

The Ride of the Walkyries by Mildred McNeal

Drawn by Albert Sterner. Half-tone plate engraved by H. C. Merrill

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OH, the tempests are gathering fast and the night is wild,
 And the level rain drives ruthlessly out of the gloom,
 And the wind has a moan like the wail of a little child,
 And the rivers are restless, and fret and clamor for room.
 Down from the leafless wood on the mountain sweeps
 A roar that answers the thundering of the deeps,
 And all of the sweet fields darken
 And tremble, and harken
 The swift oncoming of wrath and the time of doom.

Do you not hear, 'mid the charge of the hurrying winds,
 The rushing of shadowy hoofs and a snatch of song,
 Shril with the rapture that never a mortal finds
 Till the blood runs red in his veins and his hand is strong?
 Reveling in the chaos and in the black
 Dismay of the heavens, her sisters close at her back,
 Triumphant she rides, and unwearied,
 The fatal Walkyrie,
 Wherever the battle is hard and the strife is long.

Up from the rainy east and the moaning sea,
 They come, nine strong, the maidens of cruel might,
 On shaggy horses of cloud that are fearful to see,
 Riding exultingly up the steep hills of night.
 O'er gap and chasm and fiord, where the tide is gray,
 With never a pause in all of the perilous way,
 Stern is their speed as fire,
 And faster and higher
 Comes flashing of spear and shield in the fitful light.



Drawn by Albert Sterner. Half-tone plate engraved by C. W. Chadwick

It is rain and wind, and tempest and wind and rain,
And light and shadow in turn as the clouds run past,
And stormy mystery out on the open plain,
And trees stript bare and bent and torn in the blast,
And weak things, helpless and piteous, whirled out
Into the angry void with a mocking shout,
 And wild skies meeting together,
 And riotous weather,
And always the clatter of swift hoofs following fast.

