


***JOHN  
MACGREGOR***



***A THOUSAND MILES  
IN THE ROB ROY  
CANOE ON RIVERS  
AND LAKES  
OF EUROPE***

**John MacGregor**

# **A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe on Rivers and Lakes of Europe**

EAN 8596547253259

DigiCat, 2022

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# PREFACE.

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THE voyage about to be described was made last Autumn in a small Canoe, with a double paddle and sails, which the writer managed alone.

The route led sometimes over mountains and through forests and plains, where the boat had to be carried or dragged.

The waters navigated were as follows:—

The Rivers Thames, Sambre, Meuse, Rhine, Main, Danube, Reuss, Aar, Ill, Moselle, Meurthe, Marne, and Seine.

The Lakes Titisee, Constance, Unter See, Zurich, Zug, and Lucerne, together with six canals in Belgium and France, and two expeditions in the open sea of the British Channel.

TEMPLE, LONDON,  
*April 25, 1866.*

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THE AUTHOR'S PROFITS FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS, WERE GIVEN TO THE ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION AND TO THE SHIPWRECKED MARINERS' SOCIETY.

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# CHAPTER I.

## Table of Contents

Canoe Travelling—Other Modes—The Rob Roy—Hints—Tourists—The Rivers—The Dress—I and We—The Election.

THE object of this book is to describe a new mode of travelling on the Continent, by which new people and things are met with, while healthy exercise is enjoyed, and an interest ever varied with excitement keeps fully alert the energies of the mind.

Some years ago the Water Lily was rowed by four men on the Rhine and on the Danube, and its "log" delighted all readers. Afterwards, the boat Water Witch laboured up French rivers, and through a hundred tedious locks on the Bâle canal. But these and other voyages of three or five men in an open boat were necessarily very limited. In the wildest parts of the best rivers the channel is too narrow for oars, or, if wide, it is too shallow for a row-boat; and the tortuous passages, the rocks and banks, the weeds and snags, the milldams, barriers, fallen trees, rapids, whirlpools, and waterfalls that constantly occur on a river winding among hills, make those very parts where the scenery is wildest and best to be quite unapproachable in an open boat, for it would be swamped by the sharp waves, or upset over the sunken rocks which it is utterly impossible for a steersman to see.

But these very things, which are obstacles or dangers to the "pair oar," become interesting features to the voyager in a covered canoe. For now, as he sits in his little bark, he looks forward, and not backward. He sees all his course, and

the scenery besides. With one powerful sweep of his paddle he can instantly turn the canoe, when only a foot distant from fatal destruction. He can steer within an inch in a narrow place, or pass through reeds and weeds, branches and grass; can hoist and lower his sail without changing his seat; can shove with his paddle when aground, or jump out in good time to prevent a decided smash. He can wade and haul the light craft over shallows, or drag it on dry ground, through fields and hedges, over dykes, barriers, and walls; can carry it by hand up ladders and stairs, and can transport his boat over high mountains and broad plains in a cart drawn by a horse, a bullock, or a cow.

Nay, more than this, the covered canoe is far stronger than an open boat, and may be fearlessly dropped headforemost into a deep pool, a lock, or a millrace, and yet, when the breakers are high, in the open sea or in fresh water rapids, they can only wash over the covered deck, while it is always dry within.

Again, the canoe is safer than a rowing-boat, because you sit so low in it, and never require to shift your place or lose hold of the paddle; while for comfort during long hours, for days and weeks of hard work, it is evidently the best, because you lean all the time against a backboard, and the moment you rest the paddle on your lap you are as much at ease as in an arm-chair; so that, while drifting along with the current or the wind, you can gaze around, and eat or read or chat with the starers on the bank, and yet, in a moment of sudden danger, the hands are at once on the faithful paddle ready for action.

Finally, you can lie at full length in the canoe, with the sail as an awning for the sun, or a shelter for rain, and you can sleep in it thus at night, under cover, with an opening for air to leeward, and at least as much room for turning in your bed as sufficed for the great Duke of Wellington; or, if you are tired of the water for a time, you can leave your boat at an inn—it will not be "eating its head off," like a horse; or you can send it home or sell it, and take to the road yourself, or sink into the dull old cushions of the "Première Classe," and dream you are seeing the world.

With such advantages, then, and with good weather and good health, the canoe voyage about to be described was truly delightful, and I never enjoyed so much continuous pleasure in any other tour.

