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## **An Autumn near the Rhine; or Sketches of courts, society, scenery, &c. in some of the German states bordering on the Rhine**

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Letter XXV.

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## LETTER XXV.

CROSSING the bridge of boats at Manheim into modern Bavaria, I proceeded on foot across the fertile flat towards Worms; a place which my German friends in the spruce modern capitals wondered I could have any interest to see. A few Bavarian troops, in their handsome sky-blue uniforms, quartered in the little fortified *tête du pont* on the opposite side, reminded one of the new masters of this *cidevant* piece of the French Empire. Some of the same differences in the features of the scene which had struck us on crossing from the left to the right bank were again observable. The straggling hamlets along the road side, with their little white cabins, were as different as possible from the dirty walled towns on the other side, in the intervals between which you never see a house. Some of the peasants, who, instead of the light



ladder waggons were driving carts with one huge ox in the shafts, speak a more Frenchified German. If you ask the way, they reply — “*Es geht immer toujours fort;*” and for *walking* they use *promeniren*, instead of the true German *spatzieren*. Many of them speak a bad French; and I met with one or two raw, unhinged-looking fellows, who had served in the French army, and had acquired just enough of the language and the vivacity it imparts to appear fairly denationalised, and resemble neither Frenchmen nor Germans.

Frankenthal was the only town before Worms. It is a bustling lively place, communicating by a canal with the Rhine, and presenting some traces of the active trading industry which a rich colony of French and Dutch refugees formerly gave to it. One of its chief manufactories was converted by the French government into a great magazine of mendicity for the department of Mont Tonnerre — a curious illustration of the descent from commercial opulence to beggary, which an exclusively warlike system will often produce.

It was quite dark when I reached



Worms. Arriving late, alone, and without equipage, the fat landlord of the inn I entered replied to my enquiry for a bed with a scrutinising look and a demand for my passport—just as the host of an English public house would make a similar demand of a travelling tar with one arm, begging his way to Portsmouth. My passport, for which I had rarely had occasion in Germany, was unluckily sent forward with my trunks; and the answer that I had none was followed up by a brisk refusal of all accommodation from the dainty host. I knew the relenting character of a German landlord's dignity too well to be dismayed; and as Worms was now a garrison town of the Grand Duke of Hesse, I plied him with the names of half a dozen dignitaries of the Court, whom I now found invaluable friends in need. The application took instantaneous effect on the haughty proprietor of the White Horse; though, not to let himself down too abruptly from his stately elevation, he at first only condescended to reply rather gruffly—“*Dann können sic platz nehmen,*” “then you may take a place:” but his subsequent handings



first, and preventings of my wishes at supper, where he assigned me the place of honour, sufficiently proved that my titled acquaintances had happily removed all his *primâ facie* prejudices against a pedestrian without passport. During supper, which took place in the dirty dark saloon, (for every thing is dirty and dark at Worms,) a fat unsentimental looking dame played us some languishing airs on a twanging harp, the melody of which seemed entirely lost on the Hessian officers, who were smoking, boozing, and playing drafts at a beer-stained table just by. A hardy chasseur, in his green hunting dress, who came in late, was paying his respects to a savoury German sallad, a not very delicate, but by no means unpalatable, olio of potatoes, fish, anchovies, lettuce &c.; and the soft strains of the lady were soon driven to give place to the brawling mirth of these sensual rather than sentimental guests.

Worms, which from the days of the old Frankish kings who had a palace there, to those of Luther and the reformation, was the scene of Royal Residences, brilliant *Champs de Mai*, and solemn diets of the



empire, is now a mouldering mass of meanness and desolate decay—like Mayence, only enlivened by a riotous garrison of Hessian troops. The final blow to its consequence was its devastation by the French, in 1689. Of its 30,000 inhabitants not more than 5000 remain—and its commerce, which distinguished it among the Hanseatic cities, is now confined to the wine made from its celebrated vineyards, and the tobacco it grows and manufactures. The Cathedral, a massy ponderous Gothic edifice, commenced in the eighth century, is an interesting but dreary vestige of grandeur. — The bare, dismantled walls of the interior, with its falling pinnacles and ornaments, and the wretched desolation of the houses of the Chapter, give it a melancholy deserted air. It has neither statues, pictures, or any thing of interest on a close inspection; but seen from a distance, its lofty nave and four steeples rise with an imposing grandeur in the level plain of the Rhine.

Pictures of Luther and his venerable friends are exhibited in the booksellers' windows; and the Lutheran Church con-



tains a fresco painting of the reformer appearing before the splendid assembly — a mere modern manufacture, put up since the re-building of the church after the destruction in 1689, and possessing no interest or merit.