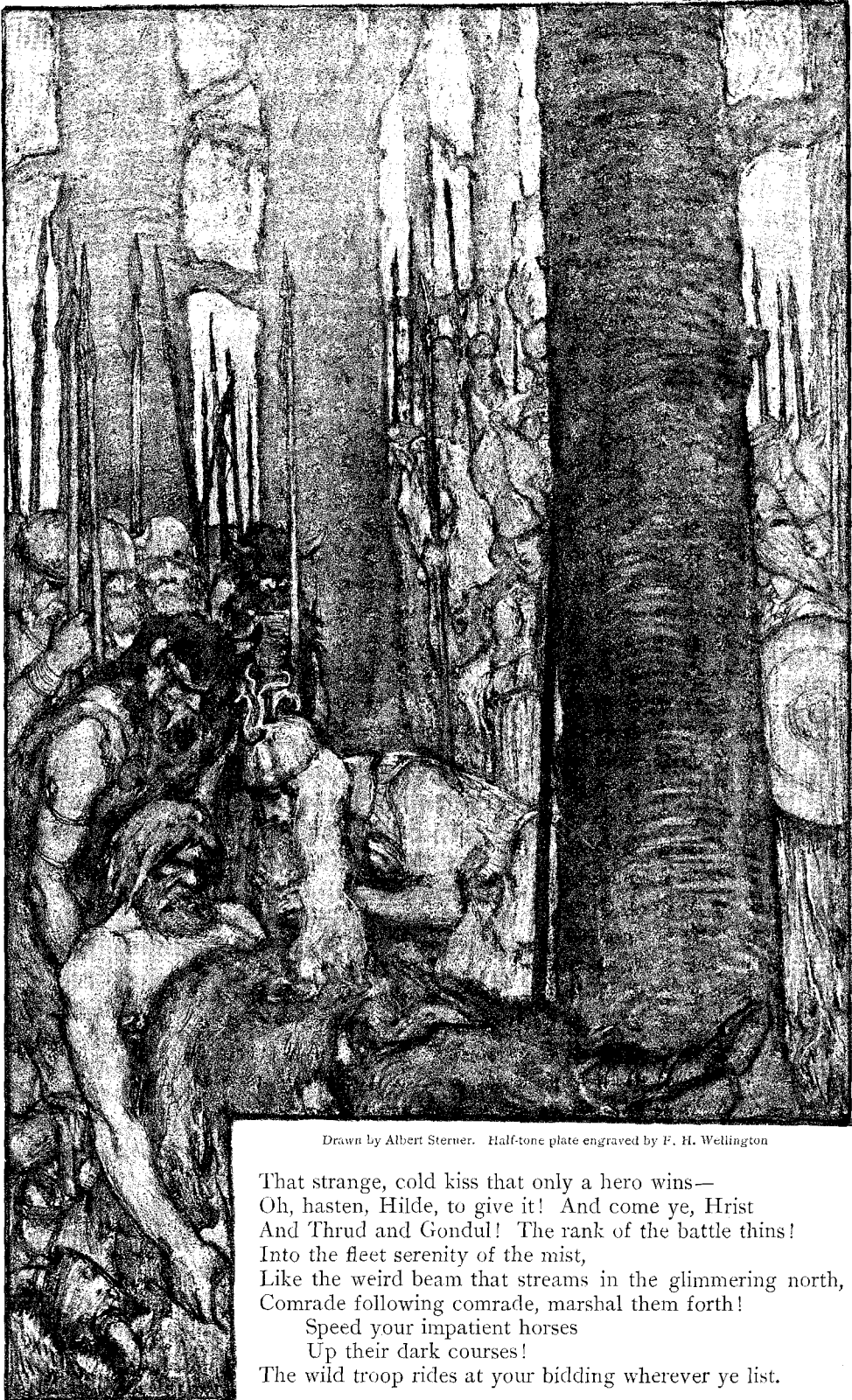
Straining sinew and fierce, unfaltering eye,
Hurrying pulse and tumultuous, combative breath!
Quick for the battle, a thousand are come to try
The old, heroic issue of life and death.
Forth and back in a struggle that has no end,
With red heel marring the body of foe and friend,
 No room is there for the coward
 Amid such untoward
Crashing of strength with strength as the conflict hath.

There comes a day when the trustiest weapon lies
Shattered and lost, and the armor is pierced through,
But never a time when the heart of the warrior dies,
And he slips away from the work he is promised to.
Striving, even with naked breast, to reach
The fierce onset at the last wide, ruinous breach,
 Ne'er doth Despair's cold pallor
 Creep over his valor!
Confident he as a king in his power to do.

Wherever the battle is hard and the strife is long,
Some shall falter and slip from the bright array,
Hear with a quickening ear the Walkyrie song,
And the close, quick rush of their horses into the fray.
The last stern blow shall fall harmless, the foe go free,
And the lights shall go out, and the passion for victory!
 But can there be ever a spirit
 So base as to fear it—
The final charge and the final riding away!

Living is sweet, but death may be sweeter still,
Drunk like a cup to the health of a cause we love.
Strong to the uttermost, meeting with valorous will
The mightiest odds, it will be joy to move
Forth in the glow and pride of the silent host,
Caring no more if the battle be won or lost,
 Heeding no more the clamor
 Of ax or of hammer,
Warriors that Wotan hath chosen and doth approve.

Let it be in the thick of it, quickly and gloriously,
Not as the knave dies, veiled and trembling,
But facing the wrack and terror, watching to see
The maidens coming, listening to hear them fling
Their furious war-shout over the raging field,
Sharp as any weapon the fighters wield:
 "Walhalla, ye men, Walhalla,
 Ho-yo-he, Walhalla!"—
A rapturous song of triumph and rallying.



