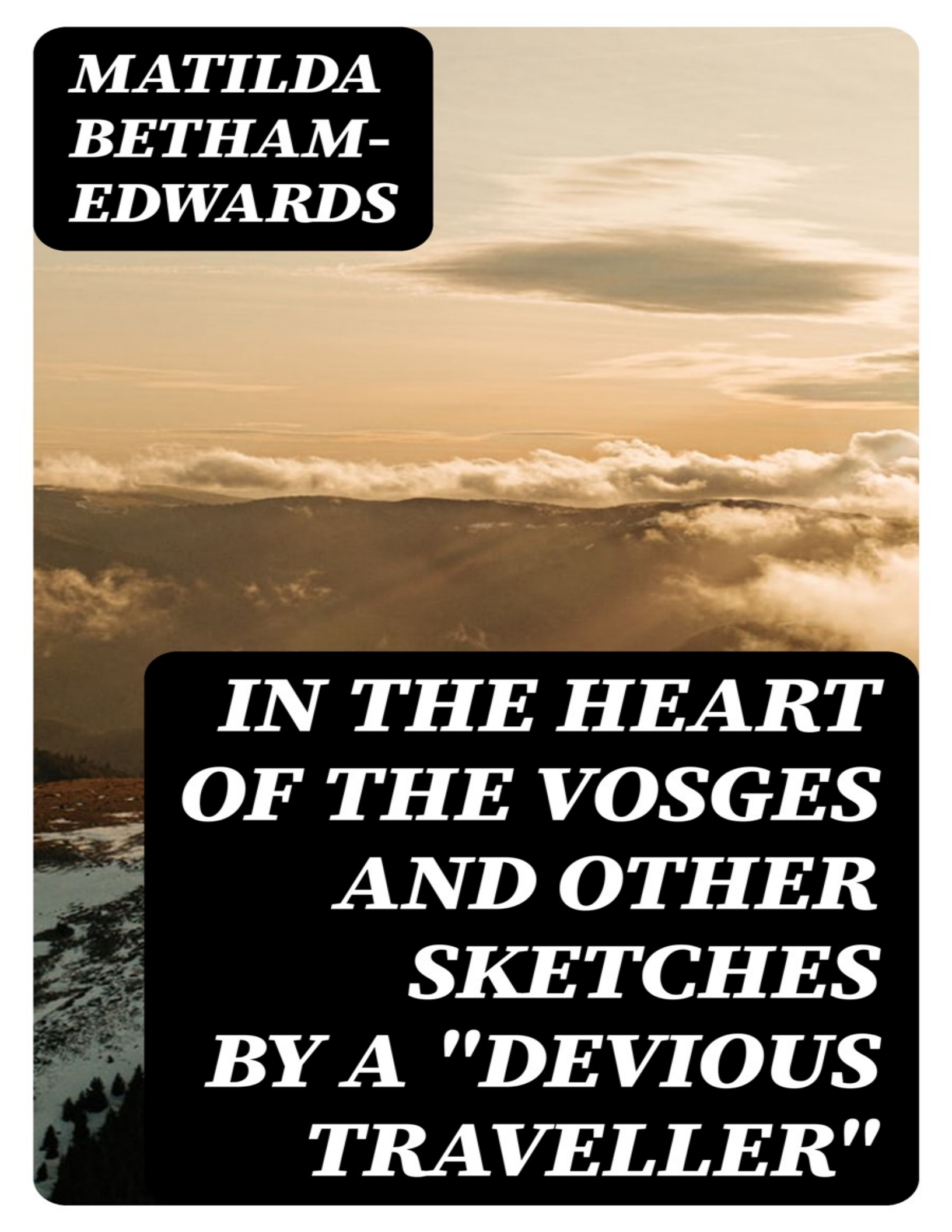




***MATILDA
BETHAM-
EDWARDS***

***IN THE HEART
OF THE VOSGES
AND OTHER
SKETCHES
BY A "DEVIOUS
TRAVELLER"***

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In the Heart of the Vosges and Other Sketches by a "Devious Traveller"

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GÉRARDMER AND ENVIRONS

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[Illustration: PROVINS, GENERAL VIEW]

