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A TRAMP ABROAD

By Mark Twain

CHAPTER I

[The Knighted Knave of Bergen]

One day it occurred to me that it had been many years since the world had been afforded the spectacle of a man adventurous enough to undertake a journey through Europe on foot. After much thought, I decided that I was a person fitted to furnish to mankind this spectacle. So I determined to do it. This was in March, 1878.

I looked about me for the right sort of person to accompany me in the capacity of agent, and finally hired a Mr. Harris for this service.

It was also my purpose to study art while in Europe. Mr. Harris was in sympathy with me in this. He was as much of an enthusiast in art as I was, and not less anxious to learn to paint. I desired to learn the German language; so did Harris.

Toward the middle of April we sailed in the HOLSATIA, Captain Brandt, and had a very peasant trip, indeed.

After a brief rest at Hamburg, we made preparations for a long pedestrian trip southward in the soft spring weather, but at the last moment we changed the program, for private reasons, and took the express-train.

We made a short halt at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and found

it an interesting city. I would have liked to visit the birthplace of Gutenberg, but it could not be done, as no memorandum of the site of the house has been kept. So we spent an hour in the Goethe mansion instead. The city permits this house to belong to private parties, instead of gracing and dignifying herself with the honor of possessing and protecting it.

Frankfort is one of the sixteen cities which have the distinction of being the place where the following incident occurred. Charlemagne, while chasing the Saxons (as HE said), or being chased by them (as THEY said), arrived at the bank of the river at dawn, in a fog. The enemy were either before him or behind him; but in any case he wanted to get across, very badly. He would have given anything for a guide, but none was to be had. Presently he saw a deer, followed by her young, approach the water. He watched her, judging that she would seek a ford, and he was right. She waded over, and the army followed. So a great Frankish victory or defeat was gained or avoided; and in order to commemorate the episode, Charlemagne commanded a city to be built there, which he named Frankfort--the ford of the Franks. None of the other cities where this event happened were named for it. This is good evidence that Frankfort was the first place it occurred at.

Frankfort has another distinction--it is the birthplace of the German alphabet; or at least of the German word for alphabet --BUCHSTABEN. They say that the first movable types were made on birch sticks--BUCHSTABE--hence the name.

I was taught a lesson in political economy in Frankfort.

I had brought from home a box containing a thousand very cheap cigars. By way of experiment, I stepped into a little shop in a queer old back street, took four gaily decorated boxes of wax matches and three cigars, and laid down a silver piece worth 48 cents. The man gave me 43 cents change.

In Frankfort everybody wears clean clothes, and I think we noticed that this strange thing was the case in Hamburg, too, and in the villages along the road. Even in the narrowest and poorest and most ancient quarters of Frankfort neat and clean clothes were the rule. The little children of both sexes were nearly always nice enough to take into a body's lap. And as for the uniforms of the soldiers, they were newness and brightness carried to perfection. One could never detect a smirch or a grain of dust upon them. The street-car conductors and drivers wore pretty uniforms which seemed to be just out of the bandbox, and their manners were as fine as their clothes.

In one of the shops I had the luck to stumble upon a book which has charmed me nearly to death. It is entitled THE LEGENDS OF THE RHINE FROM BASLE TO ROTTERDAM, by F. J. Kiefer; translated by L. W. Garnham, B.A.

All tourists MENTION the Rhine legends--in that sort of way which quietly pretends that the mentioner has been familiar with them all his life, and that the reader cannot possibly be ignorant of them--but no tourist ever TELLS them. So this little book fed me in a very hungry place; and I, in my turn, intend to feed my reader, with one or two little lunches from the same larder. I shall not mar Garnham's translation by meddling with its English;

for the most toothsome thing about it is its quaint fashion of building English sentences on the German plan-- and punctuating them accordingly to no plan at all.

