Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

The upper Rhine

the scenery of its banks and the manners of its people

Mayence to the lake of Constance

Mayhew, Henry

London, 1858

Interpelated Rhenish Scenes-Heidelberg

urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-161475

Visual Library

Interpolated Rhenish Scenes.

(5.)

HEIDELBERG.

Heidelberg is the Rheinfels of the Neckar. It is the site of an ancient "*Schloss-Festung*," as the Germans call it, or Palace-fortress as we should say in English.

But grandly as the Rhine-ruin is set amid the brown and precipitous cliffs of St. Goar, with the great German river walled in by the huge pyramids of the rocky masses, that blacken the water alongside them with their shadows, till the stream has almost the aspect of a pool or crater-lake; and with the yellow and roofless façade of the tottering stronghold cresting its green truncated mountain-cone close beside the stream—the sky shining in bright blue patches through the jagged window-holes and empty embrasures, and the walls standing in fragmentary plates almost like the tall isolated stones of some old Druid temple,—grandly as this rock-girt pile strikes the mind, and vast as its proportions appear in the desolateness of the abandoned citadel, nevertheless it dwindles into the ugliness of a mere monster dungeon when compared with the still-perfect architectural graces and rich red colour tinting the ivy-curtained walls of the eight palaces that make up the mountain-castle of Heidelberg.

The Neckar ruin, indeed, is set sublimely on a shelf of rock, half-way up one of the huge mountains between which the meandering river pushes its way, and with a pedestal of cannonless ramparts descending in steps almost to the water-side; and with the long, single street of a town that stretches at its feet, filmed over with the smoke steaming up from below, and the green sward of the mountain mass

that slopes at its back contrasting finely with the pale coral tint of its windowless and roofless walls, bastioned at intervals with their high, battered towers; and with the dark cumulus clouds of the surrounding trees rising in dense and solid fumes, as it were, about its lofty sides, and the little many-arched bridge spanning the fretting stream at its base; and with the monster earth-billows that make up the mountain-chain of the Oden-Wald swelling up, like immense volcanic "land-bubbles," along the opposite shore, and the bright tints of the sunshine, as it falls in a golden flood upon their vine-clad sides, staining the river like a rich oriel window; and the distant Neckar, seen at the far end of the narrow mountain vista, thin almost as the trickling of a spring, shining down amid the darkness of the chasm in silver flashes, like a glow-worm at the bottom of some steep bank;—all these adjuncts conspire to render the Castle of Heidelberg at once the grandest and the most beautiful ruin, perhaps, in the world —the Alhambra, as it has been termed, of Germany, though the old Moorish pile sinks to the elaborateness of filagree beside it: the one being pretty and light as a cluster of icicles sparkling in the sun, the other sublime and massive as an iceberg towering out of the sea.

Such is the exterior of Heidelberg; still, the interior is infinitely more graceful. "Here art," says Goethe, "borrows beauty from nature, and nature returns it with interest;" for the charms of ornament and the architectural delicacies, that are utterly lost in the grandeur of the mass viewed from a distance, positively enrapture the eye, when near, with the very luxury of decoration; while the pleasing incongruities of the ruin seize upon the mind with all the force of contrast: the moats changed to a wilderness, with their tangle of brambles and trees—the ramparts bristling with wild firs

rather than cannon—the portcullis immoveable with rust—the embrasures choked and wattled over with ivy a hundred years old—the royal nuptial-chambers without a roof—the *salle à manger* of the Princess of England with trees sprouting from the floor—the gorgeous *Ritter-saals* (Knights' halls) without windows or floor—and *Restaurations* ("*et de bonne bière*," adds M. Bœdeker,) and boarding-houses (with "good *table d'hôte* at 1," says Mr. Murray) dispensing the hospitalities of the Castle instead; and, indeed, the fortress that was intended, with its ball-proof bastions, batteries, and ramparts, to resist the cannon and shells of the enemy, crumbling slowly away before the silent attacks of the wind and the rain—and the "triumphal arches," that were raised to perpetuate some great glory of yore, now telling only of misfortune and human vanity.

