

The Story of Sigurd.

Senior Thesis .

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Table of Contents.

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Introduction- - - - - | -1 |
| The Nibelungenlied - - - - - | 3 |
| The Völsunga Saga - - - - - | 8 |
| The Comparison of "The Saga" with "The Lied." - - - - - | 19 |
| The Nibelungen Ring - - - - - | 24 |
| The Rhine Gold. | |
| The Valkyrie. | |
| Siegfried. | |
| The Twilight of the Gods. | |
| Wagner's Purpose and "The Nibelungen Ring" Compared with "The Lied" and "The Saga." - - - | -37 |
| The Vikings at Helgeland - - - - - | 40 |
| Ibsen's Purpose and the Char- acters in "The Vikings at Helgeland" - | -46 |
| Sigurd the Volsung - - - - - | 48 |
| Conclusion - - - - - | 54 |

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Translated by

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Völsunga Saga: The Story of the
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Ibsen's Vikings at Høgeland. - - - - -William Archer.

Morris's Sigurd the Volsung.

THE STORY OF SIGURD .

Introduction.

In the history of literature we find, again and again, old heroic stories such as the tales of the Siege of Troy or the legends of King Arthur or of Charlemagne, retold in different times and used to convey some truth to the existing age. The story of Sigurd is one of these. Representing as it does the hero of our race, and portraying deep conflict of passions, it affords a wide range for picturing the strength of man and his weakness. Primitive humanity, nature, the gods,-- for each writer these offer the means of conveying his ideas of life, whether philosophical, religious or socialistic.

With this idea in mind, I have outlined the different versions of the story of Sigurd showing their differences in incident and purpose. "The Nibelungenlied" and "The Völsunga Saga" are told rather fully for on these are based the other versions. Wagner and Ibsen both have changed the story in so many ways in order to express their ideas concerning the life of man, that it is necessary to tell their stories in brief. Morris, in reverence for old faiths and truths has merely put the old Saga into poetic form of a freedom

and grandeur of spirit that is beautiful. It is not strange that the story is continually recognized as racial by some noble mind and seized as a means for expressing some vital truth to his age; so grand, so purposeful is it, whether in the early "Nibelungenlied," the simple form of the "Saga," the dignified form of Wagner's "Nibelungen Ring," the drama of Ibsen, "The Vikings at Helgeland," or Morris's finished and graceful "Sigurd the Volsung."

The Nibelungenlied.

"The Nibelungenlied" is composed of Germanic lays collected by a German poet. He arranged these parts into a whole and thus we get it with the gaps filled in, so as to form an epic. The scene of this story is in the Netherlands, Burgundy, and Hungary, and in some foreign country where Brunhild dwelt.

The story begins with an account of the court at Worms. There, lived a beautiful maiden, called Kriemhild, carefully guarded by her three brothers, King Gunther, Gernot, and Giselher. One night Kriemhild had a dream, which, interpreted by her mother Uta, meant that a suitor would come to her but that some great ill would befall him. Kriemhild then vowed she would never marry and undergo sorrow.

At this time there was in Netherland a prince, Siegfried by name, son of Siegmund and Siegelind. He was a brave champion, free from shame, and already famed for many marvellous deeds. This hero heard of the beautiful Kriemhild in Burgundy and vowed to win her. With eleven companions he set out for Worms. On their arrival, many knights treated them with honor and Sir Hagan, a liegeman, who alone knew Siegfried, counselled King Gunther to treat him well. He told how Siegfried had slain the Nibelungers, had gained their treasure and the sword, Balmung, and had conquered Albric, winning from him the cloud cloak. He had also

slain a dragon and bathed in its blood, turning his skin to horn so that no weapon might pierce it. Gunther, acting on the advice of Hagan, received Siegfried courteously, but was met with a challenge to fight. A quarrel was averted and Siegfried persuaded to be a guest. Soon Siegfried helped Gunther in war and as a reward for his aid Gunther asked Kriemhild to greet Siegfried and thank him at a tourney. Then Siegfried fell in love.

Now Gunther had heard of Brunhild across the sea, who offered her love to him who could outmatch her in three games; but whoever failed in one, must lose his head. Gunther wished to win her and Siegfried promised his help if Kriemhild might be his. This Gunther readily promised and they set forth with Hagan and his brother Dankwart. Gunther won Brunhild, though he would certainly have lost his head had not Siegfried, in his cloud cloak, done the deeds which Gunther appeared to do. Having gained the victory then by the help of Siegfried, Gunther carried Brunhild to Worms, where they were received with joy. At the feast Brunhild learned that Siegfried was a king of great worth. She became gloomy, nor would she be made cheerful that evening. When night came, and Gunther lay beside her, in wrath she seized him and, in spite of his strength, she overpowered him, bound him, and hung him from a nail for the rest of the night.

When Siegfried learned what had happened, he again offered his help and that night, in his cloud cloak, went to Gunther's room. Gunther concealed himself while Siegfried fought with Brunhild in her anger, conquered her, and left her meek and submissive to her husband. But before leaving, Siegfried drew from her hand, so gently that she did not know it, a golden ring; and he took also her girdle.

Now Siegfried left for his home with Kriemhild and there they ruled and there a son was born to them. Brunhild, who secretly begrudged Siegfried his power, at length persuaded him and Kriemhild to come to see herself and Gunther. One day the two queens quarrelled over the power of their husbands, and Kriemhild called Brunhild a leman since she had yielded to Siegfried before she had to Gunther. Even Gunther mistrusted Siegfried when he saw Kriemhild wearing Brunhild's ring and girdle. Hagan cunningly increased his doubt, and made plans for revenge. Having learned that Siegfried's only vulnerable spot was between his shoulders, Hagan pierced him through his body one day as he knelt to drink at a brook. Kriemhild suspected Hagan of the crime immediately although he denied having done it. From this time Hagan became more powerful and when the Nibelungen treasure was brought to Kriemhild, he cast it into the Rhine, thinking to get it back for himself.

King Etzel, the Hun, now wished to wed Kriemhild; and after much thought, she consented, setting forth

with Etzel's noble messenger, Rudeger. For seven years Kriemhild lived in honor and brooded on her part. She persuaded Etzel to invite the Burgundians to Hungary and, unknown to him, planned the death of Hagan. After much consultation the Burgundians set forth. Hagan led them, but, fearing treason, he went prepared to fight. When they reached the Danube, two mermaids warned him that none of the Burgundians would return home. After much suffering, they reached Rudeger's home where they were received graciously; and before they left, Sir Rudeger promised his daughter to Gisäther. Hagan took as a parting gift a beautiful shield.

When they reached court, Kriemhild came forth to greet them, but scarcely noticed Hagan. Realizing that she was plotting against him, he got his friend, Folker the minstrel, to keep watch with him. Kriemhild had planned the murder of Hagan for that night but was foiled.

On the following day a tourney was held in which a quarrel arose, and with difficulty Etzel stopped it and took the guests to a feast. In the meantime Kriemhild bribed the Hun, Bloedel, to fall upon the Burgundians in camp while the kings were feasting. Bloedel surprised Dankwart and in the fight Dankwart's men were slain and also Bloedel. Dankwart fought his way to the hall and told the news just as Etzel's son was being passed around for admiration. Hagan in his wrath killed

the boy and, ordering Dankwart to guard the door, he and his men fell upon the Huns. Kriemhild, Etzel, and Sir Dietrich with his men left the hall unharmed, and the fight continued till all the Huns within the hall were killed. Hagan, seeing King Etzel outside, mocked him for not fighting. Thereon one named Iring rushed on Hagan, Folker, Gunther, and Gernot by turns, but in vain. Iring was slain and the fight was renewed within the hall. Kriemhild then ordered the hall to be burned; but the hall remained standing and the Burgundians still lived. She besought Rudeger to enter the fight, and he did, sorely against his will. Hagan, Folker, and Giselher refrained from fighting him but Gernot and Gunther met and killed each other. When Dietrich's men learned of this, they, too, went into the fight but without Dietrich, and were all slain except Hildebrand, who bore the news to Dietrich. By this time all the Burgundians save Gunther and Hagan were slain. Dietrich conquered them and they were imprisoned by Kriemhild. Hagan refused to tell her where the Nibelungen treasure could be found as long as Gunther lived. Gunther's head was cut off and brought to Hagan who again refused to tell. Kriemhild in wrath raised Siegfried's sword and killed Hagan.

