My Three Years in Europe

MILDRED BARNHILL

(Chapter II of an Autobiography.)

Life on an ocean liner is a lot of fun as one becomes initiated into the many devices for whiling away the idle hours. After being at sea for four or five days, seeing nothing but the broad expanse of water, it is very thrilling to sight another vessel. Warming that land will soon be seen is first given by the sea gulls, flying out sometimes great distances from the shore. The first land seen is the Scilly Islands, then the amazing chalk cliffs of southwestern England. As we made the first port, Plymouth, England, after nightfall, I am unable to give any description of this harbor. Very early the next morning, about 5 A.M. as I recall, we came into the harbor at Cherbourg, France. That picture has always remained with me. Numbers of small fishing vessels were at anchor there, and as viewed through the misty, silvery gray morning atmosphere, they presented a weird, unreal, ghostlike appearance. The vessel now proceeded on its way through the English Channel, the Strait of Dover, and the North Sea, docking at Cuxhaven. We took a train for Hamburg, staying for the night, then went on to Berlin, where I became a pupil of Martin Krause. He was a dear, jolly, happy sort of a little man, not at all the cross, gruff type I had been afraid of drawing for my lot.

What a collection of nationalities we had in the class at the conservatory! I remember there was a Swiss, three or four Russians, three Mexicans, a number of Americans and Germans. Each pupil had only twenty minutes in which to play his lesson and receive correction and criticism, but after that he was privileged to stay all day, if he so wished to do, in order to hear the instruction given to others on their lessons.

It was wise to stay an hour or two, as one could store away many ideas on compositions that he did not then have the time to learn.

I might add a word of description about Berlin itself. It is a city of apartment houses were all of a no detached houses. The very wealthy people, however, had villas, very pretentious places, in a suburb of Berlin called the Gruenewald. The apartment houses were all of a uniform height, none lower than four stories, none higher than five. It gave the skyline such a neat appearance that I grew to like it very much. Each apartment had its little balcony decorated with gay flower boxes, making the whole place look like a veritable land of flowers during the summer. Every few blocks there was a small park with lovely flower beds, trees, and a picturesque fountain. There was also the famous Tiergarten, an enormous natural park in the center of Berlin, containing something like five hundred acres. One could wander around in it for hours and forget that he was even near a city.

I remember one vacation trip when we visited several cities in southern Germany. First came Nuremberg with its ancient wall flanked with towers, and its old castle containing the torture chamber. In this torture chamber were hundreds of instruments used in torturing the prisoners of war in order to secure confessions from them. Next we went to Heidelberg, seat of the famous university. The ruins of the old castle, overgrown with ivy, and situated on a high hill behind the town, is one of its most interesting points. The scenery is also interesting. Here the Rhine River makes its junction with the Neckar; in the background are the high hills; at the foot of the hills, stretching away as far as the eye can see, lie the broad valleys of these two rivers.

An all-day trip by boat on the Rhine was next taken from Mainz.
to Cologne. Here, indeed, was picturesque scenery. The low foothills were covered with beautiful vineyards; the high cliffs were adorned by the ruins of the castles of the robber barons. This is a region rich in legend, there being a legend for each castle. We stopped at Bonn to visit Beethoven’s birthplace, and also at Cologne to view the magnificent cathedral, a piece of delicate lace-work in stone.

One summer was spent in the Austrian Tyrol in a peasant village, Haldensee bei Tannheim. Professor Krause always spent his summers there and once in a while took a few pupils with him who desired to study through the summer months. We had to take rooms with the cleanest of the peasants, but took our own cook along. Our provisions came through by stage coach from Innsbruck, thus affording us appetizing food. It would have been impossible to eat the peasant fare.

An amusing experience of the summer occurred when one of the American girls washed her hair and stepped outside to dry it in the sun. All the women of the village gathered around in amazement, seeking information as to why she had done it, for they had never heard of any one’s doing such a thing!

Another interesting experience of the summer happened when Professor Krause told us we must walk over to the neighboring village of Tannheim to view the dedication of a monument. The monument was to be unveiled by Prinz ———, (I do not recall his name,) a nephew of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria. In the way of being a celebrity, Professor Krause was next to the visiting royalty. After they had become acquainted, we were introduced to the Prince. He was a dashing, handsome young fellow, quite the story book type. I often think of the three strata of society represented that day. The Prince was as far above us socially as we were above the peasants.

Student days were over at last. What a change it was to return to America! I was back from fairy land to the land of reality with its noise, hurry, and confusion.

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**The Hill Church**

MARION SWANN

Approaching the main traveled road, we turned a corner and saw, over the hill, the white shiningness of the country church. It nestled cosily in a slight hollow, gleaming brightly against the somber background of a cemetery so old that the whiteness and blackness of polished stones had merged into a general greyness, highlighted by two or three new white stones. We rapidly drew near, watching the picture enlarge. Soon the white bell tower stood out from the square of the building. The tall, pointed glass windows gave promise of beauty as they reflected long rays of setting sun. Stepping out of the car amid dark green of evergreens, we passed through the amazing whiteness of the doorway into the shining golden glow of a small painted vestibule, and then into a small auditorium. Gleaming furniture converged toward a platform. The beautiful seriousness of Hofman’s “Head of Christ” held our eyes across the carved wood of pulpit and communion table. The rose, gold, and purple of the formal design of stained glass windows cast a glorious glow over worshipper’s spirits and physical properties. Small but perfect, the quiet calmness, mel-low goldness, and warm friendliness of this temple attract. Here is found rest.