

SIGURD'S SONGS

To Joan Hayes

I

HE SUMMONS THE RAVEN

RED raven, red raven,
Strong-winged across the foam,
Fly swiftly to the haven
Under the blue dome

Fly to my sweeting,
There by the shore;
Give my love greeting,
Raven, once more.

Say, on my journey
From the south land
I stayed for the tourney.
Fly thou to her hand.

Give my love greeting
Under the blue dome;
Say we shall be meeting
In the sea-girt home.

II

HE FALLS TO MADNESS

THROUGH the dripping elms as I passed by,
I heard the rooks under the red light;
The daylight was fading out of the sky,
Blood-red flames of the birth of night.

If the Saxon tell me there is hell,
How shall I answer him who clove the foam
To land in the west? The billows swell
Under Valhalla and the ripe blue dome.

Hell-blossoms bloom beneath my feet; my fingers
Hold loosely the lyre that gives birth to my song.
Here in the oak-woods the pale daylight lingers,
And the wind grows more shrill, and whistles, and
is strong.

I sent my love a greeting by the old black raven,
Under the north light he shall come to her;
Under the blue dome over the great haven,
He shall come to her, my faithful messenger.

The Saxon shall not slay me; I will not be tempted
From the great woods where the wind is still;
From the world-woe shall my love not be exempted,
And she shall know me when I reach the hill.

Still I see the green hill over the windy haven,
Still Swanhild stands with the gold combs in her
hair;
Oh, I shall follow the wind-path of the raven;
Through the furrowed sea I shall come to her there.

III

HE TELLS OF THE BATTLE

THERE was a battle on the heath; the axes
whirled, shrill arrows sped
Upon the way of death; my heavy hair blew round
my brows,
The gusty wind caught my robe, my arms turned to
lead,
And my hands sweated like the dewy leaves upon
the boughs.

And the heath was purple with blood; the yellow gorse
was a-drip with gore;
There were torn limbs, and parched, gaping mouths,
and screams of pain,
And staring eyes; I heard the Saxon yelling from the
shore,
And a dark cloud came suddenly down, and fell
upon my brain.

IV

HE TELLS OF THE GLAMOUR

TO dusk the daylight softens down
There are glittering lights in the old town,
And glittering lights across the sea,
Calling to me.

To dusk, to dusk, to dusk and dreams,
Are fallen the pulsing streams, the streams
That pass so slowly through the sea,
Calling to me.

There is woe, dark woe, in my heart to-night;
There is sorrow hidden from fire and light,
And there is sadness upon the sea,
Calling to me.

To easy sleep and to rest unwon,
I see the white ships before me run;
And the white gulls skim the bright green sea,
Calling to me.

Because the white witch hath cast her eye
Upon brave Sigurd, he longs to die,
And she is there in the bright green sea,
 Calling to me.

V

HE TELLS OF HIS UNBORN LOVE

FAR from the Northern lands I rove,
My soul is wrapt in an iron glove;
Starlight breaks in a foam above.

In the dark heavens, ah! sight of the stars!

Thor with his hammer is forging the bars
That hold the soft breast of my love unborn;
I wander, led on by the cars of morn.

Far in a Southern land I shall die,
Under a stargirt alien sky,
Whereover the bats take wing and fly.

In the dark heavens, ah! sight of the stars!

Thor with his hammer is forging the bars
That hold my unfledged love; astray
I wander, led on by the cars of the day.

Far in the depths my doom I seek;
No voice comes to me, no soul will speak;
Alas! I am grown neither fierce nor weak.

In the dark heavens, ah! sight of the stars!

Thor with his hammer is forging the bars
That hold her I love, nor would let her be born;
I wander, led on by the cars of the morn.

VI

SIGURD SEEKS THE ORACLE

SIGURD the Golden, say, what hast thou heard?
The song of a syren, the wings of a bird,
The laugh of a demon that spake through a tree;
The Saxon enchantments have let me go free.

Sigurd the Golden, say, what hast thou seen?
The Angles have fairies all clad in young green;
I saw subtle Merlin, the trick he had played
On Sigurd the Golden, who was not afraid.

Sigurd the Golden, say, what hast thou tasted?
The hell-broth of witches, all like to be wasted;
The cold speckled adders have poisoned not me;
Ha! Saxon enchantments have let me go free!

Sigurd the Golden, say, what hast thou felt?
The pains of the souls that in agony melt;
The hell of the Saxons hath burned me not yet;
The halls of Valhalla I shall not forget.

Sigurd the Golden, say, what hast thou smelled?
The dead roots of oak-trees all rough and new felled;
The stench of the hell-broth was nought to my ill,—
I kicked at the cauldron, and made it all spill.

Sigurd the Golden, say, what dost thou know?
The heat of the fire, the chill of the snow,
The heart of a virgin, a white unicorn,
The soul of the sunrise, the wings of the morn.

Sigurd the Golden, I say that ye pass,
And spend a long vigil to-night on the grass
Under the hazel-tree; keep watch and ward;
Beware of the coming of sceptre and sword!