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## **Excursions along the banks of the Rhine**

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Letter IX.

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## LETTER IX.

## AIX-LA-CHAPELLE—THE TOMB OF CHARLEMAGNE.

As regards invalids, Aix-la-Chapelle is a hot, cold, mineral, ferruginous, sulphurous, bathing place; as regards the pleasure seeker it is a region of balls and concerts. For the pilgrim it is the shrine of those precious relics which are exhibited once in seven years (the gown of the virgin, the blood of Jesus, and the cloth into which fell the head of St. John the Baptist). For the old chronicler, it is an abbey for maidens of high descent, succeeding to the monastery built by St. Gregory, son of Nicephoras, Emperor of the East. For the sportsman, it is no less attractive, as the ancient valley of the wild boar (*Porcetum*, having become *Borcette*). The manufacturer views it as containing water suitable for the preparation of wool; the shopkeeper as a depot of pins, needles, and cloth. But for him who is neither manufacturer, sportsman, antiquarian, pilgrim, invalid, or tourist, it is simply the CITY OF CHARLEMAGNE.

Here that great emperor was born and died, in the old half-Roman palace of the Frank kings, of which all that remains is the tower of Granus,

forming part of the town-hall. He is buried in the church he founded two years after the death of his wife Fastrada, in 796; consecrated by Leo III. in 804; the dedication of which two bishops of Tongres, buried at Maestricht, came out of their tombs to complete. The ceremony was performed by three hundred and sixty-five archbishops and bishops, to represent the days of the year.

This historical and yet fabulous church, which gave its name to the town, has, during the last thousand years, undergone many transformations. On my arrival at "Aix" I proceeded at once to "La Chapelle," which presents itself to the spectator in the following manner.

A portal of the time of Louis XV., of greyish blue granite, having fine bronze gates of the eighth century, backed by a Carlovingian wall, surmounted by a row of Saxon arches. Above these there is a fine Gothic story, superbly carved, in which you recognise the elliptic arch of the fourteenth century, but degraded by a superstructure of brick, and a slated roof, added not more than twenty years ago. To the right of the porch there is an immense pine-apple, of the *pinus sylvestris*, used as an ornament by the ancients, in Roman bronze, placed upon a granite column. On the opposite side is another column, surmounted by a bronze wolf, also Roman, the body half-turned, the teeth clenched, and the jaws open.

Allow me to relate in a parenthesis the his-

the history of this wolf and pine-apple, according to the version of the old women of the country. Ages and ages ago a wish was entertained in Aix-la-Chapelle to found a church; and the foundations being laid, and the walls raised, for six months nothing was heard on the spot but the sound of adze and hammer. But the funds of the pious having suddenly failed, the pilgrims passing through the city were appealed to, by a tin basin placed before the church door. Scarcely a denier, however, was dropped into the vessel. What was to be done? The senate assembled and consulted. The workman refused to labour, and weeds and moss already took possession of the newly laid stones, as if they were predestined to ruin! Was the design then to be abandoned? The town senate knew not what to answer!

One day, as they were sitting in deliberation, a mysterious stranger, of high and imposing aspect, made his appearance before them. "Good morrow, gentlemen," quoth he. "What is the subject of debate?—Is it the stoppage of your church which causes your anxiety?—You know not how to complete it, eh?—You want money for the endowment?" "Stranger!" replied one of the senators with indignation, "You talk too flippantly; we want half a million of gold pieces." "Here they are," replied the stranger, opening a window, and pointing to a heavy laden cart stationed in the square before the town hall,

to which were yoked ten pairs of oxen, attended by twenty Moors, armed to the teeth.

