

the trees rocked to and fro, the thunder roared and
all nature seemed on the eve of a convulsion.
Water recoiled with awe as he saw the
symbol cast a glittering radiance into the troubled flood,
which instantly became calm. The storm was hushed,
light appeared, so that he and his followers saw the
surrounding banks fluting in a wide circle, like a wreath
on the sunlit surface of the river. How then should
our poor veil, which glittered like the brightest star
light and sang in a pleasing voice the melody, with
which she trod the waves. No sooner had she
last echoes in the mid-

THE SEVEN MAIDENS.

die of the wretched pearls rose two mountainous waves,
into which she threw her silver veil, and then sinking
sawing under the foam which bore her gently down
the river. The veil descended slowly after her, like
the star-spangled canopy of heaven and continued
to shed a soft light over the stream, until at length
it all disappeared.

Upon a hill, nearer the town of Oberwesel, still
exist the ruins of the castle of Schönberg or Schom-
berg, formerly the residence of a distinguished family
nearly allied to the Counts of Degenfeld.

If tradition tells truth, this castle was once inha-
bited by the seven beautiful daughters of Count Lewis
of Arnstein. Rich, amiable and accomplished, the
maidens were constantly surrounded by powerful and
distinguished admirers, but so equally were their
smiles dispensed, that no one could boast of any par-
ticular favour. Every serious attention or approach

to wooing was received so coldly, that the boldest had little courage to renew the attempt.

Whether the ladies were really serious or only sought to prove the sincerity of their lovers, we have no means of ascertaining. To the rank or condition of the knights, there could be no objection, for they consisted of all who possessed rank and wealth, in short of the flower of the nobility and chivalry.

Infinite was the emulation that existed amongst them. Each vied with the other in exhibiting to the greatest advantage his talents and acquirements. Riding, tilting, music, songs, tales and conversation were in turns resorted to, in order to soften the damsels' hearts, and many heretofore remarked for taciturnity, became more eloquent than the disciples of the austere school of Demosthenes.

One felt that his arm daily became more vigorous, and another his eye more accurate and clear. Festivity and pleasure reigned at the castle, extending even to the neighbouring town of Wesel.

It happened one evening, that the conversation turned upon the traditions, connected with the name and origin of each fortress and ancient castle on the Rhine; when the Count of Nassau, whose efforts to amuse had this day been crowned with but little success, suddenly exclaimed: "Doubtless all have heard the legend of the seven young maidens." "No truly," said one. "Pray recount it to us," exclaimed another. "Proceed, proceed," was echoed around.

"That will I, most willingly," replied the Count,

“if no better narrator can be found. But, wilt not thou essay thy powers, Count Ysenburg?” continued he turning to a young noble beside him.

“Nay truly,” replied the Palatine, “I have little taste for hearing tales connected with the times of my grand-mother and find more pleasure in studying the beaming eyes of the fair Bertha, than in perusing ancient chronicles and old romances.” — “Well, be it so,” rejoined he of Nassau, “but ere I commence I must premise, that my narrative is no fiction.” Silence having been obtained, he proceeded thus: “Many years since, within this castle of Schönberg, resided seven beautiful maidens. A description of their charms and endowments I will not attempt to give, never having found an image by which to describe them and never having seen them equalled until now.

“Beautiful were they to admiration, but not less cold-hearted than beautiful. Love was looked upon by them as a fable. Pleasure and the chase were their idols. They sung, but it was only of knightly deeds and of the heroic actions and ancient grandeur of women. Vainly the flower of chivalry sought to win their love. Youth, beauty, valour, accomplishments, all were to them as nought — they valued them not. Frequently did they exercise their capricious tempers at the expense of their suitors, who were occasionally encouraged, in order to be repulsed with twofold cruelty and disdain. Thus many of them departed for ever from the castle and its evil maidens,

covered with insult and swearing vengeance. But their places were soon occupied by others who only arrived, to curse the fatal destiny which had led them, contrary to advice and warning, to venture within the influence of the dangerous circle. At length, the nobles began to lose their temper and the sisters perceived that they must now come to a decision.

“The suitors were accordingly informed that they might expect an answer, if they would assemble on the morrow in the marble hall of the Castle. The most favoured of the knights could, with difficulty, await the dawn ere they appeared, gorgeously attired with glittering gems, burnished weapons and nodding plumes. In due time, the marble hall doors were opened, and they entered each seeking to place himself in the most advantageous position to attract the attention and fix the eyes of the ladies. An hour and then another elapsed, still the maidens did not make their appearance. The anxious nobles began to express their impatience by loud murmurs, when suddenly their attention was attracted by sounds of merriment, resounding from without. At this they all rushed to the windows, and looking towards the river, where they perceived a light skiff, quitting the shore freighted with the seven sisters, who, with cruel mockery and loud laughter, saluted their lovers, and bade them farewell. I will not attempt to describe the downcast looks of the knights, or the deep and loud curses that broke from them when they saw the trick that had been played upon them. They were soon,

however, avenged, for even while they continued to watch the receding boat and its lovely cargo, it suddenly struck upon a rock and in an instant sunk beneath the flood. Loud screams now replaced their heartless laughter. White garments were seen floating for a moment upon the surface of the dark blue water— then all was silent. Both boat and maidens had disappeared. The terror-struck suitors regarded each other, with mingled awe and pity and “Holy Mary, holy Virgin! have mercy on them!” burst from their lips. From that day, continued the Count, seven rugged pointed rocks over which the waves break heavily, have been observed at low water, upon the spot where the accident occurred. Carefully is the dangerous spot avoided by the passing mariners, by whom they are called the seven Maidens, but nevertheless many an inexperienced boat-man has there found a watery grave.”

Here the Count ended his narrative. We know not what impression it created upon his beautiful hearers, but we have gathered from old chronicles, that the young and lovely daughters of Arnstein, soon entered the holy bonds of wedlock. One espoused the Count Palatine of Tubingen, a second Count Isenburg.

Two found husbands in Hungary, while the Lordly castle of Nassau, overlooking from its woody heights the lovely valley of the Lahn, received a sixth within its stately walls as the young and beauteous bride of its chivalrous owner.