The traveller bound to eastern France has a choice of many routes, none perhaps offering more attractions than the great Strasburg line by way of Meaux, Châlons-sur-Marne, Nancy, and Épinal. But the journey must be made leisurely. The country between Paris and Meaux is deservedly dear to French artists, and although Champagne is a flat region, beautiful only by virtue of fertility and highly developed agriculture, it is rich in old churches and fine architectural remains. By the Troyes-Belfort route, Provins may be visited. This is, perhaps, the most perfect specimen of the mediaeval walled-in town in France. To my thinking, neither Carcassonne, Semur nor Guérande surpass Hégésippe Moreau's little birthplace in beauty and picturesqueness. The acropolis of Brie also possesses a long and poetic history, being the seat of an art-loving prince, and the haunt of troubadours. A word to the epicure as well as the archaeologist. The bit of railway from Châlons-sur-Marne to Nancy affords a series of gastronomic delectations. At Épernay travellers are just allowed time to drink a glass of champagne at the buffet, half a franc only being charged. At Bar-le-Duc little neatly-packed jars of the raspberry jam for which the town is famous are brought to the doors of the railway carriage. Further on at Commercy, you are enticed to regale upon unrivalled cakes called "Madeleines de

Commercy," and not a town, I believe, of this favoured district is without its speciality in the shape of delicate cates or drinks.

Châlons-sur-Marne, moreover, possesses one of the very best hotels in provincial France—the hotel with the queer name—another inducement for us to idle on the way. The town itself is in no way remarkable, but it abounds in magnificent old churches of various epochs—some falling into decay, others restored, one and all deserving attention. St. Jean is especially noteworthy, its beautiful interior showing much exquisite tracery and almost a fanciful arrangement of transepts. It is very rich in good modern glass. But the gem of gems is not to be found in Châlons itself; more interesting and beautiful than its massive cathedral and church of Notre Dame, than St. Jean even, is the exquisite church of Notre Dame de l'Épine, situated in a poor hamlet a few miles beyond the octroi gates. We have here, indeed, a veritable cathedral in a wilderness, nothing to be imagined more graceful than the airy open colonnades of its two spires, light as a handful of wheat ears loosely bound together. The colour of the grey stone gives solemnity to the rest of the exterior, which is massive and astonishingly rich in the grotesque element. We carefully studied the gargoyles round the roof, and, in spite of defacements, made out most of them—here a grinning demon with a struggling human being in its clutch—there an odd beast, part human, part pig, clothed in a kind of jacket, playing a harp—dozens of comic, hideous, heterogeneous figures in various attitudes and travesties.

[Illustration: Provins, The Capitol]

Notre Dame de l'Épine—originally commemorative of a famous shrine—has been restored, and purists in architecture will pass it by as an achievement of Gothic art in the period of its decline, but it is extremely beautiful nevertheless. On the way from Châlons-sur-Marne to Nancy we catch glimpses of other noble churches that stand out from the flat landscape as imposingly as Ely Cathedral. These are Notre Dame of Vitry le François and St. Étienne of Toul, formerly a cathedral, both places to be stopped at by leisurely tourists.

The fair, the *triste* city of Nancy! There is an indescribable charm in the sad yet stately capital of ancient Lorraine. No life in its quiet streets, no movement in its handsome squares, nevertheless Nancy is one of the wealthiest, most elegant cities in France! Hither flocked rich Alsatian families after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, and perhaps its proximity to the lost provinces in part accounts for the subdued, dreamy aspect of the place as a whole. A strikingly beautiful city it is, with its splendid monuments of the house of Lorraine, and handsome modern streets bearing evidence of much prosperity in these days. In half-an-hour you may get an unforgettable glimpse of the Place Stanislas, with its bronze gates, fountains, and statue, worthy of a great capital; of the beautiful figure of Duke Antonio of Lorraine, on horseback, under an archway of flamboyant Gothic; of the Ducal Palace and its airy colonnade; lastly, of the picturesque old city gate, the Porte de la Craffe, one of the most striking monuments of the kind in France.

All these things may be glanced at in an hour, but in order to enjoy Nancy thoroughly a day or two should be devoted to it, and here, as at Châlons-sur-Marne, creature comforts are to be had in the hotels. In the Ducal Palace are shown the rich tapestries found in the tent of Charles le Téméraire after his defeat before Nancy, and other relics of that Haroun-al-Raschid of his epoch, who bivouacked off gold and silver plate, and wore on the battlefield diamonds worth half a million. In a little church outside the town, commemorative of this victory, are collected the cenotaphs of the Dukes of Lorraine—the *chapelle ronde*, as the splendid little mausoleum is designated—with its imposing monuments in black marble, and richly-decorated octagonal dome, making up a solemn and beautiful whole. Graceful and beautiful also are the monuments in the church itself, and those of another church, Des Cordeliers, close to the Ducal Palace.

