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

**Whitelocke, Robert Heriot**

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Chapter XIII. Visit to Geroldsau and the Waterfall. (Wasserfall.)

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CHAPTER XIII.

VISIT TO GEROLDSAU AND THE WATERFALL.

(WASSERFALL.)

I love the roaring waterfall,  
Within some deep romantic glen,  
Mid desert wilds, remote from all  
The gay and busy haunts of men,  
For its loud thunders sound to me,  
Like voices from eternity.

Dr. RAFFLES.

In every point of view a waterfall formed by nature in a wild secluded spot must be an object of interest to man, whether an advocate for the water-doctors or not, whether a lover of sherbet from the south, of sugar-water from thy realms oh France, or of 'cold without' from chalky Albion, with only two exceptions, and those are perhaps unique in their way, I mean an American Yankee whose head is pregnant with the 'power of water' and an unfortunate individual who is under the full impression of having been bitten by a mad dog; the latter circumstance is not at all unlikely to happen here, for although the canine species in this town is a perfect nuisance to all 'freshmen', the laws of Robespierre have so far given way to the 'new order of things',



LA CASCADE DE GORRELSAU.





that even this race incurs no other danger of being 'suspect d'être suspect' than a harmless day's imprisonment with bread and water,—far different from 'the reign of terror', when dogs did not dare carry their tails out straight, and when giving a dog a bad name was tantamount to hanging.

On the first of June, the 'glorious first of June', having no sea to feast my eyes upon, I looked out of my window, to see what I could see, and I saw no cloud, no ox-eye, no weather-gall, no frown upon the brow of St. Cæcilia, and wanting no other barometer to assure me of fine weather, I gave the necessary orders to my little ones 'by and with the advice of our privy council' for packing up; the commands of Jove himself were not more promptly obeyed by the 'deceitful dream.' Oh what a scampering was there my countrymen; bread, cheese, cold meat, beer, wine, and all the paraphernalia of civilized gipsies were packed up and confided to the safe custody and conduct of a boy-donkey-muleteer whom we had summoned from the 'pons asinorum', and shortly after our patriarchal procession set forth for the wilderness. We reached Lichtenthal under a canopy of verdure, leaving the nunnery 'with their sweet voices' and the mount Cæcilia to our right, passed over a bridge and coasting a babbling brook, with the high hills for our screens and now and then a tree for our fan, arrived at Geroldsau. Our adventures hitherto were not many, beyond returning the guten Morgen of the peasant whose costume reminds one of Hogarth; or meeting



a goat or donkey of the feminine gender, whose milk would in one short hour be measured into chopines, or soured into curds; or women with naked feet and baskets on their heads, humming a church tune or invoking some saint to preside over the sale of their 'Gemüse' or their alpine strawberries to the Sassenachs.

The custom of begging a kreuzer is here as in other villages universal with the children, and little ragged urchins they are in all conscience. The villagers cannot be badly off however, for every little stripe of green sward was covered with long rows of brownish linen for the purpose of bleaching. Brawny-armed muscular strong-calved wenches hurled with the power of a coal-heaver or a Billingsgate 'poissarde' whole buckets of water on the apathetic mass, and I could not help breathing a prayer or rather sighing a hope that those tanned necks might long remain uninvaded by the 'goitre', and that if they were already or were to be the 'mothers of men', that their progeny might never be cretins.

My ruminations were interrupted here by a bull, that ought to have been ruminating too, but this 'sort of cattle' does not chew the cud of a morning, being better engaged. We had been incautious enough to hang out the red flag, the emblem of battle in the shape of a shawl; he left his Io to her gad-fly and like a green-eyed monster marched up towards us, muttering in a suppressed bellow, 'the sign of wrath awaked', and now and then sticking his horns into the earth, a preparatory process equally

agreeable to the nerves as a Malay's making up his mind to run a muck. We were saved however from our danger by a neat-herd who came to the 'desdichado', struck the 'front du bœuf' with his quarter-staff, and the bullying bull retreated to his bovine concubines, as the grand vizier did to his seraglio after the battle of Koniah.