But, before this deliberate assertion has weight with intending "canoists," it may well be asked from one who thus praises the paddle, "Has he travelled in other ways, so as to know their several pleasures? Has he climbed glaciers and volcanoes, dived into caves and catacombs, trotted in the Norway carriole, ambled on an Arab, and galloped on the Russian steppes? Does he know the charms of a Nile boat, or a Trinity Eight, or a sail in the ægean, or a mule in Spain? Has he swung upon a camel, or glided in a sleigh, or trundled in a Rantoone?"

Yes, he has most thoroughly enjoyed these and other modes of locomotion in the four corners of the world; but the pleasure in the canoe was far better than all.

The weather last summer was, indeed, exceptionally good; but then rain would have diminished some of the difficulties, though it might have been a bore to paddle ten



hours in a downpour. Two inches more of water in the rivers would have saved many a grounding and wading, while, at worst, the rain could have wetted only the upper man, which a cape can cover; so, even in bad weather, give me the canoe.

Messrs. Searle and Sons, of Lambeth, soon built for me the very boat I wanted.

The Rob Roy is built of oak, and covered fore and aft with cedar. She is made just short enough to go into the German railway waggons; that is to say, fifteen feet in length, twenty-eight inches broad, nine inches deep, weighs eighty pounds, and draws three inches of water, with an inch of keel. A paddle seven feet long, with a blade at each end, and a lug sail and jib, are the means of propulsion; and a pretty blue silk Union Jack is the only ornament.

The elliptic hole in which I sit is fifty-four inches long and twenty broad, and has a macintosh cover fastened round the combing and to a button on my breast; while between my knees is my baggage for three months, in a black bag one foot square and five inches deep.

But, having got this little boat, the difficulty was to find where she could go to, or what rivers were at once feasible to paddle on, and pretty to see.

Inquiries in London as to this had no result. Even the Paris Boat Club knew nothing of French rivers. The best German and Austrian maps were frequently wrong. They made villages on the banks which I found were a mile away in a wood, and so were useless to one who had made up his mind (a good resolve) never to leave his boat.

It was soon, therefore, evident that, after quitting the Rhine, this was to be a voyage of discovery. And as I would most gladly have accepted any hints on the matter myself, so I venture to hope that this narrative will lessen the trouble, while it stimulates the desire of the numerous travellers who will spend their vacation in a canoe.[1.]

Not that I shall attempt to make a "handbook" to any of the streams. The man who has a spark of enterprise would turn from a river of which every reach was mapped and its channels all lettered. Fancy the free traveller, equipped for a delicious summer of savage life, quietly submitting to be cramped and tutored by a "Chart of the Upper Mosel," in the style of the following extracts copied literally from two Guide-books;—

(1) "Turn to the r. (right), cross the brook, and ascend by a broad and steep forest track (in 40 min.) to the hamlet of Albersbach, situate in the midst of verdant meadows. In five min. more a cross is reached, where the path to the l. must be taken; in 10 min. to the r., in the hollow, to the saw mill; in 10 min. more through the gate to the r.; in 3 min. the least trodden path to the l. leading to the Gaschpels Hof; after  $\frac{1}{4}$  hr. the stony track into the wood must be ascended," &c., &c.—*From B——'s Rhine, p. 94.*

(2) "*To the ridge of the Riffelberg 8,000 ft. Hotel on top very good. 2 hrs. up. Guide 4 fr. Horse and man 10 fr. Path past the Church: then l. over fields; then up through a wood 1 hr. Past châteaux: then r. across a stream.*"— ——'s *Handbook.*

This sort of guide-book is not to be ridiculed. It is useful for some travellers as a ruled copy-book is of use to some

writers. For first tours it may be needful and pleasant to have all made easy, to be carried in steamers or railways like a parcel, to stop at hotels Anglified by the crowd of English guests, and to ride, walk, or drive among people who know already just what you will want to eat, and see, and do.

Year after year it is enough of excitement to some tourists to be shifted in squads from town to town, according to the routine of an excursion ticket. Those who are a little more advanced will venture to devise a tour from the mazy pages of Bradshaw, and with portmanteau and bag, and hat-box and sticks, they find more than enough of judgment and tact is needed when they arrive in a night train, and must fix on an omnibus in a strange town. Safe at last in the bedroom of the hotel, they cannot but exclaim with satisfaction "Well, here we are all right at last!"

But after mountains and caves, churches and galleries, ruins and battle-fields have been pretty well seen, and after tact and fortitude have been educated by experience, the tourist is ready for new lines of travel which might have given him at first more anxiety than pleasure, and these he will find in deeper searches among the natural scenery and national character of the very countries he has only skimmed before.