[Illustration: PROVINS, THE CITY WALLS]

Nancy is especially rich in monumental sculpture, but it is in the cathedral that we are to be fairly enchanted by the marble statues of the four doctors of the church—St. Augustine, St. Grégoire, St. Léon, and St. Jerome. These are the work of Nicolas Drouin, a native of Nancy, and formerly ornamented a tomb in the church of the Cordeliers just mentioned. The physiognomy, expression, and pose of St. Augustine are well worthy of a sculptor's closest study, but it is rather as a whole than in detail that this exquisite statue delights the ordinary observer. All four sculptures are noble works of art; the fine, dignified figure of St. Augustine somehow takes strongest hold of the imagination. We would

fain return to it again and again, as indeed we would fain return to all else we have seen in the fascinating city of Nancy. From Nancy by way of Épinal we may easily reach the heart of the Vosges.

[Illustration: GÉRARDMER]

How sweet and pastoral are these cool resting-places in the heart of the Vosges! Gérardmer and many another as yet unfrequented by the tourist world, and unsophisticated in spite of railways and bathing seasons. The Vosges has long been a favourite playground of our French neighbours, although ignored by the devotees of Cook and Gaze, and within late years, not a rustic spot possessed of a mineral spring but has become metamorphosed into a second Plombières. Gérardmer—" *Sans Gérardmer et un peu Nancy, que serait la Lorraine?*" says the proverb—is resorted to, however, rather for its rusticity and beauty than for any curative properties of its sparkling waters. Also in some degree for the sake of urban distraction. The French mind when bent on holiday-making is social in the extreme, and the day spent amid the forest nooks and murmuring streams of Gérardmer winds up with music and dancing. One of the chief attractions of the big hotel in which we are so wholesomely housed is evidently the enormous salon given up after dinner to the waltz, country dance, and quadrille. Our hostess with much ease and tact looks in, paying her respects, to one visitor after another, and all is enjoyment and mirth till eleven o'clock, when the large family party, for so our French fellowship may be called, breaks up. These socialities, giving as they do the amiable aspect of French character, will not perhaps constitute an

extra charm of Gérardmer in the eyes of the more morose English tourist. After many hours spent in the open air most of us prefer the quiet of our own rooms. The country, too, is so fresh and delicious that we want nothing in the shape of social distraction. Drawing-room amenities seem a waste of time under such circumstances. Nevertheless the glimpses of French life thus obtained are pleasant, and make us realize the fact that we are off the beaten track, living among French folks, for the time separated from insular ways and modes of thought. Our fellowship is a very varied and animated one. We number among the guests a member of the French ministry—a writer on the staff of *Figaro*—a grandson of one of the most devoted and unfortunate generals of the first Napoleon, known as "the bravest of the brave," with his elegant wife—the head of one of the largest commercial houses in eastern France—deputies, diplomats, artists, with many family parties belonging to the middle and upper ranks of society, a very strong Alsatian element predominating. Needless to add that people make themselves agreeable to each other without any introduction. For the time being at least distinctions are set aside, and fraternity is the order of the day.

I do not aver that my country-people have never heard of Gérardmer, but certainly those who stray hither are few and far between. Fortunately for the lover of nature no English writer has as yet popularized the Vosges. An Eden-like freshness pervades its valleys and forests, made ever musical with cascades, a pastoral simplicity characterizes its inhabitants. Surely in no corner of beautiful France can any

one worn out in body or in brain find more refreshment and tranquil pleasure!

