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Up the Rhine

Hood, Thomas

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To Gerard Brooke, Esq.

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master had almost lost his place, she only shrugged her shoulders, and when informed that he had quite lost his breakfast, she only shrugged them again.

I have some thoughts of going up the river Rhine as far as Schaffhausen, to see the famous waterfall; but much will depend on the weather at Frank's return. This is singing rather a different tune to my former ditties; but I know, old friend, you will be well pleased that such warnings were fancies and not facts, with

Dear Peter, your old and faithful friend,

RICHARD ORCHARD.

TO GERARD BROOKE, ESQ.

MY DEAR GERARD,—Now for some account of what Mrs. Headwigs would doubtless have called her military "experiences." The most eligible horse I could pick up was one which had carried an engineer officer at the grand manœuvres; which I purchased for about 15*l.*—trappings and all. A Prussian military cloak, with a quiet blue collar instead of a red one, happened to match the saddle-cloth, as regulation, and made me so far complete. But, as the French say, the first step is all the difficulty; and when I ought to have stepped out of Coblenz with my friend the Captain and his 10th company, I was lying in my bed with a blister on my chest, whilst my nag went without me, like the "chief mourner" at a dragoon's funeral. The Captain

left me the route, in case I should be able to join, which at last I effected. My Uncle proposed posting, but, being no disciple of Zimmermann, I preferred the Eilwagen—and, thanks to the insouciance of our German maid, who lay *dreaming* of making my breakfast, I was literally “sent empty away.”

Starting on a fine fresh morning, and ascending the breezy hills in the rear of Ehrenbreitstein, it was not long ere I began to feel the cravings so keenly described by the hunger-bitten heroes of Spanish romance. Scenery went for nothing: I could see no prospect but that of a *déjeûner*, which Schreiber's Guide promised me at the end of the stage. German travelling is proverbially “dooms slow,” but, compared with my *fast*, it seemed slower than usual; but there is no inducing a royal postilion, for the King is universal coach-owner, to go any quicker to suit his “insides.” It appeared an age, ere we arrived at Ems, which, like literal M's, seemed to my fancy to stand for Mocha and Muffins. At last, we stopped at the door of some Hotel, ample enough to furnish a public dinner. “How long do we stay here?” “Ten minutes, sir.” “Good: a roll and a cup of coffee.” And, to save time, the refreshments were paid for beforehand. Good; again. But five long minutes elapsed, then six, then seven, and, at the eighth, came the roll and the cup of coffee; boiling hot;—with a jug of boiling-hot milk—there ought to have been a boiling-hot cup and a red-hot spoon. The roll might be pocketed,—but the coffee could not well be poured in after it, *à-la-Grimaldi*. In the mean time,

the post-horn kept blowing, but without making the beverage any cooler: pshaw!—the trick was palpable and provoking, and a few warm words might have fallen naturally from a scalded tongue. But the contrast between the paltriness of the fraud and the magnificent saloon in which it was perpetrated, had something in it so ludicrous that I got into the coupé again in tolerable good-humour. I have since heard that such tricks upon travellers are so common, as to have been made the foundation of a German farce; and, truly, to a flying visitor they are but fly-bites which he gets rid of with a cursory d—n and a blast of the horn: but, as Markham says, when cheating and extortion come home to you, as a resident, and become part of your fixtures, you have occasion to read, on week-days as well as Sundays, in the book of Job.

Turning my back on the inhospitable Hôtel (de Russie?) I beheld my beloved Lahn, and could not help exclaiming, “Oh! ye Naiads, can the scalding, parboiling springs uprising in the very middle of your native stream, be so repulsive to you, as the presence in this pretty Valley—meant for silence, solitude, and sweet thoughts—of Pride, Pomp, Vanity, the frenzy of Gambling, and all the hotter passions of human nature?”

As for Health, if there ever was such a Goddess resident at Ems, she must have long since been scared away by the infraction of the sanitary rules. For instance, you are not to eat fruit; which, by the practice at the Speisesaals, seems interpreted into a glut-

tonous licence to eat everything else, in any possible quantity. You are to keep your mind calm and unruffled—towards which, you are supplied with public and private gaming-tables;—you are not to worry yourself with business—but invited to make a business of pleasure at everlasting assemblies and balls. The whole thing is a profitable Hoax on pretended Temperance Principles. The very preparation for taking the waters (vide Schreiber) ought to prevent your having any occasion for them—namely, exercise, plain diet, abstinence from hot wines, or stimulative drinks—early rising and bedding, and command of your passions: in short, when you are fit to go to Ems, you need not leave Piccadilly. The rules pompously given out for your regimen at any of the great German Watering places, are, in the main, quite as applicable to Norton Folgate or Bullock Smithy. If—“there is much virtue in that if”—if a man could dismiss all thoughts of business that are bothering, all ideas of pleasure but what are innocent—if he could forget that he has a head except for pleasant thoughts, or a stomach except for wholesome things—if he would not over-walk, over-ride, over-watch, over-sleep, over-eat, over-drink, over-work, or over-play himself, to my fancy he would be a fool to leave the blessed spot, wherever he might be, for any watering-place but Paradise and the River of Life.

On quitting the Lahn, the beauty of the scenery dwindles like a flower for want of *watering*, and you enter on a lumpy-bumpy-humpy country, which is the

more uninteresting as, in getting over this "groundswell," you do it at a walk. German horses object to go up hill at any other pace; and German postilions prevent their trotting or galloping down—by which hearse-like progress we at last looked down on the slated roofs of Langen Schwalbach or "Swallow's Brook." Whereby hangs, an't please you, a swallow tale.

THE FLOWER AND THE WEED.

A LEGEND OF SCHWALBACH.

"YES," said Mr. Samuel Brown, gently closing the book he had just been reading, and looking up cheerfully at the ceiling, "yes, I will go to Germany!"

Mr. Samuel Brown was an Englishman, middle-aged, and a bachelor; not that the last was his own fault, for he had tried as often to change his state, and had made as many offers, as any man of his years. But he was unlucky. His rejected addresses had gone through nearly as numerous editions as the pleasant work under the same title; his heart and hand had been declined so frequently that, like the eels under another painful operation, he had become quite used to it. It was even whispered amongst his friends, that he had advertised in the *Herald* for a matrimonial partner, but without success. As he was well to do in the world, the obstacle, most probably, was his person;