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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

[Text]

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VI.

OPINIONS, SENTIMENTS, AND CREED.

Up to this point we have dealt with but the *outside*, as it were, of the Prussian character — representing rather their external manners than their internal thoughts and feelings.

Manners, among the ignorant, are often confounded with morals. True, the words, etymologically considered, mean the same; but, in an ethical point of view, they are as different one from the other, as the motions of the puppets from the invisible hand that pulls the strings. Indeed, manners are but modes of human action; in a primitive state of society, they are the "*natural signs*" by which our various feelings are expressed. For, as artists are aware that each different emotion has a different gesture and cast of feature by which to make itself known to others, (and the imitation of these mere muscular renderings of our inward feelings constitutes the art of pantomime on the stage,) so is there a peculiar kind of pantomime observable in the various forms of society, by which the refined are distinguished from the unrefined in every civilized nation.

But as every *manner* of action admits of being imitated, so the various gestures of the body and expressions of the features (though originally the natural and true representatives of inward sentiments and passions) become, in an artificial state, the most fallacious *criteria*, not only as to the real disposition of an individual, but as to what is either agreeable or disagreeable to his nature. Hence a breach

of manners is regarded as a social, rather than a moral offence. We may infer that there is a want of refinement on the part of the people when we see gentlefolks, as with the Germans, picking their teeth with the prongs of their forks; but no man regards another as either a fool or a knave for such acts. Diogenes could have conformed but little to the various modes of action enjoined in the Grecian "*Complimentir-bück;*" nevertheless, we must admit that *he* was at least thoughtful and honest.

Up to the present point we have dealt rather with the *taste* of the Germans than their *principles*. So to speak, we have criticised, as yet, but the conformation of their social palates and senses, rather than that of their hearts or brains; and though we may have found even the "superior classes" among them—as Jenkins loves to style the well-to-do—deficient in a sense of what is innately offensive to every refined nature, they may be a very good sort of folk, and a clever, sharp-witted race, notwithstanding.

Let us see, then, how they will bear looking at from the latter point of view.

In order to contemplate the inner spirit of a nation (for even those who go through Germany with opera-glasses can see the outside character of the natives—mere manners being patent to all), we must seek out, not only what they think to be either fashionable or godly, but also what they hold to be wise, and good, and noble in the world.

Nor is it our desire to regard even the German sense of what is acceptable to the Almighty from any sectarian and catechetical point of sight. We know too well that the world upon all such matters is divided into two large and distinct classes—those who believe that two-and-two make