Winding through the dark, narrow streets, and passing the solid decayed ramparts, I left the old city by the road towards Mayence. Just out of it, on the right, stands the Gothic monastery of *Lieb Frau*, (the Dear Virgin,) surrounded by little inclosures of vines, in which the peasants were busily engaged in the *Vendanges*. The wine produced in this little spot is one of the choicest in the country, and known by the name of *Liebfrauen Milch* (the Virgin's Milk): but a peasant in dirty boots, whom I saw treading out the juice from a tub of grapes, did not give me the most exquisite idea of the process of producing the Virgin's Milk.

I crossed the Rhine in a fisherman's shallop somewhat lower down to Gernsheim, a dirty little town, famous as the birth-place of Schäffer, the celebrated cotemporary, son-in-law, and partner of Faust, the



earliest printer. After a homely dinner at the table d'hôte of the best inn, I pursued my walk over the dreary but fertile plain towards Darmstadt. For two leagues the open arable country, without a hedge or inclosure, presented a monotonous scene; after which I entered a sandy path, through a thick, gloomy, fragrant forest of firs, stretching close up to the town, where I arrived late, heartily tired of a walk of eight leagues, without sufficient beauties to beguile the way.

I found the society of the Court enlivened by the presence of some interesting guests — the Ex-queen of Sweden, with her son and daughter the young Prince and Princess. The beauty of the Queen gained for her, on the throne of Sweden, the appellation of the Helen of the North; and her character had been described to me in colours that excited my curiosity to see her. This opportunity I enjoyed at an entertainment given by the Hereditary Princess of Hesse to gratify her young nephew and niece. The Queen, now above thirty years of age, still retains that interesting expression of countenance



which is the best part of beauty. Her figure is slender and graceful; and her delicate complexion, and soft grey eyes, give to her features which are not quite regularly Grecian, an expression of feminine softness almost bordering on timidity. She has all the appearance of having suffered much: but the expression of her countenance is rather that of pensive mildness than of melancholy. Her features have a tone of quick sensibility, which a lady happily described to me, in observing that the Queen always appeared on the point of smiling or weeping. Her manners are simple and frank in the highest degree. Her Majesty described to me, with the most good-humoured *naïveté*, the details of a perilous sea voyage which she had undertaken from Sweden, in which, after tossing about and much danger, she was obliged to put back to the port from whence she embarked. Sweden was a subject which I should naturally not have touched upon myself: but her Majesty seemed to speak of it without painful reminiscences. She is a good English scholar, and admired the poems of Lord Byron and Moore.



The former had inspired her with a particular interest; and, like her sister the Princess of Hesse, she was eager to know all the details I could give her concerning the poet. She pitied his misfortunes, and at once lamented and wondered that a man so highly gifted should be so apparently miserable. In the intervals of the conversations I enjoyed with this amiable female she would frequently watch, with an air of attentive satisfaction, the gaiety of her son and daughter, who were joining in the dance with the characteristic ardour of their age and their German education. The Princess is of a slender delicate figure, not without grace. The Prince, a tall well-looking youth of sixteen, simple and good-humoured, with a strong resemblance to his father, is now pursuing his education at the University of Heidelberg, under the care of a respectable Swiss governor. This gentleman, who was enjoying every advantage of rank, youth, and fortune in his own country, was induced, by an activity of character, and a zeal to be useful to suffering virtue, to undertake the anxious task of the



Prince's education. To qualify himself for his undertaking, he applied with unwearied diligence to perfect his own to the point which he conceived indispensable for the discharge of his duty. For a long time he found his task laborious and appalling: but the young Prince's character soon cheered his labours, and gradually produced a warm attachment between the tutor and his pupil, now grown into a fondness which makes it difficult for the former to leave his charge, even for a few days, without uneasiness. The Queen has some thoughts of sending her son to an English University. It is a curious coincidence that the young Prince is, within a few weeks, of the same age with the Prince Oscar, the son of Bernadotte, and, at present, heir presumptive to the throne of Sweden.

Considering all circumstances, the young Prince may probably indulge some distant hopes of ascending the throne, from which the imprudent heroism of his father, and the ambition of Napoleon have apparently excluded him. His near connection



with Russia, and the principal houses of Germany, and the love of the Swedish aristocracy and part of the people, which his family unquestionably enjoys, may concur, with the isolated situation of the expectant Crown Prince among the legitimate Sovereigns of Europe, to ground such a hope. The death of the Duke of Sudermania\* would probably be the period for any attempt in his favour; and if this event should take place at a less peaceful moment than the present, it is difficult to say how far the connections of the family might exert themselves for their fallen relation. Without foreign aid the attempt would be futile; for Sweden is a military kingdom, and Bernadotte has the hearts of the soldiers; and, under all circumstances, his talents and activity would

\* This event has taken place since the above was written. — The tide has not been taken at the flood by the exiled family. Bernadotte is safely seated on his throne. The new Queen of Sweden has been graciously received by Louis XVIII. — while poor Gustavus has been invested with the freedom of the city of Basle; and his amiable son may perhaps be consoled by his Imperial uncle by the Governorship of Finland, a province of the kingdom of his ancestors.



be formidable obstacles to the views of the dethroned family.

