

Here you look in vain for anything like the green fields and hedge-rows of England, with their scattered trees, groups of beautiful cattle or flocks grazing in peace, and sweet cottages, farm-houses, and beautiful mansions of the gentry. It is all one fenceless and ploughed field. Long rows of trees on each side of the roads are all that divide them from the fields, and in the south these are generally fruit trees. The beauty of Germany lies only, or with few exceptions, amongst its hills. There, its woods and green valleys, and clear streams, are beautiful; but from one region of hills to another extend only huge and open plains, marked with the road-side lines of trees. The population is not scattered along as in England, over hill and dale, in groups and single residences, of various grades and degrees of interest; while the luxuriant fences, the meadows and uplands charming with grass and flowers, old, half-hidden lands, and trees standing here and there of the noblest size, and in the freedom of natural beauty, make the plainest part of the country enchanting. All here is open and bald; the people are collected into villages of the most prosaic kind, and no gentry reside amongst them. In fact, what we call country life in England is here unknown.

For ourselves, we became once struck with this as we drove over the plain from Mannheim to Heidelberg. There is no part of Germany where the open plains are more richly cultivated, and which, with their way-side fruit trees, have a more clothed appearance, but even here how striking was the difference to the country in England! As there is one general character of country, of towns, of manners and appearances, throughout Germany, we shall here confine ourselves, where we are dealing with generals, to the neighbourhood of Heidelberg, for the reason given above, and afterwards, in various parts, point out specific differences and variations.

Far and wide the country, without a single fence, covered with corn and vegetables, seen from the heights which bounded it, present a most singular appearance to an English eye. Its predominating colour, at that time of the year, was that of ripening corn, but of different kinds of grain. This is not planted in those vast expanses which you see in the corn-farms of Northumberland and Lincolnshire, but in innumerable small patches and narrow stripes, belonging to many different proprietors. Some is also sown in one direction, and some in another, with patches of potatoes, mangel-wurzel, kidney-beans, etc., amongst it, so that it presented to the eye the appearance of one of those straw table-mats of different colours which one has seen.

Here and there you saw villages lying in the midst of the corn plain, and large woods, but not a hedge, and few scattered trees; the long rows of those marking out the highways, being the only dividing lines of the country. As we passed these trees, we observed that they were principally apple, pear, plum, cherry, and walnut trees. One could not help feeling how these trees would be plundered in England, being set, as it were, by the very road, for that purpose; and, indeed, here thorns fastened round the boles, and stuck beneath the branches of the cherry trees, where the fruit was ripening, spoke clearly of marauders. Fruit of all kinds was in abundance, and the heavy crops that are common here were indicated by the contrivances to prevent the branches being rent off. Some had their main branches held together by strong wooden clamps, others were propped with various poles; others, especially the plum trees, had their boughs tied up, and supported by ropes of chesnut bark. Some of these slips of bark were so low that mischievous urchins, if so disposed, could easily have cut them.

We passed through several of the Dorfs, or villages.

They had a primitive, heavy, and thoroughly agricultural air. The houses were built of stone, large and heavy, and each having a great round-headed gateway leading into a sort of inner court, or farm-yard. We observed numbers of women at work in the fields, without shoes, stockings, bonnets, or caps. They were healthy, contented, sunburnt creatures, many of them pictures, use enough for any painter of primitive life. What, however, riveted our attention quite as much, were the country wagons and horses. The wagons are the oddest old jumbling things imaginable. What a contrast to the jolly fat horses and ponderous painted wagons of the English farmer! The set-out of a first-rate English farmer or miller, to say nothing of the wagons and drays of the London brewers, cannot frequently be of less value than three hundred pounds. Most of these vehicles may be worth from five pounds to five shillings, and are drawn by two or three horses abreast; the horses of a lightish bay or black, of a slouching look and gait, and harnessed in ropes: if there be four, the two foremost a long way ahead of the other two.

In their out of door habits the Germans retain all their primitive simplicity; progress is no law of their life; they are content to tread, each in the steps of those that preceded them, and this content forms the beauty of the German peasant character; their daily duties, their rustic pleasures, the sweet interchange of domestic affections, constitute their happiness; they have none of that striving after what is above them, which is a national bane; none of the heart-burnings which ambition engenders, which, it is true, stimulate to exertion, and produce sometimes great results, but scorch up and wither the finer feelings of the heart, burying, in the lava of discontent with the time being, and high aims for the future, all that makes the present desirable. Placidly do the German peasants, men and women, toil in their vineyards, rear up the young vines, gather the luscious fruit, and bruise the rich clusters for the home-made vintage—a life of brown and hardy toil; for no sooner does one duty cease than another equally arduous takes its place. This constant employment keeps them the healthy, glad hearted people they are; the glow of excitement is not seen on the weather-worn cheeks, but the far more enduring hue of cheerful content is found there. This constant out of door occupation of the peasantry has, perhaps, one great disadvantage; it develops only the physical and moral powers—the intellectual are left uncared for. With perhaps the most thorough A B C education in the world, the German peasant makes no progress in mental culture. The germ of knowledge is implanted in their minds at their infant and burgher schools, but they quit these young, and seem to leave behind them all desire for further progress, and in their farms or their shops concentrate all their attention, therefore the mind of the generation remains stationary; as their fathers were, so are they.