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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

Interpolated Rhenish Scenes-Basel

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Interpolated Rhenish Scenes.

(8.)

BASEL.

Rhenish France extends along the left bank of the Rhine, *from* the point where the river Lauter unites with the great German stream by Lautenberg (nearly opposite Carlsruhe), *up* to a mile or two below the confluence of the river Birs at Basel. Beyond this limit the left bank forms part of the Swiss territory, while the right one, for a considerable distance still, belongs to the Grand Duchy of Baden, whose Rhenish possessions reach *from* Lampertheim (a little below Mannheim) *up* to Immenstadt (between Meersburg and Freidrichshafen) on the Lake of Constanz.

Basel, then, is the border-town of Rhenish Switzerland, being situate a few miles below where the Rhine first becomes navigable, in an angle on the frontiers of Germany, France, and Switzerland. It is also the capital of the half-canton called "*Basel-ville*," in contradistinction to its fellow moiety, entitled "*Basel-campagne*."* But the traveller must not expect to see a city of Swiss "*châlets*," or streets full of Swiss peasantry in very large "mushroom-hats," and very short petticoats, as well as very extensive chemisettes; neither must he look for mountain-chains hoary with "eternal snows," nor have a

* After the revolution of 1830, such furious differences arose between the citizens and country-people of the canton of Basel that a kind of civil war raged in the district, and a violent fight took place between the townsmen and peasants near Liesthal, so that the Diet of the Helvetic Confederation had to pass an Act for the division of the canton into two parts, styled "Basel-town" and "Basel-country;" and though it gave a deputy to each of the divisions, it allowed them respectively only half a vote: but as the civic and rural deputies of Basel still agree to differ, and their votes on opposite sides do not count, the citizens and rustics now have virtually no vote at all.

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notion that he is to be roused at day-break with the "lul-la-*li*-etee" of the "*Ranz des Vaches*"—there being nothing Swiss about Basel, except the indigo-blue coated soldiers and an occasional fountain or two in the streets. For, though the city has formed part of the Swiss Confederation since 1501, it belonged to the German Empire for 500 years previously; and as the manners and customs of a people are not quite so easily changed as the political "Constitution" of a country, Basel remains to this day far more Teutonic than Helvetic in its character.

The town of Basel, like the twin Rhenish towns of Köln and Deutz, Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein-Thal, Mainz, and Castel, Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, Strasburg and Kehl, is linked, by means of a rudely-constructed bridge, with a kind of supplementary colony on the other side of the water. The Rhine, which has been gradually greening in tint as we ascended the upper portion of the stream, has now become perfectly bright and clear, and of the same delicate colour as the "Riesling" grapes that grow on its banks, so that as we behold it here, rushing through the wooden and stone piers of the long Rhine bridge in a broad transparent flood, we can hardly believe it to be the stream whose drab and muddy current we noted at Köln, and which has been calculated to contain at Bonn half-a-pound of mud to every thousand gallons of water.

Viewed from the opposite shore, the *Grosse Stadt* of Basel reminds one somewhat of the *Cité* at Paris, seen from the Luxembourg side of the Seine, though the intervening river is ten times as broad and beautiful as the French canal-like stream.

The houses, which stretch for upwards of a mile along the high bank close beside the river, are of all sizes and colours, but generally tall and narrow strips of dwellings.

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They seem as if they had been squeezed together at the extreme ends of the town, and as if the compression had not only narrowed and elongated their walls, but driven the centre ones higher than the rest.

Some are built on the top of the steep, green, escarpment-like bank, while others are perched on high walls, and appear as if standing on two storeys of ramparts, by way of basement. These basement-walls in some places are arranged as garden terraces, and in others are made to form part of the house, so that the domicile appears as gawky as those in the old town of Edinburgh, being furnished with several tiers of kitchens, while it seems to require the aid of a balloon in order to reach the attics.

The long strips of walls, too, are painted of all colours—a light pea-green exterior being particularly popular, and a pink or delicate salmon by no means unfashionable, whilst a deep drab or nankeen tint appears to be possessed of considerable charms in the eyes of the good folk of Basel.

But the most peculiar of all the styles of house decoration consists in painting the long and lanky walls a light ink colour—the very tint, indeed, of the paper in which sugar-loaves are wrapped; and this is assuredly the most hideous mode of house-painting that ever irritated the eye of mortal man. One large pedimented dwelling (near where the narrow, gabled steeple—like a cottage perched pick-a-pack on a church roof—of St. Martin's is seen peeping over the tiles at the end of the bridge) seems positively as if its walls had been brushed over with several bottles of "Stephens' best Blue-black Writing Fluid;" and as the house is to all appearances a leader of fashion in the place, the inky style of decoration must clearly be regarded as the "correct thing" in Basel.

