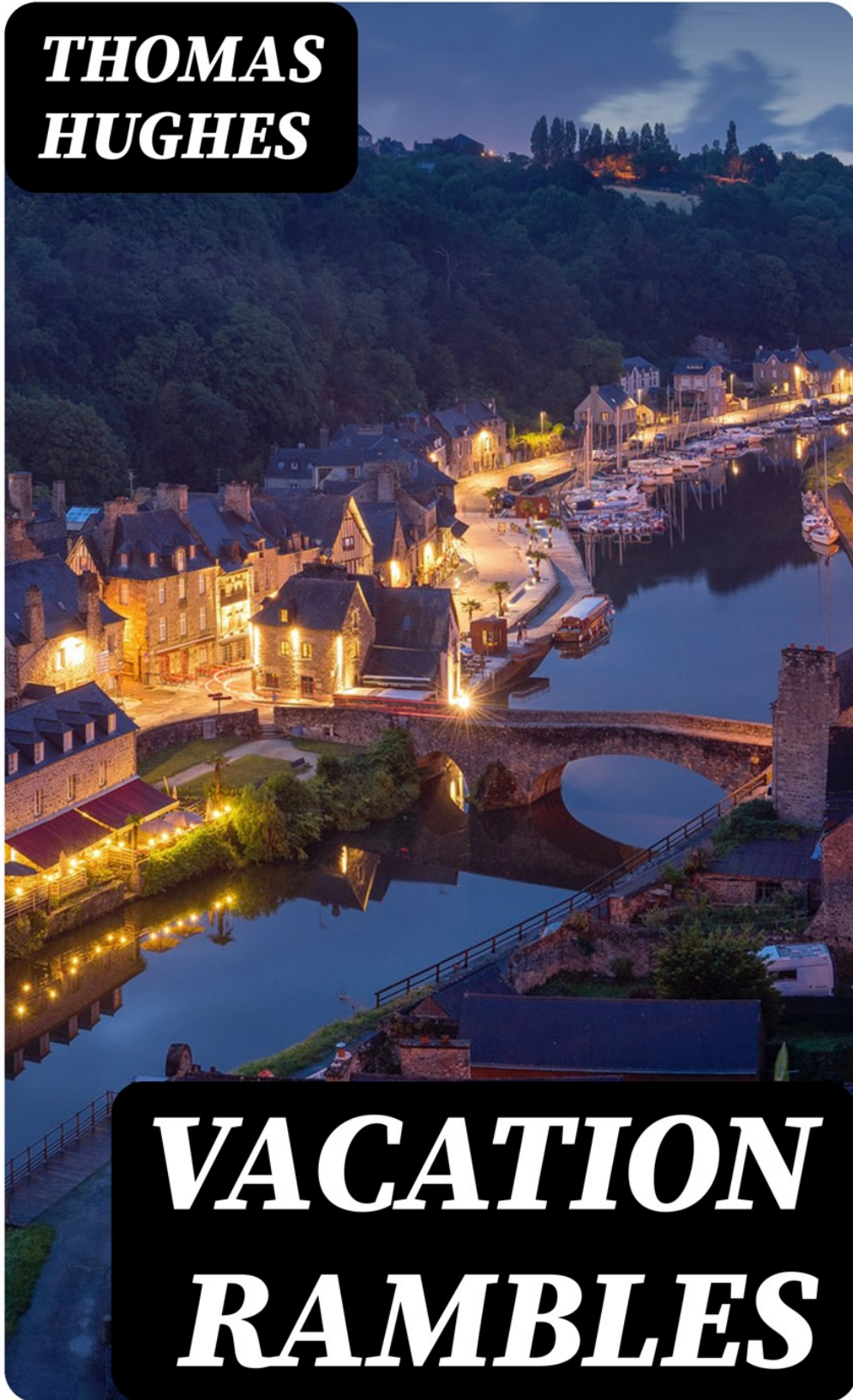


**THOMAS  
HUGHES**

An aerial night photograph of a historic stone town built on a hillside overlooking a river. The town's buildings, featuring dark roofs and stone walls, are illuminated with warm yellow lights. A stone bridge with multiple arches spans the river in the foreground. To the right, a marina is filled with numerous sailboats and yachts. The surrounding hills are dark and forested, with some distant lights visible under a twilight sky.