The rivers and streams on the Continent are scarcely known to the English tourist, and the beauty and life upon them no one has well seen.

In his guide-book route, indeed, from town to town, the tourist has crossed this and that stream—has admired a few yards of the water, and has then left it for ever. He is carried

again on a noble river by night in a steamboat, or is whisked along its banks in a railway, and, between two tunnels, gets a moment's glimpse at the lovely water, and lo! it is gone.

But a mine of rich beauty remains there to be explored, and fresh gems of life and character are waiting there to be gathered. These are not mapped and labelled and ticketed in any handbook yet; and far better so, for the enjoyment of such treasures is enhanced to the best traveller by the energy and pluck required to get at them.

On this new world of waters we are to launch the boat, the man, and his baggage, for we must describe all three,

"Arma virumque canoe."

So what sort of dress did he wear?

The clothes I took for this tour consisted of a complete suit of grey flannel for use in the boat, and another suit of light but ordinary dress for shore work and Sundays.

The "Norfolk jacket" is a loose frock-coat, like a blouse, with shoulder-straps, and belted at the waist, and garnished by six pockets. With this excellent new-fashioned coat, a something in each of its pockets, and a Cambridge straw hat, canvas wading shoes, blue spectacles, a waterproof overcoat, and my spare jib for a sun shawl, there was sure to be a full day's enjoyment in defiance of rain or sun, deeps or shallows, hunger or *ennui*.

Four hours' work to begin, and then three of rest or floating, reading or sailing, and again, a three hours' heavy pull, and then with a swim in the river or a bath at the inn, a change of garments and a pleasant walk, all was made quite

fresh again for a lively evening, a hearty dinner, talk, books, pictures, letters, and bed.

Now I foresee that in the description of this tour I shall have to write "I," and the word "me" must be used by me very often indeed; but having the misfortune to be neither an Emperor, an editor, nor a married man, who can speak in the plural, I cannot help it if I am put down as a bachelor *egotist*, reserving the "we" for myself and my boat.

The manner of working the double-bladed paddle was easily learned by a few days' practice on the Thames, and so excellent is the exercise for the muscles of the limbs and body that I have continued it at intervals, even during the winter, when a pretty sharp "look out" must be kept to pilot safely among the red and yellow lights of steamers, barges, embankments, and bridges in an evening's voyage from Putney to Westminster.

All being ready and the weather very hot at the end of July, when the country had caught the election fever, and M.P.'s had run off to scramble for seats, and the lawyers had run after them to thicken the bustle, and the last bullet at Wimbledon had come "thud" on the target, it was time for the Rob Roy to start.

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# CHAPTER II.

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### THE START.

The Thames—The Cornwall—Porpoises—A Gale—The Channel—Ostend Canal—The Meuse—Earl of Aberdeen—Holland—The Rhine—The Premier's Son—The River Main—Heron stalking—The Prince of Wales.

THE Rob Roy bounded away joyously on the top of the tide through Westminster Bridge, and swiftly shooting the narrow piles at Blackfriars, danced along the waves of the Pool, which looked all golden in the morning sun, but were in fact of veritable pea-soup hue.

A fine breeze at Greenwich enabled me to set the new white sail, and we skimmed along with a cheery hissing sound. At such times the river is a lively scene with steamers and sea-bound ships, bluff little tugs, and big looming barges. I had many a chat with the passing sailors, for it was well to begin this at once, seeing that every day afterwards I was to have talk with the river folk in English, French, Dutch, German, or else some hotchpotch patois.

The bargee is not a bad fellow if you begin with good humour, but he will not stand banter. Often they began the colloquy with, "Holloah you two!" or "Any room inside?" or "Got your life insured, Gov'nor?" but I smiled and nodded to every one, and every one on every river and lake was friendly to me.

Gravesend was to be the port for the night, but Purfleet looked so pretty that I took a tack or two to reconnoitre, and

resolved to stop at the very nice hotel on the river, which I beg to recommend.

While lolling about in my boat at anchor in the hot sun a fly stung my hand; and although it was not remarked at once, the arm speedily swelled, and I had to poultice the hand at night and to go to church next day with a sling, which appendage excited a great deal of comment in the village Sunday-school. This little incident is mentioned because it was the only occasion on which any insect troubled me on the voyage, though several croakers had predicted that in rivers and marshes there would be hundreds of wasps, venomous flies, and gnats, not to mention other residents within doors.

Just as I entered the door of the quiet little church, an only gentleman about to go in fell down dead in the path. It was impossible not to be much impressed with this sudden death as a solemn warning, especially to one in vigorous health.

