

a corpse he lies, while with his brother you shall now plight new troth."

"Never should the day dawn," said she, "wherein I with two brothers should plight troth; but this can I read in the faces of you all, little and great: not far from us lieth Oluf."

"It boots no longer to hide it from thee; Oluf lieth indeed, dead in his chamber."

Then she said to the dames around that she willed to look on the corpse where it lay. The door they opened, and stood before the raised bier. Towards it ran little Kirstin, and threw aside the white linen. The red covering she raised, and there lay Oluf, cold and still, while afar off laughed the queen-maid of the elves.

Her hand on his bosom she rested;
Herself she was sorrowful breasted.

On his breast she laid her hand, and her heart trembled and throbb'd within her. She touched his pale lips, and the same moment her heart within her broke for sorrow. Wit ye well that the cheeks of the maidens were bathed in tears, and the breasts of the dames heaved with sobs, as they beheld the little Kirstin broken-hearted with grief.

On the second day-dawn were there three corpses borne from the house of Oluf:

One was Oluf and one was his bride,
And one his dear mother--through grief
she died.
But light is the lilt of the dance 'neath
the lindens.

8.

HAGBARD AND SIGNE.

There was a feud between Hagbard the King and Sigvard the King, and the cause of the quarrel was Signe, the daughter of Sigvard, and most gracious of all maidens.

Hagbard dreamed a dream as he lay alone in his chamber; and, waking in doubtful mood, he said to his mother: "It seemed to me that I moved in the heavenly regions, where stood a burg of great fairness; and Signild the stately leaned upon my arm as together we fared through the skyways."

But there was none in the King's court able to interpret the dream; his mother went and beat her hands together, and from the eyes of his sister welled tears. Then said his foster mother: "Seek out the daughter of the elves; for without doubt she will be able rightly to read your dream."

Thereupon Hagbard, King and son of a King, took his sword in his left hand, departed to the mountain wherein dwelt the daughter of the elves, and beat with his fingers upon the mountain door. The elf-maid lay awake; for well she knew the dream that Hagbard had dreamed and that he was come to her for an interpretation of the vision. She arose, and to her said Hagbard:

"I dreamed I moved in the heavenly regions, where, too, stood a burg of great fairness; and it seemed to me that the heavens burst asunder, and I fell downwards through the blue skies."

"Your dreaming that you moved in heavenly regions bodes your winning of a fair maid; and your dreaming of falling through the skies bodes that for the maid so won you shall die. Fate decrees that you shall win a mate most amiable; but know, Hagbard, son of a King, for her you shall lay down your life."

"If to me is to be given the joy of winning the maid," said Hagbard, "little do I grieve that I must die for her." As is said:

"If so my good hap fall, that I
The maid desired shall win,
Then little will I rue the joy
Though I should die therein."

And thereto Hagbard added, "Might it be the will of the Heaven-Father that I should lie in the arms of Signild!"

Hagbard now allowed his hair to grow until it was long as a maiden's, and he caused maid's clothing to be cut and sewn for him; for he purposed to ride to Denmark, where Signe dwelt, and deceive Sigvard the King. He set out in a new brynne, a shirt of chain mail, and in iron gear, managing his horse in warrior fashion; but as he approached the court of the King he exchanged his warrior garb for that of a maiden, and in the guise of a maiden he rode to the court, stepping, so disguised, in to Signild.

"Greetings to you, haughty matrons and high-born maidens, and above all to the noble Signelille," said he. "To you, Signelille, who sit here spinning the silken thread, to you has Hagbard sent me that from you I may learn the art of spinning the thread and weaving the silken kirtle. Tell me then, Signelille, proud and noble, will you teach me, for well we know there are few who understand the art as you do?"

Signelille sat quietly, nor did she answer a word, but Sigvard the King said: "Has the maiden been sent by Hagbard? Teach her all that ye are able, to her fame and honour. Dwell together as ye may will between ye; but for Hagbard himself, beware of him, for apt is he to deceive." And again he said, "As ye will, so dwell together; but beware of Hagbard; both of you he surely cannot deceive."

Signelille then greeted the seeming maiden, and did her honour; and Hagbard followed her into the bower of the maidens to learn from her all the arts of needlework.

"All that I know I will gladly teach you," said Signe; "you shall eat at my table and shall sleep with my hand-maiden."

"I have eaten with the children of kings, and in their arms have I slept," answered Hagbard; "am I now to sleep with an hand-maiden only, I shall die of the shame."

"Be not grieved at my words, fair maid," said Signelille; "you shall eat at my table, and if you so will you shall sleep at my side. Whatso I can do for Hagbard that will I do with all goodwill: my dish you shall share with me, and with me shall share my bed."

In the bower sat the high-born maidens sewing and brooding, all excepting Hagbard, the son of a King. He sat idly playing with the needle between his lips, the while his eyes burned like stars, eagerly resting upon Signelille as she sat or moved here and there among the maidens.

They sewed skins of hinds and harts that had once run in the forests; and whilst other maidens sipped of the goblet when wine was brought to them, Hagbard drained it whensoever it was presented to him.

