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DRACHENFELS AND ROLANDSECK.

As the traveller ascends the river from the north on
his route towards the lovely valley of the Rhine, his
eye first rests upon the lofty summits of the seven moun-
tains, these mighty guardians of the stream's right
bank; while upon the opposite side arise the ruins
of the once stately fortress of Rolandseck. At this ma-
gnificent mountain gate, the uniformity of the plain
ceases as by enchantment. The Rhine, the glorious
Rhine! the father of tradition and of song, here opens
to the mind and fancy a new and inexhaustible world
of riches.

As the traveller floats securely upon the calm bosom

of the mighty waters, which bend their course through this terrestrial paradise, the giant mountains with their leaf-clad woods, ruined towers, rich vineyards and waving cornfields, irresistibly attract his attention towards the sunny heights of the Drachenfels.

For such is the name of the stupendous wall of rock, which rises precipitously from the stream, its fearful chasms still crowned with the ruins of an ancient fortress.

On the north lies the cheerful town of Königs-winter, whilst upon the south the rural village of Rhön-dorf is sheltered from the northern blasts by wild and precipitous clefts, whose flanks are fringed with golden vineyards and orchards, bending beneath a world of fruit. Amidst the rocky fissures of the south-western side of the mountain, there dwelled in olden times a fearful Dragon, the Deity of the surrounding heathens, from whom the rock derives its name. Savage and cruel were the barbarians; war and robbery were the occupations of their lives, and frequent and dreadful were their devastating attacks upon the opposite shore, where christianity had already raised the standard of peace.

It happened upon one occasion, that a noble christian maid became their prey. The beauty and virtue of the gentle girl, ere long raised an ardent flame in the breast of their two noblest chiefs. But neither the powerful Horsrik, nor the agile Rinbod found favour in the eyes of the captive. Resistance increased the frenzy of their passion and mutual jealousy inflamed

their breasts. Oaths and supplications were alike unheeded by the maiden and neither would cede the captive to the other. This contest at length divided the Barbarians into two parties and gave rise to a bloody war. Then arose the Elder of the race and spoke thus :

“ Our Gods forbid this unnatural conflict between the noblest of our race and have decreed the stranger maiden to the Dragon! To morrow, at early dawn he claims his prey ! ”

From this decision there was no appeal. Both rivals were obliged to yield submission to the power, which they worshipped. Scarcely therefore had the first blush of day illumined the mountain and while yet the misty giants of the Rhine slumbered upon the blue surface of the stream, ere the maiden was conducted to the rock, immediately overhanging the Dragon's cavern and there secured, an unresisting spoil. — As she bowed her head in pious submission to the divine will, not a single murmur escaped the lips of the beautiful christian; her eye calmly turned first to the distant east, reddened with the dawning day, and then to the heathens, who were assembled in countless multitudes beneath.

Scarcely had the first sun-beam illumined the rocks, ere the Dragon awoke and beheld his prey. Issuing from his noisome den, the hideous beast rolled rapidly with outstretched jaws and flaming eyes to seize his victim. Already the scorching blight of his fiery breath cast its pestilence upon the maiden, who not only stood undaunted, but drawing from her bosom

the emblem of her faith, she raised it before her, exclaiming: "Lord, Lord of the immortal throne and everlasting life accept my soul!" No sooner did the monster's eye fall upon the sacred symbol, before which even the Hosts of Hell tremble, than recoiling back with awe, it uttered a fearful roar and sprung headlong over the ridge of rocks into the flood beneath, whose waters closed over him for ever.

The pagan multitude could scarcely give credit to their senses, when they saw the maiden standing unshackled and unscathed before them. Still more were they astonished, when Rinbod bounded forward and raising her upon his shoulders, bore her in triumph to the highest summit of the rock, where he threw himself in devout submission at her feet. His example was soon followed by others. Ere long the voice of truth and innocence found ready access to the hearts of the Barbarians. The word of peace was understood and felt and, ere many moons had waned upon the valley of the Rhine, the Heathens rejoiced in the knowledge and worship of a Redeemer. Ere many weeks also the maiden became the bride of the impassioned Rinbod, who erected a dwelling upon the summit of the rock, to which he gave the name of the Dragon's Castle.

The ruin which now crowns the mountain belongs to a much later period.

The traveller will however be richly rewarded, for the fatigue of ascending the Drachenfels; the view which will greet him from its summit is the most splen-

did amidst all the varried splendour of the glorious Rhine. In the south his eye will catch the lovely islands of Nonnenwerth and Grafenwerth rising like emeralds amidst a stream of melted silver. From midst the dense foliage and flowery gardens of the former peep the white walls of an ancient Cloister, whilst upon the opposite shore arise the ruins of the old castle of Rolandseck. According to tradition, there dwelled many years since in this strong-hold a knight, the flower of chivalry and the pride of the Rhineland.

