

VARIOUS

THE MIRROR OF
LITERATURE,
AMUSEMENT, AND
INSTRUCTION. VOLUME
13, NO. 373,
SUPPLEMENTARY
NUMBER

Various

**The Mirror of Literature,
Amusement, and Instruction. Volume
13, No. 373, Supplementary Number**

«Public Domain»

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The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction. Volume 13, No. 373, Supplementary Number / Various — «Public Domain»,

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ANNE OF GEIERSTEIN, or THE MAIDEN OF THE MIST

A NOVEL. BY SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART

The author of this delightful novel, by the fertility of his genius, has almost exhausted the rhetoric of admiration, and even the vocabulary of criticism. But we still hail his appearance with heartfelt interest, if not with the enthusiasm and rapture with which we were wont to speak of his earlier productions. The *incognito* of their authorship is removed, but with it none of their genuine fame; and, like few works of the same class, their popularity bids fair to outlive hundreds of matter-of-fact works, whose realities might have been expected to ensure them a more durable character. It would be idle, at this time of day, to go over the ground upon which the *Waverley Novels* will take their stand among our national literature: they are not merely pictures of fact and fancy blended by a masterly hand, but beyond this merit, they abound with so much knowledge of the human heart and the mastery of its passions, as to render them interesting to every reader beyond *Robinson Crusoe*; and above all, the free, conversational style in which this knowledge is imparted, is one of their greatest attractions. The author does not account for effects by any tedious appeal to our judgment, but he strikes at once at our feelings and common sense, and we become, as it were, identified with the dictates and impulses of his heroes. This merit belongs to *book-effect*, as *situations* belong to stage-effect; the endings of his chapters are like good *exits*—we are sure to be curious as to the following page or scene.

But we are trifling, like a subordinate who stays behind to say a silly thing in a farce. Having overrun Scotland, England, France, Palestine, and Germany, Sir Walter, in the work before us, introduces us to some of the most stirring times of Swiss story. Upon this simple intimation, the reader will anticipate all the fascinations of picturesque scenery and eloquent description—so characteristic of every volume of the *Waverley Novels*, and in this expectation, he will not be disappointed. The latter charms are constant in nothing but perpetual change; and the sublimities of Switzerland will excite admiration and awe, when the labours of man have crumbled to ruin, and all his proud glories passed away in the dream of time.

The novel opens in the year 1474, when Helvetia, after her heroic struggles for independence, began to be recognised by the neighbouring countries as a free state. At this date, its inhabitants "retained, in a great measure, the wisdom, moderation, and simplicity of their ancient manners; so much so, that those who were entrusted with the command of the troops of the Republic in battle, were wont to resume the shepherd's staff, when they laid down the truncheon, and, like the Roman Dictators, to retire to complete equality with their fellow citizens, from the eminence to which their talents, and the call of their country had raised them."

The first chapter introduces us to two travellers and their guide, who lose their way in the mountainous passes of the Alps, from Lucerne to Bâle. The travellers are Englishmen, give themselves out as merchants, and assume the name of Philipson, the Christian name of the younger, who is the hero of the novel, being Arthur. They are overtaken by a storm, and fall into perils, a scene of which

we have already given at page 313, of the MIRROR. They are at length rescued, by a party of Swiss from the neighbourhood of the old castle of Geierstein, or Rock of the Vulture. This party turns out to consist of Arnold Biederman, the Landamman, or Chief Magistrate of the Canton of Unterwalden, and his sons, who reside upon a farm among the mountains. Along with them comes another, who is mainly instrumental in saving the life of Arthur, and this is *Anne of Geierstein*, the Landamman's niece, a mountain maiden, but of noble birth, the daughter of one of the best families in Switzerland, and combining all the delicacy of a woman with all the heroic spirit of a man. Her portrait will be found at page 344, of the MIRROR.