Let us mount the hill. There are two roads from the town to the Castle—the one from Karlsplatz, a mere foot-path, leading by terraces and garden-slopes up the Castle-hill side to the part of the ruin facing the Neckar; and the other a steep carriage-way, extending from the *Klingelthor*, and bringing the stranger to the back of the building.

Pursuing the latter route we enter the Castle-gardens, that are still laid out with broad walks, and exquisitely shady and cool with their long arcades of interlacing boughs above—the sun-beams trickling, as it were, in large *gouttes* through the leafy lattice; and the veiled light as it descends stained a pale green, as if it had permeated some painted window.

Here, before reaching the gate that leads to the quadrangle of the Castle itself, we turn into the *allée* to the left, and thus come to the "*Elizabethen Pforte*" (Elizabeth Gate)—a handsome triumphal arch, in red sandstone, with wreaths of oak-leaves sculptured up the pillars, and the gate itself half curtained with ivy,—the graceful lines of the architecture

being beautifully varied and broken, and the ornaments half hidden by the boughs of the parasitic plants hanging from the pediment. The arch itself is set almost in a bower of foliage, and the rich red of the embossed stone-work is in exquisite contrast, not only with the dark beetle-green of the ivy that droops in festoons about it, but with the softer colours of the now autumn-tinted trees surrounding it.

This arch is interesting to our countrymen, not alone for its intrinsic beauty, but from its having been built for the Princess Elizabeth Stuart (the grandmother of our George I.) by her husband, the Elector Frederick V., to celebrate his nuptials with the daughter of James I. the English king. It then led to the flower-garden which the Prince-Elector had laid out for her, and which to this day still remains one of the loveliest walks in the world; commanding, as it does, a vast view of the exquisite scenery of the Neckar, with the Schwarz-Wald lying far behind, and the Oden-Wald towering high in front; and looking deep down into the little town at its feet, with the pigmy people dotting its public places and its streets, and the cradle-like craft drifting down the stream, whose course the eye can track twisting through its mountain channel far away to where the hazy line of the Vosges looms like a long cloud upon the horizon.

But the arch of triumph, and the flower-garden, and the new nuptial palace, that were all devised in exultation at the good fortune that awaited the betrothed prince, now remain only splendid examples of the vanity of human hopes; serving but to recall to the mind, with all the vividness of dramatic force, the words of this arrogant Princess, who, when her husband hesitated to accept the crown of Bohemia, declared that she would rather eat dry bread at a king's table than feast at the board of a Prince-Elector; and who, with a fine retributive destiny, came in the course of years, not

only to *eat* dry bread as an exiled queen, but to have to *beg* it first.

At the end of the flower-garden, and at the corner of the "English Palace" facing the Neckar, is to be seen the well-like stump of "*der dicke Thurm*" (the thick tower), which, though the walls are twenty-two feet in thickness, was battered down almost to the root by the French in 1689. This was formerly the hall in which the fêtes of Frederick V. were given, and the statue of the Elector, with that of his brother Louis V., are still standing in the niches, half-covered with ivy.

Continuing the path towards the court-yard of the Castle, we pass the principal gateway, with the red rusted teeth of its portcullis still peeping from below the arch.

And no sooner do we enter the quadrangle than we stand environed with palaces; built by as many different Electors as there are wings, and all displaying the various tastes of their founders, as well as being enriched with the architectural graces of successive centuries. Here the walls are as red almost as cornelian, and the fretted and sculptured façades, the work of which is nearly as sharp as if it were finished but yesterday, are an encyclopædia of the several styles of the ages in which they were respectively erected; and even though the courtyard is now like a heath, and each red palace is but an open shell of walls, it could hardly have appeared more beautiful or more grand when it was fresh from the mason's chisel; for there is always a half pathos about a ruin, that (even if the breaking up of the outlines, and the mellowing of the tints—together with all the startling antitheses of peace and war, pomp and rubbish, which time links together in such a place—did not serve to lend it extra beauty in decay) would at least make it at once interesting and impressive as a monument of the mere changes of fortune since the laying of its first stone.