Whilst, too, the others sewed industriously, the hand-maiden, full of craft and wiles, stealthily eyed Hagbard; and she spoke with evil intent: "Never saw I noble maid less expert with needle; never saw I noble maid less skilled in the making of stitches or more skilled in the making of eyes; never saw I one to stitch linen worse or drink wine better; never saw I one less able to ply needle or more able to handle beaker. She sews but little, yet never does the goblet pass her unemptied. Never did I behold two such bold eyes under a maiden's brows; and her hands, though they are indeed white and small, are yet hard as iron."

"Sit in peace, O prying handmaid," said Hagbard, "or shame shall seize on you; and whether you sew well or ill, no work of yours shall I heed; sit in peace, meddlesome one, and heed not me, for if I turn my eyes hither or turn them thither, towards you shall they never turn."

Whilst the high-born maidens sewed at their cloth and skins, Hagbard, the son of a King, sat otherwise employed; they stitched and worked gold in the cloth spread over their knees, and he carved hart and hind, bird and beast, that find home in the forest: with his knife he carved these, whilst the maidens wondered. Flower and leaf he carved, and trees of the forest; and Signild, watching him, would fain have learned his art also. Lilies he carved, and roses, such as spring in the green woods, and Signelille sewed on.

Roses he carved, and he carved lilies,
Leaf and bird and flower,
And Signelille her needle plied
With laughing maids in bower.

Hart he carved and hind, leaf and lily; as the maidens willed so he carved, till day had end, and the dark night hung over the burg of King Sigvard.

Late in the evening the maidens retired to their beds. They lit up tall wax candles, held in golden candle-sticks, and the two kingly-born children stepped to the high bed-chamber. Signelille went first, leading the way up the stairs, drawing behind her her rich robe of red and scarlet. Hagbard, the son of a King, followed, his heart laughing softly within the breast of him. After them followed the hand-maiden.

Went Signelille in scarlet robe
In her high bower to rest,
And followed her Hagbard—how his heart
Laughed softly in his breast!

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH.

Hagbard seated himself at the bedside, and the hand-maiden drew off his shoes: one would suppose it might be heard how his heart laughed within him. As he sat down, his coat of mail jingled under his vest. "Never," said Signelille, hearing the sound, "never knew I maid so fair with sark so hard." Thereon she laid her hand upon his breast that shone of red gold; and again she said, "Why is not your bosom full as is the bosom of other maidens?"

"It is a custom in my father's land," said Hagbard, "that maidens should ride to the council; and my breasts are therefore not formed, owing to the pressure of the brynies rings."

Together then lay those two children of Kings; and as they lay they spoke of those towards whom each bore most love.

"Tell me, highborn Signelille," said Hagbard; "we two are alone, tell me, is there no man upon whom your affections rest above all others?"

"There is not one," answered Signelille; "not one upon whom my affections rest; unless it were Hagbard, son of a King; and him I may in no wise have. Yet never have my eyes rested upon him; but because of his deeds and his fame as he rides to and from the council, because of these things do I love him."

"Is it indeed Hagbard that you in your heart love. then turn hitherwards, O highborn Signelille; for at your side lies he for whom your heart warms in love."

"If you be Hagbard, why would you dishonour me? Why rode you not into my father's court with hawk on wrist? Hear me Hagbard, son of a King! Wherefore have you deceived me rather than ride into my father's court to claim me, your equal in birth and in honour?"

"In your father's court I have ridden, hawk on wrist; but a hasty man is your father, never hearing a speech out; yea, a hasty man is your father, and his anger rose against me; and his word is, does he but behold me, then will he hang me also."

"Hear me Hagbard, son of a King; I fear for your life; does my father learn what has chanced, sorrowful will be the end of the jest."

"Fear not, highborn Signelille! Fear not for me whiles I have my brynies of the blue steel, and my good sword. And at my head, there lies my sword, against which no man born of woman can stand; and at my feet lies my brynies, nor would I flee from an hundred weaponed men, with my brynies upon my breast. There is not one in your father's court may bind me, so long as I have my good sword and my trusty brynies."

HAGBARD AND SIGNE.

Hagbard the King and Signelille,
They rested together till day;
But little they slept, thought night was
long,

So much they had to say.
*What can ye win for me worthier than
this fair maiden?*

There now lay these kings' children, conversing as if they were alone, these two together; but without the door stood the evil hand-maiden, and all their conversation she overheard. As they rested, she stole from the head of Hagbard his good sword, and his brynies from his feet; and having done so she hastened to the chamber of Sigvard, the King.

"Do you sleep, or do you wake?" cried she; "too long do you sleep, honoured lord, seeing that with your daughter, and in her bed, lies Hagbard, son of a King."

"Peace, evil-minded handmaiden," said the King; "speak no lie concerning my daughter, or at the lightening of the day you shall be burnt with fire."

"Believe then my words, King Sigvard; for here in my hands I hold his good sword, and thereto his brynies."

