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The upper Rhine

the scenery of its banks and the manners of its people

Mayence to the lake of Constance

Mayhew, Henry

London, 1858

§ 1. The kind of Meat, Horseflesh, Black Bread, Coffee, &c. consumed by the People

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II.

STYLE OF LIVING.

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§ 1.

The Kind of Meat, Horseflesh, Black Bread, Coffee, etc. consumed by the People.

There is the same melancholy tale to be told concerning the want of refinement at table among Prussians, as there is respecting their want of cleanliness both in their persons and houses.

Barbarism, and even animalism, is never so conspicuous among people as when you see them at their food. Eating, or indeed any act of mere sensuality, every refined nature knows, is so repulsive to others, that gentlefolks with us are naturally studious how to avoid offending the susceptibilities of those who may happen to sit at the same board with them. Some of our poets have been unable to bear the sight of a lady eating, even though the act were performed with all the delicacy of the most polished manners. But, without going to such absurdly sensitive extremes, it is highly necessary that dames who would be regarded as a grade above carnivora in the scale of creation, should learn to perform an animal function after the least possible animal fashion.

Again, the quality of the food indulged in is a sure criterion as to whether the people have got beyond that primitive coarseness of palate which delights only in the strongest flavoured

viands—even as the eyes of savages find pleasure merely in the gaudiest colours; or as to whether, by a long course of superior breeding, the nerves of taste have become daintily discriminative between the more delicate of the sapid qualities of things—in the same manner as the educated retina of the artist feels its greatest charm to lie in the fine harmonies of tint, and light and shade.

The scavengers, flushermen, nightmen, and sweeps of London, live upon the coarsest possible food, for, to their leathery tongues, raw onions, pickled whelks, and the disgusting compound called "fagots," have alone power to sting their nerves into sensation; and we should as soon expect to find *them* tickled with the subtle nicety of a French made-dish, as to discover their rooms ornamented and perfumed with flowers. But even with these people, who rank as the lowest of our nation, we never knew one of them (and we have paid some little attention to the study of their idiosyncrasies) to be so nearly allied to the beast of prey as to delight in eating a considerable part of his animal food raw—as the barbarous Preussen do.

Man has been defined, by logicians who have puzzled their brains to arrive at some more essential difference than his reason whereby to distinguish him from other sentient creatures—as "a cooking animal;" since it seems to be the custom with all persons taking rank as human beings to abstain from eating their meat in a crude condition, like less culinary creatures. Such a definition, however, hardly applies to the Prussian family, for it is the fashion with them to partake of raw herrings, raw ham, raw dried salmon, raw sausages, raw dried geese, and a variety of equally revolting articles.

In the Government-School reading-book ("*für die erste Elementarklasse*") occurs the following passage:—"One eats bread, pastry, meal-food, vegetables, egg-food, flesh, fish, roast-

meat, milk, butter, cheese, honey, fruit, berries, and nuts. Some things one eats raw—what?" Whereupon the child has to answer, "Ham, sausages, herrings," &c. &c.

Now the eating of flesh, even to those who are not of the Vegetarian persuasion, is at all times no very angelic operation, and we have known English surgeons who could not be prevailed upon to carve the roasted and boiled meats at dinner. But a Preusse is not afflicted with any such sensibility, for, to *his* coarse mind, there appears to be no smack of cannibalism in eating the flesh of geese,—that once breathed and felt, ay, and perhaps thought like himself,—in its pure state of mere dried animal tissue.

We will, however, proceed to deal *seriatim* with the several subjects which stand at the head of the present section.

The Prussian meat consists principally of "*Rindfleisch*," literally bullocks'-flesh, and *Anglicè*, beef, and this is sold at five groschens (about sixpence of our money) per pound, for what we call the "prime parts." The reader, however, must not fancy that the Rhenish bullock is like our own—bred and fed for the sole purpose of the table; for in Rhineland the wretched creature, instead of living a life of luxury and ease, as with us, is used as a draught animal, and does almost as much work as an omnibus horse previous to being slaughtered,—nearly all the "wagons" being drawn by the future beef of the country.

Now this custom has a double inconvenience: first, the utility of the animal as a beast of burden tends to prolong its life far into the years of toughness; and secondly, the hard labour which the poor brute has undergone not only wears every ounce of fat off its bones, but gives a sinewiness and gristly character, as well as coarse grain to its flesh, that make it eat about as tender and toothsome as would a joint of the Egyptian Sphynx when boiled.

