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**Up the Rhine**

**Hood, Thomas**

**London, 1840**

To Gerard Brooke, Esq.

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## TO GERARD BROOKE, ESQ.

MY DEAR GERARD,—You will be glad to hear that we have escaped undrowned from that water-logged country called Holland,—a country, which, between its carillons and its canals, might be described by a punster as ringing wet.

We left Nimeguen with something of the ill-will with which we are apt, unjustly, to remember a place where we have suffered pain or experienced disappointment. And truly, to be cheated of great nature's second course, to be balked unnaturally of one of the most important non-naturals, is enough to upset one's moral as well as local affections. My Uncle says little, considering himself continually as on the brink of a sleep eternal; but my Aunt complains that she has never had a regular night's rest since she left London; whilst her maid declares, with a yawn, that foreign travelling is very racketty work, and has more than once hinted to her mistress that going abroad formed no part of her engagement. As for myself, I join with Dr. Watts's sluggard in wishing, tautologically, for "a little more sleep, and a little more slumber,"—but seem far more like a door *off* the hinges than *on* them, according to the serious poet's absurd simile. And all this gaping, and eye-watering, and drowsihed and discontent to be the work of a ridiculous Cockney, whom our evil fortune,

personified in a Dutch *touter*, had conducted to the same hotel. He had been a unit of our sum total of passengers from Rotterdam, but had escaped any particular observation by his insignificance. Boxcoated, bandana'd, and shawled, a compound of the coachman, the coxcomb, and the clerk, there was no difficulty in classifying the animal at a glance—still, in spite of a slang air, a knowing look, and the use of certain significant phrases, that are most current in London, there was such a cold-muttonish expression in his round unmeaning face as assured you that the creature had no harm in him—that he was little likely to murder sleep or anything else. However, about midnight, when number one was dozing, number two dreaming, number three snoring, and number four, perhaps, panting under the nightmare of a heavy hot supper, the populous establishment was suddenly startled broad awake by two violent explosions that frightened the whole neighbourhood from its propriety. In the first confusion of the senses, I really fancied, for the moment, that the Belgians were attempting to carry the city by a *coup-de-main*. In fact, Nimeguen being in a state of war, the alarm turned out the guard, and by the time I had donned my nether garment, some dozen soldiers were battering and clamouring for admittance at the door. On sallying from my room, I found the stairs and passages thronged with figures, male and female, in various degrees of nudity, amongst whom our maid Martha was eminently conspicuous, having, for reasons

of her own, exchanged her plain *bonnet-de-nuit* for her day-cap, with flaming geranium ribbons, the only article of full-dress on her person, or indeed amongst the whole party. As her mouth was wide open, she was probably either screaming or scolding, but her individual noise was lost and smothered in the confusion of tongues, that turned the lately quiet hotel into a second Babel. Some shouted "Fire!" others cried "Murder!" and one shrill feminine voice kept screaming, "The French! the French!" In the mean time, the *patrole* gained admittance, and with little ceremony forced their way up stairs towards the chamber to which we had traced the two reports. The door was locked and bolted, but was speedily burst open with the butt-end of a musket, the company entered, *en masse*, and lo! there was our Cockney, in a bright-coloured silk handkerchief for a turban, sitting bolt upright in his bed, and wondering with all his might at our intrusion, and that he could not quietly and comfortably let off his fire-arms at Nimeguen, as he had done ever since Marr's murder, out of his own little back window at Paddington or Dalston. It was not an easy matter to explain to him the nature of his misdemeanour, or to convince him afterwards that there was any harm in it. The landlady scolded in Dutch, the *garçon* jabbered in French, the sergeant of the guard threatened and swore in all the languages he could muster, whilst the Cockney bounced and blustered in bad English, that he was a free-born Briton, and so forth, and had a right to let off

pistols all over the world. The squabble ran so high, that our countryman stood a fair chance, I was told, of a night's lodging in the guard-house, but at length the matter was adjusted by his being mulcted, ostensibly in default of having a licence to carry arms, in a sum, which, of course, was spent in schnaps at the canteen. Moreover, he had an intimation that the damaged door would certainly appear amongst the items of his bill, and in Holland travellers' bills are anything but "easy beakers."\* Finally, he had to endure from his fellow-tourists all the maledictions and reproaches to be expected from persons subjected to that severest of trials of temper, the being waked out of a first sleep, especially when having to start by an early steamer allows no time for a second one. As thunder turns small beer, the untimely explosions had soured the whole mass of the milk of human kindness—every word that fell was like an acidulated drop, and having literally clothed the devoted Cockney with curses, as with a garment, the mob of night-caps retired to their pillows, and

"We left him alone in his glory."

