

A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens)

Table of Contents

<u>A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2</u>	1
<u>Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens)</u>	2
<u>CHAPTER VIII</u>	11
<u>The Great French Duel</u>	12
<u>[I Second Gambetta in a Terrific Duel]</u>	13
<u>CHAPTER IX</u>	25
<u>[What the Beautiful Maiden Said]</u>	26
<u>CHAPTER X</u>	35
<u>[How Wagner Operas Bang Along]</u>	36
<u>CHAPTER XI</u>	44
<u>[I Paint a "Turner"]</u>	45
<u>CHAPTER XII</u>	52
<u>[What the Wives Saved]</u>	53
<u>CHAPTER XIII</u>	60
<u>[My Long Crawl in the Dark]</u>	61
<u>CHAPTER XIV</u>	68
<u>[Rafting Down the Neckar]</u>	69

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- CHAPTER VIII
 - The Great French Duel
 - [I Second Gambetta in a Terrific Duel]

- CHAPTER IX
 - [What the Beautiful Maiden Said]

- CHAPTER X
 - [How Wagner Operas Bang Along]

- CHAPTER XI
 - [I Paint a "Turner"]

- CHAPTER XII
 - [What the Wives Saved]

- CHAPTER XIII
 - [My Long Crawl in the Dark]

- CHAPTER XIV
 - [Rafting Down the Neckar]

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Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens)



A CONNECTICUT YANKEE
IN
KING ARTHUR'S COURT.

BY
MARK TWAIN.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES L. WEBSTER & COMPANY.
1889.



CHAPTER VIII

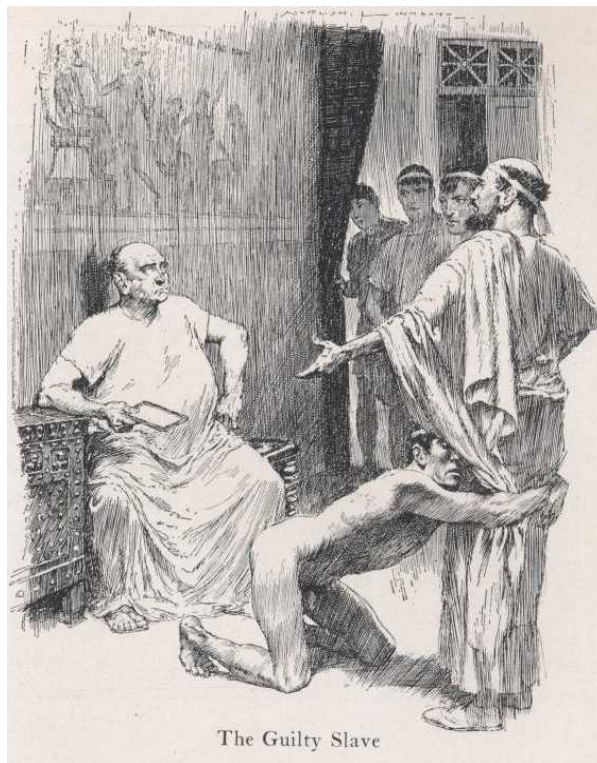
The Great French Duel

[I Second Gambetta in a Terrific Duel]

Much as the modern French duel is ridiculed by certain smart people, it is in reality one of the most dangerous institutions of our day. Since it is always fought in the open air, the combatants are nearly sure to catch cold. M. Paul de Cassagnac, the most inveterate of the French duelists, had suffered so often in this way that he is at last a confirmed invalid; and the best physician in Paris has expressed the opinion that if he goes on dueling for fifteen or twenty years more—unless he forms the habit of fighting in a comfortable room where damps and draughts cannot intrude—he will eventually endanger his life. This ought to moderate the talk of those people who are so stubborn in maintaining that the French duel is the most health-giving of recreations because of the open-air exercise it affords. And it ought also to moderate that foolish talk about French duelists and socialist-hated monarchs being the only people who are immoral.

But it is time to get at my subject. As soon as I heard of the late fiery outbreak between M. Gambetta and M. Fourtoun in the French Assembly, I knew that trouble must follow. I knew it because a long personal friendship with M. Gambetta revealed to me the desperate and implacable nature of the man. Vast as are his physical proportions, I knew that the thirst for revenge would penetrate to the remotest frontiers of his person.

I did not wait for him to call on me, but went at once to him. As I had expected, I found the brave fellow steeped in a profound French calm. I say French calm, because French calmness and English calmness have points of difference.



The Guilty Slave

He was moving swiftly back and forth among the debris of his furniture, now and then staving chance fragments of it across the room with his foot; grinding a constant grist of curses through his set teeth; and halting every little while to deposit another handful of his hair on the pile which he had been building of it on the table.

He threw his arms around my neck, bent me over his stomach to his breast, kissed me on both cheeks, hugged me four or five times, and then placed me in his own arm-chair. As soon as I had got well again, we began business at once.

I said I supposed he would wish me to act as his second, and he said, "Of course." I said I must be allowed to act under a French name, so that I might be shielded from obloquy in my country, in case of fatal results. He winced here, probably at the suggestion that dueling was not regarded with respect in America. However, he agreed to my requirement. This accounts for the fact that in all the newspaper reports M. Gambetta's second was apparently a Frenchman.



First, we drew up my principal's will. I insisted upon this, and stuck to my point. I said I had never heard of a man in his right mind going out to fight a duel without first making his will. He said he had never heard of a man in his right mind doing anything of the kind. When he had finished the will, he wished to proceed to a choice of his "last words." He wanted to know how the following words, as a dying exclamation, struck me:

"I die for my God, for my country, for freedom of speech, for progress, and the universal brotherhood of man!"

I objected that this would require too lingering a death; it was a good speech for a consumptive, but not suited to the exigencies of the field of honor. We wrangled over a good many ante-mortem outbursts, but I finally got

him to cut his obituary down to this, which he copied into his memorandum–book, purposing to get it by heart:

"I DIE THAT FRANCE MIGHT LIVE."

I said that this remark seemed to lack relevancy; but he said relevancy was a matter of no consequence in last words, what you wanted was thrill.

The next thing in order was the choice of weapons. My principal said he was not feeling well, and would leave that and the other details of the proposed meeting to me. Therefore I wrote the following note and carried it to M. Fourtou's friend:

Sir: M. Gambetta accepts M. Fourtou's challenge, and authorizes me to propose Plessis–Piquet as the place of meeting; tomorrow morning at daybreak as the time; and axes as the weapons.

I am, sir, with great respect,

Mark Twain.

M. Fourtou's friend read this note, and shuddered. Then he turned to me, and said, with a suggestion of severity in his tone:

"Have you considered, sir, what would be the inevitable result of such a meeting as this?"

"Well, for instance, what WOULD it be?"

"Bloodshed!"

"That's about the size of it," I said. "Now, if it is a fair question, what was your side proposing to shed?"

I had him there. He saw he had made a blunder, so he hastened to explain it away. He said he had spoken jestingly. Then he added that he and his principal would enjoy axes, and indeed prefer them, but such weapons were barred by the French code, and so I must change my proposal.

I walked the floor, turning the thing over in my mind, and finally it occurred to me that Gatling–guns at fifteen paces would be a likely way to get a verdict on the field of honor. So I framed this idea into a proposition.

But it was not accepted. The code was in the way again. I proposed rifles; then double–barreled shotguns; then Colt's navy revolvers. These being all rejected, I reflected awhile, and sarcastically suggested brickbats at three–quarters of a mile. I always hate to fool away a humorous thing on a person who has no perception of humor; and it filled me with bitterness when this man went soberly away to submit the last proposition to his principal.

He came back presently and said his principal was charmed with the idea of brickbats at three–quarters of a mile, but must decline on account of the danger to disinterested parties passing between them. Then I said:

"Well, I am at the end of my string, now. Perhaps YOU would be good enough to suggest a weapon? Perhaps you have even had one in your mind all the time?"

His countenance brightened, and he said with alacrity:

"Oh, without doubt, monsieur!"



So he fell to hunting in his pockets—pocket after pocket, and he had plenty of them—muttering all the while, "Now, what could I have done with them?"

At last he was successful. He fished out of his vest pocket a couple of little things which I carried to the light and ascertained to be pistols. They were single-barreled and silver-mounted, and very dainty and pretty. I was not able to speak for emotion. I silently hung one of them on my watch-chain, and returned the other. My companion in crime now unrolled a postage-stamp containing several cartridges, and gave me one of them. I asked if he meant to signify by this that our men were to be allowed but one shot apiece. He replied that the French code permitted no more. I then begged him to go and suggest a distance, for my mind was growing weak and confused under the strain which had been put upon it. He named sixty-five yards. I nearly lost my patience. I said:

"Sixty-five yards, with these instruments? Squirt-guns would be deadlier at fifty. Consider, my friend, you and I are banded together to destroy life, not make it eternal."

But with all my persuasions, all my arguments, I was only able to get him to reduce the distance to thirty-five yards; and even this concession he made with reluctance, and said with a sigh, "I wash my hands of this slaughter; on your head be it."

There was nothing for me but to go home to my old lion-heart and tell my humiliating story. When I entered, M. Gambetta was laying his last lock of hair upon the altar. He sprang toward me, exclaiming:

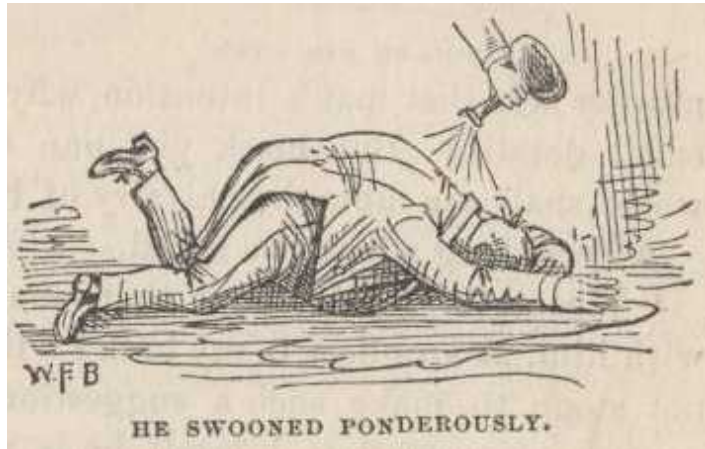
"You have made the fatal arrangements—I see it in your eye!"

"I have."

His face paled a trifle, and he leaned upon the table for support. He breathed thick and heavily for a moment or two, so tumultuous were his feelings; then he hoarsely whispered:

"The weapon, the weapon! Quick! what is the weapon?"

"This!" and I displayed that silver-mounted thing. He cast but one glance at it, then swooned ponderously to the floor.



When he came to, he said mournfully:

"The unnatural calm to which I have subjected myself has told upon my nerves. But away with weakness! I will confront my fate like a man and a Frenchman."

