

EGINHARD AND EMMA.

It was a great, glorious and happy period, when the mighty Charlemagne held his court in the splendid imperial castle of Ingelheim. Fourteen children, the most costly and precious jewels of his royal diadem, stood beside his chair. But the eyes of the father rested with peculiar pleasure upon the youngest, who according to tradition was christened Emma. As marvelous for her beauty as she was admirable for every female virtue, the lovely girl eagerly sought every opportunity of enriching her mind with the treasures of science, while she neglected no means of improving the graces of her person. In short so fault-

less were her form, her face and mind, that had not christianity then shone in its fullest splendor, men might have worshipped her as the goddess Venus, once more descended from Olympus to win them back to paganism and idolatry.

The Emperor exceedingly approved of her intelligent direction of his domestic arrangements, for the beautiful Emma not only presided over her handmaids in the work room, but superintended the Imperial buttry, where she zealously and minutely regulated all matters connected therewith, especially such as concerned the appetite of her royal father, for to please him she could prepare and season his favourite food, a dish of savoury Roe buck, better than the most accomplished cook. While she was thus busily occupied the delighted Emperor would affectionately gaze upon her and call her "His beloved bee."

Emma, however, occupied herself much more with other matters, than her good, though severe father could have anticipated. For tho' her days were passed in domestic employments the hours of repose were devoted to softer joys.

Among the ministers of the great Charlemagne, was the young Eginhard, the most graceful, and withal the most learned and intelligent of the Imperial Counselors. Eginhard worshipped the beautiful Emma and his affection was returned with equal tenderness by his imperial beauty. Notwithstanding the acknowledged condescension and benevolence of Charlemagne, yet there was too vast a distance between

Emma and the youthful minister, to permit of their indulging in a single hope of obtaining the Emperor's sanction to their attachment. Their intercourse was consequently opposed by a thousand difficulties. Ere long this restraint became so oppressive that the youthful pair resolved to steal from the silent hours of night some solace, to atone for the wearisome privations of the day. It was therefore by the soft moonlight that they contrived to meet and to yield to the influence of those ideal visions of future happiness which were dispelled or blighted by the sunshine of reality.

Let us then fancy Eginhard admitted to the apartment of his adored Emma, where by the feeble light of the pale stars there no longer existed any distinction between the Emperor's daughter and his servant. Here in the silent time of night, free from the observation of men and alone with God, their hours were passed beside the open casement, in that calm holiness of affection, in which earth had no share. Conversing of worlds and creations little thought of by this world schildren, they confided to each other their deep concentrated feelings and now talked of scenes and images, holier and purer than those of earth.

It was during such hours, that Eginhard opened to her the rich stores of his great and powerful mind, and taught Emma to live, like him, a life of ideality and sentiment. Often when no voice save that of the lovely nightingale was heard upon the air and the glorious moon rode high in the bright firmament, they sat

together enjoying the silence of night. Emma would look out with ecstasy upon the richly wooded heights and lovely smiling valley; then raising her eyes upwards to the calm pure canopy of heaven overshadowing all, tears, pure as those of angels, bedewed her cheeks and her spirit seemed linked to earth, by no other bond than the small white hand which lay within that of her Beloved. But the autumnal blasts soon commenced and the high swelling Rhine poured forth its rushing flood with angry murmurs. The lovers would then draw closer together as they watched the gathering clouds, which gloomily portrayed their own darkened prospect.

It was upon a dark November evening, that they sat together heedless of the tempest's fury, when the sand-glass suddenly reminded them that the moment of separation had arrived. Emma, as usual, conducted Eginhard to the outer door of her apartment, his own chamber being situated at the opposite extremity of the castle court. No sooner however had she carefully unbarred the portal, than both started back with affright, for the wide space which Eginhard was compelled to traverse, was now sheeted with fresh fallen snow. Alas! what was to be done! — Poor Emma! Eginhard's footsteps from the threshold of her chamber to his own apartment would inevitably betray them. Her heart quailed at the idea of her father's anger and the scandal of the Court. The thought was insupportable. A short time only remained for deliberation, for the ruddy sun already tinged the

snow capped hills. Of a sudden however Emma be-
thought her of the stratagem, which has since fur-
nished subject for many a minstrel's lay. Raising the
knight upon her lovely shoulders, the generous mai-
den stepped swiftly and lightly over the white surface,
which now only betrayed the impression of a woman's
tapering foot.

