

As the deposed monarch Henry proceeded on his way to this latter place, he chanced to look around upon his escort and remarked amongst them the soldier, who had guarded his door at Klapp. Having subsequently applied to the German people to assist him against his ungrateful son it was this faithful adherent who accompanied him in his flight from the place of his captivity.

BROMSER AND GISELA.

Although the whole Rheingau abounds in scenery of the utmost beauty, no part can be compared to the vicinity of Rudesheim, both as regards its picturesque situation and the number of chivalrous feats for which its neighbourhood was celebrated in former times, not to mention the mellow richness of that delicious wine which has served to spread its renown to the farthest quarters of the globe. Its celebrity on this score is of no recent date, for it was Charlemagne himself, who amused himself, whilst manœuvring his army at Ingelheim, with planting the adjacent mountains with vine plants from France, and he often ascended to

the topmost crags to gaze upon the smiling panorama, which from its varied hues and changing forms presented to him a vivid image of the most distant portions of his vast empire.

The little tower which nestles at the foot of the hills, is still remarkable for its four castles and its Franconian hall. These goodly remnants of the days of chivalry, combined with various old monuments, tales and legends still keep alive the memory of the renowned family of the Bromser's, who sprung from the Lily branch of the Lords of Rudesheim. In short, history, tradition and the rich juice of the grape seem to have combined in contributing to the glory of that name which forms the subject of the following legend.

The period with which our story is connected is that when Bernhard de Clairvaux raised his standard and voice at Spire and enthusiastically excited his hearers to follow him to the holy war. Nor did he preach in vain, for of the many noble knights and gallant squires who heard his pious words, there was not one, who did not readily offer his life and fortune for the deliverance of that blessed land, where the Redeemer suffered and where the glorious work of salvation was accomplished. Amongst the foremost of those who eagerly affixed the red cross upon their mantles was Hans Bromser, Lord of Rudesheim, whose beloved wife had recently been removed to a better world leaving him an only daughter, whose budding charms bade fair to outrival all that the Rheingau possessed most graceful and lovely.

The parting between the fond parent and his child was heart-rending, but Hans consoled himself with the thought that he was about to fight for the honour of the Christian faith and the eternal redemption of his own soul. We will pass over the many adventures and perils encountered by the warrior pilgrims ere they set foot upon the sacred soil of Palestine. All we shall say is that many days had not elapsed ere the Saracens felt the weight of the German battle-axes and fled in terror from the banner of the chivalry of Rudesheim. Valliant amongst the most brave, Bromser upon all occasions where peril was to be found was seen amidst the foremost ranks, so that he was distinguished above all others for his prowess and his name, honoured by the Franks, was feared by the unbelievers.

It once happened that the Christian host, pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of a shady grotto, whence bubbled a cool spring, which invited the warriors to quench their burning thirst in its limpid waters. But as they approached to drink, a hideous dragon, which had selected this spot as its retreat, rushed hissing from this cave threatening death to the first adventurer that dared draw near. Notwithstanding the want of water and excruciating thirst of the Christians, no one was bold enough to encounter so fearful an enemy, until the Lord of Rudesheim seeing the distress of his companions in arms gallantly offered to rid them of the monster.

Bracing on his polished armour and firmly grasping

his two edged sword, he fell upon his knees, uttered a short prayer and advanced towards the horrible cave. No sooner did the dragon discover the approach of a human being, than he arose and with flaming eyes and wide extended jaws darted upon the knight. But Bromser nothing daunted placed his right foot firmly on the ground and extending his sword arm thrust his blade down the monster's throat, at the moment it opened its hideous jaws to seize him. Maddened with pain the brute recoiled one or two paces back, but ere it could again rush to the attack Bromser sprung forward and plunged his trusty weapon into its heart. In a moment more the beast lay weltering in bloody and convulsive agonies at his feet.

Having thanked the Almighty for his victory the victor unbuckled his armour and his helmet and stooped down to drink of the refreshing stream; but scarcely had he wiped the stains from his sword and quenched his thirst ere an ambushed host of unbelievers, mounted on fleet steeds, rushed suddenly upon him from behind a neighbouring sand hill. The foremost dashed upon Bromser, but was instantly felled to the ground by his redoubtable two edged sword. Another — and another shared a similar fate as standing like a lion at bay he dealt death and destruction around him. On a sudden, however, a blow from a sling struck his bare head and felled him to the earth. His assailants then rushed upon him and having disarmed and bound him, led him in triumph to

an adjoining castle where the crescent still bade defiance to the holy symbol of the crusaders.

Days passed away and the unfortunate Lord of Rudesheim continued unransomed in the dark and dreary solitude of his noisome prison, where he was compelled to listen to the distant though soul inspiring battle call of his friends and gaze through the gratings of his window upon his brave companions, at whose head he had so often fought and who were still fighting the fight of faith, while he himself remained inactive and enchained. Dejected and heart broken he withdrew from a sight so galling to one whose soul was enflamed by the thirst of glory, and casting himself upon his miserable bed hoped to find some balm for his throbbing heart.

