

"*Vivat Gallia regina!*" I replied, "*Vivat Germania mater!*"

We then saluted each other, and passed on.

Above Neiderheimbach is the sombre forest of Sann, where, hid among trees, are two fortresses in ruins; the one, that of Heimbürg, a Roman castle: the other, Sonneck, once the abode of brigands. The Emperor Rodolph demolished Sonneck in 1212; time has since crumbled Heimbürg. A ruin still more awe-striking is hidden among the mountains,—it is called Falkenburg.

I had, as I have already stated, left the village behind me. An ardent sun was above, but the fresh breeze from the river cooled the air around. To my right, between two rocks, was the narrow entry of a charming ravine, abounding with shadows. Swarms of little birds were chirping joyously, and in love chasing each other amongst the thick leaves: a streamlet, swollen by the rains, dashed, torrent-like, over the herbage, frightened the insects, and, when falling from stone to stone, formed little cascades among the pebbles. I discovered along this stream, in the darkness which the trees shed around, a road, that a thousand wild flowers—the water-lily, the amaranth, the everlasting, the iris—hide from the profane and deck for the poet. You are aware that there are moments when I almost believe in the intelligence of inanimate things; it appeared to me as if I heard a thousand voices exclaim. "Where goest thou? Seekest thou places untrodden by human foot, but where Divinity has left its trace? Thou wishest thy soul to commune with solitude: thou wishest light and shadow, murmurings and peace, changes and serenity: thou wishest the place where the Word is heard in silence, where thou seest life on the surface and eternity at the bottom: thou lovest the desert; thou hatest not man; thou seekest the greensward, the moss, the humid leaves, tall branches, birds which warble, running waters, perfume mingling with the air. Well, enter; this is thy way." It required no consideration. I entered the ravine. To tell you all that I did there, or rather, what solitude did for me—how the wasps buzzed round the violets, how the wings of birds rustled among the leaves—that which startled in the moss, that which chirped in the nest, the soft and indistinct sound of vegetation, the beauty of the butterfly, the activity of the bee, the patience of the spider, the opening of flowers, the lamentations, the distant cries, the struggling of insect with insect, the exhalations of the rocks, which, sighingly, reached the ear—the rays of Heaven, which pierced through the trees,—the drops of water that fell, like tears, from flowers—the half-revelations which came from the calm, harmonious, slow, and continued labour of all those creatures and of all those things which are more in connection with God than with man;—to tell you all that, my friend would be to express the ineffable, to show the invisible, to paint infinity! What did I do there? I no longer know. As in the ravine of Saint Goarshaasen, I wandered, ruminated: and, in adoring, prayed! What was I thinking of? Do not ask me.

There are moments, you are aware, when our thoughts float as drowned in a thousand confused ideas.

I at last reached—I do not know how—the summit of a very