As ill fate however ordered it Charlemagne also
had passed the whole night, not in love's dalliance but
absorbed in the anxious duties of his station. Having
signified his intention of partaking of the pleasures of
the chase on the following day, the Emperor approached
the casement and looked out upon the night ere he
retired to his couch. It was at that moment that the
unfortunate Emma made her appearance in the court-
yard laden with the knight, whom she no sooner depo-
sited in seeming safety than she bounded swiftly back
to her own apartment.

Oh, unhappy Emperor! how could slumber visit
thy weary eyelids after such a sight as that? To sleep
was impossible, Emma had murdered sleep. Day
had therefore scarcely dawned ere Charlemagne as-
sembled his ministers and seated himself in his chair
of state. Infinite was the terror of the bystanders
when they observed the stern marks of mingled grief
and wrath that furrowed the lofty brow of their august
Master. After a momentary silence the assembly was
startled by the following question.

“What punishment,” exclaimed the Emperor in a
deep and thrilling voice, “What punishment does an

Emperor's daughter merit, who wakes at midnight to receive the secret visits of a menial lover?"

The ministers meditated and consulted with one another; but knowing the wild and hasty spirit of their master they, with one voice, declared that in all affairs of love their counsel was—"forgiveness!" The Emperor mused awhile and then continued thus. "What punishment, I ask, does an inferior noble merit who dares intrude his midnight visits upon the apartments of an Emperor's daughter?"

The ministers by whom the young Eginhard was universally beloved, conjecturing who might be the offender, again considered and again replied: "In affairs of love our counsel is—"forgiveness."

Eginhard, who sat the lowest in the circle, alone remained silent. At length he arose and lifting up his voice, exclaimed with modest firmness: "He merits death!"

The Emperor regarded him for some moments without replying, then in accents that plainly indicated his emotion he answered: "No, not death — but exile. Let him and his paramour be exiled from all whom they have loved and be forgotten by all who have loved them." He then rose, and without adding a word dismissed his council.

Intelligence of this sentence was soon conveyed to Emma who wept as though her heart would break, yet she felt sensible that she could expect no milder sentence, she therefore calmly divested herself of her princely garments and removed the jewels from her

long, golden hair and girding around her slender form a coarse robe of dusky grey, bade a tender farewell to the place and handmaidens she so dearly loved and even to the birds and animals, she had reared and fostered. She then kissed her dove which perched upon her shoulder, hoping for its accustomed food, and having restored it to liberty, she obeyed her father's mandate.

Turning her back upon the imperial castle of her ancestors, the unhappy Emma sought a footpath laying to the right of the public road. She had advanced but a short distance, when as she wiped away the falling tears, with her auburn hair, another person approached, whose drooping head fell heavily upon his heaving bosom. It was Eginhard and his appearance caused the tears of Emma to flow faster than before. Thus they continued without uttering a word, until the footpath suddenly terminated in a narrow cleft between two rocks, where Emma, fearing to fall, extended her hand to her lover. Eginhard grasped it with emotion and pressed it to his heart.

Why I know not—but Emma wept no more. The shades of evening now fell fast around and threatened them with impenetrable and unsheltered darkness. Suddenly however a distant fire glimmered thro' the dark foliage. Exhausted and hungry the wanderers at length reached the cheering blaze, near which sat two charcoal burners enjoying their frugal meal. The beautiful eyes of Emma soon obtained not only a portion of the honest men's store, but a bed of leaves and moss. Eginhard leaving her

to the repose she stood so much in need of, seated himself beside the glowing embers and, being overcome with fatigue, soon closed his eyes and slumbered until morning dawn.

The sun was already high in the heavens, when the maiden awoke to the sad reality of her situation and the solitude of the forest. Leaving her place of repose, she sought Eginhard, whom she perceived standing mournfully at a distance. Approaching him, she extended her hand, saying with a melancholy smile "Whom but thee, have I now in the world, whom hast thou but me?" They then sunk into each others arms and wept. The colliers in the mean time had departed leaving them food sufficient for several days and also various working tools. The young pair immediately fell to work and soon erected a large and commodious cottage. Eginhard filled the interstices of the walls with moss and hung the interior with the skins of animals. Their dwelling being completed, he approached his beloved, saying with a timid voice: "Who will now bestow the blessing of the Lord upon our union?"

Emma replied not, but led him to a tall and slender tree, with whose pliant boughs she had formed a cross. Both knelt before the symbol of redemption and prayed for the divine blessing. Scarcely had they uttered this prayer ere a rustling of wings was heard above them and, in a moment more, Emma's dove descended upon her bosom, as a symbol of peace and heavenly favor. Long and tender was the em-

brace which then united the lovers, so that the sun had sunk beneath the horizon, when they entered their new habitation.

