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The Pilgrims of the Rhine

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Chapter VII.

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CHAPTER VII.

COLOGNE—THE TRACES OF THE ROMAN YOKE.—THE CHURCH OF ST. MARIA.—TREVIL-
YAN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE MONASTIC LIFE.—THE TOMB OF THE THREE KINGS.—
AN EVENING EXCURSION ON THE RHINE.

ROME—magnificent Rome! wherever the pilgrim wends, the traces of thy dominion greet his eyes. Still, in the heart of the bold German race, is graven the print of the eagle's claws; and amidst the haunted regions of the Rhine, we pause to wonder at the great monuments of the Italian yoke.

At COLOGNE our travellers rested for some days. They were in the city to which the camp of Marcus Agrippa had given birth: that spot had resounded with the armed tread of the legions of Trajan. In that city, Vitellius, Sylvanus, were proclaimed emperors. By that church, did the latter receive his death.

As they passed round the door, they saw some peasants loitering on the sacred ground; and when they noted the delicate cheek of Gertrude, they uttered their salutations with more than common respect. Where they then were, the building swept round in a circular form; and at its base

it is supposed, by tradition, to retain something of the ancient Roman masonry. Just before them rose the spire of a plain and unadorned church—singularly contrasting the pomp of the old, with the simplicity of the innovating creed.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARIA occupies the site of the Roman Capitol; and the place retains the Roman name; and still something in the aspect of the people betrays the hereditary blood.

Gertrude, whose nature was strongly impressed with the venerated character, was singularly fond of visiting the old Gothic churches, which, with so eloquent a moral, unite the living with the dead.

“Pause for a moment,” said Trevlyan, before they entered the church of St. Mary. “What recollections crowd upon us. On the site of the Roman Capitol, a Christian church and a convent are erected! By whom? The mother of Charles Martel—the conqueror of the Saracen—the arch hero of Christendom itself! And to these scenes and calm retreats, to the cloisters of the convent, once belonging to this church, fled the bruised spirit of a royal sufferer—the wife of Henry IV.—the victim of Richelieu—the unfortunate Mary de Medicis. Alas! the cell and the convent are but a vain emblem of that desire to fly to God which belongs to distress; the solitude soothes, but the monotony recalls, regret. And for my own part, I never saw, in my frequent tours through Catholic countries, the still walls in which monastic vanity hoped to shut out the world, but a melancholy came over me! What hearts

at war with themselves!—what unceasing regrets!—what pinings after the past!—what long and beautiful years devoted to a moral grave, by a momentary rashness—an impulse—a disappointment! But in these churches the lesson is more impressive and less sad. The weary heart has ceased to ache—the burning pulses are still—the troubled spirit has flown to the only rest which is not a deceit. Power and love—hope and fear—avarice—ambition, they are quenched at last! Death is the only monastery—the tomb is the only cell; and the grave that adjoins the convent is the bitterest mock of its futility!”

“Your passion is ever for active life,” said Gertrude. “You allow no charm to solitude; and contemplation to you, seems torture. If any great sorrow ever come upon you, you will never retire to seclusion as its balm. You will plunge into the world, and lose your individual existence in the universal rush of life.”

“Ah, talk not of sorrow!” said Trevelyman, wildly,—“let us enter the church.”

They went afterwards to the celebrated cathedral, which is considered one of the noblest ornaments of the architectural triumphs of Germany; but it is yet more worthy of notice from the Pilgrim of Romance than the searcher after antiquity, for here, behind the grand altar, is the **TOMB OF THE THREE KINGS OF COLOGNE**—the three worshippers, whom tradition humbled to our Saviour. Legend is rife with a thousand tales of the relics of this tomb. The Three Kings of Cologne are the tutelary names of that golden

superstition, which has often more votaries than the religion itself from which it springs: and to Gertrude the simple story of Lucille sufficed to make her for the moment credulous of the sanctity of the spot. Behind the tomb three Gothic windows cast their "dim religious light" over the tessellated pavement and along the Ionic pillars. They found some of the more credulous believers in the authenticity of the relics kneeling before the tomb, and they arrested their steps, fearful to disturb the superstition which is never without something of sanctity when contented with prayer, and forgetful of persecution. The bones of the Magi are still supposed to consecrate the tomb, and on the higher part of the monument the artist has delineated their adoration to the infant Saviour.

That evening came on with a still and tranquil beauty, and as the sun hastened to its close they launched their boat for an hour or two's excursion upon the Rhine. Gertrude was in that happy mood when the quiet of nature is enjoyed like a bath for the soul, and the presence of him she so idolised, deepened that stillness into a more delicious and subduing calm. Little did she dream as the boat glided over the water, and the towers of Cologne rose in the blue air of evening, how few were those hours that divided her from the tomb! But, in looking back to the life of one we have loved, how dear is the thought, that the latter days were the days of light, that the cloud never chilled the beauty of the setting sun, and



TOMB OF THE THREE KINGS.

Cologne.

H. Schorn del.

SAUNDERS & O'LEARY.—FOR THE PROPRIETOR E. L. SCHMIDT.



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that if the years of existence were brief, all that existence has most tender, most sacred, was crowded into that space ! Nothing dark, then, or bitter, rests with our remembrance of the lost; *we* are the mourners, but pity is not for the mourned—our grief is purely selfish; when we turn to its object, the hues of happiness are round it, and that very love which is the parent of our woe was the consolation—the triumph—of the departed !

The majestic Rhine was calm as a lake; the splashing of the oar only broke the stillness, and, after a long pause in their conversation, Gertrude, putting her hand on Trevelyman's arm, reminded him of a promised story; for he too had moods of abstraction, which, in her turn, she loved to lure him from; and his voice to her had become a sort of want, which, if it ceased too long, she thirsted to enjoy.

“ Let it be,” said she, “ a tale suited to the hour; no fierce tradition—nay, no grotesque fable, but of the tenderer dye of superstition. Let it be of love, of woman's love—of the love that defies the grave; for surely even after death it lives; and heaven would scarcely be heaven if memory were banished from its blessings.”

“ I recollect,” said Trevelyman, after a slight pause, “ a short German legend, the simplicity of which touched me much when I heard it; but,” added he with a slight smile, “ so much more faithful appears in the legend the love of the woman than that of the man, that *I* at least ought scarcely to recite it.”

“ Nay,” said Gertrude tenderly, “ the fault of the inconstant only heightens our gratitude to the faithful.”