**VACATION  
RAMBLES**

***THOMAS  
HUGHES***



***VACATION  
RAMBLES***

**Thomas Hughes**

# **Vacation Rambles**

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VACATION RAMBLES

BY

THOMAS HUGHES, Q.C.

(‘VACUUS VIATOR’)

AUTHOR OF ‘TOM BROWN’S SCHOOLDAYS’



# VACATION RAMBLES

BY

THOMAS HUGHES, Q.C.

(‘VACUUS VIATOR’)

AUTHOR OF ‘TOM BROWN’S SCHOOLDAYS’

Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.—JUVENAL

London

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1895

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## PREFACE

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Dear C—— So you want me to hunt up and edit all the “Vacuus Viator” letters which my good old friends the editors of *The Spectator* have been kind enough to print during their long and beneficent ownership of that famous journal! But one who has passed the Psalmist’s “Age of Man,” and is by no means enamoured of his own early lucubrations (so far as he recollects them), must have more diligence and assurance than your father to undertake such a task. But this I can do with pleasure-give them to you to do whatever you like with them, so far as I have any property in, or control over them.

How did they come to be written? Well, in those days we were young married folk with a growing family, and income enough to keep a modest house and pay our way, but none to spare for *menus plaisirs*, of which “globe trotting” (as it is now called) in our holidays was our favourite. So, casting about for the wherewithal to indulge our taste, the “happy thought” came to send letters by the way to my friends at 1 Wellington Street, if they could see their way to take them at the usual tariff for articles. They agreed, and so helped us

to indulge in our favourite pastime, and the habit once contracted has lasted all these years.

How about the name? Well, I took it from the well-known line of Juvenal, "Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator," which may be freely rendered, "The hard-up globe trotter will whistle at the highwayman"; and, I fancy, selected it to remind ourselves cheerfully upon what slender help from the Banking world we managed to trot cheerfully all across Europe.

I will add a family story connected with the name which greatly delighted us at the time. One of the letters reached your grandmother when a small boy-cousin of yours (since developed into a distinguished "dark blue" athlete and M.A. Oxon.) was staying with her for his holidays. He had just begun Latin, and was rather proud of his new lore, so your grandmother asked him how he should construe "Vacuus Viator." After serious thought for a minute, and not without a modest blush, he replied, "I think, granny, it means a wandering cow"! You must make my peace with the "M.A. Oxon." if he should ever discover that I have betrayed this early essay of his in classical translation.

Your loving Father,

**THOS. HUGHES.**

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October 1895.

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# VACATION RAMBLES

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## EUROPE—1862 to 1866

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### Foreign parts, 14th August 1862.

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**D**ear Mr. Editor-There are few sweeter moments in the year than those in which one is engaged in

choosing the vacation hat. No other garment implies so much. A vista of coming idleness floats through the brain as you stop before the hatter's at different points in your daily walk, and consider the last new thing in wideawakes. Then there rises before the mind's eye the imminent bliss of emancipation from the regulation chimney-pot of Cockney England. Two-thirds of all pleasure reside in anticipation and retrospect; and the anticipation of the yearly exodus in a soft felt is amongst the least alloyed of all lookings forward to the jaded man of business. By the way, did it ever occur to you, sir, that herein lies the true answer to that Sphinx riddle so often asked in vain, even of *Notes and Queries*: What is the origin of the proverb "As mad as a hatter"? The inventor of the present hat of civilisation was the typical hatter. There, I will not charge you anything for the solution; but we are not to be for ever oppressed by the results of this great insanity. Better times are in store for us, or I mistake the signs of the times in the streets and shop windows. Beards and chimney-pots cannot long co-exist.