He rose to his feet, and assumed an attitude which for sublimity has never been approached by man, and has seldom been surpassed by statues. Then he said, in his deep bass tones:

"Behold, I am calm, I am ready; reveal to me the distance."

"Thirty-five yards." ...



I could not lift him up, of course; but I rolled him over, and poured water down his back. He presently came to, and said:

"Thirty-five yards—without a rest? But why ask? Since murder was that man's intention, why should he palter with small details? But mark you one thing: in my fall the world shall see how the chivalry of France meets death."

After a long silence he asked:

"Was nothing said about that man's family standing up with him, as an offset to my bulk? But no matter; I would not stoop to make such a suggestion; if he is not noble enough to suggest it himself, he is welcome to this advantage, which no honorable man would take."

He now sank into a sort of stupor of reflection, which lasted some minutes; after which he broke silence with:

"The hour—what is the hour fixed for the collision?"

"Dawn, tomorrow."

He seemed greatly surprised, and immediately said:

"Insanity! I never heard of such a thing. Nobody is abroad at such an hour."

"That is the reason I named it. Do you mean to say you want an audience?"

"It is no time to bandy words. I am astonished that M. Fourtou should ever have agreed to so strange an innovation. Go at once and require a later hour."

I ran downstairs, threw open the front door, and almost plunged into the arms of M. Fourtou's second. He said:

"I have the honor to say that my principal strenuously objects to the hour chosen, and begs you will consent to change it to half past nine."

"Any courtesy, sir, which it is in our power to extend is at the service of your excellent principal. We agree to the proposed change of time."

"I beg you to accept the thanks of my client." Then he turned to a person behind him, and said, "You hear, M. Noir, the hour is altered to half past nine." Whereupon M. Noir bowed, expressed his thanks, and went away. My accomplice continued:

"If agreeable to you, your chief surgeons and ours shall proceed to the field in the same carriage as is customary."

"It is entirely agreeable to me, and I am obliged to you for mentioning the surgeons, for I am afraid I should not have thought of them. How many shall I want? I supposed two or three will be enough?"

"Two is the customary number for each party. I refer to 'chief' surgeons; but considering the exalted positions occupied by our clients, it will be well and decorous that each of us appoint several consulting surgeons, from among the highest in the profession. These will come in their own private carriages. Have you engaged a hearse?"



"Bless my stupidity, I never thought of it! I will attend to it right away. I must seem very ignorant to you; but you must try to overlook that, because I have never had any experience of such a swell duel as this before. I have had a good deal to do with duels on the Pacific coast, but I see now that they were crude affairs. A hearse—sho! we used to leave the elected lying around loose, and let anybody cord them up and cart them off that wanted to. Have you anything further to suggest?"

"Nothing, except that the head undertakers shall ride together, as is usual. The subordinates and mutes will go on foot, as is also usual. I will see you at eight o'clock in the morning, and we will then arrange the order of the procession. I have the honor to bid you a good day."

I returned to my client, who said, "Very well; at what hour is the engagement to begin?"

"Half past nine."

"Very good indeed.; Have you sent the fact to the newspapers?"

"SIR! If after our long and intimate friendship you can for a moment deem me capable of so base a treachery—"

"Tut, tut! What words are these, my dear friend? Have I wounded you? Ah, forgive me; I am overloading you with labor. Therefore go on with the other details, and drop this one from your list. The bloody-minded Fourtou will be sure to attend to it. Or I myself—yes, to make certain, I will drop a note to my journalistic friend, M. Noir—"

"Oh, come to think of it, you may save yourself the trouble; that other second has informed M. Noir."

"H'm! I might have known it. It is just like that Fourtou, who always wants to make a display."



At half past nine in the morning the procession approached the field of Plessis-Piquet in the following order: first came our carriage—nobody in it but M. Gambetta and myself; then a carriage containing M. Fourtou and his second; then a carriage containing two poet-orators who did not believe in God, and these had MS. funeral orations projecting from their breast pockets; then a carriage containing the head surgeons and their cases of instruments; then eight private carriages containing consulting surgeons; then a hack containing a coroner; then the two hearses; then a carriage containing the head undertakers; then a train of assistants and mutes on foot; and after these came plodding through the fog a long procession of camp followers, police, and citizens generally. It was a noble turnout, and would have made a fine display if we had had thinner weather.

There was no conversation. I spoke several times to my principal, but I judge he was not aware of it, for he always referred to his note-book and muttered absently, "I die that France might live."

Arrived on the field, my fellow-second and I paced off the thirty-five yards, and then drew lots for choice of position. This latter was but an ornamental ceremony, for all the choices were alike in such weather. These preliminaries being ended, I went to my principal and asked him if he was ready. He spread himself out to his full width, and said in a stern voice, "Ready! Let the batteries be charged."

The loading process was done in the presence of duly constituted witnesses. We considered it best to perform this delicate service with the assistance of a lantern, on account of the state of the weather. We now placed our men.

At this point the police noticed that the public had massed themselves together on the right and left of the field; they therefore begged a delay, while they should put these poor people in a place of safety.

The request was granted.

The police having ordered the two multitudes to take positions behind the duelists, we were once more ready. The weather growing still more opaque, it was agreed between myself and the other second that before giving the fatal signal we should each deliver a loud whoop to enable the combatants to ascertain each other's whereabouts.

I now returned to my principal, and was distressed to observe that he had lost a good deal of his spirit. I tried my best to hearten him. I said, "Indeed, sir, things are not as bad as they seem. Considering the character of the weapons, the limited number of shots allowed, the generous distance, the impenetrable solidity of the fog, and the added fact that one of the combatants is one-eyed and the other cross-eyed and near-sighted, it seems to me that this conflict need not necessarily be fatal. There are chances that both of you may survive. Therefore, cheer up; do not be downhearted."

This speech had so good an effect that my principal immediately stretched forth his hand and said, "I am myself again; give me the weapon."

I laid it, all lonely and forlorn, in the center of the vast solitude of his palm. He gazed at it and shuddered. And still mournfully contemplating it, he murmured in a broken voice:

"Alas, it is not death I dread, but mutilation."

I heartened him once more, and with such success that he presently said, "Let the tragedy begin. Stand at my back; do not desert me in this solemn hour, my friend."

I gave him my promise. I now assisted him to point his pistol toward the spot where I judged his adversary to be standing, and cautioned him to listen well and further guide himself by my fellow-second's whoop. Then I propped myself against M. Gambetta's back, and raised a rousing "Whoop-ee!" This was answered from out the far distances of the fog, and I immediately shouted:

"One—two—three—FIRE!"

Two little sounds like SPIT! SPIT! broke upon my ear, and in the same instant I was crushed to the earth under a mountain of flesh. Bruised as I was, I was still able to catch a faint accent from above, to this effect:



"I die for... for ... perdition take it, what IS it I die for? ... oh, yes—FRANCE! I die that France may live!"

The surgeons swarmed around with their probes in their hands, and applied their microscopes to the whole area of M. Gambetta's person, with the happy result of finding nothing in the nature of a wound. Then a scene ensued which was in every way gratifying and inspiring.

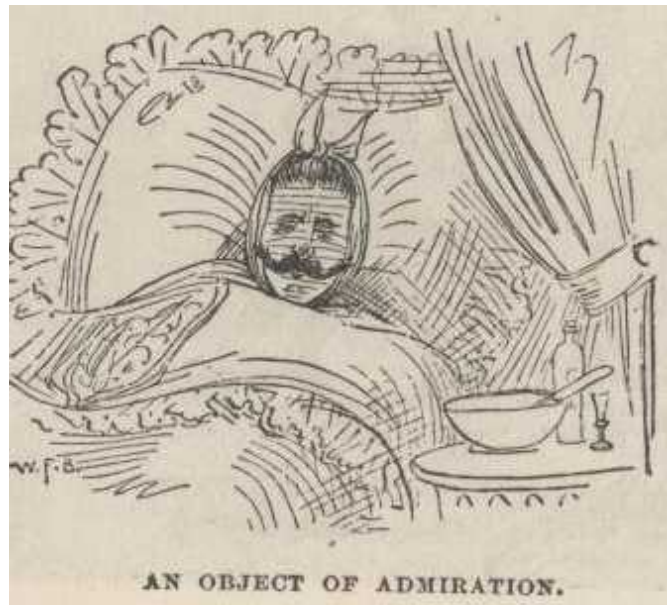
The two gladiators fell upon each other's neck, with floods of proud and happy tears; that other second embraced me; the surgeons, the orators, the undertakers, the police, everybody embraced, everybody congratulated, everybody cried, and the whole atmosphere was filled with praise and with joy unspeakable.

It seems to me then that I would rather be a hero of a French duel than a crowned and sceptered monarch.



When the commotion had somewhat subsided, the body of surgeons held a consultation, and after a good deal of debate decided that with proper care and nursing there was reason to believe that I would survive my injuries. My internal hurts were deemed the most serious, since it was apparent that a broken rib had penetrated my left lung, and that many of my organs had been pressed out so far to one side or the other of where they belonged, that it was doubtful if they would ever learn to perform their functions in such remote and unaccustomed localities. They then set my left arm in two places, pulled my right hip into its socket again, and re-elevated my nose. I was an object of great interest, and even admiration; and many sincere and warm-hearted persons had themselves introduced to me, and said they were proud to know the only man who had been hurt in a French duel in forty years.

I was placed in an ambulance at the very head of the procession; and thus with gratifying 'ECLAT I was marched into Paris, the most conspicuous figure in that great spectacle, and deposited at the hospital.



The cross of the Legion of Honor has been conferred upon me. However, few escape that distinction. Such is the true version of the most memorable private conflict of the age.

I have no complaints to make against any one. I acted for myself, and I can stand the consequences.

Without boasting, I think I may say I am not afraid to stand before a modern French duelist, but as long as I keep in my right mind I will never consent to stand behind one again.

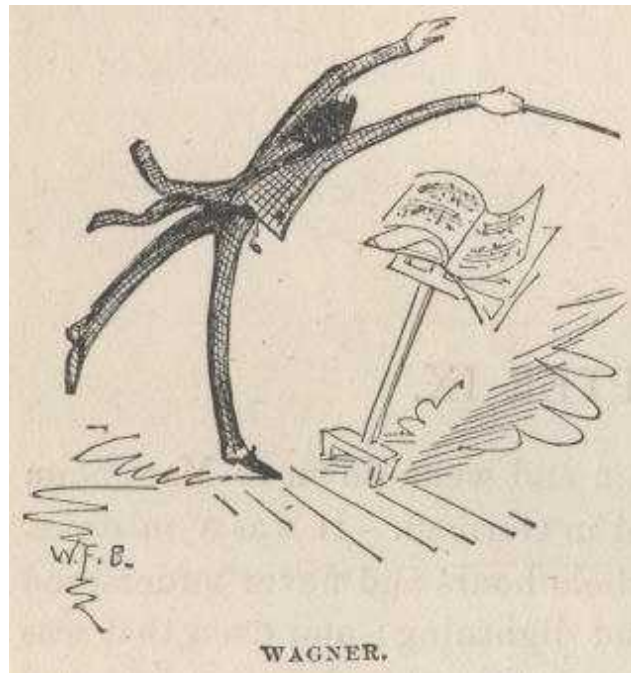
CHAPTER IX

[What the Beautiful Maiden Said]

One day we took the train and went down to Mannheim to see "King Lear" played in German. It was a mistake. We sat in our seats three whole hours and never understood anything but the thunder and lightning; and even that was reversed to suit German ideas, for the thunder came first and the lightning followed after.

