

A NEW ALBANIAN IN EUROPE.

Bad Railroading – Cologne and Its Architecture –
The River Rhine – Its Grandeur, Beauty and Towns.

“Fair Bingen, on the Rhine,” and its Surroundings.

Mayence and Its Antiquities – Weis-Baden and Its Famous Springs.

Frankfurt-on-the-Main – Leipsic – Dresden and Its Industries –
Munich – Baden-Baden – The Black Forest

Strasbourg and its Clock – Into Switzerland – Geneva and
Its Historic Lake – The Alps and St. Gothard Tunnel.

Lake Como and the City of Como – Milan and
Its Grand Cathedrals – An Organ Concert – Adieu!

Correspondence of the LEDGER

Milan, May 22, 1884

My last [letter] closed at Dresden, Saxony, giving our journeyings up to Cologne. I omitted to say that from Brussels to Cologne was the roughest railroad ride I ever had. It beat the New Albany and Chicago in her palmy days of flat rails, and why a road between two such important cities and doing a very large passenger and freight business should not be in better order I cannot understand. It was the only road over which we passed where we felt the least uneasiness about our safety.

Cologne, with a present population of one hundred and sixty thousand, is a very old city, noted more for its antiquity, its churches, and the cologne manufactured there than for anything else. It is quite a railroad center and is the point where the trip up the Rhine commences. There are several large Cathedrals here. One commenced in 1248, and said to be the finest Gothic church in the world, is an immense structure and externally is nearly covered with cut stone and has two spires, said to be the highest in the world, each over five hundred feet in height.

The City Hall – called Hotel de Ville – which was begun in the 13th Century, gives evidence of great architectural taste and beauty. The iron Rail Road bridge spanning the Rhine is a masterpiece of workmanship. The monument of Frederic William the 3rd is considered one of the finest in Europe.

We now leave Cologne, with her narrow streets, old houses, &c., and commence the ascent of the river Rhine, one among the greatest in Europe. This famous river varies in width; in some places it is double the

width of the Ohio river at medium stage, in other parts not more than half the width of the Ohio, is navigable for large inland steamers, and there appears to be a very large freight and passenger business doing.

The beauty and the grandeur of the scenery of the Rhine has been sung in poetry and told in prose, but certainly has not been exaggerated. It would be folly for me to attempt to convey a correct idea to your readers of this beauty and grandeur, but I will merely mention some of the objects to be seen that makes this trip exceedingly interesting, and would advise any traveler wishing to see Europe not to fail to take in the Rhine any time from May the first to October. There are a great many towns, villages and beautiful palaces on the shores of the river and upon the mountain sides, between Cologne and Mayence at the confluence of the Rhine and the Main, where the pleasure travel stops. The first town of importance after leaving Cologne is Bonn, about twenty miles up the river – a beautiful city with upwards of 30,000 population, noted particularly for its university, founded in 1818, quite a flourishing institution at this time.

Coblentz is the next town of importance; and here the boats leaving Cologne at 10½ in the morning remain over night for the purpose of giving passengers an opportunity of seeing the sights the entire distance of the Rhine. Immediately opposite Coblentz is the Gibraltar of the Rhine, extensive fortifications built of rock, immediately in the face of a very high, perpendicular mountain, having a small tower on its summit.

Coblentz with its spires and surroundings gives a grand and beautiful view. The boldest and finest scenery is between Coblentz and Bingen – “Fair Bingen on the Rhine” – immortalized by the poet in the line beginning, “A soldier of the legion, lay dying in Algiers.”

Immediately opposite Bingen, on a very elevated position, the German government has recently erected a monument, said to be one of the finest and handsomest in the world, in honor of their victory over the French in 1871. It is certainly a grand work of art and will no doubt stand many ages, giving additional interest to Bingen and the Rhine.

A book could be written on the scenery of the Rhine. I will merely say that the numerous castles, many of them built hundreds and some of them more than a thousand years ago, situated on the most inaccessible points of the mountain – very many of them in ruins, others kept in repair by the government – the many modern palaces, the number of towns and cities, the towering, overhanging rocky precipices, the vine clad face of the mountains, the various shades of green-clad hills, all conspire to form a view beautiful and grand.

I would here remark that persons living in the United States who have never visited Europe have no conception of the close manner in which land is used in most parts of Europe, particularly in Italy and on the Rhine where grapes are cultivated. There are places in both countries where grapes are raised apparently on the almost perpendicular sides of

the mountains. It is a wonder to me how they manage to do the work. In many of those steep places on the Rhine I saw openings very high on the mountains, and was informed that the families lived there who cultivated the grapes. Of course all the work is done by hand. We will now leave the Rhine, but I advise you to go and see it.

Mayence, the point at which pleasure travel stops, is situated at the junction of the Rhine and the river Main, has a population of 170,000, is a very old city and I am told is increasing. It has a very large Cathedral, built in the 10th century; also a monument said to have been erected thirty-eight years before Christ by the Roman soldiers in honor of Drusus. As I was not present I cannot vouch for the exact date. There are many buildings, watch towers, said to be one thousand years old.