I was very nearly beguiled this year by a fancy article which I saw in several windows. The purchase would have been contrary to all my principles, for the hat in question is a stiff one, with a low, round crown. But its fascination consists in the system of ventilation—all round the inside runs a row of open cells, which, in fact, keep the hat away from the head, and let in so many currents of fresh air. You might fill half the cells with cigars, and so save carrying a case and add to the tastefulness of your hat at the same time, while you would get plenty of air to keep your head cool through the remaining cells.

My principles, however, rallied in time, and I came away with a genuine soft felt after all, with nothing but a small hole on each side for ventilation. The soft felt is the only really catholic cover, equal to all occasions, in which you can do anything; for instance, lie flat on your back on sand or turf, and look straight up into the heavens—the first thing the released Cockney rushes to do. Only once a year may it be always all our lots to get a real taste of the true holiday feeling; to drop down into some handy place, where no letter can find us; to look up into the great sky, and over the laughing sea, and think about nothing; to unstring the bow, and fairly say: “There shall no fight be got out of us just now; so, old world, if you mean to go wrong, you may go and be hanged!” To feel all the time that blessed assurance which does come home to one at such times, and scarcely ever at any other, that our falling out of the fight is not of the least consequence; that, whatever we may do, the old world will not go wrong but right, and ever righter—not our way, nor any other man’s way, but God’s way. A good deal of sneering and snubbing has been wasted of late, sir (as you have had more occasion than one to remark), on us poor folks, who will insist on holding what we find in our Bibles; what has been so gloriously put in other language by the great poet of our time:—

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy’d,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.



I suppose people who feel put out because we won't believe that the greatest part of creation is going to the bad can never in the nature of things get hold of the true holiday feeling, so one is wasting time in wishing it for them. However, I am getting into quite another line from the one I meant to travel in; so shall leave speculating and push across the Channel. There are several questions which might be suggested with advantage to the Civil Service Examiner, to be put to the next Belgium attachés who come before them. Why are Belgian hop-poles, on an average, five or six feet longer than English? How does this extra length affect the crops? The Belgians plant cabbages too, and other vegetables (even potatoes I saw) between the rows of hops. Does it answer? All the English hop-growers, I believe, scout the idea. I failed to discover what wood their hop-poles are? One of my fellow-travellers, by way of being up to everything, informed me that they were grown in Belgium on purpose; a fact which did not help me much. He couldn't say exactly what wood it was. Then a very large proportion of the female population of Belgium spends many hours of the day, at this time of year, on its knees in the fields; and this not only for weeding purposes, for I saw women and girls cutting the aftermath and other light crops in this position. Certainly, they are thus nearer their work, and save themselves stooping; but one has a sort of prejudice against women going about the country on all fours, like Nebuchadnezzar. Is it better for their health? Don't they get housemaid's knees? But, above all, is it we or the Belgians who don't, know in this nineteenth century, how to make corn shocks? In every part of England I have

ever been in in harvest time, we just make up the sheaves and then simply stand six or eight of them together, the ears upwards, and so make our shock. But the Belgian makes his shock of four sheaves, ears upwards, and then on the top of these places another sheaf upside down. This crowning sheaf, which is tied near the bottom, is spread out over the shock, to which it thus forms a sort of makeshift thatch. One of the two methods must be radically wrong. Does this really keep the rain out, and so prevent the ears from growing in damp weather? I should have thought it would only have helped to hold the wet and increase the heat. If so, don't you think it is really almost a *casus belli*? Quin said to the elderly gentleman in the coffee-house (after he had handed him the mustard for the third time in vain), dashing his hand down on the table, "D——— you, sir, you shall eat mustard with your ham!" and so we might say to the Belgians if they are wrong, "You shall make your shocks properly." Fancy two highly civilised nations having gone on these thousand years side by side, growing corn and eating bread without finding out which is the right way to make corn shocks.