The "Cornwall" Reformatory School-ship is moored at Purfleet. Some of the boys came ashore for a walk, neatly clad and very well behaved. Captain Burton, who commands this interesting vessel, received me on board very kindly, and the evening service between decks was a sight to remember for ever.

About 100 boys sat in rows along the old frigate's main-deck, with the open ports looking on the river, now reddened by a setting sun, and the cool air pleasantly fanning us. The lads chanted the Psalms to the music of a harmonium, played with excellent feeling and good taste, and the Captain read a suitable portion from some selected

book, and then prayer was offered; and all this was by and for poor vagrant boys, whose claim on society is great indeed if measured by the wrong it has done them in neglect if not in precept, nay, even in example.

Next morning the canoe was lowered down a ladder from the hay-loft, where it had been kept (it had to go up into many far more strange places in subsequent days), and the Cornwall boys bid me a pleasant voyage—a wish most fully realized indeed.

After taking in supplies at Gravesend, I shoved off into the tide, and lit a cigar, and now I felt I had fairly started. Then there began a strange feeling of *freedom* and *novelty* which lasted to the end of the tour.

Something like it is felt when you first march off with a knapsack ready to walk anywhere, or when you start alone in a sailing-boat for a long cruise.

But then in walking you are bounded by every sea and river, and in a common sailing-boat you are bounded by every shallow and shore; whereas, I was in a canoe, which could be paddled or sailed, hauled, or carried over land or water to Rome, if I liked, or to Hong-Kong.

The wind was fair again, and up went my sail. The reaches got wider and the water more salt, but I knew every part of the course, for I had once spent a fortnight about the mouth of the Thames in my pretty little sailing-boat, the Kent, alone, with only a dog, a chart, a compass, and a bachelor's kettle.

The new steamer Alexandra, which plies from London daily, passed me here, its high-terraced American decks covered with people, and the crowd gave a fine loud cheer



to the Rob Roy, for the newspapers had mentioned its departure. Presently the land seemed to fade away at each side in pale distance, and the water was more sea than river, till near the Nore we entered a great shoal of porpoises. Often as I have seen these harmless and agile playfellows I had never been so close to them before, and in a boat so small as to be almost disregarded by them, wily though they be. I allowed the canoe to rock on the waves, and the porpoises frequently came near enough to be struck by my paddle, but I did not wage war, for a flap of a tail would have soon turned me upside down.

After a pleasant sail to Southend and along the beach, the wind changed, and a storm of heavy rain had to be met in its teeth by taking to the paddle, until near Shoeburyness, where I meant to stop a day or two in the camp of the National Artillery Association, which was assembled here for its first Prize shooting.

The Royal Artillery received us Volunteers on this occasion with the greatest kindness, and as they had appropriated quarters of officers absent on leave for the use of members of the Council of the Association, I was soon comfortably ensconced. The camp, however, in a wet field was moist enough; but the fine tall fellows who had come from Yorkshire, Somerset, or Aberdeen to handle the 68-pounders, trudged about in the mud with good humour and thick boots, and sang round the camp-fire in a drizzle of rain, and then pounded away at the targets next day, for these were volunteers of the right sort.

As the wind had then risen to a gale it seemed a good opportunity for a thorough trial of the canoe in rough water,

so I paddled her to a corner where she would be least injured by being thrown ashore after an upset, and where she would be safe while I might run to change clothes after a swim.

The buoyancy of the boat astonished me, and her stability was in every way satisfactory. In the midst of the waves I even managed to rig up the mast and sail, and as I had no baggage on board and so did not mind being perfectly wet through in the experiments, there was nothing left untried, and the confidence then gained for after times was invaluable.

Early next morning I started directly in the teeth of the wind, and paddled against a very heavy sea to Southend, where a nice warm bath was enjoyed while my clothes were getting dried, and then the Rob Roy had its first railway journey in one of the little cars on the Southend pier to the steamboat.