At length sleep closed his eye lids, but his dreams were more frightful than his waking thoughts. In one of these dreams Gisela his adored daughter, whom he had left upon the banks of the Rhine, appeared before him. By her side stood a dark haired youth and Gisela raising her mild blue eyes beseechingly to heaven and stretching her longing arms towards her father, put her hand into the youth's hand and he pressed her to his bosom. Then all vanished; but presently the knight thought he heard a noise and he looked up, and there flowed the impetuous Rhine raging and foaming as it is wont to do when the winter floods increase its current. Upon this Bromser awoke, but a change had come ever his mind and his sole desire now was to return to his native land and to the castle

of his forefathers. After remaining for a short time in deep reflection, he fell upon his knees and swore to devote his only daughter to heaven, if God would deliver him from his present affliction and conduct him once more to the banks of his beloved Rhine. His prayer was heard; for on the following dawn the army of the crusaders attacked and took the castle and restored him to liberty.

Who is the pilgrim with scollop-shelled hat and staff, that strides along with such active steps, alternately praying and singing as he goes? See! he has already left the rich plains of Lombardy and the freezing regions of eternal ice far behind. Look how he descends the dangerous track that leads from St. Gothard into the valleys of fair Switzerland. His head is bent but not with age, for his eye is keen as that of the eagle and his hands and face are swarthy like those of one who has long sojourned beneath a southern sun. It is Hans Bromser, Lord of Rudesheim. No longer able to resist his desire to revisit Germany, he had abandoned his brothers in arms and left behind him the snow-clad Alps. Wildly did his heart throb and brightly did his eye glance as he came nearer and nearer to his home. At last, when his eye caught the first sight of the castle of his forefathers, standing proudly above the rushing stream, his heart overflowed, he sank down upon the bank and moistening it with burning tears he poured forth his thanks to God for having thus vouchsafed to bring him in safety to his dear loved

father-land. Tho, overpowered by his feelings and weak with conflicting emotions Bromser arose and ascended towards his castle, where every object he met reminded him of the days of his youth, of his first love, his departed wife and beloved child. As he drew nearer he perceived a maiden radiant with youth and loveliness standing upon the balcony which overhung the stream and gazing at the last golden rays of the setting sun as they glittered upon the glorious landscape. As she hung forward her fair hair waved in luxuriant curls, as if to catch the evening breeze which swept in gentle murmurs o'er the flood.

It was Gisela! the bud had now become a blooming rose. The pilgrim paused awhile lost in admiration and then entered the castle yard. But no one recognized him; even the old boar hound he had reared rose surlily and growled as at a beggar, for the deep brown colour of his complexion with the broad brimmed hat which concealed his noble head and his long beard made it impossible even for his oldest vassals to know him. Having at length attracted the notice of one of his serfs he desired to be conducted to the Lord of the castle. But the man answered that his Lord was far away at the Holy sepulchre and that no one lived there but that Lord's only daughter. "Lead me to her presence," replied the Pilgrim. "I have tidings of her father, and bear his signet as a proof."

Upon seeing the well known ring engraved with the Lily of the Bromser arms, the menial summoned

the grey haired senechal, who without asking any questions, bade the stranger follow him up the stone staircase and then across the ancient hall filled with the armour and spoils of his forefathers. At length they reached the door of Gisela's bower and the knight was ushered into the presence of his child. In an instant more, the pilgrim cast aside his hat and cloak and then exclaiming : " Gisela! Gisela! my dear, dear child" he extended his arms and pressed his beloved daughter to his agitated heart.

The first intoxication, the first bliss of meeting having passed, the knight took his daughter's hand and visited all the apartments of his castle ;—here enjoying the welcome of the faithful vassals whom he had left behind and there stopping to gaze upon the surrounding country, whose image was unalterably graven upon his memory. He then retired to enjoy a short repose and to converse with his child on all that had occurred to him and her during their long separation. Notwithstanding this effusion of soul there evidently existed a certain degree of restraint, a secret misgiving on the part of both, which prevented that entire confidence which otherwise would have existed between the father and daughter. Was it because they had been strangers to each other during so many years that their overflowing hearts could not express all they felt, or did it spring from fatal recollections on one side, and gloomy forebodings on the other? It was clear that something existed which prevented the communing of their hearts. For some

time both sat in silence, watching the passing inhabitants of the little town or gazing upon the vessels as they cast anchor near Hatto's tower to pay the river toll, which rendered this small rock so valuable, that there was not a single Lord, holding a hand's breath of land in the neighbourhood, but was ready to wage war to obtain possession of it.

Suddenly, however, Bromser's attention was attracted by seeing a horseman gallop round the corner of the castle wall and dash into the inner court. He was not long in discovering that the rider was a young knight, who throwing himself from his saddle ran up the staircase and in an instant more stood upon the balcony where the two were seated. The stranger, for such he was to Bromser, was about to hasten towards Gisela, but her unusual embarrassment and the imposing look of him who sat beside her and who arose at the same moment, rivetted his feet to the threshold.