But if the beef is of too ancient and tough a nature to please pampered English palates, the veal has the very opposite defect, and is far too young, and the flesh too pappy, to be eatable by any but semi-savages. Indeed, the poor calves are killed in their very babyhood—when only a week old; and the custom, we must confess, smacks to our mind of such an over-greediness to turn a groschen out of the young things' lives, that we always sicken at the sight of the eternal "*Kalbfleisch*"—a viand which is more popular than any other in Rhineland, simply because it is little better than half the price of beef, or a fraction more than threepence a-pound.

Mutton (*Hammelfleisch*) is a luxurious rarity, fetching rather more than sevenpence a-pound; for the hills, upon which we should graze sheep, are either planted with vineyards or covered with wood, so that during our stay in Prussia we saw only one flock. Lamb, on the other hand, is unknown; for if the calves are killed almost as soon as born—to prevent them having any share of their mothers' milk—the young of the ewe (owing to the produce of its udder having no commercial value attached to it) are allowed to live on to a respectable old age, in order that they may bring more groschens to the breeder.

German pork (*Schweinfleisch*) is positively uneatable by English people. Dairy-fed animals are unknown in the country, the Rhenish porkers being literally *gutter-fed*. Nor is this all. A large proportion of this same German pork consists of the flesh of elderly sows that have borne multitudinous families; for the German "*Bauers*" (peasants) never think of killing any animal for food until they have got their last *Pfennig* out of it. The consequence is, that the fat of this same pork is positively yellow, and the flesh itself red and leathery, as well as coarse and rank to the palate. Such as it is, the pork fetches about five gros (sixpence) the pound, whilst

sucking-pigs (*Spanferkel*) may be had for twenty gros (two shillings) in town, and for half that sum in the country. Pork, however, is a dish seldom seen on a German table, the greater portion of the swine-flesh being made into *Schinken* (ham), ("for that gives more," say the *Bauers*,) and the rest converted into *Wurst* (sausages).

Of poulterers there are none in Coblenz, though it is the site of a royal "*Residenz*"—the fowls and pigeons being taken to the market alive in sacks, and the housewives either standing by while their necks are twisted, or else carrying the fluttering birds home by their legs, and playing the executioners themselves. Chickens cost from 6*d.* to 1*s.* each (according to size), and pigeons about 7*d.* the pair, though it must not be imagined that for this price the birds are anything like our own in quality, it being the custom of the Rhinelanders to fatten no animal for food. Indeed, the people tell you it will not pay to prepare any living thing for the table.

The fish is all freshwater; for at the rate of Preussisch locomotion, where the quickest conveyance is the "*Schnell-post*," (or, to speak more correctly in these fast days, the *snail-post*), of course it would be madness to expect that such delicacies as turbots and soles should be brought up to Rhineland from the sea. Of the freshwater kind, the St. Goar salmon (caught under the Lurlei rocks) is peculiarly fine, though rather scarce and dear, costing as much as 20 gros (2*s.* English) per lb. The "May-fish," as it is termed in Germany—or "the chad," as it is denominated by us—is, however, sufficiently abundant to be had at the rate of 5 gros (6*d.*) each, even though they be as large as ordinary salmon. This fish is purchased principally by the poorer classes—the rich generally despising it, not because it is bad-flavoured, but on account of its being brought to market *dead;* whereas the carp, tench, pike, &c., come alive in tanks.

The May-fish is generally eaten "souced;" nor is it at all unpalatable.

To the above list of the kinds of animal food consumed in the Rhenish provinces of Prussia must be added that which in England is considered fit only for cats and dogs—viz. horse-flesh (*Pferdfleisch*); but which in Germany constitutes a proportion of the *meat* eaten by the poorer classes. Philosophically viewed, there is, of course, no reason why a fillet of pony should not be as toothsome as one of veal, and a loin of a galloway even more palatable than one of a porker—seeing that the horse is a far more dainty-feeding animal than the pig. This view of the matter, however, requires that the beasts should be alike bred *specially* for the table, and killed, too, not only when young, but in good and sound condition. At the price of horses, however, it is obvious to common sense that no *Bauer* could afford to send his healthy colts to market to be slaughtered for food; so that the great objection to hippophagy in a country lies in the fact, that only the aged and diseased hacks—such, indeed, as are unfit for further work and are sent to our knackers—can possibly find their way to the national shambles. That this is considered *likely* to be the case in Rhineland, is shown by the stringent Police Regulations (quoted below),* in order to guard against the slaughtering

* Police Regulations

Respecting the slaughtering of Horses for the Police District of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein.