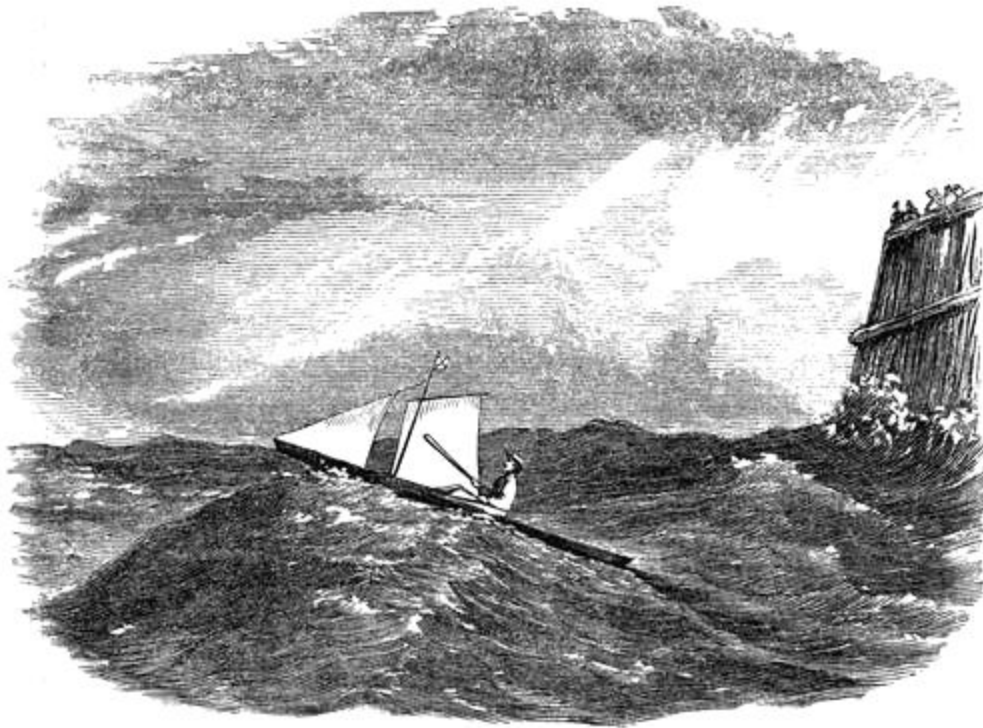
It was amusing to see how much interest and curiosity the canoe excited even on the Thames, where all kinds of new and old and wonderful boats may be seen. The reasons for this I never exactly made out. Some wondered to see so small a boat at sea, others had never seen a canoe before, the manner of rowing was new to most, and the sail made many smile. The graceful shape of the boat pleased others, the cedar covering and the jaunty flag, and a good many stared at the captain's uniform, and they stared more after they had asked, "Where are you going to?" and were often told, "I really do not know."

From Sheerness to Dover was the route, and on the branch line train the Rob Roy had to be carried on the coals

in the engine-tender, with torrents of rain and plenty of hot sparks driven into her by the gale; but after some delay at a junction the canoe was formally introduced to a baggage-waggon and ticketed like a portmanteau, the first of a series of transits in this way.

The London Chatham and Dover Railway Company took this new kind of "box" as passengers' luggage, so I had nothing to pay, and the steamer to Ostend was equally large-hearted, so I say, "Canoemen, choose this channel."

But before crossing to Belgium I had a day at Dover, where I bought some stuff and had a jib made for the boat by deft and fair fingers, had paddled the Rob Roy on the green waves which toss about off the pier-head most delectably. The same performance was repeated on the top of the swell, tumbling and breaking on the "digue"[\[II.\]](#) at Ostend, where, even with little wind, the rollers ran high on a strong ebb tide. Fat bathers wallowed in the shallows, and fair ones, dressed most bizarre, were swimming like ducks. All of these, and the babies squalling hysterically at each dip, were duly admired; and then I had a quieter run under sail on their wide and straight canal.



Rollers off the Digue.

With just a little persuasion the railway people consented to put the canoe in the baggage-van, and to charge a franc or two for "extra luggage" to Brussels. Here she was carried on a cart through the town to another station, and in the evening we were at Namur, where the Rob Roy was housed for the night in the landlord's private parlour, resting gracefully upon two chairs.

Two porters carried her through the streets next morning, and I took a paddle on the Sambre, but very soon turned down stream and smoothly glided to the Meuse.

Glancing water, brilliant sun, a light boat, and a light heart, all your baggage on board, and on a fast current,—who would exchange this for any diligence or railway, or steamboat, or horse? A pleasant stream was enough to

satisfy at this early period of the voyage, for the excitement of rocks and rapids had not yet become a charm.

It is good policy, too, that a quiet, easy, respectable sort of river like the Meuse should be taken in the earlier stage of a water tour, when there is novelty enough in being on a river at all. The river-banks one would call tame if seen from shore are altogether new when you open up the vista from the middle of the stream. The picture that is rolled sideways to the common traveller now pours out from before you, ever enlarging from a centre, and in the gentle sway of the stream the landscape seems to swell on this side and on that with new things ever advancing to meet you in succession.