BLB BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK
Baden-Württemberg

On entering the spacious quadrangle, the façade facing us is that of the palace of Frederick IV.—that to the right belongs, on the other hand, to the palace of Otto-Henry—that to the left, again, is part of the English Palace built by Frederick V.—whilst the more ancient structures behind us are the portions that were constructed by the first Electors, Rodolph and Ruprecht.

At the last-mentioned of these we see the Imperial eagle over the escutcheon of the Palatinate, and above the door is a crown of roses borne by two angels—probably some masonic symbol.

The façade of the palace built by Frederick IV. (*Freiderich's-bau*) is almost overlaid with ornament, and revelling in all the luxuries of design. It is surmounted by two handsome pediments, and its walls niched with rows of statues representing the ancestors of the Electors-Palatine, from the time of Charlemagne.

In the first row from the top we perceive the Emperor Charlemagne and the three Counts-Palatine—Otto de Wittelsbach, Lewis of Bavaria, and Rodolf the First.

Along the second line may be seen the two Emperors, Lewis of Bavaria and Rupert II., and the two Kings, Otto of Hungary and Christopher of Denmark.

Below these, on the third rank, are found four more Counts-Palatine,—Rupert the Ancient, Frederick the Victorious, Frederick II., and Otto-Henry.

Whilst the fourth and lowest series is composed of another quadrate of Palatines,—Frederick the Pious, Lewis, Jean-Casimir, and Frederick IV.

In front of this part of the Castle is a broad stone balcony ("*der Altan*"), or rather terrace, looking out on the river below, and presenting a scene of grandeur and beauty that is not to be paralleled in Europe.

The façade of the Palace of Otto-Henry, forming the

west wing, or that facing the upper part of the Neckar, is the most remarkable of all the buildings for the exquisite taste of its design and the richness of its architectural embellishments. It is in the best Italian style, called "*cinque cento*," and of the noblest proportions, having been designed, it is said, by Michael Angelo. Here the doorway is a choice bit of beauty, with its caryatides and embossed entablature, and the windows are finely pedimented and elaborately fretted with decorations; whilst the niches which indent the walls are filled with statues of the heroes of mythology and ancient history, both profane and sacred,—Hercules, Mars, Nero, Samson, Venus, Joshua, Brutus, &c., being ranged one beside the other in a curious historic and mythic medley.

At the south-eastern corner of the Castle, and at the end of the broad walk by which we first entered the ground, is seen the split tower, that was undermined and blown up by the French (*der gesprengte Thurm*). This originally formed one of the bastions of the Castle, and was 70 odd feet in diameter and 150 feet high; but the walls were so massive and the masonry so sound, that though the tower was split down, and a "vertical section," as it were, made of its construction by the explosion of the powder—leaving the vaulted casemates of the interior exposed to view—the enormous fragment, instead of crumbling to pieces, merely slid down into the moat below in one solid mass, where it still remains inclined against the wall like a huge splinter of rock, with the fir-trees sprouting from its embrasures and crevices, and the wild thicket that has sprung up in the dry moat half hiding it from view.

Almost at the cross corner to the "Sprung Tower," that is to say, at the north-western part of the building, there is a cave beside the English Palace, containing the enormous Heidelberg Tun—which is the largest wine-cask in the world, and capable of holding 800 hogsheads, or very nearly

300,000 bottles, but still of little better than half the capacity of one of the monster porter-vats of our London brewers.*

At the first glance, this huge cask strikes one like the hull of some unweildy Dutch barge resting on its stocks. Upon its head it bears an escutcheon carved on the staves. A broad staircase runs up alongside of the beam of the vessel, as it were, and leads to the deck-like platform with which the top of the gigantic tun is covered. Here the Elector Charles-Theodore (the last princely occupant of the Castle) was wont to assemble the *élite* of his court, and to give a supper and ball on the completion of the vintage, when it was filled with its river of wine—the annual tribute of the vineyards of the Palatinate.

