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ACCOUNT OF THE RUSSIAN VAPOR BATH.

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The existence in Hamburg of two establishments where the Russian Vapor Bath is used, brought to my recollection the description given by Acerbi and other travellers, of the intense heat and sudden transition to cold, so much relished by the natives of Northern Europe, raised my curiosity to experience in my own person the effects of this singular species of bathing. I was further induced to take this step, from finding myself suddenly oppressed with a violent feverish cold, which raised my pulse considerable above 100 degrees and rendered me little able to join the public dinner table in the Apollo Sael.

Accompanied by two friends who wished to make the same experiment, I repaired to the Alexanderbad, which is under the direction of its proprietor, a Jewish physician, who had liberally opened it gratuitously to the members of the society of *Naturforcher*, then assembled at Hamburg. We were ushered into a very neat saloon, provided with six couches, beside each of which stood a dressing table, and a convenient apparatus for suspending the clothes of the bather. Here we undressed, and were furnished with long flannel dressing gowns and warm slippers, after which we were all conducted into a small hot apartment, where we were desired to lay aside our gowns and slippers, and were immediately introduced into the room called the bath, in which the dim light admitted through a single window of three panes, just sufficed to show us that there were in it two persons like ourselves, in *puris*

naturalibus, one of whom was an essential personage, the operator, the other a gentleman just finishing the process, by a copious effusion of cold water over his body. This sudden introduction into an atmosphere of hot steam was so oppressive that I was forced to cover my face with my hands to moderate the painful impression on the lips and nostrils, and was compelled to withdraw my head as much as possible from the most heated part of the atmosphere, by sitting down on a low bench which ran along two sides of the bath.

The bath room is about fifteen feet long, by about as much in breadth. It is lined with wood, rendered quite black by constant immersion in hot steam. On two sides it has three tiers of benches or rude couches, each of which is calculated to hold two persons, with their feet towards each other; so that twelve might bathe at the same time. The lowest bench projects farthest into the room; they rise two feet above each other, and each has a wooden pillow at the ends.

In one corner of the farther end of the apartment stands the furnace, which is supplied with fuel from without, and has a thin arch of brick turned over the fire, against which the flame reverberates until the arch is red hot. To increase the heated surface, numerous small earthen jars or broken pottery are piled on the arch, and all are kept up to a low red heat. On these a basin of water is occasionally dashed; and the clouds of steam which instantly issue from the door of the heated chamber, form the source of heat employed to maintain the temperature of the bath.

In the corner opposite to the furnace is a reservoir of cold water, into which, during our stay in the bath, the person who manages it