How careful I was at the first shallow! getting out and wading as I lowered the boat. A month afterwards I would dash over them with a shove here and a stroke there in answer to a hoarse croak of the stones at the bottom grinding against my keel.

And the first barrier—how anxious it made me, to think by what means shall I get over. A man appeared just in time (N.B.—They *always* do), and twopence made him happy for his share of carrying the boat round by land, and I jumped in again as before.

Sailing was easy, too, in a fine wide river, strong and deep, and with a favouring breeze, and when the little steamer passed I drew alongside and got my penny roll and penny glass of beer, while the wondering passengers (the first of many amazed foreigners) smiled, chattered, and then looked grave—for was it not indecorous to laugh at an Englishman evidently mad, poor fellow?

The voyage was chequered by innumerable little events, all perfectly different from those one meets on shore, and when I came to the forts at Huy and knew the first day's work was done, the persuasion was complete that quite a new order of sensations had been set going.

Next morning I found the boat safe in the coach-house and the sails still drying on the harness-pegs, where we had left them, but the ostler and all his folks were nowhere to be seen. Everybody had gone to join the long funeral procession of a great musician, who lived fifty years at Huy, though we never heard of him before, or of Huy either; yet you see it is in our Map at [page 291](#).

The pleasure of meandering with a new river is very peculiar and fascinating. Each few yards brings a novelty, or starts an excitement. A crane jumps up here, a duck flutters there, splash leaps a gleaming trout by your side, the rushing sound of rocks warns you round that corner, or anon you come suddenly upon a millrace. All these, in addition to the scenery and the people and the weather, and the determination that you *must* get on, over, through, or under every difficulty, and cannot leave your boat in a desolate wold, and ought to arrive at a house before dark, and that your luncheon bag is long since empty; all these, I say, keep the mind awake, which would perchance dose away for 100 miles in a first-class carriage.

It is, as in the voyage of life, that our cares and hardships are our very Mentors of living. Our minds would only vegetate if all life were like a straight canal, and we in a boat being towed along it. The afflictions that agitate the soul are as its shallows, rocks, and whirlpools, and the bark

that has not been tossed on billows knows not half the sweetness of the harbour of rest.

The river soon got fast and lively, and hour after hour of vigorous work prepared me well for breakfast. Trees seemed to spring up in front and grow tall, but it was only because I came rapidly towards them. Pleasant villages floated as it were to meet me, gently moving. All life got to be a smooth and gliding thing, of dreamy pictures and far-off sounds, without fuss and without dust or anything sudden or loud, till at length the bustle and hammers of Liege neared the Rob Roy—for it was always the objects and not myself that seemed to move. Here I saw a fast steamer, the Seraing, propelled by water forced from its sides, and as my boat hopped and bobbed in the steamer's waves we entered a dock together, and the canoe was soon hoisted into a garden for the night.

Gun-barrels are the rage in Liege. Everybody there makes or carries or sells gun-barrels. Even women walk about with twenty stocked rifles on their backs, and each rifle, remember, weighs 10 lbs. They sell plenty of fruit in the market, and there are churches well worth a visit here, but gun-barrels, after all, are the prevailing idea of the place.

However, it is not my purpose to describe the towns seen on this tour. I had seen Liege well, years before, and indeed almost every town mentioned in these pages. The charm then of the voyage was not in going to strange lands, but in seeing old places in a new way.

Here at length the Earl of Aberdeen met me, according to our plans arranged long before. He had got a canoe built for

the trip, but a foot longer and two inches narrower than the Rob Roy, and, moreover, made of fir instead of strong oak. It was sent from London to Liege, and the "combing" round the edge of the deck was broken in the journey, so we spent some hours at a cabinet-maker's, where it was neatly mended.

Launching our boats unobserved on the river, we soon left Liege in the distance and braved the hot sun.

The pleasant companionship of two travellers, each quite free in his own boat, was very enjoyable. Sometimes we sailed, then paddled a mile or two, or joined to help the boats over a weir, or towed them along while we walked on the bank for a change.[III.]

Each of us took whichever side of the river pleased him best, and we talked across long acres of water between, to the evident surprise of sedate people on the banks, who often could see only one of the strange elocutionists, the other being hidden by bushes or tall sedge. When talking thus aloud had amplified into somewhat uproarious singing, the chorus was far more energetic than harmonious, but then the Briton is at once the most timid and shy of mortal travellers, and the most *outré* and singular when he chooses to be free.

The midday beams on a river in August are sure to conquer your fresh energies at last, and so we had to pull up at a village for bread and wine.

