

river. Some mermaids whom he sees bathing in the swollen Danube warn him against the fate which he and his companions are riding to meet. "Return while it is time," they cry, "for he who rides into Etzel's land must die." But this does not make Hagen waver even for a moment. The warning must not come from him, since Gernot accused him with cowardice. The mermaids direct him to a ferry, and Hagen, after having killed the ferry-man for his hesitation, rows the boat up stream where the Burgundians are waiting, and he himself ferries the whole host across the river. Then, just as they are about to march, he calls to them all, both knights and squires, "A direful woe I announce to you; we shall never return home to the Burgundian land!"

The gloominess of this song is relieved by the bright sunshine of the following one, which describes the sojourn of the Burgundians in Bechlarn with Margrave Rüdiger, who had come to Worms as Etzel's ambassador, in order to woo Krimhild. The poet tells us in easy and graceful style of the wealth and festivities which surround them there. The minstrel Volker displays his convivial talents; he shows that he can handle the bow of his violin with as much skill as his sword. Rüdiger's daughter is betrothed to Giselher, the youngest brother of Gunther, and at parting there is a general giving of presents. But soon another warning comes through Dietrich von Bern, a great hero, who is known in history as "Theodoric the Great," king of the East-Goths. He rides to meet the Burgundians, and warns them of Queen Krimhild's evil intentions. But they do not heed this warning, and proceed to Etzel's court. Krimhild bestows an affectionate greeting on her brothers, but shows coldness and hatred to Hagen. On the whole, the reception with which the Burgundians meet does not impress them favorably. The air in the royal palace seems to be gloomy and oppressive to them; they anticipate the approaching disaster. In the evening Hagen and Volker form a heroic friendship, and when the "Niebelungen" are betaking themselves to rest with heavy hearts, Volker takes up his

fiddle and makes their hearts glad with his loud melody; then, playing more softly, he lulls them to sleep. After this, he again seizes his shield and stands on guard with Hagen outside; their helmets are shining through the night, and frighten away the stealthily approaching Huns. On the following morning, when the Queen happens to pass through the court, she finds Hagen sitting on a stone before the building with a sword across his knees. Krimhild recognizes the sword which formerly belonged to Siegfried, and this discovery sends a sharp pang to her heart. Hagen does not change his attitude at her approach, but is regarding her with a gloomy defiance, which does not tend to appease Krimhild's animosity. At noon there is a large banquet at Etzel's palace. The Queen had asked the Burgundians to take off their arms, but they had refused this request. Etzel is just introducing his little son to his guests, when a messenger arrives with the news that the retinue of the Burgundians that was quartered at a tavern in the city had been suddenly attacked by the Huns, and that not one of them had escaped destruction. Hearing that, Hagen rises with a curse and strikes off with his sword the head of Etzel and Krimhild's infant son. This brutal deed is the signal for a general commotion. As in Homer's "Odyssey," the banquet hall is transformed into a scene of battle. Krimhild leaves the hall, and the Niebelungen and the Huns are fighting till night-fall. It is a beautiful, serene mid-summer evening when the Burgundians issue from the building to demand reconciliation and peace. But Etzel refuses, for they have slain his child and many of his relatives, and the wrong which they have done must be avenged. The heroes then request a fight in open field, but Krimhild dissuades the Hunnish knights from granting this request, and demands instead the surrender of Hagen. The Burgundian kings, however, are true to their vassal. So the Niebelungen are driven back into the house, which is set on fire all around, and, tortured by the heat, they drink blood on Hagen's advice. The following morning brings more fighting, and 1,200 Huns are