**Bonn, 22nd August 1862.**

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I am sitting at a table some forty feet long, from which most of the guests have retired. The few left are smoking and talking gesticulatingly. I am drinking during the intervals of writing to you, sir, a beverage composed of a half flask of white wine, a bottle of seltzer water, and a lump of sugar (if you can get one of ice to add it will improve the mixture). I take it for granted that you despise the Rhine, like most Englishmen, but, sir, I submit that a land where one can get the above potation for a fraction over what one would pay for a pot of beer in England, and can, moreover, get the weather which makes such a drink deliciously refreshing, is not to be lightly thought of. But I am not going into a rhapsody on the Rhine, though I can strongly recommend my drink to all economically disposed travellers.

All I hope to do, is, to gossip with you, as I move along; and as my road lay up the Rhine, you must take that with the rest.

Our first halt on the river was at Bonn. A university town is always interesting, and this one more than most other foreign ones, as the place where Prince Albert's education was begun, and where Bunsen ended his life. I made an effort to get to his grave, which I was told was in a cemetery near the town, but could not find it. I hope it will long remain an object of interest to Englishmen after the generation who knew him has passed away. There is no one to whom we have done more scanty justice, and that unlucky and most unfair essay of W——'s is the crowning injustice of all. I am not going into his merits as a statesman, theologian, or

antiquary, which, indeed, I am wholly incompetent to criticise. The only book of his I ever seriously tried to master, his *Church of the Future*, entirely floored me. But the wonderful depth of his sympathy and insight!—how he would listen to and counsel any man, whether he were bent on discovering the exact shape of the buckle worn by some tribe which disappeared before the Deluge, or upon regenerating the world after the newest nineteenth century pattern, or anything between the two—we may wait a long time before we see anything like it again in a man of his position and learning. And what a place he filled in English society! I believe fine ladies grumbled about “the sort of people” they met at those great gatherings at Carlton Terrace, but they all went, and, what was more to the purpose, all the foremost men and women of the day went, and were seen and heard of hundreds of young men of all nations and callings; and their wives, if they had any, were asked by Bunsen on the most thoroughly catholic principles. And if any man or woman seemed ill at ease, they would find him by their side in a minute, leading them into the balcony, if the night were fine, and pointing out, as he specially loved to do, the contrast of the views up Waterloo Place on the one hand, and across the Green Park to the Abbey and the Houses, on the other, or in some other way setting them at their ease again with a tact as wise and subtle as his learning. But I am getting far from the Rhine, I see, and the University of Bonn. Of course I studied the titles of the books exposed for sale in the windows of the booksellers, and the result, as regards English literature, was far from satisfactory. We were represented in the shop

of the Parker and Son of Bonn, by one vol. of Scott's *Poems*; the puff card of the London Society, with a Millais drawing of a young man and woman thereupon, and nothing more; but, by way of compensation I suppose, a book with a gaudy cover was put in a prominent place, and titled *Tag und Nacht in London*, by Julius Rodenburg. There was a double picture on the cover: above, a street scene, comprising an elaborate equipage with two flunkeys behind, a hansom, figures of Highlanders, girls, blind beggars, etc., and men carrying advertisements of "Samuel Brothers," and "Cremorne Gardens"; while in the lower compartment was an underground scene of a policeman flashing his bull's eye on groups of crouching folks; altogether a loathsome kind of book for one to find doing duty as the representative book of one's country with young Germany. I was a little consoled by seeing a randan named *The Lorelei* lying by the bank, which, though not an outrigger, would not have disgraced any building yard at Lambeth or at Oxford. Very likely it came out of one of them, by the way. But let us hope it is the first step towards the introduction of rowing at Bonn, and that in a few years Oxford and Cambridge may make up crews to go and beat Bonn, and all the other German Universities, and a New England crew from Cambridge, Massachusetts. What a course that reach of the Rhine at Bonn would make! No boat's length to be gained by the toss for choice of sides, as at Henley or Putney; no Berkshire or Middlesex shore to be paid for. A good eight-oar race would teach young Germany more of young England than any amount of perusal of *Tag und Nacht*, I take it. I confess myself to a strong sentimental feeling about Rolandseck.