The behavior of the audience was perfect. There were no rustlings, or whisperings, or other little disturbances; each act was listened to in silence, and the applauding was done after the curtain was down. The doors opened at half past four, the play began promptly at half past five, and within two minutes afterward all who were coming were in their seats, and quiet reigned. A German gentleman in the train had said that a Shakespearian play was an appreciated treat in Germany and that we should find the house filled. It was true; all the six tiers were filled, and remained so to the end—which suggested that it is not only balcony people who like Shakespeare in Germany, but those of the pit and gallery, too.

Another time, we went to Mannheim and attended a shivaree—otherwise an opera—the one called "Lohengrin." The banging and slamming and booming and crashing were something beyond belief. The racking and pitiless pain of it remains stored up in my memory alongside the memory of the time that I had my teeth fixed.



A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2

There were circumstances which made it necessary for me to stay through the hour hours to the end, and I stayed; but the recollection of that long, dragging, relentless season of suffering is indestructible. To have to endure it in silence, and sitting still, made it all the harder. I was in a railed compartment with eight or ten strangers, of the two sexes, and this compelled repression; yet at times the pain was so exquisite that I could hardly keep the tears back.



At those times, as the howlings and wailings and shrieking of the singers, and the ragings and roarings and explosions of the vast orchestra rose higher and higher, and wilder and wilder, and fiercer and fiercer, I could have cried if I had been alone. Those strangers would not have been surprised to see a man do such a thing who was being gradually skinned, but they would have marveled at it here, and made remarks about it no doubt, whereas there was nothing in the present case which was an advantage over being skinned.



There was a wait of half an hour at the end of the first act, and I could not trust myself to do it, for I felt that I should desert to stay out. There was another wait of half an hour toward nine o'clock, but I had gone through so much by that time that I had no spirit left, and so had no desire but to be let alone.



I do not wish to suggest that the rest of the people there were like me, for, indeed, they were not. Whether it was that they naturally liked that noise, or whether it was that they had learned to like it by getting used to it, I did not at the time know; but they did like—this was plain enough. While it was going on they sat and looked as rapt and grateful as cats do when one strokes their backs; and whenever the curtain fell they rose to their feet, in one solid mighty multitude, and the air was snowed thick with waving handkerchiefs, and hurricanes of applause swept the place. This was not comprehensible to me. Of course, there were many people there who were not under compulsion to stay; yet the tiers were as full at the close as they had been at the beginning. This showed that the people liked it.

It was a curious sort of a play. In the manner of costumes and scenery it was fine and showy enough; but there was not much action. That is to say, there was not much really done, it was only talked about; and always violently. It was what one might call a narrative play. Everybody had a narrative and a grievance, and none were reasonable about it, but all in an offensive and ungovernable state. There was little of that sort of customary thing where the tenor and the soprano stand down by the footlights, warbling, with blended voices, and keep holding out their arms toward each other and drawing them back and spreading both hands over first one breast and then the other with a shake and a pressure—no, it was every rioter for himself and no blending. Each sang his indictive narrative in turn, accompanied by the whole orchestra of sixty instruments, and when this had continued for some time, and one was hoping they might come to an understanding and modify the noise, a great chorus composed entirely of maniacs would suddenly break forth, and then during two minutes, and sometimes three, I lived over again all that I suffered the time the orphan asylum burned down.



We only had one brief little season of heaven and heaven's sweet ecstasy and peace during all this long and diligent and acrimonious reproduction of the other place. This was while a gorgeous procession of people marched around and around, in the third act, and sang the Wedding Chorus. To my untutored ear that was music—almost divine music. While my seared soul was steeped in the healing balm of those gracious sounds, it seemed to me that I could almost resuffer the torments which had gone before, in order to be so healed again. There is where the deep ingenuity of the operatic idea is betrayed. It deals so largely in pain that its scattered delights are prodigiously augmented by the contrasts. A pretty air in an opera is prettier there than it could be anywhere else, I suppose, just as an honest man in politics shines more than he would elsewhere.

I have since found out that there is nothing the Germans like so much as an opera. They like it, not in a mild and moderate way, but with their whole hearts. This is a legitimate result of habit and education. Our nation will like the opera, too, by and by, no doubt. One in fifty of those who attend our operas likes it already, perhaps, but I think a good many of the other forty-nine go in order to learn to like it, and the rest in order to be able to talk knowingly about it. The latter usually hum the airs while they are being sung, so that their neighbors may perceive that they have been to operas before. The funerals of these do not occur often enough.



A gentle, old-maidish person and a sweet young girl of seventeen sat right in front of us that night at the Mannheim opera. These people talked, between the acts, and I understood them, though I understood nothing that was uttered on the distant stage. At first they were guarded in their talk, but after they had heard my agent and me conversing in English they dropped their reserve and I picked up many of their little confidences; no, I mean many of HER little confidences—meaning the elder party—for the young girl only listened, and gave assenting nods, but never said a word. How pretty she was, and how sweet she was! I wished she would speak. But evidently she was absorbed in her own thoughts, her own young-girl dreams, and found a dearer pleasure in silence. But she was not dreaming sleepy dreams—no, she was awake, alive, alert, she could not sit still a moment. She was an enchanting study. Her gown was of a soft white silky stuff that clung to her round young figure like a fish's skin, and it was rippled over with the gracefulest little fringy films of lace; she had deep, tender eyes, with long, curved lashes; and she had peachy cheeks, and a dimpled chin, and such a dear little rosebud of a mouth; and she was so dovelike, so pure, and so gracious, so sweet and so bewitching. For long hours I did mightily wish she would speak. And at last she did; the red lips parted, and out leaps her thought—and with such a guileless and pretty enthusiasm, too: "Auntie, I just KNOW I've got five hundred fleas on me!"

That was probably over the average. Yes, it must have been very much over the average. The average at that time in the Grand Duchy of Baden was forty-five to a young person (when alone), according to the official estimate of the home secretary for that year; the average for older people was shifty and indeterminable, for whenever a wholesome young girl came into the presence of her elders she immediately lowered their average and raised her own. She became a sort of contribution-box.



This dear young thing in the theater had been sitting there unconsciously taking up a collection. Many a skinny old being in our neighborhood was the happier and the restfuler for her coming.

In that large audience, that night, there were eight very conspicuous people. These were ladies who had their hats or bonnets on. What a blessed thing it would be if a lady could make herself conspicuous in our theaters by wearing her hat.



It is not usual in Europe to allow ladies and gentlemen to take bonnets, hats, overcoats, canes, or umbrellas into the auditorium, but in Mannheim this rule was not enforced because the audiences were largely made up of people from a distance, and among these were always a few timid ladies who were afraid that if they had to go into an anteroom to get their things when the play was over, they would miss their train. But the great mass of those who came from a distance always ran the risk and took the chances, preferring the loss of a train to a breach of good manners and the discomfort of being unpleasantly conspicuous during a stretch of three or four hours.



CHAPTER X

[How Wagner Operas Bang Along]

Three or four hours. That is a long time to sit in one place, whether one be conspicuous or not, yet some of Wagner's operas bang along for six whole hours on a stretch! But the people sit there and enjoy it all, and wish it would last longer. A German lady in Munich told me that a person could not like Wagner's music at first, but must go through the deliberate process of learning to like it—then he would have his sure reward; for when he had learned to like it he would hunger for it and never be able to get enough of it. She said that six hours of Wagner was by no means too much. She said that this composer had made a complete revolution in music and was burying the old masters one by one. And she said that Wagner's operas differed from all others in one notable respect, and that was that they were not merely spotted with music here and there, but were ALL music, from the first strain to the last. This surprised me. I said I had attended one of his insurrections, and found hardly ANY music in it except the Wedding Chorus. She said "Lohengrin" was noisier than Wagner's other operas, but that if I would keep on going to see it I would find by and by that it was all music, and therefore would then enjoy it. I COULD have said, "But would you advise a person to deliberately practice having a toothache in the pit of his stomach for a couple of years in order that he might then come to enjoy it?" But I reserved that remark.

This lady was full of the praises of the head-tenor who had performed in a Wagner opera the night before, and went on to enlarge upon his old and prodigious fame, and how many honors had been lavished upon him by the princely houses of Germany. Here was another surprise. I had attended that very opera, in the person of my agent, and had made close and accurate observations. So I said:

"Why, madam, MY experience warrants me in stating that that tenor's voice is not a voice at all, but only a shriek—the shriek of a hyena."



"That is very true," she said; "he cannot sing now; it is already many years that he has lost his voice, but in other times he sang, yes, divinely! So whenever he comes now, you shall see, yes, that the theater will not hold the people. JAWOHL BEI GOTT! his voice is WUNDERSCHOEN in that past time."

I said she was discovering to me a kindly trait in the Germans which was worth emulating. I said that over the water we were not quite so generous; that with us, when a singer had lost his voice and a jumper had lost his legs, these parties ceased to draw. I said I had been to the opera in Hanover, once, and in Mannheim once, and in Munich (through my authorized agent) once, and this large experience had nearly persuaded me that the Germans PREFERRED singers who couldn't sing. This was not such a very extravagant speech, either, for that burly Mannheim tenor's praises had been the talk of all Heidelberg for a week before his performance took place—yet his voice was like the distressing noise which a nail makes when you screech it across a window-pane. I said so to Heidelberg friends the next day, and they said, in the calmest and simplest way, that that was very true, but that in earlier times his voice HAD been wonderfully fine. And the tenor in Hanover was just another example of this sort. The English-speaking German gentleman who went with me to the opera there was brimming with enthusiasm over that tenor. He said:

"ACH GOTT! a great man! You shall see him. He is so celebrate in all Germany—and he has a pension, yes, from the government. He not obliged to sing now, only twice every year; but if he not sing twice each year they take him his pension away."

Very well, we went. When the renowned old tenor appeared, I got a nudge and an excited whisper:

"Now you see him!"

But the "celebrate" was an astonishing disappointment to me. If he had been behind a screen I should have supposed they were performing a surgical operation on him. I looked at my friend—to my great surprise he seemed intoxicated with pleasure, his eyes were dancing with eager delight. When the curtain at last fell, he burst into the stormiest applause, and kept it up—as did the whole house—until the afflictive tenor had come three times before the curtain to make his bow. While the glowing enthusiast was swabbing the perspiration from his face, I said:

"I don't mean the least harm, but really, now, do you think he can sing?"

