king of the Rhineland, he forms a friendship with the king's sons, Hogni, Gunnar and Guthorm. Gudrun, their sister, fascinated by the stranger, gives him an enchanted drink which makes him forget Brunhild and then Sigurd and Gudrun are married. Gunnar wishes to marry Brunhild and asks Sigurd to go with him in quest of her. Gunnar attempts to go through the flames in vain and finally persuades his friend to do it for him. Sigurd assumes the form of Gunnar and after riding

through the fire, takes from Brunhild the ring which he had formerly given her. Upon their return, Brunhild becomes Gunnar's wife. Some time later the wives quarrel over the relative worth of their husbands. Brunhild says that Sigurd is inferior to Gunnar and Gudrun replies that it was Sigurd who rode through the flames. Brunhild, enraged by jealousy, incites Guthorm to murder Sigurd. He stabs him one night, but Sigurd hurls his sword at his murderer, whom it kills. Brunhild, having loved Sigurd all the time, kills herself with the sword which killed him and then throws herself on the pyre and is burned with him. Later Gudrun marries Atli, king of the Huns. Atli asks her brothers to visit him and notwithstanding Gudrun's warning they come. He demands Sigurd's hoard, which he claims as Gudrun's property, but they have buried it in the Rhine before leaving home and refuse to disclose its hiding place. After a fierce struggle in which all of the followers of Gunnar and Hogni fall, Atli renews his demands and promises to spare Gunnar's life if he will tell. Gunnar refuses to do so until he sees Hogni's heart. They bring him the heart of a slave but he says it is not Hogni's for it quakes. Then they bring Hogni's heart. Gunnar still refuses to tell. Then his hands are bound and he is put in the court of serpents where he plays so sweetly on a harp with his toes that he charms

all the snakes but one, by which he is stung to death. Gúdrun avenges the death of her brothers by killing the two sons which she has borne to Atli and causing him, unknowingly, to drink their blood and eat their hearts. In the night, she sets fire to the palace and leaps into the sea, where she is carried away to new scenes and adventures.

#### Synopsis of the Nibelungenlied.

Kriemhild lives at Worms, the capitol of the Burgundian kingdom, with her brothers Gunther, Gernot and Giselher, the former being the king. To Worms comes Siegfried, the son of Siegemund and Sigelinde, the king and queen of the netherlands. Siegfried possesses the magic hoard which he had taken from the two princes of the Nibelungen. He also became the possessor of the sword Balmung and the "tarnkappe". Siegfried becomes the friend of the brothers and promises to help Gunther win the hand of Brunhild, the queen of Iceland, if he in return will give him Kriemhild for his wife. He promises to do this and they set out for Brunhild's country.

In order to win her anyone must conquer her in three games. Gunther with Siegfried's aid, who makes himself invisible by means of the tarnkappe, overcomes the powerful maid. On the night of the wedding, Brunhild scoffs at Gunther, struggles with him, binds him and leaves him hanging on the wall

till morning. The next night Siegfried helps his friend and takes a ring and girdle from Brunhild, after which she is no stronger than other women. Siegfried and Kriemhild then go to the Netherlands where they live for several years. Invited to go to visit the Burgundian court, they leave Santen, the capitol, and with a great following go to Worms. Brunhild has always been unfriendly towards Siegfried whom she is represented as recognizing when they meet in Iceland. She insults Kriemhild by boasting of the superiority of Gunther. Kriemhild resents this and in a scene before the cathedral asserts her right to enter first. Kriemhild claims that Siegfried had wronged Brunhild on the wedding night and shows the ring and girdle as proof thereof. Siegfried tries to restore peace between the queens, but in vain. Brunhild decides that he must die and Hagen undertakes to do her bidding. Inducing Kriemhild to betray where her husband is vulnerable, Hagen accomplishes his object during a hunting expedition. Kriemhild is overwhelmed with grief and rage and thirsts for revenge. For thirteen years she resides at Gunther's court. Then Rudiger, margrave of Bechlaren, comes as the ambassador of Etzel, king of the Huns, and entreats Kriemhild to become Etzel's wife. She finally consents and lives with him a number of years before she has a chance for