It is only of late years that the fair broad valley of Gérardmer and its lovely little lake have been made accessible by railway. Indeed, the popularity of the Vosges and its watering-places dates from the late Franco-German war. Rich French valetudinarians, and tourists generally, have given up Wiesbaden and Ems from patriotic motives, and now spend their holidays and their money on French soil. Thus enterprise has been stimulated in various quarters, and we find really good accommodation in out-of-the-way spots not mentioned in guide-books of a few years' date. Gérardmer is now reached by rail in two hours from Épinal, on the great Strasburg line, but those who prefer a drive across country may approach it from Plombières, Remiremont, Colmar and Münster, and other attractive routes. Once arrived at Gérardmer, the traveller will certainly not care to hurry away. No site in the Vosges is better suited for excursionizing in all directions, and the place itself is full of quiet charm. There is wonderful sweetness and solace in these undulating hill-sides, clothed with brightest green, their little tossing rivers and sunny glades all framed by solemn hills—I should rather say mountains—pitchy black with the solemn pine. You may search far and wide for a picture so engaging as Gérardmer when the sun shines, its gold-green slopes sprinkled with white châteaux, its red-roofed village clustered about a rustic church tower, and at its feet the loveliest little lake in the world, from which rise gently the fir-clad heights.

And no monotony! You climb the inviting hills and woods day by day, week after week, ever to find fresh enchantment. Not a bend of road or winding mountain-path but discloses a new scene—here a fairy glen, with graceful birch or alder breaking the expanse of dimpled green; there a spinny of larch or of Scotch fir cresting a verdant monticule; now we come upon a little Arcadian home nestled on the hill-side, the spinning-wheel hushed whilst the housewife turns her hay or cuts her patch of rye or wheat growing just outside her door. Now we follow the musical little river Vologne as it tosses over its stony bed amid banks golden with yellow loosestrife, or gently ripples amid fair stretches of pasture starred with the grass of Parnassus. The perpetual music of rushing, tumbling, trickling water is delightful, and even in hot weather, if it is ever indeed hot here, the mossy banks and babbling streams must give a sense of coolness. Deep down, entombed amid smiling green hills and frowning forest peaks, lies the pearl of Gérardmer, its sweet lake, a sheet of turquoise in early morn, silvery bright when the noon-day sun flashes upon it, and on grey, sunless days gloomy as Acheron itself.

[Illustration: A VOSGIAN SCENE]

Travellers stinted for time cannot properly enjoy the pastoral scenes, not the least charm of which is the frank, pleasant character of the people. Wherever we go we make friends and hear confidences. To these peasant folks, who live so secluded from the outer world, the annual influx of visitors from July to September is a positive boon, moral as well as material. The women are especially confidential,

inviting us into their homely yet not poverty-stricken kitchens, keeping us as long as they can whilst they chat about their own lives or ask us questions. The beauty, politeness, and clear direct speech of the children, are remarkable. Life here is laborious, but downright want I should say rare. As in the Jura, the forest gorges and park-like solitudes are disturbed by the sound of hammer and wheel, and a tall factory chimney not infrequently spoils a wild landscape. The greater part of the people gain, their livelihood in the manufactories, very little land here being suitable for tillage.

Gérardmer is famous for its cheeses; another local industry is turnery and the weaving of linen, the linen manufactories employing many hands, whilst not a mountain cottage is without its handloom for winter use. Weaving at home is chiefly resorted to as a means of livelihood in winter, when the country is covered with snow and no out-door occupations are possible. Embroidery is also a special fabric of the Vosges, but its real wealth lies in mines of salt and iron, and mineral waters.

One chief feature in Gérardmer is the congeries of handsome buildings bearing the inscription "*École Communale*" and how stringently the new educational law is enforced throughout France may be gathered from the spectacle of schoolboys at drill. We saw three squadrons, each under the charge of a separate master, evidently made up from all classes of the community. Some of the boys were poorly, nay, miserably, clad, others wore good homely clothes, a few were really well dressed.

Our first week at Gérardmer was wet and chilly. Fires and winter clothes would have been acceptable, but at last came warmth and sunshine, and we set off for the Col de la Schlucht, the grandest feature of the Vosges, and the goal of every traveller in these regions.

[Illustration: CIRQUE DE RETOURNEMER]

There is a strange contrast between the calm valley of Gérardmer, a little haven of tranquil loveliness and repose, and the awful solitude and austerity of the Schlucht, from which it is separated by a few hours only. Not even a cold grey day can turn Gérardmer into a dreary place, but in the most brilliant sunshine this mountain pass is none the less majestic and solemn. One obtains the sense of contrast by slow degrees, so that the mind is prepared for it and in the mood for it. The acme, the culminating point of Vosges scenery is thus reached by a gradually ascending scale of beauty and grandeur from the moment we quit Gérardmer, till we stand on the loftiest summit of the Vosges chain, dominating the Schlucht. For the first half-hour we skirt the alder-fringed banks of the tossing, foaming little river Vologne, as it winds amid lawny spaces, on either side the fir-clad ridges rising like ramparts. Here all is gentleness and golden calm, but soon we quit this warm, sunny region, and enter the dark forest road curling upwards to the airy pinnacle to which we are bound. More than once we have to halt on our way. One must stop to look at the cascade made by the Vologne, never surely fuller than now, one of the prettiest cascades in the world, masses of snow-white foam tumbling over a long, uneven stair of granite through the midst of a fairy glen. The sound of these rushing waters is