The history of the Castle is replete with vicissitudes.

Its origin is coeval with the Counts-Palatine themselves, having been founded by the first Pfalzgraves. Otto of Wittelsbach is said to have established his residence at Heidelberg, and made the town the capital of the Palatinate; and his son Lewis IV. of Bavaria (surnamed "the Severe") who was son-in-law to Rodolph of Hapsburg, is thought to have founded the present Castle, towards the end of the 13th century, on being invested with the dignity of Count-Palatine, and coming into possession of the manor of Heidelberg.

The Elector Rodolph I. added the royal nuptial apartments to the Castle, and in them celebrated his marriage with the daughter of the Emperor Adolphe of Nassau—he whose tomb is seen in the *Kaiserdom*, and who fell at the battle of Speier.

The oldest portion, however, at present standing, was built,

* The Heidelberg Tun is 36 feet long and 24 feet high, and contains 250 fudders (800 hogsheads), or precisely 230,000 bottles. A large London porter-vat is said to contain 3000 barrels, of 36 gallons each = 108,000 gallons; and reckoning 6 bottles to the gallon, 648,000 bottles in all!

BLB BADISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK Baden-Württemberg

in the year 1400, by the Count-Palatine and Elector Ruprecht III., surnamed "the Red;" this part of the ruin is called to the present day "Ruprecht's building" (*Ruprecht's-bau*).

The Elector Frederick I., however, added largely to the structure, and after his time magnificent wings were built by the Electors Lewis V., surnamed "the Pacific," and Otto-Henry, and Frederick IV. and V., the last being the unfortunate King of Bohemia, and husband to Elizabeth Stuart, who, as we have said, was the daughter of our James I., and grand-daughter of Mary Queen of Scots.

The first of these princes erected the portion of the Castle known by the name of "*Ludwig's-bau*" (Lewis' building), together with the tower called "*Der dicke Thurm*," A.D. 1553; the second constructed the west wing, styled "*Otto-Heinrich's-bau*" (Otto-Henry's building), A.D. 1556; the third raised the north or front wing, christened "*Freidrich's-bau*" (Frederick's building), A.D. 1607; and the last added the part denominated the "English Palace," as well as the "*Elizabethen Pforte*" (Elizabeth's Gate), A.D. 1607. Indeed, the Castle of Heidelberg comprises within its trenches no less than eight different palaces, built by as many different princes.

But, if nearly half-a-score of the Counts Palatine were concerned in raising the structure, assuredly it required the cannons and bombs of many armies, as well as the bolts of Heaven itself, in order to destroy it; for it has thrice suffered from fire, and ten times experienced the horrors of war; and yet, though reduced to a mere carcass, the greater part of its adamantine walls remain to this day as solid and ornate as when they were first erected.

During the Thirty Years' War great ravages were made in the building, and the Elector Charles-Lewis the Wise vainly attempted to restore it; for he had incurred the displeasure of Louis XIV., who, in 1674, sent his troops into the Palatinate

to lay waste the country before them, with slaughter, fire, and rapine. Charles-Lewis, unable to oppose the French with an equal force, shut himself up in the Castle, and saw with anguish the flames rising from the surrounding villages and towns. But, being eager to avenge the wanton cruelties of the French General, he resolved to challenge Turenne to single combat, and addressed him the following letter:—

"It is impossible that his Most Christian Majesty can have commanded you to lay waste, as you have, my country. I must therefore attribute such barbarous conduct to personal enmity on your part. But it is unjust that my poor subjects should suffer for any feeling that you may entertain in your heart against me; and, therefore, I propose to terminate our difference on your naming the hour, the place, and the arms that you would choose."