revenge on Siegfried's death. Gunther and his brothers are invited to Etzel's court and in spite of warnings they go with an immense retinue. A terrible conflict takes place in which all the Burgundians, save Gunther and Hagen are destroyed. They are overcome by Dietrich and given to Kriemhild who places them in separate dungeons. Kriemhild demands the hoard and Hagen tells her that it is buried in the Rhine and refuses to tell its hiding place. She then has Gunther's head brought to him but he still refuses. Then Kriemhild snatches up the sword Balmung and beheads him. Hildebrand, angry that she has not kept her word, namely, that she would keep them as hostages, kills her.

There are a great many things in the Nibelungenlied which are practically the same as some of the sagas as found in the older Edda. Others vary in almost every degree imaginable. The acquisition of the hoard is one of the first things which presents itself to us and this is in a great many ways similar to the story as found in the northern saga.

E. 2;2I,II.f      In the latter case Fafnir and Regin quarrel over their parental inheritance and in the Nibelungenlied, Schilbung and Nibelung do likewise. They are killed by Siegfried's sword, which in the northern  
 N;93,4  
 E;2,22f.      saga is called Gram, in the Middle-high-german  
 N;96,I  
 epic Balmung.

In the older tradition, since the hoard did not belong to Hreidmar and his sons, we might conclude that in the Nibelungenlied, such was also the case, and that the deaths of Nibelung and Schilbung were the results of the curse resting upon the hoard.

In the Nibelungenlied Siegfried has to overcome twelve giants and the dwarf Alberich, while in the Edda he kills Fafnir, a giant, and Regin, a dwarf. The giants and dwarfs were very great favorites of the old Germanic peoples and their folklore abounds with them.

Another fact which occurs in the Nibelungenlied in connection with the hoard, is the slaying of the "linddrache". In the older story, it takes place in connection with the guarding of the hoard. Fafnir changes his form to that of a dragon and is later slain by Sigurd. In the later epic, it really has no connection with the treasure but the story of the killing of the dragon is told by Hagen:

"Sō sprach von Tronege Hagene, daz hāt er getān,  
alsō grōzer krefte, nie mēr recke gewan."

"Noch weiz ich an im mēre, daz mir ist bekant.  
einen linddrachen sluog des heledes hant.  
er badet sich in dem bluote, sin hūt wart hurnīn,  
des snidet in kein wāfen--das ist dicke worden  
(scīn"

The fact that the hoard could continually be replenished is found in both epics. IN the northern saga

E; 21, 5f.

it was brought about by the magic ring Andvaranaut, and in the Nibelungenlied by means of the wonderful wishing rod:

N; II23

"Ez enwas niht anders wan gesteine unde golt,  
unt ob man al die werlde het dā von versolt,  
sīn waere niht minner einer marke wert.  
ja ne het es āne schulde niht gar Hagene gegert!"

N; II24

Derwunsch der lac dar under, von golde ein rüete-  
līn,  
wol in aller werlde über ietslīchen man.  
der Alberīches māge kom vil mit Gērnōte dan."

In both stories we find the ring to be one of the main factors in the quarrel between the two queens. In the old Norse saga, Sigurd takes the ring from Brunhild after he rides through the fire. He gives it to Gudrun who uses it as proof against him in her quarrel with Brunhild thirteen years later. In the Nibelungenlied, Siegfried takes the ring from Brunhild on the night of the wedding and gives it to Kriemhild who uses it for the same purpose that Gudrun did in the older saga. The following verses give the story of how Siegfried took the ring and then how Kriemhild made use of it. Siegfried had been struggling with Brunhild and finally overcame her. Then:

N;679.

"Sīfrit derstuont dannen, ligen lie er die meit.  
 sam er von im ziehen wolde sīniu kleit,  
 er zōch ir ab der hende ein guldīn vingerlīn  
 daz si des nie wart innen, die vil edele künegin."