After rather more than half an hour's walk through part of the black forest, or the Sylva Martiana if you like better, though it's all the same in greek, inasmuch as it grows upon rocks of granite, and where occasionally the scenery is absolutely enchanting, our near proximity to the fall was announced by a more sympathetic murmuring, for the rippling and harmless ed-dying was sensibly increased. A sharpish descent for gouty legs by a rustic primitive wooden shed placed before us the haunted spot, such as you now look upon 'gentle reader.' The children set up a shout of joy, and clapped their hands, such admiration, such applause as nature loves from infant hearts, more pure than the shout which the French troops raised when they gazed on the colossal ruins of Thebes, more pure than the shout raised as the monarch goes in his state-carriage bedizened with gilt and tinsel, more holy, more unalloyed than the silent gaze of the philosopher, as he darts back his lightning glance to the times when Saurian monsters floundered oer the deep, and the brute earth was without its Lord.



We forthwith approached through an arch of foliage the fall, which although of tiny proportions, only twenty four feet high or thereabouts, 'say twenty four feet', is lovely in its own peculiar beauty, while over it hanging imminent, towering into the clouds and seemingly near, though in reality not so much as one at first imagines, hangs the *Krückenfels*, resembling a ruined castle in its naked and jagged cliffs, while on its very summit fit resting place for the eagle, leans forward like an old man propped on his staff a colossal cross, as yet unscathed by the lightning, and pointing out to pilgrims the way to heaven. As we stood gazing on the silvery spray, a sight such as Englishmen never see or hear of save in books, was reserved for us, for whilst we were scrambling up the rocky banks, and had surrendered our souls to the profound solitude of the place, a succession of loud reports from the cracking of a whip, echoed by the forest, heralded the rapid approach of something novel and unexpected. At length after a minute's pause emerged a swineherd, and who but a swineherd would crack his sacrilegious whip in a grove near falling water, where the oak sacred to Jove and the tall pine 'fit for the mast of some great ammiral' give birth to Dryads, and the pure stream embraces a Naiad? But the poor humble hip-lame Eumæus was totally unconscious of his guilt, so likewise was the miserable looking hump-backed being who performed the part of Ulysses. Forth rushed in full grunt and squeak a whole host of porkers along the steep forest-



covered rocks, as the Scottish host before Flodden field, and an indescribable chaos of grunting, squeaking, chumping, rousing, piggiwiggifying, cracking of pig-whips mingled with the din of the waters and the laughing astonished cries of the children. One little piggininni was peculiarly obstreperous and querulous, he approached so near us, and seemed to be so much 'put upon' by the older pigs, who ought to have known better, that we all sympathized with him, and at the moment hunger brought to my mind that pathetic passage of Eliah, wherein he says "of all the delicacies in the whole eatable world roast pig is the most delicate. I don't speak of your grown porkers — things between pig and pork — those hobbydehoys — but a young and tender suckling — under a moon old — guiltless as yet of the sty; his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble and a grumble — the mild forerunner or præludium of a grunt" but 'this little pig' was not 'the one who went to market' but who 'staid at home', so he was not for us. The foraging of the herd was amazing; talk of Attila and his Huns, they were fools to these swine, not a single leaf, not a blade was there, that was not snouted up; and no army of ants, no savage tribe, no gangs of rag-gatherers, no Cornish wreckers could have followed the trail better. If these pigs did but know how unfairly they were cheated of their property by those poaching doctors, who in prescribing acorn-coffee so inhumanly defraud the poor pig of his hereditary property! These pigs reminded me

of the negro emancipation, they were free of the sty, they had to gain their own livelihood, they were no longer (*horrendum, infame!*) to pamper and fatten in captivity, but their freedom was purchased at the expence of their skins, for they were the longest-backed lean gaunt-looking hogs I ever saw in my life, but the sagacity, activity, mutual intelligence, tractability and exploring indefatigability of these pig-mountaineers surpassed I must confess all my previously formed opinions of pigs in general. I have since this whilst out on a ramble been overtaken by a squadron of them, galloping, trotting, cantering like wild Arabs of an evening coming home to their tents; each animal turned off right or left, or through a door 'up stairs down stairs' and voluntarily dispersing throughout the village without taking leave of one another or tarrying on the road to forage for an instant. This sight surprized me not a little, the secret of their military discipline however might have been the signal for supper.

A little hut, which we discovered by the side of a meadow, 'through the wood' on the right, supplied us with milk, black but sweetish bread and some delicious honey. Our banquet was held under the forest-oak like Robin Hood and his merry merry men, and with unwilling feet we quitted at length the delightful spot, which I recommend to the notice of such harmless crusaders as will take the precaution of 'laying in a stock' previous to making this expedition.

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