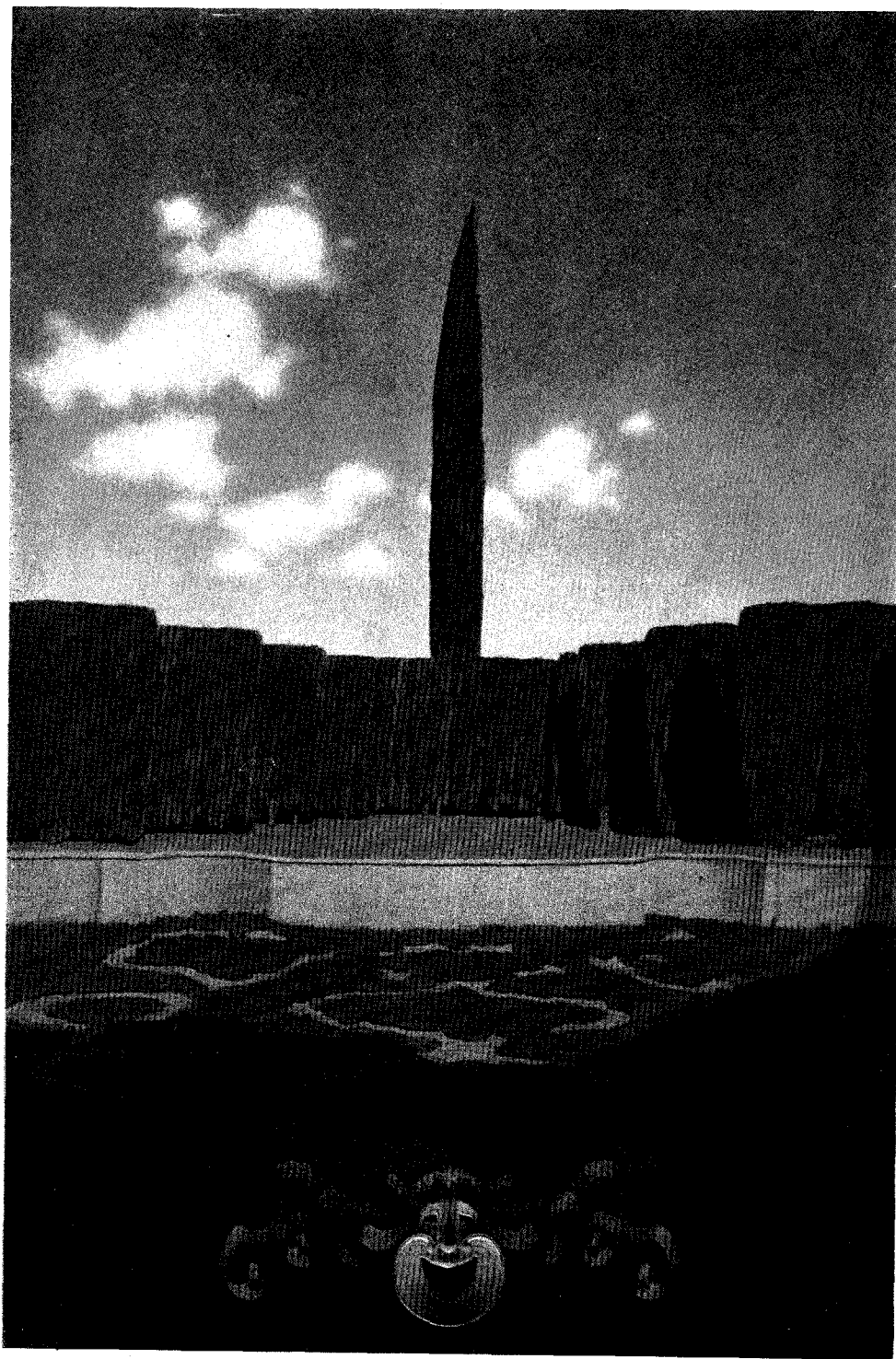
Drawn by Albert Sterner. Half-tone plate engraved by F. H. Wellington

That strange, cold kiss that only a hero wins—
Oh, hasten, Hilde, to give it! And come ye, Hrist
And Thrud and Gondul! The rank of the battle thins!
Into the fleet serenity of the mist,
Like the weird beam that streams in the glimmering north,
Comrade following comrade, marshal them forth!
Speed your impatient horses
Up their dark courses!
The wild troop rides at your bidding wherever ye list.

