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The city of the fountains, or Baden-Baden and its immediate neighbourhood

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Chapter IX. The New Castle. (Das neue Schloss.)

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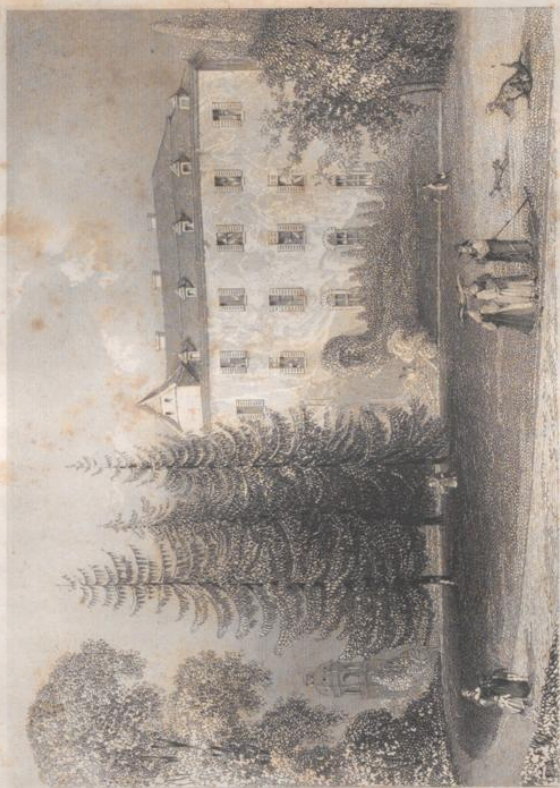
CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW CASTLE.

(DAS NEUE SCHLOSS.)

Αἰπῆς πύργοι ἄξεός εἰσι κόσμος.

THIS building although of colossal size has no embellishments of Architecture to boast of, nevertheless from its position, its history and the remarkable caverns it rests upon, claims the right of being regarded as the principal feature in the town of Baden. The gate leading to the town is singularly embellished by a dried sturgeon, which had been caught in the Rhine, curious to say, during the time of the Swedes, in the thirty years war; the phenomenon was regarded by the inhabitants as indicative of the approaching fall and ejection of the intruders. The omen turned out to be true, in the same manner as comets, croaking ravens, the death-watch or thirteen persons at dinner always do. The principal front of the edifice looks into the garden. Philip the second, that is the Markgrave, built a castle on this spot in 1579. But in the year 1689 the French destroyed it, as they did the town by fire, and it was they who reduced to ruins the castles on the hills. Nothing now remains of this



LE NOUVEAU CHATEAU
A HAIDE



princely building save the arms over the portal, the colonnade over the kitchen, some apartments in the ground floor with a few relics of pristine decorations, and the little rotunda upon the walled terrace, which leads from the castle into the garden. The castle that was built by the Markgrave Christopher in 1417 was not in this spot, but nearer to the warm fountains.

The view from the castle windows when taken in detail must present a glorious succession of unrivalled prospects.

The snail-garden (Schneckengarten) is reserved for flowers; it may be looked upon as no trivial botanical acquisition for those who love to see a choice of the rarest and most beautiful exotics.

There are several ways conducting to the new castle; one is through the garden of the *Zähringer Hof*, another by a flight of stone steps not far off from the *Baden hotel*, but on the side leading to the *Stag inn*, near a blacksmith's shop; but the most agreeable road is between the protestant church and the nunnery, this is called the *Turkish way*, and about half way up there is a flight of steps considerably abridging the fatigue of climbing in sultry weather.

The garden is generally retired, and well adapted for gentle musings and silent meditation, undisturbed by the intrusive foot of the gay and thoughtless world.

The most interesting object certainly is the chain of subterranean vaults and galleries. The entrance goes through a tower to the right at the corner of the castle down a spiral stair-case,

past what was once a Roman swimming-bath. The greatest obscurity hangs over its origin. Some suppose these vaults to have been the substructions of a Roman temple, dedicated to the guardian divinities of the Aurelian city of fountains, such as the Minerva alluded to by Cicero, Mercury, the Sun and others. Such temples generally stood upon an eminence.

The vaults would then have respect to the infernal kingdom, as the Romans were wont to represent it partly in retired caverns of rocks, partly under their temples, as in that of Mars before the Capua gate in Rome. This sanctuary was devoted to Pluto and Proserpine, whose empire was over the Manes, and it had an opening to the upper-world, through which according to popular belief, the shades of the dead could find free ingress and egress on certain days. An opening of the sort was here in the last and largest vault, but is now walled up. Four times in the year, in August, the day after the Vulcanalia, the fourth of October and the eighth of November, they celebrated this communication with the lower world, and the sanctuary was opened on these days, having been kept shut the remainder of the year.

The castle-vaults which were at a later period supported by a foundation of masonry, may have been afterwards appropriated to another use. The universal tradition here is, that the dreaded Vehmgericht held its sittings in this spot, and it records the secret executions which here took place. A popular account of

this secret tribunal may be met with in 'Anne of Geierstein,' and no doubt most of my readers are already familiar with the name. Since such a tradition exists in a town, the inhabitants of which in other respects knew just as much of the 'Vehm' as they did of the infernal deities, and who even only knew Mercury under the name of the 'sculptured man', it is evident that some reasons, some facts gave rise to it, and that popular exaggeration or superstition did not. One of the chambers, on to the walls of which iron rings are secured, still bears the traditional name of the 'Folterkammer' or torture-room, and in one of the galleries an opening is pointed out that bears the name of 'Jungfernkuss' or virgin's-kiss. Here those condemned to die are said to have been pitched down and to have fallen into the arms of an iron virgin, who embraced them with spikes and knives, producing a horrible death. There is a slight analogy between this and the poor English seaman of yore who was condemned by a secret conclave of officers to *kiss* the gunner's daughter.

The rotunda already spoken of is generally called the turret of Dagobert. At the end of the long walk is a wicket generally open in the day time, it leads to a small path, and one of the most delightful quiet walks in the wood opposite, through which, by taking the path to the right, one can descend to the *alley of sighs* and so home. All persons are excluded at night-fall.

We believe we have now enumerated every thing calculated to excite the curiosity of an Englishman, as far as the town itself

is concerned, omitting however to mention to him that there is a bath in the city for horses as well as men; should such a valuable animal become foundered by long travelling etc., the water will prove most efficacious, but he should not venture to take any step without consulting the veterinary surgeon or as he is called in German the 'Thierarzt.' Many qualified persons have spoken to me very highly of the professional talents of this gentleman. A few more matters connected with the tourist's comforts and for the object of saving him much trouble and time, will be added at the end. It may be proper to observe here that the whole of the town and adjoining districts were totally ravaged, plundered and destroyed by the French in 1689. The atrocities committed on that occasion will I fervently trust never be repeated again in civilized Europe.

The season commences on the 15th of May, the height of the season is in July and August. Horses, asses and carriages can be hired in almost every street, and the latter on the stands about the English-garden, near the Conversation-house. A new pump-room is there building. Asses- and goats-milk is a fashionable remedy. It is to be procured at several places in the immediate neighbourhood. The morning's walk to drink it must be wholesome, and as far as the milk is concerned, we only hope that the well known lines of Peter Pindar may not apply in this instance.
