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

**Whitelocke, Robert Heriot**

**Carlsruhe, 1840**

Chapter XIV. The Old Castle. (Das alte Schloss.)

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CHAPTER XIV.  
THE OLD CASTLE.  
(DAS ALTE SCHLOSS.)

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CAPTIVE.

Must I be shackled too  
In this cold vault?

GAOLER.

Such is our Lord's good pleasure.

*Old play.*

THERE are a variety of ways for ascending to this beautiful ruin, and there is not one of them that will not amply repay the hardy adventurer by the magnificence and beauty of its rich prospects. One way is from the New Castle by the Echo, which is just opposite to that part which looks over the Rhine; another way is to be found at the end of the Alley of sighs and continuing on to almost as far as the Devil's pulpit, then turning on to the left not far from the Wolf's Jaws or 'Wolfsschlucht;' but this is better for returning, we therefore recommend the carriage-road that passes by the New Castle and that continues straight and broad through the forest. It was made in the year 1833 by order of His Royal Highness the reigning Duke, and

for the carrying of it into effect as well as the building of the tower on the Mercury and a host of minor improvements the visitors are much indebted to the present Grand Bailiff Mr. DE THEOBALD, whose urbanity and strict impartiality in the administration of justice cannot be too much commended and appreciated by both residents and visitors.

After an hour's walk through a luxuriant wood of dark pines and evergreen foliage, enjoying every now and then a peep at the meandering Rhine; thinking of Calypso and all that, or it may be of Netley and Tintern Abbeys or Corfe Castle, sometimes reposing to watch the boundings of the squirrel, who will be found to be notwithstanding English prejudices, just as active and kittenish as our own breed of them at home, I came up to one of the old haunts of chivalry, the quondam seat of the Markgraves, some of whom no doubt were as mild as the times would allow, and others cruel in those ages of cruelty. I rejoiced at its destruction by the French in one sense, for I reverted back to its origin under the Roman and its subsequent military despotism and oppression over the wretched vassals of the valleys, in another sense I could not with all my moral reasonings destroy the sensations, the unknown impressions that the presence of a majestic ruin awoke and stamped in my mind.

What an abyss, what adamantine battlements!

This is then, the Knight's Hall, and where bright armour, sharp swords and bright eyes once graced the banquet, the ivy



creeps, and pines stretch their arms through the arched window-spaces telegraphic of Nature's dominion!

The raven is croaking half way down the giant mass, and yet its pile, its Typhæan tower still soars above me. I see the moving mass of gay loungers and promenaders before the Conversation House, they look like mice, the faint notes of the band flit towards me like the distant hum of the bee wafted by the breeze; there are passions there busy at work, but I cannot read them, and I have no Daguerrotype to represent them on paper so as to scan the shadows of man's face by the aid of a microscope, but I know that minds are there, that hearts are throbbing, that love is disguised or travestied, for what saith the poet,

Spesso Amor sotto la forma  
D'amistà ride, e s'asconde:  
Poi si mischia, e si confonde  
Con lo sdegno, e col rancor.  
In Pietade ei si trasforma,  
Par trastullo, e par dispetto:  
Mà nel suo diverso aspetto  
Sempr' egli, è l'istesso amor.

This is all very true, for here love chooses the warm vine-clad valleys, Idalia was clothed with myrtles, not beetling crags. Rugged rocks! can *you* echo to love? how often have you beaten back the groan, the shriek of the tortured victim, the exulting scream of the eagle. I drop a stone down this shelving funnel, the bottom of which I can hardly see, though the sun

is shining in all his splendour,—what a heavy plunge it makes! awful depth! With straining eyes I at length gain sight of its bottom, it is so narrow that a man cannot stretch himself out at full length, and this concave pyramid of rock has once been the dungeon of many a life-weary wretch; the snow, the rain has reached him, but all that his eyes have ever seen in his captivity has been by day the tantalizing rope that slowly let down to him his black bread and ice-cold water, and by night a star, as it reached its meridian. Oh civilization! oh benignant peace! what horrors have ye not chased, what blessings have ye not bestowed!

In a nook, what was once a vault or a lady's bower, I know not which, overshadowed by whispering leaves and fanned by the balmy breeze, watching the flight of crow mid-way between me and the glorious expanse of mountain-chain, tower, vale, stream, I quaffed some Affenthaler tempered with the living water of the rock, and called up to my mind the dreamy past like a phantasmagoria.

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