

# **Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

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

**Dodd, Charles Edward**

**London, 1818**

Letter XIX.

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120472](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120472)

## LETTER XIX.

LUDWIGSBURG, the favourite seat of the late King, and the present residence of our compatriot, his widow, lies in a fine open picturesque country, three leagues from Stutgard. The neat town, the ample white palace, the gardens, the avenues, and plantations have an air infinitely more imposing and cheerful than any thing in the Royal Capital. You enter from Stutgard, by a handsome wide street, one side formed by the regular buildings of the town, and the other by the stately avenues of the small park surrounding the royal mansion. A wide street branches off to the right, crossing the royal inclosures, and separated by a range of iron palisades from the stiff formal pleasure-grounds, ornamented with fountains, urns, parterres, and gravel walks, immediately before the palace. The palace presents a broad, white, handsome front,

towards this garden, though not so striking as the massy *corps de logis*, forming the back front, which is the residence of the Dowager Queen.

On the day that I passed at Ludwigsburg I regretted that her Majesty's indisposition deprived me of the honour of seeing her. The Count ———, her Grand Master, an intelligent and friendly man, spoke to me in high and affectionate terms of the amiable qualities of his mistress, and described her manners as simple and affable in the highest degree. Every one with whom I conversed at Ludwigsburg, as well as Stutgard, told the same tale. She was a "*recht brave wohlthätige dame*," "a right brave benevolent lady," "*man hat sie gern in Ludwigsburg*," "one has her willingly at Ludwigsburg" — were the plebeian expressions of loyal satisfaction, beyond which the phlegmatic German idioms never rise in compliment to any one. Her Majesty's mode of life is simple — she dines about one — an hour or two earlier than most Princes and Princesses of the country — sees little company — but is happy to receive English visitors — she spends the

evening, after six, the hour of tea, in the society of her little court composed entirely of Germans. She is regular in her attendance on Divine Worship, in the German language, in a little parlour fitted up as a chapel, in the palace. Her Majesty is described by all to have been attached, with a devoted sincerity, to the King. He, probably, in the main, appreciated her affections, but as is ordinarily the case with monarchs of vindictive passions, was a tyrant in his house as well as on the throne. Even occasional violent and coarse treatment could not shake her constant affection. She attended him in his last illness with unwearied tenderness, and was by his side when he expired. The Queen shows an affectionate attachment to all his old servants, most of them now out of place. The present king visits his mother-in-law generally twice a week and treats her with much respectful attention.

The Count accompanied me about the gardens which are large and laid out in the English taste, with all the picturesque accompaniments of lakes or rather *lake-kins*,

(to use the German privilege of universal diminutives,) cascades, rivers, pavilions, aviaries, &c. highly delightful to see, but not equally so to describe. The wild face of nature is often interesting in description; but nature tamed by a court gardener will hardly bear again taming by a picturesque describer. The mock ruins are a little more happy *fac similes* of real piles than those which often adorn German pleasure grounds. The Emichs-burg a round mouldering tower with a few interesting holes and a top picturesquely ragged is the principal—standing on a rock tolerably wild, from which a cascade rushes with a respectable impetuosity. The view from the tower over the neighbouring country is delightful; and to complete its Gothic interest, the late king christened it the Emichsburg, from an old ancestor Count Emich of Wirtemberg.

The *Spiel Platz* or Game Place, a large open area, presents the machinery for most of those delectable amusements which form the zest of Bartlemy and other English fairs—swings, round-about, nine pins, &c. A handsome pavilion contains four handsome wooden nags, saddled with great costliness,

both for ladies and gentlemen, and which gallop with surprising velocity by means of machinery under-ground. The gardens owe all their beauties to the late King, who spared no expense in the decoration of his favoured residence any more than in other fantasies. They are some of the most celebrated in Germany, but mixed with some unspoilt natural beauties, they have much trumpery and *baby-house* taste. By dint of being made upon a large scale the ruins, the summer-houses, the rocks, &c. are preserved from the striking insignificance, common in such ornaments, but they only approach nearer to nature like the young lady's wax doll which is made as large as life, but is a doll after all. The genius of the late King is wanting in the gardens which bear marks of neglect and desertion. The ruts of carriage wheels in the gravel walks, and the rampant plantations occasioned the Count to observe, "Ah! this would be otherwise if His Majesty were still alive." From the feeling tone in which he said this I apprehend the change in his own situation since the death of the King was quite as much in his Excellency's thoughts as the ruts in the gravel walk.

