

# FAIRY CIRCLES

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“ Tales and Legends of Giants, Dwarfs, Fairies,  
Water-Sprites and Hobgoblins ”

[ILLUSTRATED]



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Water-Sprites and Hobgoblins "

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**Anonymous**

Illustrated by Murat Ukray

ILLUSTRATED &

PUBLISHED BY

E-KITAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



[www.cheapestboooks.com](http://www.cheapestboooks.com)

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*Istanbul*

ISBN:

**978-625-6004-31-3**

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*Fairy Circles*

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**HELGA IN THE FAIRY KING'S PARADISE.**

# Fairy Circles

## TALES AND LEGENDS

OF

Giants, Dwarfs, Fairies, Water-Sprites,  
and Hobgoblins

FROM THE GERMAN OF VILLAMARIA

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS





## Barbarossa's Youthful Dream.

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**M**ORE than a thousand years have rolled away since a castle looked down cheerfully from a height amid the Franconian plains into the well-watered Kinzig Valley, with its pleasant villages and towns.

It belonged to the powerful Swabian duke Frederick of Hohenstaufen, whose young and valiant son loved this the best of all his father's proud castles, and often left his uncle's splendid palace to hunt in its forests, or to look down from its lofty oriel window on the blooming plain below.

His father and uncle indeed missed him sadly. His clear blue eye, and the cheerful expression of his noble countenance, seemed to the two grave and war-weary men so gladdening to look upon, that they were always unwilling to let him leave them.

But the young Frederick used to beg them so earnestly to grant him the freedom of the forest for just this once, that father and uncle smilingly granted him permission, though "this once" was often repeated.

So it happened the autumn of that year when Bernard of Clairvaux passed through Germany, calling prince and people in words of burning eloquence to aid in the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre.

"Just this once!" said young Frederick again; and King Conrad and Duke Frederick granted him permission.

As he bent in courteous farewell to take his uncle's hand, the king whispered, "Be ready, my Frederick, to return as soon as my messenger calls thee. Great things are before us, and I can ill spare thy strong right arm!" And young Frederick

smiled his own cheery smile, and answered, "I come when my king and lord calls!"

Then he galloped away as if he were bound that day to ride round the world. His Barbary steed bore him as on wings through the dark forests of the Spessart, and as the latest sunbeams sank in the waters of the Kinzig, he mounted the steep path towards the castle, and rode over the lowered drawbridge into the court.

Was it really the stags and boars in the vast forests, or the treasure of rare old manuscripts of the castle archives, which drew the young prince again and again to the small and lonely fortress?

So his father and uncle thought, but they knew not of his deep unconquerable love for the beautiful Gela, the daughter of a humble retainer. He had seen her while resting from the chase in the forest of the Kinzig Valley, and so great had his love for her become that he was willing to renounce all dreams of future power and greatness to live in blissful retirement with the beloved one whom he could not raise to his own rank.

But the lovers had to guard their secret carefully; they dared trust no confidant, lest their paradise should be laid waste before its gates had been fully opened to admit them. So they breathed their love to none but each other.

The prince passed Gela with cold indifference if he met her in the castle court or at her work about the house, and Gela made lowly reverence, as if she were the meanest of his maids, to him who counted it his greatest honour to do her service.

But at evening, when Frederick had roamed the forest since early morning, his bow on his shoulder and his faithful hounds by his side, the fair Gela might be seen walking along the high-road with a basket on her arm, or with a stock of newly-spun yarn, as if she were going to seek purchasers in the nearest town. But in the forest she would leave the broad path, and make her way through briars and under-wood to a height on which her young prince awaited her beneath the shelter of a giant oak.

There they would talk happily and innocently till the last sunbeam was quenched in the Kinzig stream, and the convent bell resounded through the arches of the forest; then they would fold their hands in prayer before saying farewell, in hope of a meeting on the morrow.

So had it been for many a year. Their love remained unbetrayed, their hope unquenched, their faith unshaken. In the splendid halls of the palace, amid the proud and lovely ladies who surrounded the young prince with flattering marks of favour, the longing after the lonely forest in the Kinzig Valley and the fair and gentle loved one never died from his heart.

They had met thus one evening with the old, yet ever new tenderness. Frederick drew Gela's fair head to his breast, and spoke to her of the near and blissful future, which would be theirs in a few weeks, when he would be of age, and would be able to lead her openly as his wife to his castle in the fair land of Bavaria, to the inheritance of his dead mother. And the oak tree overhead rustled gently, scattering golden leaves on Gela's beautiful hair, for it was far on in autumn.

