

Taunus.

The knight of Falkenstein.

At the time when Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg was endeavouring to restore order and peace in the empire, and with strong hand resisted the sword-law and disorder of the Robber-knights, lived in the castle of Falkenstein a knight of the name of Kurt, a very venturous and powerful highwayman. Not only did he rob the harmless wanderer, and the peaceful merchant who went quietly on his way with goods, but with his numerous men he surprised very often castles and towns, which he hoped to find unprovided for such attacks. For the success of most of his robberies and to his far feared might, was to be ascribed the circumstance, that he could at the same time multiply himself, for with him he had 7 strong sons, who carried-out his plans equally quick and effective, and occasionally carried-out robberies on their own account.

The cry for help from the, by Falkenstein oppressed district, echoed soon to the Emperor's throne, and as the warnings sent to the evil doer remained unheeded, the monarch set out from Worms where he was at the time, with a sufficient troop against Falkenstein and invested the castle. The knight and his soldiers offered a valiant resistance, but a storm attack, effectively

carried-out from all sides, placed the castle at last in the power of the Imperial troops, Kurt and his 7 sons were made prisoners.

The emperor had sworn that every knight-robber taken with arms in hand, as well as the accomplices should be executed, and so he commanded the execution of Falkenstein.

On the extensive castle platform, the Imperial troops formed a circle, in the middle of which the Hangmen waited for their sacrifices; and Rudolph himself was present, with a numerous retinue to be witness of the execution of his commands. It was a surprising and affecting sight, as Kurt with his 7 sons were led into the circle, the strong old man at the head of his manly fine sons, and among the numerous spectators one heard voices, who ventured to beg pardon for at least the sons. Also in the Emperor's breast there moved feelings of deep pity for these unfortunate sacrifices; and willingly he would have pardoned the youths who had acted more in obedience to their father, than from inclination and so become criminals; but the Imperial oath was inviolable, and so the monarch could not allow motives of clemency even also not, as among his people many had begged for the life of one at least of his lamented sons. And however to yield somewhat to so many and urgent solicitations, and however remain firm to his oath, Rudolph permitted the

pardoning of one of the youths, but under conditions the fulfillment of which, bordered on impossibility. „I will grant life and liberty to that one of the Falkensteiners, to which the father, after execution will step, and thereby designate for pardon.“ And now the old Kurt, with gloomy look until now, regarded Heaven, with the expression of inspired certainty, and courageously offered his neck to the executioner's sword. And see! as the head rolled in the sand, the headless with firm step advanced to the eldest who stood next to him, and from this to the 2, and the 4 others, when staggering to the youngest and last, he suddenly fell to the ground.

Astonishment and horror seized all who saw the spectral round visit. But the emperor ordered the 7 sons to be set at liberty, and had them taken into his army, so that by really noble actions they might efface the disgrace of their former lives, and that they might be worthy of pardon and condition of knights.