The streets of Basel have little peculiar about them. The

French Guide-books tell you that "*la promenade*" being the principal pleasure of the inhabitants of the town, there are many places "*consacrés à cette récréation.*" But these same "consecrated" bits of ground consist of mere planted patches; such as "*Peter's Platz*" (a kind of German Gray's-Inn Square, set with a few scrubby trees), and the river-side terrace, called "*Pfalz,*"—which is not unlike a corner from the ramparts at Boulogne, but commanding a pleasant-enough view of the river, with a leash of the Schwarz-Wald mountains towering over the opposite shore.

The most remarkable objects about Basel, indeed, are the old gates, the fountains, and the Rathaus; for, with the exception of these, the buildings and thoroughfares remind one somewhat of the High Street in a second-rate French town.

The *Spahlen Thor*, however, is particularly picturesque, and is part of the ancient defences of the city, dating from the year 1400. It consists of a narrow, square turret, ornamented with two telescopic martello-like towers at each of its front corners, and surmounted by a steeple-like roof—sharp and peaked as the crown to a witch's hat. This roof is slated, so to speak, with "fancy" tiles of different colours, which are worked into lozenge-shaped patterns, that have somewhat of an oil-clothy look. The front of the narrow, square turret is "machicolated," as it is termed, or, in other words, balconied at the upper part with parapets that are supported by a scalloped border of arches springing from the walls, whilst the lower part is embossed with large statues under Gothic-pinnacle-like canopies.

In front of the gate projects a kind of castellated porch-work, or "barbican," as it is called, having a row of grotesque little figures under its scalloped cornice. Just behind this hangs the double portcullis, with the spikes showing below the arch, like a double row of teeth within

a shark's jaws, while the square space within the tower has its roof groined like a cloister.

The Swiss soldier, in his dark blue coat, with broad white cross-belt and red epaulettes, pacing in front of the little wooden guard-house—and the deep broad moat beside the gate planted with its fruit-trees and cabbage-gardens—and the houses of the town seen peeping over the rondels and between the notches of the castellated ramparts at the gate-side—complete a pretty-enough picture, "set off" as it is with all the pleasing incongruities of peace and war, the past and present time.

The *Fischmarkt-Brunnen*, again, is almost as fine an object as the *Spahlen Thor*. It is somewhat after the style of the street-fountain already described at Freiburg, but more light and elegant still. It consists of the same telescopic prism-shaft, ornamented with fretted Gothic canopies for the statues with which its sides are set. But here the sculpture is superior as a work of art, while the pinnacles canopying the figures are of the most delicate open tracery-work, and the little notched spire at the top of the column is crested with a tiny golden angel; so that the details are exquisitely varied, and the effect of the whole light and graceful as the lines formed by a fountain itself.

The design of the *Spahlen Brunnen* is hardly of such choice architecture as that of the Fish-market fountain, though the sculptured figures about it are admirable. These are said to have been copied from a design by Albert Dürer, and represent the *Dudelsackpfeiffer* (bag-piper) playing to a group of peasants dancing round the base.

The *Rathaus*, which faces the Fischmarkt-brunnen at the bottom of the "*Freie Strasse*" (the principal street of the town), is a pleasing specimen of what is called the "Burgundian style," so popular in the Netherlands, and dates from the beginning of the 16th century. The walls are

decorated with frescoes, the upper part being castellated, and the lower arched. The frieze along the top displays the arms of the three primitive Swiss cantons—Uri, Schwytz, and Unterwalden, besides those of Basel (a bishop's crook and fish-hook). The frescoes on the front represent Justice with her sword, and nobles going out hawking, and knights bearing shields. In the small hall at the foot of the stairs, too, there is a statue of Munatius Plancus, who is said to have been the founder of Basel, as well as of the Roman "*Augusta Rauracorum*," now called "Augst," and situate some seven miles out of Basel, on the Schaffhausen road.

But the *Münster*, or Cathedral, occupies the first place among the sights of Basel. Its red sandstone walls are exactly the colour of hæmatite, or red iron ore, and it has two small, open, fretted spires, somewhat similar to Freiburg, though not nearly so light and diaphanous: indeed, you can see only little dots of white light peeping, here and there, through the steeple sides. The roof, like that of the Spahlen Thor, is covered with coloured tiles, which are worked so as to assume a large diamond pattern, and give the edifice the appearance of having been slated with slabs of mosaic pavement.

Thus much of the peculiarities of the Münster at Basel are visible from almost every point of view, but on closer inspection the edifice by no means improves in beauty. The building, indeed, is more interesting than elegant—having been founded by the Emperor Henry II., at the beginning of the eleventh century.

