

## Illustrated Interviews.

### LVII. — CARAN D'ACHE AT HOME.

BY MARIE A. BELLOC.

“**Y**ES, extraordinary as you may think it, I consider there is little doubt,” observed one of the leading French black-and-white men, thoughtfully, “that my friend Caran d’Ache played quite a notable part in bringing about the Franco-Russian Alliance. You see, he has won, though still a young man, a real place in the hearts of our beauty-loving populace. Well might he exclaim, ‘Let me draw a nation’s caricatures—I care not who make its laws.’ No artist has more cleverly indicated the weaknesses and foibles of that extraordinary being, William II., and, as is natural in one who is after all half Russian, he has spared no pains to bring the finer side of Holy Russia before the eyes and imagination of the Parisians, who look forward to his weekly page of political cartoons in the *Figaro* as to an ever-recurring source of amusement.”

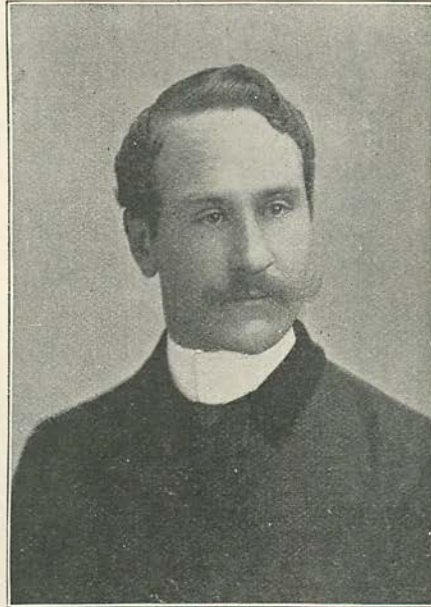
The greatest caricaturist of France, if not of the world, M. Emmanuel Poiré, or, as he is better known to the most intimate of his friends as well as to the least distinguished of his admirers, Caran d’Ache, has set up his household gods in one of the quietest and prettiest streets of suburban Passy. There he is not only within a quarter of an hour’s drive from the Opéra and the centre of Paris, but he is also at a stone’s throw of the Bois de Boulogne, and on the high road to the beautiful belt of country which lies beyond Sèvres and St. Cloud.

Some years ago a number of artists and literary Parisians “discovered” Passy, and among the great caricaturist’s nearest neighbours are his intimate friend, Jan van Beers, whose marvellous miniature palace is still the talk of fickle Paris; Munkacsy, the Hungarian

genius, whose terrible illness has cast a gloom over artistic Bohemia; Henri Rochefort, who must find sunlit Passy a startling change after Regent’s Park; and Henri Lavedan, the most brilliant of satirists and playwrights—to say nothing of a score of other distinguished people, who are all reckoned good and trusty fellow-craftsmen by your kindly modest host; for Caran d’Ache has a simple dignity of manner said to be rarely associated with militant genius.

The large studio in which he has gradually arranged his many possessions lies well away from the pretty, fantastic Louis Quinze “hotel” built from his own design, being separated from Madame Caran d’Ache’s dainty eighteenth-century *salon* by a corridor lined with some fine old First Empire engravings, dealing for the most part with events connected with the strange career of their present owner’s hero, Napoleon I.

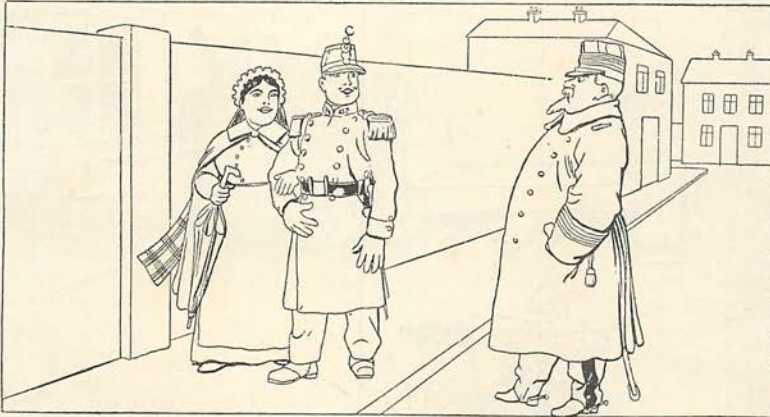
“I was born and bred in the Napoleonic tradition,” he acknowledged, in answer to a question. “Yes, it is quite true that my grandfather was one of the great Corsican’s trusted officers, one of those chosen to accompany him on the disastrous expedition to Russia. More fortunate than many of his comrades-in-arms, my forebear was wounded at the Battle of Moskowa, and so escaped the horrible fate of dying from cold or starvation; instead, he was carried off the field by some humane Russian officers, and was treated with all honour as a prisoner of war. In fact, it was as an inmate of one of the grimmest of Russian fortresses that he fell in love with the young Russian lady who afterwards became my grandmother. At the time the marriage took place the whole face of things in France had completely altered.