For awhile there was a dead silence, but Gisela recovering herself exclaimed: "Father, dear father. This is the knight of Falkenstein, the Lord of yonder castle." Then turning to the stranger she added: "Sir knight of Falkenstein, this is my beloved father whom Providence has brought safely home from the holy war." The embarrassed youth drew nearer, intending to embrace the Lord of Rudesheim; but Bromser received him coldly for he quickly remarked Gisela's blushes and discovered the object of the stranger's visit; whereupon his countenance

gloomed more darkly than before, for the remembrance of the vow he had made to heaven came vividly o'er his soul. On the other hand the young Falkenstein was not less surprised than alarmed, for he was entirely unconscious of the father's return and his heart misgave him when he saw the coldness of his manner. The interview was but of short duration and both separated mutually dissatisfied. Gisela remained the while with downcast eyes and did not trust herself to address a syllable to her lover, nor he to her, especially as Bromser soon dismissed his unwelcome visitor in a hurried and unfriendly manner.

As soon as the last clang of the retreating horse's hoof had died away, Bromser thus sternly addressed his daughter. — "Gisela!" cried he, "what brings the knight of Falkenstein thus uninvited to my walls, as if he were already the owner of the castle?" There was a pause. "Gisela, my child" continued he in a milder tone and taking her hand, "trust thy father and reply with candour to his enquiries. How couldst thou, a modest maiden, the daughter of a Bromser, or how could the instructress of thy youth, whom on my departure I placed over thee, allow this?"

Gisela now regained her presence of mind and determined on speaking the truth.

"Wax not angry father, I will tell you all. While yet a child I often saw Otto. A more noble or valiant knight does not exist upon the Rhine. All love him! Why should not I?" added she blushing as she spoke, "when I hear his praise from every mouth?"

Bromser's features betrayed deep emotion and his lips quivered. A fearful contest arose in his bosom between paternal affection and that unbending severity which, through a long life passed amidst camps and the horrors of war, had become natural to his disposition.

"Gisela!" exclaimed he after a pause, "Hearken to my irrevocable words. — Thou must never more see the Falkenstein. A union between thee and him is utterly impossible."

"Father, father, in mercy recall thy dread command," stammered out the terrified, half frantic, girl, "Otto is the idol of my soul, he is my betrothed!"

Bromser made no other answer than a fierce and startling. — "Ah! is it so?" — as he struck his clenched fist upon the stone balustrade with a force that made the very castle shake to its foundations. But he soon contrived to subjugate his emotion and inwardly concealing his passion, forced himself into seeming calmness and tranquility.

"Thou hast done this without my assent, without my knowledge," continued he with assumed coldness; "thou mayest thank thyself alone for the consequences. Hearken, girl," added he, whilst his dark features gleamed with a fierce expression, "thou art no longer free — a higher power holds dominion over thy fate. Wouldst thou have thy father cast away his soul, or break his vow? Confined in a gloomy prison, menaced with the vengeance of the Saracens, I vowed, should I regain

my freedom, to devote thee to Heaven. God heard my prayer. Liberty came upon the morning beams and thy fate was irrevocably fixed.”

At this, Gisela threw herself at his feet and firmly clasped his knees.

“Father,” said she with a voice nearly choked with anguish, “if thou wilt not that I should become the wife of Otto, in mercy assign me a chamber in thy castle. In the name of the blessed Redeemer, whose sepulchre thou didst aid to rescue from the wicked infidels, let me remain here—where thou hast carried me in thine arms. Suffer me to watch and attend thee in thy old age. Do not condemn me to pine away my youth within a dreary convent.”

But she sued in vain. Her prayers were lost upon her father. Her opposition served but to inflame his choler — and in a voice of thunder he replied.

“Thy supplications are useless. My resolution is unchangeable. The only favour that I will grant is that thou may'st select the spot where thou wilt seek repose. Beware! Thy disobedience will bring down a father's curse upon thy head.”

At this the unhappy maiden sank exhausted on the floor where Bromser left her. When her senses returned her mind was bewildered. — The terrors of a convent, of a living grave, appeared to her like some dreadful apparition. The idea of renouncing the dear object of her only love and all the joyful blessings of the world for ever was too much for her reason. The thought maddened her. Darkness

encompassed and racked her soul. Desolation chilled her mind; whilst on the other hand her father's horrible curse hovered over her! As Bromser entered and cast himself upon one of the high backed, antique chairs, his daughter rose and listened first to the dull plashing of the flood beneath the window, as it mingled its hissing murmurs with the noise of the thunder which boomed and roared amongst the distant mountains. A cold, death like shivering fell upon her and she stood for a while like a marble statue, motionless and sad. Then approaching her father, she threw her arms about his neck, but shed no tears. Then solemnly raising her hand towards heaven she exclaimed: "Father, mayest thou never repent thy vow! My resolution also is irrevocable." Then uttering the words: "Otto! Otto! I come," she sprang to the window and plunged headlong into the stream beneath. Bromser followed her but he only perceived the fluttering of a white garment in the twilight and heard some heavy body fall into the river. A fearful foreboding seized him. Calling on the name of his daughter he rushed to the balcony, but the bright flashings of the lightning only glared upon a white form drifting in the flood. "Gisela! Gisela!" exclaimed the wretched father. The wind and breakers overpowered his agonized voice and the thunder alone responded to his lamentations.