It is rain and wind, and silence and wind and rain,
And a piteous hush where the men of the battle lie,
With a thrill of ecstasy following, when the train
Of warriors and mailed maidens comes splendidly by!
A dull, brief gleam from the shields, and a sober light
From faces of stern men, glance through the shadowy night—
Men gold-haired and hoary,
Each one with the glory
Of battle upon him and armed in valiancy.

The way to Walhalla is open and wild and fleet.
Past unquiet rivers and meadows sodden and gray,—
Slipt back, storm-veiled and dim, at their flying feet,
With the gaunt and peering shapes of the awful fray,—
Past ruddy brook and grim trench opening wide,
And cliff and chasm and toss of the raging tide,
Past pines, wide-armed, giant-footed,
Fallen vast and uprooted,
The shadowy line sweeps out and up and away.





THE THEATER AT VILLA GORI

THACKERAY'S FRIENDSHIP WITH AN AMERICAN FAMILY¹

SECOND PAPER

THIS series of entirely unpublished letters by Thackeray were written to the various members of a single American family, namely, that of the late Mr. George Baxter of the city of New York. They appear in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* with the consent not only of Miss Lucy W. Baxter, but of Mrs. Ritchie, the great writer's accomplished daughter, and of the London publishers of Thackeray's works, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. The first of the letters were printed in the November issue of the magazine, with an introduction by Miss Baxter.—EDITOR.

Febbywerry Twenty-six [1853]. Sunday.
BEFORE I go to Richmond early early in the morning tomorrow, I must pay a many debts w^h I owe here and one of them is a pleasant little debt indeed: to a poor young lady by the name of Miss Lucy whose back I hope is better by this time and whose kind little hand I hereby respectfully salute. How glad I am to have done with Baltimore and Washington! There are 20 pretty girls here; but none of them fit me so completely as some young persons I know of, and I make myself at ease but not at home in any house but a brown one. I keep on having famous letters from my girls. Anny writes in great glee because they have been at a wedding party and had plenty of dancing, and because Minny has been greatly admired (I dont think I ever told you that I believe she is very arch bright & pretty-looking) and danced all the dances: and my dearest homely Nanny is quite contented with her little share of partners, and the admiration her little sister gets. Well, Anny has one faithful swain and admirer, who loves her quite as much as a girl need desire: and that gentleman is now writing to Miss Lucy Baxter. But I can't make a funny letter this time: for I can only do that when I am in the mood and I have been passing hours writing a long & sad one to my mother at home.

I think I told your mother about the dinner at the President's and how stupid it was. Yesterday, however, I know you'll be all glad to hear, the 2 Presidents came together to my lecture which was furthermore attended by a numerous & fashionable company; and then I finished the evening by going to 3 soirées—at one of which Mr. Corcoran's I saw Mrs. W. smiling and blushing like the roses of June, and many more New Yorkers all of whom have a certain interest for me because they live near some people I am fond of.

Tomorrow Richmond—next week Charleston and then where I should like to know? Will somebody from the brown house kindly carry this message to the Clarendon for me, and beg that any letters may be forwarded on?

Tomorrow I shall pass down the Potomac on which Mrs. Esmond-Warrington used to sail with her 2 sons when they went to visit their friend Mr. Washington. I wonder will anything ever come out of that preface, and will that story ever be born?

Since I wrote this I began a thinking and wrote a line or two in the French language to Miss Sally, and behold the line or 2 grew into a regular long letter so French in style (whatever it may be in grammar) that I think best not to send it but send her and all my homely *English* love instead; and hope in the most simple

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