"Him? NO! GOTT IM HIMMEL, ABER, how he has been able to sing twenty-five years ago?" [Then pensively.] "ACH, no, NOW he not sing any more, he only cry. When he think he sing, now, he not sing at all, no, he only make like a cat which is unwell."



Where and how did we get the idea that the Germans are a stolid, phlegmatic race? In truth, they are widely removed from that. They are warm-hearted, emotional, impulsive, enthusiastic, their tears come at the mildest touch, and it is not hard to move them to laughter. They are the very children of impulse. We are cold and self-contained, compared to the Germans. They hug and kiss and cry and shout and dance and sing; and where we use one loving, petting expressions they pour out a score. Their language is full of endearing diminutives; nothing that they love escapes the application of a petting diminutive—neither the house, nor the dog, nor the horse, nor the grandmother, nor any other creature, animate or inanimate.

In the theaters at Hanover, Hamburg, and Mannheim, they had a wise custom. The moment the curtain went up, the light in the body of the house went down. The audience sat in the cool gloom of a deep twilight, which greatly enhanced the glowing splendors of the stage. It saved gas, too, and people were not sweated to death.

When I saw "King Lear" played, nobody was allowed to see a scene shifted; if there was nothing to be done but slide a forest out of the way and expose a temple beyond, one did not see that forest split itself in the middle and go shrieking away, with the accompanying disenchanting spectacle of the hands and heels of the impelling impulse—no, the curtain was always dropped for an instant—one heard not the least movement behind it—but when it went up, the next instant, the forest was gone. Even when the stage was being entirely reset, one heard no noise. During the whole time that "King Lear" was playing the curtain was never down two minutes at any one time. The orchestra played until the curtain was ready to go up for the first time, then they departed for the evening. Where the stage waits never each two minutes there is no occasion for music. I had never seen this two-minute business between acts but once before, and that was when the "Shaughraun" was played at Wallack's.

I was at a concert in Munich one night, the people were streaming in, the clock-hand pointed to seven, the music struck up, and instantly all movement in the body of the house ceased—nobody was standing, or walking up the aisles, or fumbling with a seat, the stream of incomers had suddenly dried up at its source. I listened undisturbed to a piece of music that was fifteen minutes long—always expecting some tardy ticket-holders to come crowding past my knees, and being continuously and pleasantly disappointed—but when the last note was struck, here came the stream again. You see, they had made those late comers wait in the comfortable waiting-parlor from the time the music had begin until it was ended.



It was the first time I had ever seen this sort of criminals denied the privilege of destroying the comfort of a house full of their betters. Some of these were pretty fine birds, but no matter, they had to tarry outside in the long parlor under the inspection of a double rank of liveried footmen and waiting-maids who supported the two walls with their backs and held the wraps and traps of their masters and mistresses on their arms.

We had no footmen to hold our things, and it was not permissible to take them into the concert-room; but there were some men and women to take charge of them for us. They gave us checks for them and charged a fixed price, payable in advance—five cents.

In Germany they always hear one thing at an opera which has never yet been heard in America, perhaps—I mean the closing strain of a fine solo or duet. We always smash into it with an earthquake of applause. The result is that we rob ourselves of the sweetest part of the treat; we get the whiskey, but we don't get the sugar in the bottom of the glass.

Our way of scattering applause along through an act seems to me to be better than the Mannheim way of saving it all up till the act is ended. I do not see how an actor can forget himself and portray hot passion before a cold still audience. I should think he would feel foolish. It is a pain to me to this day, to remember how that old German Lear raged and wept and howled around the stage, with never a response from that hushed house, never a single outburst till the act was ended. To me there was something unspeakably uncomfortable in the solemn dead silences that always followed this old person's tremendous outpourings of his feelings. I could not help putting myself in his place—I thought I knew how sick and flat he felt during those silences, because I remembered a case which came under my observation once, and which—but I will tell the incident:

One evening on board a Mississippi steamboat, a boy of ten years lay asleep in a berth—a long, slim-legged boy, he was, encased in quite a short shirt; it was the first time he had ever made a trip on a steamboat, and so he was troubled, and scared, and had gone to bed with his head filled with impending snaggings, and explosions, and

conflagrations, and sudden death. About ten o'clock some twenty ladies were sitting around about the ladies' saloon, quietly reading, sewing, embroidering, and so on, and among them sat a sweet, benignant old dame with round spectacles on her nose and her busy knitting—needles in her hands. Now all of a sudden, into the midst of this peaceful scene burst that slim—shanked boy in the brief shirt, wild—eyed, erect—haired, and shouting, "Fire, fire! JUMP AND RUN, THE BOAT'S AFIRE AND THERE AIN'T A MINUTE TO LOSE!" All those ladies looked sweetly up and smiled, nobody stirred, the old lady pulled her spectacles down, looked over them, and said, gently:

"But you mustn't catch cold, child. Run and put on your breastpin, and then come and tell us all about it."

It was a cruel chill to give to a poor little devil's gushing vehemence. He was expecting to be a sort of hero—the creator of a wild panic—and here everybody sat and smiled a mocking smile, and an old woman made fun of his bugbear. I turned and crept away—for I was that boy—and never even cared to discover whether I had dreamed the fire or actually seen it.



I am told that in a German concert or opera, they hardly ever encore a song; that though they may be dying to hear it again, their good breeding usually preserves them against requiring the repetition.

Kings may encore; that is quite another matter; it delights everybody to see that the King is pleased; and as to the actor encored, his pride and gratification are simply boundless. Still, there are circumstances in which even a royal encore—

But it is better to illustrate. The King of Bavaria is a poet, and has a poet's eccentricities—with the advantage over all other poets of being able to gratify them, no matter what form they may take. He is fond of opera, but not fond of sitting in the presence of an audience; therefore, it has sometimes occurred, in Munich, that when an opera

A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2

has been concluded and the players were getting off their paint and finery, a command has come to them to get their paint and finery on again. Presently the King would arrive, solitary and alone, and the players would begin at the beginning and do the entire opera over again with only that one individual in the vast solemn theater for audience. Once he took an odd freak into his head. High up and out of sight, over the prodigious stage of the court theater is a maze of interlacing water-pipes, so pierced that in case of fire, innumerable little thread-like streams of water can be caused to descend; and in case of need, this discharge can be augmented to a pouring flood. American managers might want to make a note of that. The King was sole audience. The opera proceeded, it was a piece with a storm in it; the mimic thunder began to mutter, the mimic wind began to wail and sigh, and the mimic rain to patter. The King's interest rose higher and higher; it developed into enthusiasm. He cried out:

"It is very, very good, indeed! But I will have real rain! Turn on the water!"

The manager pleaded for a reversal of the command; said it would ruin the costly scenery and the splendid costumes, but the King cried:

"No matter, no matter, I will have real rain! Turn on the water!"

So the real rain was turned on and began to descend in gossamer lances to the mimic flower-beds and gravel walks of the stage. The richly dressed actresses and actors tripped about singing bravely and pretending not to mind it. The King was delighted—his enthusiasm grew higher. He cried out:

"Bravo, bravo! More thunder! more lightning! turn on more rain!"



The thunder boomed, the lightning glared, the storm-winds raged, the deluge poured down. The mimic royalty

A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2

on the stage, with their soaked satins clinging to their bodies, slopped about ankle-deep in water, warbling their sweetest and best, the fiddlers under the eaves of the state sawed away for dear life, with the cold overflow spouting down the backs of their necks, and the dry and happy King sat in his lofty box and wore his gloves to ribbons applauding.

"More yet!" cried the King; "more yet—let loose all the thunder, turn on all the water! I will hang the man that raises an umbrella!"

When this most tremendous and effective storm that had ever been produced in any theater was at last over, the King's approbation was measureless. He cried:

"Magnificent, magnificent! ENCORE! Do it again!"

But the manager succeeded in persuading him to recall the encore, and said the company would feel sufficiently rewarded and complimented in the mere fact that the encore was desired by his Majesty, without fatiguing him with a repetition to gratify their own vanity.

During the remainder of the act the lucky performers were those whose parts required changes of dress; the others were a soaked, bedraggled, and uncomfortable lot, but in the last degree picturesque. The stage scenery was ruined, trap-doors were so swollen that they wouldn't work for a week afterward, the fine costumes were spoiled, and no end of minor damages were done by that remarkable storm.

It was royal idea—that storm—and royally carried out. But observe the moderation of the King; he did not insist upon his encore. If he had been a gladsome, unreflecting American opera-audience, he probably would have had his storm repeated and repeated until he drowned all those people.



CHAPTER XI

[I Paint a "Turner"]

The summer days passed pleasantly in Heidelberg. We had a skilled trainer, and under his instructions we were getting our legs in the right condition for the contemplated pedestrian tours; we were well satisfied with the progress which we had made in the German language, [1. See Appendix D for information concerning this fearful tongue.] and more than satisfied with what we had accomplished in art. We had had the best instructors in drawing and painting in Germany—Haemmerling, Vogel, Mueller, Dietz, and Schumann. Haemmerling taught us landscape-painting. Vogel taught us figure-drawing, Mueller taught us to do still-life, and Dietz and Schumann gave us a finishing course in two specialties—battle-pieces and shipwrecks. Whatever I am in Art I owe to these men. I have something of the manner of each and all of them; but they all said that I had also a manner of my own, and that it was conspicuous. They said there was a marked individuality about my style—insomuch that if I ever painted the commonest type of a dog, I should be sure to throw a something into the aspect of that dog which would keep him from being mistaken for the creation of any other artist. Secretly I wanted to believe all these kind sayings, but I could not; I was afraid that my masters' partiality for me, and pride in me, biased their judgment. So I resolved to make a test. Privately, and unknown to any one, I painted my great picture, "Heidelberg Castle Illuminated"—my first really important work in oils—and had it hung up in the midst of a wilderness of oil-pictures in the Art Exhibition, with no name attached to it. To my great gratification it was instantly recognized as mine. All the town flocked to see it, and people even came from neighboring localities to visit it. It made more stir than any other work in the Exhibition. But the most gratifying thing of all was, that chance strangers, passing through, who had not heard of my picture, were not only drawn to it, as by a lodestone, the moment they entered the gallery, but always took it for a "Turner."



Apparently nobody had ever done that. There were ruined castles on the overhanging cliffs and crags all the way; these were said to have their legends, like those on the Rhine, and what was better still, they had never been in print. There was nothing in the books about that lovely region; it had been neglected by the tourist, it was virgin soil for the literary pioneer.

Meantime the knapsacks, the rough walking-suits and the stout walking-shoes which we had ordered, were finished and brought to us. A Mr. X and a young Mr. Z had agreed to go with us. We went around one evening and bade good-bye to our friends, and afterward had a little farewell banquet at the hotel. We got to bed early, for we wanted to make an early start, so as to take advantage of the cool of the morning.

We were out of bed at break of day, feeling fresh and vigorous, and took a hearty breakfast, then plunged down through the leafy arcades of the Castle grounds, toward the town. What a glorious summer morning it was, and how the flowers did pour out their fragrance, and how the birds did sing! It was just the time for a tramp

through the woods and mountains.