One of the senators, having accompanied the mysterious stranger down stairs, took one of the sacks from the cart, and returned to empty it before the senate, when it proved to be really full of gold! All present opened their eyes with amazement; and turning towards the stranger, with growing respect, demanded his name. "I am the owner of yonder gold. What would you have more?" replied he. "My residence is in the Black Forest, near the lake of Wildsee, not far from the ruins of Heidenstadt, the city of the pagans. I possess a gold mine and a silver mine, and during the night amuse myself with counting over heaps of carbuncles. My tastes are simple, but being of a melancholy disposition, I pass my days, watching in the deep and transparent waters of the lake, the gambols of the tritons, and the growth of the *polygonum amphibium*. Thus much in answer to your questions. I have unbosomed myself as much as I intend; make the most of it! Yonder is your million of gold pieces; take them or let them alone."

"We accept them," replied the senate, "and will hasten to finish our church."

"There is one condition to the bargain," observed the stranger. "Take the gold and finish your church. But I demand in exchange the soul of the first individual who crosses its threshold on the day of dedication."

"You are the devil then?" shouted the horri-  
fied senators.

"And *you*—asses!" was the rejoinder of Sa-  
tan.

The burgomasters of the senate now began to  
quake and tremble, and make the sign of the  
cross. But Satan, who was in a jocular mood,  
laughed outright at their panic, as he gaily chinked  
his gold; so that they took courage and began to  
negotiate.

"Satan must know what he is about," said  
they, "or he would not retain his situation as  
devil."

"After all, it is a bad bargain for *me*," retorted  
his Satanic majesty in his turn. "You will have  
your million, or your church to show for it; I  
only a wretched soul!—And whose, pray?—The  
first that comes to hand—the soul of a chance  
customer—some canting hypocrite probably, who  
in his dissembled zeal is the first to enter, and  
who would therefore, under any circumstances,  
have fallen to my share! I must observe by the  
way, gentlemen, that the plan of your church is  
admirable! Who has been your architect? Tell  
him, with my compliments, that I perfectly ap-  
proved his groined aisles; and that the pointed  
arches are in good taste. The shaping of the  
door is not altogether to my fancy, but it may  
be modified. The staircase leading to the vaults  
will be a fine thing in its way; and 'twould be a  
thousand pities that what is so well begun should

stop short for want of funds. What say you, gentlemen? Is it a deal? My million of money for a single soul—ay, or no?"

So spake the tempter. "After all," observed the senators, "we may think ourselves lucky to be let off so easily. He might have taken a fancy to half-a-dozen souls of ours,—which, let us hope, are at present safe from his clutches. Nay, he might have levied a tax of souls upon the whole population!"

The bargain therefore was finally struck, and the million of gold paid into their treasury. Satan vanished from their view through an aperture, which emitted the sulphurous blue flame usual on such occasions; and two years afterwards the church was completed. Meanwhile, though the senators had of course sworn to observe the profoundest secrecy concerning all that had happened, every man of them, the very first evening, divulged the whole story to his wife—according to a law ex-senatorial, indeed, but not the less binding. The secret, therefore, being generally known, thanks to the wives of the senators, prior to the completion of the church, no one dared to set foot in it!

Here therefore was a new dilemma: the church of Aix was built; and now, no one would enter. It was not a church, but a desert; and consequently of no mortal use to mortal soul.

Again the senate assembles, but to little purpose. They appeal to the Bishop of Tongres, to

no result ; then to the canons of the chapter, but equally without avail.

“ What you require is a mere trifle, my lords,” observed a monk belonging to the order whom they next took into consultation. “ You have undertaken to surrender the first soul that enters the new church. But it was not definitively stipulated what sort of soul it was to be. Satan is a fool to allow himself to be so overreached. This morning, my lord, after a hard chase, a fine wolf was taken in the valley of Borcette. Drive this ferocious beast into the church, and Satan must needs be satisfied. It is his own fault if he chose to make so loose a bargain.”

