

King Charles in the joy of his heart forgot to  
rejoice in the news of the happy and wonder-  
ful event had preceded them and spread universal joy  
amongst both high and low. King Charles  
enjoyed for many years the happiness  
of possessing his beloved Elizabeth and was never  
wearied of hearing the account of her adventures. He  
never ceased to deplore the cruelty, or to thank  
God for the deliverance of his beloved Queen. Nor

**CATHERINE OF HEILBRONN.**

was he ever weary of her company and who had been the companion of  
her wanderings and tribulations. She was named  
lady of honor to the Queen for life and was shortly  
united to a nobleman of high rank, wealth and di-  
stinction.

There lived at Heilbronn ages ago a gunsmith, of  
the name of Friedeborn, whose wife, who died soon  
after their marriage, had borne him an only daughter,  
called Catherine. The child was born upon Easter  
Sunday and, therefore, divers celestial beings may per-  
haps have held influence over its existence from its very  
birth, although nothing corroborated this supposition.

Little Catherine when she attained her sixteenth  
year was a lovely child—pleasing in the eyes of God,  
and as healthy in body and spirit, as the primitive  
dwellers on earth may be supposed to have been.

She was moreover a gentle, devout and interesting

creature, as it is only permitted to us mortals to see, when on the wings of imagination we soar up to heaven and fancy we behold the dear little angels, whose bright eyes peep out from amidst the clouds. When she sallied forth of an evening attired in a yellow straw bonnet, her bosom covered with a black velvet boddice and ornamented with a silver chain, — people whispered at every window: “See! — that is Kate of Heilbronn.” “Kate of Heilbronn!” — cried they, as if the sky of Suabia had been her father and the town under it her mother.

Relations who for three generations had never thought of their affinity to the industrious Friedeborn, invited her to christenings and weddings and called her their dear little Cousin. Every soul in the market where her father had his workshop, visited her on her birth-day to wish her joy and load her with presents. He who had only once seen her and obtained from her a passing salute, included her the eight following days in his prayers. Her grand-father had early made her his heir, to the exclusion of her father, and bequeathed to her an estate whereby he rendered her one of the most wealthy personages of the town. Five sons of citizens had already paid her their addresses and the knights who passed through Heilbronn could not help regretting that she was not of noble blood and expressed their opinion that, if she were, the east would lay its pearls and jewels at her feet. But she did not sigh after these vanities being exempt from all pride and ambition.

Nine months after she had completed her fifteenth year, the Sylvester night (31<sup>st</sup> Dec.) arrived and separated the old from the new year. It was then, as it is now, the custom to melt pieces of lead upon that night and to endeavour to ascertain the future from the strange forms that were produced by the molten liquid. Maidens also who did not yet know whose property they might become, prayed God upon this occasion to show them their future spouses in their dreams. Kate up to that time had not troubled herself about men, but, old Bess, her servant maid, advised her not to omit this part of the ceremony and so she followed her advice.

Midnight had already struck and she was reclining on her bed when the door opened and an angel, with snow-white silvery wings attached to its shoulders entered and introduced a knight who saluted her as his bride.—Kate who was no ways displeased with her extraordinary visitor, immediately called her two waiting women Elisabeth and Christina and then rising she fell at the feet of the angel, who seized her affectionately by the hand and pointing to a mole on her shoulder said to his companion.—“See, Sir knight, — it is by that mark you may recognize her again. ” When the servants came with lights, all had disappeared; but Kate was on her knees on the floor without other garments than her night dress—so she returned quietly to bed and carefully kept her secret.

Now it happened that some years before Kate was born at Heilbronn, the Countess Walter von Strahl was

brought to bed of a son and heir, who was a source of joy to her and his vassals. Having however attained his twenty second year he was attacked by so violent a malady, that in less than nine days the valiant and athletic youth lay a corpse upon his bed; round which his mother, aunts and cousins were kneeling in silent grief. But when the time arrived for interring the body, he, whom they supposed dead, suddenly opened his eyes and to the surprise and joy of his family and relatives rapidly recovered. Where he had been, during this interval of his earthly existence, whether he had been waking or in a dream, remained a secret. All that was known was that this occurred upon the Sylvester night, “three quarters of a year, after Kate was fifteen years old.”

