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Up the Rhine

Hood, Thomas

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To Rebecca Page

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TO REBECCA PAGE.

DEAR BECKY,—Thenk hev'n the storm I tould you of has blowed over ; but I believe I may thank master for it who was so kind as say I mite turn a Turk or a Hottenpot, if so be it agreed with my consense. As for missus, she looks grumpy enuff at my new devotions—but let her look, I mayn't always be her servent to be tride xperiments on, as was the case this blessed morning. Complaining, as usual, of her week state of nerves, she was advized by Mrs. Markhum to try the Rine Baths, as being verry braceing ; and missus was so considerrit as to let poor me make the fust trial. The Baths are kep in a floting house, witch is made fast to the Rine Bridge, of boats ; and a pretty rushin and rampagin the river makes between them, like a mill race. But there was no help for it, as bathe I must ; and was all crudling, and shakin, and shiverin, in the tearing could water ; when before one could say lawk deliver us, a nasty grate barge come spinning down the river, and by sum mismanigement the towin rope hung too low down, and jist ketching the Bath House, wipt off the hole roof in a jiffy ! There was a hawful crash, you may suppose ; and at that very minit I had duckt my head under, and wen I come up agin, lo, and behold ! there was nothin at all up abuv, xcept the bare sky. In

course it was skreek upon skreek from the other rooms ; and thinks I, if tops comes off, so may bottoms, and in that case down sinks the floting bath, and were all drownedd creturs as sure as rats. So out I run on to the bridge of boats, jist as I was, with nothin on but my newdity ; but decency's won thing, and death's another. The rest of the bathling ladies did the same ; and some of them, pore things, fainted ded away on the boards. Luckily, none of the mail sects was passing by, for xcept won Waterloo blue bonnit, we were all in a naturalized state, like so menney Eves. Most fortunately, it was a hot sunny day, or we mite have kitcht our deths ; howsumever, I was gitting more composed, wen hearing a tramp, tramp, tramp, I turned round my hed, and wat should I see but a hole rigment of Prushian sogers a marchin over the bridge. In such an undelicate case, staying was out of the question, so I giv a skreech, and roof or no roof, it was won generil skuttle back into the littel house. Then sich a skramble and hudling on of our close, there wasn't a lady but looked as if her things had been put on, as the saying is, with a pitchfork ! As for the ones in fits, the bath pepel carrid them back ; and as the best and shortest way of bringin them to, popped them into the water agin, witch had the effect. Think gudness, there was no wus harm done ; but Catshins says, wen the roof was took off, I ought to have crost meself ; and to be sure, so I ought, as well as Sanctus Marius, instead of O Criminy !

So much for bathin afore missus. For my part, I

don't admire boat bridges. Give me good iron or stone wons, like Southwurk, or Rochister. Ony the other day, a grate misguidid raft of wood driv agin the pinte end of an iland called Over Work, witch split the raft in two; so one half came down by the rite side of the iland, and the other by the left; and betwixt them, they broke and carried away both ends of the Rine Bridge; and there was a pore old woman and her cow, witch mite have been me, a dancing about, well ni crazy with frite, on the bit of bridge as was left in the middle of the river! Yesterday, Catshins took me to visit at her old place; being twelye o'clock, the fammily was jist going to dinner, and so I saw the hole preparation. First there was soop, and Catshins said, the cook said somebody said as how the English soop was so pore, it was obleeged to be disgized and flavoured up with pepper and spice; but I tould her, Lord help her, I never see any soop in England, but wat, wen could, was a perfect jelly, as might be chuckt over the house. Howsumever, I tasted the Germin soop, and thinks I, there'd be jist as much taste of the meat, if a cow had tumbled into the Rine. Then came the beef, with iled butter and sowr sarce; and tell cook at home if she wants a new ornamentle dish, I'll be bound she never thort of a bullock's nose in jelly. For wegetables, small fried taters, and something green, as looked like masht duck weed, besides a hole truss of sallet; and instead of a fruit-pie, a flat cherry-tart, amost as big as a tebord. As for the servents, the best part of their dinner was ould cowcumbers, as had crawled on

the ground till they was as yeller underneath as a toad's belly—sliced up in winiger and shocking bad ile, along with monstrashious big inguns. To be sure, they do feed very queerly. Catshins says, her missis was ill laterly, with the morbus; and the fust thing she begged for in the eating way, was a veal cutlit, and a lot of bullises stewed in sour wine! As for desert, they eat plums by the bushell, and pounds upon pounds of cherris; and wat's more, swallow the stones!

Talkin of dinners, pleas God if I ever settle in Germiny, there's three things I'll have out from England, a warmin pan, a plate-warmer, and a knife-board; for the knives here are never sharpt, and as we say of dill-water, are so innocent, you may give them to a new-born babby without the least danger. But lawk, if you was to send them out things, they don't know the rite use of them, and most likely they would fry pancakes in the warmin pan, and make a pantry of the plate-warmer, jist as they fetch water for drinkin in a tin pail, as is painted red on the inside, and green on the out. Nothing's used in its proper way. When we cum to the lodgins, I found in the drawing-room, a square painted tin basket, exactly like an English bread-basket, and ever sinse I've put the rolls in it, but wen Catshins come, she said it's to hold sand, and to be spit into—wat a forrin idear!

All together I shouldn't like to be a Germin servent; but I'm sadly afeard I shan't stop long where I am. Missus gets very cross, and seems to think I never do

enuff; but if she was in my shoes she would find I have more work then I can do, what with my new religion, and gitting all the he and she saints by heart; and to be taught nitting; and practise waltzing and singing, and learn Germin besides, witch is very puzzling for they say ve for we, and wisy wersy.

The grate Sham Fites is begun, and I've been to the Larger, as it's called, witch is full of shows and booths, and partickly wooden taverns and publick howsis, three to one. But the pitchd wite tents is a bewtiful site in the middle of a wide plane, with the blue mountings all round. I went with a party in a waggin, the same as to Fairlop Fair, and was very cumfittable till the cumming home, wen a Germin tailer, overtook with snaps, went to sleep in the bottom of the waggin with his lited pipe among the straw. A pretty frite it was! for the straw flamed up, and we were all obleeged to bundle out neck and crop. Thenk providens there was no personable axident, xcept to the yung man his self, who, wen he sobered, was dredfully put out to dis-kiver his faverit curl and all his back hare was singed off his head.

Now I must stop for want of candle, and besides Catshins snores so she puts me out. Give my luv to every boddy in Becknam, not forgetting yourself, and so as the Cathlicks say, Bendicity from

Dear Becky,

Yures luving Frend,

MARTHA PENNY.

P.S. I've begun to confess a little, namely going to the Germin Ball in Missis's silk stockings. But I couldn't quite unbuzzum. But in course me and the Priest will get more confidential in time.