The towers are of different size and shape—one being square and telescopic, and the other square at the base and surmounted by a short octagonal turret; whilst they are both surrounded at irregular distances with stone balconies, that have anything but a light or elegant look.

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The base of the front, however, with the chief portal, is better than the upper part, being ornamented with some old Gothic sculptures and quaint statues. Four figures of limp-looking mediæval monarchs (names unknown), each perched on a column and set in a pinnacled niche, stand beside the door-way; on one side of the wall, too, (near the bright blue-and-gold clock-face painted on the front) there is a large life-size figure of St. George on the top of another column, and riding a kind of stone rocking-horse, while he thrusts a spear, several yards long, down the mouth of a dragon that projects from the wall a good distance off—the said dragon being represented as seated on its hind-legs, after the fashion of the monsters in china-ware, and swallowing the spear-head as calmly as if it were being fed with a spoon. On the other side of the entrance is an equally droll equestrian figure of St. Martin; and this, like that of St. George, is of such commanding proportions, that some seem to mistake size for boldness, and describe that as admirable which at best is merely *odd*.

The door at the northern side, next the planted Platz, is known as the "*Portal of St. Gallus.*" This has some very remarkable—though far from handsome, but intensely quaint—figures, illustrative of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, carved in the semicircular arch-head of the porch.

Here Christ is represented seated on a camp-stool, as it were, with his hair over his shoulders, and a gold platter-like "glory" at the back of his head. On the right of this figure is a small St. Peter, with a huge street-door-key in his hand, and a tinfoil circle about his wig; whilst on the other side is some other saint with a peaked beard, and another disc of Dutch-metal surrounding his face. Near these figures are the "Wise and Foolish Virgins,"—five of them with lamps (like money-bags) in their hands, habited in costumes like riding-habits, and with their hair streaming down their back.

A closed door separates these from the foolish young ladies, and in front of it stands a dame with her finger up, and a cymbal-like glory round about her back hair: while beside this lady is one of the foolish virgins, with her head down and a large vessel in her hand, and with her four companions at her heels, all looking lop-sided in the true, limp Egyptian style.

The interior of the Cathedral contains but few remains of its ancient riches — the iconoclastic zeal of the Reformers having stripped it of its choicest ornaments. There are, however, still to be seen here some fine specimens of antique wood-carving, besides a rich Gothic "rood-loft" of the 14th century, in which the "rood," or cross, formerly stood, but which is now appropriated to the organ.

Here, too, on a pillar to the left of the communion-table, stands the red marble monument erected to the memory of Erasmus, who died in Basel, 1536. In the choir, too, is the tomb of the Empress Anne, the wife of Rudolph of Hapsburg, and mother of the Austrian line of princes — though the body was removed to St. Blaize some 200 years back.

But Basel is more interesting from its early history and its religious and artistic associations, than for any architectural beauties or national peculiarities appertaining to the place.

Some historians refer its foundation back to the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, who is said to have founded a colony here in honour of his mother Basiliana, A.D. 362. (The name Basel, however, means evidently the "*Basilic*," or cathedral city.) The tradition current in the town, makes the origin of Basel coeval with that of the great Roman military post Augusta Rauracorum, now called Augst (and where the remains of an amphitheatre have been discovered, as well as traces of an aqueduct), and refers it to Lucius Munatius Plancus (he whose statue stands in the Hall of the Rathaus), in the reign

of the Emperor Augustus, 27 B.C. At the end of the ninth century it was annexed to the kingdom of Burgundy, and in the year 1032 was attached to the German Empire.

During the fifteenth century Basel stood at the height of its pre-eminence, as the most powerful of the Imperial Free Cities on the Upper Rhine. At this period, two memorable events occurred: the first of these was the great Ecclesiastical Council held in the city; and the second, the heroic death of the Swiss at the village of St. Jacob by the Birs.

The battle of St. Jacob is referred to by the Swiss as the Thermopylæ of their history. It took place about a quarter of a mile beyond the gates of Basel, in the angle between the roads on the way to Berne. A Gothic column has been raised at the burial-place of the heroes, to commemorate the great fight of August 26th, 1444, when 1300 Swiss had the courage to attack and resist the French army under the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XI.), though it numbered as many thousand men as they had hundreds.*

"Again and again," says the national historian Zschokke, "the Swiss threw themselves upon the innumerable host of their foes. Their little force was broken and divided, yet still they fought. Five hundred maintained the contest upon an open meadow, the rest behind the garden-wall at the Siechenhaus at St. Jacob. Wrathful as lions they fought in the meadow, till man after man fell dead upon the corpses of the numberless

