

Charles Kingsley (1819-75)

4 *The Knight's Leap*

A Legend of Altenahr

'So the foemen have fired the gate, men of mine;
And the water is spent and gone?
Then bring me a cup of the red Ahr-wine:
I never shall drink but this one.

'And reach me my harness, and saddle my horse, 5
And lead him me round to the door:
He must take such a leap to-night perforce,
As horse never took before.

'I have fought my fight, I have lived my life,
I have drunk my share of wine; 10
From Trier to Coln there was never a knight
Led a merrier life than mine.

'I have lived by the saddle for years two score;
And if I must die on tree,
Then the old saddle tree, which has borne me of yore, 15
Is the properest timber for me.

'So now to show bishop, and burgher, and priest,
How the Altenahr hawk can die:
If they smoke the old falcon out of his nest,
He must take to his wings and fly.' 20

He harnessed himself by the clear moonshine,
And he mounted his horse at the door:
And he drained such a cup of the red Ahr-wine,
As man never drained before.

He spurred the old horse, and he held him tight, 25
And he leapt him out over the wall;
Out over the cliff, out into the night,
Three hundred feet of fall.

They found him next morning below in the glen,
 With never a bone in him whole —
A mass or a prayer, now, good gentlemen,
 For such a bold rider's soul.

30

1864

(From *Poems*. London: Macmillan, 1889)