

## ADOLPHUS OF NASSAU

and Imagina.

The transitory repose, which Germany had enjoyed during the active reign of Rodolph of Hapsburg, terminated at the death of that Monarch and a terrible war once more desolated the fruitful plains of Thuringen. The Count Adolphus of Nassau, whom the Electoral Princes of the Empire had selected as Rudolph's successor though of resolute character and great personal bravery, was not distinguished for the firmness of his government, while his vain endeavours to aggrandize his own family, were more prejudicial to himself than to his numerous enemies, who united under the banner of Albert of Austria, son of the late

Emperor. This Prince only considered Adolphus as the usurper of the imperial crown, which he expected to have obtained without opposition.

A favourable opportunity of extending his own possessions soon presented itself, however, to the Emperor. The Landgrave Albert, surnamed the Degenerate, on account of his unnatural conduct towards his wife, Margaret of Hohenstaufen, and his sons Frederic and Dietzman, whose sad fate has been so often recalled to memory, then reigned in Meisen and Thuringen. Desiring to disinherit his sons, with whom he was continually at variance, he sold his possessions to the Emperor, during the Imperial assembly at Nuremberg, for the sum of 12000 silver marks. It is not however our purpose to discuss Adolphus' right, but, by recounting the misfortunes and sad events to which this action gave rise, to show that it was alike dishonourable and imprudent.

In vain was Albert the Degenerate opposed by the young Landgraves. For among other misfortunes the town of Eisbnach the ancient residence of the Princes, situated amidst extensive forests of oaks and pines at the foot of the verdant mountain crowned by the Wartburg, was taken by their adversary. The most atrocious acts of cruelty and ferocity were committed, the inhabitants were plundered and the neighbouring villages were pillaged and destroyed.

During the period that the Emperor's army lay encamped at Freiburg in Austria, Adolphus one day accompanied a small detachment with a view of recon-

noitring the country which was overrun by armed bands, supported by the peasantry. The Emperor having encountered one of these bands, the combat was not long doubtful, the Thuringians took to flight, but Adolphus received a dangerous wound in the arm. The camp being too far off, for the wounded Prince to be carried there, he was obliged to seek temporary shelter in the immediate neighbourhood. Therefore horsemen were dispatched, for that purpose, who soon returned with intelligence that they had discovered a convent upon the skirts of a forest, at no great distance.

It was consequently determined by the Imperial attendants that they should forthwith proceed thither with their royal master. Having reached the outer gate, the horn sounded and admission was demanded, but the guardians of the nunnery declared that their duty and the rules of their order granted no admittance to strangers. At length having made known the Emperor's rank, the wounded Prince was permitted to enter one of the outer courts accompanied by one of his attendants, the greater part of his escort being compelled to take up their quarters in the neighbourhood, while the rest returned to the army with the intelligence of what had occurred.

In the mean time the holy inmates of the convent took the greatest care of Adolphus, whose wound proved to be of a more serious nature than was at first supposed, especially as the Emperor's eagerness to rejoin the army, added to the natural impetuosity of

his character, increased the violence of the fever. During the long fits of delirium caused by the severity of his wound, he at one moment thought himself reposing in the dreary silence of the grave and then again he fancied himself amidst the din of combat and fury of the battle field. It was during the intervals of these fits that he imagined he saw a tutelary angel hovering over him, endeavouring to alleviate his sufferings and to wipe from his burning forehead the trickling dew drops caused by the excess of his sufferings. At last these deadly trances ceased and the wounded Monarch became conscious of his situation. At first he was unable to recall the events which had placed him in his present situation. At length his scattered senses returned and as he lay revolving in his mind the deeds that were done and others still to be performed, to his surprise he saw a beautiful female form kneeling by his side. Her habit bespoke her to be a novice. It was in fact she who had been his angel, who had watched over him during his illness and refreshed his parched lips with healing draughts. From this time the Emperor quickly recovered. The vigour of his constitution triumphed over his remaining weakness and he was soon considered sufficiently strong to return to the army.

But a wound deeper than that which he had received in the combat now racked the monarch's heart. Nor was he the only sufferer; she who had so faithfully watched over him during his sickness, the lovely Imagina, shuddered at finding that a profane love had

taken possession of that heart, which should have been devoted alone to heaven. She had spared no efforts however to combat the rising flame. Racked by contending feelings she sometimes wished for the arrival of the moment, which was to separate her from Adolphus, and then again her heart trembled at the idea of losing him perhaps for ever.