We were all dressed alike: broad slouch hats, to keep the sun off; gray knapsacks; blue army shirts; blue overalls; leathern gaiters buttoned tight from knee down to ankle; high-quarter coarse shoes snugly laced. Each man had an opera-glass, a canteen, and a guide-book case slung over his shoulder, and carried an alpenstock in one hand and a sun-umbrella in the other. Around our hats were wound many folds of soft white muslin, with the ends hanging and flapping down our backs—an idea brought from the Orient and used by tourists all over Europe. Harris carried the little watch-like machine called a "pedometer," whose office is to keep count of a man's steps and tell how far he has walked. Everybody stopped to admire our costumes and give us a hearty "Pleasant march to you!"



When we got downtown I found that we could go by rail to within five miles of Heilbronn. The train was just starting, so we jumped aboard and went tearing away in splendid spirits. It was agreed all around that we had done wisely, because it would be just as enjoyable to walk DOWN the Neckar as up it, and it could not be needful to walk both ways. There were some nice German people in our compartment. I got to talking some pretty private matters presently, and Harris became nervous; so he nudged me and said:

"Speak in German—these Germans may understand English."

I did so, it was well I did; for it turned out that there was not a German in that party who did not understand English perfectly. It is curious how widespread our language is in Germany. After a while some of those folks got out and a German gentleman and his two young daughters got in. I spoke in German of one of the latter several times, but without result. Finally she said:

"ICH VERSTEHE NUR DEUTCH UND ENGLISHE,"—or words to that effect. That is, "I don't understand any language but German and English."

And sure enough, not only she but her father and sister spoke English. So after that we had all the talk we wanted; and we wanted a good deal, for they were agreeable people. They were greatly interested in our customs; especially the alpenstocks, for they had not seen any before. They said that the Neckar road was perfectly level, so we must be going to Switzerland or some other rugged country; and asked us if we did not find the walking pretty fatiguing in such warm weather. But we said no.

A Tramp Abroad, Illustrated, v2

We reached Wimpfen—I think it was Wimpfen—in about three hours, and got out, not the least tired; found a good hotel and ordered beer and dinner—then took a stroll through the venerable old village. It was very picturesque and tumble-down, and dirty and interesting. It had queer houses five hundred years old in it, and a military tower 115 feet high, which had stood there more than ten centuries. I made a little sketch of it. I kept a copy, but gave the original to the Burgomaster.

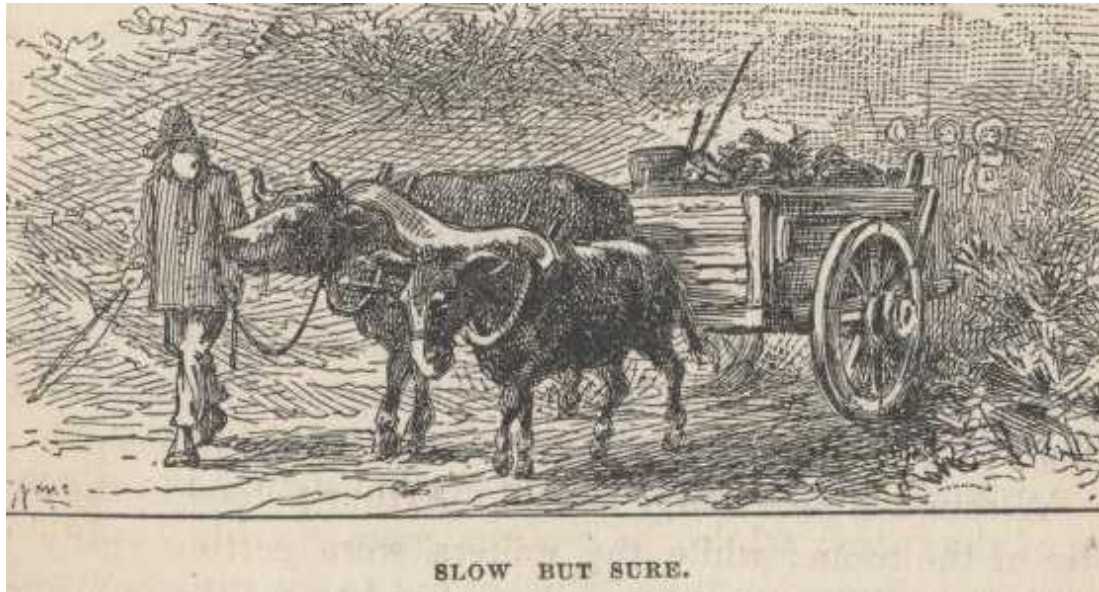


I think the original was better than the copy, because it had more windows in it and the grass stood up better and had a brisker look. There was none around the tower, though; I composed the grass myself, from studies I made in a field by Heidelberg in Haemmerling's time. The man on top, looking at the view, is apparently too large, but I found he could not be made smaller, conveniently. I wanted him there, and I wanted him visible, so I thought out a way to manage it; I composed the picture from two points of view; the spectator is to observe the man from about where that flag is, and he must observe the tower itself from the ground. This harmonizes the seeming discrepancy. [Figure 2]

Near an old cathedral, under a shed, were three crosses of stone—moldy and damaged things, bearing life-size stone figures. The two thieves were dressed in the fanciful court costumes of the middle of the sixteenth century, while the Saviour was nude, with the exception of a cloth around the loins.

We had dinner under the green trees in a garden belonging to the hotel and overlooking the Neckar; then, after a smoke, we went to bed. We had a refreshing nap, then got up about three in the afternoon and put on our

panoply. As we tramped gaily out at the gate of the town, we overtook a peasant's cart, partly laden with odds and ends of cabbages and similar vegetable rubbish, and drawn by a small cow and a smaller donkey yoked together. It was a pretty slow concern, but it got us into Heilbronn before dark—five miles, or possibly it was seven.



We stopped at the very same inn which the famous old robber-knight and rough fighter Goetz von Berlichingen, abode in after he got out of captivity in the Square Tower of Heilbronn between three hundred and fifty and four hundred years ago. Harris and I occupied the same room which he had occupied and the same paper had not quite peeled off the walls yet. The furniture was quaint old carved stuff, full four hundred years old, and some of the smells were over a thousand. There was a hook in the wall, which the landlord said the terrific old Goetz used to hang his iron hand on when he took it off to go to bed. This room was very large—it might be called immense—and it was on the first floor; which means it was in the second story, for in Europe the houses are so high that they do not count the first story, else they would get tired climbing before they got to the top. The wallpaper was a fiery red, with huge gold figures in it, well smirched by time, and it covered all the doors. These doors fitted so snugly and continued the figures of the paper so unbrokenly, that when they were closed one had to go feeling and searching along the wall to find them. There was a stove in the corner—one of those tall, square, stately white porcelain things that looks like a monument and keeps you thinking of death when you ought to be enjoying your travels. The windows looked out on a little alley, and over that into a stable and some poultry and pig yards in the rear of some tenement-houses. There were the customary two beds in the room, one in one end, the other in the other, about an old-fashioned brass-mounted, single-barreled pistol-shot apart. They were fully as narrow as the usual German bed, too, and had the German bed's ineradicable habit of spilling the blankets on the floor every time you forgot yourself and went to sleep.

A round table as large as King Arthur's stood in the center of the room; while the waiters were getting ready to serve our dinner on it we all went out to see the renowned clock on the front of the municipal buildings.

CHAPTER XII

[What the Wives Saved]

The RATHHAUS, or municipal building, is of the quaintest and most picturesque Middle–Age architecture. It has a massive portico and steps, before it, heavily balustraded, and adorned with life–sized rusty iron knights in complete armor. The clock–face on the front of the building is very large and of curious pattern. Ordinarily, a gilded angel strikes the hour on a big bell with a hammer; as the striking ceases, a life–sized figure of Time raises its hour–glass and turns it; two golden rams advance and butt each other; a gilded cock lifts its wings; but the main features are two great angels, who stand on each side of the dial with long horns at their lips; it was said that they blew melodious blasts on these horns every hour—but they did not do it for us. We were told, later, than they blew only at night, when the town was still.

Within the RATHHAUS were a number of huge wild boars' heads, preserved, and mounted on brackets along the wall; they bore inscriptions telling who killed them and how many hundred years ago it was done. One room in the building was devoted to the preservation of ancient archives. There they showed us no end of aged documents; some were signed by Popes, some by Tilly and other great generals, and one was a letter written and subscribed by Goetz von Berlichingen in Heilbronn in 1519 just after his release from the Square Tower.



This fine old robber–knight was a devoutly and sincerely religious man, hospitable, charitable to the poor, fearless in fight, active, enterprising, and possessed of a large and generous nature. He had in him a quality of being able to overlook moderate injuries, and being able to forgive and forget mortal ones as soon as he had soundly trounced the authors of them. He was prompt to take up any poor devil's quarrel and risk his neck to right him. The common folk held him dear, and his memory is still green in ballad and tradition. He used to go on the highway and rob rich wayfarers; and other times he would swoop down from his high castle on the hills of the Neckar and capture passing cargoes of merchandise. In his memoirs he piously thanks the Giver of all Good for remembering him in his needs and delivering sundry such cargoes into his hands at times when only special providences could have relieved him. He was a doughty warrior and found a deep joy in battle. In an assault upon a stronghold in Bavaria when he was only twenty–three years old, his right hand was shot away, but he was so interested in the fight that he did not observe it for a while. He said that the iron hand which was made for him afterward, and which he wore for more than half a century, was nearly as clever a member as the fleshy one had been. I was glad to get a facsimile of the letter written by this fine old German Robin Hood, though I was not able to read it. He was a better artist with his sword than with his pen.

We went down by the river and saw the Square Tower. It was a very venerable structure, very strong, and very ornamental. There was no opening near the ground. They had to use a ladder to get into it, no doubt.

We visited the principal church, also—a curious old structure, with a towerlike spire adorned with all sorts of grotesque images. The inner walls of the church were placarded with large mural tablets of copper, bearing engraved inscriptions celebrating the merits of old Heilbronn worthies of two or three centuries ago, and also bearing rudely painted effigies of themselves and their families tricked out in the queer costumes of those days. The head of the family sat in the foreground, and beyond him extended a sharply receding and diminishing row of sons; facing him sat his wife, and beyond her extended a low row of diminishing daughters. The family was usually large, but the perspective bad.

