




Wotan, Siegfried
and
Brünhilde
by
Anna Alice
Chapin



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WOTAN

SIEGFRIED, AND BRÜNNHILDE

BY

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE RHINEGOLD"
"WONDER TALES FROM WAGNER" ETC.



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PREFACE

WE all have heard Wagner's works termed incomprehensible, and have listened to the assertion that to understand them one must be "educated up" to a certain point.

All thinkers, poets, and philosophers of the world have touched thoughts so high and broad that it is necessary to use the best part of our natures to appreciate them. But the greatest of these have made their ideas so clear and applicable to life itself that the simplest mind can understand the fundamental feeling, though it may require a scholar to comprehend the ingenuity, subtlety, and skill of the presentation. In studying the art of Wagner, as of all geniuses, one might spend a lifetime and yet grasp the subject inadequately. But the spirit of Wagner—the philosophy, the poetry, and the elemental strength—must be understood by all who can feel and think.

The truths which he tells are simple and universal, expressing the philosophy of all thinkers who have, through the ages, reiterated the message of wisdom in the ears of humanity. His art is as great as his genius, for it is a part of it, and as such bewilders those who expect the visible polish of lesser craftsmen.

Which must we reverence most: the genius which could create world-types such as his, giving us the divinity of Wotan, the humanity of Siegfried, and the divinity in humanity of Brünnhilde; or the art which surrounds and connects these beings in a tissue so fine and firm that nothing is forgotten, nothing is superfluous, and every thread is woven with supreme purpose? We can only content ourselves with whole-hearted homage to both, for they are surely one.

Of all words, Art is more maligned by misuse than any other. In the sense in which it is too often applied it means only a species of very brilliant veneer under which roughness and incompleteness may be disguised. This is the reason why Wagner rarely appeals to the casual inquirer who looks on the surface for attraction. In Wag-

ner's music-dramas, as in our own life-tragedies, there is no flaunting revelation of inner meanings for the edification of the passer-by. In a wonderful double language these inner meanings are expressed,—a language not difficult to understand, for it is written for the heart. And so the Master who knew that only the truthful delineation of life can be art tells us the stories of souls and hearts as well as of actions, often speaking of the past and future instead of the present, and philosophizing to our spirits over a battle field.

A. A. C.

WOTAN

WOTAN, SIEGFRIED, AND BRÜNNHILDE

WOTAN

WOTAN, or Odin, the chief of gods, has figured in many poems and many tales. He is picturesque, people tell us, in the helplessness of his dignity—a foil for the prowess of heroes or the revels of happier gods. The Vikings felt him to be a continual spur and inspiration in battle, a war-force more potent than that of the Walküres (or Valkyrs), and so sang of him in their sagas. Those who from time to time have been attracted by the barbaric pathos and beauty of the grand old Norse-land spirit have rarely failed to come under the spell of the all-father Odin. But it was left for Wagner to see in him the supreme type of a decaying religion—a symbol of the old order that, changing, gives place to new; further than this,

to invest him with hopes, fears, desires, regrets, joys, and sorrows so actual that we give him almost the same sympathy we would grant a suffering mortal. And yet we recognize the indefinable atmosphere of godhood with which Wagner, the poet and magician, has surrounded him.

The great panorama of the growth and development of a god passes before us in all its breadth of conception and execution. One marvels in contemplating it, the lights are so clear yet modulated, the shadows so mysterious yet distinct, the colors so wonderful in their perfection of values. And so abundant is the strength of the whole that it is only equalled by the delicacy of touch, which is almost more remarkable.

In the course of the Nibelungen Ring we see Wotan in four phases—four periods in the development of his character. First he is the king, ruler of gods and men. In that tranquil, translucent light of the Golden Age, nothing has touched his power, no shadow has come across the road he travels. If he is weak, foolish, lower than mortals in his personal life, it is forgiven him, for he is the king of gods, and the world lives by his

law. Then we see him touched by that black curse which sweeps on, lashing gods and men in its mad pursuit of the Ring. We see him striving to avert the horror that he fears, scheming to save the glory of the Æsir. Then, in a third phase, he is more a man, and so more a god. When he says farewell to Brünnhilde, he gives her up to the workings of Fate. Though he places the world's salvation upon her shoulders, it is all unwittingly. In that hour of parting he does not think of the salvation of the Æsir and the world. He thinks of the daughter relinquished, the love renounced, the trust betrayed, the inconsequence of gods and men before the eternal Fate which works its will against all power and all planning. He is losing his godhood, even as through his punishment Brünnhilde will lose hers. This alone he sees clearly. Later he will understand more.

For the last time he passes across the stage of the approaching end of mythology—a wanderer now. “As witness come I, not as worker” (“Siegfried,” act ii.). He has come to watch the world adjust itself to the coming event. In the light of his new knowledge he sees too clearly

for trivial passions or useless revolt. Wisely far-seeing, he descries the glory of the new world when the curse shall have left it. He is nearer true divinity than ever before—in this last gray light of the dying Æsir. Finally he resigns the heritage of power to the boy-hero, and quietly wends his way to Walhalla to await the dusk of the gods.

In studying this tragedy which Wagner formed from the tangled and broken ends of a dead mythology, it actually seems as though the “Runenseil” (Rope of Runes) of the Nornir (or Fates) had been taken by the master from the depths of the earth and made to yield up the stories woven therein. We feel that from those torn fibres of mystic history have come these beings of another time, another world, glorified and made immortal through his genius.

The Nornir themselves, as Wagner presents them to us, are strangely impressive. We heed their words as those of oracles. We feel that in that slender cord are woven every passing change of the world, and a chill of awe responds to the weird cadences of the sisters' singing.

“Die Erste Norn” in the Vorspiel to “Die Götterdämmerung” tells the story of the first recorded action of the chief of gods in the drama of mythology :

“By the World’s Ash-Tree wove I once;
There tall and strong the sacred branches
Rose in their dress of green!
In shadowed coolness whispered a spring,—
Wisdom eddied forth in its flow;
There sang I of wondrous things!

“A fearless god sought a draught from the spring,
And for this he offered one of his eyes as a pledge.
From the World’s Ash-Tree wrested Wotan then a
branch,
And a mighty spear he shaped full well from the
wood.

“As slowly passed the time,
Bitterly wasted the wood;
Dead,—leafless the verdure;
Sore wounded the tree!
Drearily ceased then the flowing spring;
Heavy-hearted sang I my song.”

The most descriptive music accompanies these words. We hear the purling of the Fountain of Wisdom; we see the straight stem of the “Welt-esche” covered with branching green; we mark

the weaving of the Rope of Runes. Into these tranquil harmonies comes a godlike, melodious phrase which is very simple, though emphasized by repetitions :

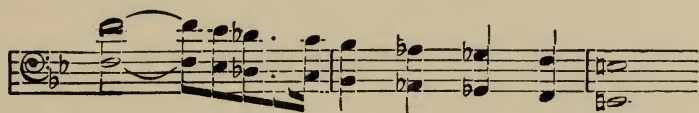


Walhalla Motif.

It is often heard at the close of the Walhalla motif; and though less majestic than the melody of which it is thus almost a part, I think we may consider it typical, if not of Wotan, at least of the magical glamor of that Golden Age of which he was the chief representative.

When Wotan had torn the limb from the World's Ash-Tree and fashioned it into a spear, he engraved on the shaft runes and laws by which the world should be governed thereafter. This is the reason why, whenever in the course of the workings of the Cycle the Spear comes into prominence, we hear the compact motif. It is a phrase barbaric and

uncompromising in form, with possibilities for the thunder of wrath or the dignity of a consecrated treaty :



Not content with the sway of the world, Wotan desired in time a more visible proof of his godhood; and, counselled by his servant Loge, the fire-god, he commanded the Giants to build him a palace wherein the gods might dwell in eternal splendor. The Giants undertook the task, asking in payment, Freia, the goddess of love. Loge bade Wotan agree to this, promising to help him evade the payment when the time arrived. The fire-god's method of fulfilling this promise was to describe the "Rheingold" (Rhine-gold), stolen by Alberich the Nibelung (Gnome), from the Rhine-Maidens so vividly that the Giants declared themselves willing to relinquish the goddess in exchange for the Nibelung's treasure. Wotan and Loge obtained this treasure by deceit from Alberich. The Gnome having stolen the gold from the Rhine-Maidens, had made it into a magic ring by might

of a spell which he learned by renouncing love forever. This Ring gave its wearer power over the world, and guided him to all the secret treasure of the earth. When it was wrested from Alberich by the gods he laid a curse upon it—a curse which soon manifested itself in the course of the slowly developing tragedy.

Wotan, enthralled by the thought of the power the Ring might give him, was reluctant to relinquish it, but Erda, goddess of wisdom, rose from the earth and warned him not to retain it. Fasolt and Fafner, the Giants, being finally given as Freia's ransom the entire treasure, including a magical helmet called the Tarnhelm, fought together for the curse-laden circlet. Fafner slew his brother, and carried the hoard away to a cavern, where, by the aid of the Tarnhelm, he changed himself into a dragon, the better to guard it. The gods then passed triumphantly over a rainbow bridge to Walhalla. Loge's suggestions as to the disappointment of the Rhine-Maidens, who had trusted to the gods to give back what had been stolen from them, met with no response.

Thus does Wotan sink three times to deeply

dishonorable deeds in "Das Rheingold." First, he made a contract with the unsuspecting Giants agreeing to pay them a certain specified price for the building of a palace—a price which he never had any intention of paying, trusting to Loge to help him elude the just claims of his workmen. Next, he participated, at least by acquiescence, in the clever but treacherous strategem by which Loge captured the Nibelung.

The third wrong of which he was guilty was the evasion of his just responsibility, when he refused to consider the rights of the Rhine-Maidens, and, instead, gave the ring, their property, to the Giants. The custom of using stolen goods to pay a debt—of righting one wrong by committing another—is one which quickly appeals to an indolent, pleasure-loving, sensuous nature. And of such natures Wotan was merely an illustrious example till, in the consequences of his own folly, he learned many things, and eventually became wise.

It has been offered as an "excuse" for Wotan that his counsellor and servant was Loge, a being so untrustworthy and bearing so unholy a hatred for the gods that his help could not be for good,

and that his influence must be demoralizing. Personally, I should prefer to think of the king of gods as a being above or beyond influence, as the term is usually understood, and likewise the necessity of an excuse. He was a joy-seeking "Licht-Alben"—"spirit of light." (See "Siegfried," act i.: "Licht-Alben sind sie; Licht-Alberich Wotan, waltet der Schaar.") Unlike a mortal, a god was not obliged to weigh his actions or consider consequences. His own wishes and Loge's suggestions coinciding, he was satisfied to allow the wary fire-god to accomplish matters in his own way. When, for the first time, Wotan countenanced deceit, he did so carelessly, thoughtlessly, with a smile. The second time it was with a sense of imperative necessity. The gold must be had or the gods would die, for without Freia's apples of youth they could not live. The third time it was because so many considerations, seemingly more important, were taking form in his mind that he cared nothing for the betrayed trust of the Rhine-Maidens—cared, indeed, but for the might of the gods, and the ways best to hold it supreme.

In the following translation of a scene between

Wotan and Fricka—that really fine and much-misunderstood goddess—(scene 2, “Das Rheingold”), we find explained in some measure the relations between the king and queen of the gods, and also vaguely indicated the general tendencies in Wotan’s character in that early period of his development.

“FRICKA—Had I the contract but known,
This fraud perchance I had stopped;
But ye in your strength worked apart from
the women.

.
What know ye, hard ones, of holiest worth
When you crave only power!

“WOTAN—Likewise yearned not Fricka as well,
When she pleaded this might be built?

“FRICKA—For my husband’s troth ill-at-ease,
I sought to think in my sorrow
How beside me to keep him,
While he fain would depart!
Brightest of dwellings—home past all wondrous—
This might tardily hold him in rest!
But thou in this home could see but visions still of power,
Warfare and ruling might it bestow thee!

Thus riotous storm now arises
And menaces us from the Burg."

Later on, in "Die Walküre," Fricka reminds Wotan of his follies and misdeeds in the following words:

"Thy faithful wife thou ever deceived
Where'er a depth or where'er a height
Did thy lustful glances beguile!
When the joys of change did enthrall thee,
Unnoticed brooded my heart!"

There is a peculiar glamour, the spirit of the Golden Age, perhaps, which surrounds these gods of "Das Rheingold" with an atmosphere as extenuating, as idealizing, and as deifying as that which breathes through the "Iliad." So poetical are they, so graceful and so gracious, in that impotent dignity, which is not human and not quite godlike, that we find ourselves smiling at their errors and weaknesses. We merely remember that they are the children of the elements, the Licht-Alben of heaven, the frequenters of the unapproachable cloud-touched mountain peaks, of the unknown depths of the earth, of all the strange places of the world; the inhabitants of storm-

clouds and rainbows, and the warders of eternal wisdom.

There is a touch of curious significance in "Das Rheingold" which we do not fully appreciate until we come to "Die Götterdämmerung." This is not at all unusual in the subtle working of the Master.

"LOGE—In glimmering glitter
Again could I wander,
Mocking—flickering—free,—
I well could sear them
Who fettered me once!

"Not foolish seemeth that!—
I'll think upon it!
Who knows what I do?"

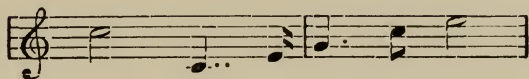
When one remembers that Wotan once bound the fire-god as his servant by might of his immortal spear, and realizes, too, that in fire Walhalla and the gods passed away, we find still another meaning within a meaning—a hidden drama, but faintly suggested, of godly wrong and revenge.