When the vesper bell of the forest cloister began to sound, it was already dark; the moonlight gleamed on the path, and Gela walked with her lover as far as the high-road, supported by his arm. But there the moon shone so brightly that they had to part, lest some prying eye should see them. "Meet me to-morrow, dearest!" said the young prince, once more kissing her blooming cheek; then Gela tripped lightly down the high-road towards the valley, while Frederick gazed after her till she vanished from his sight, when he called his dogs, and turned towards the castle.

But there the usual stillness and loneliness had given place to bustle and confusion. The young prince's aged tutor, who was the father-confessor and confidential friend alike of his father and of his uncle, had arrived a few hours before, accompanied by a troop of horsemen. Inquiries after the young prince passed impatiently from mouth to mouth, for the message was one which called for haste. At last he came riding over the drawbridge, his handsome face glowing

as in a transformation, for his vision of the forest still hovered before his mind.

The old chaplain of the brothers of Hohenstaufen had been long and anxiously awaiting his pupil; now he hastened to meet him as quickly as his infirmities permitted, and greeted his dear one, who had left him but a few days before, as if he had not seen him for years.

Then they went together to the room with the oriel window, for there the young prince liked best to sit, as it afforded a view of Gela's lattice. They sat long in confidential conversation, and the light that fell on the pavement for hours after all others in the castle were asleep told Gela, who stood at the window opposite, that important and serious matters were being discussed by her dear one and his aged tutor.

Next morning the people flocked out of the castle chapel, where the old priest who had arrived the evening before had spoken to them in eloquent words, and claimed the arm and heart of young and old for the approaching crusade to the Holy Land. And not in vain. Men and youths were ready to venture wealth and life, and the aged were with difficulty persuaded to remain at home to till the ground and protect the women and the little ones.

All returned home to arrange their business hastily, and make needful preparations. One alone remained in the sacred place. It was Gela, who, when all had left the chapel,

rose from her seat and threw herself prostrate before the altar, there to pour forth all the anguish of broken hopes, of parting, and of lonely sorrow that oppressed her heart.

She lay thus, her hands clasped, and her face uplifted in an agony of grief. There were light footsteps behind her, but Gela, lost in sorrow and prayer, heeded them not. A hand was laid on her shoulder; she looked up and saw the face of him on whose account she suffered.

"Gela," said the young prince tenderly and low, as if in reverence to the holy place—"Gela, we must part! We must wait a while for the fulfilment of yesterday's beautiful dream! I can scarcely bear it, and yet I cannot refuse, either as prince and knight, or as son and subject."

"No," said Gela calmly; "thou must obey, my Frederick, even though our hearts will bleed."

"And thou wilt be true to me, Gela, and wait patiently till I come back, and not give thy heart to another?" asked the prince, and his voice was full of pain.

"Frederick," said Gela, laying her hand on his shoulder, "bid me give my life; if it were necessary to thy happiness, I would give it gladly. Thine will I be through all the sorrow of separation; and if I die, my soul will leave heaven at thy call."

Frederick drew her to his heart. "I go content, my Gela; danger and death cannot harm me, for I am sheltered by thy love! Farewell till we meet again in joy!"

He hastened away to hide the tears that started to his eyes, and Gela sank again on the altar steps and bent her head in silent prayer.

She did not perceive the footsteps that once more broke the stillness of the place, and she only looked up when a second time a hand was laid on her shoulder. It was not into Frederick's youthful face that she looked this time, but into the grave countenance of the aged priest who had come to call her darling and the people of the surrounding country to the Holy War.

She shuddered as she thought that he had perhaps been a listener to their conversation, and had thus discovered the carefully guarded secret.

"Be not afraid, my daughter," said the old man gently; "I have been an unwilling witness of your meeting, but your words have fallen into the ear and heart of a man whose calling makes him the guardian of many a secret."

Gela breathed more freely.

"Thou art of pure heart, my daughter," continued the old man mildly; "who could chide thee for giving thy love to a youth to whom God has given a power to charm that wins



the affection of almost every heart? But, my daughter, if thou love him thou must renounce him."

Gela looked up in terror at the priest.

"Yes, renounce him!" he repeated gravely, nodding his white head as he spoke.

"I cannot, reverend father!" faltered the maiden with trembling lips.

"Canst thou not?" asked the old man still more earnestly; "canst thou not give up thine own happiness for his sake, and yet thou art ready to give thy life if his happiness should demand it?"