Up then sprang King Sigvard, crying so that his words were heard through all his court: "Arise, arise, my men, and cast on your brynies; arise, and in haste; for here is Hagbard, the son of a king, and a hardy foeman is he."

High-born Signelille lay awake; she heard the words of her father, and she heard the clamour and clang of arming men. "Waken! Hagbard, son of a King; waken! for my father calls upon his men, and his words are words of anger."

Up sprang Hagbard, and sought beneath the bedhead for his sword, but found neither it nor his brynies upon whose aid he trusted. "Now God help, fair Signelille; we are betrayed. God help, Signelille; an ill fight must I fight; for stolen is my brynies, and with it my good sword."

Now was heard beating at the door, both with shield and with spear. "Arise, Hagbard, son of a King! and come thou forth into the courtyard."

With his foot King Sigvard thrust against the door, so that it yielded and was thrust into the chamber. Then was seen the manliness and the might of the king-born Hagbard: for he defended himself against them all so long as a beam of the bed or a post remained unbroken; and before him fell the king's men as leaves fall in the forest. Some with his hands he slew, and some with his feet, until thirty of the king's men lay dead in the bower of Signelille, the King's daughter. But Hagbard was overpowered; and to Signelille he said, "Now

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH.

I am a helpless captive, and past is the time of joy between us."

They laid bonds upon him, but he burst them asunder as though they had been straw.

With fast and hard bonds they fettered his hands, but no bonds could withstand his kingly might.

They laid him in links of iron, but them he bent, and broke as though they had been lead. Then did the hand-maid give evil counsel:

Shame on the evil handmaid fall
Who gave them counsel ill:
"Fetters ye forge will hold him never,
But Signild's tresses will."

"Take ye the hair from off her head," said she, "and it shall encircle his hands unbroken; for rather than rend that asunder he will suffer the breaking of his own heart."

They cut the hair from her head and therewith bound his hands; and so dear was she to his heart that he would not so much as sunder her hair. There he stood, still as a statue, bound in the golden tresses of high-born Signelille.

Then said she, and the tears bathed her cheeks, "Burst it asunder, Hagbard; hair is but hair, and will grow again."

They laid heavy manacles upon him, whilst Signelille went to and fro, the bitter tears welling from her eyes. In great chains they laid him, whilst vainly, with earnest words, for him she pleaded.

"Hearken, Hagbard, son of a King," said Sigvard; "do you desire longer to live, then must the three maids, sisters of your mother, plead for you."

But Hagbard answered wrathfully, "Little would I value the life vouchsafed me at the request of maidens; and hear my words, O high-born Signelille! let your good will and your love be known by this: that first you see me hanged in the green wood, and then you let burn your bower."

"Are there any," answered she, "here in my father's court, who desire this violence, upon their betrothed maidens shall my vengeance this day fall." She, the noble, called her maidens around her, saying, "Come; to the high bower will we go, there to indulge in games and gladness."

Hagbard, the son of a King, they took, and led him out of the castle; and for him wept both matrons and maids. Up from the burg they led him, and soon he saw the high gallows, newly prepared, upon which he should die; but only he thought, "I list now to see but one thing in this world: how the high-born Signelille holds to her promise."

HAGBARD AND SIGNE.

Then said he as he gazed on the gallows, "Hang first my mantle on high, my mantle of scarlet cloth, that I may gaze thereon; and well I know also that all women seeing that sign will lament the death of me."

Signild stood at her bower window, and she beheld the scarlet mantle swinging from the gallows; and deeming her lover to be therein, she laid fire to her bower that she might perish in the flames. "I myself," said she, "will this day reinquish life, that with Hagbard I may meet in Paradise." To roof and rush she laid fire; and, resting upon her couch with its coverings of blue, she perished with all her maidens.

Hagbard stood, gazing upon the earth and upon the sky, until in the burg he beheld the bower of Signild lapped in flame; then said he, as the tongues of fire leaped to the sky, "Had I now ten thousand lives, not one of them all would I desire; take down my scarlet mantle and lay it upon the earth; but were ten thousand lives mine, no least one would I now beg of you."

Sigvard, the King, sat upon his grey steed; and he spoke, saying, "What is yon burning bale from whence the smoke drives so heavily?"

"It is the high-born Signelille," said a youth whose eyes streamed with sorrow; "she thus lets her true love be known to all."

The heart of the King was moved, and he cried, "Rescue, rescue, my men: let not things fare so evilly. Hasten to the bower, some; let not Signild perish in the fire; and hasten to the gallows, some, that Hagbard do not die thereon."

Or ever they reached the bower,
She lay 'mid the embers red;
Or ever they reached the gallows
Was the kingly Hagbard dead.

Then said King Sigvard, "Had I from the first known the depth of their love, or had I known the devotion of their affection, these things should not have chanced to-day; no, nor though Denmark were imperilled thereby, should these two young lovers have been parted. But the evil-minded handmaid; shall she live? Hanged is Hagbard, and burnt is Signild; take, then, the handmaid and cast her living into the earth; for from me she has taken a daughter and from my daughter a mate, bold and worthy."