Weis-Baden, the celebrated watering place in Germany, is but five miles from Mayence, and is reached by one of the most charming drives I have seen. It is as smooth as a floor, (as most of the roads in Europe are), and nearly the entire length is lined with beautiful shade trees, in blossom, and the lands are beautifully cultivated and improved. Weis-Baden has a population of fifty thousand, and is a beautiful city. The celebrated Hot Spring of Germany is at this place. It throws up a large stream of boiling water, which is said to be a remedy for many diseases. People from all parts of the world visit this city.

We leave Mayence for Frankfort-on-the-Main, distant about thirty miles. The country through which we pass is well improved and thickly settled. We were disappointed in the river Main. It is a small stream, not more than one-fourth the width of the Ohio.

Frankfort is quite an active, good looking city, with a population of 170,000, a very fine picture gallery, Opera House, good hotels, &c. We see many way side shrines on the road way, the country the entire length of the Rhine and on to near Leipsic, in Saxony, being largely Catholic.

From Frankfort to Leipsic is about two hundred miles. We pass through much beautiful country and some handsome scenery. Leipsic is quite an old city, claims two hundred thousand population, and is particularly noted as the home of Schiller. The house is still there that he occupied when a young man. It is not inhabited at present, but taken care of to show to visitors. It is a very plain house both inside and outside. Leipsic has its picture galleries, &c., and is something of a manufacturing city.

Hence to Dresden, distant about seventy-five miles, we pass through a beautiful country. The crops all through Saxony are looking as well as any I ever saw, and if nothing happens then there will be a bountiful yield of wheat, rye and hay.

Dresden, a very charming city, having a population of 225,000, is the Capital of Saxony, and is quite a manufacturing city. Dresden China is considered superior to any manufactured and is certainly very beautiful.

Linens of all kinds are manufactured in large quantities. Watches, also, of a superior quality are made here and a great variety of fancy articles are produced in large quantities. The drives and parks are equal to any we have seen. In one of our drives we met the King and the niece on horseback, with their retinue of followers. They looked very much like other people. Saxony is Protestant, but the King and his family are Catholic. My knowledge of German has answered me a most excellent purpose all through the German speaking countries; but in Holland it was no go. The Holland Dutch and German are entirely different. It will pay the tourist well to spend a few days in Dresden. The hotels are first class for European hotels.

We leave Dresden for Munich, the capital of Bavaria, distance about three hundred miles, or fifteen hours. The country through which we pass is very different from that between Frankfurt and Leipsic and Dresden. Very soon after leaving the latter city the country becomes mountainous and much broken, yet portions of it has the appearance of fairly productive land, but the crops do not look so well in Bavaria as in the country I have mentioned before.

The population of Munich is 240,000. The river Iser, made famous by the poet in describing the great battle of Hohenlinden, fought within ten miles of the city, runs through the center of the town, and runs rapidly indeed; the current is so swift that boats do not attempt to ascend it. We drove several miles along the bank. There are some quite heavy falls, and little islands, and beautiful green fields that make the views very attractive. Munich has two large and very fine picture galleries. A colossal work of art stands in front of the Hall of Fame, called the Statute of Bavaria. It is a female figure of bronze, and it is said that six men can stand in her head.

We leave Munich for Baden-Baden, in the Duchy of Baden. This was once the greatest gambling place in the world, but some ten years ago the German government compelled its removal. The man and his wife (both since died) who carried on the horrible business, removed to Monte Carlo, in Italy.

Baden-Baden is a beautiful little town of 15,000 population, situated in a beautiful valley of the Black Forest. I presume the reason for calling it the Black Forest is that the foliage is such a very dark green that at a little distance it has the appearance of being black. The Grand Hall, that was built expressly for gambling, is a very large and handsome structure, beautifully finished, and is now used for a concert hall, where they have instrumental concerts, morning, afternoon and evening, and the music is very fine; admittance half a mark, or twelve cents of our money.

One of the grandest drives we have had was from Baden-Baden to a castle in ruins on the top of the Black Forest mountain, about four miles up a good road and gradual ascent. The date of the building of the

castle is not known with certainty, but supposed to be near one thousand years ago. It is an immense building, in almost total ruin, except a small portion on the first floor occupied by a family who sell refreshments to visitors and keep the castle from total ruin. We went to the top of the castle, and to do so ascended near twenty flights of stairs, but the view from the top was a grand one and fully compensated for the labor of going up.

From Baden-Baden to Strasbourg the distance is thirty miles. Strasbourg is a very old city, as the appearance of many of the buildings gives evidence. It was once the capital of Alsace, and belonged to the French for more than two hundred years, until the French and German war, when they lost it. The fortifications in and around the city are very formidable and were built by the French, but are now occupied by German soldiers. The Alsatian women make a very singular appearance with the immense bows they wear on their heads, and their peculiar dress.