"Oh, reverend father," Gela faltered, raising her hands to him entreatingly, "look not so stern! You know not what it is to renounce him, and with him all that I call happiness. But if his welfare demands it, my heart shall break without a murmur."

A gentle radiance beamed from the old priest's eyes.

"Thou hast well spoken, my daughter," he said gently. "Frederick loves thee now with the force of his unestranged affection, and is ready to sacrifice rank and worldly prospects for thy sake; but he is a man and a prince, and, above all, of the house of Hohenstaufen, in whose soul lies a longing after great and praiseworthy deeds, though these aspirations are lulled to slumber by his love for thee. But when he

comes to years of manhood, he will be unhappy that thou hast kept him from the tasks incumbent on one of his noble race. And then, my daughter, not he alone, but all Germany will blame thee, for every far-seeing eye recognises already in this heroic youth the future leader who is destined to bring this divided realm to unity and greatness. Canst thou think of the future of thy lover, and of us all, and yet act but for thine own happiness?"

Gela raised herself as out of a dream.

"No, my father," she said in a firm voice, though the light of her eyes seemed quenched as she gazed at the priest; "no, I renounce him. But if he should ever think with bitterness of Gela, I ask of you that you will tell him of this hour, and why I have renounced him; because I loved his happiness more than myself. May this sacrifice not be in vain!"

The priest laid his hand, trembling with emotion, on her beautiful head. "Peace be with thee, my daughter!"

On a dewy May morning, two years after that farewell scene in the castle chapel, young Frederick rode over the drawbridge of the fortress on the height beside the Kinzig Valley.

The sun of Syria had dyed his white skin with a deeper hue, the toils of war and grief at dispelled illusions had

drawn a slight furrow in the smooth brow, but on his flowing beard and hair lay the same golden splendour, and his blue eyes beamed brightly as of yore.

The castle servants flocked to greet their beloved young master, who had meantime, through his father's death, become Duke of Swabia and their feudal lord. His princely mouth spoke many a gracious word, and his winning smile hovered among them like a sunbeam. His eye passed quickly from line to line, till it rested inquiringly on the features of an old bent man. It was Gela's father. Then he sprang from his horse, and ascended the stair to his favourite room.

The butler placed a goblet of the richest wine on the table, a drink of honour which he kept carefully in the driest corner of the cellar for the greatest occasions; and Dame Barbara, the housekeeper, brought in proudly the delicious pastry which she had prepared for this festive day; but the young duke gave no heed to these attentions. He stood in the oriel window, and looked down at a little lattice in the buildings that surrounded the castle court. There, in a green window-box, gillyflower and rosemary used to bloom, and behind them he often had watched a face bent over the spinning-wheel—a face that he had not found surpassed by any even among the Flowers of the East.

But now all was changed. No blossom sent forth fragrance; the green box hung empty and half-broken; the

clear lattice panes were blinded, and no dear face looked through to him in love.

A pang of dread presentiment pierced his heart.

"Who dwells in that room with the blinded window?" he asked as calmly as he could of Dame Barbara, who was rattling her keys to call her young lord's attention to herself and her masterpiece of culinary skill.

The old woman drew near, and looked at the desolate window to which the duke's finger pointed.

"Alas! my lord duke," said the loquacious old woman, "Gela used to live there, the good child; but she became a nun two years ago last autumn, and entered the convent of St. Clarissa, in the heart of the forest."

Frederick stood for a moment motionless, then he beckoned silently to the door, for his first sound must have been a cry of pain.

Barbara went, but her master sank into the window-seat, his gaze fixed on the deserted lattice.

There was a gentle knocking at the door, but the duke heard it not for the painful beating of his heart. Then the door opened, and on the threshold stood the old man on whom the prince's inquiring glance had rested on his arrival. He approached the window with a low reverence, and waited patiently till his young master raised his head. When at

last he looked up, the old man started to see the beloved face that used to beam like the sunlight now covered as with the shadow of death.

"My lord duke," said the old man, when Frederick signed to him to speak, "I had an only child. I know not if your grace has ever noticed her. When the men went from the country round to the Holy War, she entered the forest cloister, because she thought she could there pray undisturbed for the safety and victory of our soldiers. Before she went she made me promise to give this letter into your hands as soon as you returned."

Then he drew from his doublet a strip of parchment carefully sewed in purple silk, and handed it to the duke.

And again Frederick spoke not, but silently took the missive, for his heart was full to overflowing.