M. CARAN D'ACHE.  
From a Photo. by Nadar, Paris.



SIMPLICITY. I.—“YOU NEED NOT SALUTE, MY MAN, WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR ARMS FULL.”

SIMPLICITY. II.—“WELL, MY MAN, WHY DON'T YOU SALUTE?”  
“I HAVE MY ARMS FULL, COLONEL.”

The Grande Armée was but a phantom memory; my grandfather's beloved chief was a heartbroken prisoner at St. Helena, and so, yielding to his bride's wishes, he determined to remain among the aliens who had been so good to him.”

“Then I suppose, monsieur, that your own father was to all intents and purposes a Russian?”

“Yes, and no. My grandfather never allowed his children to forget that they were French, although he himself never again saw his own country. He founded, at Moscow, a fencing school, which soon became famous; indeed, it was there that *l'escrime Française* was introduced, for the first time, into the Russian army.”

“And what brought you home?”

“I am by birth a Muscovite, but, as so often happens in such cases, the fact that I had never seen and knew so little of the land of my ancestors only increased my desire to see France, and even as a child I solemnly

determined to reconquer my French nationality. My father died when I was seventeen, and in spite of all that my friends had to say against the idea, I applied at the French Embassy in order to know what would be the best way in which to fulfil the obligation, which I knew devolved on every young Frenchman, of serving a certain time in the French army. Once I had obtained this, to me, very important information, I started gaily for France with very little money in my pocket, but with high hopes and boundless ambitions surging through my brain.”

“I presume that, even as a school-boy, you had acquired some artistic training?”

“No,” was the unexpected answer. “I was, it is true, always drawing, but only for my own pleasure, and, I need hardly say, out of school hours. A good deal of my time was spent as a child among the good-natured soldiers of my father's adopted country, and I confess I cherished a secret wish of becoming a military painter. One day, to my great joy, someone presented me with a fine book of French engravings, and among its contents was a short account of Detaille, together with some specimens of his splendid work. Accordingly, I made up my mind that I would seek him out—youth is ever bold—and no sooner had I reached Paris, in, I may add, a somewhat forlorn condition, than I boldly presented myself at M. Detaille's front door, a portfolio of sketches under my arm.”

“And you were kindly received?”

“Kindly is not the word! Edouard Detaille received me in a fashion that proved him to possess what is perhaps rarer even

than great genius—a great heart. He looked over my poor little drawings, encouraged me to persevere, and then, after I became a private in the French army, he never lost sight of me. Indeed, it was owing to his influence that I was finally appointed to work at the War Office among those whose duty it is to prepare drawings of uniforms and so on.

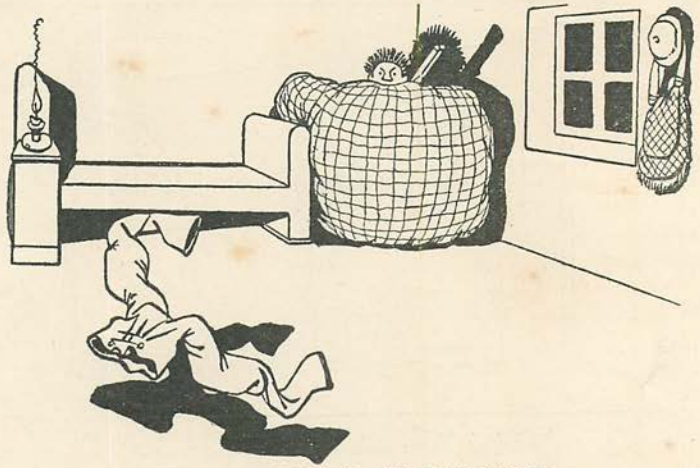
“Even then,” he added, after a moment’s pause, “M. Detaille’s kindness did not stop there; he gave me some valuable advice. Instead of proposing that I should become a student in some art school—a course which would have been from every point of view impossible to me at that time, even had I wished it—he told me to study from life, and not to be discouraged, however poor might be the result; and so, no sooner did I find myself in the guard-room of the 113th Line Regiment, than I began following my master’s advice in season and out of season. Not till I became attached to the War Office, however, did I find time to do work with a view to publication. To my surprise, I found a ready, if a humble, market for my wares, and it was then that I first signed my drawings ‘Caran d’Ache,’ which, as you may know, signifies in Russian ‘lead pencil.’”