When the winter was passed and fine weather had returned, the Count Palatine threatened the town of Heilbronn with a great calamity, for he wanted nothing less than to deprive it of its freedom. Both knights and citizens armed themselves, therefore, and the market place rung with preparations for combat. Count Walter von Strahl was the foremost on this occasion to join his patriotic townsmen. Before he departed however he galloped up to the house of the gunsmith Friedeborn, armed *cap à pié*. Having alighted from his horse, he bowed his head almost to the ground in order to pass beneath the door with the high plumes which nodded on his helmet. “Master,” cried he, “I am about to march against the Palatine who threatens to destroy our town. My anxiety to attack the

enemy is so great that I have burst my coat of mail. Take your tools, my friend, and mend it again, without my being obliged to undress myself." Friedeborn was ready to do what he was desired, so he begged his customer to sit down on a chair in the middle of the room and set himself to work having previously cried out to his servants "Hollah there! Bring wine and ham, wherewith to regale the Lord Walter."

Whilst the valiant knight's charger stood neighing and pawing the ground in the care of his squires, Catherine opened the door and entered carrying on her head a large silver tray, on which were placed bottles, glasses and viands of various kinds. Had she seen the clouds open and the glorious visage of the Almighty shining therefrom, she could have not felt more astounded than she did, on beholding the knight. Indeed she was so agitated that she let fall the tray, tankards and viands. Pale as death, she clasped her hands as if to pray and with her head reclining on her bosom she knelt before him, speechless and fascinated as if she had been struck by lightning. Her father justly alarmed at this, lifted her up, but she clung to him in order to prevent herself from falling again and stared with burning cheeks at the Count, as if he were an apparition. — "What in the name of the blessed Virgin ails thee, child?" exclaimed he gazing at her with great astonishment, whilst the whole household came running in to enquire, what had befallen their beloved young mistress. After staring about for a while in a wild and agitated manner, her look became more tranquil and she was

so far restored as to permit her father to complete his work. As soon as it was finished the Count stood up and looked thoughtfully and tenderly at the little maiden whose head scarcely reached to his shoulder. He then stooped over her, kissed her forehead and exclaimed in a soft voice. "God bless thee!" after which he left the house. — But he had no sooner mounted his war horse and rode out of sight ere the maiden appeared at one of the windows and lifting up her hands to heaven cast herself headlong from a balcony at least thirty feet high; alas, her gentle body fell upon the pavement and, altho' she escaped with life, she broke both her legs immediately above the knees. The knight, in the mean time, having turned round saw that a crowd had collected before the house, but being ignorant of the cause he pursued his route.

The war with the Count Palatine ended to the satisfaction of the citizens of Heilbronn. But Count Walter in lieu of returning home continued his chivalrous adventures. It happened in the middle of summer that he was one day on a journey to Strasburg and being oppressed by the heat he stretched himself to sleep on a cool and shady bank near the Rhine.— Having awoken after a short repose, to his astonishment he found Catherine slumbering at his feet, as if she had fallen there from the heavens; so he hastily exclaimed to his squire: "What do I see! Surely this is Kate of Heilbronn!"

At these words she opened her eyes, replaced her

bonnet which had fallen off her head and behaved exactly as if she had been overcome by sleep in her father's garden. When the knight asked her, what brought her so far from Heilbronn, she replied: "I have business, noble Lord, that calls me to Strasburg, but being afraid to venture alone through these woods, I joined company with you." The knight supplied her with refreshments, gave her a guide, who was to conduct her to Strasburg and springing upon his steed pursued his journey.

In the evening he reached an inn and was about to retire to rest, when his servant, Gottschalk, entered and informed him, that the girl was below and requested permission to pass the night in his stable. The Count ordered his groom to give her some straw to repose upon and retired to rest. The next evening the same thing happened; in short a similar scene took place every day during the whole course of his journey. The knight permitted it, for the sake of the old man her father, saying to himself: "When I return to Heilbronn, he will thank me for bringing back his daughter." In the mean time Gottschalk had grown as much attached to the girl, as though she were his own child and he therefore showed her every kind of kindness and attention.