I was rather curious to observe what sort of countenance the author of the disturbance would wear the next morning; but when he made his appearance amongst us on board the steamer, instead of looking chop-fallen

\* In the "Orbis Pictus," a Dutch-built polyglott school-book, birds of the *soft-billed* kind are rendered into English as "easy beakers."

or abashed, there was such an appearance of complacent self-satisfaction in his face, as convinced me, that on his return to London, he would brag of his noisy exploit at Nimeguen, to his comrades of Walbrook or Lothbury, as "a famous rumpus." I am afraid such exhibitions are but too common with Cockney travellers, who persist in perverting the end of the old adage, "When you are at Rome," &c., into "Do as you do at home." But remember I am far from intending to apply the term Cockney exclusively to the native of our own metropolis, who, if the whole horizon were canvas, would turn it into a panorama of London. Perhaps there are no more finished *badauds* extant than your French ones, of whatever rank, who fancy that the whole world is in France, and that all France is in Paris.

On reviewing the motley company on board, I was sorry to note the absence of the red and yellow faced men, the Mustard and Pepper that had hitherto served me for condiments. But, for the present, the amusement was to be furnished by a member of our own party. My Aunt, as you ought to know, is a simple, gentle creature, timid and helpless even for a woman, but as strong in her affections as weak in her nerves. In a word, she resembles Chaucer's Prioress, who was "all conscience and tender heart." To this character she owes most of her travelling adventures, one of which I must now describe,—but under the seal of secrecy, for it is as sore a subject, with her, as the victorious

*phoca* to Hector M'Intyre in the "Antiquary." Next to her standing regret for "poor George," it is one of her stock troubles that she is not a mother, and like some hens in the same predicament, she is sure to cluck and cover the first chick that comes in her way. To her great delight, therefore, she discovered amongst the company a smart, dapper, brisk, well-favoured, little fellow, with long flaxen ringlets curling down his back, —a boy apparently about eight years old,—a great deal too young, in her opinion, to be sent travelling, and especially by water, under nobody's care but his own. Such a shameful neglect, as she called it, appealed directly to her pity, and made her resolve to be quite a parent to the forlorn little foreigner. Accordingly, she lavished on him a thousand motherly attentions, which at first seemed to amuse and gratify her *protégé*, though he afterwards received them with an ill grace enough. Still she persevered, womanlike, in bestowing her tenderness on its object, however ungrateful the return—indulging, from time to time, in strictures on Dutch fathers and mothers, and their management of children, in a language which, fortunately, was not the current one of the place. At last, to raise her indignation to the climax, she saw her adopted urchin betake himself to practices which she scarcely tolerated in children of a larger growth. "It was quite folly enough," she said, "to have dressed up a boy like a man, without teaching him or at least allowing him to imitate grown-up habits:—for instance, smoking tobacco—and, as I

live," she almost screamed, "the little wretch is going to drink a glass of Dutch gin!" Such a sight upset all her patience—

To be precocious

*In schnapps* she reckoned was a sin atrocious.

But as a temperance exhortation in an unknown tongue could be of no possible use, she appealed at once, like some of our chartists, to physical force, and made a determined snatch at the devoted dram. This was a mortal affront to the long-haired manikin, who resisted with all his might and *mane*, and being wonderfully strong for his age, there ensued a protracted struggle, that afforded infinite amusement to the company on deck. My Aunt tugged, and hauled, and scolded in hissing English—the little fellow scuffled, and kicked, and spluttered abundance of guttural German, proving, amongst his other accomplishments, that he was not at all backward in his swearing. Temperance, however, gained her point, by spilling the obnoxious liquor; and in revenge, the manikin vented his spleen by throwing the empty glass into the Rhine. So far all was well. My Aunt had fought triumphantly for what she considered her duty, and a great principle; but her satisfaction was doomed to be short-lived. My Uncle, who had watched the fray with unequivocal signs and sounds of amazement, could not help congratulating the victorious party on such an unusual exertion of spirit, and its signal success, for the defeated urchin had rushed off