The moment I got into my boat again a shrill whining cry in the river attracted my attention, and it came from a poor little boy, who had somehow fallen into the water, and was now making his last faint efforts to cling to a great barge in



the stream. Naturally I rushed over to save him, and my boat went so fast and so straight that its sharp prow caught the hapless urchin in the rear, and with such a pointed reminder too that he screamed and struggled and thus got safely on the barge, which was beyond his reach, until thus roughly but fortunately aided.

On most of the Belgian, German, and French rivers there are excellent floating baths, an obvious convenience which I do not recollect observing on a single river in Britain, though in summer we have quite as many bathers as there are abroad.

The floating baths consist of a wooden framework, say 100 feet long, moored in the stream, and through which the water runs freely, while a set of strong bars and chains and iron network forms a false bottom, shallow at one end and deeper at the other, so that the bather cannot be carried away by the current.

Round the sides there are bathing boxes and steps, ladders, and spring boards for the various degree of aquatic proficiency.

The youths and even the little boys on the Rhine are very good swimmers, and many of them dive well. Sometimes there is a ladies' bath of similar construction, from which a good deal of very lively noise may be heard when the fair bathers are in a talkative mood.

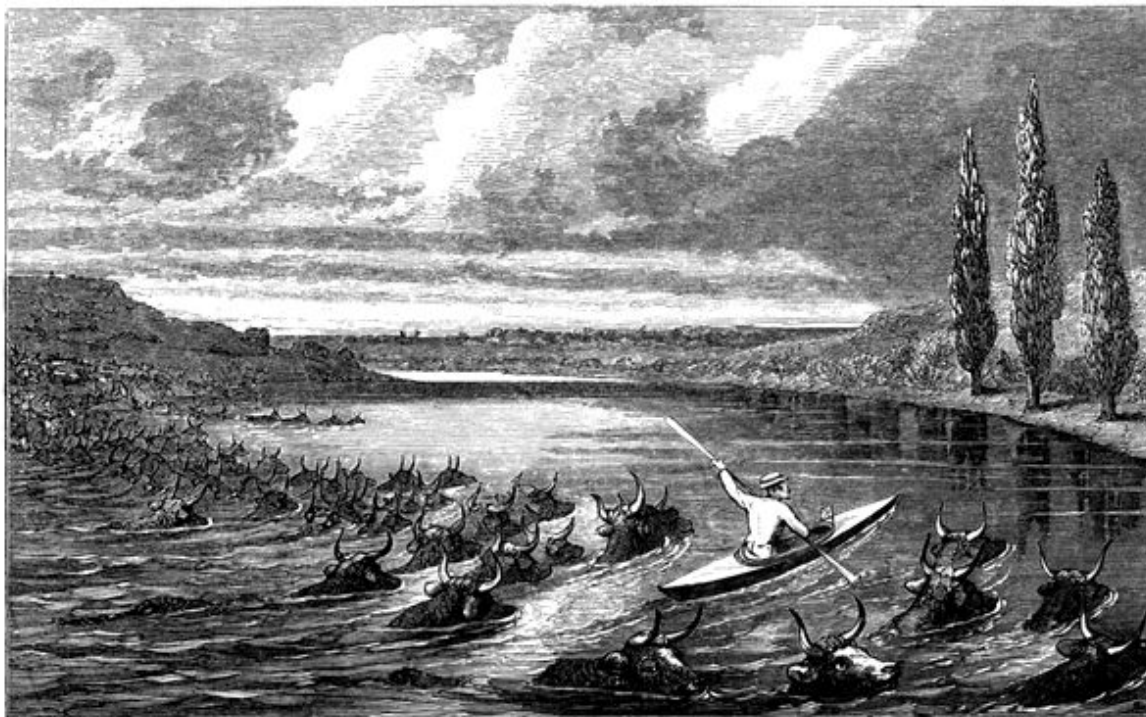
The soldiers at military stations near the rivers are marched down regularly to bathe, and one day we found a large number of young recruits assembled for their general dip.

While some were in the water others were firing at the targets for ball practice. There were three targets, each made of cardboard sheets, fastened upon wooden uprights. A marker safely protected in a ball-proof *mantelet* was placed so close to these targets that he could see all three at once. One man of the firing party opposite each target having fired, his bullet passed through the pasteboard and left a clear round hole in it, while the ball itself was buried in the earth behind, and so could be recovered again, instead of being dashed into fragments as on our iron targets, and then spattered about on all sides, to the great danger of the marker and everybody else.