E. In conformity with the Police laws of the 11th March, 1850, and after a consultation with the Magistrates of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein, the following orders are herewith given concerning the slaughtering of horses:—

§ 1. Every butcher who wishes to slaughter must first obtain the permission of the Royal Police direction, and he must specify the place of slaughtering the horses, as well as the place of selling the horse-meat: in order to obtain such permission.

of unwholesome nags. Hence, though the following disgusting advertisement is frequently seen in the newspaper of the Rhenish capital,—

Fresh, salted, and smoked Horseflesh, always to be had of
Weber, Weissergasse, No. 7,—

the Englishman thanks Providence that beef—and the best

§ 2. The horses intended to be slaughtered must not only be healthy, but likewise in good condition.

§ 3. For ensuring the last-mentioned particular, the horses must first be inspected by Mr. ——, of the Veterinary Surgeon's Department, both before being slaughtered as well as during the slaughtering.

The slaughterer must produce the attestation of the preceding officer concerning the inspection and permission for the sale of the slaughtered animals; and this attestation must be laid before the proper district Police Inspector, and afterwards fastened into the slaughter-book with his *visé*. (See § 4.)

§ 4. The horse-butchers are bound to keep a slaughter-book that has been paginated by the proper Police Inspector; and in this must be entered the name of the sellers, the day of the sale, and that on which each of the slaughtered horses was killed, together with a statement of the weight, and the attestation of Mr. ——, the Veterinary Surgeon, annexed. (See § 3.)

§ 5. The horse-butcher is not allowed to have any meat brought in from outside the town without the special license of the Police; and in like manner he is not to be permitted, on any pretext whatever, to receive horse-meat from private persons. If, however, he obtain some from other horse-butchers, he must not only write it immediately in his slaughter-book, with all the particulars relating thereto, but must get permission to receive it.

§ 6. The slaughter-book must be shown monthly to the proper District Police Inspector; and at each time of the examination of the selling-place by the police and sanitary officers, this book must be laid before them, and also all the unsold meat pointed out.

§ 7. In general, the horse-butchers must take care that all articles in the selling-place be kept free and open, and the utmost possible cleanliness be observed; for all secreted and by-laid meat, as well as any showing the slightest trace of corruption, will be destroyed at the cost of the slaughterer.

§ 8. Any opposition and neglect of the orders above given, as well as of others that may be issued hereafter by the Police Senate, will be punished with a fine of from 1 to 3 thalers; and if the slaughterer be unable to pay, he will be imprisoned for a time, which will be in proportion to the amount of the fine, with consideration to the withdrawal of his license.

Coblenz, 30th January, 1855.

Royal Police-Direction of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein.

beef in all the world, too — is still the staple food of his native land, and that his countrymen have not yet sunk to such an abyss of barbarism and squalor as to get their joints from the knacker's yard, and to be able to obtain a taste of *meat* only by robbing the kennel.

As regards bread, the same wretched account must be given.

In even the wealthier families, *white* bread is eaten only as cake, whilst the ordinary household loaf consists of a composition that is the colour of mill-board, being several shades darker than our gingerbread, as heavy as over-boiled yeast-dumplings, and as sour as "turned" beer.

The gentry, however, occasionally regale themselves with a "*Milch*-" or "*Wasserbrödchen*" (milk or water rolls), but such things are classed in the same dainty category as buns with us.

It will be seen by the official price-list given below* that the town or baker-made varieties of the German staff of life are classified by the police, with all the pedantry of school-men, into the A, B, and C genera, whilst the country-made

* Price-List of celebrated Bakers' Wares.

At Baker Creaelius,

Lawful for 14 Days, reckoned from to-day.

		Sgr.	Pfg.	Pence, Engl.
A. Rye-bread	of 6 lbs	8	4	10
B. Mixed (white bread)	4 „	7	4	8¾
„ „	2 „	3	8	4½
„ „	1 „	1	10	2¼
C. Wheaten bread ..	.. ..	—	—	—

Approved, Coblenz, the 22nd of March, 1855.

Royal Police Direction of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein.

black bread is subdivided into the "lower-case" *a* and *b* species.