to digest his discomfiture in the fore-cabin. "Not," said my Uncle, "that I'm one of your wishy-washy tea-totallers; but a colt's a colt, and what is fit drink for a strong man may be a bad draught for a boy."—"I ax pardon, sare," interposed our conducteur, who had been one of the heartiest laughers at the skirmish, "bot de leetle gentleman is not von boy—he is ein zwerg—vat you call von kleines manchen."—"I suppose," cried my Uncle, "you mean a dwarf."—"Ja! ja! von dwarf," answered the conducteur; "he have nine-und-zwanzig jahrs of old." Imagine, dear Gerard, the effect of such an announcement on a shrinking, delicate female, with sensitive feelings, nearly akin to prudishness, like my poor Aunt! I confess I felt some anxiety as to the direction of her first impulse. Providentially, however, instead of urging her to jump overboard, it only impelled her to rush down below, where we found her in the pavilion, struggling, by Martha's help, with the hysterics, and fervently wishing, between her sobs, that she had never—never—never left Woodlands. She had not only let herself down, she considered, but all her sex; and especially her own countrywomen. "What could the foreigners think," she asked, "of an English lady, and above all, a widow, scuffling like a great masculine romp or hoyden with a strange man, no matter for his littleness—what can they say of me—oh! what *can* they say?"—"Why, as for that matter, Kate," answered my Uncle, playing the comforter, "whatever they say of you will

be said in a foreign lingo, so you are sure to hear nothing disagreeable."—"But it's what they will think," persisted the afflicted fair one. "Phoo! phoo!" said my Uncle, "they will only think that you fought very like a woman, or you would have chosen a fairer match." But the mourner was not to be soothed with words; nor, indeed, by anything short of engaging the pavilion for her, as a *locus penitentiae*, where she could bewail her error, and her shame, under lock and key. "I'll tell you what it is, Frank," said my Uncle, after we had enjoyed a hearty laugh together, out of my Aunt's hearing, "it must never be named to poor Kate,—but from this time forward I shall think that little Gulliver and his nurse Glumdalstitch was not such an out of the way story after all!"

I subsequently learned, that the little manikin in the steamer was a great man at Elberfeld, in the cotton line; and our conducteur forewarned me, that I should probably meet with several copies of this pocket edition of the human species in the Rhenish provinces, and particularly two brothers, born at Coblenz. It is singular that the empire has been equally prolific in natural and supernatural dwarfs. To Germany our show caravans and Lilliputian exhibitions have been indebted for many of their most remarkable pigmies; whilst imps, elfins, little grey men, "and such small deer," literally swarm in its romantic mythology;—a coincidence I humbly submit to the speculations of our philosophers.

At Lobith we reached the frontier, and passed from the guardianship of the Triton, or John Dory, or Stockfish, or whatever else is the Dutch tutelary Emblem,—under the protecting wings of the Black Eagle, which we soon saw displayed, in the attitude of a bird of prey on a barn door. Our passports were consequently in requisition at Emmerich, the first Prussian town, and led to a scene, on the part of our Hypochondriac, which he had already rehearsed at Nimeguen. Accordingly, to the request for the document, he quietly answered that there was no need. “But, sare, you shall go to Cologne,” said the conducteur. “Sir, I shall do no such thing,” retorted my Uncle with some asperity, as if arguing the point with old Truby himself. “Sare, as you please,” returned the conducteur, with the national shrug and grimace; “bot you most not go by de Preussich frontièrre wizzout de visé.” “My good fellow,” said my Uncle, smiling gravely, “I am going beyond the great frontier of all, and where your King of Prussia can’t stop me, with all his police, and his army to boot.” “Teufel! vere is dat?” exclaimed the German, astounded by this apparent denial of the power of an absolute monarch. “It’s another and a better world,” said my Uncle, solemnly, and with a shake of the head that, like Lord Burleigh’s, was a homily in itself: “and mark my words, sir, I shall be there before night.” It was now time to interfere, and by dint of expostulation, I obtained the paper. “Well, Frank, there it is,—but, mind, it’s a dead letter. Do what you like with it,

only don't let me be troubled with any such worldly formalities again."

*Apropos de bottes*—our conducteur, a shrewd fellow, with a taste for humour, told me he had seen a passport the day before, wherein the bearer described himself as "a man of property," and, by way of giving weight to the document, it was indorsed by the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of London, and one or two of the Aldermen. What a characteristic trait of a moneyed Cit on his travels!