Because Etzel bemoaned the death of Hagan, Hildebrand killed Kriemhild. So ended the feast of Etzel.

The Völsunga Saga.

"The Saga" is quite different from "The Lied," not only in the general thread of the story, but in conception of character and in general atmosphere. There are no mediaeval customs such as tourneys brought in. Simplicity and sturdy artlessness take the place of pomp and display in the story itself and in the ingenious manner of telling it.

It begins furthest back in the story, taking up with Sigi, the son of Odin, and Skadi, who was a great man. Skadi had a thrall, Bredi. One day Sigi and Bredi went hunting and because the thrall got the greater prey, Sigi killed him. For this he was banished from the land. He wandered till at length he married and a son named Rerir was born. Rerir became a great man, and, because he had no child, he prayed to the gods and a son was born, whom they named Volsung.

Volsung married and had ten sons and one daughter. The eldest son was Sigmund and the ~~eldest~~ daughter was Signy. They lived in a hall and in the midst thereof grew an oak tree which blossomed out over the roof; and men called its trunk Branstock.

At this time King Siggeir of Gothland came to woo Signy, who was given to him; and a feast was held. In the evening there came into the hall a certain one-eyed man who drew a sword, and smote it into Branstock, saying that whosoever could draw it forth should own it. None

save Sigmund could draw it forth. Siggeir would fain have bought the weapon but Sigmund angrily refused; and Siggeir cunningly concealed his own wrath. Before leaving, he gained Volsung's promise to visit him in three months.

At length Volsung and his sons went to Gothland where they found Siggeir awaiting them with his army. They entered into the fight and all were killed save the ten sons of Volsung. Signy begged that her brothers be allowed to live, so they were placed in stocks in the woods. At midnight a she-wolf came to them and devoured one of the brothers. Each night she returned until all but Sigmund were taken. Then Signy sent a servant to smear honey on Sigmund's face and in his mouth. When the wolf came she thrust her tongue into Sigmund's mouth and he caught her tongue between his teeth and it came out by the roots.

When Sigmund was free, Signy came to him bringing him all he needed and he built for himself a house. Hither Signy sent the older of her two sons to help Sigmund in the avenging. Sigmund bade him make bread and went off for firewood. But when he returned he found no bread and the lad said he feared, for something quick lay in the meal-sack. Signy bade Sigmund kill the lad, and this he did. The second son fared the same way.

It befell that a witch-wife came to Signy and changed semblance with her. Signy set forth as a witch-wife to Sigmund and begged for shelter. Sigmund welcomed

her, giving her food; and for three nights she staid there and then returned home and changed semblance again. A son was born to Signy whose name was Sinfjotli.

He, too, was sent to Sigmund and made the bread, kneading in the serpent without fear. Sigmund taught Sinfjotli many things till he deemed it time for revenge. On a night he and Sinfjotli went to Siggeir's hall where they concealed themselves. The King's children, seeing them, ran to tell the King. Straightway Signy took them and bade Sigmund kill them. Sigmund and Sinfjotli were both captured and placed in a cave divided by a rock. Before the cave was covered, Signy brought a bundle of straw to Sinfjotli. Within the straw was Sigmund's sword, which Sinfjotli drove into the rock; and the two sawed the rock apart. When free, they set fire to the hall and called forth Signy, who came to say good-bye; and since she had accomplished her purpose, she went back into the flames. The two then left for their fatherland where Sigmund regained his own, and became a mighty king. He wedded Borghild and they had two sons. Now Sinfjotli loved one whom Borghild's brother loved; he killed the brother. When Borghild learned this, she held a funeral feast where she offered Sinfjotli wine, which he refused, knowing it was poisoned. Then Borghild mocked Sinfjotli and brought him wine three times. The third time Sigmund bade him drain the cup and he did and straightway fell dead. Sigmund was sorely grieved and bore forth the body even to a river where he saw a man with a boat. Sigmund placed the body

in the boat and immediately both man and boat vanished with the body. Then Sigmund went home and sent Borghild from the hall.

There was at this time a king called Eylime, who had a beautiful daughter Hjordis. Sigmund went to woo her and Hjordis chose him rather than another suitor, King Lyngi. After the wedding King Lyngi made war on Sigmund. Hjordis, with a bond-maid, taking her wealth, hid in the woods during the fight. When the battle had lasted for a long while, there came to Sigmund a one-eyed man, who, after breaking Sigmund's sword, slew him. Then were all Sigmund's men conquered and King Lyngi, failing to find Hjordis, went home. Hjordis went among the slain and found Sigmund, who told her, before dying, to keep the shards of his sword for their son when he should be born.

On the following day, Alf, the son of Hjalprek of Denmark, landed, and seeing Hjordis, went to question her. But Hjordis saw him coming and changed clothes with her hand-maid, pretending to be a thrall. Alf took the two home with him, and wondering that the hand-maid was the fairer of the two, he finally asked each how she knew the wearing of hours at night. The queen said that as a child she was wont to drink milk at dawn and so still woke at that time. The bond-maid showed a gold ring which her father had given her that always turned cold at morn. Then was the truth known and the King wished to wed Hjordis. Yet she told him of her

marriage with Sigmund and was held in great honor.

After a time a son was born, named Sigurd.

Sigurd grew in the King's house, and at length Hjordis and Alf were wed. Sigurd had for foster-father Regin, who taught him many things. One day Regin mocked Sigurd because he had no horse, whereupon Sigurd asked the King for one and was sent to the fields to make his choice. There he met an old man who helped to drive the horses into the water, and all swam back save one. This horse Sigurd chose and named Grani. Regin then told Sigurd of a great treasure guarded by a dragon, and called Sigurd cowardly since he durst not get the treasure. Sigurd wondered at Regin's interest and so learned his story. Hreidmat was Regin's father and Fafnir and Otter his brothers. Regin was skilled as a smith; Otter was a great fisher and differed from other men in that he had the likeness of an otter by day; Fafnir was greatest and grimmest and longed to own all things. Otter went to a force one day where he got fish, and the gods Odin, Loki, and Hoenir came upon him slumbering. Loki cast a stone at him and killed him. Pleased with the prey, they flayed off its skin and went on to Hreidmar's house. When Hreidmar saw what they had done, he demanded as his ransom enough gold to fill the skin and cover it over. So Loki craftily obtained the gold from Andvari, the dwarf, taking also a gold ring; whereon Andvari swore that the ring

and all the gold should be the bane of whosoever owned them. Hreidmar took the gold and demanded the ring and Loki pronounced the curse of Andvari. Fafnir slew his father and drove forth Regin, thereby becoming owner of the hoard; and brooding over his wealth, he became a dragon.

Now Sigurd ordered Regin to make a sword for the killing of Fafnir. Regin made two swords, which Sigurd broke on the anvil. Angrily Sigurd went to his mother and asked for the shards of Sigmund's sword. Out of these Regin made a third sword with which Sigurd struck the anvil and cut the anvil in two. Sigurd then set forth to avenge his father's death. Having accomplished this, he returned home only to set forth with Regin to kill Fafnir. Regin told him to dig a hole in the dragon's path and there await the coming of the monster. But while Sigurd was doing this, the one-eyed man appeared and told him to dig many holes for the dragon's blood to run into. Sigurd did this and when the dragon came, pierced him through the heart. When Fafnir learned that Sigurd had wounded him, he advised him to go home without the treasure, for it would be his bane. Then Regin came to Sigurd, blaming him for killing his brother, Fafnir, and bade Sigurd roast Fafnir's heart for him. Sigurd roasted the heart, and deeming it done, he felt of it, put his finger in his mouth, and immediately understood the voices of birds. They told that Regin planned Sigurd's death and said it were better for Sigurd did he kill Regin and ride to Hindfell where a maid, called Brynhild, was sleeping.