The story of Roland the Brave is, after all, one of the most touching of all human stories, though tourists who drop their H's may be hurrying under his tower every day in cheap steamers; and it is one of a group of the most characteristic stories of the age of chivalry, all having a connecting link at Roncesvalles. What other battle carries one into three such groups of romance as this of Roland, the grim tragedy of Bernard del Carpio and his dear father, and that of the peerless Durandarté? When I was a boy there were ballads on all these subjects which were very popular, but are nearly forgotten by this time. I used to have great trouble to preserve a serene front, I know, whenever I heard one of them well sung, especially that of "Durandarté" (by Monk Lewis), I believe. Ay, and after the lapse of many years I scarcely know where to go for the beau ideal of knighthood summed up in a few words better than to that same ballad:

Kind in manners, fair in favour,  
Mild in temper, fierce in fight,—  
Warrior purer, gentler, braver,  
Never shall behold the light.

But much as I prize Rolandseck for its memories of chivalric constancy and tenderness, Mayence is my favourite place on the Rhine, as the birthplace of Gutenberg, the adopted home, and centre of the work of our great countryman, St. Boniface, and the most fully peopled and stirring town of modern Rhineland. We had only an hour to spend there, so I sallied at once into the town to search for Gutenberg's house—the third time I have started on the

same errand, and with the same result. I didn't find it. But there it is; at least the guide-books say so. In vain did I beseechingly appeal to German after German, man, woman, and maid, "Wo ist das Haus von Gutenberg—das Haus wo Gutenberg wohnte?" I got either a blank stare, convincing me of the annoying fact that not a word I said was understood, or directions to the statue, which I knew as well as any of them. At last I fell upon a young priest, and, accosting him in French, got some light out of him. He offered to take me part of the way, and as we walked side by side, suddenly turned to me with an air of pleased astonishment, and said, "You admire Gutenberg, then?" To which I replied, "Father!" Why, sir, how in the world should you and I, and thousands more indifferent modern Englishmen, not to mention those of all other nations, get our bread but for him and his pupil Caxton? However, the young priest could only take me to within two streets, and then went on his way, leaving me with express directions, in trying to follow which I fell speedily upon a German fair. I am inclined to think that there are no boys in Germany, and that, if there were, there would be nothing for them to do; but for children there is no such place. This fair at Mayence was a perfect little paradise for children. Think of our wretched merry-go-rounds, sir, with nothing but some six or eight stupid hobby-horses revolving on bare poles, and then imagine such merry-go-rounds as those of Mayence fair. They look like large umbrella tents ornamented with gay flags and facetious paintings outside, and hung within, round the central post which supports the whole, with mirrors, flags, bells, pictures, and bright coloured drapery.

Half concealed by the red or blue drapery, is the proprietor of the establishment, who grinds famous tunes on a first-rate barrel organ when the merry-go-round is set going, and keeps an eye on his juvenile fares. The whole is turned by a pony or by machinery. Then, for mounts, the children have choice of some thirty hobby-horses, or can ride on swans or dragons, richly caparisoned, or in easy *vis-à-vis* seats. When the complement of youthful riders is obtained, on a signal off goes the barrel organ and the pony and the whole concern—pictures, looking-glasses, bells, drapery, and all begin to revolve, with a fascinating jingling and emphasis! and at twice the pace of any British merry-go-round I ever saw. It is very comical to watch the gravity of the little *Deutsch* riders. They are of all classes, from the highly dressed little *madchen*, down to the ragged carter-boy, with a coil of rope over his shoulder, and no shoes, riding a gilded swan, but all impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. But here I am running on about fun of the fair, and missing Gutenberg's house, as I did in reality, finding in the midst of my staring and grinning that I had only time to get to the boat; so with one look at Gutenberg's statue I went off.

The crops through all these glorious Rhine valleys right away up to Heidelberg look splendid, particularly the herb pantagruelion, which is more largely grown than when I was last here. Rope enough will be made this year from hemp grown between Darmstadt and Heidelberg to hang all the scoundrels in the world, and the honest men to boot; and the tobacco looks magnificent. They were gathering the leaves as we passed. A half-picked tobacco field, with the



bare stumps at one end, and the rich-leaved plants at the other, has a comically forlorn look.