Whilst our papers were under the inspection of the police, the familiars of another inquisition boarded the vessel, and commenced their function. They conducted themselves very civilly; but it would be bad policy indeed, at the threshold of a grand and profitable exhibition—and such is the Rhine—to allow visitors to be disgusted by any official rudeness at the threshold. The search, therefore, was politely strict, but nothing objectionable was discovered, except a certain bale of Dutch linen, at which the officers made a dead set. I was about to interpose on behalf of the owner, when her maid resolutely undertook the defence. The holland, she said, was honestly come by and paid for, and belonged to her mistress. "Bot it is goods for a tax," said the officer. "It's no such thing," said Martha, positively, and becoming unconsciously an advocate for free trade; "the Dutch charged no taxes on it, and it stands to reason it can't be taxed in Germany." "You shall see de boke," said the officer,— "you know vat is

a tariff?" "It's a fiddlestick," retorted Martha, waxing angry. "It is de Yarman Commercial Leg," said the douanier. "Leg or no leg," replied the championess, "it's not going to walk off with my missis's property." "Why for, den, you not declare it?" asked the officer; whereupon the maid declared, she knew nothing about declarations. "If you seize the linen, you shall seize me," said she, and suiting the action to the word, she seated herself on the bale with the dignity of a Lord Chancellor, the fountain of all equity, on his woolsack. The officers looked puzzled and undecided how to act, when they were fortunately relieved from the dilemma by a personage who had hitherto taken no more notice of the matter than if he had literally done with the things of this world. "Martha, ask my sister to step here." Up jumped the unconscious maid to perform this errand; but her back was no sooner turned, than, pointing to the linen, my Uncle addressed the douaniers: "Take it, gentlemen, and welcome. It is heartily at your service, to make into shirts or towelling, or whatever you or your wives think proper." The officers stared, and seemed to doubt the purport of this speech, till I translated it into the best German I could muster. Then they stared still more, as if thinking, not without reason, that Englishmen are very droll people; but suddenly recollecting themselves, they made a low bow, first to my Uncle, then another to me, and then, without a word, handed the bale over the side, and took their departure. "I'll tell you what it is, Frank," said my

Uncle, "many persons in such a case would have stood out, but in the first place we have got rid of a great incumbrance, and in the second place, before it got to Woodlands, the Dutch linen would have cost more than double its worth. Above all, its being seized will be a comfort to your Aunt. Yes, you may laugh, but there's nothing in life so good for a fretful person as a real vexation. That's my remark, and take my word for it, for a week to come, Kate will be far more angry with the King of Prussia, than troubled about poor George."

But, however right in his theory, my Uncle found himself mistaken as to the conductor that was to carry off the shock. The moment Martha returned, and discovered that she had been robbed, like a hen off her eggs, she set up a clamour that could only be silenced by her master's acknowledgment of his own share in the transaction. Big with this fact, she ran back to her mistress, and when we afterwards dined in the pavilion, for my Aunt declined appearing at the table d'hôte, she did not fail to bring her Dutch cloth on the table. "It was hard enough," she said, "to be disappointed, in what she did for the best, without the pain of owing it to her own brother's cruel connivance." Her own brother looked a little foolish at this remark, and had she been content with her advantage, would have probably been worsted, but when she went on to charge him with ingratitude, seeing that the beautiful Dutch linen was intended for a new set of shirts for himself,

his constitutional infirmity supplied him with a defence. "Well, well, Kate, let bygones be bygones. What is done is done, and it's no use taking it to heart. And besides, Kate," he added, quite seriously, "you have one comfort, and that is, if the Dutch linen was to be made into shirts for me, I should never, you know, have lived to wear 'em."

To borrow a phrase that fell from the Cockney, "the steam-boat passes a night on board" between Nimeguen and Cologne, and in the interim the passengers sleep as they may or can, without any accommodation for the purpose. In default of a berth, a *corner* is the best resting-place; but to obtain such a nook I had to dispossess a score of German pipes. Here I dozed, sitting, till towards morning, when methought a bell began to ring, the paddles stopped, and the vessel brought up with a jolt against something hard. Some dozen of outlandish figures, in fancy caps, immediately roused up, and, each selecting a pipe, groped their way out of the dingy atmosphere of the cabin, where as many other shapes, some still more foreign, and every one armed with a meershaum, as speedily filled their places. The bell rang a second time, the paddles revolved, the vibration recommenced, my eyes closed again, and when they opened to the daylight, I was told that we had stopped and exchanged some of our live stock at Düsseldorf.