“ Bravo !” exclaimed his auditors ; “ the monk has more brains in his head than the whole collective wisdom of the senate !” Next day at dawn, the bells of the new church rung cheerfully for the angelus. “ How is this ?” said the burghers of the city ; “ Is this the day of dedication ? and pray who do they expect will be fool-hardy enough to hazard the adventure ?” “ Not I,”—“ Nor I,”—“ Nor I,” was heard on all sides ; as the Senate and Chapter advanced gravely towards the chief entrance.

The wolf was now produced ; and at a given signal, its cage door and the church gates flew open at the same moment. On discerning the empty ailes, in he rushed. Satan was already on the spot, his jaws distended, and his eyes voluptuously closed with expectation of a feast.



Imagine his rage on discovering his prey to be of the brute creation. With a hideous howl, he spread his harpy wings, flapping about the arches of the edifice with the roar of a tempest; and, finally, on making his exit from the building, bestowed a kick of his hoof upon the brazen gate, by which it was rent in twain from top to bottom, as seen to the present day.

“It is in memory of this event,” say the old women of Aix, “that the brazen effigy of a wolf was placed on the left of the entrance; while the pine-apple to the right is intended to represent the soul so mercilessly gobbled up by the evil one!”

Such is the local legend. Let us now return to the church, premising that I could not discover the rent in the door described by the tradition. On entering the cathedral by the principal portal, the Roman, Gothic, and rococo styles are confusedly intermixed, without regard to affinity, fitness, or order, and consequently without effect. But if you approach from the choir, the effect is wholly different. The lofty apsis of the fourteenth century shines forth in all its boldness of design, and displays the beauty and science of the angle of its roof, the rich carved work of the balustrades, its diversified and fantastic spouts, the gloomy colour of the stone, and the transparency of its lofty lancet windows, seen through which, houses two stories high appear to sink into insignificance. Even

from thence, however, the view of the church, imposing as it, is hard and discordant. Between the apsis and the portal, in a kind of hollow, where all the lines of the edifice appear to break, is concealed, barely connected with the façade by a charming bridge of the fourteenth century, the Byzantine dome, with its triangular frontal, built by Otho III., in the tenth century, exactly above the tomb of Charlemagne.

This fictitious façade, this buried dome, this broken apsis, constitute the blemishes of La Chapelle of Aix. The architect of 1353 chose to unite, in his prodigious design, the old church of Charlemagne, devastated by the Normans in 882, and the dome of Otho, burnt in 1236. A series of minor chapels, connected with the basis of the grand central chapel, was intended to surround the whole edifice, with the exception of the portal. Two of the chapels which now exist were already built when the fire of 1366 took place. This rapid progress was then checked; and, strange to say, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did nothing for the fine old church, which the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to spoil.

It must be confessed, however, that upon the whole, the Cathedral of Aix exhibits considerable grandeur: after some minutes' contemplation, a sort of majesty seems engendered by the edifice, which, like the empire of Charlemagne, was never completed; and represents various

styles and periods, just as the latter was composed of many nations speaking many tongues.

To him who contemplates it from without, there is a deep and mysterious harmony between the great sovereign of old and the great tomb which he provided for himself. I was all impatience to see more of it. Having entered through the finely arched portal, and the ancient gates of bronze, embellished in the centre with a lion's head, and shaped to fit the architraves, the first object that struck me was a white rotunda of two stories, lit from above, profusely embellished in the florid rustic style; and on looking down in the centre of the pavement I perceived, by the pale light diffused from above, a large slab of black marble, worn by the feet of many visitors, on which is inscribed, in brazen characters,

## CAROLO MAGNO.

Nothing can be in worse taste than the rococo style of the chapel; insulting with its meretricious graces so great a name. Cherubs with the air of Cupids; palms, that look like courtly feathers; garlands, flowers, and knots of ribbons, and other frivolous devices; have been inflicted upon the dome of Otho III., and the tomb of Charlemagne! The only object worthy of the precious remains contained in this chapel, is an immense circular lamp of forty-eight burners, about twelve feet in diameter, offered in the twelfth century by Frederick Barbarossa to the

tomb of Charlemagne. This lamp, which is of copper and gilt silver, is in the form of an Imperial crown, suspended above the marble slab by a massive iron chain ninety feet in length. The black slab covering the frame is nine feet long, by seven feet wide.

