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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 XII.

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LETTER XII.

THE new regime of Germany has ranked the Grand Duke of Baden, the seventh member of the Serene Confederation, coming immediately after the King of Wirtemberg, and before the solitary Elector of Hesse Cassel; now as much an Elector, in reality, as an inhabitant of Birmingham or Manchester. In the latter days of the Empire, the Elector ranked above the then humble Dukes of Wirtemberg; but the sovereigns of Wirtemberg and Baden have availed themselves, more adroitly, of the tide of politics, and by enlisting, zealously, under the banners of Napoleon, have stolen a march upon his Electoral Highness in power and precedence. The Allies, some will say, should not have permitted a staunch old legitimate to be pushed from his stool by a

Grand Duke and a King of yesterday, whose dignities are rather equivocally acquired from a rather equivocal source — But the statesmen of Vienna thought otherwise — and you can easily conceive that compact military sovereignties were in a condition to negotiate more efficaciously than an emigrant Prince just returned from exile. The near relationship of Baden with Russia, and Wirtemberg with Great Britain, may also have given some weight to the notes of their diplomatists; while the old Elector's close alliance with Prussia (by his own marriage, that of his son, and other intermarriages for the last century) gave him little more than the support of a reed broken by the same storm which had, for a time, swept himself from the map of Germany.

The population of the Grand Duchy of Baden — henceforward a considerable power — is about 1,200,000, nearly three times the amount before the profitable Confederation of the Rhine. The revenue before that event was nearly 300,000*l.* per annum; it is now, I believe, increased in about the same proportion as the territory. Besides his connection as nephew by marriage to

Napoleon, the Grand Duke was—whether willingly or not, far be it from me to decide—a useful member of the Rhenish Confederation. His state was drained, and his people squeezed dry, to support his contingent of troops, at one time amounting to no less than 20,000 men. In his zeal, or in his hard task-work, (whichever it is to be called,) the Grand Duke brought into the field as many troops as his much more competent neighbour of Wirtemberg. His Royal Highness was little with them himself. Campaigning little suits his weak indolent character; but they were well equipped by his people's gold, and ably commanded by the young Counts of Hochberg, under whom they gained considerable distinction.

His peace establishment amounts to about 8000 men; four times as many as his subjects are disposed to consider necessary for garrisoning the town, mounting and relieving guard, and parading in full dress before the Palace. In this number there are about thirty-three Generals; a General to about every 230 men; a proportion, or rather disproportion, which

reminds one of our infantine tastes, when in our tin or paste-board armies we always created as many officers as privates, because they were the prettiest and most showy. Unfortunately, however, for the finances of Baden, General Officers are more costly play-things than soldiers, and the people complain loudly that not above six or seven of these doughty commanders are in service, while the remainder receive pay as favourites of the Court, and their number is continually augmented to make snug retiring shelves for the dignitaries whom Court manœuvres lay aside to make room for other aspirers. The Baden troops are some of the handsomest and best appointed I have seen in Germany: but a deficiency in these qualifications is rarely to be charged on the legions of the small Sovereigns, As they are the pets and hobby-horses of His Highness, and the main ornaments of his capital, they are generally more showily equipped than those of more gigantic Sovereigns, to whom the great bulk of their army are more for use than ornament. The Grand Duke of Hesse's army are appointed *à la Francaise*.

In Baden, the alliance with the great northern Autocrat holds up the ugly Russian and Prussian fashions to imitation, and the long tapering waists, and chests swelling with horsehair or wool, give to the soldiers the awkwardly effeminate look of a Russian or Prussian trooper. The Prussians carry this system of stuffing their men into fine figures to the highest caricature; and many civil *elegans* of Germany, whose shapes at the distance of a hundred leagues are often under the discipline of a Berlin tailor, owe the manly swell they carry before them to convenient pads inserted in the lapelles of their coats.

It is difficult to give you an idea of the government and political condition of Baden. The exhausting efforts of the country at the conclusion of the late war, and the weak unstable character of the Grand Duke, have left every thing, according to the vulgar phrase, at sixes and sevens. The desperate condition of the finances has arrived at the unusual extremity of frequently retarding the salaries of the servants of government. The taxes are high, and the people generally discontented, a

main cause of their unfortunate emigrations last year. The Grand Duke is governed entirely by his favourites, and his wayward inclinations. While his illustrious mother and sisters are patterns of good conduct and sense, His Royal Highness's character, originally amiable, has been spoiled by being an only son, and an *enfant gâté*. He was educated entirely at Carlsruhe, and has scarcely seen any thing beyond it. The excellent Margravine, prudence itself in every thing else, could not refuse the young Prince Charles any thing that he wished. His grandfather, the late Grand Duke, (his father was killed early in Sweden,) one of the most respected Princes of Germany, deserved in every thing, but his indulgence of his wild heir, his title of "Charles Frederic the Wise." His Royal Highness's character is now naturally enough formed into one of vacillating indolence, inaptitude to business, and suspicious distrust of all around him. He passes much time in gaming, drinking, and dissipated pleasures, and will sometimes ease himself of the accumulated *ennui* of neglected papers, by consigning a

bundle unexamined to the flames. The passion which he has lately taken for the amiable Grand Duchess, is some restraint upon his wandering course, and may lead him to pursuits of better taste at least, if not of more advantage to his country. In a small despotic state, the character of the Prince is the secret spring that moves the whole machine; and in Baden every thing appears to partake of the Sovereign's instability. Changes and new organisations are continually making and meditating; new Committees, Colleges, and Ministeriums appointed without any apparent improvement of the real condition of things. As to all that relates to political liberty, the establishment of the States, the freedom of the press, &c., &c., the people here, as in the other States, are "referred to the coming on of time," and the decisions of the Diet, which may come with it. The Diet being specially charged with this important matter, the Sovereigns reasonably enough suspend all their proceedings till the general precedent of a constitution appears, which the Serene Assembly are to draw out as a model for all the States.

The Congress of Diplomats naturally undertake, rather reluctantly, a task which is to curtail the prerogatives of their illustrious Masters — but it is the general opinion of the best informed persons, that sooner or later, Representative Constitutions must be conceded to the universal demands for them. The spirit of enquiry, and a sense of their rights, have been too much raised by late events among the Germans, to be silenced by any thing but compliance with their rational requisitions. The most staunch supporters of the arbitrary Governments see plainly that concessions are no longer to be evaded.

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