long in our ears as we continue to climb the splendid mountain road that leads to the Schlucht, and nowhere else. From a giddy terrace cut in the sides of the shelving forest ridge we now get a prospect of the little lakes of Longuemere and Retournemer, twin gems of superlative loveliness in the wildest environment. Deep down they lie, the two silvery sheets of water with their verdant holms, making a little world of peace and beauty, a toy dropped amid Titanic awfulness and splendour. The vantage ground is on the edge of a dizzy precipice, but the picture thus sternly framed is too exquisite to be easily abandoned. We gaze and gaze in spite of the vast height from which we contemplate it; and when at last we tear ourselves away from the engaging scene, we are in a region all ruggedness and sublimity, on either side rocky scarps and gloomy forests, with reminders by the wayside that we are approaching an Alpine flora. Nothing can be wilder or more solitary than the scene. For the greater part, the forests through which our road is cut are unfrequented, except by the wild boar, deer, and wild cat, and in winter time the fine mountain roads are rendered impenetrable by the accumulation of snow.

This approach to the Col is by a tunnel cut in the granite, fit entrance to one of the wildest regions in France. The road now makes a sudden bend towards the chalet cresting the Col, and we are able in a moment to realize its tremendous position.

From our little chalet we look upon what seems no mere cleft in a mountain chain, but in the vast globe itself. This huge hollow, brought about by some strange geological

perturbation, is the valley of Münster, no longer a part of French territory, but of Prussian Elsass. The road we have come by lies behind us, but another as formidable winds under the upper mountain ridge towards Münster, whilst the pedestrian may follow a tiny green footpath that will lead him thither, right through the heart of the pass. Looking deep down we discern here and there scattered *châlets* amid green spaces far away. These are the homesteads or *chaumes* of the herdsmen, all smiling cheerfulness now, but deserted in winter. Except for such little dwellings, barely discernible, so distant are they, there is no break in the solitary scene, no sign of life at all.

The *châlet* is a fair hostelry for unfastidious travellers, its chief drawback being the propensity of tourists to get up at three o'clock in the morning in order to behold the sunrise from the Hoheneck. Good beds, good food, and from the windows, one of the finest prospects in the world, might well tempt many to linger here in spite of the disturbance above mentioned. For the lover of flowers this halting-place would be delightful.

Next morning the day dawned fair, and by eight o'clock we set off with a guide for the ascent of the Hoheneck, rather, I should say, for a long ramble over gently undulating green and flowery ways. After climbing a little beechwood, all was smoothness under our feet, and the long *détour* we had to make in order to reach the summit was a series of the gentlest ascents, a wandering over fair meadow-land several thousand feet above the sea-level. Here we found the large yellow gentian, used in the fabrication of absinthe, and the bright yellow arnica, whilst

instead of the snow-white flower of the Alpine anemone, the ground was now silvery with its feathery seed; the dark purple pansy of the Vosges was also rare. We were a month too late for the season of flowers, but the foxglove and the bright pink *Epilobium* still bloomed in great luxuriance.

It was a walk to remember. The air was brisk and genial, the blue sky lightly flecked with clouds, the turf fragrant with wild thyme, and before our eyes we had a panorama every moment gaining in extent and grandeur. As yet indeed the scene, the features of which we tried to make out, looked more like cloudland than solid reality. On clear days are discerned here, far beyond the rounded summits of the Vosges chain, the Rhine Valley, the Black Forest, the Jura range, and the snow-capped Alps. To-day we saw grand masses of mountains piled one above the other, and higher still a pageantry of azure and gold that seemed to belong to the clouds.

No morning could promise fairer, but hardly had we reached the goal of our walk when from far below came an ominous sound of thunder, and we saw heavy rain-clouds dropping upon the heights we had left behind.