It is evident that there must have been an early monument to Charlemagne in this very spot; for the antiquity of the marble slab is doubtful; and the inscription of "CARLO MAGNO" is of the last century. The remains of Charlemagne no longer lie under the stone; in 1166 Frederick Barbarossa, whose lamp, however magnificent, does not redeem the act of sacrilege, caused the Emperor to be disinterred. The Holy Catholic Church laying violent hands on the skeleton, broke it up into relics: and in the vestry of the Cathedral, the vicar exhibits to the curious the arm of Charlemagne, which I saw at the cost of a few francs—that arm, the awe of the world, upon which is pitifully inscribed, by some Latinist of the twelfth century, "*Brachium sancti Caroli magni.*" His skull was next exhibited, between the finger and thumb of a beadle; the skull from which issued the regeneration of Europe, and on which a sacristan now beats the tattoo with his thumb-nail!\* All these objects are kept in a

\* The translator of this work, being at Rouen in 1837, shortly after the discovery of the grave of Richard Cœur de Lion, and the examination of his remains, was offered by the sacristan of the church, for a few francs, a portion

closet of painted wainscot, picked out with gold, surmounted with those Cupid-like angels which constitute the real tomb of him whose fame, at the expiration of ten centuries, still astonishes the human mind; whose name remains stamped upon the world with the double title, "*sanctus*" and "*magnus*;" the two most august epithets derivable from services rendered to heaven or earth!

The dimensions of the skull and arm are extraordinary. Charlemagne was one of the few men whose physical strength equal their moral power. The son of Philip the Bref was a Colossus alike in frame and intelligence. His height was seven times the length of his foot; which measure assigned a law to the kingdom! This royal foot, the foot of Charlemagne, originated the common foot of long measure, which we have recently sacrificed to the more prosaic admeasurement of the *mètre*; to the extinction of a world of poetry and history in favour of the decimal system, without which the world contrived to get on so well during six thousand years. The cupboard in question is rich in treasures. The doors are painted within in admirable oil paintings upon golden grounds, some of the panels being unquestionably the work of Albert Durer. Besides the arm and skull, there is the horn of Charlemagne, an enormous elephant's tooth most curiously carved; the cross

of the heart of the English hero, which the man produced in a *pill-box*, and warranted genuine. It had the appearance of a piece of mouldy leather.

of Charlemagne, in which is inserted a piece of the true cross of our Saviour, which the Emperor wore round his neck when so audaciously disinterred; a beautiful censer given by Charles V., and spoilt by a tasteless addition of modern ornament; the fourteen golden medallions, embellished with Byzantine sculptures, which figured upon the marble throne of the great Emperor; a shrine given by Philip XI., representing the Duomo of Milan; the cord which bound the limbs of Jesus Christ during his flagellation; a piece of the sponge which absorbed the gall with which they moistened his lips when on the cross; and, lastly, the girdle of the Holy Virgin, in worsted, and that of our Saviour in leather. This little knotted thong, resembling a child's whip, has occupied the attention of three Emperors. From Constantine, who stamped its authenticity with the seal or *Sigillum*, which it still bears, it descended to Haroun-Al-Raschid, by whom it was presented to Charlemagne.

All these venerable and venerated objects are enclosed in Gothic or Byzantine cases, adorned with jewellery, like so many shrines or microscopic cathedrals in massive gold, sparkling with emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds, by way of windows. Amidst these precious jewels, piled upon the twin shelves of the cupboard, are two immense golden shrines, of the most admirable workmanship and considerable value. The first and most ancient is Byzantine, surrounded

with niches in which are seated, with their crowns on their heads, sixteen emperors. In this are kept the remaining bones of Charlemagne; and it is never opened. The second, which is of the twelfth century, and was given by Barbarossa, contains the famous relics to which I alluded at the beginning of my letter, and is opened every seventh year. The opening of this celebrated shrine in 1496, attracted one hundred and forty-two thousand pilgrims to Aix-la-Chapelle; producing a profit to the city, in fifteen days, of eighty thousand golden florins.