* In 1844 a marble tablet was placed in the Church, bearing the following inscription:—

OUR SOULS TO GOD,
OUR BODIES TO THE ENEMY.
HERE DIED, UNCONQUERED,
BUT EXHAUSTED WITH VICTORIES,
1300 CONFEDERATES AND ALLIES,
IN CONFLICT WITH FRENCH AND AUSTRIANS,
AUGUST 26TH, 1444.

enemies . . . . . The Confederates, to the number of 1300, died like heroes; but the French, with their horses, fell by thousands and thousands from Pratteln to St. Jacob. There stood the Dauphin still upon the field, but would not venture onwards. 'I will provoke this obstinate people no farther,' he cried; and full of reverence for so much bravery, he met them afterwards at Ensisheim, and concluded a peace."

The Swiss youths of the "Singing Unions" and "Federal Rifle Clubs," celebrate this event every year by vocal and military *fêtes*. And not far from the field of battle the vineyards of Wahlstadt produce a red wine, which the people delight to call "Swiss blood,"—"*Schweizer-blut.*"

Basel, throughout the Middle Ages, obstinately resisted every attempt at innovation in the manners and customs of its people. It was called in those days "the reverend city of Basel," and its councillors bore the title of "the noble, dread, pious, resolute, circumspect, wise, and honourable lords." Such sticklers, too, were the Burgomeisters for their full measure of civic honours, that in 1501 the town-council issued a decree, that "if it so happened that, either through scorn or through envy, any person should curtail our civic title in any manner whatsoever, and neglect to address us as our ancestors were wont to be styled, all letters and messages will be sent away without the least notice being paid to them."

Moreover, down to the end of the last century, it was the custom in the city of Basel for the clocks to be set an hour in advance of all others in Europe. This practice tradition ascribes to the circumstance of a conspiracy, to deliver the town over to an enemy at midnight, having been defeated by the Münster clock striking one instead of twelve.

But whatever might have been the origin of the absurd practice, the citizens clung to it with such pertinacity, that

though in 1778 the municipal authorities issued a decree that all the clocks of Basel should, after the first of January next, be regulated by solar time, the alteration excited so much indignation among the citizens, that the town-council was compelled, fifteen days afterwards, to issue another decree repealing the first. Nor was it until nearly twenty years later that the "fast" clocks of Basel could be got to conform to regular hours.

In the Puritanical times that succeeded the Reformation, Basel was the head-quarters of the Evangelical party, and the Methodistical character of the townspeople broke out even in their ordinary trade announcements over the shop-doors. One of these was as follows:—

"Macht auf, ihr Menschen, und thut Buss,
Ich heiss zum goldenen Rinderfuss."

A sentiment which may be paraphrased, by supposing a psalm-singing publican of the present day to set the subjoined couplet under his sign,—

I LONG EVERY DAY TO BE CALLED UP TO ZION,
STILL MY DWELLING ON EARTH IS THE 'GOOSE AND GRIDIRON.'

But while these *literally* "outward and visible *signs*" were being displayed in Basel, there was, according to the best accounts, but a small proportion of "inward and spiritual grace" prevalent among the people; for, so far from despising the treasures that "moth and rust corrode," a proclamation of the town council towards the end of the 17th century denounced all those who lent money to the needy at less than the "Christian usance" (*Christlichen Zins*) of five per cent as persons who, "by their avarice, did irremediable injury to churches and church property!"

Under such a state of Puritanism, it may be readily

imagined that the magistrates at Basel did not fail, like the rest of the world, to look after, with all the sharpness of sumptuary laws, the cut and quality of the clothes, as well as the kind and quantity of viands indulged in by their neighbours. At one time these worthies were violent in their attacks against the vanity of "doublet and hose." They would not allow women to have their hair dressed by men, nor could any one give a dinner-party without first having the bill of fare *visé-ed* by the town officials. Moreover, all were obliged to go to church dressed in black; and no carriage could pass through the gates during the forenoon service on Sundays—a rule, by the by, which continues to be enforced to this day.

This extreme Christian zeal, however, on the part of the people of Basel, did not tend to breed anything like brotherly love between them and their neighbours; for the most violent local feuds raged, until very recently, between the inhabitants of the *Klein* and *Grosse Stadt*. A curious memorial of this fact existed in the image called "*Lallen-könig*" (the stuttering king), that is so often mentioned in the "Folks' Books" of the Middle Ages. A tower stood on the left bank of the Rhine, at the entrance to the *Grosse Stadt* by the bridge. At the upper part of this was a clock, with a giant's head wonderfully carved in wood, protruding from the walls above it. From the mouth of the monster figure a long tongue was thrust out, and this being connected with the machinery of the dial, was made to wabble (*lallen*, and hence the meaning of the name) derisively, with every beat of the pendulum, in the face of the people inhabiting the *Klein Stadt* on the opposite shore.

