SLOVENIAN LESSON

LEGENDS

COUNTS OF CELJE

We come from Slovenia and would like to present a nobel family from the middle ages which is a basis for many legends and stories and many authors used this theme for their dramas, novels and other works of art.

In the 14th century lived a very ambitious and influential Count Herman II of Celje, whose realm covered all of what is now Slovenia. The family coat of arms had red and white logs and 3 golden stars. He had 7 children, the most famous of whom were Barbara of Celje, who became the Holy Roman Empress and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and her brother, Friderick II of Celje. The story is mostly about Friderick and his love story.

Friderick was married to a Croatian princess and they had 2 sons, but the marriage was unhappy. Friderick was a strong, happy knight, who loved dancing, hunting, drinking and living life to the fullest. His wife was religious, sick and boring, so they had nothing in common and they didn't even live together any more.

So it happened one day that Friderick was hunting game, when and accident happened and Friderick was shot with an arrow. He was taken to the nearest house, where the lady of the house took care of him. She was skilled in picking herbs and making medicine, so Friderick soon recovered. When he came back to his sences he thought an angel was leaning over him. The woman was namely so pretty, with her long blonde hair and blue eyes, that Friderick fell madly in love with her. And she loved him back. Her name was Veronika of Desenice.

But they couldn't be together. Friderick was married and what was worse, she was not of nobel birth, so she could not be his wife. But they loved each other more than anything.

So Friderick couldn't wait any longer and decided to visit his wife. She met him with all the neccessery honour and then they went to her private chambers. But Friderick left in a hurry before dawn and in the morning they found his wife dead. Did he morder her? Noone could tell.

Now he was free to marry, but they married in secret, because his father was strongly against Veronika. She was simply not a suitable wife for the prince.

Then he stole money from his father's treasury to build a small castle called Friderichstein for his bride. There you can still see a black rock, where Friderick kissed Veronika and their love was so hot that the rock melted.

But their bliss didn't last long. Everybody, including Count Herman beleived, that Veronika is a dangerous witch. They beleived she cast a spell on Friderick to love her so much. So they put Friderick in prison and took Veronika to trial. Friderick lived in a dungeon of a prison for years, with little food and water and no sunlight. And Veronika was tried in front of the judges and clergy for days, but to Herman's surprise they found no guilt in her and let her free. But Herman couldn't accept this verdict. He paid two of his knights to kill her. They drowned her in a pot of water no deeper than her head. Her body was bricked in the wall of a castle and people still say they can hear a wailing voice of Veronika on a windy day.

After Veronika's death Friderick had no reason to live. He was just a broken shadow of a man and not even becoming a king couldn't make him happy.

This is just the most famous story connected with the important counts of Celje and you can still see their golden stars in the Slovenian coat of arms.