From all this it will be seen that Wotan, though a god, was very weak and very short-sighted. He, like the world, was in a spiritual

and moral childhood. With the coming of sorrow—the first breaking notes of the tragedy of change—the god grew wiser. But it was not until the end that he grew great—great with the coronation of suffering, the triumph of defeat, and the wisdom born of that growing dawn of another day.

With the curse of Alberich ringing in his ears, and the warning of Erda lingering in his memory, Wotan approached the cloud-palace so dearly bought. At last he realized that an element of seriousness was creeping into these lightly planned schemes of gods; startled, he felt the shadow, and a fear came upon him for the first time. The curse was set loose upon the world. He had incurred it. The cloud of coming ill loomed large upon the horizon; what should be done to avert it, and save earth and sky from the growing bonds? An inspiration sprang into his troubled mind, and he seemed to see in prophecy a giant race born of the gods and nurtured by mortals—a race with all divine and human strength—a race which should work in supreme freedom, and by might of sword win the accursed gold, returning it through divine guidance to the Rhine. At this point the sword

motif enters for the first time, typical of that strong race yet to be born :



But before this inspiration could be realized there was more to be done. For the first time the god was handling heavier things than love and power and the joys of gods. He was becoming an active worker in the giant drama which was unfolding itself, and he must now work and plan alone, without help from Loge. It was not pleasure and success, but the world and the Æsir that troubled his heart, and he must know more ere he could act.

So he sought Erda, the goddess of wisdom, in the innermost recesses of the earth, and awakened her from her sleep of wonderful dreams. She unfolded to him all that she knew of past and future, and bore to him nine daughters of marvellous strength and wisdom. These daughters, when they grew to womanhood, were his agents in another colossal scheme which he had formed for the protection of the Æsir and Walhalla. Were the

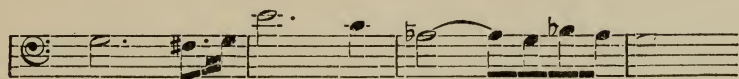
sacred halls filled with the bravest heroes of the earth, there would be no danger from Alberich, even should the world-swaying Ring come back to his hand.

So the nine maidens, whom men came to call the Walküres, flew over the world on their wind-horses in fulfilment of the all-father's will. And men on the battle field and at sea grew to know the flash of their armor and the rush of shrieking wind when the Walküres passed on their way. Wherever they went, combat arose and swords clashed; and after the battle back sped the war-goddesses, bearing before them upon their horses the heroes who had fallen, and singing through the clouds. And Wotan was the "Walvater," the father of war, and it is in this light that we meet him oftenest in the sagas and tales of the Vikings.

Meanwhile that first plan, weighted with as many consequences as the second, had also been put to the proof. To earth went Wotan, disguised as a wanderer, and in union with a mortal woman formed a new race—the race which he had seen prophetically as he entered Walhalla. "Wälse"

was his name as a mortal, and his children were the Wälsungs (or Volsungs).

A son and a daughter were born to him, demi-gods, and thus greater than mortals and stronger than the Æsir. In accordance with his plot he separated them and threw them both under the heavy shadow of misfortune. The Miswende motif has a veritable load of trouble in its sound:



Wälsung Motif.



Miswende (Misfortune) Motif.

The girl (Sieglinde) was captured and wedded by force to a brutal warrior (Hunding). During the wedding festival the god came to the hall of the warrior, in his disguise of Wanderer, and before the guests assembled there thrust a sword into the great ash which was Hunding's roof-tree. This sword he had determined should be Sieg-

mund's heritage, and he declared aloud that it should belong to any man strong enough to draw it forth. As he left the house he smiled upon his daughter, and the memory of that tender look dwelt long in her thoughts. The years passed, and through days and nights of indignity and misery, while warriors came and went striving to draw out the sword, she still carried the recollection of that strange smile, and felt it to have been a promise of some coming compensation.

Wotan under his title of Wälse dwelt with his son Siegmund in the woods, instilling in the boy hatred of law and order and of the gods themselves. Together they hunted and fought, and people grew to know and fear the fierce and lawless pair. In Siegmund's narrative ("Die Walküre," act i., scene 2) there is a wonderful touch, as he describes returning one day to the spot where he had left his father. He saw but an empty wolf-skin, he says. His father he found no more. And with the closing words we hear, very softly, the motif of Walhalla, so often used to typify Wotan, its lord. It tells us more plainly than words that the father had gone back to resume his

godhood. It is in such places that we best appreciate this double language of Wagner.

We may know what acute suffering it was to the god to thus abandon the children whom he loved by the phrase: "In bitterest sorrow grew he lonely to manhood. My shield never sheltered him!"—set to the Misfortune motif, and the cold downward crash of the Compact motif, which sounds in this instance as stern as an inexorable law.

Siegmond reached manhood, and in time came to Hunding's house and gained the sword. There is a strong dramatic touch in this act (the first of "Die Walküre"). Swordless and helpless, the Walsung remembers that his father once promised him a sword, and in passionate, ringing tones he cries: "Wälse! Wälse! Where is thy sword?" A crimson light falls on the hilt of the buried weapon—the god's triumphant answer to his son.

The woman who tended Siegmund so gently in Hunding's house, who brought him wine and gave him her sympathy, aroused a love in the Walsung's heart as strong as it was suddenly awakened, and, sword in hand, he bade her leave the house and come away with him into the wide forest where

the "house of spring" should shelter her. Carried away by this power of love so new and wonderful to her, she consented, and at last recognized in him the twin brother from whom she had been separated in childhood. Then came the recollection of the significant tender promise of the Wanderer's smile, and in a flash they seemed to see the eternal destiny which had made their love its medium. With the cry, "Thus must flourish the race of the Wälsungs!" they fled into the moonlit forest, their hearts filled with a new inspiration.

All these things were known to Wotan, who felt at last at peace. What he had wished had come to pass. His schemes would be successful. Into this triumphant mood came a sudden change. Fricka, the goddess of wedlock, had come to demand vengeance for the broken laws. Perhaps the god of the first period, "Das Rheingold," would not have listened to her; but he was wiser now. He had considered too many things since the building of Walhalla not to recognize the importance of what she said. It was true, and he knew it by every rune engraven on his Spear, by every sense of law and right that he possessed.

Now he was the heart-broken, despairing god, learning his bitter lesson with all that augmented appreciation of suffering which his divinity gave him. The children he loved he must disown; the plan he had formed with labor and pains he must wittingly destroy; the dusk of the gods seemed to rise in an awful wall of blackness before him. In a burst of despair he commanded Brünnhilde, the Walküre, to carry death to the Wälsung.

Lovers of Wagner grow tired of hearing the scenes between Wotan and Fricka, and Wotan and Brünnhilde, spoken of in terms expressive of insulting tolerance. Musically, of course, there have been few such expositions of harmonic ingenuity, and of dramatic music in its highest sense, as are offered by these scenes. In significance the words reach marvellous heights. In the first of these much-discussed and consequently much-abused interviews, take, for instance, the words in which Wotan pleads for his beloved children who have broken the law :

“ That truthfully love they, must thou see clear;
To tenderer judgment then turn!
If e'er sweet love earned thy pure benediction,

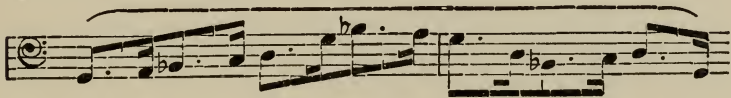
Then smile, and lovingly bless thou
Siegmond and Sieglinde's bond!"

These lines with the music accompanying them are surely not to be relinquished without regret; and so the rest of the scene. One need not mention that wonderful melody, "Oh, was klag' ich um Ehe und Eid!" to strengthen the case in favor of the Fricka scene. It is all so beautiful that one is tempted to review it word by word and note by note, and to make special mention of each and every line and bar. As for the scene following, in which Wotan confides his sorrows and fears to his daughter, I have tried in vain to find a passage which, omitted, does not leave an appreciable void. Wagner lovers know what delight has been theirs on those rare occasions when they have been able to hear the whole, undesecrated by the blue pencil of a conductor.

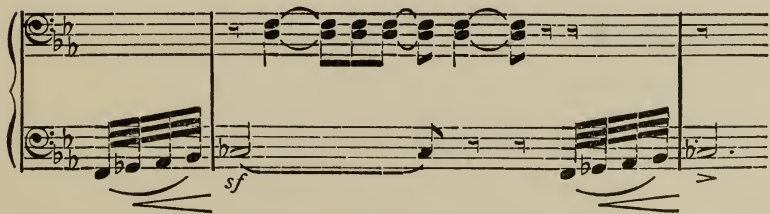
We all know that Wagner authorized and indicated certain cuts in his works. Many persons consider this an insurmountable argument against the production of the Trilogy in full. To me it seems a rather pathetic indication of the Master's lack of faith in the public's comprehension of his

works—a lack of faith which, one must admit, seems justified, judging from the objections often made to the Nibelungen Cycle when given in its entirety.

In the scene with Brünnhilde much striking music is introduced, some of it entering for the first time, or at least in a novel form. Notable among the new phrases is the motif of the Gods' Need or Gods' Stress :



The throbbing motif of the Nibelung's Hate pulses angrily through the god's words when he tells his daughter that Alberich has won to him a woman, tempting her by gold since love is forbidden him. She will soon bear a child of hate who may one day overcome the gods.



In a climax of bitterness Wotan cries out that

the offspring of night, the Nibelung's son, may have his blessing; it is well that the gods should be quickly overthrown. Better that than the gradual decay of their splendor and power. In his sorrow he cries :

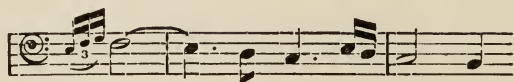
“I laid hands on Alberich's Ring,
Longing grasped the gold;
The curse that I caused
Will leave me no more!
What I love best must I abandon,
Slay him I hold the dearest,
Faithless betray his trust in me!
Fadeth afar godliest pomp!
Splendor and glory wane in the shame!
In ruins broken lies all I built.
I leave now my work,
But one thing wish I still;
The Ending—the Ending!
And for that Ending waits Alberich!”

Brünnhilde was commanded to aid Hunding, and to destroy Siegmund. But through pity for the unfortunate Wälsungs and her knowledge of her father's real desires, she endeavored to save the hero whom she had been ordered to slay. This could not be allowed by the law which was Wotan's pledge of divine power. With his own Spear he

shattered the sword that he had bestowed upon his son, and, despairing, watched the stroke with which Hunding killed him.

Then in the midst of his grief came a still more heartrending thought. Brünnhilde, his best-loved daughter, had also broken the law. She had aided the law-breaker; she had disobeyed his commands. She also must be punished. In this was the highest and most poignant sorrow which he had yet experienced. The consolation, the joy, the exhilaration of his life—all these things had the Walküre been to him. In the discord of schemes and broken bonds, of impossible dreams and heart-sickening forebodings, his love for Brünnhilde had been the one true and glorious note. And now she too must fall under the shadow which to his horror-stricken eyes seemed striding on to engulf the world. With this was, at first, a more intimate pain: grief that the Walküre whose life had been to execute his will should have disobeyed him. The loss of the daughter was thus double. After the first sting this sense of wrong vanished in the wider and more generous sorrow. The phrase commonly called the motif of Wotan's

anger, I should term instead the motif of Wotan's pain, which, like all bitter and futile suffering, sometimes takes the form of a despairing frenzy akin to wrath.



Such is the anger of Wotan in the last act of "Die Walküre." He struggles with himself pitifully in his sentence of Brünnhilde. His condemnation of her wrong is strangely pathetic:

"Wish-maid wert to me,—
 Yet against me hast thou wished!
 Shield-maid wert to me,—
 Yet against me is thy shield!
 Fate-holder thou wert for me,—
 Yet dost thou now fate hold against me!
 Hero-helper thou wert for me,—
 Yet against me helpst thou heroes!"

Slowly the bitterness faded out of his heart and the pain of renunciation took its place. The full measure of the god's sorrow flooded his soul. Tenderness came to soften, yet sharpen, the hour of parting. He drew the Walküre into his arms to gaze upon her brave and loving face before he

laid her down under the fir-trees in her long, mystic slumber.

The following is a very inadequate translation of one of the most exquisite passages of poetry ever written :

WOTAN'S FAREWELL.

“Farewell, thou bravest, loveliest child,—
Thou highest pride my heart e'er could know,—
Farewell—farewell—farewell!

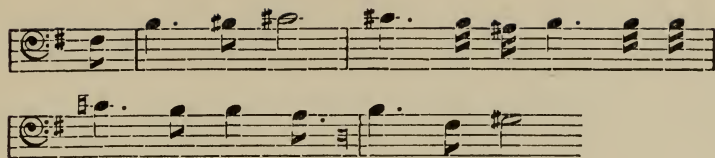
“Now must I leave thee,
And never again may I lovingly greet thee;
Never more mayst thou ride by me blithely,
Nor stand, red wine to pour me!
Now I renounce thee, though I love thee,
Thou of my eyes the chief pleasure!

“Such torches of bridal shall for thee glimmer
As never a bride may have known!
Flickering flame thy shelter shall ring,
With burning and flashing frighten the cowards
Who fly, and near not Brünnhilde's Rock.
But one may pass, freeing the bride,—
One freer than I—the god!

“The shining light of thine eyes
That oft I tenderly kissed,

When after battles won thou my praising,
When sweetly thy gentle lips did speak
Of heroes' marvellous deeds;—
These wondrous, light-giving eyes !
That bright through storm on me gleamed,
When hopeless longings my heart o'er-burdened,
When world's delights won my soul from thoughts
Of the glories of the battle;—
Still shine they fair; for the last time
In a sad farewell I kiss thee now.
For happier man thine eyes shall be stars,—
The sorrowing immortal may no more behold them.
Now closes their brightness the god,—
And kisses thy godhood away."