“And did you gradually make your way? Or, if it is not an impertinent question, to what do you attribute your first great vogue as a caricaturist?”

“Nay, I consider that a very legitimate question;



THE HAUNTED HOUSE. I.—“WHAT DO I SEE? MY TROUSERS DANCING?”

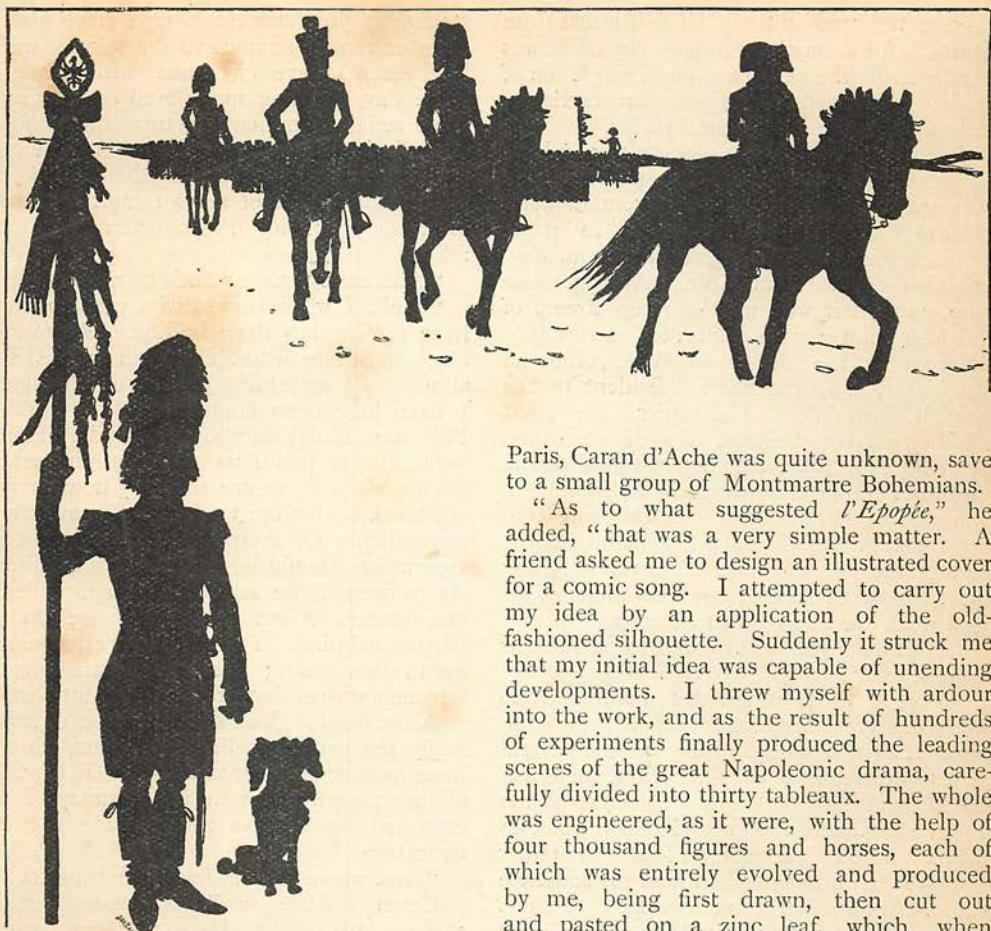


THE HAUNTED HOUSE. II.—GUN AND BARRICADE.



THE HAUNTED HOUSE. III.—THE GHOSTS APPEAR.

CARAN D'ACHE



SCENE FROM "L'ÉPOPÉE," BY CARAN D'ACHE.

for there must be in every artist's life a moment when he finds himself trembling between obscurity and popular success. As for myself, my first great stroke of luck was undoubtedly the production of *l'Épopée*, at the Chat Noir."