The travellers spend some days at the Landamman's house. Arthur becomes intimately acquainted with the sons of Arnold Biederman, joins with them in their athletic sports, and gains no small reputation for his activity and skill. A cousin of these young men is also introduced, by name, Rudolph, of Donnerhugel, a youth of ambitious temperament, and withal a passionate admirer of Anne of Geierstein. Arthur and he, of course, are not disposed to regard each other with much complacency, and at the commencement of their acquaintance a challenge is exchanged between them; the combat is extremely well described:

The sun was just about to kiss the top of the most gigantic of that race of Titans, though the long shadows still lay on the rough grass, which crisped under the young man's feet with a strong intimation of frost. But Arthur looked not round on the landscape however lovely, which lay waiting one flash from the orb of day to start into brilliant existence. He drew the belt of his trusty sword which he was in the act of fastening when he left the house, and ere he had secured the buckle, he was many paces on his way towards the place where he was to use it.

Having hastily traversed the fields and groves which separated the Landamman's residence from the old castle of Geierstein, he entered the court-yard from the side where the castle overlooked the land; and nearly in the same instant his almost gigantic antagonist, who looked yet more tall and burly by the pale morning light than he had seemed the preceding evening, appeared ascending from the precarious bridge beside the torrent, having reached Geierstein by a different route from that pursued by the Englishman.

The young champion of Berne had hanging along his back one of those huge two-handed swords, the blade of which measured five feet, and which were wielded with both hands. These were almost universally used by the Swiss; for, besides the impression which such weapons were calculated to make upon the array of the German men-at-arms, whose armour was impenetrable to lighter swords, they were also well calculated to defend mountain passes, where the great bodily strength and agility of those who bore them, enabled the combatants, in spite of their weight and length, to use them with much address and effect. One of these gigantic swords hung around Rudolf Donnerhugel's neck, the point rattling against his heel, and the handle extending itself over his left shoulder considerably above his head. He carried another in his hand.

"Thou art punctual," he called out to Arthur Philipson, in a voice which was distinctly heard above the roar of the waterfall, which it seemed to rival in sullen force. "But I judged thou wouldst come without a two-handed sword. There is my kinsman Ernest's," he said, throwing on the ground the weapon which he carried, with the hilt towards the young Englishman. "Look, stranger, that thou disgrace it not, for my kinsman will never forgive me if thou dost. Or thou mayst have mine if thou likest it better."

The Englishman looked at the weapon, with some surprise, to the use of which he was totally unaccustomed.

"The challenger," he said, "in all countries where honour is known, accepts the arms of the challenged."

"He who fights on a Swiss mountain, fights with a Swiss brand," answered Rudolf. "Think you our hands are made to handle penknives?"

"Nor are ours made to wield scythes," said Arthur; and muttered betwixt his teeth, as he looked at the sword, which the Swiss continued to offer him—" *Usum non habeo*, I have not proved the weapon."

"Do you repent the bargain you have made?" said the Swiss; "if so, cry craven, and return in safety. Speak plainly, instead of prattling Latin like a clerk or a shaven monk."

"No, proud man," replied the Englishman, "I ask thee no forbearance. I thought but of a combat between a shepherd and a giant, in which God gave the victory to him who had worse odds of weapons than falls to my lot to-day. I will fight as I stand; my own good sword shall serve my need now, as it has done before."

"Content!—But blame not me who offered thee equality of weapons," said the mountaineer. "And now hear me. This is a fight for life or death—yon waterfall sounds the alarum for our conflict. —Yes, old bellower," he continued, looking back, "it is long since thou hast heard the noise of battle; —and look at it ere we begin, stranger, for if you fall, I will commit your body to its waters."

"And if thou fallest, proud Swiss," answered Arthur, "as well I trust thy presumption leads to destruction, I will have thee buried in the church at Einsiedlen, where the priests shall sing masses for thy soul—thy two-handed sword shall be displayed above the grave, and a scroll shall tell the passenger, Here lies a bear's cub of Berne, slain by Arthur the Englishman."