Sigurd killed Regin and, taking the treasure with him, rode to Hindfell. Within a castle he found one in armor, sleeping, and cutting away the helm, he found a fair woman. She awoke and Sigurd learned that Odin had struck her with the sleep-thorn, because in battle she had given victory contrary to his decision. She taught Sigurd of her wisdom and warned him against the hate of his wife's house. Sigurd then plighted troth with her.

After this he rode to the dwelling of Heimir, whose wife was Brynhild's sister. At this time Brynhild returned to Heimir and sat in her bower overlaying cloth with gold. On a day Sigurd rode into the woods and his hawk flew to a window of a tower. Sigurd followed it and found Brynhild. On the next day he went to her to tell of his love for her and vowed he would wed none but Brynhild. He gave her a gold ring and swore oath anew.

There was a king, Giuki by name, who had three sons, Gunnar, Hogue, and Guttorm, and a daughter, Gudrun. His wife, Grimhild, was a fierce-hearted woman. Budli was a king mightier than Giuki, and Atli, his son, was Brynhild's brother. One night Gudrun had an evil dream and because Brynhild was wise she asked her its meaning. She had dreamed that there was an excellent hart that all longed to own; yet Gudrun got him; but Brynhild shot him and gave to Gudrun a wolf-cub that sprinkled her with the blood of her brother. Brynhild interpreted

that Gudrun would marry Sigurd, but would lose him, marry Atli, lose her brother, and slay Atli.

When Sigurd left Brynhild, he rode to the hall of Giuki, where Grimhild, knowing of his love, gave him a drink whereby he lost all memory of Brynhild. Gudrun was then offered him; he accepted her and swore brotherhood with Gunnar and Hogni. Gunnar was urged to woo Brynhild, who now lived in a hall surrounded by fire. Gunnar set forth with Hogni and Sigurd, but when he came to the flames his horse refused to move, nor would Sigurd's horse bear him through. So Gunnar and Sigurd changed semblance as Grimhild had taught them, and Sigurd, in the likeness of Gunnar, rode through the flames. He told Brynhild she was his according to her oath to marry whoever could ride through the flames. In vain she tried to turn him away. For three nights he remained but always laid his sword between them, saying he must wed thus or get his bane. Brynhild gave him the ring which Sigurd had given her aforetime; it was the ring of Andvari. Then Sigurd returned to Gunnar and resumed his own likeness. Gunnar and Brynhild were married; a feast was held, and at its end Sigurd again had memory of Brynhild.

One day Brynhild and Gudrun went to the river to bathe and Brynhild waded farthest into the stream, saying that she did so because Gunnar was great and Sigurd was but a thrall. Gudrun then told of Sigurd's deeds and told that it was he who rode through the fire, and she showed the ring which Brynhild had given him. On the following day Gudrun questioned Brynhild in a mocking manner con-

Brynhild was in a heavy mood at this and went to her room where she lay as one dead. When Gunnar came to her, she questioned him concerning the ring saying that Sigurd only, was brave enough to ride through the flames. She cursed Grimhild and would have slain Gunnar had not Hogni fettered her. Gunnar freed her, but from that time she was sad, nor would she speak kindly to any one. At length Gudrun bade Sigurd go to Brynhild and smother her grief and anger. He found her in deep sorrow and learned that she had never loved Gunnar, but Sigurd. He then told of his love for her, and how Grimhild had beguiled him. Great was his grief when he saw Brynhild grieving. In no way would she be soothed but told Gunnar he must slay Sigurd or lose her. Gunnar was sorely troubled, yet, deeming Brynhild dearer to him than Sigurd, he took counsel with Hogni. Since they had sworn brotherhood with Sigurd, they durst not kill him; but Guttorm had sworn no oath and so was persuaded to do the deed. In the morning he crept to Sigurd's room, but Sigurd lay watching him and he dared do nothing. A second and a third time he went and at length found Sigurd sleeping; so, drawing his sword, he thrust it through Sigurd. Thereon Sigurd seized his sword and cast it after Guttorm, killing him. Great was Gudrun's sorrow when she learned that Sigurd must die; nor was it long before Brynhild bewailed the death she had caused. Calling Gunnar to her, she told him she was about to die and told what would happen to

his race, even as things actually befell. Then she died and was burned beside Sigurd.

Guðrun left the hall and went to the abode of one, named Thora. There she lived till Grimhild bade Gunnar go to her and make peace. He did this and gave her a drink whereby she forgot the wrongs done to her. Grimhild asked her to marry Atli, which Guðrun did against her own will. Now Atli began longing for Fafnir's hoard and sent a messenger to Gunnar, hoping to learn of the treasure. Guðrun, fearing evil, sent Gunnar a gold ring cut with runes. But before Vingi, the messenger, reached Gunnar, he changed the runes so that Guðrun seemed to beg her brothers to come to Atli. They came to Atli's land where they found the king awaiting them with his army. A fight ensued and Gunnar's men were killed, he himself taken captive as well as Hogni. Atli asked Gunnar about the hoard but Gunnar refused to tell unless Hogni's heart were brought to him. This was done and then Gunnar refused to tell, saying that now he alone knew where to find the hoard. Thereupon Gunnar was thrown into a serpents' pit. Guðrun sent him a harp, which he played so that all the serpents slept save one adder that crept to him and thrust its sting into his heart; and he died.

Silently Guðrun brooded on her sorrow and killed Atli's two sons, serving their roasted hearts and wine mixed with their blood to Atli. Their skulls she used as beakers. Now Hogni had a son, Niblung, who longed

to avenge his father's death. So he and Gudrun killed Atli and set fire to the hall.

Gudrun wished to live no longer, so cast herself into the sea, with her daughter Swanhild, who was also Sigurd's daughter. The waves bore them to King Jonakr's castle and the King took Gudrun to wife and took care of Swanhild. King Jormunrek wished to marry Swanhild, and sent his son, Randver, with his counsellor, Bikki, to woo her for him. Bikki counselled Randver to wed her, but when they returned to Jormunrek, Bikki said Randver had deceived the King. Randver was killed and his innocence learned too late. Then Swanhild was blamed and the king had her trampled with horses. When Gudrun heard of this slaying, she sent her three sons to avenge the death, and then gave herself up to grief and died.

Hamdir and Sorti, the elder sons, set forth alone and, meeting Erp, asked how he would help them. Erp said, "Even as hand helps hand, or foot helps foot." They deemed this nothing, so slew him. When they came to the king, they fell upon him; Hamdir cut off his hands, Sorti his feet, but Erp was not there to cut off his head. Many men fell on them and they defended themselves well, till a certain one-eyed man advised the King's followers to kill the brothers with stones. This they did, and so ended the Volsung race.

The Comparison of "The Saga" with "The Lied."

Here the story ends, just as "The Lied" does; but its conclusion is brought about differently. The whole conception is changed.

In the first place, "The Saga" goes back to Sigurd's ancestry, making note of the fact that he was descended from Odin. How significant it is that the hero of our race should be descended from the gods and that his father was so heroic. A son of Sigmund would of necessity be brave, truthful, gloriously admirable in every way. In "The Lied" there is no Odin mysteriously entering into affairs, and Siegfried's father, a thoroughly true man of fame, a peace-loving king, is liked but does not awaken admiration, since he does not figure importantly.

