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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 X.

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LETTER X.

WE passed along the beautiful *Berg-strasse* (the Roman *Strata Montana*) of which I have before given you some description, to Heidelberg, in a gusty bleak night. Though necessity, rather than taste, selected this hour for the journey, the fine scenes familiar to us in their full meridian features now delighted us with some of those indefinite and flitting charms which a beautiful face acquires behind a transparent veil. Heppenheim, Weinheim, and the other towns, with their impending mountains and ruined castles, were sometimes involved in thick gloom, and sometimes half illumined by the "chaste beams of the watery moon." Weinheim is an old walled town now decayed and insignificant, in one of the most striking spots of the *Berg-strasse*. A fine round-headed mountain, covered with vines and crowned by the old Castle of

Windek, rears itself abruptly above the town—the old-fashioned market-place of which slopes down a steep declivity, while the rapid Weschnitz below, emerges with a foaming impetuosity from the narrow valley through which it has wandered among the mountains of the Odenwald. A dismal *Chateau*, once of the Electors Palatine, and the crumbling walls and portals of the town are the only remaining traces of its consequence.

I awoke from one of those dozes, in the carriage corner, to which German *Chaussees* are mercilessly hostile, on the centre of the fine bridge over the Neckar at Heidelberg. The scene was well calculated to strike re-opening eyes — The silvery river below us, the green ranges of mountains on the bank we had just left, the bolder wooded head of the *Königstuhl* Mountain on the other side, with the town below, and the grey ruins of the castle halfway up its shaggy sides, were lighted up by a clear burst of the moon from which the wind had driven every fleecy cloud. This first impression of Heidelberg was too striking to be forgotten. For a few more

details of the place you must wait till I re-visit it in returning; for, in this visit, a rumbling midnight entrance at the Neckar portal, and the harmonious echoes of the Postillion's bugle as we jolted through the naked streets, are all that I remember of this seat of science—from whence, after drinking coffee at the post-house, we started again for Carlsruhe in two hours.

Morning shone upon our route to announce to us that its striking beauties had ceased at Heidelberg. It now ran parallel with the Rhine, at the distance of four or five leagues, through flat, uninteresting, open fields, chiefly of tobacco plants and garden produce. A range of regular dwarfish mountains still accompanied us, bounding the valley on the left. We passed Wisloch, a small dull town, and arrived at Bruchsal, the capital of the old Bishopric of Bruchsal, formerly united with that of Spires, and now swallowed up in the Grand Duchy of Baden. The palace of the *cidevant* Prince Bishop is a spacious and striking edifice, whose dismal courts and corridors and slackly streaming fountains bespeak deserted splendour. The old Margravine

Dowager of Baden, passes a few summer months here; and the gay ladies of her court complain bitterly of its magnificent dreariness.

We arrived in the evening at the handsome capital of Baden. A *grand manoeuvre* of the Grand Duke's troops, to the number of 3 or 4000 men! about to take place, produced a scarcity of beds and a grand commotion in the Residence. Having found accommodation, however, with the worthy host of "the Court of Zähring," we went to the Opera, found some acquaintances, heard Madame Weixelbaum, the admired Siren of the Court and the town, and determined to spend a few days, at least, in the gay metropolis of Baden.

Carlsruhe is a white, regular, elegant little town. The approaches through stately poplar avenues—the wide High-street, above a mile long—the massy modern gates—the Barracks—the Arsenals with an ostentatious display of 12 and 24-pounders, give it an air of cheerful importance. Its construction has more singularity than taste, according to enlightened modern notions; though when founded, by an old Margrave,

a century ago, it was, no doubt, a masterpiece of the stately formality of the age. It is built in the exact shape of a fan, at the edge of a fine forest, coming up to the castle gardens. The main streets of the town branch out like the rays of a circle, the palace forming the nucleus, and closing the vista of each long street. The market-place, a large square in the centre of the town, adorned by the Corinthian portico of the Lutheran Church, is the handsome *Place* of the town; though an ugly pyramid of boards in the centre breaks in on its air of elegance, and, as the old Margravine lamented to me very feelingly, does no honour to her respectable ancestor, the founder of the town, and of the Grand Baden Order of Fidelity, whose ashes repose beneath it. This Prince, the Margrave Charles, who appears to have been a bit of a philosopher, intended the town, originally, as a retired hunting-seat, for his court at Durlach, and christened it Carlsruhe, or Charles's Rest. His subjects, however, chose to follow their Prince, and gradually deserted Durlach for the new residence, apparently half against the will of the old