Leaving his daughter asleep in her circle of flame, the god slowly makes his way out of sight of her rock-dwelling. With what intense sorrow he looks back upon her sleeping figure ere he passes the ring, realizing what he has lost, and perhaps what she has lost—and gained—I suppose we must be gods fully to understand. But a suggestion of the sorrow is vouchsafed in the yearning music of Wotan's farewell, which accompanies him on his way, as though his heart were bidding her a perpetual farewell—a loving and eternal renunciation:



So Wotan enters the fourth and last period, dramatically speaking, of his being. When we meet him again he is changed. In the stately Wanderer who comes to Mime's smithy and enters into the empty compact of the three questions, we scarcely recognize the bowed and despairing god we left but a short time since. Here, indeed, he seems to have lost fear and foreboding. He has learned much in the passing of years; and now, appreciating the strength of the omnipotent hand of Fate, he resigns all plotting and planning, all regret and all desire. The coming end of the Æsir no longer fills his heart with terror or anguish. His weary and worn brain wishes, indeed, for the rest of complete annulment. He has grown used to the dimness, and the coming darkness has no evil spectres to haunt him. He has little to do himself. The great workings of the giant drama of all things require other actors. He is only a shadow on the background—"Witness, not worker."

To Mime he leaves a prophecy, to Fafner a warning, to Alberich those words of calming wisdom: "All beings act according to their nature; not thou, nor any one, one thing can change."

After his interview with Alberich, as he passes through the woods, the swift measures of a portion of the Walküre's ride music, here typical of Wotan as Walvater, accompany him in a vivid storm effect:



Through it swells the sorrowful melody of Wotan's farewell—as though Brünnhilde were still in his thoughts wherever he might turn his steps. He wends his way to a high mountain-pass, and summons Erda from her slumber in the earth's depths. He relates to her much that has hap-

pened during the passing years, and tells her that her wisdom is waning, that its illimitable sorrow will soon vanish forever in the place of oblivion. Gently he hushes her with promises for the eternal well-being of the world. Then, divine prophecy inspiring him, he declares in music of most wonderful dignity and tenderness—

“Wakened, works thy wisdomful child
A deed to redeem the world!”

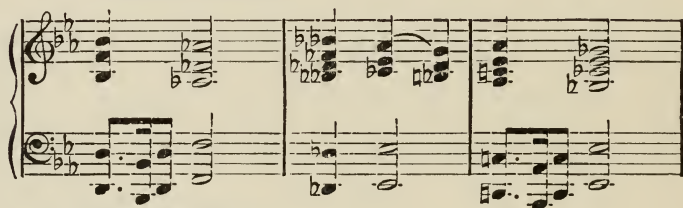
Then comes Siegfried, the blithe-hearted youth, and the god's heart is filled with a love for his offspring that softens every word in the scene between them, and lends a strange and touching pathos to the motif of Wotan's pain. The tenderness which he felt for Siegmund and Sieglinde he transfers to their son, and when Siegfried taunts him he only says :

“Knewest thou me, offspring brave,
Thine insults wouldst thou spare!
Painfully wounds me, who love thee, this scoffing!”

He beseeches Siegfried to delay the moment when the final stroke must fall; as he gazes upon

him he forgets everything save his love for the boy who defies him. "Why dost thou wear such a great hat?" laughs Siegfried; and he answers simply, "Such is the Wanderer's custom, when he goeth against the wind." There is a small but vivid picture in the music underlying these words. The Wanderer motif sounds with its habitual broad, mysterious dignity:

a. Wanderer Motif.



b. Walküre Motif.

The lower notes carry the wild Walküre motif; the Walhalla motif follows. The inner eyes see a lightning vision of clouds and storm, of Walküres speeding to execute the will of the Wanderer, of godlike doings, and matters strange to the comprehension of mortals.

True to his promise to Brünnhilde, the god holds out his Spear to gauge the might of the hero, to gauge as well the dying strength of the Æsir.

Siegfried strikes the sacred shaft to pieces. The music comes to us like the convulsive sighs of the god's own sad heart. As the Spear made from the World's Ash falls in splinters to the ground, the heavy, irregular octaves of the Compact motif storm their way slowly down into subdued thunder and then silence. At last the Erda motif rises, fraught with sad, prophetic harmonies, ending in its majestic inversion, the motif of the Dusk of the Gods:

a. Erda Motif. *b.* Motif of the Dusk of the Gods.

So Wotan turns, holding the broken Spear, and passes away in the darkness. He enters the stage of action no more. But from the mystic singing of the Norns and the narrative of Waltraute when she comes to Brünnhilde to beg for the Ring, we gather the record of his final actions in the closing hours of the great drama.

There remains but little for the king of gods to say or do. But since he must depart in all honor and pride, he may make ready for that event which,

he now sees, is not a catastrophe, but a supreme blessing to the world. The World's Ash-Tree is hewn into pieces by his orders, and piled into a circle around Walhalla. Then from far and wide he summons his heroes, and in silence takes his place among them. He sends his great ravens out for tidings; and thus he waits, refusing the holy apples of youth. The words which he whispers to Waltraute are full of a deeper meaning than she can understand. He tells her that when Brünnhilde shall return the Ring to the Rhine-Maidens, gods and men will be free from the weight of the curse. She tries to obtain the Ring from her sister, but in vain. Fate wills that the Rhine daughters shall receive their property from Brünnhilde's own hands, as a gift blessed by her wisdom and her suffering. And, indeed, we may know most surely that Wotan does not wish to avert the destruction of the gods. His words are but prophecy, for he sees farther than the twilight; and the freedom which he means is the annulment of the gods, as well as the cleansing of the gold-cursed earth.

The music which describes the burning of Wal-

halla is based on the motif of the God's Need, but has a harmonic construction which produces a thrilling and wonderful effect. Listening, one finds oneself breathless from a strange, constraining force—it seems to hold in it a magic as potent as it is indescribable.



The phrase first enters in the Norn scene, again in Waltraute's narrative, and reaches its climax when Brünnhilde commands the erection of the funeral pyre—that funeral pyre the rising flames from which finally destroyed Walhalla. Loge's revenge is expressed by his characteristic music, which sweeps up in a veritable surge of crackling fire.

Here let me draw your attention to a beautiful musical touch. We remember the short but lovely phrase so often used to bring the Walhalla motif to a close,—the melody which seems to character-

ize Wotan as supreme god of the Golden Age. Who but the master would have dared to give this fresh and simple melody to the broken and weary god awaiting the end of his power and splendor? Yet, as Brünnhilde, raising her arms, sings solemnly, "Ruhe! ruhe! du Gott!" ("Rest! rest! thou god!"), we hear first the Walhalla motif, full of peace and dignity, then the motif of the God's Need, subdued and lulled, and last the simple and tranquil melody which, with the Walhalla motif, seems to depict Wotan in his youth and strength and the happy arrogance of his godhood. The touch is perfect, and is like a gentle word at a death-bed.

Though he was long called god, Wotan, the king of gods, was only frail, erring and weaker than mortal until he had learned the lessons given him. But he did learn them; and so, with his petty faults, and trivial plots, and his love, and his suffering, and his heavy crown of godhood, he fell asleep in the last twilight. For thus he was a god at last: wise ere he died; great ere he slipped into obscurity; divine ere he passed into the dead days with the other shapes and shadows of the old order. He, in keeping with the eternal necessity

of all things, was forced to suffer before he was crowned; but after we have pitied him, and blamed him, and scorned him, we at last come to reverence him as he fades away, a dim, godlike figure, among the growing shadows of the Dusk of the Gods.

“Ruhe! ruhe! du Gott!”

SIEGFRIED

SIEGFRIED

AMONG all the characters drawn in literature, Siegfried is the only being absolutely natural. Wagner desired to show a perfectly elemental and primitive being influenced only by instinct, governed only by impulse, and totally ignorant of any constraint. To produce this effect he placed his character in a wilderness, without instruction or companionship. He must have no cultivation, no artificial polish,—not even that rough learning which passed for education at that day. Therefore his only companion is an ignorant dwarf, who can tell him nothing of the world save an occasional tale of jousts or battles, and who can have no possible refining influence upon him. For whatever refinement he may possess must come by instinct, and not by training.

He knows nothing of the world; he is unskilled in the use of weapons; he is quite untaught in matters of custom, law, or order; he has never heard

of love, and he cannot even vaguely picture to himself a woman. It is of such material that the strength of a perfect man is formed. So Wagner wishes us to see. Giving us an absolutely pure and absolutely natural nature, the Master proves conclusively that, the knowledge of good and evil being equally instinctive, it is the instinct of the good and the beautiful which largely predominates.

Siegfried is a man, to whom the heritage of life must come. In the course of time love must come to him, pain also, yearning—even fear. He must battle with the world and with men, he must learn restraint and the most worthy exercise of his strength; he must confront many strange things unforeseen and hard to understand. But his brain will be unclouded by artificiality, his heart will be free from the doubt and hesitancy of a contagiously cowardly world, and his arm will be strong with the supreme strength of the forest. Whatever it is necessary for him to experience, that he will meet. He must love, and he must love deeply as befits the depth and force of his nature; and though the word and its meaning are alike unknown to him for a long time, he watches the birds and beasts

and meditates upon the mysteries of life, stirred by the vague, intangible sentiment of an utterly untutored nature. And eventually he must die;—and he dies as all heroes have died, smiling at the bright memories that death brings him.

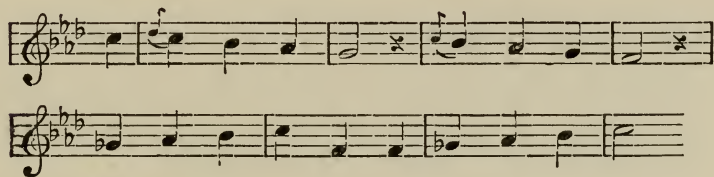
What we feel most strongly, even in a superficial glance at this character, is the extraordinary abundance of vitality and energy. Here, also, let us acknowledge the wise art of the Master. Had he placed Siegfried in an atmosphere of greater refinement, had his interests been more numerous and his freedom more restricted, he must have been weaker, less overwhelmingly vigorous. This is the reason why the Siegfried of the Nibelungenlied interests us less, being more a knight of chivalry than a hero of barbaric simplicity. The Siegfried who lived in Worms and engaged in tourneys was an interesting, but not a convincing character; the Siegfried who wandered in the woods, and later by the Rhine, doing great deeds and laughing at fear, seems strangely real and near to us. For in spite of the divine blood in his veins, Siegfried is the most human of mortals. He is actual—living—true to life in

every heart-beat. In the world of stories and songs, poems and plays, I know of no more truthful and charming picture of the possibilities of this our inherent life.

After Siegmund's death, Brünnhilde gathered together the splinters of the broken sword and gave them to Sieglinde, to keep as a treasure for her child. With divine prophecy the Walküre declared that that child should be the highest hero of the world, and that he should be called "Siegfried"—"Son of Victory" (Sieg, in German, is victory). With this one great end to live for, Sieglinde wandered away into the woods, and after a long interval of privations and sufferings was finally found by Mime, the dwarf, half-brother of Black Alberich who had originally stolen the Rhine-gold. Mime saw a golden possibility in caring for the unfortunate daughter of Walsung. Were Fafner, the giant dragon, slain by some mighty offspring of the demi-gods, the gold and the treasure would be more available. Men could be poisoned; dragons required more daring to overcome. So, with this hope, he gave aid to Sieglinde; and when she died, having given birth

to a boy, he expended all the care of which he was capable upon the child. The pieces of the sword he treasured against some future day when they might be needed. He did his best to bring the boy up to hardy and fearless manhood, and his efforts were successful. Never before were seen such strength and splendid vigor in mortal youth; and Mime cringed, at last, before the might that he had fostered.

The first musical phrase that I will give is a melody in which Mime ("Siegfried," act i.) describes Siegfried's babyhood and early childhood.



It has been charmingly likened to a folk-melody or a cradle-song. It pictures to our imagination the first grace of a young child,—all the simplicity and freshness of that ignorant, happy childhood in the woods. As the boy grew older, we learn from Mime's querulous complaining that he made him "a tuneful horn." And now let us consider this—

the first definite expression of the nature of the frank and blithe-hearted boy—the wild and lovely sound that echoed through the forest when Siegfried first tried his tuneful horn.



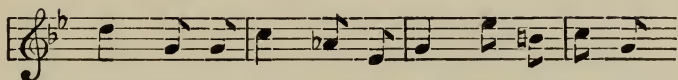
This horn-call is the motif of Siegfried the Fearless in its primitive form. Later the same melody, when augmented and enriched, becomes the motif of Siegfried the Hero.

“Talk’st thou of giants and vigorous warfare,
Of daring deeds and able defence;
And swords dost thou sharpen,—forge the weapons,
Praising thy craft most highly indeed!
Put I my hand to what thou hast smithied,
With but a stroke destroyed is the trash!”

Such is Siegfried’s complaint, and the words are accompanied by two delightfully characteristic phrases. The setting of—

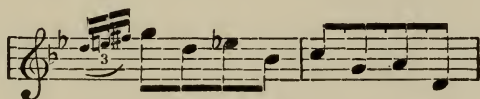
“Talk’st thou of giants and vigorous warfare,
Of daring deeds and able defence”—

is as vigorous as the warfare of which he speaks.