After many years Brunhild and Kriemhild quarrel over the respective worth of their husbands. Kriemhild tells Brunhild that Siegfried had been with her on the wedding night. Brunhild becomes very angry and will not believe it.

N;XIV.

N;846.

"dō sprach die vrouwe Brūnhild, „ir solt stille stān,  
 ir jāhet mīn ze kebesen, daz sult ir lāzen sehen,  
 mir ist von iuvern sprūchen, daz wizzet leide  
 (geschen,“

N;847

"Dō sprach diu vrouwe Kriemhilt, „ir möht mich lāzen  
 (gān.  
 ich erziuge'z mit dem golde, deich an der hende hān,  
 daz brāhte mir mīn vriedel, do er ērste bī iu lac,  
 nie gelebte Brūnhilt deheiner leideren tac."

N;848.

"Sie sprach; diz golt vil edele, daz wart mir verstoln  
 unt ist mir harte lange vil ũbele vor verholn,  
 ich kum ez an ein ende, wer mir'z hāt genomen.  
 die vrouwen wāren beide in grōz ungemüete komen."

N;849.

"Dō sprach aber Kriemhilt, „i'ne wil's niht wesen  
 (diep,  
 du möhtes wol gedaget hān, unt waer' dir ēre liep.  
 ich erziuge'z mit dem gūrtel, den ich hie umbe hān,  
 daz ich niht enliuge, jā wart min Sīfrit dīn man!"

The tarnkappe appears in the Nibelungenlied as having the power to make its wearer invisible and to give him the strength of twelve men. Although we do not find mention of the cap in the northern saga,

Sigurd does have the power of changing his appearance and thus accomplishes the same result. The one performance of this feat which has the greatest significance to the story, was the one where Sigurd changed his appearance to that of Gunnar and rode through the wall of fire which surrounded Brunhild. In this way he won the beautiful maiden for Gunnar who was unable to do it for himself, even with the help of Sigurd's horse Grani. The corresponding passage in the Nibelungenlied where Siegfried helps Gunther win Brunhild, follows:

N; 431.

"Die wīle was ouch Sīfrit, der waetliche man  
ē iz iemen erfunde, in daz schif gegān.  
da er sine tarnkappe verborgen ligen vant,  
dar in slouf er vil schiere; dō was er niemen  
(bekant."

N; 452

"Unt waere im Sīfrit niht ze helfe kōmen,  
sō hete sie dem künēge sīnen līp benōmen.  
er gie gar tougenliche unt ruort im sīne hant,  
Gunther sīne liste vil harte sorchlich ervant."

N; 453.

"Was hāt mich gerüeret, daht der künēne man,  
dō sach er allenthalben, er vant dā niemen stān.  
er sprach, "ich pin Sīfrit, der liebe vriunt dīn.  
vor der künēginne soltu gar ān' angest sīn."

N; 454. "Den scilt gip mir von hende, unt lā mich den tragen,  
unde merke rehte waz du mich hōrest sagen,  
nu habe du die gebaere--die werc wil ich begān;  
do er in reht' erkande, ez was im liebe getān."

N; 454.4 "Wan diu tarnkappe, sie waren tōt dā bestān."

N; 470.1.2. "Sīfrit der snelle wīs er was genouc,  
sī ne tarnkappe er abe behalten trouc."

Another significant fact which remains in the Nibelungenlied is the occurrence and importance of dreams. Dreams and prophecies held a very prominent place in ancient mythology. Among the Germans especially, the women were thought to be greatly distinguished on account of their gift of prophecy. It is therefore, not at all surprising that we find dreams deeply rooted in the sagas and legends of the northern peoples, or that they have come down to us in our more modern traditions, in spite of the changes which have occurred in the latter. The very first adventure gives us the dream of Kriemhild in which all the suffering of the future years is foretold.

N; 13. "In disen hōhen ēren troumte Kriemhilde,  
wie si zūge einen valken, starc scoen' unt wilde.  
den ir zwen' aren erkrunnen, daz si daz muoste  
ir enkunde in dirre werlde, leider nimmer  
sehen,  
gescehen."