Siegfried and Sigurd are the same in character, each being a picture of the ideal hero of the race; and their difference lies in their action in the stories. The two stories take on entirely different aspects from the fact that Siegfried won Kriemhild through love and never wooed Brunhild. His interest in Brunhild was really his interest in Gunther whom he unselfishly wished to help. But in "The Saga," Sigurd loved Brynhild, won her, and was beguiled into wooing Gudrun. His strength of character is beautifully drawn forth in "The Saga" when

he realizes that Brynhild is his only love, and that he can admire Gudrun but never love her as he loved Brynhild. Because Gunnar was his friend and because Gudrun was faithful, he bore his fate silently, though the terrible conflict went on within himself.

There seems to be a decidedly realistic strain running through "The Saga," whereby everything happens naturally and of necessity; whereas, in "The Lied" the romantic is emphasized, and we wonder why things should chance as they do. In the most natural course of events, in "The Saga" Sigurd is given the Andvari ring by Brynhild; but why in the world Siegfried should, in "The Lied," have stopped to take away Brunhild's ring and girdle, unless as trophies of war, one can not see. And yet the rest of the story depends on his ability as a pick-pocket on this occasion.

We lose in "The Lied" a certain decisiveness of character that is strongly marked and clear-cut in "The Saga," just because the former is fixed up and not simple and naive.

Brunhild is not the admirable person we find in Brynhild. She is jealous of Kriemhild because Siegfried is greater than Gunther. Her jealousy is petty and we instinctively dislike her begrudging spirit. Brynhild, however, is thoroughly admirable. How natural that she should be jealous when the one she loved was unfairly beguiled by another. We feel very sorry for her in her utter helplessness, for she can do nothing against

fate. Brunhild did not wish to kill Siegfried, and if she had, she would have done it in a spirit of spite. It was Hagan who played that part. But Brunhild wished to have Sigurd die, partly as revenge, but most of all to end her own misery. Because of her love for him, she wished him to die and wished to die herself.

Then, too, how different Kriemhild is from Gudrun. Her love for Siegfried dominates everything; whereas, with Gudrun, family pride is ever instinctive. She loves Sigurd, but she could never harm her own brothers. But Kriemhild marries Etzel with the purpose of revenge against her brother and becomes inhuman, losing all control of her passion.

Gunther of "The Lied" takes a very different part in the story from ^{that of} Gunnar of "The Saga." He is quite admirable at times, but is too easily moved by Hagan to be entirely loved. He does not, like Gunnar, kill Siegfried in order to keep Brunhild, but simply because Hagan awakens his jealousy. His love of honor is not so great as Gunnar's, nor his love for Siegfried so noble.

There is no one in "The Saga" corresponding to Hagan, who is so well drawn in "The Lied." Hagan is so powerful in his very subtlety, in his deceit, and never fails to make the most of everything for himself. He takes all he can, but takes it forcibly, and we are not surprised to find him a brave fighter and thoroughly admirable as such. He is an idealized Rockefeller;

having power, he uses it for himself in gaining wealth, only to increase his desire for more wealth. Through the introduction of Hagan, Gunther's brothers act through motives differing from those of Gunnar's brothers. They see the hatefulness, the meanness of Hagan and act as Kriemhild's friends. Gunnar, however, has his brothers on his side and his younger brother kills Sigurd. Thus on the one side we have justice, and on the other family pride.

Lacking also in "The Saga" are the mediaeval knights that are brought into "The Lied." Beautiful as Rudeger is and lovable withal, one would find him thoroughly incongruous if he appeared in "The Saga" in any way. This picture of true knightlihood, not only in Rudeger but in many other warriors, belongs only with "The Lied."

We cannot leave the comparison without taking up Etzel and Atli. Etzel, who is quite an ordinary man, is weak compared with Kriemhild. He is only Kriemhild's husband, with money and an army for Kriemhild to use; and one feels rather sorry for him since he can do nothing but what is forced upon him. How confused he must have been after the action ceased and every one was dead. But Atli, who is really the historical Attila, is fierce as a bear, not lion-like in the least. He does everything through brute-force, acting of his own accord, and one is glad that Gudrun

kills him.

On the whole, we find in "The Lied" the petty motives of man; whereas, in "The Saga" are brought forth the deep passions and their conflict.

THE NIBELUNGEN RING.

The Rhine Gold.

In the depths of the Rhine sported three nymphs who carefully guarded a treasure of gold. One day Alberich went to seek the love of the nymphs and, with it, their gold. They only taunted him and showed him their gold, saying that he who made a ring therefrom might rule all. But he who wished the gold must fore-swear love. Then Alberich angrily seized their gold and bore it away, leaving the nymphs weeping.

Far away among the clouds, Wotan had a hall called Valhalla, built by Fafner and Fasolt with the promise of getting Wotan's daughter Freia for wife. When Fricka, Wotan's wife, learned this, she was angered; but Fafner and Fasolt would not give up Freia, knowing that she alone could pick the apples whereby the gods remained ever young. Wotan called on Loge, the cunning one, to find some way to pacify the builders, but Loge knew of nothing save the treasure of Alberich. When Wotan heard of this treasure, he longed to possess it; but Fafner and Fasolt longed for it, too, and seizing Freia, they left, saying they would only return her for the treasure. Gradually the youth of the gods faded, and at length Wotan and Loge went to Nibelheim to get the treasure.

When Alberich returned to Nibelheim, he forged the ring and from that time ruled heavily over the dwarfs. Alberich and Mime were brothers and Alberich loved to beat Mime in sport. He ordered him to make a wishing helm. Mime sat thinking after his work and Alberich, fearing evil from him, beat him again and left him whining. Wotan and Loge then arrived and heard Mime's complaint. When Alberich returned they told him they had heard of his power. Loge asked if he did not fear he might have his treasure stolen while sleeping, and Alberich told him of his wishing helm whereby he might take on any form. Loge cunningly pretended not to believe him, so Alberich changed into a dragon, whereupon Loge asked if he could also become as small as a toad. Alberich did this and Wotan quickly stepped on him while Loge took away the helm. They took Alberich to the realm of the gods, where they demanded as ransom all his gold and even his ring. In wrath Alberich parted with all, cursing any who should own the ring.

When Fasolt and Fafner returned with Freia, there was great joy, and the gold was piled up before her as Fasolt desired. Yet because Freia's hair still shone forth, the helm was placed on top. Fasolt still saw Freia's eye, so Fafner demanded the ring on Wotan's finger. Wotan refused to part with it; but then a blue light broke upon them and in the midst was a woman, who warned Wotan to give up the ring, saying that she was Erde, the Wise One. So Wotan gave up the ring and Fafner

put all the treasure into a sack, while Fasolt anxiously looked on and at length demanded his share. He seized the ring, whereupon Fafner killed him. Then Donner called down the dews and Froh helped him to build a rainbow bridge across the sky to Valhalla, and the gods crossed over amid the wailing of the Rhine-maidens, who sang that the gods must pass away and goodness fly to earth.

The Valkyrie.

Siegmond was a mighty warrior who had many foes. At length he was attacked by them, and by nightfall all his small band was killed so that he himself had to flee. In his flight he came to a house and, without knocking, stumbled in and lay down before the fire and sank to sleep. In the midst of the room was an ash tree with branches growing out over the roof. Soon a beautiful woman entered and, seeing Siegmund, she pitied him. On a sudden he awoke and begged for water. When refreshed, he turned and gazed at her lovingly, and with thanks he started to go. Yet she begged him to stay and Siegmund, seeing sorrow in her face, longed to remain but feared he might bring harm to her. At length he sat down and fell to thinking till Hunding, the lord of the house,

came in. Hunding was not greatly pleased with Siegmund and mutteringly noted how like the stranger's face was to his wife's. Then Siegmund told his story.