When three men had thus fired, signals were made by drum, flag, and bugle, and the firing ceased. The marker then came out and pointed to the bullet-mark on each target, and having patched up the holes he returned within his *mantelet*, and the firing was resumed. This very safe and simple method of ball practice is much better than that used in our military shooting.

Once as we rounded a point there was a large herd of cattle swimming across the stream in close column, and I went right into the middle of them to observe how they would welcome a stranger. In the Nile you see the black oxen swim over the stream night and morning, reminding you of Pharaoh's dream about the "kine" coming up out of the river, a notion that used to puzzle in boyhood days, but which is by no means incongruous when thus explained. The Bible is a book that bears full light to be cast upon it, for truth looks more true under more light.

We had been delayed this morning in our start, and so the evening fell sombre ere we came near the resting-place. This was the town of Maastricht, in Holland, and it is stated to be one of the most strongly fortified places in Europe; that is, of the old fashion, with straight high walls quite impervious to the Armstrong and Whitworth guns—of a century gone by.



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But all we knew as we came near it at night was, that the stream was good and strong, and that no lights appeared. Emerging from trees we were right in the middle of the town, but where were the houses? had they no windows, no lamps, not even a candle?

Two great high walls bounded the river, but not a gate or port could we find, though one of us carefully scanned the right and the other cautiously scraped along the left of this very strange place.

It appears that the commerce and boats all turn into a canal above the old tumble-down fortress, and so the blank brick sides bounded us thus inhospitably. Soon we came to a bridge, looming overhead in the blackness, and our arrival there was greeted by a shower of stones from some Dutch lads upon it, pattering pitilessly upon the delicate cedar-covered canoes.

Turning up stream, and after a closer scrutiny, we found a place where we could cling to the wall, which here sloped a little with debris, and now there was nothing for it but to haul the boats up bodily over the impregnable fortification, and thus carry them into the sleepy town. No wonder the *octroi* guard stared as his lamplight fell on two gaunt men in grey, carrying what seemed to him a pair of long coffins, but he was a sensible though surprised individual, and he guided us well, stamping through the dark deserted streets to an hotel.

Though the canoes in a cart made a decided impression at the railway-station next day, and arguments logically proved that the boats must go as baggage, the porters were dense to conviction, and obdurate to persuasion, until all at once a sudden change took place; they rushed at us, caught up the two neglected "batteaux," ran with them to the luggage-van, pushed them in, and banged the door, piped the whistle, and as the train went off—"Do you know why they have yielded so suddenly?" said a Dutchman, who could speak English. "Not at all," said we. "Because I told them one of you was the son of the Prime Minister, and the other Lord Russell's son."

But a change of railway had to be made at Aix-la-Chapelle, and after a hard struggle we had nearly surrendered the boats to the "merchandise train," to limp along the line at night and to arrive "perhaps to-morrow." Indeed the Superintendent of that department seemed to clutch the boats as his prize, but as he gloried a little too loudly, the "Chef" of the passengers' baggage came, listened, and with calm mien ordered for us a special covered truck, and on arriving at Cologne there was "nothing to pay."[\[IV.\]](#)

To be quiet we went to the Belle Vue, at Deutz, which is opposite Cologne, but a great Singing Society had its gala

there, and sang and drank prodigiously. Next day (Sunday too) this same quiet Deutz had a "Schutzen Fest," where the man who had hit the target best was dragged about in an open carriage with his wife, both wearing brass crowns, and bowing royally to a screaming crowd, while blue lights glared and rockets shot up in the serene darkness.

At Cologne, while Lord A. went to take our tickets at the steamer, the boats were put in a handcart, which I shoved from behind as a man pulled it in front. In our way to the river I was assailed by a poor vagrant sort of fellow, who insisted on being employed as a porter, and being enraged at a refusal he actually took up a large stone and ran after the cart in a threatening passion. I could not take my hands from the boats, though in fear that his missile would smash them if he threw it, but I kicked up my legs behind as we trotted along. One of the sentries saw the man's conduct, and soon a policeman brought him to me as a prisoner, but as he trembled now with fear more than before with anger, I declined to make any charge, though the police pressed this course, saying, "Travellers are sacred here." This incident is mentioned because it was the sole occasion when any discourtesy happened to me during this tour.

We took the canoes by steamer to a wide part of the Rhine at Bingen. Here the scenery is good, and we spent an active day on the river, sailing in a splendid breeze, landing on islands, scudding about in steamers' waves, and, in fact, enjoying a combination of yacht voyage, pic-nic, and boat race.

This was a fine long day of pleasure, though in one of the sudden squalls my canoe happened to ground on a bank just at the most critical time, and the bamboo mast broke short.