At Strasburg the Count resided at the Archbishop's palace and was surprised that Kate likewise came thither, as if she formed a part of his suite. This however displeased him, so one day seeing her at the stable door, he went up to her and enquired what

business brought her to Strasburg? Kate blushed up to the very eyes and answered: "Oh my Lord! you already know the cause." It then occurred to him that the girl was come on his account and he resolved immediately to send a messenger to Heilbronn not only to apprise her father that she was with him but to request him to hasten forthwith to the castle of Strahl to convey her home.

The old man was not in a very good humour when the message reached him, for he could only explain the whole affair between Kate and the knight, by attributing to the latter the art of witchcraft.

He recollected that, after she had broken her legs she was carried to her bed and that she laid there six weeks without moving; but, although tormented by a violent fever, neither that or the delirium of her brain could induce her to pronounce a single word, that could give a clue to her thoughts. Scarcely had she recovered when one morning, ere the first rays of the rising sun had gilded the Church spire, she hastened down stairs and was about to cross the threshold when her father seeing her exclaimed: "Whither art thou going?" "To join Count Walter von Strahl," answered she and disappeared.

Unable to follow her the forsaken and broken hearted father remained at home cursing his undutiful daughter, but still more deeply cursing her wicked seducer. No sooner however did the Count's messenger arrive than he quickly set out to liberate and bring her home. The Count received Friedeborn with as much



kindness as the latter displayed irritation; nay, the old man carried his suspicion with regard to the innocent nobleman so far that, on entering his house, he sprinkled himself over with holy water. The Count ingenuously related to him the whole affair and then conducted the afflicted father into the stable, where Kate was occupied in cleansing a sword. But no sooner did she perceive the old man, than, pale as ashes, she fell at the Count's feet and begged of him to protect her from her own father. Friedeborn stood for a moment petrified, then, ere the Count could recover from his own astonishment, he threw his hat in his face, as if to chase away some horrid apparition and then took to his heels as if the devil and his legions were at his back.

The blacksmith knew however that there existed a secret tribunal, who judged impartially both high and low. He therefore hastened to accuse the Count before this high court, as guilty of witchcraft and seduction. The Count appeared on the first summons bringing with him the trembling maiden, who was likewise cited, but the simplicity and truth of his narrative clearly convinced the judges how ill-founded were the charges brought against him. Indeed, he was fully vindicated by the maiden's spotless and unsullied innocence, which was elicited in the most satisfactory manner by the cross examination of the high assembly.

Count Walter von Strahl was acquitted, and after he had forbidden Kate again to appear at his castle,

old Friedeborn was entrusted with the paternal care of the body of his child. Yes her body — for her soul, which was beyond the limits of human power remained, as before, with her beloved Lord who like a flash of lightning had entered her young heart and completely set it on fire. On the other hand Walter in despite of his apparent indifference and coldness, had long been deeply affected by the attachment and charms of the lovely girl; but there were three things which served to repress the feelings that were rising in his bosom. One was: his principles of honor which made him reject with horror the base crime of seduction: the second was the prejudices of his rank, which prevented him from gratifying his passion by making her his lawful wife and the third was a secret between him and God, but as it afterwards came to light, it may here be related.

On that Sylvester night, in which the Count von Strahl lay like a corpse on his bed, he thought a cherub came to him and taking him gently by the hand led him in the dark to the bed chamber of a maiden, who lay sleeping on a white bed with a red quilt, with nothing on her person but her night garment.

It seemed to him, that, on his entrance, the charming maiden first fondly gazed upon him with her large black eyes and exclaimed. “Elisabeth!” Then radiant with joy, she had risen and thrown herself on her knees before him, saying: “My Lord, my noble Lord.” The angel then told him, that she was an emperor’s child and showed him a dark mole

on her shoulder, observing that he might recognize her by that mark—but when he was about to examine her face in order to obtain more certain means of recognition lights were brought and every thing disappeared. When he opened his eyes he was lying on his bed in the castle of Strahl and his mother and cousins were weeping around him. He had never communicated this occurrence to any human being, but he did not the less deeply cherish the remembrance of it in his own bosom. He was in fact so convinced that heaven itself destined him to marry an Emperor's daughter that he believed it unlawful on his part to think of any other maiden and he, therefore, quickly silenced every inward emotion favourable to Catherine. He consequently strove by every means to forget the whole affair and turned his attention to war and other chivalrous occupations.

