

Rheinstein.

The Ride to the Wedding.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century inhabited the castle Rheinstein a knight named Sifrid, just as rich and powerful, as he was defamed for his robberies and wicked actions.

Once returning home heavily laden with booty, from one of his incursions, he brought a female of extraordinary beauty, whom he had taken away from Frankenland. But however he as victor triumphed over the captured, he soon felt himself conquered by the gentleness of the beautiful female.

The noble Jutta's arrival at the Rheinstein effected a surprising change in the knight's character. From then no acts of violence, no more robberies; quietly the merchant passed the, at other times feared castle, and fearlessly the shipper steered past the walls of the rampart. — Jutta's flattering voice had persuaded the knight to renounce entirely his former manner of life; so much can Love do!

Formerly the noisy residence of bold highwaymen. Rheinstein was now the cordial habitation of peace and harmless enjoyment. The wild guests gradually left it, and the rough war comrades, covetous for booty and licence, sought other service; in the service of Sifrid there was no more booty to be gained, since the happiness of quiet

housekeeping dominated there — Jutta had wished it so, and Sifrid highly esteemed her, as beauty and virtue are honored.

But this quiet happiness was not to remain long undisturbed. After a year's household management, Jutta died in giving birth to a daughter. The loss of the beloved wife threw the knight in a deep melancholy, which gradually became gloomy misanthropy. Only the consolation, to have in the child a dear remembrance, and the care for this precious pledge alone bound him to life, and he devoted his days to the welfare and education of his daughter.

Gerda, the child's name, soon displayed those excellent qualities, the inheritance of her noble mother; as a tender flower gradually develops its beauty, she grew in grace and loveliness under the protecting care of her father.

However as retired as Sifrid had lived hitherto, he could not refuse hospitality to tired wanderers, or pious pilgrims, who rested at the foot of the castle, and so the treasure which the castle hid, was soon known, and the report of Gerda's beauty was soon spread in the whole valley and neighbourhood. It was not long, before a number of knights of high and low nobility, found themselves at the castle, all wishing to conclude a marriage, which promised a double gain, the charms of the splendid maiden with the great riches of the father. In order to keep off the suitors, which daily in-

creased, the old master of Rheinstein appointed to meet them at Mayence at a Tournament, at which he with Gerda would assist: the hand of the beautiful heiress should be the prize of the bravest.

Not easily could a tournament number more participators than this, and the knights showy retinues and splendid accoutrements increased the magnificence of the festival; but the finest was thought by all to be Gerda, whom to win, many now entered the lists, while from a high balcony she regarded the combattants.

Among the knights present two distinguished themselves, Kurt of Ehrenfels, possessor of the same named castle, and Kuno of Reichenstein, of the castle, near Rheinstein, so that both seemed one castle. Both knights were renowned combatants and if Kuno, younger than his opponent the prerogatives of a finer education and a nobler character, so overbid him the rough Kurt, who had the surname of the Bad, in riches and extensive possessions. Sifrid wished from avarice, Kurt to be the gainer, but Gerda however had long had an inclination for the amiable Kuno; but as the caprice of Fortune often decides, so it decided this time in favor of those who had willingly seen the victory wrested from love. After Kuno had vanquished all other rivals, and dismounted several, he was obliged to succumb to the superior strength of Kurt, and gladly Sifrid saluted Kurt the wicked, as his future son-in-law.

And so the destined marriage day arrived without Gerda's supplications and tears being able to shake her father's resolution. With pale cheeks and inflamed eyes, she appeared in costly garments and splendid wedding ornaments, not a happy bride, but like a sacrifice to whom one dedicated a solemn death. But before she became an offering to the inflexible will of her father, before one forced her to the altar, she would seek consolation and assistance of the mighty protectress of suffering maidens, of her, the Queen of Heaven, throw herself at her feet and pray to her in the chapel of the castle. And so she hastened to the chapel and threw herself before the figure of the Holy-Virgin. „Without your help, o Mary full of grace, am I eternally lost, grief and sorrow will kill me! O protect me, save thy child from such misery!“ So she supplicated the Holy Virgin, and long lay she there at her feet, when at last impatient, Kurt hastened and impetuously demanded of her to join the marriage procession. But the devout Prayer had marvellously strengthened Gerda's courage, and with a placid mien she advanced to the knight, glanced still once to the side where on the pinnacle of Reichenstein Kuno gloomy and sad regarded the castle Rheinstein, and followed, full of confidence in the mother of the Redeemer, the preceding Kurt.

Arrived to the expectant guests of the Feast, she begged, in order to ride to church, they would

allow her grey ambler to be saddled, which Kuno of Reichenstein had presented her on her 18th birthday. One did, as she wished, and now the procession went down the mountain to St. Clement's church, the ruins of which are again replaced.

Kuno saw the procession from his castle, and irresolute, whether he should revenge himself on his rival or bury himself in a cloister, he regarded, abstractedly sunk in grief, when suddenly an extraordinary sight roused him out of his sadness. Just in the moment, as the procession had arrived at the church, Gerda's horse, which till now had kept quiet step, began to prance, and overthrowing all who approached, it broke away furiously. Directly the knights rode after to bring it back; but in vain, it galloped to the Rhine, in which to throw itself Gerda not regarding Kurt's calling, drove it on, for death in the cold stream had been desired by her; however on the banks of the river the faithful animal turned, and quick as an arrow it fled up the steep rock, on the summit of which Reichenstein was with its massive walls; scarcely quick enough could Kuno let down the drawbridge to receive the beloved, who was in so wonderful a manner led to his arms.

Then after resigning themselves to the most lively pleasure, he ordered, the doors to be immediately closed, care for the embrasures and altogether put all in the most defensive condition,—unnecessary trouble however, the Heaven had