Heidelberg I thought more beautiful than ever; and since I had been there a very fine hotel, one of the best I have ever been in, has been built close to the station, with a glass gallery 100 feet long, and more, adjoining the "Speisesaal," in which you may gastronomise to your heart's content, at the most moderate figure. Here we bid adieu to the Rhineland.

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## **Munich, 29th August 1862.**

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**A** bird's-eye view of any country must always be unsatisfactory. Still it is better than nothing, and in the absence of a human view, one may be thankful for it. My view of Wurtemberg was of the most bird's-eye kind. The first thing that strikes one is the absence of all fences except in the immediate neighbourhood of towns. Even the railway has no fence, except for a few yards where a road crosses the line, and here and there a hedge of acacia, or barberry bushes (the berries were hanging red ripe on the latter), which are very

pretty, but would not in any place keep out a seriously-minded cow or pig.

Wurtemberg is addicted to the cultivation of crops which minister to man's luxuries rather than to his necessities. The proportion of land under fruit, poppies, tobacco, and hops, to that under corn, was very striking. There was a splendid hemp crop here also. They were gathering the poppy-heads, as we passed, into sacks. The women and girls both here and in Bavaria seem to do three-fourths of the agricultural work; the harder, such as reaping and mowing, as well as the lighter. The beds of peat are magnificent, and very neatly managed. At first I thought we had entered enormous black brick-fields, for the peat is cut into small brick-shaped pieces, and stacked in rows, just as one sees in the best managed of our brick-fields. As one nears Stuttgart the village churches begin to show signs of the difference in longitude. Gothic spires and arches give place to Eastern clock-towers, with tops like the cupolas of mosques, tinned over, and glittering in the hot sun. I hear that it was a fancy of the late Emperor Joseph to copy the old enemies of his country in architecture; but that would not account for the prevalence of the habit in his neighbour's territory. I fancy one begins to feel the old neighbourhood of the Turks in these parts. The houses are all roomy, and there is no sign of poverty amongst the people. They have a fancy for wearing no shoes and scant petticoats in many districts; but it is evidently a matter of choice. Altogether, the whole fine, open, well-wooded country, from Bruchsal to Munich, gives one the feeling that an easy-going, well-to-do people inhabit and enjoy it.

As for Munich itself, it is a city which surprised me more pleasantly than almost any one I ever remember to have entered. One had a sort of vague notion that the late king had a taste for the fine arts, and spent a good deal of his own and his subjects' money in indulging the taste aforesaid in his capital. But one also knew that he had been tyrannised over by Lola Montes, and had made a countess of her—and had not succeeded in weathering 1848; so that, on the whole, one had no great belief in any good work from such a ruler.

Munich gives one a higher notion of the ex-king; as long as the city stands, he will have left his mark on it. On every side there are magnificent new streets, and public buildings and statues; the railway terminus is the finest I have ever seen; every church, from the Cathedral downwards, is in beautiful order, and highly decorated; and it is not only in the public buildings that one meets with the evidences of care and taste. The hotel in which we stayed, for instance, is built of brick, covered with some sort of cement, which gives it the appearance of terra-cotta, and is for colour the most fascinating building material. The ceilings and cornices of the rooms are all carefully and tastefully painted, and all about the town one sees frescoes and ornamentation of all kinds, which show that the people delight in seeing their city look bright and gay; and every one admits that all this is due to the ex-king Lewis. But he has another claim on the gratitude of the good folk of Munich. The Bavarians were given to beer above all other people, and the people of Munich above all other Bavarians, long before he came to the throne; and former kings, availing themselves of the

