

with which he does such execution is the magic sword Balmung forged for Siegfried by Wieland, the Scandinavian Vulcan. Apropos of Wieland we may be pardoned for digressing slightly in order to give an instance of the keenness of his weapons and his own personal strength. In a contest with a brother smith he clove him in twain with a blow so fine that the unfortunate victim was not aware he had received it till he attempted to move when his body fell apart in two pieces. This sword Balmung Hagan took from Siegfried after murdering him and he more than once flaunted it in the face of Crimhilda.

The fate of Rudiger is perhaps the most touching incident in the whole poem, the conflict within him between duty and friendship and the victory of the former move even the stern Hagan to hold him free of blame. His daughter is betrothed to one of the young Burgundian princes, yet compelled by the duty which he owes his liege lord Attila he slays that prince's brother and is slain by him, "down dead dropped both together, each by the other slain."

Hagan will not give up Rudiger's body even at the request of Dietrich king of the Goths, who wishes to give it Christian burial. Thereupon the Gothic king enters the hall where Hagan and Gunther are standing at bay, captures them both alive, and gives them up to Crimhilda with a request that she will pardon them. But maddened by the taunts of Hagan, she slays her brother with her own hand and then when her haughty enemy tells her triumphantly that now the secret of the Nibelungen hoard shall die with him, she seizes in frenzy the sword Balmung and with one blow gives Hagan the death he has so richly deserved. Immediately afterwards Hildebrand, "the Nestor of German romance," arrives, and finding that the merciful request of his master Theodoric has been unheeded punishes

Crimhilda by slaying her with the same sword which had killed her husband, her enemy and her brother.

In this second part of the poem, Crimhilda is certainly not an amiable heroine. Her revengeful feelings control her too completely to be readily excused, and the murder of her brother is a horrible episode. Yet her totally unexpected death at the moment when her victory over Hagan is most complete enlists our sympathy, notwithstanding that poetic justice would seem to demand such a catastrophe.

Attila, or Etzel as he is called, occupies a minor place in the poem. The reputation which history has given him for boldness and bravery is not herein sustained.

Theodoric or Dietrich the king of the Goths, although appearing on the scene only at the eleventh hour, seems to be the noblest of the many heroes of the *Nibelungen Lied*. The poem lavishes a wealth of description on his personal gifts; his disinterestedness and magnanimity are kept constantly before us, and it is only a motive of the purest nature that induces him to take part in the affray. Even then he displays towards Hagan and Gunther a degree of mercy rarely found in warriors of his time.

Making due allowance of course for poetical exaggeration, the *Nibelungen Lied* may be regarded as a faithful portrait of the lives and manners of the Germans in the sixth and seventh centuries.

The traditional composer of the poem is a minnesinger named Heinrich Von Ofterdingen, who lived about 1200 A.D., and probably gathered the materials of his tale from the legends and lays current at that time concerning the events which he narrates. By the freshness of his coloring and the faithful reproduction of the spirit of times long gone by, as also by his animated and picturesque language he strongly reminds us of his greater Greek prototype.

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