

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

## A FRIEND.

## I.

A soldier lies on the battle plain;  
All around him are heaps of slain:  
He is raving wildly from thirst and pain;  
He sleeps—he shall never awake again.

## II.

Far away from his boyhood's home  
He had followed the sound of the martial drum  
Fearlessly rushed to an early tomb,  
And now he is lowly and stricken and dumb.

## III.

There he lies in his youthful pride,  
But where are the friends on whom he relied?  
Of all the friends whom he "trusted and tried,"  
Only one has come to watch by his side.

## IV.

Peacefully sleeps he the sleep of the dead.  
The only friend near him the dog he had fed—  
True to the last, when all others had fled,  
He has laid him to rest in the same gory bed.

JOHN READE.

## A DISTINGUISHED DINNER-PARTY.

On the 5th of May, 1812, a great gala-dinner was announced at the royal court at Dresden, in Saxony. The occasion being an extraordinary one, full dress was ordered for the whole train of the royal household; indeed, a more numerous and eminent assemblage of distinguished guests had never before been invited to unite in the pompous rooms of that antique crazy chateau, which has accommodated so many a crowned head in bygone centuries.

There was the tall king of Prussia, Frederic-William III., dead now, and buried in his family vault at Sans Souci, but then a proud and stately gentleman with rigid manners and military airs—though not with military capacities; then the king of Bavaria, a portly lord with black moustaches, a great admirer of the Hero of the age, to whose giant army he had added 40,000 of his humble subjects, none of whom ever saw his native land again; and the king of Wurtemberg, a monstrously corpulent sovereign, who never rode on horseback, but who drove in a gig through the ranks of the 15,000 men which he contributed to the army of the modern Alexander. His troops were silent at that time, and did not cry, as usual, "God save the king!" which is the more to be wondered at, since they saw their lord for the last time on that occasion, every one of them being buried eight months afterwards in the snowy fields of Russia. There was, moreover, the Elector of Hesse-Cassel, an important personage too, although his contingent to the conqueror's army amounted only to 6,000 men; just as much as his father, of glorious memory, had sold to the British government fifty years before, at so much per head, to be shot dead in the woods of the new world by the American insurgents. Besides these distinguished guests, there were present a dozen or more of petty grand-dukes, dukes, and princes, all members of that famous Rhenish Confederation, and most of them hangers-on of the French emperor. They were, however, set below the salt, which served them right. Well, no; there was one amongst them who ought not to have been set below the salt. He was a stout man with a stout heart, on whose high forehead there was written many a painful and bitter thought. He looked grave, even melancholy. If it had but depended upon him, those 300,000 German soldiers who followed the foreign invader into the barren plains of Russia, would have received a far different destination. It was the Grand-duke of Saxe-Weimar, Ernest-Augustus, the most intimate friend of Goethe.

Grand as these personages were, descended from the oldest dynasties of Europe, and surrounded therefore by the nimbus of hereditary power, they were, however, doomed to act but a subordinate role by the side of those adventurous upstarts who formed the important part of the guests assembled now in the state-rooms of the royal palace, although they had no pedigrees but their swords, no other hereditary land save that of the battle-field.

There was a tall, well-made man, fantastically attired in a green tunic richly embroidered with gold; his left hand was leaning on the hilt of a Turkish sabre, which he had brandished in more than forty battles. He had a look of daring in his dark flashing eyes, well becoming to the man that had gained a crown with his curved sword. His mother could have little thought that her poor ragged boy would one day dine from golden dishes by the side of emperors and kings—himself a king—when she used to sell apples and gingerbread in the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne. This was Murat, King of Naples, brother-in-law of the Emperor, and commander-in-chief of the French cavalry.

Near him, but a little apart from the rest, there stood a modest-looking young man, who took no part in the conversation. On his breast were seen glittering the grand crosses of all the continental orders; but his features were sad, and his large dark eyes bore a melancholy expression. It was the Viceroy of Italy, Eugène Beauharnais, son-in-law of the Emperor.