national taste, had established a "Hof-Breihaus," where the monarch sold the national beverage to his people. King Lewis found the character of the royal beer not what it should be, and the rest of the metropolitan brewers were also falling away into evil ways of adulterating and drugging. He reformed the "Hof-Breihaus," so that for many years nothing but the soundest possible beer was brewed there, which is sold to the buyers and yet cheaper than in any other house in Munich. The public taste has been thus so highly educated that there is no selling unwholesome beer now. A young artist took me to this celebrated tap. Unluckily it was a wet evening, so we had to sit at one of the tables, under a long line of sheds, instead of in an adjacent garden. There was a great crowd, some 300 or 400 imbibers jammed together, of all ranks. At our table the company were the artist and myself, a Middlesex magistrate, two privates, and a non-commissioned officer, and a man whom I set down as a small farmer. My back rubbed against a vociferous student, who was hobnobbing with all comers. There were Tyrolese and other costumes about, one or two officers, and a motley crowd of work people and other folk. The royal brew-house is in such good repute that no trouble whatever is taken about anything but having enough beer and a store of stone drinking-mugs, with tops to them forthcoming. Cask after cask is brought out and tapped in the vaulted entrance to the cellars, and a queue of expectant thirsty souls wait for their turn. I only know as I drank it how heartily I wished that my poor overworked brethren at home could see and taste the like. But it would not pay any of our great brewers to devote themselves to

the task of selling really wholesome drink to the poor; and I fear the Prince of Wales is not likely to come to the rescue. He might find easier jobs no doubt, but none that would benefit the bodily health of his people more. The beer is so light that it is scarcely possible to get drunk on it. Many of the frequenters of the place sit there boosing for four or five hours daily, and the chance visitors certainly do not spare the liquor; but I saw no approach to drunkenness, except a good deal of loud talk.

The picture collections, which form, I believe, the great attraction of Munich, disappointed me, especially the modern ones in the new Pinacothek, collected by the ex-king, and to which he is constantly adding now that he is living at his ease as a private gentleman. I daresay that they may be very fine, but scarcely any of them bite; I like a picture with a tooth in it—something which goes into you, and which you can never forget, like the great picture of Nero walking over the burning ruins of Rome, or the execution picture in the Spanish department, or the Christian slave sleeping before the opening of the amphitheatre, or Judas coming on the men making the cross, in the International Exhibition. I have read no art criticism for years, so that I do not know whether I am not talking great heresy. But, heresy or not, I am for the right of every man to his own opinion in matters of art, and if an inferior painting gives me real pleasure on account of its subject, I mean to enjoy it and praise it, all the fine art critics in Christendom notwithstanding. The pictures of the most famous places in Greece, made since the election of the Bavarian Prince Otho to the throne of Greece, have a

special interest of their own; but apart from these and some half dozen others, I would far sooner spend a day in our yearly exhibition than in the new Pinacothek. The colossal bronze statue of Bavaria is the finest thing of the kind I have ever seen; but the most interesting sight in Munich to an Englishman must be the Church of St. Boniface, not the exquisite colouring proportions, or the magnificent monolithic columns of gray marble, but the frescoes, which tell the story of the saint from the time when he knelt and prayed by his sick father's bed to the bringing back of his martyred body to Mayence Cathedral. The departure of St. Boniface from Netley Abbey for Rome, to be consecrated Apostle to the Germans, struck me as the best of them; but, altogether, they tell very vividly the whole history of the Englishman who has trodden most nearly in St. Paul's footsteps. We have reared plenty of great statesmen, poets, philosophers, soldiers, but only this one great missionary. Yet no nation in the world has more need of St. Bonifaces than we just now. The field is ever widening, in India, China, Africa. We can conquer and rule, and teach the heathen to make railways and trade, but don't seem to be able to get at their hearts and consciences. One fears almost that were a St. Boniface to come, we should only measure him by our common tests, and probably pronounce him worthless, or a dangerous enthusiast. But one day, when men's work shall be tested by altogether different tests from ours of the enlightened nineteenth century kind, it will considerably surprise some of us to see how the order of merit will come out. We shall be likely to have to ask concerning St. Boniface—whose name is scarcely known to one Englishman