The old man withdrew in silence. When Frederick found himself alone, he cut the silken covering with his hunting-knife, and drew out a piece of parchment; and when it was unfolded, he saw the childish handwriting which he himself had taught Gela in their happy hours in the forest, and with which she now bade him the last farewell, for she could not break her promise to the aged monk.

While Frederick, two years before, hastened to his uncle's palace, the holy man had gone on to other parts of the

country to call on the people to join the Holy War, and from this errand death had called him.

The sun was already far past the meridian, but yet no sound had broken the stillness of the room where Frederick sat. The butler's drink of honour was untasted; Dame Barbara's masterpiece remained untouched.

At last the young duke rose, left the room, and descended the winding stair into the court; but when his steed was brought, the attendant esquire thought that this could scarcely be the same young and joyous prince who, a few hours before, had ridden across the bridge. He sprang into the saddle, cast a last glance on the desolate window, and then turned without a word of farewell to take the road which, but a short time before, he had galloped over with hopeful heart. It was the same road which Gela had so often followed with him to the little hill in the forest, and when he came to the narrow path, he led his obedient horse to one side, fastened the bridle round the trunk of a tree, and then walked slowly along the mossy path.

Now he stood beneath the oak. Its leafy roof and the moss at its foot were green and fresh as ever. Once he was like it in his love and hope, but all was changed! He sat down at the foot of the tree, and its rustling brought back to his soul the dream of his now vanished youth.

Suddenly bells sounded from the forest depths. But he could not, as in days gone by, fold his hands in pious awe,

and pour forth every grief in a believing prayer. No; at the sound of these bells which now called Gela, his Gela, to devotion, it seemed to him as if he must rush to the cloister gate, knock with his sword hilt, and cry, "Come back, Gela, come back; for thy sacrifice will be in vain!"

He hastened down the hill to his horse, and sprang into the saddle.

"Away, my faithful steed!" he cried aloud. "Show me the way, for love and grief have bewildered my clear brain. Bear me where knightly duty and princely honour claim my presence—for I know not where."

And the good beast, as if it understood his master's words, rushed with him away farther and still farther south through the dim twilight, and beneath the bright beams of the full moon. Without weariness, though without rest, it bore him on, and when the morrow's sun stood in noontday splendour they had reached the goal, and the young duke stood before the gate of his own Staufenburg.

Gela's sacrifice was not offered in vain. The words the old monk uttered that morning in the castle chapel were fulfilled. After his uncle's death, young Frederick of Swabia was raised to the throne of Germany, and all that the realm and people of Germany had hoped from him was more than fulfilled.

His strong hand gave unity, strength, and majesty to the divided land, such as no ruler after him was ever able to bestow; and when the imperial crown of Rome was also placed upon his head, the proud people of Italy bowed before Frederick Barbarossa, did him homage, and acknowledged his power.

The laurels of many a victory rested on the Emperor's brow; his house was happy, his race flourished, his name lay like a word of blessing on every lip; and when Gela, still in the bloom of youth, closed her eyes in death, she knew that she had not in vain renounced Frederick and happiness.

Beneath the shelter of his favourite castle the Emperor founded a town, and named it after the unforgotten loved one of his youth, "Gelashausen;" and when on his travels he came to the forest of the Kinzig Valley, he led his horse silently aside, fastened the bridle to a tree stem, and ascended the hill to the majestic oak. There leaning his head, amid whose gold full many a thread of silver gleamed, against the trunk, he closed his eyes, and dreamed once more the old delightful dream.

And the people called that tree ever after "the Emperor's oak."

The sun of Asia Minor once more sent its glowing rays on the head of the heroic Emperor, though they gleamed back now with a silvery radiance.





### **BARBAROSSA IN THE HOLY LAND.**

The cry of distress had risen once again from the Land of Promise, and drawn the aged monarch from his German home; he placed himself at the head of his army, and led it with prudence, courage, and military skill safely through the heat of the Eastern sun, in spite of the treachery and malice of the foe, in spite of the pangs of hunger and consuming thirst.

On a warm summer evening the army reached the steep bank of a foaming mountain torrent. There on the farthest side lay the road that they must take.

Barbarossa's son Frederick, that "Flower of Chivalry," sprang with a chosen band from the high rocky bank into the stream and reached the other side in safety.