But the *Klein Baselers* were not long in producing a wooden repartee in the shape of another image, more insulting than the first; and accordingly they set up, at *their* end of the bridge, a huge carved figure, with its back turned to the

Lallen-könig, and in a most offensive attitude. Nor was this removed until the year 1830.

The ecclesiastical history connected with Basel is as interesting as its mediæval customs.

Basel is to Constanz what Speier is to Worms. In the two German cathedral towns we read the struggles of Martin Luther and Protestantism—the one town continuing the stirring page of history that was begun by the other. So in the Swiss *Dom-stadts*, the one tells us of the martyrdom of John Huss and Jerome of Prague—the valiant champions of "Gospel liberty," who prepared the way for the Reformation; and the other gives us the sequel of the story in the Jesuitical attempts of the priests to pacify the demands of the early Reformers, and so put a stop to the coming revolution.

The Council of Basel, which met in the body of the Cathedral on the 14th of December, 1431, and was attended by upwards of 500 of the principal clergy, had for its object "the restoration of peace and unity to Christendom, the adjustment of the Hussite differences, and the improvement of the Church."*

These "Hussite differences" were the natural consequence of the double martyrdom of the Bohemian preacher, who has been styled "the John the Baptist of the Reformation," and his faithful friend Jerome of Prague.

The burning of these two champions of Gospel freedom

* The assembly at Basel, however, sought also to establish the principle that the authority of the Council was greater than that of the Pope. His Holiness, Eugene IV., on the other hand, was determined to maintain *his* supremacy, and accordingly issued a decree dissolving the Council, as well as excommunicating its members. The Council, again, on their part, declared Pope Eugene to be deposed, and announced that they had elected Duke Amadeus VIII. of Savoy to the Papacy in his stead. The contest between these rival powers lasted for 17 years, after which the Council of Basel dissolved itself in 1448, and acknowledged Nicolas V. as the head of the Romish Church.

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had created a deep sensation in Bohemia. The fury of their followers was first directed against the churches and monasteries. These they not only sacked but often consumed by fire; and though the ranks of the Hussites were at the beginning filled only with the vulgar, they were soon joined by several ecclesiastics—even by monks—and many nobles.

A large number (not less than 40,000, it is said) of the body assembled on a hill, to which they gave the puritanical name of "*Tabor*," and there they preached continually against the avarice, the debauchery, and other vices of the Romish clergy; and while one portion remained praying on the summit, another sallied forth to plunder the neighbouring monks and priests, in order to obtain food for their brethren.

Those of the sect, on the other hand, who had continued in Prague had public processions almost daily in the streets, and did not fail at such times to insult and revile the Romish practices and doctrines in every possible manner. The Bohemian king, Wenceslas IV., commanded the magistrates to suppress these scenes, but the Hussites were too strong for them. One day, however, as one of the processions passed the *Rathaus*, a stone struck one of the priests of the sect, and in a moment a leader of the body, named Ziska, rushed at the head of a furious band into the Town-hall, and threw thirteen of the magistrates from the windows on to the pikes of the multitude below. The news of this outrage is said to have caused the death of King Wenceslas.

After the decease of the King, Ziska, at the head of a large force, made himself master of the city of Prague; and to quell the insurrection, the Emperor Sigismund, having assembled a large German army, led the troops himself against the Bohemian capital. But such was the enthusiasm or fanaticism of the new Reformers, that they signally defeated the Germans —12,000 of whom were left dead on the field.

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In this extremity Sigismund was glad to sanction a truce —even at the cost of conceding four of the Reformers' chief demands, viz.:—(1), The abolition of Latin prayers; (2), The administration of the Sacrament with the cup as well as the wafer; (3), The confiscation of the landed and other secular property of the clergy; (4), The punishment of moral crimes with the same severity as political ones.

The suspension of hostilities, however, was but for a moment. The four articles which the Hussites of Prague had exacted from Sigismund were by no means pleasing to the "Taborites," who demanded that much greater concessions should be made; and these not being granted, Ziska and his army once more began to ravage the country. The Emperor sent frequent bodies of troops into Bohemia to arrest their course, but the Germans were in all cases defeated, so that they got at last to believe the Hussites were magicians and invincible.

Mortified, however, at the repeated reverses of his army, the Emperor at length consented to negociate with the Hussite leader; but Ziska died before the treaty was completed. Never was chief so lamented by his troops,—his followers regarding him at once as a saint and a hero.