A few of the bipeds we had obtained by this transaction were, as to costume, extremely grotesque. One

of them, a short, squat, vulgar-looking personage, particularly attracted my Uncle's notice. "In the name of wonder, Frank, what can that long-haired fellow be?—the one yonder in the black velvet cap, with a notch cut out of the brim, like a barber's basin." "I suspect," said I, "he is a painter, or would-be painter, from Düsseldorf; that cap is an imitation of Raffael's, and the great hat near it is a copy of Rubens's." My Uncle received this intelligence with a "Humph." All kinds of foppery are his especial aversion, and he did not conceal his disgust. "Painters, indeed! Take my word for it, Frank, they are rank daubers. It's my notion that people who are so full of themselves are always empty of everything else. As for their Raffael and Rubens hats, I'd back a common London house-painter agin them in his paper cap. No, no, Frank;—a man that makes such an exhibition of himself will never cut a figure at Somerset House."

In the mean time, these Young Masters strutted about as complacently as if they had really rivalled the Old ones by an "Assumption" and a "Transfiguration." The Raffaelesque hero, in particular, had arranged his *chèche-lure* so elaborately after that of Sanzio, as to prove that, if not otherwise skilful, he could handle a hair-brush. But the thing was a profanation; and I could not help favouring the brace of Burschen with a mental apostrophe. "Gentlemen, instead of dressing after Rubens and Raffael, you ought to have gone naked long before them—in the savage ages, gentlemen, when you might



at once have exercised your art, and gratified your personal vanity, by painting your own bodies."

That vented me: and now, Gerard, for fear of mistakes, please to turn to the noble work on Modern German Art, by the Count Athanasius Raczyński, and there you will find that Düsseldorf can turn out painters, and good ones too, as well as lay figures.

Now then, methinks you cry, for Cologne;—but my hand is tired, and my pen is worn out, and I must reserve that ancient city (it smells high, but it will keep,) for another letter. All love to Emily, from, dear Gerard, yours very truly,

FRANK SOMERVILLE.

P.S.—You remember Grundy, not the celebrated old lady of that name, but our schoolfellow at Harrow. He has just put up at our hotel in his way homewards, full of grumbling and grievances, and anathematising the Rhinelanders for having "extorted" him. Right or wrong, his indignation has turned his complaint into verse, and here follows a copy of what Mr. Grundy says of the natives:—

Ye Tourists and Travellers, bound to the Rhine,  
 Provided with passport, that requisite docket,  
 First listen to one little whisper of mine—  
 Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

Don't wash or be shaved—go like hairy wild men,  
Play dominoes, smoke, wear a cap and smock-frock it,  
But if you speak English, or look it, why then  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll sleep at great inns, in the smallest of beds,  
Find charges as apt to mount up as a rocket,  
With thirty per cent. as a tax on your heads,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll see old Cologne,—not the sweetest of towns,—  
Wherever you follow your nose you will shock it ;  
And you'll pay your three dollars to look at three crowns,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll count Seven Mountains, and see Roland's Eck,  
Hear legends veracious as any by Crockett ;  
But oh! to the tone of romance what a check,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

Old Castles you'll see on the vine-covered hill,—  
Fine ruins to rivet the eye in its socket—  
Once haunts of Baronial Banditti,—and still  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll stop at Coblenz, with its beautiful views,  
But make no long stay with your money to stock it,  
Where Jews are all Germans, and Germans all Jews,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

A Fortress you'll see, which, as people report,  
Can never be captured, save famine should block it—  
Ascend Ehrenbreitstein—but that's not their *forte*,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll see an old man who'll let off an old gun,  
And Lurley, with her hurly-burly, will mock it;  
But think that the words of the echo thus run—  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

You'll gaze on the Rheingau, the soil of the Vine!  
Of course you will freely Moselle it and Hock it—  
P'rhaps purchase some pieces of Humbugheim wine—  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

Perchance you will take a frisk off to the Baths—  
Where some to their heads hold a pistol and cock it;  
But still mind the warning, wherever your paths,  
Take care of your pocket:—take care of your pocket!

And Friendships you'll swear most eternal of pacts,  
Change rings, and give hair to be put in a locket;  
But still, in the most sentimental of acts,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!

In short, if you visit that stream or its shore,  
Still keep at your elbow one caution to knock it,  
And where Schinderhannes was Robber of yore,  
Take care of your pocket!—take care of your pocket!