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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

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with ravines and truncated peaks, whilst they are piled and heaped at the back, so that you might almost fancy they were dark, solid clouds—the mountain-steps leading to the very heavens themselves.

The curving shore here is embanked, and shelving with stone. The terraced roadway is speckled with white-fronted houses, and the waves (for the bay is rougher at this part than at any other) grate or chafe upon the masonry like the continued rustling of silk.

On entering the town, we find at first a largish open space, flanked with old-fashioned French-looking houses; then we come to a neat-enough short street, where stands the police-office, with the passport *bureau* up-stairs; and near this is the "*See Kapelle*" (Lake Chapel), with its high, narrow tower, hardly thicker than a sentry-box.

Across the end of this street stands the low colonnaded guard-house, called the "*Haupt-wache*," with a stack of arms under its little porch, and the Austrian riflemen grouped in front of it, with their silver-grey uniforms turned up with green, and their peculiar semi-cocked hats edged with japanned leather—half-policemen, half-gend'arme—and plumed with a bunch of green-looking metallic feathers at the side.

Beyond the guard-house, as you turn sharp round the corner, you come to a line of colonnaded houses, having the *trottoir* under the first floor; and here, on the left, is a steep lane, or almost perpendicular street, leading to the upper town—the tall, thick square tower of which, with its crown-like copper roof, is seen peering its red head at the end of the thoroughfare. Continuing the ascent, you find the houses piled up the side of the slanting street, so that one moment you are on a level with the parlour-door, and the next, though only a few steps farther on, looking in at the first-floor windows of the same building; while you see the people above you

climbing up the thoroughfare as though they were a string of mountaineers scaling Mont Blanc.

At length you reach the *Pfarr-kirche*, standing on top of a high green slope, with its narrow, gabled, cottage-like steeple, and the neighbouring *Kirche-hof* (burial-ground) planted with black and gilt wooden crosses as thick as hop-poles. This Pfarr-kirche stands, as it were, on one side of a steep ravine, or groove in the mountain, at the back of the town, whilst the opposite slope consists of a green truncated pyramid of earth furrowed with vineyards, and with a range of buildings and walls at top that strike you as belonging to some quaint old palace.

This, however, is the *Obere-Stadt*, or upper town of Bregenz; it is surrounded with high old walls that are set with rondels and bastions at intervals, and pierced with windows, as well as covered with a series of roofs that seem as if the ancient palace had been converted into a succession of low lodging-houses.

Descending the one slope below the Pfarr-kirche, and mounting the other that leads to the upper town, you find on entering the small arches which are cut through the walls that you are in the midst of a little colony, about a quarter the size of the upper town of Boulogne, the whole *Stadt* being but three streets wide, and each of those streets only eight houses long. The streets, moreover, are a bright green with their crop of grass, and the houses rude enough in their architecture to carry the mind back to the very darkest ages. Some have colonnades like crypts, and others grandly-painted exteriors, with the traces of imitation pillars and ornamental copings to be detected on the walls.

In one corner near the tall crown-roofed tower stands the *Spital*, or almshouse; and here, while we were searching for an exit from the curious little city, we were startled by

the sound of a voice in the air: whereupon we beheld, on looking at the upper windows of the palatial workhouse, one of the old paupers anxious to learn whether we would like to go over the establishment.

This old town is the site of an ancient Roman settlement called *Brigantium;* indeed the remains of the old Roman walls are still to be seen. The upper town dates as far back as Strabo, A.D. 40; and there is an odd bas-relief on the walls of the Obere-Stadt of the heathen goddess Epona, who is said to have been the guardian deity of horses and mares.

Bregenz was originally peopled by the *Vindelicians*—a tribe that is said to have belonged to Augsburg (the ancient "*Augusta Vindelicorum*"), and to have derived its name from the rivers *Vinda* (the modern Wertach) and *Lech,* between which Augsburg is situate.

After the disappearance of the Romans from the banks of the *Boden See,* Bregenz belonged to the Counts of Montford and Wirtemburg; and during the Appenzeller war, in 1405, held out successfully against the Swiss, a considerable number of whom were killed and wounded; and to this day the guards, in their night-watches, cry "Honour to Hergotha!" who is said to have defended the city till Lord Montford appeared at the head of his troops.

Fifty years afterwards, Elizabeth, Lady of Montford and Bregenz, sold half the city to the Archduke Sigismund of Austria, and the other half to the Archduke Frederick of Austria.

Like Lindau, Bregenz suffered much during the Thirty Years' War, during which it fell, in 1646, into the hands of the Swedes, who destroyed the old castle of the Montfords, that formerly stood on the Gebhardsberg, and carried off plunder sufficient to fill some five hundred wagons. Towards the end of the next century, also, the town was sacked by the French.