The last shrine has but a single key, which is broken in two pieces, one of which remains in the custody of the Chapter, the other in that of the first civil authority. It has been opened upon extraordinary occasions for crowned heads. The present King of Prussia, when Prince-Royal, was refused the favour.\* In a lesser press, close by the other, is a *fac simile*, in silver gilt, of the Germanic crown of Charlemagne. The Carolingian crown, surmounted by a cross, and loaded with precious stones and cameos, is formed of a simple circle, à *fleurons*, which surrounds the head, having a semicircle superadded from the brows, near the nape of the neck, which resembles, viewed in profile, the ducal horn of Venice. Of

\* This collection of relics was opened in the month of September, 1842, in presence of the King of Prussia and several royal visitors assembled on occasion of the reviews at Cologne.

the three crowns worn by Charlemagne, as emperor of Germany, king of the Lombards, and king of France, the Imperial crown is at Vienna, that of France at Rheims, and the third, the iron crown of Lombardy, at Milan.

On leaving the vestry, I was made over by the beadle to a verger, who conducted me about the church, opening every now and then certain gloomy-looking recesses, which within glittered with magnificence.

The pulpit, for instance, which at first appears shabby enough, by the sudden removal of its exterior covering becomes a splendid tower of silver gilt. It is a beautiful specimen of the goldsmiths' craft of the eleventh century, given by the emperor Henri II. to the Cathedral. Byzantine ivories richly carved, a crystal ewer with its dish, a huge onyx nine inches long, adorn the suit of golden armour which surrounds, as it were, the priest of the temple deputed to expound the word of God. The breast-plate represents Charlemagne carrying the *Chapelle* of Aix upon his arm.

This pulpit is placed at the angle of the choir, occupying the marvellous apsis of 1353. All the stained glass has disappeared, and the lancet-windows are plain from top to bottom. The rich tomb of Otho III., founder of the dome, destroyed in 1794, is replaced by a flat stone marking the spot, at the entrance of the choir. An organ given by the Empress Josephine places the ignoble



style of 1804 in juxtaposition with the exquisite arched roof of the fourteenth century. Roof, pillars, capitals, statues, in fact the whole choir is covered with stucco. In the midst of this degraded choir stands the eagle given by Otho III., with wings outspread and fiery eyes, transformed into a reading-desk; apparently scorning the use to which he is devoted, for he retains the globe itself in his talons. This ancient emblem of Cæsarean sway ought to have been respected. Yet when Napoleon visited Aix-la-Chapelle, the eagle of Otho had a thunderbolt added to the globe grasped in his talons, which still figures on either side the imperial orb. The verger gratifies the curiosity of strangers by unscrewing the moveable thunderbolt. Upon the back of the eagle, as if by ironical and sad anticipation, the sculptor of the tenth century executed an outspread bat, mimicking a human face, upon which the reading-desk is now stationed.

To the right of the altar is deposited the heart of Mons. Antoine Berdolet, first and last Bishop of Aix-la-Chapelle, appointed by Napoleon, and, as he is qualified by his epitaph, "*primus Aquis-granensis episcopus.*" At present, the chapel is served by a chapter, presided over by a dean with the title of provost.

In another gloomy recess of the chapel, the verger opened a closet containing the coffin of Charlemagne, being a superb sarcophagus of white marble, and Roman origin, exhibiting in

bas-relief the profane abduction of Proserpine. I examined with much interest this work of art, which passed for a fine antiquity a thousand years ago.