Margrave, who lamented the interruption of his eremitical plans, in a curious inscription on the old castle:

“*Sylva domicilium ferarum fuit, Anno 1715, Cosmopolita pro requie inveniendâ stationem meam hic elegi ut mundo fastidiisque abstraherer. O Vanitas! nullam inveni— Ubi Homo, ibi Mundus— Contra meam voluntatem populus affluxit civitalemque erexit— VIDE VIATOR— Homo proponit— DEUS disponit— Non voluntas sed gratia ter optimi Requiem animi dat quam sperat CAROLUS. Anno 1728.*”

The present Castle, built by the late Grand Duke, is a handsome white edifice, owing its imposing appearance more to the immense open area before it, than to its own dignity. The wings of the Castle, which branch out like rays from the ends of the centre *Corps de Logis*, are continued by long diverging ranges of building, occupied by the Court Library, the Court Theatre, the Court apothecary's shop, and other appurtenances of the Grand Ducal establishment. The space between these two wide slants is left a noble open area, intersected with a few

rows of dwarf shrubs, not large enough to spoil the grand air which this unbroken space gives to the Palace. The two rows of building are finally connected together and the area inclosed by a semicircular range of regular buildings, with a handsome covered arcade. The houses in this range are the most fashionable and cheerful in Carlsruhe. — looking over the open area, whose space diminishes the passing equipages into apparent insignificance.

The interior of the Castle presents nothing more remarkable than the ordinary splendour of sattin papers, polished oak floors, audience rooms, clocks, canopies, &c. &c. The old Margraves of Baden, and the Princes of Pforzheim and Zähring, whose titles have devolved on the Grand Duke, hang on the walls, and gave rise now and then to a genealogical explanation from our sagacious liveried guide. The dining saloon, a handsome room, opens into the interior of the octagon tower, called the *Bleythurm*, (Lead Tower,) in the centre of the Castle. The view from the outside is extensive and beautiful. At the back of the Castle it commands the

rich expanse of beech and oak forest, which, by way of repetition of the quaint ground plot of the town, is intersected by thirty-two straight alleys, all converging to a point at the Castle, some of them extending through several leagues of forest; the blue broken tops of the Vosges Mountains in France bound the prospect. On the other side, the town, with its mathematical formality of straight lines, presents a picture of exact analogy to the forest view at the back—except that the forest here is such a one as the rural Methodist parson said he preferred on transferring his tub from a village to a city—a forest of chimneys instead of trees. Round the back of the Castle stretch the spacious and umbrageous shrubberies and gardens, laid out in a corresponding style of straight alleys, circles, and squares; the walks ornamented by rows of orange trees, some of them of great size and value.

The new Lutheran Church just completed, on the scite of one which an increase of population rather than of piety had rendered too contracted, is a much boasted ornament of the Capital. It is the work of

Weinbrenner, an architect of Carlsruhe, of great reputation, who has travelled in Italy, studied at Dresden, and ornamented several of the principal towns in Germany. The large Corinthian portico is the most striking part of the edifice: but the columns are thick and gouty; and though too high for the pediment, which is awkwardly perched in the air, are without lightness or grace. The capitals, cornices, and other ornaments, appear elaborately finished: but without richness of effect, or freedom of execution. The steeple is a little square piece of *mesquinnerie*, such as you sometimes see on a trim looking chapel of ease near town. The interior is far from redeeming these defects, by its gigantic stained columns with gaudy gilt capitals, its square unrelieved length of walls, and the finical *recherchés* ornaments superinduced upon a grand outline.

The picturesque "English Garden" of the Margravine is one of the most agreeable of the many agreeable promenades round the town. A small but handsome pleasure house stands in the shrubberies, in which the old lady had planned a *fete*

champêtre, which the weather obliged her to adjourn to the palace. In one corner of the garden is a small modern Gothic building, containing a simple monument to the Margrave her husband, who was killed before attaining the throne by a fall from a carriage during a visit to his daughter the Queen of Sweden. The upper story contains two little apartments, hung chiefly with English prints, which formed the favourite abode for many weeks of the late Duke of Brunswick, the hero of Waterloo. Grief for the loss of his charming wife, a daughter of the old Margrave, drove him to seek distraction and comfort with her family at Carlsruhe. He formed a solitary study of these little apartments, situated in a sequestered shrubbery, and passed several weeks here almost without society.