- N; 14 "Den troum si dō sagete ir muoter Uoten.  
sine kunde's niht bescheiden bas der guoten:  
"der valke den du ziuhest, daz ist ein edel man,  
in welle got behüeten, du muost in sciere vloren hān."
- N; 15 "Waz saget ir mir von manne, vil liebiu muoter mīn.  
āne recken minne sō vil ich immer sīn,  
sus scoene ich wil beliben, unz an mīnen tōt.  
daz ich von mannes minne sol gewinnen nimmer nōt."
- N; 16 "Nu versprich ez niht ze sēre," sprach aber ir  
muoter dō,  
"soltu immer herzenliche zer werlde werden vrō.  
das gescit von mannes minne. du wirst ein scoene  
wīp,  
ob dir noch got gefüezet eines rehte guoten  
ritters līp."
- N; 17 "Die rede lāt belīben", sprach si, "frouwe min,  
es ist an manegen wīben vil dicke worden scīn  
wie liebe mit leide ze jūngest lōnen kan.  
ich sol si mīden beide: son'kan mir nimmer  
missegān."
- N; 18, 4 sit wart si mit ēren eins vil kūenen recken wīp."
- N; 19 Der was derselbe valken den sie in troume sach,  
den ir besciet ir muoter, wie sēre si daz rach  
an ir muoter māgen, die in sluogen sint  
durch sīn eines sterben, starp vil maneger  
muoter kint."

This corresponds to the dream of Gudrun  
in the northern saga, although the details are some-  
what different. In the latter it is Brunhild who

interprets the dream and the prophecy extends to the destruction of the Burgundians and the Huns, which it does not do in the Nibelungenlied except in a general way.

The other important dream which has a semblance to one in the Edda is the one of Uote before the departure of her sons for Etzel's court. Here we find a counterpart to the dream of Gunnar's and Hogni's wives upon the same occasion.

N;1510 "Dā sprach zuo z'ir kinden, die edele Uote:  
 "ir soldet hie beliben, helde guote  
 mir ist getroumet hinte, vonangestlichen nōt,  
 wie allez daz gefūgele, in diesem lande waere  
 tōt."

Another thing which cannot be explained in any way without the older saga is the recognition of Brunhild and Siegfried when the latter goes to help Gunther win the beautiful maiden. As they near the palace they see a number of beautiful maidens standing in the windows and Siegfried tells Gunther to choose the one whom he would like to have for his wife. Gunther does this and then Siegfried says to him:

N;393,1,2,3. "Dir hāt erwelt vil rehte, diner ougen scīn,  
 ez ist diu edel Prūnhilt, daz scoene magedīn,  
 nāch der dīn herze ringet, dīn sin unt ouch  
 der muot."

A little later, after the Burgundians have been received into the palace, Brunhild inquires who the strangers are and one of her maids replies:

N; 411 "vrouwe, ich mac wol jehen,  
daz ich ir deheinen nie mēr habe gesehen  
van gelīche Sīfrīde, einer drunder stāt,  
der sult ir wol enpfāhen: daz ist mit triuven mīn rāt."

Brunhild attires herself in her richest garments and prepares to meet him royally:

N; 419. "Dō die küneginne Sīfriden sach,  
nu muget ir gerne hoeren wie die maget sprach:  
"sīt willekommen, Sīfrit, her in ditze lant,  
was meinet iuwer reise? gerne het ich daz bekant."

N; 420. "Vil michel iwer genāde, min vrou Prūnhilt,  
daz ir mich ruochet grūezen, fürsten tōchter milt,  
vor disem edelen recken, der hie vor mir stāt.  
wan der ist mīn herre: der ēren het ich gerne rāt."

The question naturally arises, "How did Brunhild and Siegfried know each other?" In the Nibelungenlied this is the first intimation of any meeting between the two and the only explanation which can be offered is that the author had the old Norse saga in mind when he wrote this adventure. In the saga, we expect them to recognize each other when Sigurd goes to help Gunnar win Brunhild,

because Sigurd had earlier gone through the fire and had awakened her from the magic sleep. The author of the Nibelungenlied, however makes no mention of this earlier meeting and the reader must take it for granted when he reads this portion of the story.