When Kate saw herself separated from her knight, she desired nothing more in this world, than to be instructed in religious duties by his friend, the prior of an Augustine convent, preparatory to her becoming a nun of the order of St. Ursuline. Her father granted her request with great sadness, indeed one evening, on her arriving at the gate of the said convent, the thought of burying his child for ever in a cloister, affected him so painfully, that he himself proposed to her to proceed once more to the castle of Strahl. "There," said he "on the declivity of the hill, under the shade of the lilactrees, where thou wert fondest of sitting thou mayest reflect upon the matter ere it be too late."

Kate gazed at him with her large, melancholy eyes and said. "I dare not do so, the Count has forbidden me." Upon this her father offered to obtain the Count's permission. This act of paternal love, had such an effect upon her that she forthwith resolved not to take the veil and still less to go to the lilac bank, but to say her prayers at the Priory and then return to Heilbronn with her father.

It happened at that time that Count Walter von Strahl was at variance with a Rhenish nobleman of the name of Stein. The latter, not being able to overcome his opponent by open violence, had hired a servant whom he sent to the castle of Strahl with directions, if possible, to obtain service there and this for the most vile and treacherous purposes. An opportunity for putting his plans into execution having arrived the Rhenish Count despatched two messengers with letters, one for Peter Quanz, the treacherous servant at the castle of Strahl, in which he acquainted him, that precisely at twelve he would be before the gates with his troops and would expect his aid from within. — The second was to Hatto, prior of the Augustine convent, where Kate was going to pass the night, to inform him, that he would visit him late in the evening in order to receive absolution.

Now divine providence so ordained it that the letters were changed and thus the one destined for Peter fell into the hands of Catherine. Thus was she apprized of the danger which threatened her knight. Regardless of the perils of the road and of the darkness of the night, she

immediately set out for the castle of Strahl, into which however she would certainly not have obtained admittance at such an hour, had not Gottschalk fortunately seen her approach and conducted her to his master's presence. The latter no sooner saw her than he waxed exceeding wrath and the more so since he imagined he had got rid of her for ever. He therefore severely rebuked Gottschalk for admitting her into the castle and addressing himself to the faithful Catherine he not only reviled her as a wanton and vagabond but would not allow to open her lips. Nay more when she held up the letter and insisted on obtaining a hearing, he took down a whip from the wall to drive her out, for at the moment he thought more of the accusation before the secret tribunal and all the embarrassment the maiden's love had already occasioned him than of the duties of chivalry.

In despite however of his rage, Kate succeeded in delivering to him the letter through Gottschalk. Upon this the knight's heart was immediately touched with contrition and gratitude. Conscious of the peril from which the heroic girl had saved him, he immediately took measures to frustrate the intended attack on his castle. The most difficult thing was to meet the eye of poor Kate whom he had so ill-treated and to whom he was so deeply indebted. He treated her indeed kindly and sought to atone for his injustice, but there was no rancour in the maiden's heart; for, what injustice could a knight who had been conducted to her bed side by an Angel of God, be guilty of in her sight!

Whatever he did or said was therefore looked upon as just and right by her.

Henceforth Kate never quitted her beloved knight. She brought him his arms when he was going forth to battle; she followed him through forests and camps; she attended him across rivers and mountains and through heat, cold and perils of all kinds; in short there was no more talk of her returning to Heilbronn. The Count nevertheless conducted himself towards her with the same frigid indifference. He scarcely seemed to remark her presence and never uttered a single word that could sooth her heart. — But at the same time he knew that care would be taken of her for she had a true protector in old Gottschalk. When peace was restored, Kate again returned to Strahl and took up her old quarters in the stable. But her favourite couch was under the lilac tree before the castle, so she built herself a hut beneath its branches whose foliage afforded her shelter from the burning rays of the sun. Gottschalk in the mean time had often found her sleeping. He remarked on these occasions that her dreams were disturbed and that she either whispered or spoke in a voice as sweet as that of nightingales warbling on a summer's night. He consequently related all he saw and heard to his master, who determined, after due reflection, to take an early opportunity of watching her during her sleep.

