

Strasburg.

The Clock and the Cathedral.

As the world-renowned building of the Strasburg Dome was completed, the Magistrate had the wish to ornament the high steeple with an artistic clock. Long no master was to be found, to whom one could confide the execution of such a work, but at last one announced himself from a foreign country, named Isaac Habich, an already venerable old man, who offered to arrange an incomparable clock-work on the steeple. The offer was joyfully accepted, and the master began the laborious work. After several years unremitting endeavours the work was finished, and all who saw it, regarded it with justifiable admiration. The clock not only indicated the hour, but the day and month of the year, there was also added a large World-ball with the rising and setting of the sun, which as well as the appearances and eclipses of the Moon and Sun each time exactly as they occurred in nature, Mercury standing with his staff pointed out all changes, and each constellation stepped forward in its turn as soon as its domination commenced. Besides many artistic arrangements of different sorts, was also remarkable that beside the clock which announced the hours, stood the personification of Death, who shortly before the strike

of every quarter advanced to seize the clock-hammer, while at the same time from the other side the figure of the Redeemer appeared and sent back Death; only the full hour Death struck with the hammer. This ingenious clock as well as an excellent chime belonging to it, which toned the most edifying church-psalms seemed to be a real masterwork and the city glorified itself in its possession. But even the excellence of the work excited in the minds of the magistracy the wish that Strasburg might be and remain the only city that could boast of it, and this wish led to the horrible design, that instead of rewarding the master for his art and diligence, to put-out his eyes. In order to have a pretence for this cursed act, and because they feared to execute such cruelty on a man so highly honored by the people, they took refuge to the easy deceptive superstition of that time.

They accused the master of not being able to complete the work without demoniacal help, was in connection with the Devil, and effected by imprisonment and torture the master's confession of his guilt. However before the infamous men could carry-out their Judgment, the master declared, that he must do the last work to the clock and finish the wheel-work what would be impossible for any one else to complete, and begged to be still once allowed to ascend the steeple. This explanation appeared so weighty

with the chiefs of the city that they could not but comply with it. They had the condemned conducted to the steeple, and after he had filed and altered some time, he declared that all was completed. Immediately afterwards the dreadful act was committed of depriving the old man of sight. But soon it was known that the chimes and works were still. The cruel authors of the inhuman act perceived now too late, that the master of the artistic movement had intentionally destroyed it, to revenge himself on the barbarous vanity and ambition of the Magistracy. And so indeed it was. The badly treated artist said he had annihilated his own work, and that nobody would ever be able to repair it and set it in motion.

Even to the present day one shows the immoveable wheel-work to the stranger visiting Strasburg-dome; whoever regards the endless artistic work and the fine mechanism can only regret that as the blind master predicted, till now no artistic hand had power to order the machine and to bring it into activity. In the clock made by Schwilgue 1838—1842 some parts of the clock were used; at midnight of 31st Dec. of every year, the clock regulates itself for the next year.