Woeful, he called himself, son of Wolfing, and he had once had a twin sister. One day he and his father went hunting and on their return found their home burned, the mother dead, and no trace of his sister. Wolfing and his son fled to the wood, but one day Wolfing disappeared, and thereafter ill luck pursued Woeful. He had fought for a maiden but had only gained sorrow for her and flight for himself. When Hunding heard this, he remembered that one had come to him asking of this man. He promised to treat Siegmund as a guest for the day, but said he must fight him in the morning. He then commanded the woman to go, and as she obeyed she stared steadfastly at the tree-trunk.

Soon after, Hunding left and Siegmund sat alone. Suddenly the fire lit up the ash-tree and there in its trunk he saw a sword hilt; yet the sword could not be seen. Then Hunding's wife came in to beg Siegmund to go before morning, saying she had given her husband a sleeping-draught. She told him how he might gain a sword. Hunding, she said, had married her against her will. At the wedding-feast a one-eyed man appeared, who had a sword, which he thrust into the tree-trunk saying that he who could draw it forth should own it. Then Siegmund siezed her lovingly and said that he would draw forth the sword and she should be his wife. She told

of her child-hood and they knew they were brother and sister; and his name was Siegmund and hers Sieglinde. So Siegmund drew forth the sword and they left together.

In the realm of the gods, Wotan stood with Brunhilde, the chief of the Valkyries. Wotan sent her with victory for the Volsung, whom Hunding was following. But Fricka demanded that victory be given to Hunding since love between Sieglinde and Siegmund was shameful. Wotan refused, and she told him he was continuing the faithlessness to her which he began when he dwelt with a mortal woman, who bore these two children. In vain Wotan insisted that the gods needed a hero like Siegmund. At length he promised the victory to Hunding. Calling Brunhilde to him, he told her his sorrow. He had thought to learn more from Erde concerning her warning. He went to her and lived with her, and to them were born Brunhilde and eight sisters, the Valkyries. Thinking to avoid the fall of the gods, Wotan had sent the Valkyries to earth to bring heroes to Valhalla. Volsung, he thought, would be able to get back the ring before coming to Valhalla, and thus win victory for the gods. But now he had promised to aid Hunding, and Brunhilde must go to carry out the promise.

Sadly, Brunhilde went to do this, and found the fleeing ones. Sieglinde, wearied, sank down and slept. When Siegmund learned his fate, he refused to go to Valhalla without Sieglinde, and Brunhilde, deeply moved,

promised him the victory. When Hunding came, she guided Siegmund; but suddenly Wotan appeared beside Hunding and struck Siegmund's sword in pieces so that Hunding killed his foe. Quickly Brunhilde lifted Sieglinde to her horse and fled from Wotan who put an end to Hunding's life.

Brunhilde sought protection with her sisters and told Sieglinde to go to the land of Fafner. This, Sieglinde did to save her unborn child. When Wotan came, he would show Brunhilde no mercy since she had acted against his will. He doomed her to a sleep, which should be broken by the first man who found her, and whom she must marry. With tears, she begged that flames surround her sleeping place, so that none but the bravest would come to her. Wotan granted this, sadly kissed her good-bye, and she fell to sleep. Gently he laid her down and commanded the flames to surround her.

Siegfried.

When Sieglinde fled, she went to the woods where Mime dwelt, and dying, left her boy, Siegfried, with Mime. Mime was a cunning smith and spent his time in welding swords for Siegfried; but in vain, for they all broke. One day when he had finished a sword, Siegfried came in from the woods leading a bear, which he sent after Mime, who crouched in terror behind the anvil.

At length he freed the bear. The new sword broke as the others and Siegfried scolded Mime, who reproached him for being ungrateful. Since Mime had done so much for him, he should love Mime instead of finding him repulsive. Siegfried wondered why he always returned to Mime and decided it was in order to find out who was his mother. He had watched the wild beasts mating and now wondered who was Mime's wife. In vain Mime told him he was both father and mother; Siegfried had noticed that the wild things look like their parents and had seen his own face in the water; but in no wise did it look like Mime's. So Mime told of Sieglinde and her death and brought forth the pieces of Siegmund's sword, which she had kept. Siegfried demanded that Mime make a sword from these shards. Mime was now gloomy, for he knew well that he could not make the sword. He thought of how vain his labor was, for he had a purpose, which was to get Siegfried to kill Fafner, and so gain the ring himself through cunning.

Now Wotan came to him as a traveller and asked for shelter. He called himself Wanderer, but Mime told him to travel on. Wanderer told Mime to ask him three questions, saying that he would forfeit his head if he failed to answer rightly; otherwise Mime must share his hearth. So Mime asked him of the people that worked beneath the earth, of those on the earth, and of those among the clouds.

Wotan told him of all and as he finished struck his spear on the ground and thunder rolled through the air. Wotan then placed the same wager on Mime and questioned him. Mime answered rightly till Wotan asked who would weld the sword together. Mime knew not, so Wotan told him that he alone who knew no fear should weld the sword and should also end Mime's life.

After Wotan left, Mime cunningly told Siegfried that he must learn fear before going out into the world. Siegfried eagerly questioned him and Mime said he should learn fear from a dragon, Fafner, who had killed many, and who must be slain by Siegfried. Now this made Siegfried still more eager in his demands for his sword, but Mime only whined and moaned, and Siegfried in anger seized the pieces and himself went to work. Singing as he worked, he filed and melted and moulded Needful anew. Then raising the sword above his head, he struck the anvil in two. Here the story is much the same as "The Saga." Mime and Siegfried went to Fafner's cavern. Alberich was there to watch and Wanderer came and taunted him, saying that Siegfried would get the ring. Then came Siegfried accompanied by Mime, whom he found tiresome and sent away. Thoughtfully he looked at Nature and longed to understand the speech of birds and to know more of his father and mother. As he waited, the dragon

Fafner came, and Siegfried met him and killed him. As he drew forth his sword, blood spilled on his finger, burning so that he put it to his mouth. Suddenly he understood the song of a bird that warned him against the treachery of Mime, as in the story of "The Saga," and told him of Brunhilde. So Siegfried, after a quarrel with him, killed Mime, who is here depicted as most cunning.

Now Wotan went to Erde to ask her counsel; but receiving none, he went forth to await Siegfried, who soon appeared. In the conflict that ensued, Wotan's spear was splintered and Wotan, wearied with strife, gave up his sway to that of human love; for Siegfried passed by to Brunhilde's sleeping place. And there he awoke Brunhilde who, through love, was transformed from a Valkyrie to human woman. He pledged his love with the Nibelung ring.

The Twilight of the Gods.

The story begins with the Norns, or Fates, who are weaving on Brunhilde's fell and who foretell the fall of the gods. Then it returns to Brunhilde, telling how Siegfried took leave of her to seek greater fame; and how he rode away on her horse, Grani.

Now there were at this time living on the Rhine the Gibichungs, Gunther and his sister, Gudrun, and one named Hagan, son of Alberick the dwarf. On a time Hagan had told Gunther of Brunhilde and of Siegfried, and had stirred Gunther to a desire for Brunhilde, and had caused Gudrun to dream of Siegfried. Knowing of the wanderings of Siegfried, they planned that, if Siegfried should come to them, Gudrun should give him a drink whereby his former love would be instantly forgot, and only Gudrun would be loved. Soon Siegfried came and all was done as planned; and when Gunther spoke of his love for Brunhilde, Siegfried offered to help him secure her. And so the two left to find her.

Now as Brunhilde sat musing on Siegfried and his love, there hastened to her one of the Valkyries, Voltrante, who besought her to give back the ring to the Rhine-maidens and to turn away the curse of the gods. But Brunhilde refused to part with the ring, which was more to her than Valhalla and the gods, since it was Siegfried's pledge. As she spoke, she heard the horn of Siegfried and prepared to meet him; but there came towards her a stranger. It was Siegfried, who by means of the Tarnhelm appeared in the guise of Gunther. In vain she tried to flee from him; he overpowered her and tore from her finger the ring and led her to the cave. Then drawing his sword, he placed it between them before he lay down, that he might be true to Gudrun.