“Talk’st thou of gi-ants and vi-gorous war-fare—”

The rapid downward sweep of the music to which he sings his anger at the uselessness of Mime’s weapons is a motif well recognized in the Trilogy—the motif of Siegfried the Impetuous :



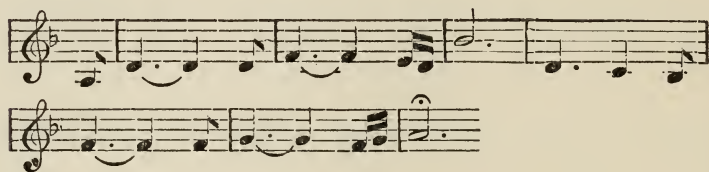
A wild young animal, he grew up in the forest, the first softening and tender influences, as I have said, coming from the loving woodland creatures. The love that he saw around him among birds and wolves and foxes, and “the gentle deer that had paired,” aroused an answering love in his heart. “Thus learned I well what love is,” he said to Mime. The motif of Forest Life, or Love Life, is very beautiful, and it is to this that his first tender thoughts are set :



At last his mind awoke; and tired of dreams of distant warfare, and lonely musings in the wood, he demanded some definite knowledge of his parents. Instinct and a rough reasoning told him that the cringing gnome could be “no father of his,” and he longed passionately to know something of his mother,—the mother who belonged to that beautiful unknown mystery of womanhood which sometimes assailed his thoughts with its indefinable sweetness. Mime told him of her death at last, and showed him the broken pieces of the sword Nothung, while the boy stood, wondering and touched, bewildered and sad.

As the Nibelung tells Siegfried the story of his birth, the accompanying music also tells its tale,—a tale of love and grief, of desolation and despair, of pain and death. The Wälsung motif, weighted with woe, rises and falls as with a sigh;

Meanwhile another phrase has been heard several times in the orchestra,—the Siegfried motif, one of the most important in the Cycle.



When Siegfried returned to the cave, a new thought was ready to greet him in Mime's mention of "fear." He had never been taught the word, and, having had no sensation demanding some such phrase, had never acquired it. It is well known that children learn first the words which they need most in the expression of their daily desires and feelings. It was a happy touch to show Siegfried's freedom from fear by his ignorance of the term expressing it. "Das Fürchten?" he said wonderingly. And when Mime had described this strange "Fürchten," he still shook his head, smiling and curious. At this point, dimly suggestive, like a prophetic glimmer through mist, the Sleep motif steals out over the rest of the music. For he was to learn fear, this calm-hearted boy. "Im

Schlafe liegt eine Frau, die hat ihn das Furchten gelehrt!" ("Siegfried," act iii.)

But this new suggestion had fired his imagination. If there was anything that he did not know he must be taught at once. Mime declared that Fafner the dragon had taught it to many dragons. He, too, should learn of him. Siegfried demanded the sword Nothung, saying that he would go to the dragon, learn the art of fearing, and then fare forth to the world. And as Mime wailed that he could not smithy Nothung, the boy, fired by a species of divine inspiration, filed the pieces, blew up the forge, and fashioned the sword anew.

In this first contemplation of Siegfried, we are impressed principally by these points. The youth was the complete antithesis of Mime in every respect. The dwarf inspired him with a disgust so overwhelming that at times it seemed as though he must strike him aside like a venomous reptile. Instinct alone brought him back to the cavern day after day.

We are inclined, in viewing the deeds of these gods and demi-gods of old, to criticise them in the light of modern civilization, and therein are wrong.

Were Siegfried a youth of to-day, and Mime his plotting and scheming guardian, the boy, brought up in cultivated and decorous surroundings, would probably give him all due respect and proper courtesy even while in his honest heart he must scorn and distrust him. But Siegfried lived in a primeval day, in a dense forest. Mime himself was unlikely to have inculcated either courtesy or kindness in his charge's heart. So, there being no necessity for outward hypocrisy, the youth simply endured the Nibelung as long as he could. When natural antipathy became augmented by the knowledge that Mime was plotting his death he struck him dead with his sword in a volume of impetuous wrath. I have heard this described as "murder"; and while one could easily plead self-defence, if one so desired, I do not wish to make excuses for "The highest hero of the world." It would be an insult to the embodiment of supreme, elemental nature which the boy was. But, if I could, I would bring home the picture of that lonely boy, guided only by his own hot, passionate heart and the tenderness taught him by the forest creatures,—to those who would receive it. But it

is a great canvas, and only the perusal of that giant drama of Wagner's, the Nibelungen Ring, can give the complete and heart-stirring whole.

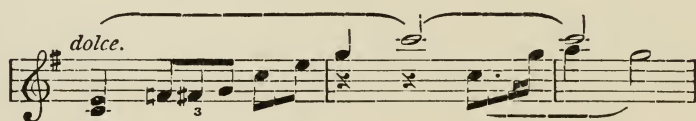
The sword in hand, Siegfried followed Mime to the cave of the dragon, and there lay under the linden-tree watching the tiny shadows flicker and listening to the great whispering surge of indefinable, familiar sounds. The twittering of birds mingled with the thousand voices of the wind in the trees; and what a symphony was the whole, what a crowning perfection of tremulous harmony, unmarred by melody,—almost without measure or rhythm, yet pulsing like a great heart. The heart of the wide world of nature was throbbing for the boy that day; and, listening, cannot we, too, feel the magic that steals upon us in that vague, infinite wave of music which engulfs the ears and the heart and the soul in a ceaseless, formless flood of sound? “Waldweben” . . . forest weaving indeed,—the weaving, weaving of all that is loveliest in the forest secrets into a whole, mysterious and heart-contenting and complete.

He wondered softly, affected like all simple and susceptible beings by the influences of that tender,

imperative nature around him, what his mother had been like. It seemed impossible for him to picture her. Was she like the mother-deer, whose bright eyes shone so softly with love? No, even lovelier. Finally he sighed:

“When in her grief she bore me,
 Ah, why must she thus have died!
 Die so all human mothers,
 Leaving their sons behind them alone?
 Surely 'twere too sad, that!”

The tender motif of Freia quivers upward from the orchestra, as though the gentle goddess of love gave her benediction to the boy, in a smile that gleams momentarily through the whisper of the “Waldweben:”



A bird began to sing in the tree above him, and in the whimsical hope of talking to it—for he was very lonely—he cut a reed into a whistle and tried bravely to imitate the clear note. But the whistle sounded out of tune, and the bird only seemed to

mock him. In disgust he threw "the stupid reed" away, and acknowledged himself incapable of the marvels of wood-talk. A lusty blast on his horn brought Fafner the dragon before him, and quite unconsciously the youth forged the first link of the chain which should one day bind him hand and foot. With the dragon he fought and plunged Nothung into his heart. Dying, Fafner warned him of the curse, and of coming ill, and lamented in strange and impressive music the end of the mighty "Riesen-geschlecht."

Looking down upon him, Siegfried said slowly:

"My race and parents fain would I know,—
Wise now thou seemest, wild one, in dying!
Give me rede from my title,—
Siegfried,—so am I named!"

But the dragon was dead. And the youth sighed sorrowfully: "The dead can give no tidings, so have I naught but my good sword to lead me!"

The dragon's blood falling on his hand and so touching his lips gave him power to understand the language of the birds; and the small wood-warbler which he had tried to imitate on the reed

bade him in most musical tones enter the cave and take the Tarnhelm and Ring which he would find there. He obeyed, quite ignorant of their use, and looking upon the rest of the treasure with wondering curiosity. Again came the bird-voice bidding him beware of Mime. The dwarf drew near with a cup of poison which he endeavored to force upon Siegfried with cajolery; but the dragon's blood had also given power to read the evil and treacherous thoughts that prompted the hypocritical protestations. In a storm of anger the Wälsung killed him.

As he returned to the cool shadows under the linden-tree, he felt, suddenly and more overpoweringly than ever before, his extreme loneliness. There seemed no one in the wide world to whom he could even speak—he seemed completely and utterly alone. He envied the wild birds their companionship, and their happiness with each other, and wondered, sadly enough, if he should ever have a friend of his own—"Ein gut Gesell."

Listening to the love-songs of the birds, brooding on the customs of the forest-creatures, Siegfried had long felt the indefinite instinct of love stir in his heart, but it had never before risen to

the height of yearning. Never before had he thoroughly recognized his own intolerable loneliness. Never before had he realized what was far stranger and more thrilling—his own capacity for love. Intangible, formless, nameless, this sense of something unattained filled his being—this tremulous, half-painful delight—this emotion which seemed to carry his heart from him in a rush of longing.



Yearning Motif.

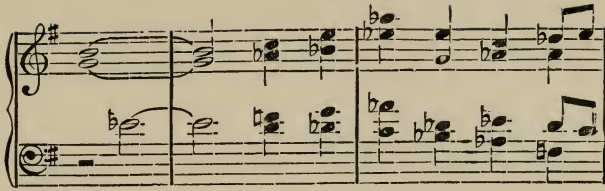
The bird sang to him of Brünnhilde, the sleeping goddess, and promised to guide him to her fire-encircled rock; and at last Siegfried found the knowledge of the meaning of his longing. Through fire he would spring to find the Walküre.

The boy was no longer a boy; he was a man, throbbing with life and vigor. He must come into his heritage of love. The bird which led him through the forest is but the symbol of the irre-

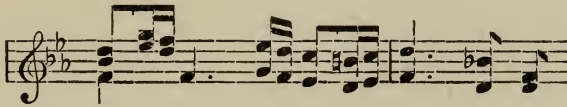
Through the fire went Siegfried, blowing his horn and gleefully fighting the tongues of magical flame; up the mountain-side he sprang, until he reached the summit and entered that trance-bound enclosure where the Walküre slept in the shadow of the fir-trees. The Sleep motif sounds softly in the passes; an ethereal sweep of harp-tones rises like the musical stir of the breeze through the branches. The Freia motif greets the hero graciously, and the Fricka motif, one of the loveliest melodies in the Cycle, seems to enfold him as in a stately consecration :



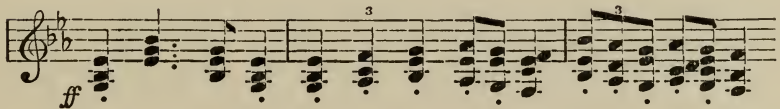
The melody of Wotan's farewell lingers about the place. The minor notes of the rhythmic Walküre motif throb faintly, like an echo. It is as though the gods drew together to bless the coming of the hero to the enchanted spot; as though Freia, goddess of love, and Fricka, goddess of wedlock, sanctified the coming union, and the father of gods whispered his loving farewell once



The motif of Siegfried's Love is also most stirring and vigorous, with a flash of happiness in it, and a cadence like a caress :



And so we come to the second and older Siegfried, to whom is given the blithe musical phrase which we have known as the motif of Siegfried the Fearless, but which now, with its lusty strength and manliness, we call the motif of Siegfried the Hero :



After a long lapse of time, Siegfried, urged by Brünnhilde, determined to go forth into the world, and test his good sword and the strength of his arm. So he left with her the Ring as a love-

pledge; and she gave him her horse, armor, and weapons, and waved him a brave farewell as he rode down into the valley.

During what is usually spoken of as Siegfried's Rhine journey we have a wonderful web of motifs woven with marvellous art, and all full of significance and strange charm. Among others, we hear the motif of Heroic Adventure, which was first heard in Mime's cave when the boy longed for the excitement of the world.

While he passed on his way down the Rhine, a mighty plot was being prepared for him in the hall of the Gibichungs, where Gunther and Gutrune, children of Gibich, lived with their half-brother Hagen. Hagen was the son of Grimhilde, their mother, and of Alberich, the Nibelung, and he it was whom Wotan had hailed in a moment of bitterness as the sin-aided conqueror of Walhalla. That the Ring might come back to the hands of the Nibelungs, the Nibelung's son plotted deeply, and worked in magic, until one day he could suggest a project to Gunther and Gutrune which seemed both plausible and pardonable.

It was meet that Gunther and Gutrune too should

wed. The son of Gibich should find a fitting mate,—thus he spoke. The race was a noble one, and only the noblest of women could unite with it. There was such a woman—though far beyond the reach of most men. Fire encircled her dwelling, and only a man who could fight his way through it could wed with her. This was, unfortunately, possible only to one hero—Siegfried, the Wäl-sung, son of Siegmund and Sieglinde. He was brave and strong—such a man, in sooth, as Gut-rune, the daughter of Gibich, should make her mate. Not only would he bring might and nobility to the race of the Gibichungs; he possessed wealth also—the hoard of the Nibelungs, which lay in Hate Hole.

Gunther sprang up disturbed, and asked Hagen angrily why with such apparent pleasure he aroused this desire for impossible things. Slowly and secretly Hagen continued. If Siegfried could be induced to bring the bride to Gunther, all would be well. This was not so impossible as it seemed. If Gutrune wove a spell for his enslavement, he would gladly do their will. To Gutrune's indignant assertion that surely the greatest hero of the

world would be beyond such enslavement, since he must have already loved and won to him the loveliest women of the earth, and that he would scarcely stoop or be bound by her, Hagen answered that magic could do many things. He bade her remember the love-potion which he had lately brewed—it was sweet, it was strong; for its mystical power he, who had with labor concocted it, could vouch. Did Siegfried even taste this draught he would forget that he had ever seen a woman before Guttrune, and any love which had been in his heart would straightway pass away, and he would love Guttrune instead. Thus could he be bound to gain the flame-guarded bride for Gunther. They need but wait till he came; and he surely would come, for the Gibichungs were a far-famed race, and in the course of time he would seek them out.

With such a web of deceit and treachery prepared for him, why did not the hero feel an unholy influence emanating from the hall of the Gibichungs? Why did he not turn the barge which bore him and his horse, and continue down the Rhine, blowing his horn in his glad confidence and

strength? Instead, he sprang on shore and greeted them. And Hagen hailed him as "Siegfried, highest of heroes!" with the triumph of black, successful hate in his voice. As the young Wälung set forth upon the threshold the shadow fell, all unrecognized, upon him. At this point the Curse motif swells out like a fearful menace, and as though in musical defiance the Siegfried motif follows triumphantly:

a. Curse Motif.

b. Siegfried Motif.