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It now belongs to Austria, by which power, indeed, it has been possessed for the greater part of the time since the ancient house of the Counts of Montford became extinct in 1547.

Bregenz contains at present 1500 inhabitants, and boasts several monasteries in its immediate neighbourhood,* the monks from which may be generally seen in the streets, walking among the townsfolk with bare feet and bare shaven head—except on rainy days, when they indulge in the worldly vanity of a cotton umbrella, even while delighting to tramp shoeless and stockingless through the puddles.†

The costume of the peasant-women around Bregenz (the *Bregenzer-wälders*), who on market-days crowd the streets of the curious old city, is also sufficiently primitive and unlike the engravings in the "*Courrier des Dames*" to merit a brief description."

The dress consists of, (1), a peculiar kind of conical, blue-felt, brimless hat, which bulges out all round the head like the skull-protector of a French baby, and having plaits of hair showing at the back.

(2), A cloth bodice, so tight and short-waisted that it has the appearance of the neck-piece to a boy's blouse, and fitted with a pair of very high-shouldered "leg-of-mutton" sleeves, which are invariably of a different colour from the bodice itself. One lady whom we saw had a pair of brown silk sleeves, while the body of her dress was of black cloth; those of another peasant-woman were of green "stuff," and a third rejoiced in sleeves made out of a half-mourning print.

* The Swiss monks, driven from their own country, have recently purchased the ruins of the *Vorkloster* here for 50,000 francs (2000*l.*).

† These monks beg alms for the poor. They are not allowed to take money, but go from house to house collecting bread and meat, &c., and all who come to their kloster have food given them. The Capuchin monks have a monastery up the hill at the back of the town.

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(3), A brown glazed-calico skirt, so closely plaited round the waist that the gathers are positively as thick as the folds in a fan; and the said skirt cut so short, that it reveals a good eighteen inches of blue worsted stocking, terminating in a thick muddy shoe.

(4), A black silk kerchief tied round the neck, cravat fashion, and with a full black velvet chemisette, ornamented with a gilt band showing beneath it.

(5), A dark-blue linen apron, fastened round the waist by means of a broad leathern belt, that has huge brass clasps at the back.

But the most peculiar part of the Bregenz fashions consists in the extreme flatness of the bust that the peasant-women study to produce; for so wedded are the ladies of the Bregenzer-wäld to high dresses, that they take the greatest possible pains, we were assured, to hide the charms peculiar to low-necked ones; and certainly those whom we saw might have been mistaken for *A-mazons* in the thorough sense of the term.

The costume of the men, on the other hand, consists of a light grey kind of postilion's jacket, with black knee breeches and huntsman's high boots; some of them wear the Swiss peasant's hat, with a gold shaving-brush-like tassel dangling on the brim; whilst others in rainy weather appear in a blanket, which has a hole cut in the middle of it for the head to be thrust through; and this, whenever the peasant enters a tavern, or has to wait for any time on the road, is taken off and used as either a horse-cloth or cow-cloth, according to the cattle driven by its owner.

Another peculiarity of the Tyrol towns may be noted in the shooting-houses that are usually to be found in the suburbs of each village. At Lindau, near the Land-thor, is seen the first *Schützenhaus*—a villa-like *Weinwirthschaft*,

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standing at the edge of the island, and with a number of targets in sentry-boxes that are built on stilts, as it were, at some distance out in the water.

At Bregenz, again, we see the same institution. This at first has the appearance of a landing-pier, or swimming-school, for the Bregenzer Schützenhaus is a largish building facing the lake, and somewhat like the Margate bathing-saloons in style. It has a balcony overlooking the water, and set with seats for the spectators, after the fashion of our river-side taverns; and beneath these is the room from the windows of which the rifles are fired, each casement being fitted with a bell-wire that stretches, telegraph-like, along poles towards the stilted sentry-box-like target-houses that stand in the water immediately facing the house. A small gangway raised on piles extends from the Schützenhaus to the target-boxes, where, during the practice, boys are stationed to signal the result of each shot.

Through the week the windows of the aquatic shooting-gallery are kept closed, and the house itself is used for the purposes of a school, while the fancy targets, ornamented with figures of Justice, Mercury, &c., are taken into the hall, where they may be seen all pock-marked with shot and as full of holes as a slug-eaten cabbage-leaf.

On the Sunday, however, the place is all alive with the crowds of riflemen, and the air resounds with the sharp crack of the guns and tinkle of the target-bells.

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