For the enlightenment, however, of those who are not quite so metaphysical as German policemen, we may state that there are three distinct kinds of Rhenish bread,—rye, wheaten, and mixed. The first constitutes what to English minds belongs to the *black* class, the second to the *white*, and the third (which is merely a compound of the other two) to the *whitey-brown*.

Of the black species of bread there are three distinct

Subjoined is the Tariff of the Mountain bread :—

Police-Tariff of the Upper-Country Rye-Bread.

Lawful for 8 Days, reckoned from to-day.

	Sgr.	Pfg.	Pence, Engl.
a) of 4 lbs	5	1	6
b) of 2 ,, ...	2	7	3

Confirmed, Coblenz, the 22nd March, 1855.

Royal Police-Direction of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein.

The police regulate the *maximum* price of bread, and allow bakers to make loaves at a price as much below that as they please, and hence the reason of the term "self-rated bakers' wares."

The police prices are printed at intervals in the local journals, as well as the prices of the several kinds of corn, a copy of which is appended:—

Bread-Tariff from the 30th April, 1856.

	S.	P.	Eng. d.
4 lb. Upper country (rye-bread)	4	7	5½
2 ,, ,, ,, ...	2	4	2¾

Royal Police Administration.
Junker.

Coblenz, 30 April.

	T.	S.	P.	Eng. s.	d.
Wheat (per scheffel of 60 lbs.)	3	16	1	10	7¼
Rye ,, ,, ...	2	21	10	8	2¾
Barley ,, ,, ...		—		—	
Oats ,, ,, ...	1	1	10	3	2⅝

subdivisions:—1. The "CAMIS-BROD," or soldiers' black bread, which is made of the coarsest rye flour with the husks intermixed: 2. The "OBERLÄNDISCHE ROGGENBROD," or upper-country rye-bread, which is more sour and *fest* (solid), as the Germans call it, than—3. The "BÄCKERS' ROGGENBROD," or ordinary bakers' rye-bread; for it is the economical property of the second sort that the least bit of it "lasts" (as a German described its character to us) "a long time in the mouth."

The soldiers' bread is not purchasable in the ordinary way, but the country bread is brought to the town twice or thrice a-week in small covered ox-wagons, and sold at the corners of the streets. The mixed, or whitey-brown bread, is eaten only by the rich; whilst it will be seen by the before-cited official document, that wheaten bread is a luxury too costly to be made into loaves for *any* class of German people —small halfpenny rolls alone being composed of that dainty material.

Butter is a luxury seldom used to give relish to the acid, dark-brown paste which, in Rhineland, passes by the name of bread; the "fresh" kind costing 8 gros (9½*d.* English) the pound. Even in the families of the so-called gentry, dry black bread is the ordinary food at breakfast on week-days, whilst on Sundays some of the *very* rich *do* certainly indulge in a penny pat.

"What! do *you* have butter on your bread every day?" said a Professor's child to our little boy. "Oh, Je——, how rich your father must be!"*

The coffee drunk in Germany (tea is seldom or never

* A friend in Germany has furnished us with the following list of prices respecting the principal articles of consumption in Coblenz during a series of years, and by which it will be seen how the various necessaries of life have been

tasted), we have before hinted, is no very delectable decoction; but even those who can afford to indulge in the pure article, rather than the burnt acorn compound, put up with the most common and flavourless kinds, so that such a costly delicacy as real Mocha is positively unobtainable at the shops in Coblenz. The ordinary coffee mixture used by the middle classes consists of part acorns, part chicory, and the residue Java coffee; though, even if the coffee itself were of the finest possible character, the mode of roasting it would be a sure method of making it about as palatable as charred horse-beans.

Every one who has lived in Paris is well acquainted with the delicious aroma that salutes the nostrils on passing the grocers' during the roasting of the berries at the kerb-stone.

regularly growing dearer there, and this while the wages of the people have remained almost stationary, so that each year the poor have found themselves poorer than the last:—