The image shows a musical score for two motifs. The first motif, labeled 'a. Curse Motif', is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 3/4. It begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The melody is in the right hand, starting on a G4 and moving through a series of notes: A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The left hand provides a simple accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second motif, labeled 'b. Siegfried Motif', is also in the same key signature and time signature. It begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The melody in the right hand starts on a G4 and moves through: A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and single notes, including a prominent bass line with a trill-like figure.

Soon afterward we hear the motif of the Wälung's Heroism. It is a minor melody, and has sometimes been called the motif of the Wälung's Fortitude. It sounded like a death march over the dead Siegmund; later we hear it after the death of our hero himself.



After words of greeting and friendship between the warriors, Gutrune came from an inner chamber with the love-draught (the motif of Gutrune and the motif of the Love-potion being heard at this point), and offered the guest the usual drink of hospitality.

As he takes the drinking-horn in his hand, the motif of Love's Greeting accompanies him as he softly whispers :

“Forgot I all that thou to me gav'st,
 One lesson still I ever should hold,
 This draught of wine with love eternal—
 Brünnhild', I pledge to thee!”

There is a sense of heaviness in the air,—a creeping mystery like a clinging mist. “What unholy magic is this?” asks Brünnhilde, later. The same question takes form in our hearts as

the mystic harmonies of the Spell motif stir the silence:



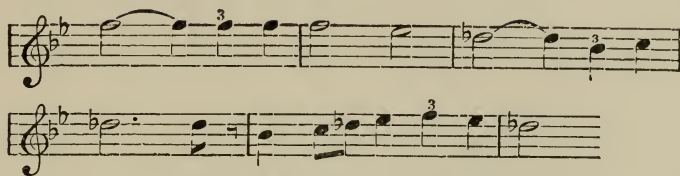
And now it is all over, and Siegfried is Siegfried no longer, but another. That "love eternal" which was the central thought of his being as he drank the potion has left him. Light-hearted, generous, kindly, and courageous,—these things he will always be; but the love of his life has gone, and with it a certain seriousness, a vein of tender gravity—something which came with Brünnhilde's love. These things float away on the cloying, insinuating sweetness of the Love-potion motif, and there is but the curse, ringing out its malignant warning, and that he does not hear. With pathetic significance we hear the melody which had stood for Siegfried's love, now used to accompany him when he offers help to Gunther in his undertaking. It is as though the strong heart of the man, robbed of the guiding love which had been its

chief motive, expends all its warmth and force, instead, upon friendship and the new and lighter passion.

Now let us listen carefully. Gunther describes the bride that he desires to win. "On rocky height she dwells . . . fire encircles her abode . . . but he strong enough to brave the fire . . . may meetly wed Brünnhilde." Each phrase is hastily repeated by Siegfried. He is fighting with the hideous spell about him; his memory is struggling for clearness. The bird-notes flash elusively, fitfully, mockingly, through the music,—they become clearer! Ah, he almost has the memory! The sweet bird-song thrills out distinctly,—it was that, then! Secretly, mysteriously, weirdly rises the Spell motif like a clammy vapor between him and the glowing past. It is done: the magic chains are safely forged. Siegfried is successfully enchanted,—he will do their will!

To win Gutrune, he gladly promises to conquer the "wild mountain maiden" for Gunther, and gladly swears the Oath of Blood-brotherhood with the Gibichung; drinking with him a horn

of wine into which each has let fall a drop of his blood.



Motif of Blood-brotherhood.

Prompted by Hagen as to the use of the Tarnhelm, he offers to change shapes with Gunther by its power, and thus bring the Walküre to the hall on the Rhine without discovery as to his true identity. So he blithely starts out on his second journey through the fire.

It is necessary that Siegfried, too, shall become the victim of fate. In the truth and honesty of his nature he can never wittingly bring wrong or sorrow to any one; therefore he must be the dupe, the machine, the blinded medium for the workings of the great tragedy. It is impossible for him to distrust any man. So honorable is he himself, even when at the end he is stabbed treacherously by the man he had accounted his friend he does not fully appreciate the villainy. Well does Gunther say to him, with the sadness of forebod-

ing: "Thou over-happy hero!" Though on his way to the Gibichung's hall he had mixed with men, he had not learned to suspect. He had learned much of warfare, and many customs current among the heroes of the day. We see that he is familiar with the Oath of Blood-brotherhood. Later he swears the warrior's oath of innocence "on the spotless spear-head." He has come in contact with the world, and has gained a knowledge of the ways of men. Yet these things do not seem to have changed the simplicity of his heart nor the uncompromising directness of his mind. There is something very refreshing and characteristic in his greeting to Gunther. "I hear thee widely spoken of beyond the Rhine. Now fight with me, or be my friend!"

In contradistinction to the sunny nature of Siegfried, son of the gods and type of courage and honesty, we have the gloom and treachery of Hagen, offspring of the Nibelung, and representative of darkness and sin. From that loveless union where gold was the only bond had come this strange, evil-shadowed child of darkness. While Wotan had founded a race of demi-gods for

the lifting of the curse from the world, Alberich had planned that this son, in whom were all his own craft and hate, should with him overthrow the gods, aided by the Ring which they should win from Siegfried. It is a significant and somewhat ironical fact that Hagen, like all other beings, labored under the weight of the curse. Bitterly enough do he and his Nibelung father hate the world, and the hate recoils on themselves. Happiness never comes into the life of the Nibelung's son; all is conspiracy and hate, envy and disappointment. Better than any other, Hagen knows his own grim heritage, recognizes the curse that makes his life alien from other lives, that bars him from joy and love. It is from his own lips that we hear the words which most fittingly describe him, in his strange and nameless power, in that supernatural aspect which is peculiarly impressive at times. In "Die Götterdämmerung," act i., Siegfried asks him carelessly why he did not join in the Oath of Brotherhood. The Nibelung motif beats out a tragic message, the motif of the Apples of Youth sounds in subdued harmonies as though signifying hopelessly some unattainable privilege,

and the Ring motif describes its strange thirds in a mystic circle upon the air. And Hagen answers :

“ My blood would trouble the draught ;
Its flow is hardly noble enough,
Sluggish and cold doth it move ;
Not e'en my cheek will it redden.
So, far I stay from vigorous bonds.”

Even more fully we feel the weight of gloom, the blight of sin, later on in his complaint to his father, which is yet not a complaint, but a bitter statement of his fate.

“ If strength my mother gave,
I yet can never thank her
That thou didst win her to thee ;
Youthless, grim, and wan,
Hate I all glad ones,
Feel I no joy ! ”

He is a strangely tragic figure ; and sitting there in the hall of the Gibichungs, brooding darkly as he watches the two heroes hastening away toward the Walküre's rock, he seems to arouse a form of admiration in our hearts,—so grimly strong is he under the shadow, so scornfully proud in his dreary destiny.

Siegfried, as agreed, passes through the fiery circle, struggles with Brünnhilde for the Ring with which she defies him, and finally tears it from her finger while we hear the Curse motif menacing him from the orchestra. The circlet which he now places on his own finger arouses no memory in his mind, and indeed (and note here the trickery, the intricate deception, of the spell under which he lives!) he quickly forgets having taken it from Brünnhilde, and, as time passes, merely connects the ring that he wears with the recollection of the dragon which he killed at Hate Hole. For this memory is as clear as ever; he has forgotten only Brünnhilde and all connected with her. As the Walküre falls at his feet, exhausted and conquered, which of all the melodies of the Cycle does the poet Wagner choose to reveal a pathos too deep for other expectation? The tender motif of Siegfried the Protector. And who, hearing it and understanding, could fail to feel that throb of sorrow which the Master knew would be the tribute to this incomparable touch?

As Brünnhilde passes into the cave, by his command, he draws his sword, and, before following

which serves to impress itself most insistently upon the mind is the Fate motif:



The hero's wonder at being hailed by Brünnhilde, his bewilderment in regard to the Ring, his disgust at his apparent failure of the Tarnhelm magic,—all go to make the situation complete, all show to perfection the many sides of this “over-happy hero.” The innate sense of chivalry in his nature is aroused by Brünnhilde's apparent grief, but her desperate frankness shocks him; and, while it awakes his quick desire to prevent this woman from placing herself in so terrible a position, fills him with indignation as well.

“Car'st thou so lightly for thine honor?
The false lips that revile it—
Must I of lying accuse them?”

This indignation gradually rises to personal resentment at her accusations, and it is with the

vehemence of insulted honor that he swears his innocence on Hagen's spotless spear-head.

“Where sharpness can wound me
There wound thou me!
Where'er death's hand can strike me,
Strike thou at me!
If her lament is true,
If I have broken my bond!”

This resentment, however, soon gives place to a half-amused sympathy for Gunther in the sudden turn matters have taken, and to a merry appreciation of the almost ludicrous—to him—situation. As he turns away he sends a laughing word over his shoulder to the vassals who have assembled:

“Ye men all! Speed ye away!
Leave to quarrel the wives;
Like cowards will we escape
If with our tongues we must fight!”

In his kindness and his joyousness he strikes some note of sorrow in our hearts; for we feel a void as we hear the careless words which awaken regret for the Siegfried who has slumbered since the drinking of the love-potion. Such a man as this Siegfried might have been, blithe and brave

and slow to grief, had he never found his way to Brünnhilde's rock, long ago. Such a man he is now with this difference, that he has gained something—and lost it; and there is a rent in his broad and loving nature—a strange want which one feels in every gesture and every word, mighty hero though he be.

Read over, all you who desire a more intimate knowledge of Wagner's art, the scene in which Hagen first suggests the murder of Siegfried to Gunther ("Die Götterdämmerung," act ii., scene 5). The Gibichung gasps, "Siegfried's death!" with a thrill of horror, while the Murder motif throbs out with sinister persistency. He falls into meditation, while he half whispers reluctance:

"GUNTHER—Blood-brotherhood, both have we sworn.

HAGEN—The traitor's blood only atones!

GUNTHER—Broke he the bond?

HAGEN—Art thou not betrayed?

GUNTHER—Betrayed he me?"

The music is dark and full of evil, breathing treachery and the insidiousness of crime. In the midst of it we hear, broad and strong, with note of truth and cheery steadfastness in its melodious

cadences, the music of the Oath of Brotherhood. It is so loud that for a moment it predominates all, and we feel that Gunther cannot resist the force of the memory. But it passes and is lost in the blackness of conspiracy and untruth, and, consenting, Gunther murmurs: "Shall this be Siegfried's ending?"

When Hagen declares the necessity of Siegfried's death, he speaks a truth which he does not recognize. Underneath the ostensible causes there is in reality the necessity, great and all-imperative, that he should die. In his very strength, in his very light-heartedness, in his very nobility, he is a fit victim to be added to the great sacrifice. The world must be purged of sin and sorrow, and only the best of the world's good can be offered on the altar which looms mistily through the last twilight. The altar is made of griefs and wrongs and broken possibilities; of shame and fraud and the bitterness of life. Upon it the gods must be sacrificed, and the splendor of the pagan days. Upon it Siegfried, with his vigor and strength, and that heritage of human and divine power, must pass away in expiation of those inex-

plicable and complicated wrongs of the now swiftly moving tragedy. Upon it, Brünnhilde, wisest and greatest of all, must be immolated in supreme and final redemption of the world.

And so we follow our hero to the last scene of his life,—the shore of the Rhine. So joyous-natured is he that he laughs from his heart with the merry Rhine-Maidens, who hail him as he passes; so simple that he stops to discuss prophecy with them; so frankly and happily arrogant that he defies their warning and holds fast the Ring, even though—so childlike is he—he does not in the least understand either its uses or misuses. And he laughs at their folly when they swim away, singing:

“Come, sisters!
Haste from the fool, then!
He dreams that he is
As free and as wise
As in truth he is blinded and bound!

“Oaths he swore well,—
And heedeth them not!
Runes he knows, too,—
And reads them not!
A wondrous good won he as gift,—

That 'tis abandoned
Knows he not!
But the Ring which will gain him death,—
That circlet doth he still hold to!

“Farewell, Siegfried!
A stately woman to-day inherits your treasure,—
More heed will she pay to us!
To her! To her! To her!”

When the maidens have departed, and the hunting-train have entered the valley, he, marking Gunther's depression and attributing it to further strange caprices of “the tameless mountain bride,” offers to amuse and cheer him with “stories of his boyhood's days.” As both Gunther and Hagen agree with apparent heartiness, he commences. This narrative is one of the most marvellous combinations of music that Wagner ever formed.

The hero pauses a moment to think. Then the clang of Mime's hammers seems to sound in his brain, and he plunges into the account of those early years in the dwarf's smithy. Merrily and carelessly enough he describes his doings until he has completed the story of Mime's death. “What further told the bird?” asks a vassal. Siegfried

raises his bewildered eyes. What was it? Something! The motif of the Love-potion rises, and falls dulcetly, clingingly. "Drink first, hero, from my horn," he hears Hagen say. "I have mixed thee a goodly drink to refresh thy mind, that past things may be clear."

The motif of the Spell rises mysteriously. As it swells weirdly upward, it is caught by a liquid and tender melody—the motif of Brünnhilde's Love,—and is thus arrested. Then softly as a caress is whispered the Brünnhilde motif. The music seems actually like an awakening from a trance. It is changed, the minor harmonies have gone. Siegfried is Siegfried once more.

Lost in the surging memory of the exquisite "Waldweben," he tells of the glad tidings given him by the bird. Then the thrilling, tremulous fire-music surrounds him. He seems passing through the magic circle once more. His brain, excited to abnormal clearness, sees all as in a marvellous light. "And thus found I the gift . . . sleeping . . . a wondrous woman." Again he loosens the bright armor, again he bends above her, again his kiss wakes her to love.