The Court library at Carlsruhe, which has been enriched by the addition of that at Rastadt, on the union of the Margraviate of Baden-Baden with Baden-Durlach, and since by the spoils of numerous cloisters and *mediatized* Princes, occupies one of the side buildings of the Castle, and contains

about 70,000 volumes. Among these are many curious books of the fifteenth century, some costly antiquarian works, and some good editions of the classics. Among the MSS., which are rather numerous, are two curious Hebrew Bibles, the property of the great Hebrew scholar and sturdy champion of literature in the fifteenth century, Reuchlin. The largest of these he received as a present from the Emperor Frederick III. Reuchlin was born at Pforzheim, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, educated at Baden, and class-fellow of one of the old Margraves. At his death he left his books and MSS. to an institution in his native town, from whence they were brought to the library at Carlsruhe—the little German Capital invariably absorbing all that is valuable in the provinces.

The picture gallery of Carlsruhe, of course, an invariable accessory of splendour to the Residence, contains, among many insignificant pieces, some of merit, by Van Eick, the first German oil painter, Rembrandt, Craier, Holbein, Quintin Matsis, Vandyke, and a variety of Dutch and Flemish painters; and a splendid portrait of the

minister Colbert, by Champagne, which the Grand Duke bought of Napoleon for 6000 florins. His Royal Highness adds pretty liberally to his collection, though his treasury at this moment is by no means overflowing.

The ordinary plan of education of German boys, from the higher down to all but the lowest classes, is at the Public Gymnasium, a free school, to be found in every considerable town. They a good deal resemble the grammar-schools in our large towns, except that the ranks of the boys are even more mixed — and the system of education and discipline by no means comparable. The sons of many of the noblesse frequent these places of instruction; the more opulent, or judicious, have private tutors in their own houses. Latin and Greek, of course, form a principal part of their instruction — but it is a proof of the defectiveness of the system, that in spite of drilling at the Gymnasium, and a residence, at least of two years, at the University, you seldom find a man, in the higher ranks, who possesses more than the merest smattering of classical attainments. The Professors,

and some of the Pastors, are almost the only tolerable scholars. The higher classes of the Gymnasium are instructed, besides the dead languages, in philosophy, theology, &c. The boys are placed, on their entrance, in the class for which they appear fit, on a preliminary examination. The noblesse rarely send their sons to any but the higher classes, into which a little favour often admits young Barons, who are more fitted for the lowest. The boys generally learn gymnastic exercises, and are often taught to sing patriotic songs at their games.

You might suppose that petty despotic governments would little relish these spices of patriotism in instructions administered under their immediate patronage; — that they are not lost upon the young minds, you will perceive when I come to speak of the system of the university. Do not, however, set this licence down to any extraordinary liberality. Supine indifference, and an utter blindness to the operation of causes, not quite immediate, are the prevalent characteristics of the little governments. With some few exceptions,

most of the Princes would little hesitate to prescribe alterations in the system, if it ever entered their heads, or those of the multitudinous counsellors around them, that such seeming trifles as the games and songs of the public schools, might be pregnant with more important results to their thrones, than a marriage with a great power, or a visit to a little one. The more shrewd well-wishers to despotism see clearly that the rising generation are educating at the Gymnasium and the University with ideas of independence, ill-suited to the capitals of the little monarchies. But the Princes' easy apathy, in this and other instances, lets things take their course and unintentionally favours the progress of liberal ideas, which must in the end, either bend or break the governments with which, in their present state, they can never go hand in hand.

The self-adopted costume of the little urchins of the Gymnasium, is another badge of their patriotism. The long flowing hair, brown frock coats with short skirts, open necks and little caps, which give them the look of the little

quaint ragamuffins whom one sees in an old wood cut of the days of Albert Durer, are a close aping of the dress of the universities; where this costume is intended for a revival of the old German fashions, which it is thought must be necessarily instrumental in reviving the good old German spirit. But the worthy papas and mammas would surely do well to put a veto upon such ebullitions of public spirit; for they sadly disfigure their little patriotic darlings of eight or nine, and, after all, I fear, are much more likely to make Tom Truants of them than either Brutuses or Hampdens.

Besides the usual Gymnasium, Carlsruhe contains a variety of useful public Establishments; such as a Deaf and Dumb Institution, a public Drawing School, where boys and girls receive lessons *gratis* in drawing, geometry, &c., &c., a Military Cadet's School, an Engineer's School, and a Forest and Hunting School, for young men intended for the forest and hunting department. The instructions, however, of this last school are necessarily confined to the theoretical knowledge necessary; forest

botany, mineralogy, mathematics, &c.; and the young nobles who follow this wild profession generally acquire under some superintendant of forests who takes pupils, the whole science of cultivating and managing woods, and hunting wild boars and stags, after the several modes used and approved of.

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