Then we hired the hack and the horse which Goetz von Berlichingen used to use, and drove several miles into the country to visit the place called WEIBERTREU—Wife's Fidelity I suppose it means. It was a feudal castle of the Middle Ages. When we reached its neighborhood we found it was beautifully situated, but on top of a mound, or hill, round and tolerably steep, and about two hundred feet high. Therefore, as the sun was blazing hot, we did not climb up there, but took the place on trust, and observed it from a distance while the horse leaned up against a fence and rested. The place has no interest except that which is lent it by its legend, which is a very pretty one—to this effect:

THE LEGEND

In the Middle Ages, a couple of young dukes, brothers, took opposite sides in one of the wars, the one fighting for the Emperor, the other against him. One of them owned the castle and village on top of the mound which I have been speaking of, and in his absence his brother came with his knights and soldiers and began a siege. It was a long and tedious business, for the people made a stubborn and faithful defense. But at last their supplies ran out and starvation began its work; more fell by hunger than by the missiles of the enemy. They by and by surrendered, and begged for charitable terms. But the beleaguering prince was so incensed against them for their long resistance that he said he would spare none but the women and children—all men should be put to the sword without exception, and all their goods destroyed. Then the women came and fell on their knees and begged for the lives of their husbands.

"No," said the prince, "not a man of them shall escape alive; you yourselves shall go with your children into houseless and friendless banishment; but that you may not starve I grant you this one grace, that each woman may bear with her from this place as much of her most valuable property as she is able to carry."

Very well, presently the gates swung open and out filed those women carrying their HUSBANDS on their shoulders. The besiegers, furious at the trick, rushed forward to slaughter the men, but the Duke stepped between

and said:

"No, put up your swords—a prince's word is inviolable."

When we got back to the hotel, King Arthur's Round Table was ready for us in its white drapery, and the head waiter and his first assistant, in swallow-tails and white cravats, brought in the soup and the hot plates at once.

Mr. X had ordered the dinner, and when the wine came on, he picked up a bottle, glanced at the label, and then turned to the grave, the melancholy, the sepulchral head waiter and said it was not the sort of wine he had asked for. The head waiter picked up the bottle, cast his undertaker-eye on it and said:

"It is true; I beg pardon." Then he turned on his subordinate and calmly said, "Bring another label."



At the same time he slid the present label off with his hand and laid it aside; it had been newly put on, its paste was still wet. When the new label came, he put it on; our French wine being now turned into German wine, according to desire, the head waiter went blandly about his other duties, as if the working of this sort of miracle was a common and easy thing to him.

Mr. X said he had not known, before, that there were people honest enough to do this miracle in public, but he was aware that thousands upon thousands of labels were imported into America from Europe every year, to enable dealers to furnish to their customers in a quiet and inexpensive way all the different kinds of foreign wines they might require.

We took a turn around the town, after dinner, and found it fully as interesting in the moonlight as it had been in the daytime. The streets were narrow and roughly paved, and there was not a sidewalk or a street-lamp anywhere. The dwellings were centuries old, and vast enough for hotels. They widened all the way up; the stories projected further and further forward and aside as they ascended, and the long rows of lighted windows, filled with little bits of panes, curtained with figured white muslin and adorned outside with boxes of flowers, made a pretty effect.



The moon was bright, and the light and shadow very strong; and nothing could be more picturesque than those curving streets, with their rows of huge high gables leaning far over toward each other in a friendly gossiping way, and the crowds below drifting through the alternating blots of gloom and mellow bars of moonlight. Nearly everybody was abroad, chatting, singing, romping, or massed in lazy comfortable attitudes in the doorways.

In one place there was a public building which was fenced about with a thick, rusty chain, which sagged from post to post in a succession of low swings. The pavement, here, was made of heavy blocks of stone. In the glare of the moon a party of barefooted children were swinging on those chains and having a noisy good time. They were not the first ones who have done that; even their great-great-grandfathers had not been the first to do it when they were children. The strokes of the bare feet had worn grooves inches deep in the stone flags; it had taken many generations of swinging children to accomplish that.



Everywhere in the town were the mold and decay that go with antiquity, and evidence of it; but I do not know that anything else gave us so vivid a sense of the old age of Heilbronn as those footworn grooves in the paving-stones.

CHAPTER XIII

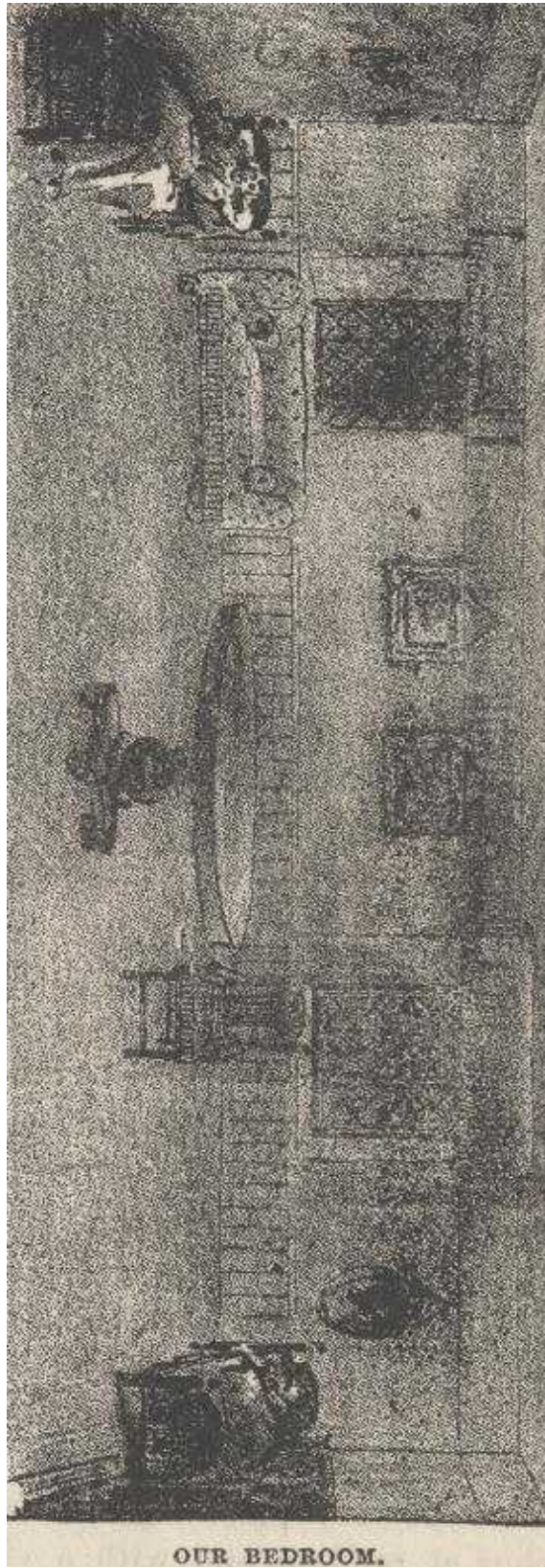
[My Long Crawl in the Dark]

When we got back to the hotel I wound and set the pedometer and put it in my pocket, for I was to carry it next day and keep record of the miles we made. The work which we had given the instrument to do during the day which had just closed had not fatigued it perceptibly.

We were in bed by ten, for we wanted to be up and away on our tramp homeward with the dawn. I hung fire, but Harris went to sleep at once. I hate a man who goes to sleep at once; there is a sort of indefinable something about it which is not exactly an insult, and yet is an insolence; and one which is hard to bear, too. I lay there fretting over this injury, and trying to go to sleep; but the harder I tried, the wider awake I grew. I got to feeling very lonely in the dark, with no company but an undigested dinner. My mind got a start by and by, and began to consider the beginning of every subject which has ever been thought of; but it never went further than the beginning; it was touch and go; it fled from topic to topic with a frantic speed. At the end of an hour my head was in a perfect whirl and I was dead tired, fagged out.

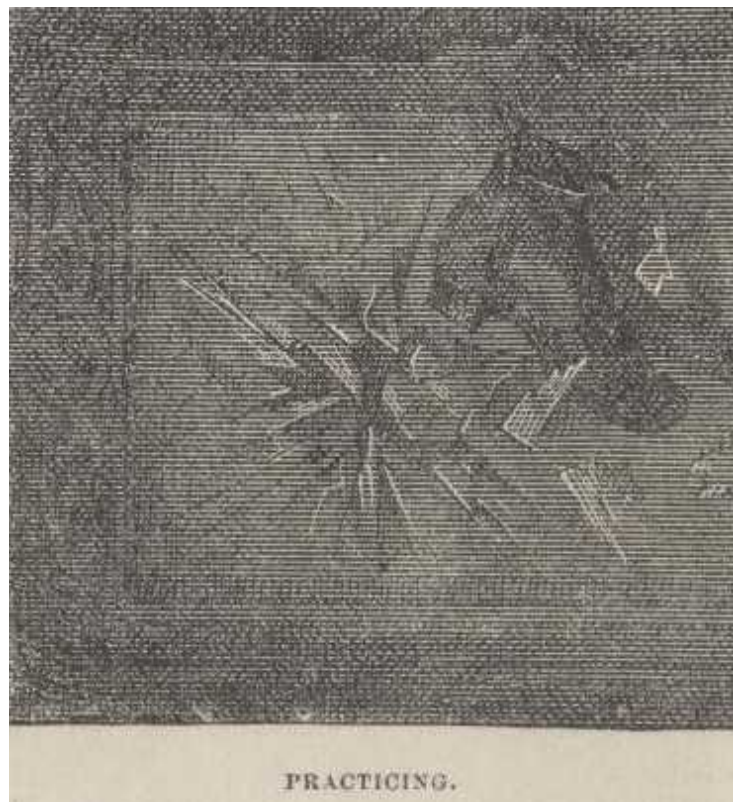
The fatigue was so great that it presently began to make some head against the nervous excitement; while imagining myself wide awake, I would really doze into momentary unconsciousness, and come suddenly out of it with a physical jerk which nearly wrenched my joints apart—the delusion of the instant being that I was tumbling backward over a precipice. After I had fallen over eight or nine precipices and thus found out that one half of my brain had been asleep eight or nine times without the wide-awake, hard-working other half suspecting it, the periodical unconsciousnesses began to extend their spell gradually over more of my brain-territory, and at last I sank into a drowse which grew deeper and deeper and was doubtless just on the very point of being a solid, blessed dreamless stupor, when—what was that?

My dulled faculties dragged themselves partly back to life and took a receptive attitude. Now out of an immense, a limitless distance, came a something which grew and grew, and approached, and presently was recognizable as a sound—it had rather seemed to be a feeling, before. This sound was a mile away, now—perhaps it was the murmur of a storm; and now it was nearer—not a quarter of a mile away; was it the muffled rasping and grinding of distant machinery? No, it came still nearer; was it the measured tramp of a marching troop? But it came nearer still, and still nearer—and at last it was right in the room: it was merely a mouse gnawing the woodwork. So I had held my breath all that time for such a trifle.



Well, what was done could not be helped; I would go to sleep at once and make up the lost time. That was a thoughtless thought. Without intending it—hardly knowing it—I fell to listening intently to that sound, and even unconsciously counting the strokes of the mouse's nutmeg-grater. Presently I was deriving exquisite suffering from this employment, yet maybe I could have endured it if the mouse had attended steadily to his work; but he did not do that; he stopped every now and then, and I suffered more while waiting and listening for him to begin again than I did while he was gnawing. Along at first I was mentally offering a reward of five—six—seven—ten—dollars for that mouse; but toward the last I was offering rewards which were entirely beyond my means. I close-reefed my ears—that is to say, I bent the flaps of them down and furled them into five or six folds, and pressed them against the hearing-orifice—but it did no good: the faculty was so sharpened by nervous excitement that it was become a microphone and could hear through the overlays without trouble.

