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

Weber, Henry William

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Adventure XXIV. - How Werbel and Swemmel did their message

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hilt was instructed by Rudiger to kiss twelve of the noblest champions: the others she also received with great courtesy. A tournament was held till the evening broke in, and the whole train then proceeded to Vienna, where the bridal feast was celebrated for seventeen days. The gifts distributed by Etzel and his subject princes were incalculable; and his two minstrels, ¹ Werbel and Swemmel, received no less than a thousand marks. At the end of the feast, the king, with his bride and his attendants, left Vienna, and proceeded by the old fortress of Hunenburg, and by Misenburg, to his own residence, at the castle of Etzelenburg. Chrimhilt was served by seven daughters of kings, and particularly by Herrat, niece to Etzel, and wife of Dietrich of Bern.

ADVENTURE XXIII. HOW CHRIMHILT INVITED HER BROTHERS TO A HIGH FEAST.—Chrimhilt dwelt with King Etzel for thirteen years, during which time she bore him a son, who, by her influence, was baptised, and called Ortlieb. Chrimhilt, ever intent on her meditated revenge, persuaded King Etzel to send his two minstrels, Swemmel and Werbel, to the Rhine, and to invite King Gunter and his brothers, with all their knights, to a high feast in Hungary. She instructed the messengers secretly to give out that she lived in perfect happiness at the court of Etzel, and not to suffer any one of her brothers' principal champions to remain behind.

ADVENTURE XXIV. HOW WERBEL AND SWEMMEL DID THEIR MESSAGE.—The messengers arrived safely at Worms, and were received with every mark of attention; but the answer to their message was deferred to the seventh day. Hagen strongly opposed accepting the invitation, from which he presaged utter ruin, and was not won over to give his consent till Ghernot and Ghiseler taunted him, and bade him remain behind, if he feared to go with them. Rumold, the mas-

¹ This passage, and the honourable reception of the minstrels at the court of Burgundy, fully prove the rank held by minstrels in former ages, and their frequent occupation in confidential embassies; and strongly militate against the general degradation they have suffered from the learned, but capricious and tasteless Ritson.

ter of the kitchen, also made a very characteristic, but ineffectual attempt to persuade the kings from the journey, by painting their present felicity, having abundance of meat, drink, and clothes. When Hagen found all were fully determined on the expedition, he undertook to select a thousand of the best knights, among whom were his brother Dankwart, and the hero Folker of Alsace, who was called the Minstrel, or the Fiddler, on account of the excellence of his playing and singing.* The messengers from the Huns were detained till every thing was ready for the journey, by Hagen, to prevent them from coming too soon back to Chrimhilt, and giving her an opportunity of making great preparations for the destruction of himself and the other knights.

ADVENTURE XXV. HOW THE NIBELUNGEN WENT TO THE HUNS.— Queen Uta dreamt that all the birds in the kingdom had dropt down dead ; but Hagen, urged on by the taunts of Ghernot, was now bent on proceeding. The care of the two queens and the kingdom being left to Rumold, the host, consisting of a thousand knights, and nine thousand esquires, proceeded on their journey, and traversing Swabia and Franconia, under the conduct of Hagen, who was their guide, and of Dankwart, marshal of the host, arrived on the banks of the Danube.

Hagen of Tronek rode before the noble host,
Guiding the Niblung knights, their leader and their boast :
Now from his horse the champion leaped upon the ground ;
Full soon unto an oak the courser has he bound. -----

The ferryman he sought by the river far and wide :
He heard the water bullering closely by his side :
In a fountain fair, sage women he espied,
Their lovely bodies bathing, all in the cooling tide.

* Folker is not a professed minstrel, but, like many of the French, German, and northern princes and knights, cultivated music and poetry as an accomplishment.