

Gerresheim near Düsseldorf.

Gunhilde.

Gunhilde, the pious, moral and in youthful gracefulness shining Nun had awakened in her Confessor's heart an impure inclination, the existence of which she had not supposed.

The unworthy priest spared nothing to seduce the inexperienced, but all his shameful exertions failed against Gunhilde's innocence. Consumed by passion, and full of impious plans, the seducer at last tried to persuade her to fly under the promise of returning to the world, and would unite himself with her in the holy bonds of matrimony.

Gunhilde did not resist such promises and his oaths. She escaped with the priest, during a dark night from the encircling walls of the cloister, and now he believed his object attained. But it was not so; the anxious maiden resisted with unconquerable constancy every improper request and demanded the fulfillment of his promise. To grant this, the wicked priest was not at all inclined; but resigned himself, in seeing every means to satisfy his passion remained fruitless, to a vagabond, dissipated life. By this daily more demoralized, he was, at last, connected with a band of robbers, in whose society he committed numerous crimes.

But during a marauding excursion, the former priest was seized, and soon afterwards hanged, as a fitting reward for his vicious life. The news of his terrible death soon reached Gunhilde, who lamented their days in the greatest seclusion and wept their precipitation. She had it is true remained innocent; however she was a culpable fugitive, a sinner in the eyes of the world, which is ever inclined, to believe the evil than in virtue and moral greatness. Notwithstanding the unfortunate determined, to return immediately to the cloister, and to atone for her crime, by subjecting herself to the most severe punishments. She threw herself at the feet of the Abbess, and implored her to accept, an undutiful, lost but yet repentant and unhappy daughter with clemency and mercy. „Rise“, said the superior, „rise my dear child; why do you accuse yourself? have you not indeed since unceasingly prayed to God in your chamber and honoured with your charming sounding voice, and more pious you stand there, than your sisters, more pleasing to God, than I.“

And to her cell the Nuns and Abbess accompanied the astonished. On entering her cell all was clear to Gunhilde; for from her resting-place an Angel rose and disappeared, who during her absence had been her substitute, prayed for her, and praised God with pious songs.