In the mean time the walls of Ingelheim re-echoed with the notes of sorrow. For Charlemagne incessantly mourned the absence of his favourite child. His hair turned grey and his features became so attenuated with grief that he was scarcely to be recognized. With his beloved daughter had disappeared the happiness of his life. He daily indulged in the chase to divert his sorrow and destroyed abundance of game, but there was none who now welcomed him so tenderly as once did Emma. The courtiers sighed for the return of the young pair and numerous were the secret messengers dispatched in search of them. But all was in vain, they had disappeared nor could any trace of them be discovered.

Five times had the golden harvest yielded to the sickle of the reaper, since the maiden had left her fathers halls. It was again autumn but the heath still gaily smiled under the cheering influence of an October sun and the air was still warm and redolent with the breath of flowers. The Emperor exhilarated by the beauty of the day proposed to extend the chase to the neighbourhood of the Odenwald. The Courtiers rejoicing at the reviving cheerfulness of their august Sovereign, merrily joined in the sport.

The evening had declined and the brilliant God of day had sunk behind the distant hills, when the Emperor found himself alone in the midst of a dense

wood. The hunting call, which he blew upon that mighty bugle horn whose fame has outlived its glorious possessors, remained unanswered, so that the royal huntsman had no alternative but to stretch his weary limbs upon the soft and dewy moss and thus resign himself to slumber. Suddenly however the brushwood beside him gave way and a stately roe bounded forward, closely followed by a lovely boy. The child no sooner perceived a tall and powerful man extended upon the heath, than he approached and offered his little hand. The heart of Charlemagne beat within him at the beauty and grace of the boy, who commenced playing with the Monarch's weapons and at last bounded into the forest, carrying with him the imperial huntsman's ponderous sword. The Emperor shouted after him but the little urchin heeded him not, so that Charlemagne was compelled to follow the child; in order to recover his weapon. After a short walk he reached an open space, upon which stood a charming cottage, surrounded by a grove of flowery shrubs. Before the door there sat a beautiful woman nursing an infant, behind whom the boy had concealed himself with the sword. Upon the approach of the noble stranger the female rose and courteously greeting him, desired to know his wishes. The Emperor had scarcely uttered a short reply, ere she disappeared with her infant into the cottage leaving him to gaze in vain astonishment, for he recognized her not. Five years absence — change of attire and her matronly appearance, had

but added to her loveliness, and the father's eye no longer saw in the stately and beautiful woman his once sylph-like and delicate Emma.

After an absence of a few moments, however, she returned with fruit and cold venison and entered into courteous conversation with her guest, who, to use his own recorded expression, could not conceal his surprise at discovering "such a bird in such a nest."

With the twilight there also appeared a stalwart huntsman, carrying a bag of game, whose long brown hair and thick curling beard rather added to than detracted from his noble appearance. He also extended to the stranger a friendly hand and entered into conversation. In the mean time the beautiful female prepared a dish of roe buck for their evening meal and the infant frolicked around the Emperor, who seemed to watch his graceful movements with a delighted eye.

Darkness had scarcely closed around when the female summoned them to the cottage and great was the astonishment of Charlemagne at the neatness of the apartment, which was hung with the most beautiful skins and adorned with feathers and glittering pebbles. It was truly an inviting abode. But a strange tremor agitated the Emperor as he glanced around the board, which was illuminated by an immense iron lamp suspended from the ceiling. All was arranged as it was formerly wont to be, at his own cheerful home, by his dear Emma. Mournful recollections of by gone days came over him and he raised his eyes

with mingled hope and fear upon his gentle hostess, until Emma, who could no longer restrain her emotion, suddenly threw herself before him and clasped his knees, whilst Eginhard dreading the Monarch's choler withdrew with his boy.

The Emperor however soon recalled him and assuring both of his forgiveness pressed them to his heart.

The clang of horns and the baying of hounds now resounded through the forest and the happy Charlemagne greeted his assembling suite with a loud "hollah". No sooner had his retinue dismounted than he led forth his children and presented them and their lovely infants to the surprised and delighted courtiers. Ere the moon had risen in the firmament the whole party were on their way to Ingelheim.

On the spot where Emma and Eginhard had resided for five years the former erected the beautiful cloister of Seligenstadt and, in due time, the remains of its lovely founder were deposited within its hallowed precincts.