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## **The Pilgrims of the Rhine**

**Lytton, Edward Bulwer Lytton**

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Chapter XXXII.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

A SPOT TO BE BURIED IN.

ON their return homeward, Du —e took the third seat in the carriage, and endeavoured, with his usual vivacity, to cheer the spirits of his companions; and such was the elasticity of Gertrude's nature, that with her, he, to a certain degree, succeeded in his kindly attempt. Quickly alive to the charms of scenery, she entered by degrees into the external beauties which every turn in the road opened on their view; and the silvery smoothness of the river, that made the constant attraction of the landscape; the serenity of the time, and the clearness of the heavens, assisted by those spells which Nature ever exercises over her votaries, tended to tranquillise a mind that, like the sun-flower, so instinctively turned from the shadow to the light.

Once Du —e stopped the carriage in a spot of herbage, bedded among the trees, and said to Gertrude, "We are now in one of the many places along the Neckar, which your favourite traditions serve to consecrate; amidst

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yonder copses, in the early ages of Christianity, there dwelt a hermit, who, though young in years, was renowned for the sanctity of his life. None knew whence he came, or for what cause he had limited the circle of life to the seclusion of his cell. He rarely spoke, save when his ghostly advice, or his kindly prayer was needed; he lived upon herbs, and the wild fruits which the peasants brought to his cave; and every morning, and every evening, he came to this spot to fill his pitcher from the water of the stream. But here, he was observed to linger long after his task was done, and to sit gazing upon the walls of a convent which then rose upon the opposite side of the bank, though now even its ruins are gone. Gradually his health gave way beneath the austerities he practised; and one evening he was found by some fishermen, insensible, on the turf. They bore him for medical aid to the opposite convent; and one of the sisterhood, the daughter of a prince, was summoned to tend the recluse. But, when his eyes opened upon hers, a sudden recognition appeared to seize both. He spoke—but words in some other tongue; and the sister threw herself on the couch of the dying man, and shrieked forth a name, the most famous in the surrounding country, the name of a once noted minstrel, who, in those rude times, had mingled the poet with the lawless chief, and was supposed, years since, to have fallen in one of the desperate frays between prince and outlaw, which were then common; storming the very castle which held her—now the pious nun, then the beauty

and presider over the tournament and gaillard. In her arms the spirit of the hermit passed away. She survived but a few hours, and left conjecture busy with a history to which it never obtained further clue. Many a troubadour, in later times, furnished forth in poetry the details which truth refused to supply; and the place where the hermit at sunrise and sunset ever came to gaze upon the convent, became consecrated by song."

The place invested with this legendary interest was impressed with a singular aspect of melancholy quiet; wild flowers yet lingered on the turf, whose grassy sedges gently overhung the Neckar, that murmured amidst them with a plaintive music. Not a wind stirred the trees; but, at a little distance from the place, the spire of a church rose amidst the copse; and, as they paused, there suddenly arose from the holy building the bell that summons to the burial of the dead. It came on the ear in such harmony with the spot, with the hour, with the breathing calm, that it thrilled to the heart of each with an inexpressible power. It was like the voice of another world—that amidst the solitude of nature summoned the lulled spirit from the cares of this;—it invited, not repulsed, and had in its tone more of softness than of awe.

Gertrude turned, with tears starting to her eyes, and laying her hand on Trevelyman's, whispered:—"In such a spot, so calm, so sequestered, yet in the neighbourhood of the house of God, would I wish this broken frame to be consigned to rest!"