These struggles of her mind did not escape the Emperor's notice. He soon discovered not only that the passion which enflamed his own breast had communicated itself to that of the lovely Imagina, but he even divulged to her his secret and implored her not to forsake him, as in her and her alone was centered his very existence. Duty opposed itself strongly to the Monarch's prayer, but human weakness yielded at last to the influence of mutual love.

The night preceeding the day of Adolphus' departure was passed by Imagina in sobs and tears. Prostrating herself upon the steps of the altar in the convent chapel, she attempted to soothe her tortured heart with the thought of being the guardian angel of him whom she loved and of being able, through his influence, to be the instrument of benevolence and charity. This hope somewhat appeased the voice of conscience and she rose with greater calmness.

The next day the Emperor departed, but dropping behind his escort, he waited the fall of night in the neighbourhood. As soon as darkness had begun to veil the surrounding scene, Imagina hastened to the convent gate, enveloped in a mantle. There she was

met by Adolphus, who lifted her upon his horse, and carried her to the camp, where he clothed her in the garb of a Page and concealed the adventure from all but one of his confidential servants. The whole of the country though not the hearts of its inhabitants, being reduced to submission Adolphus raised his camp and soon after returned to his beautiful Rhenish provinces.

At a small distance from the salubrious waters of Schwalbach on the banks of the Aar, there is a small hamlet inhabited by a few peasants, overlooked by the gloomy ruins of Adolphseck, which to this day bears the name of its founder.

It was to this spot where the clamours of the world could not penetrate, that the Prince of Nassau led his beloved. It was here that he enjoyed at her side a few hours of short lived stolen bliss during the brief intervals of repose that were left him by his restless life and the continual wars in which he was engaged.

But the enjoyment of the present was denied to Imagina. A presentiment of the future tormented her continually, when she fancied that the crime she had committed would meet its punishment even in this world. She also perceived that Adolphus became every day more serious and thoughtful, that the hopes he had formed of the future began gradually to vanish. His visits to the castle were less frequent and shorter; his love alone remained the same, but it had a certain tincture of melancholy which did not belong to his ardent temper and general manner.

As he one day arrived at the castle, he could no

longer conceal the truth from his beloved, who had waited for him with impatience. The long prepared tempest had burst above his head. The Electoral Princes, induced by promises and intrigues, besides being deceived in their hopes of finding in the Count of Nassau a weak Prince without any will of his own and only fit to execute their designs, had assembled a Diet at Mayence, where they deposed him and placed the crown upon the head of the Duke of Austria, his most bitter enemy. The greater part of the accusations against the Count of Nassau were false or unjust, but he was not a man, to submit patiently to an affront, which put both his honour and life at stake, especially as his influence in the Empire seemed strong enough to make head against his enemies. Although several encounters took place still matters remained in suspense, but the main body of the enemys army having reached the Rhine a bloody and decisive combat was inevitable.

The fear which Imagina now felt for her beloved prevented her from remaining at Adolphseck. She could not separate herself in the hour of danger from all that she held most dear. Having attired herself in light armour she quitted the castle, her eyes overflowing with tears at the recollection of the happiness she had enjoyed in its now deserted halls. At five leagues distance from the ancient city of Worms the immense plain of Gelnheim extends in almost interminable perspective far up the course of the lovely Rhine, having on its right the Harat mountains. It was in the convent of

Rosenthal near Gelnheim, that Imagina impatiently awaited the issue of the battle. Her heart was full of the most direful apprehensions, she could hardly find sufficient strength to recommend to God the cause and the preservation of her lover.

The day was near its decline, when intelligence of the Emperor's defeat was spread abroad. Frantic with grief Imagina flew from the convent and regardless of the tumult of battle wandered over the field of strife, calling upon her beloved Adolphus.

Nothing but confusion, carnage and plunder, met her eye. At length the unhappy girl reached the foot of an ancient oak where several bleeding victims lay stretched on the ground. She instantly threw herself with a terrible shriek upon one of the bodies. Never to rise again. Her heart had burst, she had breathed her last — embracing the mangled remains of the ill fated Emperor.

The Elector of Mayence who had been the principal instrument of Adolphus's death, but who now seemed to forebode his own lot, no sooner saw his enemy fall by the hands of Albert, than he ordered the body to be buried in the convent of Rosenthal, a resting place having been refused to it in the vault of the Emperors at Spire.

A cross with a short inscription, marks the spot where Adolphus fell and it is he who is still recalled to mind by the ruins of Adolphseck, although the implacable Albert caused the castle to be destroyed a short time after the battle of Gelnheim.