The particular attraction in Strasbourg is the great clock, that is probably as ingenious a piece of machinery as was ever made. It is wound but once a year, keeps good time, tells the rising and setting of the sun and moon, days of the month, and many other things too numerous to mention. Many figures make their appearance at certain times, and occasionally a large chicken cock which is in sight crows. The Cathedral is an immense and very expansive building, commenced in 1015 and finished in 1275. Some of the houses are said to be five to six hundred years old, and their appearance would indicate the truth of the assertion.

We now leave Strasbourg for Geneva, Switzerland. From Strasbourg to Basle, on the frontier of Switzerland, is eighty miles; thence to Geneva two hundred and sixty miles. Very soon after entering Switzerland the country becomes very much broken, and by degrees the hills become very high and steep mountains, called the Jura Mountains. There is certainly some as wild, bold and grand scenery to be seen in passing through this valley as could be wished for. There are glass works, iron works and one quite large watch manufactory situated in the narrow valley, a valley which nature appears to have left expressly for a railroad to be built in. We pass quite a number of small towns and villages and occasionally a Swiss chalet nestled in the face of the mountain. The Swiss are a frugal, industrious people and look healthy and happy. We arrive at Geneva in good season and all very well.

Geneva is the largest city in Switzerland; population about seventy thousand, and is the capital of the Canton in which it is situated. The river Rhone and Lake Geneva run through about the center, but many fine bridges span the streams. The city is handsomely built, wide, clean streets, and is a manufacturing place. It is claimed that one hundred and twenty

thousand watches are manufactured here annually, and musical boxes of every kind without number, some of them great curiosities.

In leaving Geneva we took steamer on Lake Geneva about twenty miles, and a more beautiful sight than that seen from the steamer's deck can not well be imagined. The steamers with their flags flying; the numerous sail vessels, with sails spread to the breeze; the row boats, the beautiful city on both sides the lake; the Jura Mountains with their snow capped tops; the Alps, with mont Blanc, the clouds resting on its head; the beautiful valley, with its different shades of green; the beautiful fruit trees, covered with blossoms – taken all together give a view that once seen is not to be forgotten.

In leaving Geneva we start for Paris by way of the St. Gothard Tunnel via Como. This is one of the grandest trips for unequalled, bold and terrific scenery in the country. The building of this road, including the tunnel, shows what money, energy and the genius of man can accomplish. We run along the base, the sides, and the top of the Alps, passing through many tunnels and making wondrous turns before we reach St. Gothard tunnel, which is nine and a half miles in length, and the express trains are twenty-seven minutes in passing through. The scenery for about seventy-five miles before reaching St. Gothard is grand and terrific beyond my ability to describe. Imagine mountains of rock thousands of feet high, in many places streams of water pouring down at the rate of a small Niagara, forming a small river at the base which goes clashing through and amongst the rocks with great velocity; the occasional pieces of green sward; the little towns and houses built at the base and on the sides of the mountain in such places that you cannot see how it is possible to reach or how people can make a living there.

We soon reach Lake Como, in Italy, a beautiful lake its entire length of near thirty miles. Its shores are thickly settled. Many of the towns are largely visited in the spring and early summer, the hotels are numerous, many of them first class. They no doubt are delightful places for pleasure seekers that have the time to spend a few weeks. Amongst the most attractive are Cadenabia, Bellagio and Biuno.

The day we passed up the lake was as beautiful as could be wished for, and we all enjoyed it to the full.

Camo is an old city, of about twelve thousand population, but there is not much there to attract the tourist except the lake.

I omitted to say that after we left Geneva we stopped at Freiburg to hear a concert given on what is said to be one of the grandest organs in the world, and I assure you we were amply repaid for stopping. The organ is in a very large Cathedral, and at times the sound of the instrument would fill it full; at other times the sweetest and most melodious sounds would come forth, and so much like the human voice that our company supposed there were voices assisting.

We left Como for Milan, where we are at this time. Milan is one of the most prosperous cities in Italy; population said to be about 300,000. One of its great attractions is the Milan Cathedral, which is second only to St. Peter's of Rome in size, finish and architecture. The external I think is handsomer than St. Peter's.

Milan has many Cathedrals. There is one that is said to have been built in the fourth century, and from the appearance of its pillars and many other things I have no doubt it is true.

We go through the Mount Cenis tunnel on our way to France, and leave here to-morrow for Paris – have engaged our passage on the Urania for Saturday, June 21st, and the balance of our travel will be through France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. But as your readers have read all I could tell them this will close our correspondence for the present.

Permit me here to say that we have visited nearly every country in Europe. No persons ever enjoyed a trip more than we have, nor have we labored much in accomplishing our journey. Our plan has been when arriving in a city to secure a resident guide who could speak English, and tell him we would remain two or more days, just as the case may be, and we wished to secure his services whilst here, and would expect him to give us the cream of the city. Then by using a carriage we could accomplish much in a short time.

I hope and pray that the same kind and protecting care that has followed us through life may permit us to return in safety to our beloved New Albany.

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