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## **Excursions along the banks of the Rhine**

**Hugo, Victor**

**London, 1843**

Part I.

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## A LEGEND OF THE RHINE.

## PART I.

THE handsome Pecopin was enamoured of the fair Bauldour, and the fair Bauldour was enamoured of the handsome Pecopin. He was the son of the Burgrave of Sonneck, and Bauldour daughter to the Lord of Falkenberg: one ruled the forest, the other the mountain, and what could be more natural than to unite the two dominions?

The fathers consequently agreed, and Bauldour and Pecopin were affianced: it was on an April day. The elders and hawthorns opened their blossoms to the sun in the forest; thousands of rippling cascades arose from the snows and rains, converted into streams; the asperities of winter became the graces of the spring, and bounded harmoniously along the mountains; and love, the April of life, rejoiced the throbbing hearts of the betrothed.

Pecopin's father, an old and valiant knight, the pride of the Nâhegau, died soon after the betrothing, giving his blessing to his son, and commending Bauldour to his love. Pecopin wept a little, but by degrees he raised his eye from his father's tomb, and gazing upon the soft and radiant face of his

bride, became consoled. The moon once risen, who thinks of the sun that has set?

Pecopin possessed all the essential qualities of a man and a nobleman. Bauldour was a queen in her castle, a holy virgin in her chapel, in the forest a nymph, with her needle the adroitest of fairies.

Pecopin loved the chace, Bauldour her distaff, and there is affinity betwixt the spindle and the hunting horn. The hunter a-field, his lady-fair spins assiduously, the better to support his absence. The hounds cry, the spindle whirls. The distant blast of the horn, with the far-off cry of the pack, faintly issuing from the thickets, breathe a gentle warning of "Think of thy lover!" The wheel, which compels the fair spinster to cast down her eyes, seems to murmur with its meek soft voice, "Think of thy husband!" and when the husband and lover are one, all is well! Unite, therefore, the spinster with the hunter, and it will be union indeed!

I must admit, however, that Pecopin was somewhat over-fond of the chace. When he was once mounted, his falcon on his wrist, or followed his greyhound with his eye, or heard the cry of his crooked legged beagles, all else on earth was forgotten. Avoid excess, oh! man, for happiness consists in moderation! Weigh well your tastes, and restrain your appetites. He, who loves horse and dogs too well, affronts the gentle sex; and he, who devotes himself too much to the gentler sex, provokes the jealousy of heaven.

When Bauldour saw Pecopin about to mount his impatient steed, which stood snorting with pride, as if about to bear the weight of Alexander the Great—

when she beheld Pecopin caress its neck, and, sparing of his spur, indulge the animal with a handful of fresh grass—Bauldour became jealous of the horse. When this haughty and high-born damsel, this star of love, youth, and beauty, saw Pecopin caress his favourite hound and bring his fine bewitching face in contact with the flap-eared, broad-nosed favourite, Bauldour was jealous. Shut up in her chamber, sad and dejected, she wept, scolding her waiting women, and her dwarf; for woman's anger is like the shower in the forest, which hath a double fall, *bis pluit*.

In the evening Pecopin used to return dusty and way worn. Bauldour still resentful, had a tear in the corner of her bright blue eye. But when Pecopin kissed her tiny hand, she was appeased; when he kissed her ivory forehead, she smiled; for lo! the forehead of Bauldour was of ivory, glossy, and beautiful as that of Charlemagne's horn.

Each then retired to their respective towers. She did not permit the valiant knight to approach her waist. One evening indeed he happened to touch her elbow, and she was covered with blushes; for Bauldour was betrothed, not wedded; and modesty in woman is essential, as chivalry in man.