"The stone is not in Switzerland, rocky as it is," said Rudolf, scornfully, "that shall bear that inscription. Prepare thyself for battle."

The Englishman cast a calm and deliberate glance around the scene of action—a courtyard, partly open, partly encumbered with ruins, in less and larger masses.

Thinking thus, and imprinting on his mind as much as the time would permit, every circumstance of the locality around him which promised advantage in the combat, and taking his station in the middle of the courtyard where the ground was entirely clear, he flung his cloak from him, and drew his sword.

Rudolf had at first believed that his foreign antagonist was an effeminate youth, who would be swept from before him at the first flourish of his tremendous weapon. But the firm and watchful attitude assumed by the young man, reminded the Swiss of the deficiency of his own unwieldy implement, and made him determine to avoid any precipitation which might give advantage to an enemy who seemed both daring and vigilant. He unsheathed his huge sword, by drawing it over the left shoulder, an operation which required some little time, and might have offered formidable advantage to his antagonist, had Arthur's sense of honour permitted him to begin the attack ere it was completed. The Englishman remained firm, however, until the Swiss, displaying his bright brand to the morning sun, made three or four flourishes as if to prove its weight, and the facility with which he wielded it—then stood firm within sword-stroke of his adversary, grasping his weapon with both hands, and advancing it a little before his body, with the blade pointed straight upwards. The Englishman, on the contrary, carried his sword in one hand, holding it across his face in a horizontal position, so as to be at once ready to strike, thrust, or parry.

"Strike, Englishman!" said the Switzer, after they had confronted each other in this manner for about a minute.

"The longest sword should strike first," said Arthur; and the words had not left his mouth when the Swiss sword rose, and descended with a rapidity which, the weight and size of the weapon considered, appeared portentous. No parry, however dexterously interposed, could have baffled the ruinous descent of that dreadful weapon, by which the champion of Berne had hoped at once to begin the battle and end it. But young Philipson had not over-estimated the justice of his own eye, or the activity of his limbs. Ere the blade descended, a sudden spring to one side carried him from beneath its heavy sway, and before the Swiss could again raise his sword aloft, he received a wound, though a slight one, upon the left arm. Irritated at the failure and at the wound, the Switzer heaved up his sword once more, and availing himself of a strength corresponding to his size, he discharged

towards his adversary a succession of blows, downright, athwart, horizontal, and from left to right, with such surprising strength and velocity, that it required all the address of the young Englishman, by parrying, shifting, eluding, or retreating, to evade a storm, of which every individual blow seemed sufficient to cleave a solid rock. The Englishman was compelled to give ground, now backwards, now swerving to the one side or the other, now availing himself of the fragments of the ruins, but watching all the while, with the utmost composure, the moment when the strength of his enraged enemy might become somewhat exhausted, or when by some improvident or furious blow he might again lay himself open to a close attack. The latter of these advantages had nearly occurred, for in the middle of his headlong charge, the Switzer stumbled over a large stone concealed among the long grass, and ere he could recover himself, received a severe blow across the head from his antagonist. It lighted upon his bonnet, the lining of which enclosed a small steel cap, so that he escaped unwounded, and springing up, renewed the battle with unabated fury, though it seemed to the young Englishman with breath somewhat short, and blows dealt with more caution.

They were still contending with equal fortune, when a stern voice, rising over the clash of swords, as well as the roar of waters, called out in a commanding tone, "On your lives, forbear!"

The two combatants sunk the points of their swords, not very sorry perhaps for the interruption of a strife which must otherwise have had a deadly termination. They looked round, and the Landamman stood before them, with anger frowning on his broad and expressive forehead.

[The Landamman was indebted for his knowledge of the rencontre taking place, to the watchful care of Anne of Geierstein.