Now after Gunther and Siegfried had left Hagan, he sat brooding upon the success of his plot until he slept. Alberich came to him and, rousing him, asked him to avenge the theft of the ring by killing Siegfried. Mechanically Hagan answered and, half awake, swore to secure the ring, showing that he had planned it before. Presently Siegfried came and awoke him fully to his cunning scheme. Gudrun was called and was told that Gunther was coming with Brunhilde. Hagan called together the Gibichung men, telling them to come armed and prepared for a wedding-feast. The assembled company greeted Gunther and his bride boisterously. When Gudrun and Siegfried came forth, Brunhilde cried out in surprise; and when she learned that the two were betrothed, she fell fainting in the arms of Siegfried. When she recovered and saw the ring on his finger and realized that it was he and not Gunther who had overpowered her, her fury knew no restraint. Both Gunther and Gudrun believed her story and believed in Siegfried's faithlessness to them, although he swore on Hagan's spear-point that the accusation was false. Hagan aroused Gunther's suspicions still more, and with Brunhilde they swore vengeance on Siegfried and plotted to kill him in the woods. One day while they were hunting, Siegfried found himself alone on the bank of the Rhine. The Rhine-maidens appeared and asked him for their ring. But he could not consent

to part with it, even when they told him of its curse. And they sank into the river's depth, warning him of death.

When Siegfried came upon his companions, he told them of the Rhine-maidens. Then Hagan persuaded him to tell the story of his life and as he told it, Hagan gave him a drink which brought back to him the memory of Brunhilde, and unthinkingly he told of his wooing. At this Gunther sprang up in horror. Hagan asked if he could understand what ravens overhead were saying, and when Siegfried turned to look at them, Hagan thrust a spear into his back, his only vulnerable spot. And thus died Siegfried calling out to Brunhilde in loving passion.

On their return to the hall with the hero's body, Hagan and Gunther were involved in a conflict about the ring, and Gunther fell. Hagan reached forth to snatch the ring but slowly and menacingly the hand of Siegfried lifted and Hagan stopped aghast. Then suddenly Brunhilde spoke and silence fell on all, while she bade the men raise a funeral-pyre. Then she took the ring from Siegfried's hand and placed it on her finger and calling upon the Rhine-maidens spoke:

"Hear, now,

Ye gliding daughters of the river depths,
 The words I speak! What ye desire I give;
 From out mine ashes take it for your own!
 The flames that burn me will destroy the curse
 Laid on the ring;- - - - -"

She snatched a fire-brand and hurled the torch upon the pyre; then mounting Grane, with one bound she sprang into the flames, which leaped about her. Then suddenly the Rhine overflowed its banks and the Rhine-maidens glided toward the pyre; and as Hagan madly plunged into the flood to get the ring, they seized upon him and bore him underneath the waves. And one held aloft the ring.

Far to the north a ruddy glow streamed forth; Valhalla burned; the dusk of the gods had fallen. Brunhilde had expiated the sins of the gods and Love had triumphed.

Wagner's Purpose and "The Nibelungen Ring" Compared
with "The Lied" and "The Saga."

So the fall of the gods is completed and through love, which Alberich renounced for wealth and power, Brunhilde works out her salvation and brings a new order of things. With this idea of the final triumph of love and the necessary change in the order of things, Wagner shows the power of greed to degrade man and even the gods.

Wagner's power of making things seem real, of entering into the spirit of the time and place, is wonderful. In this respect, his story differs from "The Lied," in which the customs of mediaeval Germany are introduced, making the story less powerful and apparently made over. It seems more wonderful that he should lend reality to things when we consider that he is writing of imaginary peoples whom he makes us feel that we know. Whether he tells of the gods or the gnomes, we find them realistic. Excellently he has caught the spirit of the underground workers. With the godly realm he deals well so far as he describes the place; but when he brings in Wotan, we are sadly disappointed, for this character is an utter failure. We do not wonder for a moment that the gods fell if they had for a ruler a Wotan such as Wagner conceives him, a god given over to spending most of his time on earth lustfully. Gustav

Kobbe' speaks of Fricka's persuading Wotan to give victory to Hunding as a "domestic spat," which phrase most excellently fits; for Wotan is little more than an insipid, weak husband in this scene, rather too snivelling for one to remember, without a shock, that he is a god.

How different is Wagner's conception of Brunhilde; how much more strongly she is portrayed both as a Valkyrie and as a mortal. Through her Wagner makes clear his ideal, which is self-sacrificing nature. To him Germany seemed a whole race of Alberichs, greedy for wealth and power; but through his faith in humanity, he believed that Love would be all-conquering. Brunhilde, the embodiment of self-sarifice and love, is a decided contrast to the Brunhilde of "The Lied," who is moved by petty jealousy. Not so decided is the contrast to the Brynhild of "The Saga," who is admirable but does not act through such a motive as Wagner's Brunhilde, but merely because she would be unhappy otherwise.

Siegfried is not particularly well drawn by Wagner. We are told that he is a hero and we certainly feel that he is brave and we know that he is fearless. He is lovable rather than admirable, though he is evidently meant to be admired.

Sieglinde is a purely lovable being, much the same as Hjordes of "The Saga." Neither one enters into the story to a great extent, but they are similar though their stories are different.

As for Gudrun, she is more similar to Gudrun of "The Saga" than to Kriemhild, though her part is far less than that of either of the others. Like Gudrun of "The Saga," she wins Siegfried by deceit; nor is she malicious like Kriemhild.

The dwarfs are particularly real, both the malicious Alberich and the brooding Mime; while Hagan, the son of Alberich, is rightly conceived as such. There is reason for his maliciousness, whereas, in "The Lied" Hagan is a malicious man brought in for the sake of showing the result of his sins. Wagner's Hagan is a continuation of Alberich.

One might think that Wagner was a socialist believing, as he did, that love of mankind will set all things right. On the contrary, he was quite opposed to socialism, calling communism "the most insipid and senseless of all the doctrines." His idea was that love will bring the rebirth of society whereby peace and rest must come.

The Vikings at Helgeland.

The story of Sigurd as told by Ibsen in "The Vikings at Helgeland" is a simple story simply told. It bears in general, but not in detail, a resemblance to "The Völsunga Saga."

Örnulf, an Icelandic chieftain, went to Helgeland to find Gunnar and to avenge the theft of his foster-daughter, Hiördis. He found Sigurd, who had stolen his daughter, Dagny, and challenged him to a combat. After Sigurd wounded him, they made peace with each other and Dagny came to greet her father lovingly.

Then Käre, a peasant, came running to them for protection and told his story. One of Gunnar's men had stolen his oxen and Käre had slain the thrall. Gunnar had made terms of peace with him, but Hiördis had taken up the quarrel when Gunnar was gone south with their son, Egil.

Just at this point, Gunnar appeared and, after talking with the others, pardoned Käre. Then Hiördis came and unjustly accused Gunnar of being influenced by fear of Örnulf. Spitefully she attempted to make trouble amongst them and finally reminded Gunnar of his oath to take revenge against Örnulf for killing her father, Jökul. Örnulf wrathfully declared that Gunnar had no right to take up her family quarrel, because he was not a lawful husband. Then in vain the others tried to

sooth Hiördis. She went away swearing vengeance for Örnulf's statement.

Käre suggested to Örnulf that his means of revenge lay in burning the hall where Hiördis dwelt; but Örnulf was enraged at the idea and dismissed the servant with a severe rebuke. Käre left them moodily.

Now Gunnar returned and made peace with Örnulf and begged him, as well as Sigurd and Dagny, to stay. Sigurd protested but at length gave in to please the others; so Gunnar returned to Hiördis.

