

# The Loreley

## Part 2



The sad news was soon brought to the Count Palatine who was overcome with grief and anger and ordered the false enchantress to be delivered up to him, dead or alive.

The next day a boat sailed down the Rhine, manned by four hardy and bold warriors. The leader looked up sternly at the great rocks which seemed to be smiling silently down at him. He had asked permission to dash the diabolical seductress from the top of the rocks into the foaming whirlpool below where she would find her certain death, and the count had readily agreed to this plan of retribution.

As the first shades of twilight were gliding softly over mountain and hill, the rock was surrounded by armed men, and the leader, followed by some of his more daring comrades, was climbing up the side of the rock the top of which was veiled in a golden mist, which the men thought were the last rays of sunset. But it was the bright gleam of light enshrouding the maiden who appeared on the rock, dreamily combing her golden

hair. She then took a string of pearls from her bosom, and with her slender white fingers bound it around her forehead. She cast a mocking glance at the threatening men approaching her.

“What are the weak sons of the earth seeking up here on the heights?” she mocked them, her rosy lips smiling scornfully. “You sorceress!” cried the enraged leader and added with a contemptuous grin: “We shall dash you down into the river below!” The maiden’s laughter echoed over the mountain. “The Rhine will come himself to fetch me!” she cried.

Then, bending her slender body over the precipice yawning below, she tore the jewels from her forehead, hurtled them triumphantly into the waters, and with a low sweet voice she sang: “Haste thee! Haste thee, o father dear! Send forth thy steeds from the clear waters that I may ride with the waves and the wind!”

A storm burst forth, and the Rhine river rose, covering its banks in foam. Two gigantic billows like snow-white steeds rose out of the depths, and carried the nymph down into the rushing current.

The terrified messengers returned to the count, bringing him the tidings of this strange event.

Ronald, whose body a chance wave had washed up on the banks of the river, was deeply mourned throughout the land.

From this time forth, the Loreley was never seen again. But sometimes, when night sheds her dark shadow on the hills, and the pale moon weaves a silver bridge over the deep green stream, the voice of a woman, soft and low, can be heard echoing from the weird heights of the rock.

The Loreley has vanished, but her charm still remains.

Thou findest it, O Wanderer, in the eyes of the rhineland’s maidens. It blooms on their cheeks, it lingers on their rosy lips. There thou wilt find its traces.

Arm thy heart, steel thy will, blindfold thine eye!

As a poet of the Rhine once wisely and warningly sang, “My son, my son, beware of the Rhine ....”

The Lorelei has vanished, but her charm still remains.

From “Legends of the Rhine” by Wilhelm Ruland (Hoursch & Bechstedt. Cologne, 1906)

Illustration by Eckart Breitschuh