All hope of a fine prospect was now at an end, but instead we had a compensating spectacle. For thick and fast the clouds came pouring into one chasm after another, drifting in all directions, here a mere transparent veil drawn across the violet hills, there a golden splendour as of some smaller sun shining on a green little world. At one moment the whole vast scene was blurred and blotted with chill winter mist; soon a break was visible, and far away we gazed on a span of serene amethystine sky, barred with

lines of bright gold. Not one, but a dozen, horizons—a dozen heavens—seemed there, whilst the thunder that reached us from below seemed too remote to threaten. But at last the clouds gathered in form and volume, hiding the little firmaments of violet and amber; the bright blue sky, bending over the green oasis—all vanished as if by magic. We could see no more, and nothing remained but to go back, and the quicker the better. The storm, our guide said, was too far off to reach us yet, and we might reach the chalet without being drenched to the skin, as we fortunately did. No sooner, however, were we fairly under shelter than the rain poured down in torrents and the thunder pealed overhead. In no part of France are thunderstorms so frequent and so destructive as here, nowhere is the climate less to be depended on. A big umbrella, stout shoes, and a waterproof are as necessary in the Vosges as in our own Lake district.

We had, however, a fine afternoon for our drive back, a quick downhill journey along the edge of a tremendous precipice, clothed with beech-trees and brushwood. A most beautiful road it is, and the two little lakes looked lovely in the sunshine, encircled by gold-green swards and a delicate screen of alder branches. Through pastures white with meadow-sweet the turbulent, crystal-clear little river Vologne flowed merrily, making dozens of tiny cascades, turning a dozen mill-wheels in its course. All the air was fragrant with newly-turned hay, and never, we thought, had Gérardmer and its lake made a more captivating picture.

Excursions innumerable may be made from Gérardmer. We may drive across country to Remiremont, to Plombières,

to Wesserling, to Colmar, to St. Dié, whilst these places in turn make very good centres for excursions. On no account must a visit to La Bresse be omitted. This is one of the most ancient towns in the Vosges. Like some of the villages in the Morvan and in the department of La Nièvre, La Bresse remained till the Revolution an independent commune, a republic in miniature. The heads of families of both sexes took part in the election of magistrates, and from this patriarchal legislation there was seldom any appeal to the higher court—namely, that of Nancy. La Bresse is still a rich commune by reason of its forests and industries. The sound of the mill-wheel and hammer now disturbs these mountain solitudes, and although so isolated by natural position, this little town is no longer cut off from cosmopolitan influence. The little tavern is developing into a very fair inn. In the summer tourists from all parts of France pass through it, in carriages, on foot, occasionally on horseback. Most likely it now possesses a railway station, a newspaper kiosk, and a big hotel, as at Gérardmer!

As we drop down upon La Bresse after our climb of two hours and more, we seem to be at the world's end. Our road has led us higher and higher by dense forests and wild granite parapets, tasselled with fern and foxglove, till we suddenly wheel round upon a little straggling town marvellously placed. Deep down it lies, amid fairy-like greenery and silvery streams, whilst high above tower the rugged forest peaks and far-off blue mountains, in striking contrast.

The sloping green banks, starred with the grass of Parnassus, and musical with a dozen streams, the pastoral

dwellings, each with its patch of flower garden and croft; the glades, dells and natural terraces are all sunny and gracious as can be; but round about and high above frown inaccessible granite peaks, and pitchy-black forest summits, impenetrable even at this time of the year. As we look down we see that roads have been cut round the mountain sides, and that tiny homesteads are perched wherever vantage ground is to be had, yet the impression is one of isolation and wildness. The town lies in no narrow cleft, as is the case with many little manufacturing towns in the Jura, but in a vast opening and falling back of the meeting hills and mountain tops, so that it is seen from far and wide, and long before it is approached. We had made the first part of our journey at a snail's pace. No sooner were we on the verge of the hills looking down upon La Bresse, than we set off at a desperate rate, spinning breathlessly round one mountain spur after another, till we were suddenly landed in the village street, dropped, as it seemed, from a balloon.

A curious feature to be noted in all the places I have mentioned is the outer wooden casing of the houses. This is done as a protection against the cold, the Vosges possessing, with the Auvergne and the Limousin, the severest climate in France. La Bresse, like Gérardmer and other sweet valleys of these regions, is disfigured by huge factories, yet none can regret the fact, seeing what well-being these industries bring to the people. Beggars are numerous, but we are told they are strangers, who merely invade these regions during the tourist season.