Who was that robust man with bright eyes and noble features, bald and eagle-nosed like Cæsar, in lively conversation with the King of Naples, to whose splendid attire his own plain dress bore a singular contrast? It was Michael Ney, then Duke of Elchingen and Marshal of France, three years afterwards shot dead, like the other, not in the battle-field, but as a criminal, pierced by a dozen French balls.

And yon proud and sulky-looking man, with a lion's head, who scarcely deigned to answer the obliging address of some little German prince, but only nodded to his questions with a wandering mind—who was he? The King of Prussia never once looked at his dark and frowning features, so annoyed was he at his presence; nor was this without reason, for the gloomy man was no other than his fearful antagonist in the dreadful battle of Auerstadt, Davoust, Marshal of France, and Prince of Eckmühl.

There were a dozen more of these chivalrous champions of the sword looking with contempt upon the petty dukes and princes around them, the satellites of their common sun. The tall and erect figure of Macdonald, Duke of Tarentum, was prominent among them all. The proud warrior was leaning negligently against a marble statue of Achilles, and well were matched those two iron-hearted men. Only there was a look of weariness to be observed on the open and martial counte-

nance of the living hero, which made it evident that he did not anticipate much pleasure from the coming campaign; indeed, he was longing for a far different engagement, and thought of his beautiful chateau in the south of *la belle France*, where he would fain have spent the rest of an eventful life.

By this side, in conversation with Marshal Junot, Duke of Abrantes, stood a little man with a countenance strikingly full of genius and good-humour. His fine-set lips never opened without uttering a sarcasm, and the more critical the occasion was, the more sparkling became his wit, the source of which seemed to be inexhaustible. His extensive business, whose vast enormity would have crushed any other head, was managed by him amidst a continual shower of sallies that oftentimes elicited roars of laughter from his functionaries, even amidst the very roar of cannons. He was personally attached to the Emperor, whose vast genius, free from all pedantry, quite agreed with his own. The Emperor missed him sorely during the final campaign of 1815, with its fatal day of Waterloo, that was destined to put a stop to all this transient glory. He would most gladly have forgiven the chief of his staff his vacillation and disloyalty, only the little man was too proud to be forgiven. He was pining away the while in a quiet German town; but when he saw that there was no more occupation whatever for his ardent desire for activity, no excitement, no suspense, nobody to laugh at his *bons mots*, he grew tired of the burden of life, and Alexander Berthier, Prince of Neufchâtel and Wagram, Marshal of France, and Chief of the general staff of the French army, grounded arms at last by throwing himself out of a window, on a quiet and tedious Sunday morning of the fatal year 1815, in the quiet and tedious town of Bamberg in Germany.

All this brilliant assembly of kings, and dukes, and marshals was waiting upon that pale and dwarfish giant, who boasted of having journeyed all over Europe on horseback amidst the roar of cannons and the rattling of drums. He might have added—and over nearly one million of human bodies, also.

When the doors were thrown open at last, and Napoleon entered, followed by the King of Saxony, the host of these eminent guests, there was not one head that did not bow in low obeisance; not one eye that did not cast an anxious look at this pale face, as profound and as inflexible as fate itself. He nodded but indifferently in acknowledgment to the low reverences rendered to him by his vassals; no flashing up of that fixed eye, no smile of triumph round those firm-set lips; all indifference, or even satiety in that calm and profound countenance. He was already too much accustomed to homage and flattery.

It was the king's birthday. Nine years afterwards, on that same day, his illustrious guest, for whom the world was once not large enough, gave up his ghost in a small rocky island in the Atlantic Ocean; and—strange coincidence of a strange fate—seven years later, on the same 5th of May, Frederic-Augustus, King of Saxony, was called to his last account.

The lord-steward shewed the guests through a long row of state-apartments into the "white saloon," where they were received by the master of the ceremonies, who, by means of an infinite number of bows and obeisances, assigned to them their different places at the royal table, according to the strict rules of court-etiquette.