The scene is now speedily changed. The Swiss Cantons, provoked by some encroachments on their liberties made by Charles the Bold, of Burgundy, and one of his ministers, Archibald Von Hagenbach, to whom the duke had intrusted the government of the frontier town of La Ferette, determine on sending a deputation to the court of Charles, either to obtain reparation for the injuries received, or to declare war in the name of the Helvetian Cantons. This deputation consists of Arnold Biederman, Rudolf Donnerhugel, and three others. As the two Englishmen are also on their way to the court of Charles, they agree to travel with the deputation; and as Count Geierstein, Anne's father and Arnold's brother, who has attached himself to the Duke of Burgundy, is anxious for his daughter's return to the paternal roof, she also proceeds along with the rest, together with a female attendant. An escort of 20 or 30 young Swiss volunteers complete the cavalcade.

The remainder of the first, and the whole of the second volume, is occupied with an exceedingly interesting and varied account of the different adventures of the deputation, or its individual members, in their progress. Among these are an account of a night-watch in an old castle in the neighbourhood of Bâle, including the mysterious moonlight appearance of Anne of Geierstein to Arthur, and Donnerhugel's wild and wonderful narrative of the supernatural circumstances supposed to be connected with her family; the last of which will be found at page 324, of the MIRROR.

At the opening of the second volume, the two Englishmen leave the deputation for La Ferette, where, on their arrival, we are made acquainted with the ferocious governor, Archibald Von Hagenbach, Kilian, his fac-totum, and Steinernherz, his executioner, who has already cut off the heads of eight men, each at a single blow, and is to receive a patent of nobility, as soon as he has performed the same office for the ninth. The English travellers fall into the hands of these notable persons, and are saved from death, after a succession of the narrowest escapes, owing to a general rising of the town, and the death of the cruel governor. In these dangers, both father and son are saved by the apparently supernatural interference of Anne.

The elder Philipson proceeds on his journey, and at an inn in Alsace, meets with the following extraordinary adventure, the whole of which is wrought up with great effect:]

He had been in bed about an hour, and sleep had not yet approached his couch, when he felt that the pallet on which he lay was sinking below him, and that he was in the act of descending along with it he knew not whither. The sound of ropes and pullies was also indistinctly heard, though every

caution had been taken to make them run smooth; and the traveller, by feeling around him, became sensible that he and the bed on which he lay had been spread upon a large trapdoor, which was capable of being let down into the vaults, or apartments beneath.

Philipson felt fear in circumstances so well qualified to produce it; for how could he hope a safe termination to an adventure which had begun so strangely? But his apprehensions were those of a brave, ready-witted man, who, even in the extremity of danger, which appeared to surround him, preserved his presence of mind. His descent seemed to be cautiously managed, and he held himself in readiness to start to his feet and defend himself, as soon as he should be once more upon firm ground. Although somewhat advanced in years, he was a man of great personal vigour and activity, and unless taken at advantage, which no doubt was at present much to be apprehended, he was likely to make a formidable defence. His plan of resistance, however, had been anticipated. He no sooner reached the bottom of the vault, down to which he was lowered, than two men, who had been waiting there till the operation was completed, laid hands on him from either side, and forcibly preventing him from starting up as he intended, cast a rope over his arms, and effectually made him a prisoner. He was obliged, therefore, to remain passive and unresisting, and await the termination of this formidable adventure. Secured as he was, he could only turn his head from one side to the other; and it was with joy that he at length saw lights twinkle, but they appeared at a great distance from him.

From the irregular manner in which these scattered lights advanced, sometimes keeping a straight line, sometimes mixing and crossing each other, it might be inferred that the subterranean vault in which they appeared was of very considerable extent. Their number also increased; and as they collected more together, Philipson could perceive that the lights proceeded from many torches, borne by men muffled in black cloaks, like mourners at a funeral, or the Black Friars of St. Francis's Order, wearing their cowls drawn over their heads, so as to conceal their features. They appeared anxiously engaged in measuring off a portion of the apartment; and, while occupied in that employment, they sung, in the ancient German language, rhymes more rude than Philipson could well understand, but which may be imitated thus:—

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