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## **The Pilgrims of the Rhine**

**Lytton, Edward Bulwer Lytton**

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Chapter XXIX.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

ELLFELD. — MAYENCE. — HEIDELBERG. — A CONVERSATION BETWEEN VANE AND THE GERMAN STUDENT. — THE RUINS OF THE CASTLE OF HEIDELBERG AND ITS SOLITARY HABITANT.

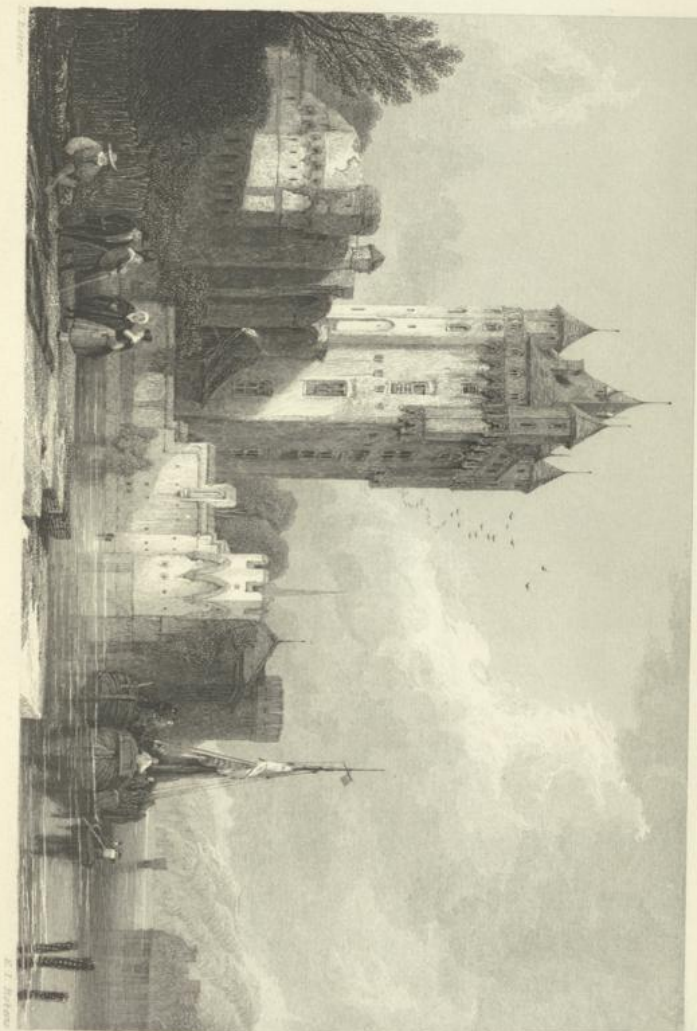
It was now the full moon; light clouds were bearing up towards the opposite banks of the Rhine, but over the GOTHIC TOWERS OF ELLFELD the sky spread blue and clear; the river danced beside the old grey walls with a sunny wave, and close at hand a vessel crowded with passengers, and loud with eager voices, gave a merry life to the scene. On the opposite bank the hills sloped away into the far horizon, and one slight skiff in the midst of the waters broke the solitary brightness of the noonday calm.

The town of Ellfeld was the gift of Otho the First to the church; not far from thence is the crystal spring, that gives its name to the delicious grape of Markbrunner.

“ Ah ! ” quoth Du — e, “ doubtless the good Bishops of Mayence made the best of the vicinity ! ”

They stayed some little time at this town, and visited the ruins of Scharfenstein; thence proceeding up the river, they passed Nieder Walluf, called the Gate of the Rheingau, and the luxuriant garden of Schierstein; thence, sailing by the

VIEW OF THE TOWER OF ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH







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castle seat of the Prince Nassau Usingen, and passing two long and narrow isles, they arrived at Mayence, as the sun shot his last rays upon the waters, gilding the proud cathedral-spire, and breaking the mists that began to gather behind, over the rocks of the Rheingau.

Ever-memorable Mayence!—memorable alike for freedom and for song—within those walls how often woke the gallant music of the Troubadour; and how often beside that river did the heart of the maiden tremble to the lay! Within those walls the stout Walpoden first broached the great scheme of the Hanseatic league; and, more than all, O memorable Mayence, thou canst claim the first invention of the mightiest engine of human intellect,—the great leveller of power,—the Demiurgus of the moral world—The Press! Here too lived the maligned hero of the greatest drama of modern genius, the traditionary Faust, illustrating in himself the fate of his successors in dispensing knowledge—held a monster for his wisdom, and consigned to the penalties of hell as a recompense for the benefits he had conferred on earth!

At Mayence, Gertrude heard so much and so constantly of Heidelberg, that she grew impatient to visit that enchanting town, and as Du —e considered the air of Heidelberg more pure and invigorating than that of Mayence, they resolved to fix within it their temporary residence. Alas, it was the place destined to close their brief and melancholy pilgrimage, and to become to the heart of Trevlyan the holiest spot which the earth con-



tained;—the KAABA of the world! But Gertrude, unconscious of her fate, conversed gaily as their carriage rolled rapidly on, and, constantly alive to every new sensation, she touched with her characteristic vivacity on all they had seen in their previous route. There is a great charm in the observations of one new to the world, if we ourselves have become somewhat tired of “its hack sights and sounds;” we hear in their freshness a voice from our own youth.