In the chapter devoted to "Legends of Frankfort," I find the following:

"THE KNAVE OF BERGEN"

"In Frankfort at the Romer was a great mask-ball, at the coronation festival, and in the illuminated saloon, the clanging music invited to dance, and splendidly appeared the rich toilets and charms of the ladies, and the festively costumed Princes and Knights. All seemed pleasure, joy, and roguish gaiety, only one of the numerous guests had a gloomy exterior; but exactly the black armor in which he walked about excited general attention, and his tall figure, as well as the noble propriety of his movements, attracted especially the regards of the ladies. Who the Knight was? Nobody could guess, for his Vizier was well closed, and nothing made him recognizable. Proud and yet modest he advanced to the Empress; bowed on one knee before her seat, and begged for the favor of a waltz with the Queen of the festival. And she allowed his request. With light and graceful steps he danced through the long saloon, with the sovereign who thought never to have found a more dexterous and excellent dancer. But also by the grace of his manner, and fine conversation he knew to win the Queen, and she graciously accorded him a second dance for which he begged, a third, and a fourth, as well as others were not refused him. How all regarded the happy dancer, how many envied him the high favor; how increased curiosity, who the masked knight could be.

"Also the Emperor became more and more excited with curiosity, and with great suspense one awaited the hour, when according to mask-law, each masked guest must make himself known. This moment came, but although all other unmasked; the secret knight still refused to allow his features to be seen, till at last the Queen driven by curiosity, and vexed at the obstinate refusal; commanded him to open his Vizier. He opened it, and none of the high ladies and knights knew him. But from the crowded spectators, 2 officials advanced, who recognized the black dancer, and horror and terror spread in the saloon, as they said who the supposed knight was. It was the executioner of Bergen. But glowing with rage, the King commanded to seize the criminal and lead him to death, who had ventured to dance, with the queen; so disgraced the Empress, and insulted the crown. The culpable threw himself at the Emperor, and said--

"'Indeed I have heavily sinned against all noble guests assembled here, but most heavily against you my sovereign and my queen. The Queen is insulted by my haughtiness equal to treason, but no punishment even blood, will not be able to wash out the disgrace, which you have suffered by me. Therefore oh King! allow me to propose a remedy, to efface the shame, and to render it as if not done. Draw your sword and knight me, then I will throw down my gauntlet, to everyone who dares to speak disrespectfully of my king.'

"The Emperor was surprised at this bold proposal, however it appeared the wisest to him; 'You are a knave he replied after a moment's consideration, however your

advice is good, and displays prudence, as your offense shows adventurous courage. Well then, and gave him the knight-stroke so I raise you to nobility, who begged for grace for your offense now kneels before me, rise as knight; knavish you have acted, and Knave of Bergen shall you be called henceforth, and gladly the Black knight rose; three cheers were given in honor of the Emperor, and loud cries of joy testified the approbation with which the Queen danced still once with the Knave of Bergen."

CHAPTER II

Heidelberg

[Landing a Monarch at Heidelberg]

We stopped at a hotel by the railway-station. Next morning, as we sat in my room waiting for breakfast to come up, we got a good deal interested in something which was going on over the way, in front of another hotel.

First, the personage who is called the PORTIER (who is not the PORTER, but is a sort of first-mate of a hotel)

[1. See Appendix A] appeared at the door in a spick-and-span new blue cloth uniform, decorated with shining brass buttons, and with bands of gold lace around his cap and wristbands; and he wore white gloves, too. He shed an official glance upon the situation, and then began to give orders.

Two women-servants came out with pails and brooms and brushes, and gave the sidewalk a thorough scrubbing; meanwhile two others scrubbed the four marble steps which led up to the door; beyond these we could see some men-servants taking up the carpet of the grand staircase. This carpet was carried away and the last grain of dust beaten and banged and swept out of it; then brought back

and put down again. The brass stair-rods received an exhaustive polishing and were returned to their places. Now a troop of servants brought pots and tubs of blooming plants and formed them into a beautiful jungle about the door and the base of the staircase. Other servants adorned all the balconies of the various stories with flowers and banners; others ascended to the roof and hoisted a great flag on a staff there. Now came some more chamber-maids and retouched the sidewalk, and afterward wiped the marble steps with damp cloths and finished by dusting them off with feather brushes. Now a broad black carpet was brought out and laid down the marble steps and out across the sidewalk to the curbstone. The PORTIER cast his eye along it, and found it was not absolutely straight; he commanded it to be straightened; the servants made the effort--made several efforts, in fact--but the PORTIER was not satisfied. He finally had it taken up, and then he put it down himself and got it right.

