

The Flaming Castle

Folk-Lore And Legends: German

German

Advanced
4 min read

Upon a high mountain in the Tyrol there stands an old castle, in which there burns a fire every night, and the flashes of that fire are so large that they rise up over the walls, and may be seen far and wide.

It happened once that an old woman in want of firewood was gathering the fallen twigs and branches upon this castle-crowned mountain, and at length arrived at the castle door. To indulge her curiosity she began peering about her, and at last entered, not without difficulty, for it was all in ruins and not easily accessible. When she reached the courtyard, there she beheld a goodly company of nobles and ladies seated and feasting at a huge table. There were, likewise, plenty of servants, who waited upon them, changing their plates, handing round the viands, and pouring out wine for the party.

As she thus stood gazing upon them, there came one of the servants, who drew her on one side, and placed a piece of gold in the pocket of her apron, upon which the whole scene vanished in an instant, and the poor frightened old woman was left to find her way back as well as she could. However, she got outside the courtyard, and there stood before her a soldier with a lighted match, whose head was not placed upon his neck, but held by him under his arm. He immediately addressed the old woman, and commanded her not to tell any one what she had seen and heard upon peril of evil befalling her.

At length the woman reached home, full of anguish, still keeping possession of the gold, but telling no one

whence she had obtained it. When the magistrates, however, got wind of the affair, she was summoned before them, but she would not speak one word upon the subject, excusing herself by saying that if she uttered one word respecting it great evil would ensue to her. When, however, they pressed her more strictly, she discovered to them all that had happened to her in the Fiery Castle, even to the smallest particular. In an instant, almost before her relation was fully ended, she was carried away, and no one could ever learn whither she fled.

A year or two afterwards, a young nobleman, a knight, and one well experienced in all things, took up his abode in those parts. In order that he might ascertain the issue of this affair, he set out on foot with his servant in the middle of the night on the road to the mountain. With great difficulty they made the ascent, and were on their way warned six times by an unknown voice to desist from their attempt.

They kept on, however, heedless of this caution, and at length reached the door of the castle. There again stood the soldier as a sentinel, and he called out as usual—

“Who goes there?”

The nobleman, who was bold of heart, gave for answer—

“It is I.”

Upon this the spirit inquired further—

“Who art thou?”

This time the nobleman made no answer, but desired his servant to hand him his sword. When this was done, a black horseman came riding out of the castle, against whom the nobleman would have waged battle. The horseman, however, dragged him up upon his horse and rode with him into the courtyard, while the soldier chased the servant down the mountain. The nobleman was never more seen.

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