Another leader, Procopius Raso—no less valiant a warrior than Ziska—was soon chosen, and under his generalship fresh irruptions were made into Hungary, Austria, Bavaria, and Saxony, until the whole empire was filled with consternation. Army after army was again and again defeated, and legate after legate compelled to abandon with humiliation all attempts at reconciling the differences of the Church. The Germans, indeed, often fled in panic at the mere approach of the Hussites.

Under these circumstances, Sigismund promised not to disturb the religious doctrines of the "heretics" until the

Council of Basel, which had been convoked for the year 1431, should have decided respecting them.

All minds, therefore, were fixed on the ensuing Council, which, it was hoped, would be the means of restoring peace to the distracted Empire.

One of the first acts of the Council was to cite the Hussites to appear by their deputies and state their grievances; and the summons was obeyed the more willingly because, owing to their victories, there was no longer any danger in the mission.

The proceedings were opened by Cardinal Julian; after which the Hussite deputies laid before the Council the four demands which Sigismund had sanctioned.

The article relating to the Communion, both with the cup and the wafer, was first discussed. Its explanation occupied the Bohemian deputies three mornings.

The deputies were followed by John de Ragusa, the procurator of the Dominicans, who, in answer to the "Callixtines," or "cup-ites," as they were called, harangued for a whole week on the sufficiency of the wafer alone.

This polemic was answered, in its turn, by Roskyczana, a Hussite leader, in six mornings, his colleagues speaking at equal length on the other articles.

Unanimity on any one point, however, seemed to be hopeless. Each party appeared to have indulged in the vain hope of vanquishing the other by argument. Irritation showed itself on both sides, and it was subsequently agreed that a certain number of the members of the Council should meet in Prague, and decide on the point in a friendly manner.

Accordingly, as the Hussites refused to hear of peace until the four articles were sanctioned by the legates, it was ultimately conceded (but not until the festival of the Holy Trinity, 1433) that the cup should for a time, and under certain re-

strictions, be allowed to communicants; and, moreover, that moral offences should be punished agreeably to the ancient canonical law.

At a later period, however, the Council of Basel sanctioned the "unrestricted use of the cup," and this for a time had the effect of *smothering* those religious dissensions, which were afterwards destined to "light up a greater fire than ever."

The *Concilium-Saal* (or Chapter-house), in which, during the session, some of the committees held their deliberations at Basel, is still attached to the Cathedral—a small staircase leading to it from the choir. It is merely a low room, with four Gothic windows, and is so far worthy of inspection that it exists in precisely the same state as it did at the time of the sitting of the Council.

In one corner of the square, too, in which the Münster is situate there stands an old building called "*zur Mücke*," and in this assembled the conclave during the Council which elected Felix V. (Duke of Savoy) Pope, in the place of Eugene IV.

The other associations in connexion with Basel are of a literary and artistic character.

Erasmus, the learned and witty assailant of the doctrines of the schools and the vices of the monastic orders, as well as the preparer of the way for Luther and the Reformation, closed his labours and his life in Basel. Born at one end, as it were, of the Rhine, he made the other end of it the scene of his highest literary labours.

In a small street (*Breede Kerk Straat*) in Rotterdam, near the "*Groote Markt*," we noted, at the beginning of our Rhenish trip, the house in which the author of "The Praise of Folly" was born; and here, in Basel, we walk the cloisters beside the Münster which are said to have been his favourite resort in

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his old age, and where, maybe, he planned his "*Ecclesiastes*' (or Art of Preaching), that was first printed by his friend Froben in Basel town, not long before his death.

The entry of Erasmus into the world was as romantic as his departure was glorious.

A young man named Gerritz, a native of Gouda, in the Low Countries, loved a physician's daughter. His family sought to make him embrace a monastic life; but the youth fled—leaving the object of his affections about to become a mother—and repaired to Rome. The frail girl gave birth to a son; Gerritz, however, was not apprised of it, but, shortly afterwards, was informed by his parents that she whom he had loved was no more. Stricken down with sorrow and remorse he took the priestly vows, and gave himself up to the service of God. In a short time, however, he made his way back to Holland, and there he found his beloved still living. She refused to be wed to another, and Gerritz, remaining faithful to his sacerdotal vows, concentrated, with her, his affection on their son. The boy was sent to school when only four years old, and was hardly thirteen when his teacher, Sinthemius of Deventer, one day, enraptured with his little scholar's quickness, embraced him as he exclaimed—"This child will attain the highest pinnacle of learning."