A cart of coals	(1846–55)..	22–23 sgr.	= 2*s.* 2½*d.* – 2*s.* 3½*d.*
„	(1855–56)..	32–33 „	= 3*s.* 2½*d.* – 3*s.* 3½*d.*
4 lbs. bread ..	(1835–36)..	2½ sgr.	= 3*d.*
„	(1847)	7 sgr. 2 pfg.	= 8½*d.*
„	(1850), for a fortnight	2 „ 5 „	= 3*d.*
„	(January 1856) ..	6½ „	= 7¾*d.*
„	(February „) ..	5½ „	= 6½*d.*
110 lbs. of potatoes	(1836–45) ..	7 „	= 8½*d.*
„ „	(1856)	1 thlr. 1 sgr.	= 3*s.* 1¼*d.*
1 lb. of beef	(1835)	2½ „	= 3*d.*
„	(1836–54) ..	3 sgr. 4 pfg.	= 4*d.*
„	(1856)	4 „ 8 „	= 5½*d.*

Veal fluctuates from 2½ sgr. (3*d.* English) per lb. in summer, to 4 sgr. (4¾*d.* English) per lb. in winter.

Formerly pork was the same price as beef, but now (1856) it is 5 sgr. (6*d.* English) per lb.

From 1828 to 1854 twenty-five eggs cost (in summer) 5 sgr. (6*d.* English), but during Lent in 1855 the price was 1 thlr. 10 sgr. (4*s.* English) for the same number. Skim-milk was 7 pfg. (¾*d.* English) the maas (about ½ gall. English) in 1835, and for many years afterwards; but 1855–6 the maas cost 18 pfg. (1¾*d.* English) to 2 sgr. (2½*d.* English).

But the process which is productive of a positive perfume in the French capital, begets only a nauseous stench in the Rhenish one. We had the misfortune to live over a grocer's in Coblenz, and on roasting-days we were forced to close our back windows, for the smell that came up from the yard was more than English noses could bear; and when the reader is informed that it is the Rhenish custom to fry the berries in fat, he will readily understand that the aroma developed by the Prussian operation must be very like that of the streets of Paris on an illumination night. Further, some grocers, for the purpose of giving additional weight to the burnt berries and colour to the decoction produced by them, prefer to roast their coffee with several pounds of coarse sugar, which, when melted, soaks into every grain, and adds considerably to the weight.

But, even if such methods of sophistication were not practised on the poor coffee-berries, the tasteless and scentless Prussians would burn every particle of aroma out of them; for, believing that a cup of good coffee should be black to the eye rather than aromatic to the palate, they resolutely roast the berries to charcoal, and offer you an infusion of cinders as refreshment either for your breakfast or tea.*

Sugar, again, is seldom used by the middle class except as a Sunday or holiday treat. The majority of the people drink their coffee-water unsweetened, whilst those who are more prodigal boil beet-root with the Java powder in order to give it somewhat of a saccharine flavour. Nor is it all uncommon for gentlefolks to have their coffee grounds re-

* The price of coffee ranges from about ninepence to fifteenpence the pound. Tea, which is a luxury procured mainly for the English residents, is two thalers (6s.) a-pound, though there is no duty! and if procured in ¼-lb. packets at Neurohr's, the principal Coblenz grocer, consists of two ounces of lead-foil out of the four that have been purchased as souchong. Loaf-sugar—the light, spongy article made from beet-root—costs a fraction more than sevenpence the pound.

BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
KARLSRUHE

BLB BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
Baden-Württemberg

MAINZ.

BLB BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
Baden-Württemberg

BADISCHE
LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
Baden-Württemberg

BLB BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
Baden-Württemberg

burnt, and then handed over to their servants to make an infusion for the kitchen breakfast.

In fact, in a true middle-class German household, the children hardly know the taste even of sugar.

"Help *her*, indeed!" said a German lady, in reply to a request for charity on behalf of a widow who had "seen better days;" "not I! for your grand ladies who *must* have milk and sugar in their coffee should be taught to know what want is."

Interpolated Rhenish Scenes.

(3.)

MANNHEIM.

As Coblenz stands on the tongue of land at the very junction of the Mosel with the Rhine, so is Mannheim situate on the narrow Cape of marshes formed by the meeting of the river Neckar with the great German stream. It is, indeed, the City of the Confluence of the "*Ober-Rhein.*"

But the beauty which the lower "*Confluentia*" derives from the union of the two rivers, pouring from out their different mountain channels, is utterly lost at Mannheim—the river scenery at that point being as flat and unpicturesque as that of Battersea, at the "*eck*" where the muddy Wandle trickles into the drab-coloured Thames.

Nor is the architecture of Mannheim more attractive than the scenery amid which it is set. The new stucco Stadt is, indeed, the civic antithesis to the quaint old tumble-down towns of Worms and Oppenheim, being closely allied in urban