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FRIDOLIN,

Translated from the German, by J. W. [unclear].

We present our readers, this week with the whole of the beautiful ballad, entitled "Fridolin, or the Message to the Forge." The original ballad has, for nearly thirty years, formed the delight of the Germans, and it has furnished the subject of various operas and tragedies. It has been set to a beautiful, simple and affecting melody, by the late regretted Weber. The subject of this ballad is an ancient Alsacian tradition, which is still extant in Lorraine and on the banks of the Rhine; and it is said that Schiller, having heard it repeated at Manheim, made himself master of it, and by the force of his talent, it thus became, in some sort, national.

The translation, though not equal to the vigour of the original, is easy and spirited: and conveys a tolerably just idea of Schiller's powerful delineation.

In beauty's train was never seen
A boy of more engaging mien,
Or more endowed all hearts to win,
Than the fair page, young Fridolin;
His lady was a lofty dame,
The Countess of Saverne by name;
Oh! she was gentle good and mild,
She loved him as a favourite child,
And he loved her with that pure zeal,
Which souls devout for angels feel.

From early dawn to deep in night
He served her with unfeigned delight;
And if the lady bade him rest,
His eyes were d'w'd, his heart oppress'd;
For still he thought his duty vain,
If done without fatigue or pain.

Above the empty pride of birth,
The Countess saw and prized his worth;
She thought not of his low degree,
But of his mind's nobility;
From fairy lips his praises fell,
The sweet reward for doing well.

The huntsman, Robert, saw, with rage,
These favours to a stripling page;
Dark as his fierce and hideous scowl,
The demon hate possess'd his soul:
He watch'd, determin'd to destroy;
The unsuspecting, artless boy;
And one day in his master's ear,
Thus pour'd the subtle poison there:

"How happy is my noble lord!"
The traitor cried with venom'd word;
"Doubt in his bosom cannot dwell,
Nor jealousy, that fiend of hell;
For with so rare a consort blest,
The purest, faithfullest and best,
The serpent-tempter's self must fail
Who dared such virtue to assail."

"What say'st thou, slave!" with frowning brow,
The Count exclaimed, "and thinkest thou
My faith is pinn'd to woman's sleeve,
Whose truth 'twere folly to believe?—
They're changing as the shifting waves,
And he who vaunts their virtue raves;
My faith is built on firmer ground,
And long 't will be ere he is found
Whose lawless passion meets return
From her whose lord's the Count Saverne!"

Robert replied—"The wretch, 'tis true,
Merits, my Lord, but scorn from you;
And though the recreant, vassal-knave
Dares your high dignity to brave,
Lets his loose thoughts and fierce desire,
Even to his mistress' love aspire."—
"Hold!" cried the Count, "of whom you tell,
And does he in this castle dwell?"

"Oh, yes! he daily eats your bread.—
But can it be," the reptile said,
"My noble master's not aware,
Of what to all the household's clear?
'Tis strange! and yet perhaps I'm wrong,
But henceforth I will hold my tongue."
"Speak, or thou diest!" convulsed with rage;
The count exclaimed, "His name?" "The page."

No pen could paint the count's dismay,
While Robert thus went on to say,
"The boy's well-shaped one can't disprove.
And female hearts are prone to love,
And opportunity and youth,
Are dangerous foes to wedded truth;
But then the haughty pride of blood,
Besides the countess is so good;
Yet did your lordship never note
His looks that languishingly dote
Upon her, and that seem to claim
An answer to his amorous flame?"

"And then his verses full of fire,
And sentiment, and soft desire,
Where he avows his love."—"Avows!
And does he thus insult my spouse?"
"Doubtless your lady mild and true,
Thro' pity, hides his fault from you;
But I regret what I have said—
And what have you, my lord, to dread?"

With bursting heart and boiling blood,
The count plunged in the neighbouring wood,
To where his iron-forgers bent
That metal, from earth's caverns rent,
In flames, whose red, terrific light
Perpetual glar'd thro' day and night;
Where fire, water, and man's skill
Subdued the stubborn steel at will.

The count now beckon'd to draw nigh
Two cyclops, that had caught his eye;
Then said: "Slaves listen, and attend!
The first, the very first I send
To you, whose message thus shall run:
The master's orders are they done?
Seize him and hurl him, in a breath,
Into your hottest flames to death!"

The wretches grinn'd with horrid joy,
For in their souls no soft alloy
Of pity dwelt, no tempering glow
To melt their iron hearts to woe;
Forth to the fire, with eager feet,
They speed, to rouse its fiercest heat;
Like demons they exulting wait
The victim of their master's hate.

"Haste, comrade haste, make no delay!"
To Fridolin did Robert say:
"My lord demands you."—Swift as light
The page was in his master's sight;
Who said: "Quick, to the forges run,
And ask if my commands are done."
He bowed, and promised to obey,
But scarce had he began his way,
When justly to himself he thought,
My lady's leave should first be sought;
So he retraced his steps, and came
To ask permission of the dame.

With that sweet voice, whose witching tone
Could move a stoic or a stone,
The countess of Saverne replied:
"My son is ill, I must abide
Beside his infant couch, to save
My first-born darling from the grave:"

Then to the holy mass repair,
My page, and offer up a prayer
For him, and heaven will not despise
A willing heart's pure sacrifice.

With graceful bow, and heart content,
Fridolin from the countess went;
Fleet as an arrow he pursued
His path, impell'd by gratitude.
And now the bell began to toll,
Which vibrates to the sinner's soul.

On sainted ground his steps now trod,
Within the temple of his God;
A silence, solemn and sublime,
There reign'd—for it was harvest time.
No pious hand as yet appear'd
To aid the holy priest rever'd—
Till Fridolin, as quick as thought,
The sacred vests and vases sought,
And offer'd to the holy man
To serve as clerik and sacristan.

His soul was pure and free from guile,
And heaven's own approving smile
Seem'd to endow him with the skill
Required these duties to fulfil:
He well performed his pious part,
His hand was prompted by his heart.

The mass was done, the blessing given
By the meek minister of heaven;
The sacred vessels of the Lord,
By the young clerk were then restor'd:
Each to its proper place with care;
And with a heart as light as air,
A conscience free, and spirits gay,
Forth to the forge he bent his way.

Envelop'd in the stifling smoke,
Thus to two sooty feinds he spoke.—
"The count's commands are they obeyed?"
With looks as hideous as their trade,
They pointed to the gulph of flame,
And grinning said—"We've done the same:
We did the deed like hearts of steel,
The count will thank us for our zeal."

Back to his master now he hies,
But how describe the count's surprise,
To see the beauteous, buoyant page
Return unconscious of his rage!
"Whence comest thou?"—"From my lord's forge:"
And can the burning flames disgorge
Their prey unhurt;—thus thought Saverne;
Then to Fridolin said he, stern:
"Boy, thou hast loitered on the way."
"I did, my lord."—"For what?"—"To pray.

"This morning when I left your sight,
Forgive me, that I thought it right,
Ere I went out first to receive
My lady's orders, and her leave;
She bade me to the mass to go,
And there I pray'd for her and you,
For you, and her, and your sweet heir,
I pray'd, my lord—a grateful prayer."

The count was moved; in his stern heart
Remorse and pity each had part;
He ask'd, conceiving the mistake,
"What answer did the forgermen make?"
"My lord, their words were dark and wild,
They pointed to the flames and smiled:
"We've done the deed like hearts of steel,
The count will thank us for our zeal."

"And met'st thou Robert on thy road?"—
"Nor in the village, field or wood."