The Emperor now prepared to follow. Without heeding the advice of his attendants, the aged hero, who had never known what fear meant, put spurs to his steed and plunged with him into the waters of the Seleph. For a few seconds the golden armour gleamed amid the waves, once or twice the reverend, hoary head rose above the stream, then the deadly waters carried horse and rider into their raging depths, and the beloved hero vanished from the eyes of his sorrowing army. His most valiant knights indeed and chosen friends plunged after him into the flood to save their honoured prince or die with him, but the wild mountain torrent bore them all to death. With bitter lamentations the army wandered up and down the stream, if perchance they might at least win the precious corpse from the waters. But night came and threw its dark veil over the sorrow and mourning of the day.

All around were wrapped in slumber, even deeper than was their wont. The moon stood high in heaven, and beneath its beams the waters of the Seleph flowed more gen-

tly like molten silver. Once more they roused their angry strength, and from their midst a white head rose, golden armour gleamed above the waves, and Barbarossa and his faithful steed slowly emerged from the waters. With noiseless hoof they wandered up and down the stream, and out from the depths mounted the troops of faithful ones who had followed their Emperor to danger and death. The drops gleamed like diamonds as they fell from head and armour with a gentle splash into the shining stream.

Silently the band of warriors rode along the waves; not a sound, not a footstep broke the stillness; thus they turned to the shore, and the horses clambered up the rocky bank.

There Barbarossa and his silent warriors halted on the height. For a moment the Emperor's glance rested on the slumbering army, he held out his hand as if blessing them in a last farewell, then he shook the reins, and horse and rider, freed from the laws of earthly gravity, swept onwards to the beloved Fatherland.

They passed over the Bosphorus. Far below them gleamed the towers of Constantinople with the golden cross on their summits, but Barbarossa heeded them not. His head was bent forward, so that his white locks fluttered in the night wind, and his eyes were directed solely to the land towards which the horses moved with the swiftness of the storm-wind on their cloudy path.

Soon German forests rustled beneath them, and round the Emperor's lips played something like the reflection of the old sunny smile.

To the south lay the Italian plains which had claimed the best years of his life and his youthful energy, but the Emperor turned his head from these. Perhaps he saw already the destiny of his proud race, which must some day be fulfilled in those fragrant fields.

Now their native air surrounds them. The fir trees of the Black Forest scent the air, the waves of the Neckar gleam below them, and, bathed in the full moon's silvery splendour, there lies at their feet the Staufenburg, the cradle of the lofty imperial race.

Barbarossa raised his hand to bless its battlements and pinnacles, but still he held on his way northwards.

The Spessart forests rustled beneath him in the darkness of the night, not a moonbeam pierced their thickly-leaved summits. But there gleamed the waters of the Kinzig, the walls of Gelashausen in its gently flowing stream, and over on the mountain's brow shone the aged Emperor's favourite castle, with the high oriel window, and Gela's deserted lattice.

Barbarossa bent over his horse's neck, and cast a look of recognition on the scene of his early happiness.

Soon they hovered above the high-road, and then over the familiar forest with its spreading "Emperor's oak." The old man's head was still bent forward, as if his eye would pierce the whispering tree-tops. A sound of clear bells greeted his ear. Below in the convent they called to midnight prayer, and these tones, which had once well-nigh broken his heart, acted now as a spell to bring back the old loved images. His breast heaved as of yore in mingled joy and grief, and "Gela, my Gela!" was the cry that started from his lips and reached the convent in whose vaults the loved one slumbered.

But still the steeds held on their unhalting course over Thuringia's golden plain to the Kyffhäuser Mountain, within which Frederick Barbarossa must hold council to-night with his faithful ones about the people of Germany and their future.

The castle, which in bygone days had so often opened its hospitable gates to him and his court, within whose halls many a gladsome feast had been held, of whose magnificence and splendour old chronicles tell us—this castle still kept watch over the land with unbroken pinnacles, but Barbarossa knocked not at its gate.

Gently the horses sank to the earth, and halted at a hidden door in the mountain side.