That child was Gerritz Gerritz, or as he afterwards translated his name into its Latin and Greek equivalents, "*Desederius Erasmus*"—though he generally signed himself "*Erasmus Roterodamus*" (Erasmus of Rotterdam). He was a mere lad when both his parents died, and the three guardians to whose tender mercies he was bequeathed squandered his property and forced him into a monastery in Brabant, so as to get possession of the whole of his patrimony and conceal their villany. He subsequently assumed the monastic vows at Stein, in 1486, where he became one of the regular canons.

Luckily, however, for the young scholar, and the world as well, Erasmus was not destined to be buried in a monastery, for his classic acquirements attracted the attention of the Bishop of Cambray, who made him his private secretary, and then franked him to Paris, so that he might complete his studies. In the French capital, however, the learned young Dutchman fell into abject poverty, and for years wandered about the Continent, living in the most precarious manner upon the generosity of his patrons. Nevertheless, as soon as Erasmus could procure any money, he employed it in purchasing, first, Greek books, and then clothes; and often did the poor Hollander solicit, in vain, the bounty of his protectors.

The poverty and privations of his early life rendered it the greatest delight of his after years to furnish the means of support to youthful, but poor students; and it is recorded that Holbein would have starved during his early career at Basel, had it not been for the generosity of the quondam poor scholar, but then affluent and illustrious writer, Erasmus.

The habit of study which Erasmus acquired during this part of his career remained with him to the rest of his days. Even while travelling, which he mostly did on horseback, he was accustomed to compose on the way, and to reduce his ideas to writing when he reached the inn at which he was to rest for the night. His celebrated Ἐγκώμιον Μωρίας (Praise of Folly), of which seven editions were sold in a few months, was composed in this manner in the course of a journey from Italy to England.

In this work, Erasmus introduces Folly in her own person, Moria, making her the daughter of the God of Riches, and assigning the Fortunate Isles as the place of her birth. She is reared on drunkenness and impertinence, and becomes the queen of a powerful empire. She depicts successively all the States in the world that belong to her, as well as the classes

of people that are her favourite subjects, dwelling particularly on the Churchmen, whom she says she loads with favours. She delights in deriding the labyrinth of dialectics in which divines have entangled theology, and in ridiculing those extravagant syllogisms by which they seek to uphold the Church.

This little book produced the most startling effect at the time of its publication—no less than twenty-seven editions appeared in the lifetime of Erasmus, and it was translated into every European language; thus contributing more than any other to confirm the antisacerdotal tendency of the age, and to fit the public mind for the reception of the coming Reformation.

In 1506 Erasmus travelled into Italy, and there obtaining from Pope Julian II. a release from his monastic vows, joyfully changed his monk's frock for the black tunic of the lay schoolmen.

At the invitation of Henry VIII., in 1510, he revisited England, and taught in Cambridge as a lecturer on Greek, maintaining with the most illustrious men of the country—such as Sir Thomas More, Dean Colet, &c.—those friendly relations which endured for their lives. In 1514 he returned to the Continent, and after several changes finally settled down at Basel in 1521, to complete many of his best works.

Eight years afterwards, however, the principles of the Reformation triumphed in that town, and then the timid satirist of monks and popish ceremonies fled in fright to Freiburg. Nor did he return until 1535, when his health was fast declining—gout and gravel having for some years severely tortured him. He was at length seized with dysentery, and died at Basel on the 12th of July, 1536.

His body was followed to the grave by all the most eminent persons of the town, and on his tomb was engraved the motto, "NEMINI CEDO" (Second to none).

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In personal appearance, Erasmus is described as having been a fair little man, with half-closed blue eyes, that keenly observed all that was passing, and with lips that were continually curled with faint sarcastic smiles. His frame is said to have been so slight that it seemed as if a puff of wind would have blown him down, whilst his manner is characterised as timid and embarrassed. His company is spoken of as a feast of refined enjoyment—his fund of anecdote being inexhaustible, and his love of literature the passion of his life. His works abound with scholarship at once extensive and elegant—for Latin was more familiar to him than his mother-tongue—and are replete with a dry wit that sparkles through the pages with pleasant variety. In his various prefaces and dedications he nobly and elegantly vindicated the circulation of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongues of Europe, and his writings largely contributed to the success of the Reformation—though he himself wanted the courage to take rank among the heroic band of the early Reformers.

The other great glory of Basel is Hans Holbein, the illustrious painter of the 16th century.

In the narrow *Augustiner-gasse* that leads from the Rhine bridge to the Münster, there is a handsome club-house-like building, with some fine bas-reliefs on the frieze emblematical of Art and Industry. This is the new Museum, and contains a collection of paintings and drawings by the great artist of Basel.

