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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-Rheinfelden

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advertisement is inserted in the local paper, for the benefit of the public in general:—

Marriage-Announcement.

(Delayed.)

To our foreign friends and acquaintances hereby (is made) the respectful announcement of our to-day-solemnized-matrimonial alliance.

Mulheim-on-the-Rhine, and Burrig, 6th June, 1843.

Dr. M. H. E——
M. G. E——
born B——

Interpolated Rhenish Scenes.

(9.)

RHEINFELDEN.

A few miles above Basel the Rhine ceases to be navigable. The broad, smooth, and placid flood dwindles into a narrow, foaming, and fretful rivulet, and the barges and steamers disappear from its surface, which now looks as desolate as a German street, with nothing but the boats belonging to an occasional ferry or a rude covered bridge to give the least life to its banks.

The journey to the Rhine Falls may be performed by diligence along either side of the Rhine. On the right bank the direct route is from Freiburg to Schaffhausen, and lies through the loveliest parts of the *Schwarz-Wald*—traversing the sublime ravine of the *Höllenthal* (Hell Valley), where the rocks tower so high, so steep, and so close on either side of the

roadway, that the "*eil-wagen*" (etymologically the *fast coach*, but in fact the particularly slow one) seems to be passing along the dried-up bed of one of the Rhine gorges. By this route, too, the traveller obtains his first peep of the wooden homesteads peculiar to Switzerland, with their broad eaves jutting from the sides of the house like the roofs of sheds, and their wooden galleries reminding one of our old "Talbot Inns;" and the whole house, roofs, sides, and all, covered with wooden slates, as it were, of unpainted deal, that are arranged after the fashion of wafer pen-wipers.

Here, too, may be seen the little Oberland churches, with their tiny steeples covered with tin-plate, and looking in the distance really like bright metal extinguishers shining in the sun; and groups of charcoal-burners at work in the forest, with their white eyes and teeth glistening from out their grimy faces as you go by; and the fires burning in bright crimson patches, that contrast finely with the tall ebony stacks charring beside the roadway.

Here, moreover, you stop to take your "*Mittag-essen*" (mid-day meal) at country inns, where the walls of the "*Speise-saal*" are literally covered with hundreds of small wooden clocks, the pendulums of which are all wagging at once in different ways, and ticking with such violence that you might fancy there was a colony of crickets in the walls.

The other route runs close alongside the Rhine—the sudden twisting and turning of the stream, in its now zigzag course among its bed of rocks, this journey giving it an equal beauty, though of a wholly different kind from the other—as different as the course of a valley is from that of a mountain-chain.

At Basel the Rhine makes an abrupt bend, as at Bingen, and instead of flowing straight on, begins running east and west, in a direction almost at right angles to its former course.

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It continues serpentining along, across the bed of the Jura mountains, almost like a vein in marble—being broken up into a number of small cascades or "rapids," rather than "falls"—until it reaches Schaffhausen, where the great liquid avalanche thunders in a broad sheet of snow over its steep step of rock, on its way from the vast Alpine reservoir of the "*Boden-See*" (Lake of Constanz); above which it comes hurrying down its narrow mountain channel, winding along from south to north, and thinned into the insignificant dimensions of a brook, rather than partaking of the gigantic capacity of a river flood.

The villages (for they can hardly be complimented with the name of towns) that border the stream between Basel and Schaffhausen—though somewhat picturesque in their external appearance, give one a wretched sense of the squalor and poverty, as well as the half-civilised character of the people in these parts; for they are as widely different from the neatness of English village homes as is a villa from a wigwam.

Rheinfelden is the first hamlet of any note that we reach on our journey to the Falls. It consists merely of one rude lane-like street—a long, irregular line of tall, old-fashioned houses, ranged close beside the water—and with the huge green humps of the Schwarz-Wald hills swelling up close behind it. At the upper end of the town stands, as usual, the city-gate; a mere isolated square turret, with battlements at its top corners, and a large clock over the gateway arch.

The town itself has little worthy of notice, if we except that it is built of stones from the neighbouring old Roman settlement of Augusta Rauracorum, and that it contains a handsome column of bronze, doing duty for a fountain, and supporting a standard-bearer with the arms of the town.

At the lower end of the village the Rhine (which is hardly wider here than a canal) is crossed, as shown in the engraving,

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by a covered bridge raised upon piers, as dumpy as mushroom-stalks, and the covered way being as rude as a barn in the interior, where it is divided down the middle, after the fashion of a railway shed.

The object of these covered bridges it is difficult to divine, but they are peculiar to the Swiss portion of the stream, and almost as dark within as if they were a tunnel under the stream rather than a covered roadway above it.

At this part of the river the water is as shallow as a ford, and the green tint harmonises prettily with the flecks of the white waves as it curves and chafes about each impeding stone. There are some rapids close by, too, which cover the river-bed with a white pellicle of foam, and fill the air with a bee-like buzz, for some distance round. This part of the stream bears the name of the "Hell-hook" (*Höllhacken*), though there is little of such an infernal character about the shape of its channel as to warrant so forcible a name.

At a short distance from the bridge is a kind of island, or mound of rock and earth, rising up out of the middle of the stream. Here formerly stood the old fortress of "*Stein*," that, like Pfalz by Caub, once formed the island-palace of the ancient Counts of Rheinfelden. Earlier still, this was the residence of King Rudolph of Suabia (the Anti-Emperor Henry IV.), but was ultimately destroyed by the Swiss Confederates during the battle of St. Jaques, in 1344.

Agnes, wife of Berthold II., Duke of Zahringen by Freiburg, was the last relic of the nobles of Rheinfelden.

Formerly Rheinfelden was strongly fortified, and though its walls now seem incapable of holding out against a "park" of pop-guns, and the place appears hardly worth the taking, it was in the middle ages besieged times without number. The famous Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar and Johann von Westh fought several battles under its walls in the year 1638—

Bernard in the end taking his adversary prisoner, and the Duke de Rohan perishing in the last conflict.

The town fell into the hands of the French in 1744, and in 1801 was made over to Switzerland, to which country it now belongs. The population at present numbers only 1500: and how even this small body of individuals manage to exist in a place that is utterly destitute of manufactures, commerce, and even traffic, beyond the daily diligence—the noise of which in the streets seems to startle the people like the railway engine bewilders cattle in the fields—is more than the stranger can possibly divine.

Rheinfelden forms one of the four ancient "forest towns" situate in these parts, viz. Rheinfelden, Seckingen, Laufenburg, and Waldshut.

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§ 2.

Respect for Women—Domestic Feeling among the Married Classes—Divorces—and Public Vice.

Among the Eastern nations it is well known that woman was, and indeed is, regarded as a mere animal necessity, — a creature designed to be the object of man's lowest passions rather than his highest and purest affections; and a creature, moreover, that the "blessed Prophet" Mahomet held to be as unworthy of immortality as even the beasts of the field.

The refined Greeks, too, whom classical taste would teach us to admire, regarded women from scarcely a higher point of view—considering them inferior to men, and qualified to discharge only the subordinate functions of life. Aristotle