And as my host uttered these words there suddenly came into my mind the half-forgotten recollection of an evening at Montmartre, spent in gazing at the wonderful shadow performance which was at that time the talk, not only of Paris, but of Europe.

Many of those to whom *l'Épopée* stands out among their own cherished recollections of a visit to Paris are probably unaware that they owed this rare artistic pleasure to the now famous draughtsman; for at the time when the original performance took place in the strange Bohemian café concert, now numbered among the dead glories of vanished

Paris, Caran d'Ache was quite unknown, save to a small group of Montmartre Bohemians.

"As to what suggested *l'Épopée*," he added, "that was a very simple matter. A friend asked me to design an illustrated cover for a comic song. I attempted to carry out my idea by an application of the old-fashioned silhouette. Suddenly it struck me that my initial idea was capable of unending developments. I threw myself with ardour into the work, and as the result of hundreds of experiments finally produced the leading scenes of the great Napoleonic drama, carefully divided into thirty tableaux. The whole was engineered, as it were, with the help of four thousand figures and horses, each of which was entirely evolved and produced by me, being first drawn, then cut out and pasted on a zinc leaf, which, when once more silhouetted, produced a sentient member of my large dramatic company. I may add that the whole work from beginning to end was entirely carried out by me.

"I need hardly say," continued Caran d'Ache, "that I was fortunate in finding a man who understood at once the possibilities which lay in this very novel type of moving tableaux. Had it not been for the proprietor of the Chat Noir, all my labours might have come to nothing. However; thanks to him I had my chance.

"The whole action took place across a comparatively small white screen. I attended every performance and stage-managed the whole affair myself. I think I may say," he added, modestly, "that I succeeded in creating a very vivid impression of life and movement. Each detail of every little figure was as carefully studied as were those of Napoleon I. himself, and I made many experiments before I felt even half-satisfied with the result. The most striking, and also the most popular,

tableau was undoubtedly 'The Retreat from Russia,' for a curiously impressive effect was produced by the slow passage in single file of countless men, horses, waggons, and carriages, across the great, snow-bound plains."

But the artist was too modest to allude to the extraordinary impression produced by this strange work of genius. From all parts of the Continent artists, eager to make acquaintance with this extraordinary novelty, crowded to the Chat Noir. Among those who made their way up the steep streets of old Montmartre were celebrities as strangely different as the Prince of Wales, General Boulanger, and the then President of the French Republic. Meissonier, the great military painter, declared himself astonished at the extraordinary accuracy of the historical costumes and uniforms as indicated in silhouette. Drawings of *l'Épopée* were sent "by request" to the late Czar, who, to the end of his life, was one of Caran d'Ache's most constant patrons. Indeed, much of his best work even now goes to Russia.

"And have you never cared to pursue this kind of work?"

"For a time silhouettes continued to exercise a great fascination on me," he confessed, half-reluctantly. "I produced several series of tableaux at the Chat Noir, including the presentment of the great avenue of the Bois de Boulogne filled with Parisian notables of the hour on horseback, on foot, and in their carriages. A little later I showed my audience the vast snow-laden Russian steppes. I have, however, a horror of monotony. You must have noticed that nowadays the moment an artist makes a success, all those round him make vigorous attempts to confine him to the particular class of work which has produced a temporary sensation. I suppose, had I cared to do so, I might have gone down to history as the arch-showman of this *fin-de-siècle*, but I should have considered that in so doing I was degrading not only my art, but also myself. No,

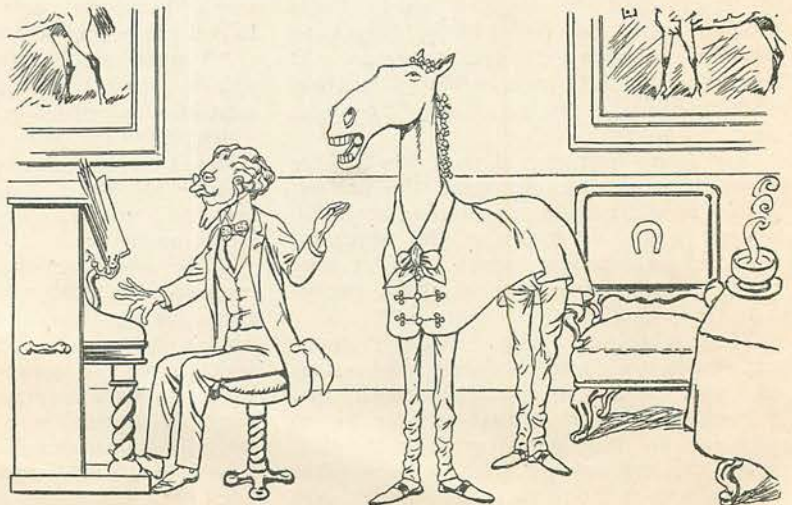
strange as you may think it, I have always been extremely anxious to do serious work. For years I have cherished the scheme of some day devoting my life to completing a great series of military pictures, taken from every period of history. One of my heroes, by the way, is the great Marlborough. But all brilliant deeds of arms attract me, and, even as a boy, I began a collection of military relics."