The monument erected by the late king to his friend and minister the Count Zepelin, is the most interesting and tasteful object in the gardens. It is a simple Doric temple, which you approach through a gloomy iron-gate, up a short turf path shaded by weeping willows and funereal cypress. The spot is melancholy, sequestered, and interesting. On entering the temple which is lined with rich grey marble, and surrounded by niches, holding brass candelabras; you are struck by a graceful white figure of friendship, leaning on a massy sarcophagus of black marble. The statue is an admirable specimen of the skill of Danekker; the attitude and expression are that of despondent grief, and agonised resignation. Above the tomb is the portrait of the Count in marble bas relief on the wall of the temple. A faint light gleams into the temple through a small arch in the cupola, and a simple lamp hanging from the middle of the roof supplies its place at night. On the pediment are inscribed in large golden letters, "*Dem vorangegangenen Freunde.*" "*To the Friend gone before;*" and over the vestibule, in smaller characters,

*“ Die der Tod getrennt  
Vereinigt das grab.”*

*“ Whom Death separates the Grave unites.”*

I surveyed this testimonial of Royal attachment with greater interest from the circumstance of having heard much of the virtues of the Count Zeppelin, and of his having been connected by ties of friendship with a friend of my own. The Count was early attached to the late King, followed him in his campaigns when he was a Russian General, and married the daughter of Catherine, and stood by him in his misfortunes when His Majesty was obliged to leave Russia and the Russian service in 1786. His Majesty entrusted to him the negociation for his marriage with our Princess Royal, which the Count conducted equally to the satisfaction of his master and of our Royal Family and Ministers. On the King's accession the Count was appointed Prime Minister, to the joy of the whole people, and remained with an unvaried popularity the King's adviser and confidential friend to the day of his death. This was in part hastened by the fatigues of missions and political busi-



ness when the country was distracted by the first entry of the French, aided by anxieties of love for a lady of great beauty and merit. The Count's wife died a few days after him; and this lady, who was sincerely attached to him, thus lived to see removed too late the obstacle that had opposed their happiness. She survived the Count some years: but she languished in ill health, and never revived after the shock of his death. The King took charge of his two sons, and educated them under his own eyes with a paternal attention. The grief of all ranks at the loss of this excellent man was unexampled; and the unvarying friendship and gratitude which the King showed both to him and his family are proofs of some good qualities of heart, too often obscured in His Majesty by violent passions and ostentatious pride.

You must not set the late King down as quite an ordinary despot, or form your idea of him solely from his menagerie, his gingerbread crowns, his oppressive *chasses*, or the excavation in his dinner table to admit his corpulence. He appears to have been one of those anomalous

compounds of bad and good which so often occur in life to falsify the divisions of the world too frequently made into monsters and angels. Buonaparte (no mean judge as far as talents are concerned) used to say, he was the only Sovereign in Germany capable of reigning. He was a man of strong intellect and cultivated taste, but a tyrant, and an acknowledged coward; with something imposing in his exterior, and possessing that ascendant over those around him which violent temper, without masculine character, is insufficient to produce. His passions were unbridled, but they had not quite corrupted his heart. He often made reparation to those he had injured. His manners were dignified and agreeable. A lady who used to be much in the circles and card-parties at Ludwigsburg, without being at all connected with the Court, told me she never met with a man "*qui possedoit mieux l'art de parler.*" The Queen was as much afraid of him as attached to him. His reign was severe; but with the exception of the havoc of hunting and some other arbitrary follies, its severity fell, principally where, in spite of its injus-

tice, it did least harm — on the noblesse. He cut down their privileges, made many serve as common soldiers in his army, and constantly vexed them by tyrannical seizures and oppressions; while his feeble neighbours were purchasing their flattery at the expense of their other subjects. He was in short an able not an *imbecile* tyrant — with some grandeur mixed with much littleness in his pride, and some little nobleness of nature in his ferocity.

I regretted that circumstances deprived me of the pleasure of seeing Danekker, the distinguished artist whose works I have before mentioned. He is a native of Stutgard, born of humble parents, and owed the means of cultivating his genius to the patronage of the Duke Charles, predecessor of the late king. The early bent of his genius which first led him to a fondness for drawing and made him once spoil some smooth hewn stones by scratching flowers and figures on them with a nail, afterwards appears to have become too strong to be checked by the opposition of his parents. When the Duke offered to admit one of their children into an excellent public seminary his parents

refused from a false idea that the students were only designed to recruit the ranks. The boy entreated in vain permission to accept the offer, and his importunities were at last only to be silenced by a confinement in his chamber. This gave him leisure to brood over his favourite objects, and to devise a scheme for accomplishing them. He contrived to communicate from his window with eight or nine of his comrades, whom he persuaded to stand by his cause, and to accompany him boldly to the Duke himself, at Ludwigsburg, to entreat an admission into the academy. The boys announced themselves, were admitted and kindly received by the Duke, who was delighted with the resolution and boldness of the young would-be academician of thirteen. He was immediately placed in the seminary where he found the means of a liberal education which afforded him a fund of acquirements useful in his profession. He studied here nine years, then made pedestrian tours to Paris and to Rome, profiting almost unaided by the opportunities they afforded him. In Italy he received kindnesses from Canova and

Trippel, and was recalled by his Prince in 1790, to his great grief, from the bright skies and the noble relics of Rome, to the fogs and cramped occupations of Stutgard. By way of recompence he was made Court Sculptor and Professor at the academy, with a salary of 800 florins, now considerably increased, for which he is obliged to execute all the orders of the court. Danekker's history adds one to the many instances of the early developement and buoyant character which have so often distinguished genius of the first rank.