“Canst thou read also the speech of yonder ravens?” comes Hagen’s voice to his rapturous dream. Startled, he turns, while the music rises in the stark, sinister intervals of the Curse motif. “Vengeance they say to me,” says the Nibelung’s son; and as he stabs him in the back the Siegfried motif crashes out high and fierce, in a supreme culmination of strength that dies down in a long diminuendo to the bitter throb of the Death motif.

Again the exquisite awakening motifs and the marvellous love-music of “Siegfried” come softly back. Reminiscent melodies float on the surging sea of sound. Back through the darkness of pain and misunderstanding goes Siegfried’s dying memory;—back through the mists so long undispeled to the golden light of the dawn of love. Nothing else matters—her eyes are open to him forever—her love is his eternally! The motif of Siegfried’s Love accompanies his dying whispers:

“Brünnhilde! Holiest bride!
Awake! Open thine eyelids!
Who imprisoned thee thus in sleep?
Who binds thee in slumber once more?
The Wak’ner came!
He kissed thee awake!

Again he the bride's fetters has broken,—
Now gloweth Brünnhilde's joy!

“ Ah, how her eyelids open forever,—
Ah, how her breath is balmily stirring! . . .
Sweetest of endings—
Awe that is rapture!
Bünnhild' greets me at last! ”

And this is Siegfried's death. The men bear him up the rocks in the looming shadows, and the cold, swathing mists; and over all is the growing moonlight, silver-white through the clouds.

The music that we hear while the sorrowful train wends its way out of sight says those things which no words could say, expresses those depths and heights that no speech could sound; reveals to us the hidden mysteries of all triumphant pain and crowning grief. Our listening ears may wait for funereal cadence and wails of mourning; they will not hear them. Only when we open our hearts to the broad surge of that most sublime of death-pæans, we may feel it rush and sweep like beating waves—even to our souls. And our hearts will throb in unison with the mighty pulse of that exultation of heroic death.

One by one, the motifs enter, one by one they are swept aside by the Death motif. Picture after picture passes us; thought after thought vanishes in the mist of music. We hear the story of the hero's life; we feel the tragedy of his death; and then in the progress of the music we behold him lifted to that strange glory and sanctification which surrounds the dead. In a storm of major chords we hear the motif of Siegfried the Hero; the Death motif transfigured to a shout of triumph interrupts it: the music wanes and dies. Softly the Brünnhilde motif creeps up, to die as softly. In the tenderest minor echo of the Hero motif, the pæan closes.

Even Hagen seems to have caught, though grimly, the spirit of mysterious dignity attendant upon the hero's death, when he comes to tell Gutrune that her husband has been killed:

“Up, Gutrune! And greet now Siegfried!
The warrior brave is coming home.

“The pallid hero blows horn no more!
No more to the hunt nor battle he fares,
Nor wooeth earth's loveliest women!”

Though he mocks, there is an element of grav-

ity in the music that seems to say much. It is as though Hagen, brave, if endowed with no other virtue, recognizes the courage of that other warrior whom he has killed; and while feeling no regret for his deed, does him honor in his own cold heart as he remembers the hero's life and death.

The key-note of Wagner's philosophy is the pride and triumph of failure, the glory of what was never attained, and of what, having been attained, was lost. We have seen the god supreme in his overthrowal; we now see the hero thrice a hero in a death which loses its ignominy in his simple acceptance of it. Siegfried was the greatest type of glorious failure ever drawn. He was the highest hero of the world; and yet he lived but a few years, after all, and died on the shore of the Rhine from a stab in the back. He was the bravest of all men,—the tenderest, the most generous. Yet in all the world there were but two who loved him, and both of these were women. Both had wronged him, and both he had indirectly wronged: one by the unwitting withdrawal of his love, one by the bestowal of a love which was not real.

In the words which Brünnhilde speaks above him, at the end, we find his possibilities and contradictions set forth with the tenderness of an undying love :

“ What radiant sunshine gleams in his smile!
The noblest was he who thus betrayed!
His wife deceiving, true to friendship,
From his well-beloved, faithful and fond,
He barred himself with his sword.
Truer than he did swear oath never;
Juster than he did ne'er make a compact;
Purer than his was never passion;
And yet every promise—every agreement—
All love's depth and honor —
Broke none as did he!”

In thunderous music Walhalla passes away; and when we hear the glorious Siegfried motif rise in all its heroic joy against the melodies of Walhalla and the Dusk of the Gods, we seem to read a further message,—one which is not put into words. The Fate which lays a compelling, guiding hand upon gods and men, in the tragedy of the Nibelungen Ring, is a symbol of that power behind the Æsir,—that inscrutable, wonderful mystery before which are built the religions of the world. The

glory of Walhalla is as a breath upon iron. The creation of God — humanity — lives to discard mythology, lives to conquer all that is base and untrue; and Siegfried is the supreme type of humanity, with his manhood and his strength, his passion and his tenderness, his simplicity and his joyousness. He seems to stand in the mists smiling at a world which will not understand that in order to be a hero one must only be true to himself; to conquer one must only smile when one fails.

For this, unrealized by himself, was the philosophy of Siegfried.

BRÜNNHILDE

BRÜNNHILDE

IN the character of Brunnhilde, Wagner executed the noblest piece of character-development of his career. No other poet, however fired by imaginative possibilities, ever portrayed Brünnhilde in so striking a light as that in which she appears in the Nibelung Ring—as goddess and woman, protectress and avenger, all in one; a mixture of simplicity, passion, and divinity.

From her various places in legends and poems she has looked down the ages always with brave and compelling gaze, but with a different personality in each case. Sometimes it is as the haughty lady who gave her love once and forever, and when she found herself bound to an unloved lord, bore her fate in stern queenliness; and who at the end slew herself with the sword Gram, and was burned with her dead hero, with the sword flashing between them on the bier. Sometimes it is as the Amazon queen of the Northlands who fought with

men, and laughed at them in high, wild glee when they fell before her strength and skill, and who was only conquered when her magic girdle was wrested from her. Sometimes it is as a goddess who came under the ban of her father's displeasure, and whom Odin pricked in the temple with a sleep-thorn and caused to fall into a deep sleep in a lonely house on a hill.

In each of these characters Wagner found the same broad, essential qualities: the power to love; the passion to hate; and above all, courage—courage so high and strong that in all the world there was nothing to daunt it. Conquered Brünnhilde may have been, but never broken. Wherever we find her she is equally fearless in the face of pain, grief, shame, or death. So, putting aside these superficial differences which colored the various pictures of her, Wagner took the living, passionate nature of Brünnhilde herself, and gave her to us as she was, with all her errors and her grand truths. One of the highest proofs of genius rests on the achievement of making an improbable and inconsistent sequence of events seem natural and connected by the process of their exposition.

If one desires to see this art in its fullest and most convincing form, look at the manner in which the Master handles the story and character of Brünnhilde. Take the bare outlines of her history and tell it boldly without explanation or shading; you have an extraordinary tale,—striking, yes, but so startlingly inconsistent as to lose much of its charm; a peculiar medley of right and wrong, revenge and love, hatred and tenderness. All these qualities undoubtedly existed in chrysalis form in Brünnhilde's nature, but they could only have come forth in the graduated degrees demanded by the subtle and complete considerations of life.

This same improbable and unnatural sequence of inconsistencies becomes true to life in the hands of the Master. The steps of Brünnhilde's growth and development become simple and natural. Wagner was too harmonious an artist to allow sudden or startling leaps where all should be as gradual as the slow crescendo of light culminating in a sunrise. He permits nothing unprepared, for he deals not in rough effects, but in perfect results of thought and intention.

When we first meet Brünnhilde she is a war goddess, ignorant of sorrow, of evil, or of good. When at the end she passes from our gaze she is a woman whose heart has learned the fundamental meanings of life, whose eyes look past the present into the compensating future, and whose outstretched hands seem to bear the errors and follies of the Golden Age into the cleansing fire.

The character of Brünnhilde will best manifest itself by exposition. It is futile to attempt to dissect it. In the very process of analysis it seems to lose something of its rare beauty. It is for us to follow in all reverence the work of Wagner. As we have seen, Brünnhilde was Wotan's best-loved daughter. In his farewell to her we have heard her eulogized as his "bravest, loveliest child," "and the highest pride his heart e'er could hold." We have heard him dwell tenderly on the days when she rode beside him to battle, and when she poured him red wine in the halls of Walhalla. We have heard his heart's tribute to her,—those words in which he speaks of her "light-giving eyes," which comforted him in sorrow, and held him steadfastly to his duties. In this we seem to

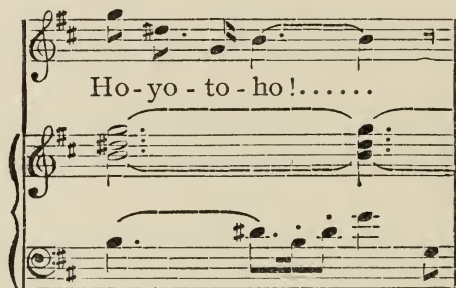
have a picture of that strong-hearted girl-goddess with the soul of sunshine and storm. Brünnhilde, as we first find her, seems the highest type of un-earthly maidenhood. She is as free as the winds over which she rides, as pure as the white moonlight that in some way seems a part of her, and as joyous as only a spirit of light gifted with everlasting youth could be. I never think of that wonderful, bright maiden of the clouds, as we see her in the second act of "The Walküre," without instinctively repeating the words of the poet—

"The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire, and dew."

Not the least of her charms is her unconsciousness. The simplicity of a child or a bird is hers. She only knows one dominating purpose, her father's will, and her emotions are governed and caused by the elements of which she is the god-child. She is the possessor of a wonderful heritage, though she does not recognize it. In her brain is all the knowledge of ages—all the wisdom that has been the result of Erda's centuries of dream-

ing. In her heart is all the noble dauntlessness and passion, all the fire and the divinity, of Wotan and the race of the gods. In her soul are numberless embryo possibilities—perfections some day to be realized. Yet she does not know.

The following musical phrase—the Walküre's call—is wonderfully descriptive of the wild freedom which it represents :



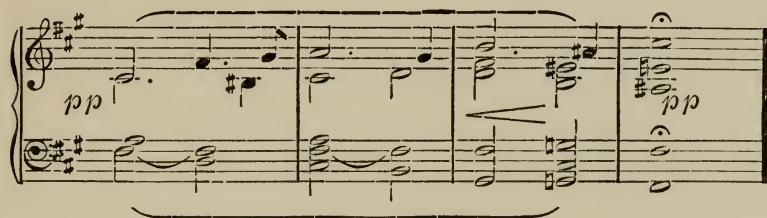
It is the shout, sometimes throbbing with joy, sometimes pulsing with the excitement of war, that the Walküres sang when they sped through the clouds. If we close our eyes as we hear it, we will seem to see a mail-clad warrior goddess mounted on a wild wind-horse, galloping upward over the storm-clouds into the purple blaze of the lightning, her voice vibrating with fierce joy as she calls, clear and long through the distance:

“Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Ho—ho-ō!” Or perhaps the swinging measure may bring to us a flash of sunshine on valleys far below,—a sweep of dazzling white clouds shifting under the rush of those winged hoofs, a bank of mist, rose-flushed by morning. Or it may be that a vision will come of long, crimson lines of glory, wide floods of gold,—all the passion and splendor of sunset, when the call sounds longer, more thrilling, and more replete with the magic of dusk. But whatever the picture, there will always be the upturned face glowing with some mystical exhilaration, the steel armor reflecting the light in glints and sparkles, and flying hair of the Walküre. There will always be the ringing of the shield against the breastplate, and the high, carolling voice crying the boisterous call out over the world that lies below. And always will come that sense of freedom and purity and eternal youth. The melody underlying the Walküre’s call is the Walküre motif, and its purest form is as follows:



It was the duty of the Walküres to aid their father in his warlike enterprises, and they loved to carry the slain heroes to Walhalla, there to watch them take their places at the great board, and sing strange chants of life and war. One of their duties was to carry the tidings of death to the fated heroes before battle. It seems strange at first thought that, so often bringing death to men, no suggestion of a shadow ever crossed the bright thoughts of Brünnhilde; yet, when one considers, it is quite comprehensible. Death, to her, was but a means to eternal bliss; and she had never come in touch with the great tragedy of parting, or seen the bereavement of those left behind. Wotan bade the Walküre carry to Siegmund tidings that he was to meet death in the combat with Hunding; but she, seeing his grief and love, was moved to pity and endeavored to protect him in the battle. But Wotan defeated the Wälsung, and she fled with Sieglinde before the god's wrath. In this same scene we see the first awakening of compassion, of human interest in any form. When she first appears, a grave vision of prophecy, with fateful words and warning music, she is as far

away as the stars, as unapproachable as the moonrise. The mournful music to which she sings her "Tod-Kunde" (death-tidings) is too mysterious to express any human pain. It is the motif of the Death-tidings, or Death-lament, and enters with solemn effect in the last act of "Die Götterdämmerung."



Motif of the Death-tidings or Death-lament.

In the despair of Siegmund she seems to see a new possibility. This is the first tragic element that has ever entered her life, and the first shadowy suggestion in her experience of the power of human love. In her own words to Wotan, in the last act of "Die Walküre," we find a simple narrative of the effect upon her sleeping heart :

"I who in the battle behind Wotan stay,
 Have now seen one thing thou hast not descried!
 Siegmund did I seek;
 Death-tidings to him I brought.

His face I gazed on, harked to his words,—
I marked well the hero's holiest need;
Deeply like music his lament aroused me!

“Love of the freest, pain the most fierce,
Saddest of courage, strongest of trust!
All of this I heard and all I saw;
And then—deep within me—
My heart with sacred magic was stirred!

“Shy and wond'ring, stood I in shame;
To quickly aid him was all my feeling.
Victory with him or death seemed equal:
This did I strive to accomplish—in vain!”