I was surprised to learn from military men that the co-operation of the Crown Prince in the campaign of 1813, for which he was so liberally paid at the expence of the Norwegians, was by no means so satisfactory as has frequently been supposed. His military talents are unquestionable; and it could only be his lukewarm attachment to the cause for which he fought, which has acquired him, among his German allies, the common appellation of General *Langsam*, i. e. General Slow.

Perhaps the most insurmountable obstacle to the hopes of the excluded family of Sweden, is the wild and inefficient character of the exiled Gustavus, who, in spite of something of the intrepid fire of Charles XII. in his veins, is probably as unfit to govern as the proclamations of his intriguing uncle described him. The same sanguine temperament which lost him his throne, has now converted him into a fanatical Quixote, — alternately projecting pilgrimages and crusades, and relaxing his



stout heart before the first pretty *bourgeoise* in whom his imagination sees a damsel of romance. His Majesty resided for some time at Frankfort, where his inaptness to the prose of life involved him in a squabble with a plain-dealing merchant, to whom a case, containing the insignia of royalty, was consigned from Sweden for his Majesty's use. The merchant demanded the expences of transportation, which his Majesty thinking it beneath his dignity to pay before he received the packet, the valuable casket was in a fair way of remaining with the merchant, but for the intervention of a French diplomatist of my acquaintance, who, from pure good-nature, and in spite of the unseemly appearance at that time of interesting himself for an emigrant monarch, exerted his influence, and put Gustavus in possession of his property. The King opened his treasures in presence of his friend the ambassador; and on taking out, amongst other things, a miniature of Louis XVIII., asked him, probably undesignedly — “*Le reconnoissez vous ?*” to which the wary Frenchman promptly replied — “*Je le connois.*” The precious contents of



the packet the King afterwards sent, with a letter of admonition, to his son. Basle is the present scene of his Majesty's exploits, from whence he sent not long ago to his amiable Queen a sentence of divorce, procured without the least pretence of blame on her part. His susceptible heart lately fell into the chains of a fair banker's daughter, whose friends were not quite pleased with the nature of his Majesty's attentions; and his proposal of a marriage with the left hand, by no means satisfied them. The Count Gottorp, however, valiantly persisted in his overtures; and at last procured the opportunity of indulging his chivalrous propensities in a single combat with his fair one's uncle, which ended without serious damage to either party. The impression of the banker's daughter was not, however, effaceable. Caroline used to appear to him in visions in various attitudes and shapes — sometimes strangely confounded in appearance with a Princess of Mecklenburg, with whom his Majesty had once been on the point of a marriage. One lucky day the disconsolate lover, partly in despair of success, and partly



on the strength of an invitation to England from the Prince Regent, took resolution to depart. The hour arrived; the post-horses were at the door, and the royal lover ready to step into the carriage, when Caroline's little lap-dog, which had always before been rather shy of his Majesty's caresses, presented itself at the coach door, and laid hold of his coat. This had too much the air of an embassy from his relenting fair one not to melt at once the King's feeble resolution. The Prince Regent's invitation was forgotten — the post-horses sent away — and the romantic monarch returned to his pursuit with his courage renovated by the lap-dog's caresses. Some time ago, advertisements appeared in his Majesty's name in the German papers, announcing his project of a grand crusade to Palestine, and calling on all chivalrously disposed persons to enlist under his banners. This, however, was prematurely and surreptitiously published. The pious King had merely composed one of the same nature, with a view to publish it, and showed it to a bookseller, whom he consulted as to the publication. The man, recollecting the heads



of what he had seen, sent them to the Hanau Gazette, which thought them much too extraordinary to be kept from the public.

Another visitor, who adorned rather than enlivened the Court circles, was the Prince Frederic of Hesse\*, a son of the Grand Duke, and a Marshal in the French army. His fine heroic figure, embellished by the uniform of a French Marshal, but ill accorded with the complacent insipidity of his conversation, and the gloomy turn of his character. The Prince has passed much of his time in France and Italy, among Catholics and priests, and under the protection of the Pope, who have availed themselves of a weak serious character to convert him to their religion. Though a young man, he is now a zealous Catholic devotee, without gaiety or life. He keeps up a correspondence with his Holiness,

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from whom he received the other day a Latin epistle, full of affection, and inviting him to make the Vatican his head quarters in a tour he is about making in Italy. His Highness has sanguine hopes of receiving a Cardinal's hat in reward for his zeal.

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This amiable, though gloomy young Prince, can not be confounded with the old Landgrave Frederic of Hesse-Cassel, the father of the married Princess of Cambridge, whose resemblance is ascribed to his son. The latter has acquired for him the name of the Prince of Hunsdorf.

D. D.