

The Loreley

Part 1



A long time ago, when night in her dark garment would descend upon the Rhine near Coblenz, the soft voice of a woman could be heard from the Loreley rock, and a maiden of divine beauty appeared upon its summit. Her golden lock's flowed like a royal gown about her graceful shoulders and covered her snow-white raiment.

Woe to the boatsman who passed the rock at this hour! As the Greeks of old once were beguiled by ghostly songs, so was this hapless voyager allured by the beautiful siren into a sweet daze. Forgetting everything about him, he would steer towards the nymph and already dream of having reached her when the jealous waves would grab his boat and dash it treacherously against the rocks. The roaring waters of the Rhine would drown all cries of agony.

But the virgin, whom no one had ever approached, continued every night to sing soft and low till darkness vanished in the first rays of the sun.

Ronald was a proud youth and the boldest warrior at the court of his father, the Count Palatine at the Rhine. When he heard of this divine creature, his heart began

to burn with the desire to behold her, and he persuaded an old sailor to row him to the rock.

Twilight was brooding over the Rhine valley when the boat approached the gigantic cliff. The departing sun had long sunk behind the mountains, and now night was creeping on in silence, the evening star twinkling in the deep blue firmament.

Ronald gazed at this light in rapture for some time when a low cry from the boatsman interrupted his reveries. "The Loreley!" the old man whispered. "Do you see her, the enchantress?" The youth's only answer was a soft murmur as with wide-open eyes he looked up and lo, there she was. Yes, this was her, the wonderful creature! A glorious picture in a dark frame. Yes, that was her golden hair, and those were her flowing white garments.

She hovered up above the rocks combing her beautiful hair; rays of light surrounded her graceful head, revealing her charms in spite of the night and the distance, and as Ronald gazed, the maiden's lips parted, and a song thrilled through the silence, soft and plaintive like the sweet notes of a nightingale on a still summer evening. From the rock's summit she looked down into the hazy distance and cast the youth a rapturous glance which sank down into his soul and thrilled his whole frame.

His eyes were fixed on the celestial creature's face which told him a sweet story of love... and rocks, stream and brooding night all melted into a mist before Ronald's eyes. He saw nothing but the figure above, nothing but her radiant eyes. The boat crept along too slowly for him. He would no longer remain in it, and if his ear did not deceive him, this creature seemed to whisper his name with a melodious sweetness. Calling her name, young Ronald dashed into the water...

Then a death cry echoed from the rocks, and the waves sighed and washed over the youth's corpse.

The old boatman moaned and crossed himself, and as he did so, lightning tore the clouds asunder, and a peal of thunder roared over the mountains. Then the waves whispered gently below, and again from the heights above, sad and dying away, sounded the Loreley's song.