In the haunted valley of the Neckar, the most crystal of rivers, stands the town of Heidelberg. The shades of evening gathered round it as their heavy carriage rattled along the antique streets, and not till the next day was Gertrude aware of all the unrivalled beauties that environ the place.

Vane, who was an early riser, went forth alone in the morning to reconnoitre the town; and as he was gazing on the tower of St. Peter, he heard himself suddenly accosted; he turned round and saw the German Student, whom they had met among the mountains of Taunus, at his elbow.

“Monsieur has chosen well in coming hither,” said the Student; “and I trust our town will not disappoint his expectations.”

Vane answered with courtesy, and the German offering to accompany him in his walk, their conversation fell naturally on the life of an University, and the current education of the German people.

"It is surprising," said the Student, "that men are eternally inventing new systems of education, and yet persevering in the old. How many years ago is it since Fichte predicted, in the system of Pestalozzi, the regeneration of the German people? What has it done? We admire—we praise, and we blunder on in the very course Pestalozzi proves to be erroneous. Certainly," continued the Student, "there must be some radical defect in a system of culture in which genius is an exception, and dulness the result. Yet here, in our German universities, every thing proves that education without equitable institutions avails little in the general formation of character. Here the young men of the colleges mix on the most equal terms, they are daring, romantic, enamoured of freedom even to its madness; they leave the university, no political career continues the train of mind they had acquired; they plunge into obscurity; live scattered and separate, and the student inebriated with Schiller sinks into the passive priest or the lethargic baron. His college career, so far from indicating his future life, exactly reverses it, he is brought up in one course in order to proceed in another. And this I hold to be the universal error of education in all countries; they conceive it a certain something to be finished at a certain age. They do not make it a part of the continuous history of life, but a wandering from it."

"You have been in England?" asked Vane.

"Yes; I travelled over nearly the whole of it on foot.



I was poor at that time, and imagining there was a sort of masonry between all men of letters, I inquired at each town for the *savans*, and asked money of them as a matter of course."

Vane almost laughed outright at the simplicity and naïve unconsciousness of degradation with which the Student proclaimed himself a public beggar.

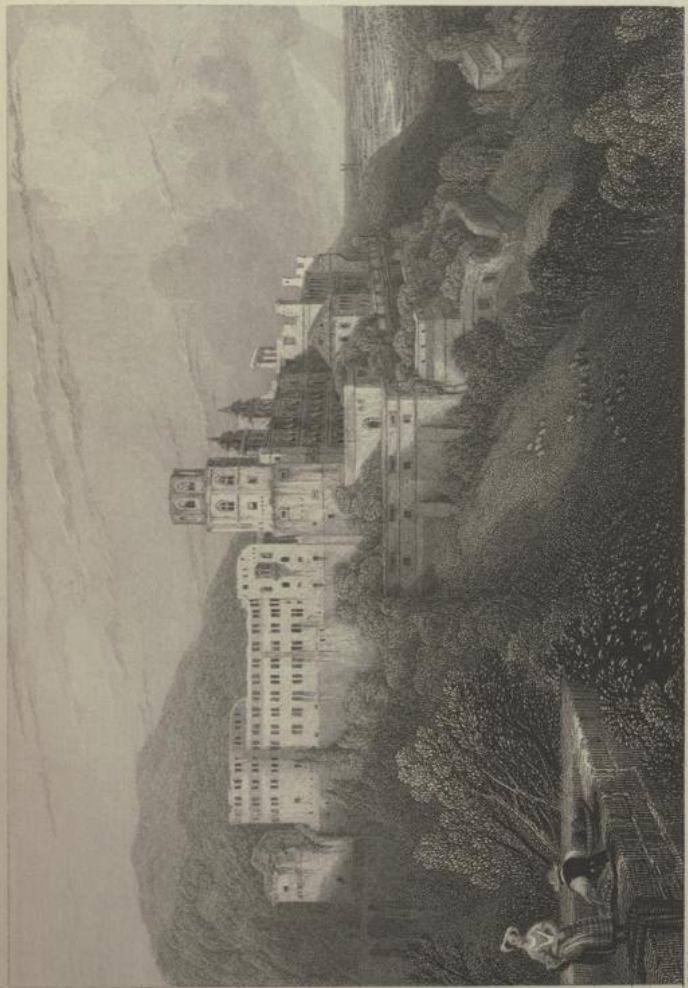
"And how did you generally succeed?"