At this stage of the proceedings, a narrow bright red carpet was unrolled and stretched from the top of the marble steps to the curbstone, along the center of the black carpet. This red path cost the PORTIER more trouble than even the black one had done. But he patiently fixed and refixed it until it was exactly right and lay precisely in the middle of the black carpet. In New York these performances would have gathered a mighty crowd of curious and intensely interested spectators; but here it only captured an audience of half a dozen little boys who stood in a row across the pavement, some with their school-knapsacks on their backs and their hands in their pockets, others with arms full of bundles,

and all absorbed in the show. Occasionally one of them skipped irreverently over the carpet and took up a position on the other side. This always visibly annoyed the PORTIER.

Now came a waiting interval. The landlord, in plain clothes, and bareheaded, placed himself on the bottom marble step, abreast the PORTIER, who stood on the other end of the same steps; six or eight waiters, gloved, bareheaded, and wearing their whitest linen, their whitest cravats, and their finest swallow-tails, grouped themselves about these chiefs, but leaving the carpetway clear. Nobody moved or spoke any more but only waited.

In a short time the shrill piping of a coming train was heard, and immediately groups of people began to gather in the street. Two or three open carriages arrived, and deposited some maids of honor and some male officials at the hotel. Presently another open carriage brought the Grand Duke of Baden, a stately man in uniform, who wore the handsome brass-mounted, steel-spiked helmet of the army on his head. Last came the Empress of Germany and the Grand Duchess of Baden in a closed carriage; these passed through the low-bowing groups of servants and disappeared in the hotel, exhibiting to us only the backs of their heads, and then the show was over.

It appears to be as difficult to land a monarch as it is to launch a ship.

But as to Heidelberg. The weather was growing pretty warm, --very warm, in fact. So we left the valley and took quarters at the Schloss Hotel, on the hill, above the Castle.

Heidelberg lies at the mouth of a narrow gorge--a gorge the shape of a shepherd's crook; if one looks up it he perceives that it is about straight, for a mile and a half, then makes a sharp curve to the right and disappears.

This gorge--along whose bottom pours the swift Neckar--is confined between (or cloven through) a couple of long, steep ridges, a thousand feet high and densely wooded clear to their summits, with the exception of one section which has been shaved and put under cultivation.

These ridges are chopped off at the mouth of the gorge and form two bold and conspicuous headlands, with Heidelberg nestling between them; from their bases spreads away the vast dim expanse of the Rhine valley, and into this expanse the Neckar goes wandering in shining curves and is presently lost to view.

Now if one turns and looks up the gorge once more, he will see the Schloss Hotel on the right perched on a precipice overlooking the Neckar--a precipice which is so sumptuously cushioned and draped with foliage that no glimpse of the rock appears. The building seems very airily situated. It has the appearance of being on a shelf half-way up the wooded mountainside; and as it is remote and isolated, and very white, it makes a strong mark against the lofty leafy rampart at its back.

This hotel had a feature which was a decided novelty, and one which might be adopted with advantage by any house which is perched in a commanding situation. This feature may be described as a series of glass-enclosed parlors CLINGING TO THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE, one against each and every bed-chamber and drawing-room. They are like long, narrow, high-ceiled bird-cages hung against the building.

My room was a corner room, and had two of these things,
a north one and a west one.