My anger grew to a frenzy. I finally did what all persons before me have done, clear back to Adam,—resolved to throw something. I reached down and got my walking-shoes, then sat up in bed and listened, in order to exactly locate the noise. But I couldn't do it; it was as unlocatable as a cricket's noise; and where one thinks that that is, is always the very place where it isn't. So I presently hurled a shoe at random, and with a vicious vigor. It struck the wall over Harris's head and fell down on him; I had not imagined I could throw so far. It woke Harris, and I was glad of it until I found he was not angry; then I was sorry. He soon went to sleep again, which pleased me; but straightway the mouse began again, which roused my temper once more. I did not want to wake Harris a second time, but the gnawing continued until I was compelled to throw the other shoe.

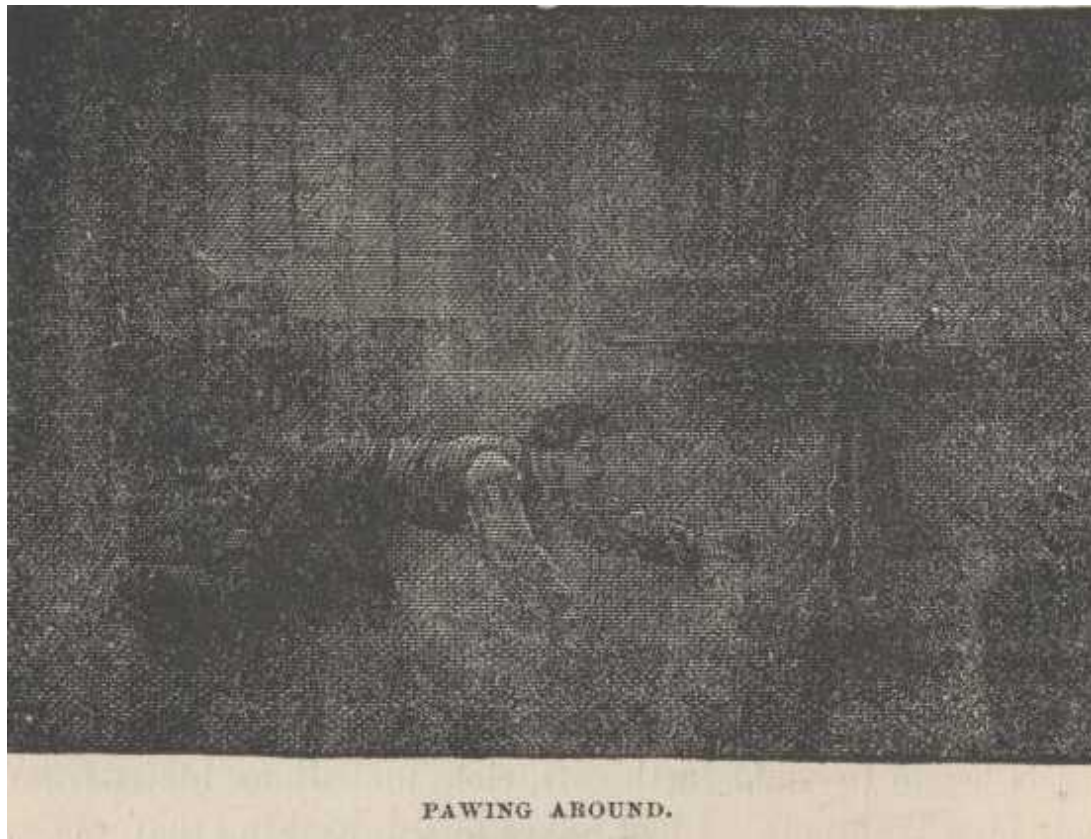


This time I broke a mirror—there were two in the room—I got the largest one, of course. Harris woke again, but did not complain, and I was sorrier than ever. I resolved that I would suffer all possible torture before I would disturb him a third time.

The mouse eventually retired, and by and by I was sinking to sleep, when a clock began to strike; I counted till it was done, and was about to drowse again when another clock began; I counted; then the two great RATHHAUS clock angels began to send forth soft, rich, melodious blasts from their long trumpets. I had never heard anything that was so lovely, or weird, or mysterious—but when they got to blowing the quarter-hours, they seemed to me to be overdoing the thing. Every time I dropped off for the moment, a new noise woke me. Each time I woke I missed my coverlet, and had to reach down to the floor and get it again.

At last all sleepiness forsook me. I recognized the fact that I was hopelessly and permanently wide awake. Wide awake, and feverish and thirsty. When I had lain tossing there as long as I could endure it, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to dress and go out in the great square and take a refreshing wash in the fountain, and smoke and reflect there until the remnant of the night was gone.

I believed I could dress in the dark without waking Harris. I had banished my shoes after the mouse, but my slippers would do for a summer night. So I rose softly, and gradually got on everything—down to one sock. I couldn't seem to get on the track of that sock, any way I could fix it. But I had to have it; so I went down on my hands and knees, with one slipper on and the other in my hand, and began to paw gently around and rake the floor, but with no success. I enlarged my circle, and went on pawing and raking. With every pressure of my knee, how the floor creaked! and every time I chanced to rake against any article, it seemed to give out thirty-five or thirty-six times more noise than it would have done in the daytime. In those cases I always stopped and held my breath till I was sure Harris had not awakened—then I crept along again. I moved on and on, but I could not find the sock; I could not seem to find anything but furniture. I could not remember that there was much furniture in the room when I went to bed, but the place was alive with it now—especially chairs—chairs everywhere—had a couple of families moved in, in the mean time? And I never could seem to GLANCE on one of those chairs, but always struck it full and square with my head. My temper rose, by steady and sure degrees, and as I pawed on and on, I fell to making vicious comments under my breath.



Finally, with a venomous access of irritation, I said I would leave without the sock; so I rose up and made straight for the door—as I supposed—and suddenly confronted my dim spectral image in the unbroken mirror. It startled the breath out of me, for an instant; it also showed me that I was lost, and had no sort of idea where I was. When I realized this, I was so angry that I had to sit down on the floor and take hold of something to keep from lifting the roof off with an explosion of opinion. If there had been only one mirror, it might possibly have helped to locate me; but there were two, and two were as bad as a thousand; besides, these were on opposite sides of the room. I could see the dim blur of the windows, but in my turned-around condition they were exactly where they ought not to be, and so they only confused me instead of helping me.

I started to get up, and knocked down an umbrella; it made a noise like a pistol-shot when it struck that hard, slick, carpetless floor; I grated my teeth and held my breath—Harris did not stir. I set the umbrella slowly and carefully on end against the wall, but as soon as I took my hand away, its heel slipped from under it, and down it came again with another bang. I shrunk together and listened a moment in silent fury—no harm done, everything quiet. With the most painstaking care and nicety, I stood the umbrella up once more, took my hand away, and down it came again.

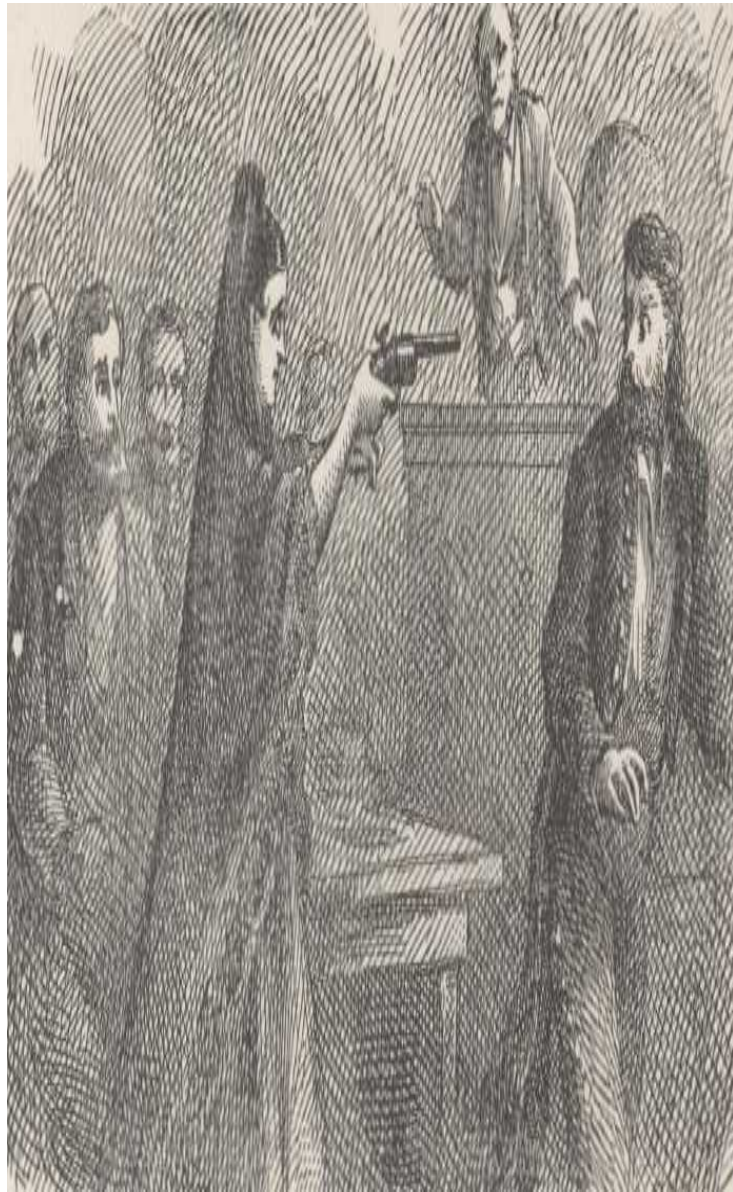
I have been strictly reared, but if it had not been so dark and solemn and awful there in that lonely, vast room, I do believe I should have said something then which could not be put into a Sunday-school book without injuring the sale of it. If my reasoning powers had not been already sapped dry by my harassments, I would have known better than to try to set an umbrella on end on one of those glassy German floors in the dark; it can't be done in the daytime without four failures to one success. I had one comfort, though—Harris was yet still and silent—he had not stirred.

The umbrella could not locate me—there were four standing around the room, and all alike. I thought I would feel along the wall and find the door in that way. I rose up and began this operation, but raked down a picture. It was not a large one, but it made noise enough for a panorama. Harris gave out no sound, but I felt that if I experimented any further with the pictures I should be sure to wake him. Better give up trying to get out. Yes, I would find King Arthur's Round Table once more—I had already found it several times—and use it for a base of departure on an exploring tour for my bed; if I could find my bed I could then find my water pitcher; I would quench my raging thirst and turn in. So I started on my hands and knees, because I could go faster that way, and with more confidence, too, and not knock down things. By and by I found the table—with my head—rubbed the bruise a little, then rose up and started, with hands abroad and fingers spread, to balance myself. I found a chair; then a wall; then another chair; then a sofa; then an alpenstock, then another sofa; this confounded me, for I had thought there was only one sofa. I hunted up the table again and took a fresh start; found some more chairs.