"In most cases I was threatened with the stocks, and twice I was consigned by the *juge de paix* to the village police, to be passed to some mystic Mecca they were pleased to entitle 'a parish.' Ah," (continued the German with much *bonhomme*,) "it was a pity to see in a great nation so much value attached to such a trifle as money. But what surprised me greatly was the tone of your poetry. Madame de Stael, who knew perhaps as much of England as she did of Germany, tells us that its chief character is the *chivalresque*; and excepting only Scott, who, by the way, is *not* English, I did not find one chivalrous poet among you. Yet," continued the Student, "between ourselves, I fancy that in our present age of civilisation, there is an unexamined mistake in the general mind as to the value of poetry. It delights still as ever, but it has ceased to teach. The prose of the heart enlightens, touches, rouses, far more than poetry. Your most philosophical poets would be commonplace if turned into prose. Childe Harold, seemingly so profound, owes its profundity to its style; in reality it contains nothing that is new, except the mechanism of its



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HEIDELBERG, DEN 11. SEPTEMBER 1845.

VERLAG VON J. G. P. PINXTEN, HEIDELBERG.

J. G. P. Pinxten





diction. Verse cannot contain the refining subtle thoughts which a great prose writer embodies; the rhyme eternally cripples it; it properly deals with the common problems of human nature which are now hackneyed, and not with the nice and philosophising corollaries which may be drawn from them. Thus, though it would seem at first a paradox, commonplace is more the element of poetry than of prose. And, sensible of this, even Schiller wrote the deepest of modern tragedies, his *Fiesco*, in prose."

This sentiment charmed Vane, who had nothing of the poet about him; and he took the Student to share their breakfast at the inn, with a complacency he rarely experienced at the re-meeting with a new acquaintance.

After breakfast, our party proceeded through the town towards the wonderful castle which is its chief attraction, and the noblest wreck of German grandeur.

And now pausing, the mountain yet unscaled, the stately ruin frowned upon them, girt by its massive walls and hanging terraces, round which from place to place clung the dwarfed and various foliage. High at the rear rose the huge mountain, covered, save at its extreme summit, with dark trees, and concealing in its mysterious breast the shadowy beings of the legendary world. But towards the ruins, and up a steep ascent, you may see a few scattered sheep thinly studding the broken ground. Aloft, above the ramparts, rose, desolate and huge, the PALACE OF THE ELECTORS OF THE PALATINATE. In its broken walls you may trace the tokens of the lightning that blasted its ancient pomp, but

still leaves in the vast extent of pile a fitting monument of the memory of Charlemagne. Below, in the distance, spread the plain far and spacious, till the shadowy river, with one solitary sail upon its breast, united the melancholy scene of earth with the autumnal sky.

"See," said Vane, pointing to two peasants who were conversing near them on the matters of their little trade, utterly unconscious of the associations of the spot, "see! after all that is said and done about human greatness, it is always the greatness of the few. Ages pass, and leave the poor herd, the mass of men, eternally the same—hewers of wood and drawers of water. The pomp of princes has its ebb and flow, but the peasant sells his fruit as gaily to the stranger on the ruins, as to the emperor in the palace."

"Will it be always so?" said the Student.

"Let us hope not, for the sake of permanence in glory," said Trevelyman, "had *a people* built yonder palace, its splendour would never have past away."

Vane shrugged his shoulders, and Du —e took snuff.

But all the impressions produced by the castle at a distance, are as nothing when you stand within its vast area, and behold the architecture of all ages blended into one mighty ruin! The rich hues of the masonry, the sweeping façades—every description of building which man ever framed for war or for luxury—is here; all having only the common character, RUIN. The feudal rampart, the yawning fosse, the rude tower, the splendid arch—the strength



of a fortress, the magnificence of a palace—all united strike upon the soul like the history of a fallen empire in all its epochs.

“There is one singular habitant of these ruins,” said the Student, “a solitary painter, who has dwelt here some twenty years, companioned only by his Art. No other apartment but that which he tenants is occupied by a human being.”

“What a poetical existence,” cried Gertrude, enchanted with a solitude so full of associations.

“Perhaps so,” said the cruel Vane, ever anxious to dispel an illusion; “but more probably custom has deadened to him all that overpowers ourselves with awe; and he may tread among these ruins rather seeking to pick up some rude morsel of antiquity, than feeding his imagination with the dim traditions that invest them with so august a poetry.”

“Monsieur’s conjecture has something of the truth in it,” said the German,—“but then the painter is a Frenchman.”

There is a sense of fatality in the singular mournfulness and majesty which belong to the ruins of Heidelberg; contrasting the vastness of the strength with the utterness of the ruin. It has been twice struck with lightning, and is the wreck of the elements, not of man; during the great siege it sustained, the lightning is supposed to have struck the powder magazine by accident.

What a scene for some great imaginative work! What

a mocking interference of the wrath of nature in the puny contests of men! One stroke of "the red right arm" above us, crushing the triumph of ages, and laughing to scorn the power of the beleaguers and the valour of the besieged.

They passed the whole day among these stupendous ruins, and felt, as they descended to their inn, as if they had left the caverns of some mighty tomb.



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J. K. G. G. G.

THE GREAT COURT OF HEIDELBERG.

J. K. G. G. G.

JAMES & CO. FOR THE PROPRIETOR E. J. ROBERTS.