

THE

PFaffen-THOR (PRIESTS DOOR)

at Cologne.

Notwithstanding the frequent and sanguinary contests which the wealthy city of Cologne had formerly to sustain with its Archbishops, it had risen, through the genius, commercial enterprize and industry of its inhabitants, to the highest rank of power and prosperity. No less determined than incessant were the struggles, which the independent and spirited burghers maintained against the powerful influence of their spiritual sovereigns. Within its stately walls resided a numerous and wealthy aristocracy, who were frequently disunited among themselves, whilst at other times they espoused the cause of the citizens against their oppressors, and as often

were found ready to aid and support the Archbishops, in their attempts to overthrow the franchises of the people. At no period however did the contest between the different parties rage more fiercely than during the reign of Engelbrecht of Falkenburg, who in the year 1261 succeeded Conrad of Hochsteden the founder of the Cathedral. The massive walls of the Beyenthurm, with its battlements, its barred windows, and heraldic emblazonry, as they may still be seen from the old tower upon the shore, bring to remembrance the reign of this despot.

On his first arrival the new Lord made his entry with all the emblems of power and pomp, and forthwith adopted every measure, that violence and coercion could suggest in order to subdue the spirit of the contumacious burghers. The latter patiently submitted for some time to this unwonted oppression, but in the second year the smouldering flame of revolt undisguisedly broke forth. The valiant citizens having flown to arms, were victorious under their popular leaders and having stormed the gates, drove the Archbishop's mercenaries from their intrenchments and planted the old standard of Cologne upon the walls. The exasperated Engelbrecht, however, soon assembled a powerful force and laid siege to the refractory town, but after a protracted contest in which he was repeatedly defeated, he was compelled to accede to the wishes of the people.

Amongst the most prominent partizans of the burghers, and the most determined opponents of the

Archbishop, were Mathias Overstolz, and the Burgomaster Hermann Gryn. The former, whose name repeatedly recurs in the history of the popular tumults of that unsettled period, was of most respectable family, which traced its origin to the times of ancient Rome. The latter who descended from one of the oldest and most noble houses of Cologne, had distinguished himself in the late manly contest for the interest, rights and privileges of his native town, and was universally beloved and esteemed by his fellow citizens. In consequence of this, Engelbrecht's adherents regarded him with the utmost dislike, and determined upon his destruction.

No opportunity offering itself to injure him publicly, at the moment of peace being re-established, they were the more anxious to invent means of destroying him in secret. Among the most violent of his enemies were two Prebends of the Cathedral, who, being impelled not only by their own dislike to the Burgomaster, but by the evil council of Hermann de Wittinghof, the Archbishop's confidant, being encouraged also, as was reported, by the Falkenburger himself, they eagerly watched for an opportunity, to work Hermans downfall. In order to attain their object, and to prevent any suspicion of treachery, they assumed an appearance of exceeding friendship towards the unsuspecting citizen, and with honey upon their lips, but gall in their hearts, feigned to take an equal interest in the prosperity of the town. The upright and noble-minded Gryn received their proffered advances with

friendly sincerity. Being further desirous to promote the welfare of his fellow citizens, and secure for them the favour of their spiritual Lords, he readily accepted an invitation from the prebends to a banquet, given in honor of their reconciliation.

Guileless himself, he had no suspicion of treachery in others, he consequently hastened at the appointed hour to the cloister of the cathedral, which in those times of civil commotion and discord was rarely visited by the citizens. On his entry, the prebends proposed to conduct him over the different apartments of the edifice, under pretext of beguiling the time until the arrival of their other guests. The Burgomaster willingly accompanied and united with them in admiring the costly splendour and glorious architecture of the magnificent pile. Thus they continued advancing until they reached a massive and strongly secured oaken-door, the end of a long narrow passage on the ground-floor. This, they said, contained the rich treasures, at jewels and relics of the cathedral, which as a mark of friendship and especial favour they would show to him. Thereupon one of his conductors drawing from his girdle a ponderous key, hastily unlocked the door, and Gryn entered a large and dimly lighted vault. But scarcely had his feet passed the threshold, ere the door closed behind him, while a long and appalling roar issued from a distant corner. He had no time for deliberation, for the dim-light of a lamp shed its feeble rays upon the gleaming eyes of an immense lion, whose natural ferocity was

increased by hunger. This sudden exposure to such unlooked for peril did not rob the valiant Burgomaster of his presence of mind. Wrapping around his arm, the long flowing mantle, which he usually wore, he drew forth his sword, and placing his back against the nearest wall, awaited his ferocious adversary's approach. Nor had he long to wait. After lashing his flanks with his tail, and shaking his shaggy mane, the lion sprung with wide extended jaws upon his prey, but the undaunted Burgomaster, firmly stretching forth his left arm, thrust it into its capacious throat, whilst at the same time he raised his right arm and plunged his trusty blade into its heart. The blow was decisive. The huge beast convulsively staggered for an instant, then with a groan resembling thunder, fell dead beneath his feet.

Although this had been but the work of a moment, the brave Gryn had scarcely time to congratulate himself upon his wonderful escape, ere the vaulted chamber rung with the echoes of loud noises arising from the street.

The treacherous priests, rejoicing at the supposed success of their murderous plans, had no sooner quitted the gloomy passage of the lion's den, than they hastened to the church square, tearing their hair and affecting the deepest grief and consternation at the fall of their guest, who, they said, had rashly entered the lion's den, and before assistance could arrive, had been torn to pieces by the monstrous beast. This intelligence flew like wild fire through the streets and in

an instant the populace assembled tumultuously, swearing vengeance upon the Priests and Prebends. At the moment however that they were preparing to rush upon the cathedral-door, loud strokes of a sword and the voice of the Burgomaster were heard from one of the furthest windows of the building. At this the Prebends turned pale with terror, whilst the populace eagerly rushed towards the cloisters and flew to rescue their beloved magistrate. The doors though strongly secured soon yielded to their efforts, and the worthy hero was quickly delivered and borne forth in triumph upon the arms of the people, whilst another band carried the dead trophy of his valour and the Priests treachery. As they passed along the streets the burghers looked down with astonishment upon the dead lion and could scarcely give credit to their eye-sight. In the mean time the dastardly Priests either hid themselves or sought safety in flight, but they were quickly seized by the raging multitude and, after a short but summary trial—condemned to death. They were then dragged to the place of execution and without regard to that priestly calling, which they had so infamously disgraced, they were hung up at a gate close by the cloister. It is from this event that the gate derives the name of the *Pfaffen Thor* (Priests door), though antiquarians have endeavoured to retrace its origin to the times of the Romans, and look on it as a corruption of “*Porta Paphia.*”

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Over the portal of the ancient Town-Hall, the most

remarkable, and perhaps the most striking edifice in Cologne, however rich it may otherways be in memorials of the middle ages, may still be seen a "*Basso-Relievo*" representing the combat between the lion and the Burgomaster.