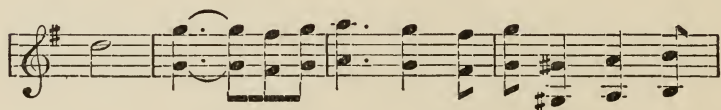
No girl, suddenly awakened to a realization of some tragedy of life, could be more shyly, wonderfully simple than this war goddess as she stands before the picture of the doomed Wälsungs. In her war-trained spirit Siegmund's courage and fortitude find quick appreciation: his dauntless fidelity to the woman he loved strikes a new note. And his suffering, in addition to the fearlessness she loves, completes the impression made upon her. She becomes almost womanly. When in his despair he would kill Sieglinde and himself, she bids him stay his hand for the sake of the child that

may be born to them. She looks with wondering tenderness upon the unconscious woman, and promises to shield her; and when she flies before the wrath of Wotan it is less with personal fear than the desire to help Sieglinde to safety.

Having left the place of combat where the Wäl-sung had fallen, Brünnhilde bore Sieglinde away on her horse through the clouds to the common meeting-ground of the sisters—the Walküre's rock. She knew that Wotan was close behind them, and that there was little time for elaborate plans, so she quickly gave the woman the broken splinters of Siegmund's sword, bidding her take them with her into the forest and keep them for her unborn child; while she, the Walküre, remains behind to meet Wotan's anger, and bear what punishment there may be. In the pressure and urgency of the moment, something of her mother's gift of prophecy seemed to come upon her, and in mystical exaltation she cried that this child should be the strongest and noblest hero of the world, and that he should mend the sword and wield it when he grew to manhood.

Sieglinde answered in passionate and inspired

words of gratitude. And the music that accompanies these words is a melody which we would do well to mark. It is the motif of Expiation, and is the phrase descriptive of Brünnhilde, the divine woman, who eventually immolated herself to atone for the sins of the world. In its introduction in this connection there is a special significance :



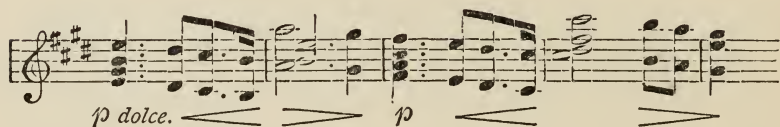
This is the turning point of the Walkure's existence. The shadows of life are stealing upon her. In these first small sacrifices which she makes, she is unconsciously forming and preparing her brave spirit for the vast sacrifice at the end.

In extenuation of her decision to help Siegmund, the Walkure knew that in so doing she was fulfilling her father's true desires. In this way she felt her disobedience to be only in the letter, not in the spirit. Having never considered a question of principle in her life, nor experienced the faintest struggle on the ground of right and wrong, she did not weigh the ethical considerations of the

matter, nor stop to realize that she was acquiescing in contempt of a great moral law. She acted from impulse, not reason; and secure in her knowledge that Wotan had originally wished the Walsung's success, she abandoned herself to the course urged by her sympathies. It was not until after she had helped Sieglinde to escape that she realized with a strange thrill that for the first time she had planned without Wotan's help; that she had, independently and unauthorized, exercised her own will and strength of character. She was like a bird that had tried its wings. Through all her bewildered grief at Wotan's wrath, her wonder, and her horror at his sentence, we find that peculiar exaltation, that triumph of individuality, stronger and ever stronger, as the situation grows more freighted with tragedy. This is the opening step in Brünnhilde's development from an utterly unconscious spirit of the air to a woman who in the closing moments of the Cycle, seems an all-comprehending prophetess, the Wala of humanity.

In reading over this scene—"Die Walküre," act iii.,—we see very clearly this triumphant defiance of shame which is even greater than the cour-

age which has always been characteristic of her. It is the involuntary assertion of her individuality combined with her love for her father that prompts the words in which she demands a fitting guard for her slumbers. The following is typical of the great love of the Walküre for her father—a love in which there is tenderness but no shadow of weakness:



Note that there is here actual demand, not appeal—the demand of a goddess for just honor. It is characteristic, likewise, that she should remind Wotan that he would disgrace his own godhood, should he leave her, as he plans, in unprotected slumber, the booty of the first passer-by who may awaken her:

“If then this must be, if no more meet me,
If thou must sever the bond that was fast,

Thou god, forget not this!

For thine eternal honor take heed then!

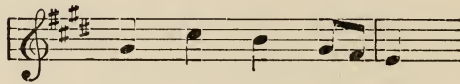
Shame not thy godhood in shaming me;
Thyself would be dishonored, didst thou permit
my disgrace!

.

“To this one thing must thou hearken.
Yes,—punish thy child who doth clasp thy knees,
Crush thou the true one, blight thou the maid;
All her life’s young strength destroy with thy spear,
But give, cruelest, not such desperate shame as
that!
By thy command bid fire to arise here,
To burn and to flicker, glowing and wild;
To scorch as it licks,—to sear as it tears
The fool who may brave the burning,
And neareth the prize-keeping rock!”

We seem to see in her several beings in one, as we mark the words: the Walküre, fearless and strong; the daughter, loving yet proud; the divine maiden, guarding her honor; the prophetess, vested with mythical exaltation. The music surges and flashes, the scene passes; Wotan’s farewell falls sorrowfully upon our ears; and at last as she slips silently from her father’s arms to the rock, we seem to see in her some foreshadowing of the womanhood which is to be her crown.

Here the graceful melody of the Sleep motif, which in its simplest form is as follows—



seems transformed and beautified into a great slumber symphony:



So for many years she lay within the magical circle. The seasons passed, and the history of the world waxed slowly, and the day came when she was to enter into her new estate. The hero passed through the circle of fire, and with a long kiss woke her to life.

Under a long-sustained note ("Siegfried," act iii.), we hear the Freia motif stir softly up in a low, caressing murmur, like returning life. It rises and creeps up, ever higher and ever richer in harmonies. The long-sustained note is broken;

the music is full of broad and rapid movement, the sweep of the vast currents of life,—and Brünnhilde is awake. As she slowly raises herself on the rock-couch and gazes straight up into the blazing sky, we hear strange, thrilling music which fills us with wonder—the Awakening motif:

The musical score consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It starts with a fortissimo (fz) dynamic, followed by a gradual decrescendo (dim.) to pianissimo (pp). The music then moves to a crescendo (cresc.). The second system begins with a forte (f) dynamic, followed by a gradual decrescendo (dim.). The third system begins with a piano (p) dynamic, followed by a gradual increase (piu p) to pianissimo (pp). The system concludes with an 8va. (octave) marking and a trill (tr) in the right hand.

Watch here the returning to life of the goddess. The farthest thing from her divine being is humanity, for she is not yet a woman. Her nearest

thought and earliest consideration is the sight of the sky, the sun, the light,—finally, the hero who has awakened her :

“Sun, I hail thee!
Hail thou light!
Hail, O glorious day!
Long was my sleep,—
I am awaked!
Who is the man who broke the spell?”

When she learns the name of her rescuer she again breaks out in a noble rhapsody, eulogizing all beautiful things in the joy of her renewed life :

“Gods, I hail ye!
Hail, O world!
Fruitful earth, now I hail thee!
My sleep is at an end,—
Awake am I!
Siegfried 'tis who awakens me!”

It is a matter of course that her divinity should proclaim itself in the entire absence of self-consciousness in her greeting to Siegfried. She speaks to him as her deliverer,—she cries, “Hail to the mother who bore thee!” She assures him of her deathless, godlike love; but when Siegfried

in ardent, passionate tones bids her be his wife, she seems suddenly startled and terrified, and wails that in that demand her hero has dealt her the cruelest shame of all:

“As sacred ever viewed me the heroes;
Maiden came I from Walhall’!”

It is the cry of insulted innocence and purity, the cry as well of broken strength and conquered pride. Siegfried has broken her armor, and she seems to have lost her warlike power. “Brünnhilde am I no more!” she cries despairingly, and in a new frenzy of fright and horror seems to see imaginary shadows haunting her round,—ghostly spectres of past grief and coming ill, warning shapes and terrifying recollections. It is the process of her change from a goddess to a woman. Brünnhilde the Walküre knew no regret, no foreboding. Brünnhilde the woman must be made of more sensitive fibre. Already, even in her vehement self-defence, she leans on the strength of the hero. Womanly at last, she cries in the culmination of appeal: “Oh, Siegfried! Siegfried! See thou my fear!”

Finally the despairing terror passes, and in a clear, searching moment of retrospective and prophecy she seems to see unforeseen possibilities of beauty. The passion of the hero, instead of startling and bewildering her, arouses an answering joy, thrilling and wonderful. Her strength returns to her, warlike no longer, but pure and glad, as she gives herself to Siegfried.

Greatly changed is the attitude of Brünnhilde at the end of this act from her attitude at the beginning. From a maiden-goddess, grandly impersonal, marvellously unapproachable, exquisitely proud, she becomes a glowing, living woman, tender and passionate, humble and exultant, gentle with a new gentleness, yet so gloriously daring in her carelessness of the future that we must catch our breath in wonder. Yet with so consummate an art has the process of the change been handled that we have realized only a gradual growth and enrichment ending in a climax to which Wagner has led up, slowly and surely, through the whole scene.

For those who are not already familiar with this—one of the most glorious love-scenes ever conceived by the mind of man—let me draw atten-

tion to Brünnhilde's great cry of surrender to love and defiance of fate :

“ Oh, hero-like boy!
Oh, warrior childlike!
Thou strongest, purest in all the world!
Laughing must I adore thee,
Laughing blind myself for thee,
Laughing go to death with thee,
Laughing wait for the end! ”

Siegfried is young, eager, and passionate, all unlearned and ignorant. What can he know of the coming evils which Brünnhilde feels vaguely but defies? She knows that grief and anguish await them; she knows that the gods must fall; she knows that outside this brilliant love-light lurk shadows black and thick. But what does it all matter? There is almost an element of maternal tenderness in her loving hail to Siegfried :

“ Oh, hero-like boy!
Oh, warrior childlike! ”

For him she can hold pain and evil at bay,—war with the blackest of curses, the most persistent fate. Her brave laugh defies the future, her strong love makes rich the present.

“Laughing must I adore thee,
Laughing blind myself for thee,
Laughing go to death with thee,
Laughing wait for the end!”

She sings; and through the flashing, caressing, quivering, passionate music of this last part of the scene, ever and anon we hear the swift swing and clash of the Walküre's call,—sweet and brave and confident as the strong heart of Brünnhilde.

Brünnhilde is so complex a being that it is difficult to realize how utterly simple and single-souled she is, in grief or joy, in passion or content. Instinctively we expect wails of anguish or exaggerated expressions of joy. But at her greatest moments her speech is simplest. Only in one instance does her torn heart cause her to break out in a mad passion, which soon passes, leaving her more wonderfully calm than ever before. We have heard her account of her meeting with Siegmund, and the clear, simple eloquence of her demand for a fire guardian. We have marked the quiet exaltation in her greeting to sky and earth. In the love-scene there is the eager, rapturous outpouring of an unrestrained nature, but no ex-

travagance. Mark her words to Siegfried at the height of excitement :

“ If I were thine,
Godliest rest were lost in the billows,
Quietest light broken to blazing,
Heavenly wisdom far from me fled!
Passionate love would whirl them away,
If I were thine.”

Free and unfettered and wild as Brünnhilde is, there is through all an instinctive restraint and dignity that colors every word. She is an elemental being who does not know the luxuries of complex laments and extravagant subtleties.

Before continuing to speak of Brünnhilde's character, I will give a very brief and simple outline of the rest of her history as contained in “Die Götterdämmerung.”

After a time Brünnhilde's loving ambition for her hero sent him out into the world to do great deeds and make a name among men. She, remaining behind, guarded the Ring he left with her as a love-pledge, and waited only for his return. Her Walküre sister Waltraute came to her to tell of the approaching end of the gods, and to beg for

the Ring, saying that Wotan in an abstracted moment had whispered that when the Rhine-Maidens should receive the ring from Brünnhilde, men and gods would be freed from the curse. Brünnhilde indignantly refused to relinquish the circlet, and Waltraute departed in despair. Siegfried, having been enchanted by drinking a love-potion, came to win Brünnhilde for Gunther, the brother of the woman whom he now desired to wed. He took the Ring from Brünnhilde's hand and wedded her in Gunther's name and character, laying his sword between them, according to the ancient barbaric custom when a woman was wedded by proxy.

Later, at the hall of the Gibichungs, Brünnhilde saw him in his own shape, with Gutrune, and recognizing the Ring on his finger, demanded enlightenment. Siegfried, being under the influence of the oblivion-bringing love-draught, was only mystified by her vehement and agonized questioning, and Gunther's bewilderment added to her conviction that they had conspired together to betray her. In a madness of fury and despair she told Hagen of a means to stab Siegfried in his one vulnerable point. After the deed had been done,

the Rhine-Maidens, who had seen the hero's death, unfolded to her the mystery of his unfaithfulness, and told her of the accursed Gold and the sorrow of the world. Wise at last, with a wisdom greater than her mother Erda's, she commanded that a funeral pyre should be built for the dead hero, and, mounting her war-horse, rode into it joyously and so was immolated. Such is the story of Brünnhilde.

The change in Brünnhilde after the lapse of time during which she has lived with Siegfried, his loved wife and chief interest, is more felt than perceived. We feel that she is veritably a woman at last, full of a woman's eager pride in and ambition for the man she loves, and a woman's tender humility before him. There is little of that half-desperate defiance of fate that marked her surrender to him. Her heart is glad and tranquil, full to overflowing with love and contentment, blessed beyond all expression with her happy wifehood. She no more doubts Siegfried than her own soul. She sends him out into the world with but one dread, the pain of separation. Her lovely speech to him, at his departure, pretends to

express a half-fearful doubt as to his complete love for her,—but there is in it no real doubt. It is the trickery of love, which plays at fear because fear is so far away that it can be simulated safely.