Here may be seen Holbein's wonderful portrait of himself, together with some beautiful pen-and-ink studies of the heads of the family of the Burgomeister Meyer, sketched for the masterpiece of his works which is now in the Dresden Gallery; as well as the original sketch of his famous picture of the family of Sir Thomas More, and portraits of his generous friend

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Erasmus, and of Erasmus' friend Froben, the printer; besides the exquisite picture of the Passion of Christ in eight compartments, for which the Elector Maximilian of Bavaria, many years since, offered 30,000 florins; and the Dead Christ, said to have been drawn after a drunken Jew. There are, indeed, a multitude of like gems of art—the very recalling of which is a source of pleasure for life.

The public library at Basel, too, contains amongst its 70,000 volumes a copy of Erasmus' *Laus Stultitiæ* (Praise of Folly), embellished with Holbein's marginal caricatures, which are said to have amused the author so much that he laughed himself out of a fit of illness when they were shown to him.

Though born at Augsburg, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, Holbein was removed in the year 1519, when but a mere lad, to Basel, whither his father came to settle. In his younger days he was distinguished by a genius full of whim and originality, and yet so insensible were the Baselers to the beauties of his art, that he lived with his family in extreme misery, and was even reduced to paint signs and decorate houses—many of his most original works having been thus exposed to the mercy of the wind and rain. Indeed, the two pictures of a School, which are now treasured in the Museum, were painted in the 14th year of the artist's age for a schoolmaster's sign-board, and for several years hung in the streets at Basel.

Young Hans gained so little by his trade, that he often wanted for the commonest necessaries of life, and must, it is said, have repeatedly perished from hunger, had it not been for the generous assistance of Erasmus, who, remembering his own sufferings during his struggles after fame, never failed to help the poor lad to the utmost of his power.

The youthful artist, however, is said to have been imprudently fond of visiting the wine-shops in the city, and a

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story is told of him, that on being engaged to decorate the ceiling of the shop of an *Apotheke* in the town, and finding the druggist was loth to let him quit his work for his customary glass, Hans painted a pair of legs on the wall immediately beneath the scaffolding, and so true to nature, as well as so perfectly like his own, that the apothecary on looking up from his desk below, and seeing (as he thought) the lad's calves dangling beneath the planks, was wont to fancy he was still overhead, busily engaged at his work.

Holbein, however, finding his talents but little appreciated in Basel, and being worried by the temper of his wife even more than by his pecuniary troubles, finally made up his mind to visit England. Erasmus kindly wrote him several letters of introduction to his friends in the English capital, and in the one he addressed to Sir Thomas More he says, "here the arts perish," and confesses that it is the want of encouragement that drives Holbein to seek his fortune in London.

The English Chancellor received the artist with distinction, and in return for his hospitality Holbein embellished his mansion with many fine paintings. Sir Thomas More was not long in presenting him to Henry VIII., and the king was so struck with his genius, and so taken with his manners, that he conceived a high admiration for him, and attached him to the Court.

An anecdote is told, that an English nobleman of high rank once came to the *atelier* of Holbein at a time when he was engaged upon some important picture that he wished to prosecute in secret. Holbein begged his illustrious visitor to come to him on some future day, but his lordship, snob-like, fancying that an artist should consider it an honour to receive a person of his quality at any time, insisted upon entering; whereupon the quondam sign-painter of Basel, who had been little used to the forms and ceremonies of a Court, took the bestarred and begartered puppy by the shoulders, and thrusting

him from the door, pushed him from the top to the bottom of the stairs.

The lord hastened to the king, and recounting the ignominious treatment he had received at the hands of a vulgar painter, demanded that the fellow should be punished in a most exemplary manner for the base insult heaped upon him.

The monarch, however, replied, that he set more value upon an artist such as Holbein than upon all the great lords of his kingdom; "for," said he, "I have only to take so many peasants to make out of them as many noblemen as I will, but if I were to take the entire peerage, I could not get one such genius as Holbein out of all the noblemen in the land."

In 1538 Holbein revisited Basel, when the city which formerly could hardly find him subsistence even at sign-painting was, now that he was the favourite painter of the King of England, so deeply impressed with his genius, that the Municipality granted him a salary of 50 florins per annum. This was done principally with the hope of retaining the artist in the town; but he returned to London, where he died of the plague in 1554.

The style of Holbein's works, though somewhat hard and formal, is manly and correct, while many of his portraits are marked by great character and individuality.

The "Dance of Death" has been attributed to his pencil; but it is known to have adorned the walls of the Dominican Church in Basel at the time of the assembling of the Council—some 50 years, at least, before Holbein's birth.

Basel is now the centre of a comparatively busy trade, the chief of which lies in the ribbons and paper which it produces, and the residence of the great chemical philosopher Schönbein, the discoverer of "gun-cotton," and more particularly of that wondrous allotropic element termed "*Ozone*."

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