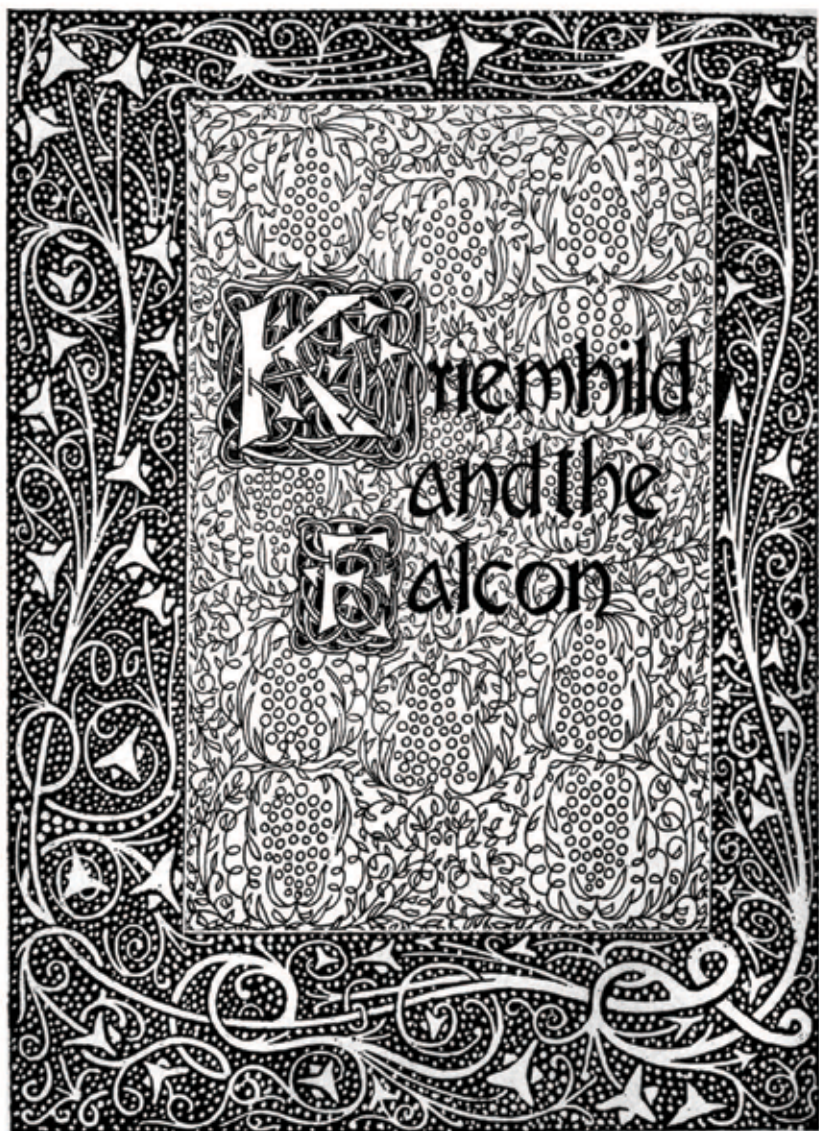


- TOLKIEN'S BOOKSHELF -



THE SONG OF THE
NIBELUNGS

- illustrated -





BOOK I
FIRST ADVENTURE
CONCERNING THE NIBELUNGS



Old tales they tell us many wonders of heroes and of high courage, of glad feasting, of wine and of mourning; and herein ye shall read of the marvellous deeds and of the strife of brave men.

There grew up in Burgundy a noble maiden, in no land was a fairer. Kriemhild was her name. Well favoured was the damsel, and by reason of her died many warriors.

Doughty knights in plenty wooed her, as was meet, for of her body she was exceeding comely, and her virtues were an adornment to all women.

Three kings noble and rich guarded her, Gunther and Gemot, warriors of fame, and Giselher the youth, a chosen knight. The damsel was their sister, and the care of her fell on them. These lords were courteous and of high lineage, bold and very strong, each of them the pick of knights. The name of their country was Burgundy, and they did great deeds, after, in Etzel's land. At Worms, by the Rhine, they dwelled in might with many a proud lord for vassal.

Their mother was a rich queen and hight Uta, and the name of their father was Dankrat, who, when his life was ended, left them his lands. A strong man was he in his time, and one that in his youth won great worship.

These three princes, as I have said, were valiant men, overlords of the best knights that folk have praised, strong and bold and undismayed in strife. There were Hagen of Trony, and also his brother Dankwart the swift; and Ortwin of Metz; the two Margraves, Gary and Eckewart; Volker of Alzeia, strong of body; Rumolt, the steward, a chosen knight; Sindolt and Hunolt. These last three served at court and pursued honour.

And other knights were there, more than I can name. Dankwart was the marshal; the nephew of Ortwin of Metz carved at the board; Sindolt was the butler, a worthy warrior: each did his part as a good knight.

The splendour of this court and its might, the high valour and chivalry of its lords, were a tale without end.

Now it so fell that Kriemhild, the pure maid, dreamed a dream that she fondled a wild falcon, and eagles wrested it from her; the which to see grieved her more than any ill that had happened to her heretofore.

This dream she told to Uta, her mother, who interpreted it on this wise. "The falcon that thou sawest is a noble man; yet if God keep him not, he is a lost man to thee."

"What speakest thou to me of a man, mother mine? Without their love would I still abide, that I may remain fair till my death, nor suffer dole from any man's love."

Said her mother then, "Be not so sure; for wouldst thou ever on this earth have heart's gladness, it cometh from the love of a man. And a fair wife wilt thou be, if God but lead hither to thee a true and trusty knight."

"Say not so, mother mine," answered the maiden, "for on many a woman, and oft hath it been proven, that the meed of love is sorrow. From both I will keep me, that evil betide not."

Long in such wise abode the high, pure maiden, nor thought to love any. Nevertheless, at the last, she wedded a brave man; that was the falcon she dreamed of erstwhile, as her mother foretold it. Yea, bitter was her vengeance on her kinsmen that slew him, and by reason of his death died many a mother's son.



Kriemhild Gazeth Secretly From Her Window
On Siegfried