When we come to the historical similarities our epic has very few, in comparison with the number of mythological similarities.

Of course the second part of both poems deals with the overthrow of the Burgundians but in the details there are a great many changes. The main characters are practically the same. Gudrun(Kriemhild) marries, after the lapse of a number of years, Atli(Etzel), king of the Huns. The grief and despair of Kriemhild are pictured just as vividly, if indeed, not more so, in the Nibelungenlied, than they were in the older Norse saga.

E;2,25.

N;XVII

In spite of the passing of the years, she waits patiently and silently for her chance for revenge. In the later epic she turns against her brothers, who are responsible for Siegfried's death; and the real reason for her marriage with Etzel was the hope that by allying herself with him she might find the chance to avenge herself.

In the Edda the first of this part of the story is very similar, but here she becomes reconciled to her brothers, turns against her husband and

finally slays him.

In the northern saga, when Atli becomes the conqueror over Gunnar, he necessarily becomes the avenger of Sigurd's death, although his real purpose in overcoming Gunnar was to gain possession of the hoard. In the Nibelungenlied, it is Kriemhild who plans the destruction of the Burgundians and Etzel becomes the weaker character.

The historical elements in the Nibelungenlied are more conspicuous than in the Edda, perhaps because they are somewhat changed from the authentic records. The one fact which has been distorted the most, is the one which represents Dietrich and Etzel as being contemporaries, for in reality there was several years between the death of the latter and the birth of the former.

Throughout the old Norse saga, as well as the more modern Nibelungenlied, runs a theme which is the fundamental principle of both poems, namely, the old, old theme of "triuwe". I suppose the one word which best gives the meaning of this is "faithfulness". Never for an instant are we permitted to lose sight of the fact that this one quality is the most important and it is shown to a very great extent in both poems.

In the Nibelungenlied, the person toward whom this "triuwe" is shown has been changed from the brothers to the husband of Kriemhild, but the

principle is the same. In the older time, it was the custom to remain true to ones blood relatives, no matter who else might have a right to expect the same treatment.

After the introduction of Christianity, however, the ideals of the people changed, so in the later epic we find Kriemhild remaining true to her husband rather than to her brothers.

Never, during all the years of her widowhood nor during the years after her marriage to Etzel did she swerve from her purpose to avenge the death of Siegfried. When Rüdiger comes to her, to woo her for Etzel, he promises to avenge any injury which might come to her lot, and secretly she thinks that this will be her chance for revenge. Thereupon she consents to become Etzel's wife. The following lines show us her attitude toward her brothers and her enduring love for and faithfulness to Siegfried .

N;II06.

"Sus saz si nāch ir leide, daz ist alwār  
 nāch ir mannes tōde, wol vierdehalbez iār,  
 daz si ze Gunthēre nie dehein wort gesprach  
 unt ouch ir vīent Hagenen in der zīte nie  
 gesach."

N;II05.

"si klagete unz an ir ende die wīle werte ir līp  
 sit rach sich wol mit ellen des kūenen  
 Sifriāes wīp."

N; I233. "Dōsprach diu küneginne: marcgrāve Rūdegēr,  
waer' iemen der bekande diu mīnen scharpfen sēr  
der baete mich niht triuten noch deheinen man,  
jā vlōs ich ein den besten, den ie vrouwe gewan. "

N; I238. "Dōsprach diu küneginne: wie möhte mīnen līp  
immer des gelusten, deich wurde heledes wīp?  
mir hāt der tōt an einem sō rehte leit getān,  
des ich unz an mīn ende muoz unvroeliche stān."

N; 12 57 "sīt ich vriunde hān  
alsō vil gewonnen, sō sol ich reden lān  
die liute swaz si wellen, ich jārmerhafftez wīp.  
waz ob noch vurt errochen des mīnen lieben mannes līp!"

At the very last of the Nibelungenlied we find Kriemhild using Siegfried's sword to kill her own brothers and at last, in her own opinion, she has avenged her first husband's death.