At the extremity of the composition are four plunging horses, of a mingled divine and infernal race, led by Mercury, and dragging towards a half-open abyss the car, in which Proserpine is writhing with despair, struggling in the arms of Pluto. The robust arm of the god encircles the form of the young maiden, who is thrown back, till her dishevelled hair waves against the firm and inflexible face of the helmeted Goddess of Wisdom. The allegory exhibits Pluto carrying off Proserpine, to whom Minerva is whispering words of advice; while a smiling Cupid is seated at the bottom of the car, betwixt the colossal legs of Pluto. Behind Proserpine, in fierce attitudes of defiance, stand a group of nymphs and furies. The companions of Proserpine are struggling to detain a car, which is stationed behind as if by way of relay, and to which are yoked two winged and flaming dragons; one of the youthful goddesses having boldly seized a dragon by the wing, so as apparently to cause him to send forth shrieks of pain. This curious relieve is in itself a poem, belonging to a vigorous and noble order of sculpture, somewhat emphatic, worthy of pagan Rome, and such as Rubens might have conceived in modern art. Previous to serving as the Sarcophagus of Char-

lemagne, this coffin contained the remains of Augustus.

Ascending by a flight of steps, trodden during the last six centuries by innumerable emperors, kings, and illustrious visitors, my guide conducted me to the gallery which forms the first story of the rotunda, called the Hochmünster. Here, under a half-open wooden covering, which is never completely removed except for visitors of royal rank, I beheld the marble chair or throne of Charlemagne. It is formed of four slabs of white marble, plain and unsculptured; the seat being of oak, with a cushion of red velvet. It is elevated on a platform, of the height of six steps; of which two are of granite, and four of white marble. Upon this same arm-chair, formerly embellished with the fourteen Byzantine medallions before alluded to, upon a stone floor raised by four steps of white marble, with the globe and sceptre and Germanic sword in his hands, a mantle of state upon his shoulders, the relique of the Cross of Jesus Christ suspended round his neck, and his feet trampling upon the sarcophagus of Augustus, sat CHARLEMAGNE in his tomb! During the space of three hundred and fifty-two years, or from 814 to 1166, did he retain this dignified attitude in the grave. But in 1166, Frederick Barbarossa, desirous of having the arm-chair for his coronation, entered the tomb, the precise form and nature of which no tradition has handed down, but to which, un-

questionably, belonged the two noble gates of bronze which constitute the principal door of the cathedral.

Barbarossa was himself an illustrious prince and valiant knight; and it must have been a strange and fearful moment when he, a crowned head, stood face to face with the imperial corpse, no less majestic than himself;—the one attired in all the pomps of sovereignty; the other in the still more awful majesty of death: the soldier defying a shadow; the living struggling for power with the dead. The chapel retained the skeleton, and Barbarossa took the marble seat, which he converted into a throne. The chair occupied by the remains of Charlemagne literally became the foundation of four centuries of imperial sway.

Thirty-six emperors, including Barbarossa himself, were crowned and consecrated in the chair still deposited in the Hochmünster of Aix-la-Chapelle. Ferdinand I. was the last; Charles V. the last but one. In later years, the coronations of the Emperors of Germany were solemnized at Frankfort.

I could with difficulty tear myself away from this chair, so simple, yet so grand. I contemplated the four steps of marble, worn by the heels of the thirty-six Cæsars, and having beheld the brightness of their pomps and glories successively extinguished, a confusion of startling ideas overwhelmed my mind.

I remembered that the violator of the Imperial

sepulchre, Frederick Barbarossa, in his old age proceeded for the second or third time to the Holy Wars. Finding himself one day on the banks of the Cydnus, and suffering from the heat, he was tempted to bathe; he who had dared to profane the manes of Charlemagne, presumed to forget the history of Alexander. The chill of the river benumbed his limbs to a degree nearly fatal to Alexander, even in his youth, and wholly so to Frederick Barbarossa, who was old and infirm. At some future day, perhaps, a holy and pious inspiration will induce some king or emperor to replace the reliques of Charlemagne in his tomb. The imperial remains will be religiously collected; the gates of bronze be restored; and the Roman sarcophagus, placed at the foot of the chair, which will be raised anew upon the stone platform, and once more adorned with the fourteen medallions of gold.