Thorolf, Örnulf's youngest and favorite son, now came running with the news that Käre had sent word that revenge was close at hand, for he had gone south with men to kill Egil, Hiördis's son. Örnulf hurried off to the south, speaking so vaguely that Thorolf thought he intended to go to help Käre with the revenge. With this idea in mind, they went to the feast at the hall.

Before going to the feast, Sigurd called Dagny and told her the story of the ring which she wore on her arm. One time in Iceland at a feast Gunnar and Sigurd had sworn to carry off Hiördis and Dagny. But Gunnar, in order to gain Hiördis, had to kill a white bear that guarded her. He feared to lose his life and his loved one, so Sigurd offered to do the deed for him. Sigurd killed the bear and entered Hiördis's chamber. Since

it was dark, she thought it was Gunnar. He passed the night with his drawn sword between them, and she drew a ring from her arm and gave it to him. Before dawn Sigurd left and it was Gunnar who took her on board ship while Sigurd took Dagny; the ring which Hiördis had given to him was the one Dagny now wore. He now begged her to cast it into the sea lest trouble come from it; but Dagny would not part with it, saying she would hide it carefully.

At the feast Hiördis again strove to stir up strife and at length bade each man tell the story of his bravest deed. Neither Sigurd nor Gunnar wished this, but at length, moved by her taunts, each one told a story. Hiördis interrupted Gunnar, by telling him the story of the slaying of the bear, saying that Gunnar was the bravest man, and Sigurd was only second in greatness, while Örnulf held only third place. In anger, Thorolf added that her father Jökul must hold a very low place since Örnulf had killed him. Thereupon the two quarrelled; Thorolf curbed his wrath till Hiördis told a shameful lie concerning Örnulf. Then Thorolf angrily left the hall, casting back to Hiördis, news of the plot against Egil.

Overcome with sorrow and wild with grief at this news, Gunnar arose and followed him; nor could Sigurd stop him. When Gunnar returned, he had slain Thorolf.

Just then Örnulf entered the hall with the boy Egil still living. He told Hiördis that now he had atoned for the death of Jökul.

Consternation fell on all when they learned that Örnulf had gone to save Egil from the hands of Käre. His seven sons, whom he had taken with him, had all been slain in the fight, but he consoled himself with the fact that Thorolf still lived. But when he learned that he too was slain, deep and terrible was his grief. Alone, he carried forth his son and raised a mound for him, and all day watched over him. Hiördis came and spitefully scoffed at him and then in rage Dagny burst forth with the true story of the slaying of the bear and she produced the ring as proof.

Then was Hiördis overcome and began plotting the death of Sigurd. That night and all the next day she made arrow heads and a bow, weaving the string from her own hair. When Gunnar came, she urged him to slay Sigurd. While Gunnar still wavered, Dagny came with news that Käre was coming with outlaws and that Sigurd was holding them in check. Gunnar, filled with remorse, no longer wavered, but hastened away, loving Sigurd more than ever. Hiördis then directed her ill-will against Dagny, wounding her painfully by reminding her that Sigurd had once said that he could love only a strong, brave, war-like woman. Dagny, conscious of her weak timidity, feared she had made Sigurd unhappy, and hastened

away sadly when Sigurd entered.

Hiördis rebuked Sigurd for his actions toward her, till finally he told her in the form of a saga that he had loved her passionately, but, because she apparently had no love for him and because he himself loved Gunnar greatly, he had helped Gunnar gain her and had contented himself with one whom he prized merely for her faith and trust. Hiördis completed his story for him by declaring that she had loved him only and not Gunnar. She wished him to leave Dagny and to take her instead, for it was the Norn's will that they should be together and she was determined that it should be so. Sigurd refused, but asked her what she would do if he killed Gunnar. When she said that in that case she must avenge Gunnar's death with Sigurd's, he declared that either she or Gunnar must die. He straightway challenged Gunnar to fight on the next day, to answer for the death of Thorolf. Gunnar knew that Hiördis was the cause of this and sorrowfully bade Sigurd farewell.

In the evening, Sigurd and Dagny found Örnulf silently watching by the mound and in vain besought him to come in. Then Dagny bade her father make a song for his sons and he sang of his great sorrow, telling how the Norns had taken all from him, but that there remained for him the gift of song, which they could never take away. Thus was his sorrow eased. Then Sigurd begged him to aid Gunnar against Käre and his men, who were setting the hall on fire. And Örnulf set forth to fight,

and Dagny to comfort and watch; but Sigurd remained behind, since he might not meet Gunnar till the morrow.

Scarcely had they gone when Hiördis came, full-armed, to Sigurd. She spoke to him of their sad lives, saying, "All good gifts may a man give his faithful friend—all, save the woman he loves; for if he do that he rends the Norns's secret web, and two lives are wrecked." She said that now things must be altered and they must go together out of this life to Valhal where she would enthrone him king, for the old gods were strong no longer. With that she sent her arrow into Sigurd and shouted jubilantly, "Now art thou mine at last;" but dying he triumphantly told her that now he was even less hers, for he was Christian and not Pagan. In despair Hiördis called to the company riding to Valhal that she would not go without Sigurd, and cast herself into the sea.

Örnulf, Dagny, Gunnar and Egil returned after the burning of the hall, only to find Sigurd dead, slain by Hiördis's arrow. In their sorrow Gunnar took comfort to himself in the thought that Hiördis loved him after all, since she had slain Sigurd the night before the combat; but Egil seemed to see his mother leading the company of heroes in their ride to Valhal.

Ibsen's Purpose and the Characters in "The
Vikings at Helgeland."

Ibsen has here splendidly and simply brought forth the deep passions of man in their conflict. The strength of the whole story lies in its simplicity. The scene is rugged and barbaric, as are also the people. Örnulf is a skald such as we like to imagine. A brave, fearless soldier, he stoically bears his grief as the will of the Norns; and yet he will not give in to them, but defiantly cries that he has one thing that they can not wrest from him.

Sigurd, too, is as noble and great as Ibsen declares him, fully meriting all the praise given him. In struggle, he rises to greater heights and becomes more true, more noble; in renunciation he is truly great and heroic. Ibsen seems to conceive of the Christian idea of renunciation as making for strength in character just as Wagner conceives of it in Brunhilde's renunciation.

Hjördis is pagan. She is spitefully vengeful, and strikes most keenly. She is far more despicable and fearful in her treachery than Brunhild of "The Lied" could ever have been. She believes the will of the Norns is all-powerful, and knowing that she and Sigurd are fated for each other, works toward that end. Sigurd voluntarily renounces her from the first, even to the extent of entering into combat with Gunnar to end all

difficulty. He finally triumphs when, by his death, he is forever separated from her. Thus Ibsen makes clear through Sigurd the idea that will, human will, is triumphant over fate; whereas, Wagner, by uniting Siegfried and Brunhilde, makes clear through the latter the idea that love triumphs over the will of the gods.

There are fewer characters in this drama than in the versions already given and consequently each character is more clearly defined and more strongly drawn.

Gunnar's struggle with his simple love for Sigurd and his yearning love for Hiördis is so admirable that we almost forget that he was a trifle cowardly in asking Sigurd to gain Hiördis for him.

Dagny, so full of faith and trust, lives up to these two qualities throughout.

Even Thorolf is clearly a clever fellow, brave and quite admirable; while Kare is a barbarian, anxious for revenge.

Sigurd the Volsung.

Morris's story of Sigurd is much the same as "The Saga" in incident, for he was so thoroughly impressed with the strength of the original that he did not wish to make a new tale. He versified the old story and raised all the characters to heroic proportions. As he does not trace the ancestry further back than King Volsung, we lose the fact of Sigurd's descent from Odin.