The Emperor struck the stone with his sword, so that a loud echo answered from the hollow interior. Then the

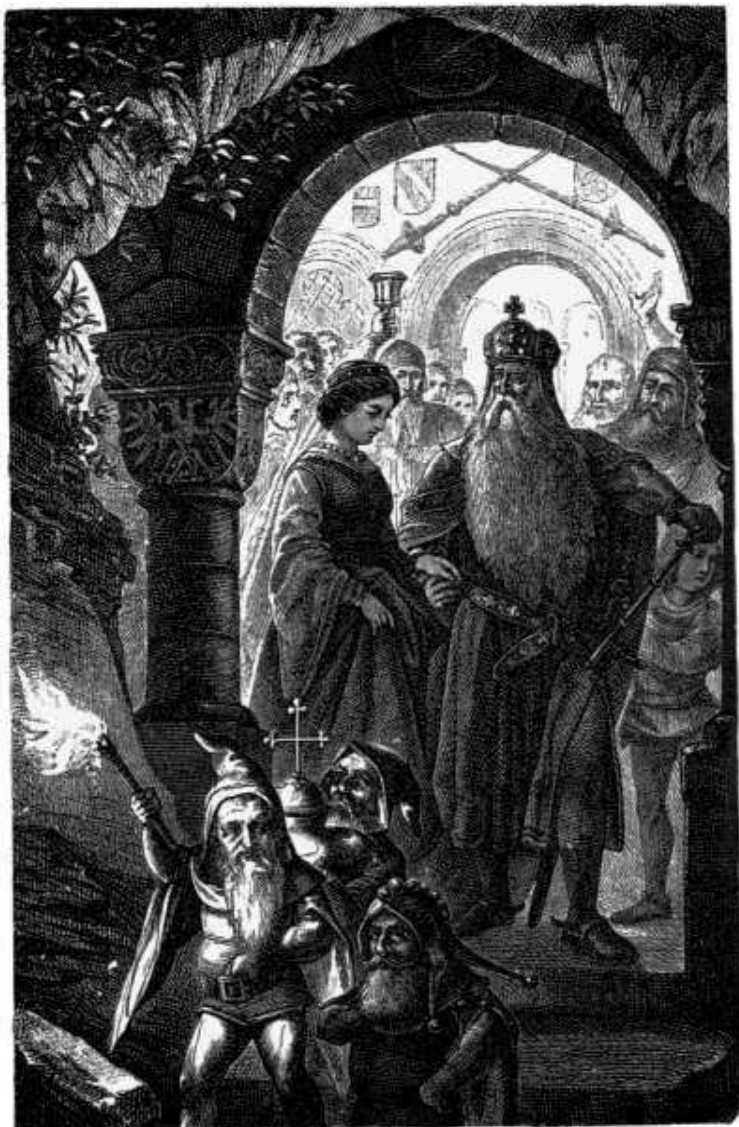
rocky door opened, and Barbarossa and his faithful warriors entered the spacious hall of the Kyffhäuser Mountain. The rock had not long closed behind them when a gentle tapping was heard, the magic gate swung open, and the lovely Gela entered, arrayed in bridal attire as she had been laid in the tomb.

The hand of death had touched her heart, but had not quenched her love. When Frederick's cry reached her ear, she had opened her eyes as out of a deep sleep, and had left the vault to seek her beloved with the swiftness of a spirit's tread. Now she stands before him in unchanged grace and beauty.

Barbarossa's youthful dream was fulfilled. Gela, his first love, was now at his side to tend him and bless him for ever as she could never have done on earth. It was she, the faithful one, who ruled henceforth in the magic kingdom of the Kyffhäuser, and cared for the beloved hero and his trusty band. It was she who knew when Barbarossa's heart yearned over the memories of his glorious past. Then she would lead the knights—his faithful comrades in the Holy War—into his room. They would range themselves round the marble table at which Barbarossa sat, with his long white beard flowing round him like imperial ermine, and over the golden goblets, filled from the exhaustless stores of the mountain cellars, they talked with the hero about the glorious days that they had spent together, about "the golden age" of the Holy German Empire. And the minstrels, who

had been wont to go with him to the Holy Land, and had entered with him the enchanted mountain of the "Golden Meadow," would strike their harps, and the song of the future, which still slumbered in their souls, rose to their lips and echoed loudly through the enchanted arches of the Kyffhäuser Mountain.

When Barbarossa's heart longed for news of the fatherland, Gela would pass at midnight out through the door in the rock, down through the "Golden Meadow," and listen at many a door, and look through many a window. Then all that she heard there of sad lamentation or joyous hope she would faithfully pour into the Emperor's ear on her return. And what Gela failed to find out was seen by other eyes and heard by other ears. Just as once Odin's ravens flew down from the dwelling of the gods to the home of men to tell the heavenly Ruler of all that happened on the earth, so did the ravens that built their nests in the clefts of Kyffhäuser hover through the plains to hear of joy and sorrow, and bear the tidings back in silence to their rocky home.



**BARBAROSSA AND GELA IN THE KYFFHÄUSER.**