It occurred to me, now, as it ought to have done before, that as the table was round, it was therefore of no value as a base to aim from; so I moved off once more, and at random among the wilderness of chairs and sofas—wandering off into unfamiliar regions, and presently knocked a candlestick and knocked off a lamp, grabbed at the lamp and knocked off a water pitcher with a rattling crash, and thought to myself, "I've found you at last—I judged I was close upon you." Harris shouted "murder," and "thieves," and finished with "I'm absolutely drowned."

The crash had roused the house. Mr. X pranced in, in his long night-garment, with a candle, young Z after him with another candle; a procession swept in at another door, with candles and lanterns—landlord and two German guests in their nightgowns and a chambermaid in hers.

I looked around; I was at Harris's bed, a Sabbath-day's journey from my own. There was only one sofa; it was against the wall; there was only one chair where a body could get at it—I had been revolving around it like a planet, and colliding with it like a comet half the night.



I explained how I had been employing myself, and why. Then the landlord's party left, and the rest of us set about our preparations for breakfast, for the dawn was ready to break. I glanced furtively at my pedometer, and found I had made 47 miles. But I did not care, for I had come out for a pedestrian tour anyway.

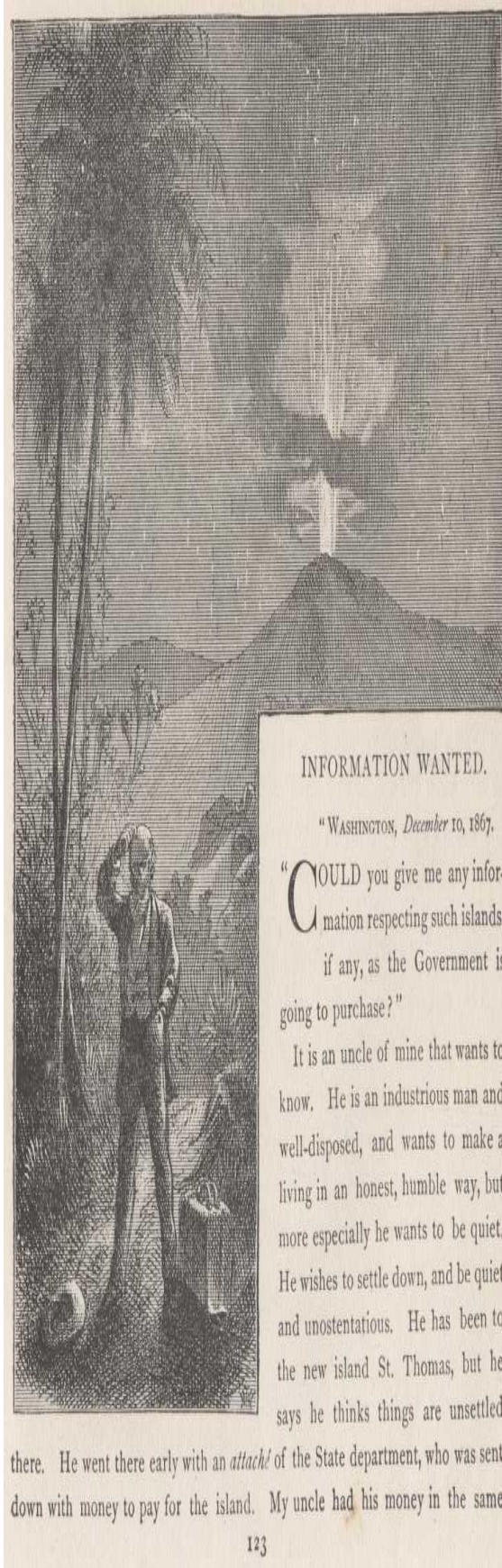
CHAPTER XIV

[Rafting Down the Neckar]

When the landlord learned that I and my agents were artists, our party rose perceptibly in his esteem; we rose still higher when he learned that we were making a pedestrian tour of Europe.

He told us all about the Heidelberg road, and which were the best places to avoid and which the best ones to tarry at; he charged me less than cost for the things I broke in the night; he put up a fine luncheon for us and added to it a quantity of great light-green plums, the pleasantest fruit in Germany; he was so anxious to do us honor that he would not allow us to walk out of Heilbronn, but called up Goetz von Berlichingen's horse and cab and made us ride.

I made a sketch of the turnout. It is not a Work, it is only what artists call a "study"—a thing to make a finished picture from. This sketch has several blemishes in it; for instance, the wagon is not traveling as fast as the horse is. This is wrong. Again, the person trying to get out of the way is too small; he is out of perspective, as we say. The two upper lines are not the horse's back, they are the reigns; there seems to be a wheel missing—this would be corrected in a finished Work, of course. This thing flying out behind is not a flag, it is a curtain. That other thing up there is the sun, but I didn't get enough distance on it. I do not remember, now, what that thing is that is in front of the man who is running, but I think it is a haystack or a woman. This study was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1879, but did not take any medal; they do not give medals for studies.



INFORMATION WANTED.

“WASHINGTON, December 10, 1867.

“COULD you give me any information respecting such islands, if any, as the Government is going to purchase?”

It is an uncle of mine that wants to know. He is an industrious man and well-disposed, and wants to make a living in an honest, humble way, but more especially he wants to be quiet. He wishes to settle down, and be quiet and unostentatious. He has been to the new island St. Thomas, but he says he thinks things are unsettled

there. He went there early with an *attaché* of the State department, who was sent down with money to pay for the island. My uncle had his money in the same

We discharged the carriage at the bridge. The river was full of logs—long, slender, barkless pine logs—and we leaned on the rails of the bridge, and watched the men put them together into rafts. These rafts were of a shape and construction to suit the crookedness and extreme narrowness of the Neckar. They were from fifty to one hundred yards long, and they gradually tapered from a nine-log breadth at their sterns, to a three-log breadth at their bow-ends. The main part of the steering is done at the bow, with a pole; the three-log breadth there furnishes room for only the steersman, for these little logs are not larger around than an average young lady's waist. The connections of the several sections of the raft are slack and pliant, so that the raft may be readily bent into any sort of curve required by the shape of the river.

The Neckar is in many places so narrow that a person can throw a dog across it, if he has one; when it is also sharply curved in such places, the raftsman has to do some pretty nice snug piloting to make the turns. The river is not always allowed to spread over its whole bed—which is as much as thirty, and sometimes forty yards wide—but is split into three equal bodies of water, by stone dikes which throw the main volume, depth, and current into the central one. In low water these neat narrow-edged dikes project four or five inches above the surface, like the comb of a submerged roof, but in high water they are overflowed. A hatful of rain makes high water in the Neckar, and a basketful produces an overflow.

There are dikes abreast the Schloss Hotel, and the current is violently swift at that point. I used to sit for hours in my glass cage, watching the long, narrow rafts slip along through the central channel, grazing the right-bank dike and aiming carefully for the middle arch of the stone bridge below; I watched them in this way, and lost all this time hoping to see one of them hit the bridge-pier and wreck itself sometime or other, but was always disappointed. One was smashed there one morning, but I had just stepped into my room a moment to light a pipe, so I lost it.

While I was looking down upon the rafts that morning in Heilbronn, the daredevil spirit of adventure came suddenly upon me, and I said to my comrades:

"I am going to Heidelberg on a raft. Will you venture with me?"

Their faces paled a little, but they assented with as good a grace as they could. Harris wanted to cable his mother—thought it his duty to do that, as he was all she had in this world—so, while he attended to this, I went down to the longest and finest raft and hailed the captain with a hearty "Ahoy, shipmate!" which put us upon pleasant terms at once, and we entered upon business. I said we were on a pedestrian tour to Heidelberg, and would like to take passage with him. I said this partly through young Z, who spoke German very well, and partly through Mr. X, who spoke it peculiarly. I can UNDERSTAND German as well as the maniac that invented it, but I TALK it best through an interpreter.

The captain hitched up his trousers, then shifted his quid thoughtfully. Presently he said just what I was expecting he would say—that he had no license to carry passengers, and therefore was afraid the law would be after him in case the matter got noised about or any accident happened. So I CHARTERED the raft and the crew and took all the responsibilities on myself.



With a rattling song the starboard watch bent to their work and hove the cable short, then got the anchor home, and our bark moved off with a stately stride, and soon was bowling along at about two knots an hour.

Our party were grouped amidships. At first the talk was a little gloomy, and ran mainly upon the shortness of life, the uncertainty of it, the perils which beset it, and the need and wisdom of being always prepared for the

worst; this shaded off into low-voiced references to the dangers of the deep, and kindred matters; but as the gray east began to redden and the mysterious solemnity and silence of the dawn to give place to the joy-songs of the birds, the talk took a cheerier tone, and our spirits began to rise steadily.

Germany, in the summer, is the perfection of the beautiful, but nobody has understood, and realized, and enjoyed the utmost possibilities of this soft and peaceful beauty unless he has voyaged down the Neckar on a raft. The motion of a raft is the needful motion; it is gentle, and gliding, and smooth, and noiseless; it calms down all feverish activities, it soothes to sleep all nervous hurry and impatience; under its restful influence all the troubles and vexations and sorrows that harass the mind vanish away, and existence becomes a dream, a charm, a deep and tranquil ecstasy. How it contrasts with hot and perspiring pedestrianism, and dusty and deafening railroad rush, and tedious jolting behind tired horses over blinding white roads!

We went slipping silently along, between the green and fragrant banks, with a sense of pleasure and contentment that grew, and grew, all the time. Sometimes the banks were overhung with thick masses of willows that wholly hid the ground behind; sometimes we had noble hills on one hand, clothed densely with foliage to their tops, and on the other hand open levels blazing with poppies, or clothed in the rich blue of the corn-flower; sometimes we drifted in the shadow of forests, and sometimes along the margin of long stretches of velvety grass, fresh and green and bright, a tireless charm to the eye. And the birds!—they were everywhere; they swept back and forth across the river constantly, and their jubilant music was never stilled.

It was a deep and satisfying pleasure to see the sun create the new morning, and gradually, patiently, lovingly, clothe it on with splendor after splendor, and glory after glory, till the miracle was complete. How different is this marvel observed from a raft, from what it is when one observes it through the dingy windows of a railway-station in some wretched village while he munches a petrified sandwich and waits for the train.



[Transcriber's Note for edition 12: on the advice of two German-speaking volunteers, the German letters a, o, and u with umlauts have been rendered as ae, oe, and ue instead of as, variously, :a, a", :o, o" and :u, u" as in previous editions.]