It was upon a mild summer's evening, that the knight descended the steps of his castle and directed his steps towards Kate's lilac tree, where he found her

reposing with flushed cheeks and clasped hands. After gazing at her for a long time with deep emotion he resolved to try if it were not possible to discover, why this girl, whose wealth and beauty were sufficient to ensure the happiness of the first citizen in all Suabia should follow him about like a dog through good and bad fortune. It occurred to him to ask her some of those questions during her sleep, which he had so often put to her whilst she was awake, but to which he had never received any other reply than. "Ah, my Lord, you are already well acquainted with the cause." He therefore approached her softly, knelt down beside her and gently encircling her waist with his arm, addressed to her various questions, to all of which she returned rational answers. At last he came to his chief query. "Hast thou lost thy heart to me?"

"Alas—yes"—replied Kate.

"But I love thee not, whatever thou mayst think," answered Walter?

"You deceive yourself," said she smiling, "for you are desperately enamoured of me."

The knight started for she had told the truth. He was however more astonished than pleased at the assurance with which she ventured to confess her sentiments. A breeze of wind, rising from the valley, chancing at this moment to blow aside her scarf it caused Lord Walter no slight surprise, for his eye immediately fell upon a mole, such as the cherub showed to him during his Sylvester vision. And in an instant he saw and was fain to acknowledge that Catherine

was the maiden who had appeared to him on that occasion.

As he stood there gazing upon her she awoke, and greatly was she terrified at being thus surprised by Lord Walter who, she feared would rebuke her as he was wont to do. But in lieu of exhibiting anger he addressed her in gentle accents and forthwith ordered Gottschalk to prepare suitable apartments for her in the castle.

Henceforth his hours of solitude were occupied in meditating upon this singular occurrence. "How is it possible" said he to himself "that this girl can be an Emperor's daughter!" but that she was so, he was as firmly convinced as that there was a sky above the castle. He therefore did not hesitate to confide the matter to his confessor and other grave personages and to ask their advice. No one, however, could relieve his anxiety or aid him in solving the mystery.

It was in the midst of this perplexity that the Count was summoned to the Emperor's court at Worms. Friedeborn, whose accusations had been rejected by the secret tribunal, having heard that Lord Walter had declared that his Kate was the Emperor's daughter, thereby injuring the good fame of his deceased wife, lost no time also in hastening to the foot of the throne, in order to prefer his complaints to his Imperial Majesty in person. The Emperor, as was his custom, listened attentively and was highly incensed at the knight's proceedings, for although he was conscious



of many little peccadillos, yet being otherwise a just and virtuous Prince, he was grievously vexed at seeing himself so publicly exposed.

On the other hand the Count was no less displeased than his royal master at his private affairs being thus trumpeted forth to the world, so he declared before the Emperor, that it never was his intention to give any credit to such a report. This declaration would have contented his Imperial Majesty, but Friedeborn doggedly insisted upon a trial by mortal combat between him and the Count. Consequently the latter at last lost all patience and cried out before the whole Court, that Kate was in truth the Emperor's child and that he would instantly prove it with his sword, which he forthwith drew from its scabbard and Friedeborn having followed his example the latter, after a few thrusts, was disarmed and slightly wounded.

When the Emperor beheld his accuser victorious, the colour fled from his cheeks, but a light was suddenly kindled in his memory, for he recollected to have been at Heilbronn, seventeen years before, at the marriage of his sister the Countess Palatine. He also remembered to have been present at a public festival and to have chatted rather freely in an arbour with a pretty citizen's wife to whom he had not revealed his rank, although he had presented her with a golden medal bearing his own effigy. Now, as it appeared upon inquiry, Kate had received this identical piece of money as a precious legacy from her mother, on her death bed. There was no possibility

of denying this evidence, so the Emperor, decided on settling the business amicably, fearing lest a second cherub should descend from heaven and announce the secret to all the world. He therefore requested the humbled Friedeborn to surrender the child to his Imperial care. The latter having no means of refusing, gave his consent and the Emperor forthwith acknowledged her as his adopted daughter, under the name of Catherine of Swabia, and announced his intention of marrying her, with exceeding pomp to Count Walter von Strahl, adding that Friedeborn might then pass the rest of his life in peace and tranquility with the young couple.

This proposal satisfied all parties. A few days afterwards the court of the Imperial castle glittered with all the pomp of chivalry and the gentle Catherine, mounted upon a beautiful white palfrey and surrounded by a bevy of lovely damsels and gallant knights, was led to the hymeneal altar by the brave Count Walter von Strahl.