The French General, however, did not deign to accept the challenge, and a few years afterwards, Louis XIV. (on the death of the Elector) laid claim to the Palatinate on behalf of the Duke of Orleans, and in 1688 sent another army up the Rhine under Mélac—a general whose brutality and atrocities surpassed those of the previous leader, and who, contrary to the conditions of the recent treaty, blew up the Castle of Heidelberg.

In 1693, again, the devastation was continued, and even to a greater extent than before; for then, at the siege under Chamilly, the troops were guilty of excesses, equalled only in enormity by those of the French Revolution. The Castle being surrendered, or rather betrayed by the Governor, the citizens who had taken refuge in it were slaughtered without mercy, and the building itself reduced to ruins.

Its ultimate destruction, however, had yet to be achieved; for though it was once more restored, and almost to its former splendour, by Charles-Philip, in 1716, and remained intact until

1764, then the "octagon tower," at the corner next the viaduct-like "terrace," was struck by lightning, and the interior of the Castle entirely consumed by fire, as the Elector Charles-Theodore was returning to it from his residence at Mannheim.

Since then it has never been restored or occupied, and it now remains a mere shell of red-stone walls, having been roofless for nearly a century; still it is one of the most interesting ruins in Europe, not only on account of its varied fortunes, but for its picturesque situation, as well as its vastness and its architectural riches, exhibiting as they do the styles of different centuries and the taste of its different founders.

The town of Heidelberg contains little to attract the stranger. It is, as we said, one interminable, narrow thoroughfare, as long as our Oxford Street, and extending from the railway station to the handsome gate of Carl-Theodore. The line of houses is squeezed in between the "Castle" mountain (*Schlossberg*) and the Neckar, and is broken by the clumsy, bulbous tower of the Church of the Holy Ghost (a most accommodating and Christian edifice, being used by Catholics and Protestants by turns), the square turret of the Church of St. Peter (against whose door Jerome of Prague, the noble friend of Huss, nailed his theses, and in whose pulpit he afterwards defended them), and the Temple-Bar-like front of the Jesuits' Church (a heavy marble affair, in the usual Jesuitical style of church architecture). The *Haupt Strasse* (High Street) of Heidelberg is, comparatively speaking, busy with passengers—the University students, with their gay-coloured cloth caps and striped watch-ribbons, composing the greater number of the pedestrians, and the shops being more like those of Paris and London than the ordinary sleepy-looking "Magazins" of a German town. Indeed, the whole place has the look and bustle of a thriving community. The University, however, is very much like a

huge model lodging-house in a bad state of repair, being merely a large, plain, stucco building, at one side of a bare open Platz, and appearing almost as desolate as Gray's Inn Square on a Sunday.

The environs of Heidelberg, however, are full of beauty —every different road revealing some fresh charm. There is the lovely ride to Wolfsbrunnen, with its Swiss-châlet-like restaurant and black pools of water; and the exquisite mountain-walk up either to the *Königstuhl* (King's Stool)—the immense hill swelling up immediately behind the Castle, or else up the ravine of the still loftier *Heilegenberg* (Holy Hill), on the opposite side of the river, along the exquisitely thoughtful Philosophers' Way (*Philosphs Wæg*). Here, too, at a little distance up the valley that leads to the mountain-pass, you come to the small inn called *Hirschgraben*, where the college-boys fight their duels, and the tables are scored over with students' names. The room in which the encounters take place is a little square one, and partakes of the character of a country casino (or dancing-saloon), having a tin hoop of candles dangling from the centre of the ceiling. On the floor here the would-be men, having stripped themselves to their shirt-sleeves, thrust at one another with their "*Schläger*" (rapiers) until blood is drawn, while the spectators (for the public are admitted to such displays) sit round on the benches against the wall, as if it were some rat-fight that was going on.

"Would the Herr like to see a duel?" said the barmaid to us as we inspected the apartment. "There was one here about two months ago, and we expect another in about a fortnight; we should be happy to send word to the Herr's hotel a day or two before."

Some twenty to thirty such affrays take place here in the course of each season, and occasionally terminate fatally—a boy from Hamburg was killed on the spot the year before our visit.