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Illustrations of northern antiquities, from the earlier Teutonic and Scandinavian romances

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Edinburgh [u.a.], 1814

Adventure X. - How Gunter held his bridal feast with Brunhild

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-161450](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-161450)

tributed among her maidens. The preparations made for the reception of Gunter and Brunhild were of the most splendid description; and when their approach was discerned, Chrimhilt, accompanied by eighty-six dames, and fifty maidens of supreme beauty, and with many champions in her train, proceeded before the town gates, to give them welcome.

ADVENTURE X. HOW GUNTER HELD HIS BRIDAL FEAST WITH BRUNHILD.—Gunter's arrival with his bride was celebrated on the plain before the city, with tournaments and other games; nor did they return to the palace till the sun had gone down. As they were washing their hands, previous to supper, Siegfried reminded the king how he had promised him his sister for his spouse, if he should achieve his expedition to obtain the hand of Brunhild. Gunter readily complied, and Chrimhilt was that night given in marriage to Siegfried. But Brunhild was greatly mortified at what she conceived a match below the dignity of her sister; and roundly informed the king, that he should not obtain any favour of her, unless he declared to her why he had given his assent to a marriage between a vassal of his and his sister. He informed her that Siegfried was a king in Netherland, not far inferior in power to himself; but she was not satisfied with his answer. The supper appeared very long to the two bridegrooms, who soon dismissed their attendants, and retired to their chambers. The scene which was transacted in that of Siegfried was, however, of a very different nature from that which happened in that of Gunter.

When the king was alone with his bride, indulging in the hope of being supremely happy, he found, to his great sorrow, every favour denied, unless he would acquaint Brunhild with the real reason of his giving Chrimhilt to the hero of Netherland; and when he endeavoured to use force, he found his strength far unequal. She took her girdle, and, tying his feet and hands together, hung him upon a nail in the wall; nor could his lamentations and entreaties prevail with her to release him, nor prevent her from enjoying a sound sleep. When the morning came, she unbound him; and after he had promised not to

touch her body, she allowed him to lie by her side, and thus obviate the shame he would have received, had his chamberlains found him in that disgraceful situation.*

It will readily be supposed that the king was not in good humour during the day: Neither the tournament, the dubbing of six hundred new knights, nor the mass in the cathedral, could divert his melancholy. Siegfried had shrewd suspicions of the cause, and found them verified, when, upon inquiry, the king related the dreadful situation in which he had passed the night.

To his guest spake Gunter,— “ With shame and woe I sped ;
I have brought the evil devil, and took her to my bed :
When I hop'd her love to gain, she bound me as her thrall ;
To a nail she bore me, and hung me on the wall.

“ There I hung with fear and anguish till the sun of morning shone,
While soundly in the bed slept Brunhild all alone.
Loudly to thee I plain of my shame and sorrow sore.”
Then spake the hero Siegfried,— “ Right sorry am I therefore.”

He, however, consoled the poor king, and promised to put Brun-

* Josian, in the far-famed history of Sir Bevis, proves herself as great an Amazon as her predecessor Brunhild. Being treacherously decoyed into marriage by Earl Miles, she persuades him to dismiss out of his bed-chamber all attendants :

Than was before his bed i-tight,
As fele han of this gentil knight,
A coverture on raile-tre,
For no man schold on bed i-se.
Josian bethoughte on highing ;
On a towaile she made knotte riding ;
Aboute his nekke she hit threw,
And on the raile-tre she drew ;
Be the nekke she hath him up-tight,
And let him so ride al the night.

AUCHINLECK MS. v. 3213—3222.

For the whole of this curious adventure the reader is referred to Mr Ellis's elegant abstract of the romance, in his *Specimens of Romances*, vol. II. p. 144, et seq.

hild completely in his power the next night; and for that purpose required to be admitted to their bed-chamber, where he would render himself invisible, by the means of his tarn-cap. Gunter consented, upon his swearing not to take advantage of the opportunity.

When the night came, and the bridegrooms had retired with their wives, Chrimhilt was astonished at the sudden disappearance of her husband, who had put on his tarn-cap, and joining the chamberlains of Gunter, entered the chamber. When the chamberlains and attendant maids retired, and the lights were extinguished, Siegfried entered the bed, and a most violent and singular combat commenced. Brunhild threw him out of the bed at the very beginning, that his head "loudly resounded on the footstool." He again resumed his task, and was again defeated. She embraced him with great force, and bearing him out of the bed, pressed him between a door and the wall, that he cried aloud with pain. Ashamed of this defeat, he again commenced the attack, and threw her on the bed, where she pressed his hand, that the blood flowed from his nails. He took from her the girdle and ring which he gave in his pride to Chrimhilt some time after; and for this gift he and many other champions lost their lives. At length the knight of Netherland bruised her so violently, and held her so close, that she surrendered at discretion. Siegfried then retired, as if to take off his dress, and leaving the joyful king to reap the fruits of his hard-gained victory, rejoined his own spouse.

In the morning the king was in high good humour, and dispensed many rich gifts to the knights and courtiers. The high feast lasted fourteen days, at the end of which the guests parted for their several homes.

ADVENTURE XI. HOW SIEGFRIED CAME HOME WITH CHRIMHILT TO NETHERLAND.—When the other guests had taken their leaves, Siegfried also desired to return to his country, and Chrimhilt was content. But she first wished to obtain a part of the dominions of Burgundy for her husband; which were readily offered to him by the three royal brothers. But Siegfried refused them, saying, that he himself would