From the north cage one looks up the Neckar gorge;
from the west one he looks down it. This last affords
the most extensive view, and it is one of the loveliest
that can be imagined, too. Out of a billowy upheaval of
vivid green foliage, a rifle-shot removed, rises the huge
ruin of Heidelberg Castle, [2. See Appendix B] with empty window
arches,
ivy-mailed battlements, moldering towers--the Lear of
inanimate nature--deserted, discrowned, beaten by the storms,
but royal still, and beautiful. It is a fine sight to see
the evening sunlight suddenly strike the leafy declivity
at the Castle's base and dash up it and drench it as with
a luminous spray, while the adjacent groves are in deep shadow.

Behind the Castle swells a great dome-shaped hill,
forest-clad, and beyond that a nobler and loftier one.
The Castle looks down upon the compact brown-roofed town;
and from the town two picturesque old bridges span
the river. Now the view broadens; through the gateway
of the sentinel headlands you gaze out over the wide
Rhine plain, which stretches away, softly and richly tinted,
grows gradually and dreamily indistinct, and finally melts
imperceptibly into the remote horizon.

I have never enjoyed a view which had such a serene
and satisfying charm about it as this one gives.

The first night we were there, we went to bed and to
sleep early; but I awoke at the end of two or three hours,
and lay a comfortable while listening to the soothing
patter of the rain against the balcony windows.

I took it to be rain, but it turned out to be only the murmur of the restless Neckar, tumbling over her dikes and dams far below, in the gorge. I got up and went into the west balcony and saw a wonderful sight. Away down on the level under the black mass of the Castle, the town lay, stretched along the river, its intricate cobweb of streets jeweled with twinkling lights; there were rows of lights on the bridges; these flung lances of light upon the water, in the black shadows of the arches; and away at the extremity of all this fairy spectacle blinked and glowed a massed multitude of gas-jets which seemed to cover acres of ground; it was as if all the diamonds in the world had been spread out there. I did not know before, that a half-mile of sextuple railway-tracks could be made such an adornment.

One thinks Heidelberg by day--with its surroundings--is the last possibility of the beautiful; but when he sees Heidelberg by night, a fallen Milky Way, with that glittering railway constellation pinned to the border, he requires time to consider upon the verdict.

One never tires of poking about in the dense woods that clothe all these lofty Neckar hills to their beguiling and impressive charm in any country; but German legends and fairy tales have given these an added charm.

They have peopled all that region with gnomes, and dwarfs, and all sorts of mysterious and uncanny creatures.

At the time I am writing of, I had been reading so much of this literature that sometimes I was not sure but I was beginning to believe in the gnomes and fairies as realities.

One afternoon I got lost in the woods about a mile from the hotel, and presently fell into a train of dreamy thought about animals which talk, and kobolds, and enchanted folk, and the rest of the pleasant legendary stuff; and so, by stimulating my fancy, I finally got to imagining I glimpsed small flitting shapes here and there down the columned aisles of the forest. It was a place which was peculiarly meet for the occasion. It was a pine wood, with so thick and soft a carpet of brown needles that one's footfall made no more sound than if he were treading on wool; the tree-trunks were as round and straight and smooth as pillars, and stood close together; they were bare of branches to a point about twenty-five feet above-ground, and from there upward so thick with boughs that not a ray of sunlight could pierce through. The world was bright with sunshine outside, but a deep and mellow twilight reigned in there, and also a deep silence so profound that I seemed to hear my own breathings.

When I had stood ten minutes, thinking and imagining, and getting my spirit in tune with the place, and in the right mood to enjoy the supernatural, a raven suddenly uttered a horse croak over my head. It made me start; and then I was angry because I started. I looked up, and the creature was sitting on a limb right over me, looking down at me. I felt something of the same sense of humiliation and injury which one feels when he finds that a human stranger has been clandestinely inspecting him in his privacy and mentally commenting upon him. I eyed the raven, and the raven eyed me. Nothing was said during some seconds. Then the bird stepped a little way along his limb to get a better point of observation, lifted his wings, stuck his head far down below his

shoulders toward me and croaked again--a croak with a distinctly insulting expression about it. If he had spoken in English he could not have said any more plainly that he did say in raven, "Well, what do YOU want here?" I felt as foolish as if I had been caught in some mean act by a responsible being, and reproved for it. However, I made no reply; I would not bandy words with a raven. The adversary waited a while, with his shoulders still lifted, his head thrust down between them, and his keen bright eye fixed on me; then he threw out two or three more insults, which I could not understand, further than that I knew a portion of them consisted of language not used in church.

