

THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN

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The heiress of Cronenstein by Ida Hahn-Hahn

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IDA HAHN-HAHN

**THE HEIRESS OF
CRONENSTEIN**

THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN.

THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN

BY THE

COUNTESS HAHN-HAHN

Hahn-Hahn, Ida Marie Luise
sophie Friederike Gustava,
ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN BY
MARY H. ALLIES *gräfin*

*O amare, O ire, O sibi perire,
O ad Deum pervenire.*

ST. AUGUSTINE.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

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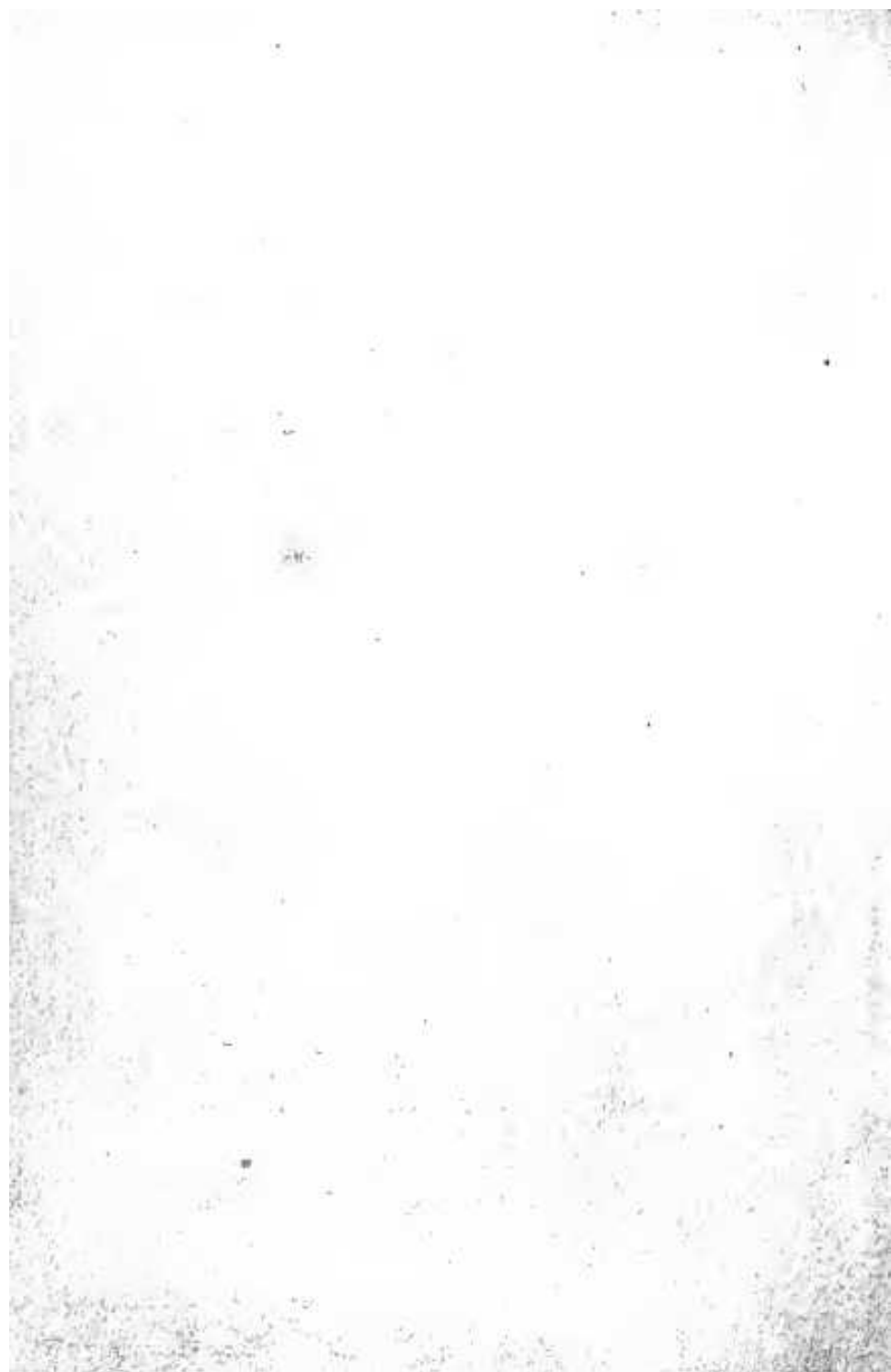
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THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE AND TOWN.

THE districts watered by the large and small rivers in the neighborhood of the Rhine are amongst the pleasantest in Germany. Along the banks of the Moselle, Lahn, Neckar, Murg, and Kinzig, to mention a few out of many, the eye rests upon a varied succession of sylvan and romantic pictures at every turn. It is not the stupendous beauty of a lofty mountain nor the majesty of a lordly river; it neither dazzles nor overawes. It is a beauty full of sentiment, hence eminently German.

The ancient little town of X., numbering about five thousand inhabitants, was situated on one of these Rhine rivers. An old ivy-grown church of Roman origin formed the centre of its irregular streets. The vine flourished on the sunny hills with their southwest aspect, though not to the same extent as on the Moselle and in the Rheingau. The grape ripened in the narrow slips of valley, and the lordly forest crowned the hilltops. A few wood-dealers, whose trade had descended from father to son, had grown well-to-do in the course of time, and

employed wood-cutters and wood-carriers. Houses run up by contract were unknown at X., whilst there were not a few projecting gabled roofs, black with age, in simple and serious contrast to smiling nature all around.

The highroad branching off at the entrance of the town led up to Cronenstein Castle, a modern residence on an ancient site. A powerful arched entrance alone remained of the old building, and over it the arms of the Cronensteins were conspicuous: a crown strongly cut in stone, and on each side in a niche half hidden by ivy, a knight in armor. The site was magnificent, commanding as it did the upward and downward traffic on the river, the highroad, the town, and the opposite bank. The chapel was evidently new, built in ornate Gothic, with very narrow arched windows and the mysterious rose over the portal. To the right a cluster of old lime-trees sheltered a rocky terrace, which presented a lively scene in the spring of 185—. Four boys and a girl were playing at soap-bubbles. Their youthful spirits proved too boisterous for the game, so they were delighted when the girl's pipe at last produced a full round bubble.

"That one will soar up with the birds!"

"Yes, to the angels."

"No, to God!"

"O dear! there, it has melted away."

"Neither you nor I can reach God by this road," exclaimed the girl, as merry as her little companions.

"And soap-bubbles are not good enough for heaven," said one of the children.