Whoever knows anything about court-fashions in Germany, must be aware that—with the sole exception, perhaps, of the Chinese empire—their practice has nowhere else received so high a development. Indeed, the science of etiquette of which Louis XIV. has laid the foundation, has been thriving there ever since, and may be considered now to have attained the highest pitch of perfection. But amongst all the thirty-eight courts of that happy land, there is one that, in this respect, has always gained the precedence over all the rest, that stands unequalled for the strictness, the accuracy, the pedantry with which even the most minute prescriptions of etiquette are unrelentingly observed, and that is declared as the very model of order and regularity in all the various departments of its household. The slightest infringement of the inexorable laws of etiquette is considered there as a crime whereof no absolution can clear the unhappy offender. Charles XII., King of Sweden, had to repent afterwards of his disdain for this same etiquette, when he called one day—a hundred years ago—on Augustus II., Elector of Saxony, attired in a pair of dirty riding-boots, and holding a horse-whip in his hand. He had just beaten the Saxon army in a series of bloody battles; had dictated to the Elector the fatal peace of Altranstadt, and was little pressed for time. Augustus II. would have forgiven him the smaller offence of having crushed 30,000 of his men to atoms, and laid under contribution the whole of his patrimonial dominions; but for his intrusion in a drawing-room with dirty boots and a riding-whip, there was no excuse; and he made haste to conclude his alliance with the Czar Peter of Russia.

When the guests were seated, the numerous officers of the royal household took the different stations, conformable to their rank and the duties attached to it.

The old feudal custom of waiting on the sovereigns was of course carried out only by the lords-in-waiting, members of the first families in the land, who therefore had their post of honour immediately behind the chairs of the royal guests; behind them, in the second file, were drawn up the assistant-chamberlains who had to help the lords-in-waiting; these were again waited upon by the pages of honour, who, in their turn, employed the assistance of a whole army of yeomen, heyducs, equerries, grooms, porters, waiters, and minor court-servants, each of them having his different department assigned to him. The whole attendance was in full gala-dress; the lords-in-waiting wearing all their numerous ribbons and orders; the pages their state-habits, and red velvet shoes with silver buckles; and the rest of the officers of the royal household the rich parade-uniforms prescribed for the occasion. The assistant-master of the ceremonies and the marshal of the ceremonies had nothing to do but to walk up and down and see that all was right.

The dinner was sure to be of the first order; and the big king of Wurtemberg had made up his mind to enjoy it hugely. The royal table in Saxony has always had a most excellent repute, and orders had been given by the lord-steward that full honour should be done to the ancient glory of the house of his royal master. The chief-cook, master-cooks, clerks of the kitchen, messengers of the kitchen, yeomen of the kitchen, as well as the other gentlemen of the confectionary and pastry, had been in great agitation for some days, and were now, like

the cranks and wheels of a large engine, working to the top of their best. German princes in general are known to have no aversion to good cheer; and those present were well pleased at the idea of having a couple of quiet hours before them wherein to make their choice of the various luxuries gathered from all the corners of the globe.

Poor men! They little thought that they were doomed to suffer a heavy disappointment. But they had in fact been reckoning—not without their host—but without that pale man who was just upon the point to invade the largest empire of the world, and who cared but little about a full-dress dinner.

When the soup had made its appearance, and the plates—passing from hand to hand, after the Asiatic system of caste in full working-order, aided by all the advantages of a superior civilization—had at last reached the lords-in-waiting, who, with the dignity appropriate to the occasion, placed them respectfully before the monarchs, a waiting-officer of the imperial general staff entered the room, and walking straight up to the Prince of Wagram, the chief of the general staff of that giant army just then on its way of destruction towards the east, whispered a few hasty words into the ear of Marshal Berthier. The little man with the fine-cut features and expressive eyes rose immediately and went out of the room.

The incident, slight as it was, did not escape the notice of the King of Saxony, who looked upon it as being extremely contrary to rule; and his patriarchal countenance at once assumed an expression of ill temper, which he could very ill conceal.