I still made no reply. Now the adversary raised his head and called. There was an answering croak from a little distance in the wood--evidently a croak of inquiry. The adversary explained with enthusiasm, and the other raven dropped everything and came. The two sat side by side on the limb and discussed me as freely and offensively as two great naturalists might discuss a new kind of bug. The thing became more and more embarrassing. They called in another friend. This was too much. I saw that they had the advantage of me, and so I concluded to get out of the scrape by walking out of it. They enjoyed my defeat as much as any low white people could have done. They craned their necks and laughed at me (for a raven CAN laugh, just like a man), they squalled insulting remarks after me as long as they could see me. They were nothing but ravens--I knew that--what they thought of me could be a matter of no consequence--and yet when even a raven shouts after you, "What a hat!" "Oh, pull down your vest!" and that sort of thing, it hurts you and humiliates you,

and there is no getting around it with fine reasoning and pretty arguments.

Animals talk to each other, of course. There can be no question about that; but I suppose there are very few people who can understand them. I never knew but one man who could. I knew he could, however, because he told me so himself. He was a middle-aged, simple-hearted miner who had lived in a lonely corner of California, among the woods and mountains, a good many years, and had studied the ways of his only neighbors, the beasts and the birds, until he believed he could accurately translate any remark which they made. This was Jim Baker. According to Jim Baker, some animals have only a limited education, and some use only simple words, and scarcely ever a comparison or a flowery figure; whereas, certain other animals have a large vocabulary, a fine command of language and a ready and fluent delivery; consequently these latter talk a great deal; they like it; they are so conscious of their talent, and they enjoy "showing off." Baker said, that after long and careful observation, he had come to the conclusion that the bluejays were the best talkers he had found among birds and beasts. Said he:

"There's more TO a bluejay than any other creature. He has got more moods, and more different kinds of feelings than other creatures; and, mind you, whatever a bluejay feels, he can put into language. And no mere commonplace language, either, but rattling, out-and-out book-talk--and bristling with metaphor, too--just bristling! And as for command of language--why YOU never see a bluejay get stuck for a word. No man

ever did. They just boil out of him! And another thing: I've noticed a good deal, and there's no bird, or cow, or anything that uses as good grammar as a bluejay. You may say a cat uses good grammar. Well, a cat does--but you let a cat get excited once; you let a cat get to pulling fur with another cat on a shed, nights, and you'll hear grammar that will give you the lockjaw. Ignorant people think it's the NOISE which fighting cats make that is so aggravating, but it ain't so; it's the sickening grammar they use. Now I've never heard a jay use bad grammar but very seldom; and when they do, they are as ashamed as a human; they shut right down and leave.

"You may call a jay a bird. Well, so he is, in a measure--but he's got feathers on him, and don't belong to no church, perhaps; but otherwise he is just as much human as you be. And I'll tell you for why. A jay's gifts, and instincts, and feelings, and interests, cover the whole ground. A jay hasn't got any more principle than a Congressman. A jay will lie, a jay will steal, a jay will deceive, a jay will betray; and four times out of five, a jay will go back on his solemnest promise. The sacredness of an obligation is such a thing which you can't cram into no bluejay's head. Now, on top of all this, there's another thing; a jay can out-swear any gentleman in the mines. You think a cat can swear. Well, a cat can; but you give a bluejay a subject that calls for his reserve-powers, and where is your cat? Don't talk to ME--I know too much about this thing; in the one little particular of scolding--just good, clean, out-and-out scolding--a bluejay can lay over anything, human or divine. Yes, sir, a jay is everything that a man is. A jay can cry,