Remiremont, our next halting-place, may be reached by a pleasant carriage drive, but the railway is more convenient

to travellers encumbered with half-a-dozen trunks. The railway, moreover, cuts right through the beautiful valley of the Moselle—a prospect which is missed by road. Remiremont is charming. We do not get the creature comforts of Gérardmer, but by way of compensation we find a softer and more genial climate. The engaging little town is indeed one of nature's sanatoriums. The streets are kept clean by swift rivulets, and all the air is fragrant with encircling fir-woods. Like Gérardmer and La Bresse, however, Remiremont lies open to the sun. A belt of flowery dells, terraced orchards, and wide pastures, amid which meanders the clear blue Moselle, girds it round about, and no matter which path you take, it is sure to lead to inviting prospects. The arcades lend a Spanish look to the town, and recall the street architecture of Lons-le-Saunier and Arbois in the Jura. Flower gardens abound, and the general atmosphere is one of prosperity and cheerfulness.

The historic interest of this now dead-alive little town centres around its lady abbesses, who for centuries held sovereign rule and state in their abbatial palace, at the present time the Hôtel de Ville. These high-born dames, like certain temporal rulers of the sex, loved battle, and more than one *chanoinesse*, when defied by feudal neighbours, mounted the breach and directed her people. One and all were of noble birth, and many doubtless possessed the intellectual distinction and personal charm of Renan's *Abbesse de Jouarre*.

There are beautiful walks about Remiremont, and one especial path amid the fragrant fir-woods leads to a curious relic of ancient time—a little chapel formerly attached to a

Lazar-house. It now belongs to the adjoining farm close by, a pleasant place, with flower-garden and orchard. High up in the woods dominating the broad valley in which Remiremont is placed are some curious prehistoric stones. But more inviting than the steep climb under a burning sun—for the weather has changed on a sudden—is the drive to the Vallée d'Hérival, a drive so cool, so soothing, so delicious, that we fancy we can never feel heated, languid, or irritated any more.

The isolated dwellings of the dalesfolk in the midst of tremendous solitudes—little pastoral scenes such as Corot loved to paint—and hemmed round by the sternest, most rugged nature, are one of the characteristics of Vosges scenery. We also find beside tossing rivers and glittering cascades a solitary linen factory or saw-mill, with the modern-looking villa of the employer, and clustered round it the cottages of the work-people. No sooner does the road curl again than we are once more in a solitude as complete as if we were in some primeval forest of the new world. We come suddenly upon the Vallée d'Hérival, but the deep close gorge we gaze upon is only the beginning of the valley within valley we have come to see. Our road makes a loop round the valley so that we see it from two levels, and under two aspects. As we return, winding upwards on higher ground, we get glimpses of sunny dimpled sward through the dark stems of the majestic fir-trees towering over our head. There is every gradation of form and colour in the picture, from the ripe warm gold barring the branches of the firs, to the pale silveriness of their upper foliage; from the gigantic trees rising from the gorge below, each seeming to

fill a chasm, to the airy, graceful birch, a mere toy beside it. Rare butterflies abound, but we see few birds.

The hardy pedestrian is an enviable person here, for although excellent carriages are to be had, some of the most interesting excursions must be made on foot.

I do not suppose that matters are very greatly changed in hotels here since my visit so many years ago. In certain respects travellers fare well. They may feast like Lucullus on fresh trout and on the dainty aniseed cakes which are a local speciality. But hygienic arrangements were almost prehistoric, and although politeness itself, mine host and hostess showed strange nonchalance towards their guests. Thus, when ringing and ringing again for our tea and bread and butter between seven and eight o'clock, the chamber—not maid, but man—informed us that Madame had gone to mass, and everything was locked up till her return.

Even the fastidious tourist, however, will hardly care to exchange his somewhat rough and noisy quarters at Remiremont for the cosmopolitan comforts of Plombières within such easy reach. It is a pretty drive of an hour and a half to Plombières, and all is prettiness there—its little park, its tiny lake, its toy town.

It is surely one of the hottest places in the world, and like Spa, of which it reminds me, must be one of the most wearisome. Just such a promenade, with a sleepy band, just such a casino, just such a routine. This favourite resort of the third Napoleon has of late years seen many rivals springing up. Vittel, Bains, Bussang—all in the Vosges—yet it continues to hold up its head. The site is really charming, but so close is the valley in which the town lies, that it is a