The door was opened again a few minutes afterwards, and the Prince of Wagram re-entered the apartment. His fine and clever face wore its usual expression; but when he moved towards the emperor and laid an open dispatch before him on the table, there was something like mischievous fun twinkling in his bright eyes; he knew his man, and knew therefore what was coming.

What the dispatch contained, nobody ever knew. Something important, of course, at a time when an avalanche of 950,000 men, with more than half a million horses, was rolling towards the east, followed by an immense train that covered all the high roads of Germany.

The Emperor laid down his spoon and took up the paper, while the King of Saxony looked very grave.

He had done reading at a glance. On his powerful forehead was gathering a cloud dark and menacing. He threw the dispatch violently upon the table, and in a sharp and piercing voice, accompanied by an impetuous and imperative gesture, cried:

"Le dessert!"

If the great ancestor of the old house of Weddin had risen from the dead, and had walked in amidst that modern assembly, indifferently attired in a bear's skin and armed with a battle-axe, his appearance could scarcely have created a greater perplexity amongst them than that one word uttered by the modern Alexander. With the exception of the Frenchmen, every soul remained for some moments completely thunder-struck. The big King of Wurtemberg dropped his spoon, and the King of Saxony looked as if he was expecting the walls and ceilings of his old palace to tumble down with a crash, and bury them all under their ruins, as the natural consequence of such an unprecedented enormity.

The Emperor raised his head and looked around for a moment at those descendants of the oldest dynasties of Europe. All that was lingering within him of the Jacobin—and there was a good deal—became distinctly apparent in the proud flash of his eyes, the scornful curl of his lips. With a haughty toss of the head, and in a savage tone of voice, he repeated once more:

"Le dessert!"

There was no more misgiving now about his imperial majesty's pleasure, and the master of the ceremonies being unfit for service (he had fainted away), the assistant-master gave at once the necessary orders.

To describe the perfect Babel and pantomimic madness amongst the lords-in-waiting, the assistant-chamberlains, the pages, and the other officers of the royal household above—fully equalled by the Babel and pantomimic madness amongst the master-cooks, clerks, messengers, yeomen, and the other gentlemen of the kitchen below—would be too high a task for any pen or pencil.

They put bread and cheese and some fruits upon the table, and when the Emperor had partaken of these modest refreshments, the King of Saxony rose, and the illustrious guests retired from dinner.

## CALLOW CYNICS.

Enthusiasm was the fault of the last generation; cynicism is the foible of this. Our mothers rushed wildly into universal admiration and a general rose-coloured efflorescence of mind over all sorts of moral questions and poetical aspects; our daughters look with cold disdain on everything but money, and think nothing worthy of praise that has not a marketable value on the exchange. Simplicity has gone out of fashion, and belief in humanity has followed in its train. Love is fast becoming a tradition of the past, neither respected nor regretted; and "to be spoony" on anyone is by no means a state of mind to be encouraged or applauded—when by chance it comes about, being indeed no better than measles or scarlet fever in the estimation of the callow cynics of the drawing-room. The utmost amount of praise they ever bestow on man, woman, or thing is that he, she, or it is "awfully jolly," but the more general verdict is "awfully slow," than which they can go no farther in the way of condemnation. In fact, the callow cynic is in a state of perpetual mental yawn; and enthusiasm, besides being ridiculous, would be too fatiguing to be indulged in even if the inclination for it existed; which it does not.

The callow cynic lives fast. Before the dawn is well on his upper lip, or before the lean forms of girlhood have rounded into the softer lines of womanhood, the world has been proved and found hollow; all the dolls are stuffed with bran, and plum-cake to-day means a rhubarb draught to-morrow; there is nothing new and nothing true, and it does not signify one way or the other; and the callow cynic not only refuses to be caught like moths with glare or the silly trout with a barbed fly, but even refuses to admire where there is no danger—if there is no gain. Does it pay? The callow cynic, beginning practical arithmetic betimes, makes that the touchstone of all merit and the *sine quâ non* of his own ad-