“From new great prowess, dearest hero,
How small my love, held I thee back!
Yet one sad fear doth much oppress me,—
That I to thee am not yet wholly all!

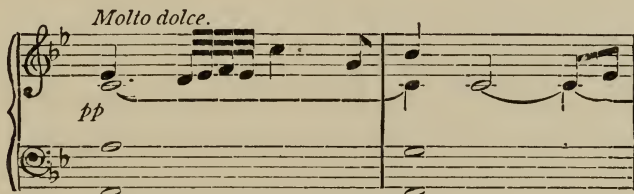
“What gods had unfolded, taught I thee,
Holiest runes—a treasure rich!
But my great strength of maiden’s estate
Took thou from me who live now to serve thee.

“Of wisdom bare—though of wishes full;
In love so rich—thoughts poor in resource,—
Holdest thou not lightly one so helpless,
Who, all having granted, can now give no more?”

And Siegfried answers :

“More gav’st thou me, wonder-woman, than I can
yet grasp!
So find not fault if much of thy wise teachings I
forget!
One great thing though I know—for me Brünnhilde
lives!
And one lesson learned I well—Brünnhilde to re-
member!”

Wagner has rightly given his richest and most gracious melodies to Brünnhilde. Probably he never wrote more lovely or more expressive phrases than those which enter in this scene (Vorspiel, "Die Götterdämmerung"): the motif of Brünnhilde the Woman and the motif of Brünnhilde's Love. The first of these has a faint resemblance to the motif of the Wälsungs and the motif of Love's Greeting, the reason for which is obvious. The second seems to be entirely novel both in form and in harmonization.



Motif of Brünnhilde the Woman.



Motif of Brünnhilde's Love.

This duet in "Die Götterdämmerung" is a con-

secration of love. It is widely different from the eager, ecstatic ending of Siegfried: quite as rapturous, quite as strong and untrammelled, but without the slightest element of unrest. It is as deep, as fair, and as happy as the broad sunshine of heaven.

Such is the art of Wagner. Brünnhilde must pass through the most scorching, the most searing fire possible for heart to endure. For this her being must be prepared by the most complete and restful joy. The loss of the hero must mean more than the loss of Siegfried, the rescuing warrior, himself: it must mean the loss of all that makes life fair and good to her. Her divine estate has passed from her; her mystical wisdom has faded in the light of her bright human happiness. Her central thought, her one impulse in life, is Siegfried. With the discovery of his treachery must go the dream and glory of existence. Stripped bare, first of divinity and wisdom, then of love and joy, what is left to her but that power for bitter and revengeful hate which is in all great natures, and is only governed or annulled by stronger and higher influences? Thus does

Wagner tacitly explain the complexities of Brünnhilde's character.

In keeping with those strong, idealizing qualities which we have felt all through the Trilogy, Brünnhilde makes her love the god and idol of her life. The Ring is the visible symbol of it, the actual expression of its brightness and its complete and happy bond. When Waltraute beseeches her to give it to her that she may save the gods from destruction, Brünnhilde refuses as indignantly as though her sister had asked her to renounce love itself. From joy at meeting Waltraute again she changes quickly to deep resentment. She bids the Walküre return to Walhalla speedily. The hall of the gods, the might of the gods—these may crash in ruins; it is a small matter. But Siegfried's love-pledge, Siegfried's marriage circlet,—never will she relinquish that.

The night falls, the fire flares higher, a horn-call sounds far away. She starts up eagerly; it is surely Siegfried. Her late disquietude makes the thought of Siegfried's approach almost bewilderingly joyful. "Up! up! and be gathered into my god's arm!" she cries. As the dim figure

with face hidden by the masking Tarnhelm appears in the fire's glare, the shock of horror strikes her dumb, after one gasping word—"Betrayed!"

As the stranger speaks to her she can hardly hear him. She is dazed and crushed, yet bitterly alive to a hideous mental torture. A gleam of clearness crosses her dimmed faculties as she wrestles with him for the Ring. Here is her hope of salvation—the Ring. The music accompanies every movement in that swift, fierce struggle: pitiful brave music, as the Walküre motif denotes her strained resistance; eagerly triumphant music as the motif of Brünnhilde's Love soars up, to be drowned in the crash of discords; hopeless, sinister music as the motif of the Curse proclaims the warrior's victory. I have already cited the introduction of the motif of Siegfried the Protector at this point as a wonderful touch of art. Quickly following this motif is a long-drawn chord, ending in the mysterious motif of the Tarnhelm. Underneath this long-sustained harmony we hear the motif of Brünnhilde the Woman. And so strenuously does the whole speak of grief and desolation, and the hopeless mockery of human life, that it

would be difficult, understanding its meanings, to hear it without a heartache.

Quite as touching is the music accompanying Brünnhilde's arrival at the hall of the Gibichungs. The fierce, subdued resentment of the Walküre motif sounds piteously in the midst of the glad melodies of the wedding festival. The music seems to express the silent scorn and despair in the heart of this pale woman who, says the libretto, follows Gunther with white and down-drooped face.

Surely with Brünnhilde must have been always the thought of Siegfried, her dear lord, who would one day find her and make all things right, or at least free her from her present despair. For this loving and absolutely trusting woman from whom all has been taken save her belief in her hero, there is but one more ill in store—but one more pain possible for her to experience. And as she raises her eyes and sees Siegfried with Guttrune, that last crowning agony is hers. "Siegfried knows me not!" she breathes, faint with wondering horror. The ground seems to rock under her. What does it all mean? Is it not some terrible

dream? In the long scene which follows, Brünnhilde passes through an ordeal which becomes the refinement of torture. Enigma after enigma is woven into the giant web of treachery, mystery, and confusion. She stands alone, striving, through a despair which has become almost insanity, to find the truth in the horrible mist that surrounds her. Love, happiness, hope,—all these have departed; now honor also had gone. Shamed and disgraced, fallen so low that Siegfried, in careless kindness, reproves her for a word which may hurt her soiled name—a creature abhorred, scorned, distrusted by all—it is not strange that her mind seems to give way before the strain. She cries out in the intense bitterness of her soul words of past love and present hate; words of agony, of remembrance and revenge.

When the crowds have gone away with gay rejoicing to prepare for the marriage of Siegfried and Gutrune, her pain finds less frenzied utterance:

“What unholy magic is here hidden?
What dark spirit’s craft woke all this ill?
Where now is my wisdom, in this enchantment?
Where are all my runes now, in this enigma?”

Oh, Anguish! Anguish! Woe, ah, woe's me!
All my wisdom from me he won!
Fast in his might held he the maid,
Fast in his bondage held he the booty
Who, anguished and torn by shame,
He flings now, careless, aside!"

A little later she breaks out into more furious grief, in which her woman's jealousy lends even fiercer impetus to her mad despair:

"What brought me my wisdom?
What won me my runes all?
Most helpless of torture is all my gain!
Gutrune holds the magic
That did win my hero from me!
Ill come to her!"

Yet in all her wrath, how pathetic is the touch of pride in Siegfried's power, when she laughs at Hagen for suggesting that he shall deal death to him: "To Siegfried? Thou!" When a moment later she tells simply of the spells she laid upon him to guard him, one can see how far from dead is her love, in spite of vows of vengeance and death:

"Each magic art that e'er I knew
For his good hap did I use;

Unknown and mystical spells I laid
That from all wounds protect him now!"

Hagen asks if no one spot is vulnerable; and she answers with a gasp, as though the words were torn from her very soul, that his back is not protected by spells.

"Never,—this knew I,—would he retreat,
Ne'er fly and turn his back in battle.
So laid no spell there to guard him."

The last words are accompanied softly by the broken music of Brünnhilde's Love.

A strange calm falls upon Brünnhilde. For his deceit, his falseness, Siegfried must die; but it is in the most marvellous solemnity that she speaks of his death. Suffering has brought a majesty to her demeanor which seems to uplift her, at the close of this second act of "Die Götterdämmerung," as the embodiment of justice and grave, impersonal vengeance. When the barbaric fighters and dreamers of the Golden Age hated, it was with no smallness or pettiness—it became a sacrament to them. They offered prayers and sacrifices to the gods, and prepared themselves for revenge in silence and solemnity. So Brünnhilde, filled

with the conviction that her loved lord has been false and untrue, vows that he shall die in expiation of all the suffering occasioned by his wrongdoing. She no longer raves in the madness of that first shock of grief. All her suffering thereafter is silent. Never does her voice rise in lament again. Souls that are broken on the wheel and seared by red-hot irons grow numbed after the first outburst of pain. Brünnhilde even enters the train of the wedding with Gunther, and follows Siegfried and his bride.

Cold and white and still, she is ready for the last phase of her existence—the last chapter in her wonderful life. If she can be shown that Siegfried has not betrayed her she will rise in her new, calm courage, and will do all that the world may demand of her. This torture has braced and strengthened her for the end,—has cleared her vision and taught her a truth and wisdom beyond that of any mortal ever born. But these results are hidden and silent. Let the one touch come, the knowledge of her hero's truth, and she will be changed.

That touch comes at last, through the Rhine-

Maidens. Siegfried has died,—died because of her vengeance for a wrong which never existed. As she comes quietly into the great hall where the people are lamenting over the body of the man she loves, we realize that the veil has fallen—that she has come into her heritage of eternal wisdom.

The development of the character of Brünnhilde may be called a gradual growth of consciousness. Brünnhilde the Walküre possessed the germs of all that bore rich fruit in the nature of Brünnhilde the divine woman, but she was unconscious of everything. Her first consciousness of self was when in her pity for the Wälsungs she acted without her father's sanction and received his punishment. In that punishment was a new awakening to consciousness—her fear lest her father should not guard her slumbers fittingly—and the first actual assertion of her own will in her demand upon his love and his dignity as a god. When she awoke from slumber she awoke, too, to a clearer consciousness. Siegfried's passionate love enlightened her being and showed her the possibilities of her own strong emotions. From this the growth of the complete consciousness of love was swift.

In her overthrowal by the conquering warrior in the Tarnhelm she found, in her simplicity, more cause for agonized grief than for shame. It was not until she made the discovery of Siegfried's apparent faithlessness that her own degradation seemed so terrible as to crush her whole soul in its blackness. Further consciousness came with the awakening in her heart of that frenzy which for a time was almost hate. So, through this she passed to a calmer, sterner impulse of vengeance.

Now, at last, she reaches that perfect stillness of soul,—that complete knowledge and clearness of being, that tenderness for the past and yearning for the future—that comes to her with absolute consciousness of all things. The tidings of the Rhine-Maidens have cleared away those clouds which have obscured her sight. With the dissipation of doubt her trusting and perfect love rises gladly in her heart, and she is no longer a mad and broken-hearted woman, but Brünnhilde herself, true and wise and brave; not the exultant goddess nor the rapturous wife, now, but the grand woman who typifies the attainment of all wisdom, the evolution of the world.

When she enters the hall of the Gibichungs there is no hint of dejection or even sorrow in her demeanor. She is very gentle with Guttrune, very quiet in her words to the assembled people,—in every word breathes a deep courage and calm. She does not speak directly of her share in Siegfried's death. She merely bids them build a funeral pyre, and says, as though offering the simplest reparation to the dead:

“His horse quickly bring here,
That the steed may bear me to him.
In the hero's holiest honor
Be burned my body to-night.”

It is wonderful to note how simply she appreciates that the source of her wisdom is her suffering. Only she asks once, with a quiet pathos, if it was absolutely necessary:

“Must my pure hero so have hurt me
That wisdom thus I should gain?”

Everything is clear to her at last, she says. She knows all things, sees all things, understands all things. She recognizes all the depths and heights of life,—those disturbed and fearful places through

which she has stumbled blindly. She looks up into the sky and greets the race of gods, bidding them rest, for even now the great ravens speed back to Walhalla with the long-awaited tidings, and the dusk of the gods draws near. Taking a torch from the hand of one of the vassals, she throws it upon the funeral pyre. Does she know that that pyre is to ignite Walhalla? Yes, she realizes even this, and her action is solemn and majestic. Upon her alone rests the destruction of the gods. Gravely she takes the responsibility; gravely she says:

“So, cast I my brand
In Walhall’s wonderful Burg!”

Never in her life has Brünnhilde known actual fear. Now as she flings the torch onto the pyre and watches the leaping flame that shall soon burn her body to ashes, she feels it as little as ever. Instead comes for the first time to-night a touch of excitement, an exhilaration which is akin to joy. As she sees the war-horse which in the old free days she was wont to ride through the clouds, she springs to meet him, exultant and strong.

The music surges and sweeps—a bewildering,

quivering sea of sound. Is it the wooing, caressing laughter of the fire which now rises higher and higher against the sky? Is it the blowing of giant winds that tell the story of the gods and their fall? Is it the harmony of the indefinable, innumerable voices of the universe—infinately passionate, infinitely sweet? Is it the throbbing of hearts, the laughing of lips, the falling of tears? Is it a singing, a whispering, or a beating of voiceless sounds upon the heart?

Through it comes Brünnhilde's voice, high and clear as though every note were winged with joy:

“Grane, my horse! Greetings to thee!

Dost thou know, my friend, where soon we shall hasten?

In firelight glowing thy master waits,—

Siegfried, my hero sublime!

Once more to fare with him neigest thou gladly?

Lures thee to him the flame and the flashing?

Feel then my bosom—how it doth burn!

Wildest fire-gleams my heart doth enthrall!

Once more to greet him—be caught in his arms;

In mightiest passion be his evermore!

Hoyotoho, Grane! Greet now thy hero!

Siegfried—Siegfried! See!

Gladly greets thee thy wife!”

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
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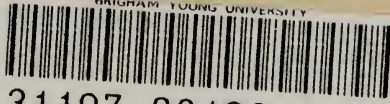
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