



South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

Jutta of Braunsberg

Braunsberg Castle still stands near Lana in the Val d'Adige (Etschtal) Valley. It was here that an ancient painting perpetuated an ancient legend:

At the end of the twelfth century, a knight of the house went to Palestine, leaving his young wife Jutta alone behind. The evil governor of the castle had the audacity to make advances on her, and was duly dismissed. The rejected party took his revenge in the most disgraceful way: he stole the wedding ring of his mistress and showed it to the returning knight, whom he went to meet, as evidence of her infidelity.

Boiling with rage, the knight vowed that his faithless wife would rot in prison until the end of time. A zealously loyal servant of hers, however, informed her of what awaited her. Knowing only too well the violent nature of her husband and seeing that he held steadfast to his vow, she lost her mind and plunged over the castle walls into the depths of the whooshing Falschauerbach Stream. The hands of angels bore the insane girl gently as she fell, however, and she alighted on soft ground, unhurt. When the knight heard what had happened, he repented of his anger and his resolve. Hastening to his wife, he celebrated her rescue as a miracle of heaven, and embraced her lovingly. The governor of the castle, meanwhile, recognised divine judgment and cast himself into the same abyss; he remained lifeless there, smashed against the rocks. From time to time he still flares, a blue flame, along the bed of Falschauerbach Stream.

No matter how much the knight pleaded with the Lady of Braunsberg to return with him to the castle and live together there, she refused to do so under any circumstances; instead, she persuaded him to undertake a pilgrimage of penitence. They journeyed into Bavaria, to the famous Weingarten Monastery, and remained there – souls united, but physically separated in monastic austerity.

The first part of this legend is echoed somewhat in the legend of Countess Ida of Toggenburg, except that her ring falls into the hands of a hunter; the wrath of her husband, the fall, the rescue and the conclusion of monastic solitude – everything else is the same as peas in a pod.