Let the Carlovingian diadem be replaced upon the skull; the orb of empire upon the arm; the golden mantle upon the bones, while the brazen eagle shall nobly resume its place beside the master of the ancient world. The various shrines of gold and jewels, and the different coffers now in the Cathedral, should be deposited around this royal chamber of death; and since the Catholic church is disposed that we should contemplate the remains of saints in the form which death assigns them, let there be a grated aperture in the wall, and a light suspended from the vault

of the sepulchre, so that the kneeling pilgrim may hail, upon the platform which human feet will defile no longer, seated upon the chair incrustated with gold, his crown upon his head, and his sceptre in his hand, the imperial phantom which once was Charlemagne.

Striking, indeed, would be the apparition to any one whose eye was bold enough to penetrate this tomb, and all who had courage for the contemplation, would quit the spot with ennobled thoughts. To such a spectacle people would flock from the furthest parts of the earth; and no profound thinker would neglect so startling a pilgrimage.

Charles, the son of Pepin, is one of those complete beings, whom mankind contemplate under four different aspects. To the eye of history, he is great as Sesostris or Augustus. As regards romance, he is at once the rival of Rolando as a paladin and Merlin as a magician. With respect to the Church, his sanctity is as that of St. Jerome or St. Peter. But in point of philosophy, he may be regarded as the personified genius of civilization, which every thousand years or so takes a giant stride across some dark abyss, surmounting civil war, barbarism, or revolution, under such names as Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, or Napoleon.

In 1804, just when Bonaparte had progressed into Napoleon, he visited Aix-la-Chapelle. Josephine, who accompanied him, indulged in the caprice of sitting upon this marble

throne. But the Emperor, though he did not control this indecorous whim of his Creole wife, had attired himself for the occasion, from a deep sense of deference to that mighty name, in full regimentals, and stood silent, motionless, and bareheaded, before the chair of Charlemagne. Charlemagne died in 814. In 1814, one thousand years afterwards, almost to an hour, occurred the fall or moral death of Napoleon. In the course of the same fatal year the allied sovereigns visited the grave of Charles the Great; when Alexander of Russia mounted his gala-uniform in imitation of Napoleon, while Frederick William of Prussia appeared in an undress, and the Emperor of Austria in a great coat and round hat. The King of Prussia entered into all the details of the coronations of the German emperors, with the provost of the Chapter; but the two emperors observed a profound silence. All these are now as silent as Charlemagne! Napoleon, Josephine, Alexander, Frederick William, and Francis II., are cold in their graves!

My guide, who was an old veteran of Austerlitz and Jena, living at Aix, having become a Prussian by the grace of the Congress of 1814, now wears the baldric, and carries the halberd of the Cathedral, in the ceremonies and processions of the Chapter. One cannot but admire the providence which disposes of even the trifling incidents of this world: this man, who has Charlemagne perpetually upon the tongue, adores the

memory of Napoleon. From that circumstance alone, and unknown to himself, his words obtain a certain dignity. Tears rushed into his eyes, when referring to the great battles he had seen, to his old companions, or his colonel. In such a vein did he talk to me of Marshal Soult, of Colonel Graindorge, and, ignorant how dear to me was the name, of General Hugo. He soon recognised me as a Frenchman; and never shall I forget the solemn simplicity with which he observed at parting—"You may say, Sir, how you beheld, at Aix-la-Chapelle, a pioneer of the 36th of the line turned into the verger of the Cathedral."

He had previously said, "Such as you see me, Sir, I belong to three nations. I am by chance a Prussian, a Swiss by profession, but in heart a true Frenchman."

