

Staufenberg in Ortenau.

The foot on the Wall.

In the fine times when there were fairies, nymphs, and other lovely creatures of the world of Fable who cultivated a gay and happy intercourse with men, lived at his castle Staufenberg, a rich young count whose amiability and virile beauty had almost become proverbial in the neighbourhood. He was passionately addicted to the pleasures of the chase, ranged daily mountain and wood, and not seldom he made an excursion to the distant banks of the Rhine, which then, were little inhabited. It once happened that tired from the useless pursuit of a stag which had led him to the banks of the stream, he encamped in the shade of a tree and fell asleep. On awaking he saw a young maid of incomparable beauty, sitting in the grass who friendly saluted him. Just as much astonished at the unexpected appearance as attracted by her charms, he asked after her origin and dwelling, the sweet maid related him that she was a nymph of the Rhine and her house was built in the rocky-ground of the river. This answer astonished the count still more, and raised in him the impression which the fabulous being had made on him so much, that he, bewitched by the supernatural charm of the nymph, did not separate from her, till

she had promised to be on the same place the next day. The count directly renounced the chase, and different pleasures which he had had before, he had only mind for the charming enchantress who bound him with magical love-bands. He saw her daily on the quiet confidential place where she first appeared to him, and nothing disturbed the enjoyment of sweet happy love. The oath of eternal true love, which the Fairy demanded of him, the count had willingly given with the assurance that it would be impossible for him, ever to belong to another, for which the beloved promised him continual joys, and a long life. Could you, she said sometimes with warning voice, could you once forget your oath and break your vowed Faith to me, nothing would remain for me than to weep eternally, for I can only love once, and never another than you. But your faithlessness would be ruinous to you, for you would hear my plaintive cry in this castle or wherever you might be, and even if I were invisible you would see a foot of mine, and this would be a sign, that after 3 days as punishment of your perjury you would become the prey of Death. Long the calm band of love was more than in one manner a blessing for the count, for by the magic of his adored, every endeavour and action succeeded. He was always victor in Tournament, as in serious battle ever his lance struck his adversary, never failed his sword, and

the high renown of his arms spread wide into the country. No wonder therefore, that many a beauty rivalled for the favour of the beautiful count, yet he remained faithful to his nymph. It happened once that the Emperor, sojourning in the Rhine-country arranged a grand banquet, and as then the most noble knights took part, so also the Staufenberger. The Youth's stately figure and noble manners soon attracted all eyes, but the most the glance of the only daughter of the sovereign. She was inflamed with love for the knight, and did not conceal from her father that she must either be the count's wife, or never marry. The Emperor cordially responded to the wish of his child and sought an opportunity to make the count acquainted with this wish. This declaration was accompanied with such splendid offers, and alluring promises that the thereby blinded knight declared to the Emperor his oath of love to a nymph of the Rhine, and this was the obstacle which prevented his conducting home, as married wife, the daughter of his powerful master. The emperor opposed, that a love connection with such a being, and that an effected oath could have no validity, and in every case the Bishop would be able to release the count from the fairy, from all guilt and from all evil consequences. Allured by ambition, the count consented to the emperor's offer, and in the loving caresses of the Emperor's love-inflamed daughter, the

youth soon forgot all of that threatened him by the nymph, and drunk with joy he sat at the wedding-feast beside the highly-blessed in beauty, blooming young wife. But see! as all were jovial, and the health of the newly-married was enthusiastically toasted, there was displayed on the wall, opposite the festal-table an extremely beautiful and elegant feminine foot, which visible to the knee, had penetrated through the wall, although it remained undamaged. At the same time toned in all ante-rooms a heartrending long continuing wail. By this infelicitous sign the count paled: „Woe to me!“ he cried that is the punishment for my faithlessness, that is the announcement of my near death. Seized with madness, and as if chased by Furies he ran forth, after 3 days he was found in the near Forest killed by lightning. But the unhappy bride sunk in grief and mourning, renounced the world, and ended her days in a cloister.