Beginning with the wedding feast at the Hall of Sigmund, the story tells of Sigmund's gaining the sword and of Siggeir's treachery. In "The Saga," Signy conceives the idea of placing her brothers in stocks, hoping thus to keep off their death as long as possible. In "The Sigurd," the deed is planned by Siggeir, thus increasing the depth of his despicable cunning. Signy's device of the honey is not used, but Sigmund by his own strength frees himself. Thus Morris adds to the heroism of Sigmund. When Signy sends her sons to Sigmund she does not, as in "The Saga," wish them to be killed. They are merely sent out of the way. Thus the loving, womanly Signy does not suddenly become ferocious. The birth of Sinfiotli and his fostering, the slaying of Siggeir, the return of Sigmund and Sinfiotli to their fatherland, the marriage of Sigmund to Borghild, and the poisoning of Sinfiotli,—all these are told.

In this version Sinfiotli does not fight with Borghild's brother Gudrod through love for a woman but because, in their wars, Gudrod had left only the worthless booty for him. Justly wroth at this he challenged Gudrod and killed him. Herein Sinfiotli is more heroic than in "The Saga" and Gudrod is shown to be a victim of greed. Death is the reward of ill-gotten wealth,—such is the teaching of Morris.

The incidents concerning Helgi, son of Sigmund and Borghild, given in "The Saga" are omitted in "Sigurd the Volsung." Morris tells, without interruption, the story of Sigmund, his marriage to Hiordis, his death at the command of Odin, and the fight of Hiordis to King Elf,—the King Alf of "The Saga." Then follows the birth of Sigurd and his fostering by Regin. Sigurd gets the horse called Greyfell. Regin tells him of Fafner and forges the sword called the Wrath of Sigurd to his own destruction. Sigurd sets out immediately for the Glittering Heath and kills Fafner, the dragon, and then Regin. Like Wagner's hero, Siegfried, he is absolutely fearless and thus, heroic.

He wakens Brynhild and after plighting their troth, he goes forth to Lyndale where he sees Brynhild again. In neither "The Saga" nor "The Sigurd" is it clear why Sigurd leaves Brynhild and one has to go to Wagner for the clue. There Brynhilde tells Siegfried

that if she refused to let him go forth to do new deeds and win greater fame, she would not show much love for him. One must conclude that so heroic a person as Brynhild would think of deeds to be accomplished and so Sigurd leaves her.

Sigurd rides to the Niblungs, the misty folk, and drinks the evil cup that Grimhild prepares and he forgets Brynhild and wins Gudrun for himself and Brynhild for Gunnar. Then follows the quarrel between the queens, the slaying of Sigurd and the passing away of Brunhild.

Elizabeth Cary speaks of Brynhild's grief as neither noble nor dignified. Because of her nobility Brynhild acts naturally. She herself lends dignity to her passionate words. Critics speak of Morris's characters as heroic but lacking in human reality; but when these characters act as men and women, they are cried down as undignified.

The story continues with the quile of Grimhild which leads Gudrun to wed Atli, a mighty king, who later bids the Niblungs to his court and slays them all, killing Hogni in the hope of learning of the Niblung treasure and casting Gunnar into the serpent pit. Then Gudrun kills Atli in the night, sets fire to the Hall, and casts herself into the sea. The incident of the roasting of the hearts of Atli's sons is left out by Morris as

something too gruesome for Gudrun. He artistically closes the story when the interest ceased.

The difference between the Atli of "The Saga" and Morris's Atli is marked. In "The Saga" he works his own will, and of his own thought sends for the Niblungs while Gudrun tries to warn her brothers. But in "Sigurd," Atli is fearful and only when Gudrun has schemed many a time to arouse his desire for the treasure; does his greed overcome his fear. Again when Gudrun of "The Saga" wishes to kill Atli, not only does she wait until he has drunk himself into deep sleep but she needs the help of Hogni's son in the deed. The Gudrun of Morris works alone and after firing the hall, goes to meet the awakened Atli who stares at her motionless with fear, till she pierces him through with her sword.

The other characters are much the same in the two versions, except that Morris has elevated all. What "The Saga" says in a few simple lines, he has raised to poetic form of many lines and beautified with vivid descriptions.

It is a little strange that Mackail should say that there is no coherency of the first cycle of Morris's "Sigurd" with the second. Certainly it adds to our idea of Sigurd to know of his father, Sigmund. Without the first part, the story would be incomplete, as the story of England of today would be, without an account

of the Angles and Saxons. One theme runs through both, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In both cycles, Morris deals with greed for wealth and its evil outcome. Death is the reward, of Siggeir and his covetousness and of Atli who blindly desires greater power through riches. Sigurd is the true, honest, and just man who takes only what he earns, who enlightens and brightens the rest of the world and sacrifices himself in so doing. His is true renunciation which makes for the betterment of the race.

We read of the heroic deeds of a race gone by and know that Morris means that we, too, should be doing like deeds for the race to come. For not only is the telling of them good to hear and of value in moving others, but, clearly, what we are, depends upon our ancestors. Society has made us what we are and we are just as surely making the future.

After feeling all this, one is inclined to laugh at Scudder who says that Morris's world is one of "forms and dreams lacking substantial verity even of emotion." What is Gudrun but a bundle of emotions? All her actions are founded on them. Certainly she does not stop to reason, else she would not talk scornfully to Brynhild one day and shortly after suffer deepest regret. Nor would she have drawn her brothers to death, only to take vengeance on their slayer. Nor does the Gudrun who

speaks so haughtily and malignantly to Brynhild, or the Gudrun who fires the hall of Atli and plunges the sword into his body, answer to the description of Scudder, "One woman forever wanders through the varied climes and we weary soon of clinging draperies, gray eyes and tender feet." No more would Brynhild the Valkyr, longing for battle, be likely to go forth to war in "clinging robes." Far more complex, also, is the story of Sigurd himself than that which Scudder sums up as the story of a hero who "beholds a maiden, loves, loses, wins, or dies."

In this, as in all the versions, the characteristic strong life of the Northern race has been retained. The lays were told originally with truth and care by those who believed in them, and later writers cling to them so that in all versions a strong note of realism is found. To be sure, "The Lied" is mediaeval romanticism but even here is found the real hero, Sigurd, always heroic and strong.

CONCLUSION.

The story of Sigurd is distinctly a racial story. Whether it originated in Norway or in Germany is a matter of dispute, but certain it is that Sigurd is the type hero, the Platonic ideal of all Germanic people. "Beowulf" may be considered a racial story, but Sigurd's story is even more truly so. We know not one character in it only, but several, all of whom are typical.

That the story of Sigurd is of mediaeval origin is true, but one cannot fail to recognize in all versions of the story the heroically strong and weak characters of today, whether described in the Old Norse story of the thirteenth century or in the English version of William Morris. Though their environments, their customs, religions and ethics seem to differ from ours, yet in reality we are in sympathy with the characters, who are not mere inventions but real, living people whose general spirit is much the same as our own.

The same people, it is true, differ in character in the different versions in accordance with the part they take in the story. But, after all, Kriemhild of "The Nibelungenlied" is Ann of "Man and Superman" in thought and in feeling, in her womanly love not to be opposed. She is wrapped up in love, possessing all womanly wiles,

thinking naught of states or of people except as they serve her purpose; and she lies willingly and readily for this purpose. Sigurd is no other than Carlyle's hero. In him we recognize the man whose "feelings are parents of his thoughts" and whose "thoughts are parents of his actions." He is the great man, valorous, sincere, truthful, and laudably ambitious. Gunther is like many another king, honest and just, but wrongly influenced by others. All of the characters are the ones we find in literature of today. Not only were the old lays taken and added to and given new aspects, but Wagner used the existing stories, changed them and mixed with them his ideas to bring out his conception of Love. Later Ibsen used the old stories as a basis for his drama. Adding the spirit of Christianity, he stated his idea of renunciation and human will.

Morris's Sigurd is a combination of all the old stories. They are cleverly and beautifully united into a whole, setting forth the vital truth of today and making clear the universal purpose of humanity.

So the old story has been taken with all its significance by different writers and new truths have been added for the sake of expressing each man's central idea.