I confess that his ignorantly military view of ecclesiastical affairs amused me exceedingly; and on quitting the Cathedral, I was so pre-occupied, that I scarcely noticed a very handsome façade of the fourteenth century, ornamented with seven noble statues of emperors, and backed by an obscure street. Besides, I experienced some interruption from two travellers who, like myself, were quitting the church, and had probably been piloted by my old soldier. As they were shouting with laughter, I turned round, and discovered two gentlemen, one of whom had inscribed his name that morning, in



my presence, in the register of the Hôtel de l'Empereur, as "The Count d'A——," belonging to one of the most illustrious families in Artois. They were talking aloud, so that I could not but overhear them. "What names!" said they: "It required a revolution to bring them to one's ears. Captain Lasoupe! Colonel Graindorge! Where the devil do such people come from?" These were the colonel and captain of my poor old soldier, nor could I refrain from informing them that Colonel Graindorge was connected with Field-Marshal de Lorge, father-in-law to the Duke of St. Simon. As to Captain Lasoupe, I conclude that he may have been cousin to the Duke de Bouillon, uncle of the Elector Palatine of the Rhine.

Soon afterwards, I found myself in the square before the town-hall, which, like the Cathedral, is composed of several other edifices. From two gloomy façades, with high narrow windows, of the date of Charles V., rise two towers, the one low and broad, the other high, taper, and quadrangular, being a handsome elevation of the fourteenth century. The first is the famous tower of Granus, scarcely recognisable under its present fantastical mask. This steeple, of which the other is a miniature, looks like a pyramid of turbans placed one upon the other, and diminishing to the top.

Before the façade is a noble staircase, constructed like that of the court of the White

Horse, at Fontainebleau. In the centre of the square is a marble fountain, repaired and somewhat remodelled in the eighteenth century, surmounted by a bronze statue of Charlemagne, armed and crowned. To the right and left are two minor fountains, columns bearing on their summits two black and fierce-looking eagles, half-turned towards the grave-looking emperor. It is on that site, perhaps in that Roman tower, that Charlemagne was born.

The ensemble of the fountains, the façade, and the towers, is royal, mournful, and severe. The whole speaks powerfully to the mind, of Charlemagne; effacing by means of this all-powerful unity, the disparities of the edifice:

“ All are but parts of that stupendous whole.”

The tower of Granus recalls the greatness of Rome, his prototype; the façade and fountains, Charles V., the most powerful of his successors. The Oriental design of the belfry reminds one of that magnificent Caliph, Haroun-Al-Raschid, his contemporary and friend.

Evening was approaching: I had passed my whole day in presence of stern but grand reminiscences, and the dust of ten centuries. I felt athirst to breathe the fresh air of the country, to look on fields, trees, and birds, and having quitted the town, wandered amid verdure and vegetation till nightfall.

Aix still possesses its ancient wall and towers,

not having passed under the hands of Vauban. The subterraneous passages, said to have communicated between the town-hall, the Cathedral, and the Abbey of Borcette, nay, even to Limbourg, are filled up and forgotten.

At dusk I rested myself upon a green bank, to contemplate Aix-la-Chapelle, which lay beneath me in the valley, as if floating in a vacuum. By degrees the evening fog, effacing the fringed roofs of the ancient houses, blotted out even the sharp outlines of the two towers, which, with the other belfries of the town, reminded me vaguely of the Muscovite or Asiatic profile of the Kremlin.

Only two masses, of all the city, remained distinctly defined; the town-hall and the Cathedral. All my thoughts and visions of the day now rushed anew upon my mind. The town itself, the illustrious and symbolical town, seemed to metamorphose itself under my very eyes. The first of the two black masses, which I still distinguished, became to me an infant's cradle; the second, a shroud; and, in the complete absorption of my soul, I seemed to expect that the shadow of that giant whom we call Charlemagne, would gently ascend upon the pale horizon of night, hovering between the august cradle of his infancy, and the sepulchre of his eternal greatness!