N; 2372. "Si sprach: sō habt ir übele geltes mich gewert,  
sō wil ich doch behalten daz Sīfrides swert  
daz truoc min holder vriedel, do ich in jüngest  
sach,  
an dem mir herzeleide von iuwer sculden geschach!"

The greatest heathen element still existing in Nibelungenlied is that of fatalism. From the very beginning, all the actions, or results of actions are brought about by fate. In the old Norse saga we find the dwarf Andvari speaking these words to Loki

after he had given the treasure to him:

B; 2, 21, 5

"Das Gold, das eh'mals Gust besessen,  
wird einst zwei Brudern Untergang bringen  
und acht Fursten zum Unheil werden;  
vom Schatze wird niemand Nutzen haben."

From the moment this curse was put upon the hoard everything which happened to its possessors was the result of the curse. It begins to take effect at once for in the Edda, Regin and Fafnir quarrel over the division of the hoard and kill their father and Fafnir changes himself into a dragon to keep Regin from getting possession of the treasure. A little later, Fafnir and Regin are both killed by Sigurd and now the curse begins to fall upon him. In the Nibelungenlied we find the two sons of Nibelung in possession of the hoard and they are killed by Siegfried.

The greatest event, of course, and the one on which the rest of the story depends is the death of Siegfried. Although the quarrel of the queens over their husbands' respective worth and the attempt to smother things over are the apparent causes for his death, it was in reality the result of the curse resting upon the hoard, of which he had become the possessor. After Siegfried's death, the hoard remained in the possession of the Burgundians and as a matter of course, the same

fate still pursued. Although a number of years elapsed before their destruction took place, it eventually had to happen; there could be no escape from it.

The Burgundians are invited to visit the court of Etzel, King of the Huns, and there the terrible conflict takes place. First the men of lower rank are murdered while seated at their tables, and then group by group, the men of higher rank are killed, until there remains from the vast Burgundian army only Gunther and Hagen. For a while it seems as if they might escape, but they are finally overpowered by Dietrich and taken to Kriemhild, who promises to spare their lives.

N: XXXII  
to  
N: XXXVII

N: 2362.

"Dō sprach der helt von Berne, vil edeles küneges wīp,  
ez enwart nie gīsel mēre sō guoten ritter līp  
als ich iu, vrouwe hēre, an in gegeben hān;  
nu sult ir di ellenden mīn vil wol geniezen lān."

N; 2364.

"Si jach si tat ez gerne, dō gie her Dietrich  
mit weinenden ougen von den helden lobelīch  
sit rach sich grimmelichen daz Etzelen wīp  
den ūz erwelten degenen nam si beiden den līp."

N; 2365.

Here we find that she does not keep her promise but when Hagen refuses to tell the hiding place of the hoard she has Gunther killed. Even then he will not tell his secret and she beheads him:

N;2373. "Si zōh iz(Sifrit's swert) von der scheiden, daz kunde  
 er niht erwern  
 dō dāhte si den recken des lībes behern,  
 si huot ez mit ir handen, daz houbt si im abe slouc,  
 daz sach der künec Etzel, do was im leide genouc."

At this terrible turn of events, Hildebrand is very angry and wishes to avenge the death of the Burgundian princes.

N;2376. "Hildebrant mit zorne zuo Kriemhilde spranc,  
 er sluoc der küneginne einen swaeren swertes swanc  
 jā tet ir diu sorge von Hildebrande wē.  
 waz mohte si gehelfen daz si sō groezlichen scrē."

Apparently it is Hildebrands anger at the queens unfair deed which causes him to kill her, but I do not think that this is the only reason. So long as any of the Burgundians or any one else had anything to do with the treasure they must suffer the consequences of fate. It would not do for the author to spare Kriemhild after he had made all the others suffer. If the curse was to be carried out for one it must be done for all. There was no escape from it; it had to be and through the entire poems we find the possessors of the hoard sufferinh the evil consequences, as had been prophecied in the beginning. None of the characters could be free moral agents. So long as the curse was upon them, no matter what they did in the end they must suffer.

Finis.

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