Esteemed and beloved by all, the young Roland was warmly welcomed, wherever he appeared, but to none were his visits more frequent or more acceptable, than to the beautiful daughter of the old knight of the Drachenfels. On these occasions, so frequently repeated, Roland's eye sought with passionate admiration, the lovely countenance of the maiden, whom he hoped at no distant period to hail as his bride; while Hildegunde's downcast look and blushing cheek tacitly revealed her conscious tenderness. The old knight heard with undissembled joy, that Roland loved, and sought to win the hand of his beauteous child, and readily consented to their union. Indeed the day of their marriage was already fixed, when Roland was summoned to the aid of a friendly knight, who was engaged in a long and sanguinary feud with a neighbouring chieftain.

The laws of honour and chivalry forbad his refusal and he therefore tore himself sorrowfully from his beloved and obeyed the call.

A tear trembled in the downcast eye of the maid, when Roland pressed upon her lips a parting kiss and promised a speedy return.

“Farewell,” faintly articulated the maiden, as she gently withdrew from the encircling arms of the knight and implored him for her sake, not to allow himself to be led away by the ardour of his courage.

Roland promised and departed, overwhelmed with grief and vexation. The war between the knights long continued and the young hero sighed inwardly for his home and his beautiful mistress. Victory in the mean time attended his arms and love shielded him in the hour of peril.

At length the war ended and the impatient Roland eagerly sought his native land. The evening had closed around, when he arrived in the neighbourhood of the Drachenfels. Loud sounds as of a distant tumult came upon the wind. Spurring his noble courser up the steep ascent, he reached the fortress, where a scene of wild confusion presented itself to his sight. A robber-knight had stormed the castle, and penetrated to the inward court. Roland's war-cry soon rose above the din of arms and gave new courage to the men of Drachenfels. Already had the enemy been driven to the outer gate, fiercely pursued by the conquerors, when suddenly there appeared amidst the combatants a knight, who sought with blind fury the youthful conqueror, but a blow from the vigorous arm of the powerful Roland laid the assailant lifeless on the field.

The robbers fled and the cry of victory resounded through the mountain. But on returning to the fortress, what a scene awaited the conqueror!

There in mute sorrow stood the men of Drachenfels weeping over the body of their Lord, while Hildegunde in tones of woe bewailed the death of her father, upon whose corpse she had thrown herself, insensible to all around.

Roland approached to console his beloved, when he started back with horror on perceiving by the torch light, that the knight he had slain was the father of his adored Hildegunde. "O God!" he cried, "I am his murderer! Hildegunde canst thou ever pardon the offender?" "Roland! thou his murderer," shrieked the maiden recognizing the voice, ere she sunk into insensibility. Unspeakable was her anguish, when she recovered. Alas! she had lost her father, her dearest friend upon earth and this by the hand of her lover, he whom the departed warrior had called with pride his son! Tears fortunately came to her relief and assuaged the violence of her grief, but a silent melancholy soon took possession of her soul and she not only resolved to abandon the world and its joys, but to renounce her beloved.

Roland listened to her determination in an agony of grief, but prayers and supplications were vain.

"No," replied she, "it is in a cloister, that I will seek that happiness, which the world can no longer afford me." When Roland knelt down to implore her pardon and urged her in despairing accents to

change her resolution, she again answered: — “ No! in yonder solitary cell, will I pray that God may pardon thee, for thy unpremeditated crime. There also will I endeavour to forget all that has passed between us, our love, our hopes and joys.” Alas! the joy of Roland’s life had fled with Hildegunde. Silence and sorrow reigned now within the once merry fortress of Rolandseck. From early morn to the close of day the unhappy Lord sat upon the balcony that overlooked the green island of Nonnenwerth to which Hildegunde had retired. His only hope was that he might perceive the maiden, who now and then appeared in the cloister-garden like a pale lily amidst the summer blooming flowers. Months thus rolled on when one morning at early dawn, the cloister-bell was heard tolling a solemn knell.

Roland’s throbbing heart soon told him for whom that fatal knell resounded and bitter tears bedimmed his mournful eye.

The hillock, that covered the remains of the loveliest of flowers, was ere long transformed by the pious sisterhood into a blooming garden, which was never for a moment lost sight of by Roland, who passed his remaining days in gazing upon the spot. Thus was he found one morning with his eyes fixed and a heavenly smile irradiating his countenance. His attendants attempted to call him but he also slept in the Lord.

The fortresses of Rolandseck and the Drachenfels have both long since been destroyed. The ruins

still remind the beholder of their former grandeur. The dark ivy now clings around and points out the arch of the casement, whence the devoted Roland looked down upon the little island of Nonnenwerth, where once reposed the mortal remains of Hildegunde.

CASTLE OF STOLZENBURG.

Upon approaching the fruitful valley of the Uff, on the road from Call to Dalldorfen, the traveller beholds a dark and gloomy wood, from amidst whose foliage huge masses of rock, decaying mossy and half-sunk walls still rear their heads. These are the ruins of an ancient fortress, where in olden times there dwelt a knight, the best of the neighbourhood and the terror of all travellers. His occupations were drinking, robbing and plundering — his amusements, tormenting and oppressing his vassals. Unusually hated and feared, even his companions in wickedness execrated him in their hearts and cherished towards