"And as to your methods of work?"

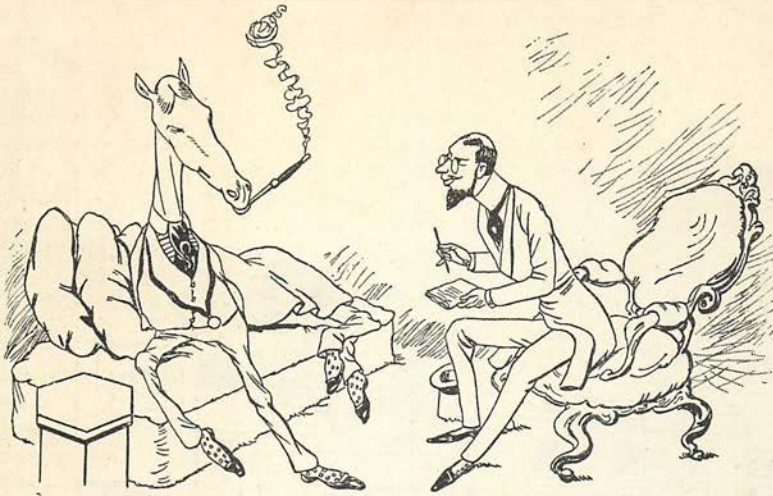
"Well, I work very slowly, and so far I have preferred to draw in line. *Apropos* of black-and-white work, I am an enthusiastic admirer of your leading English draughtsmen. I have long been familiar with the work of Phil May, Linley Sambourne, Dudley Hardy—but it is invidious to mention certain names, when there are so many now turning out black-and-white work full of genius and originality. Of course, from my point of view artists should be able to draw anything. As to myself," he added, laughing, "I leave one branch of art severely alone: that is portrait-painting. Friends have often asked me to draw them; if ever I attempt to carry out their wishes they are anything but pleased with the result. You see, the worst of it is I really see people in line, and often, when I have produced a group which I consider almost photographic in its accuracy, I am informed that I have rarely made a better caricature!"

"And where do you find your subjects?"

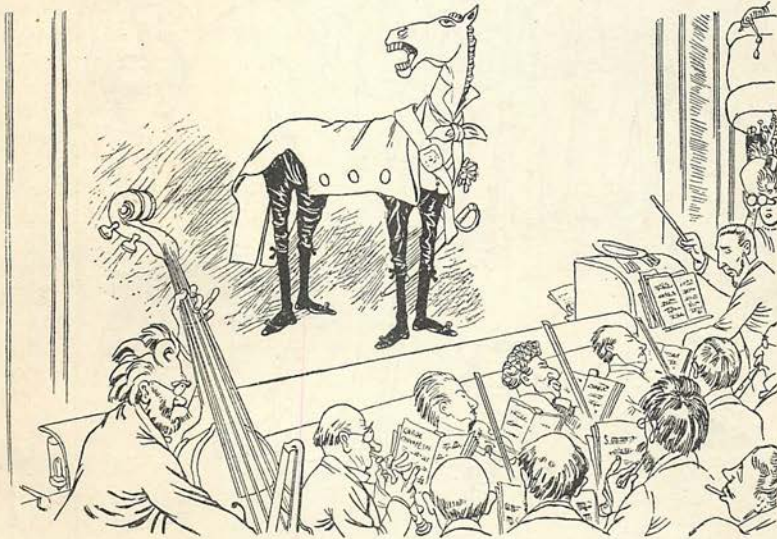
Caran d'Ache made a vague gesture. "How can I tell? Here, there, and everywhere; at a smart wedding; at any one and



THE SINGING HORSE. I.—IN THE MORNING, A LESSON FROM HIS SINGING-MASTER.



THE SINGING HORSE. II.—AT NOON, AN INTERVIEW.



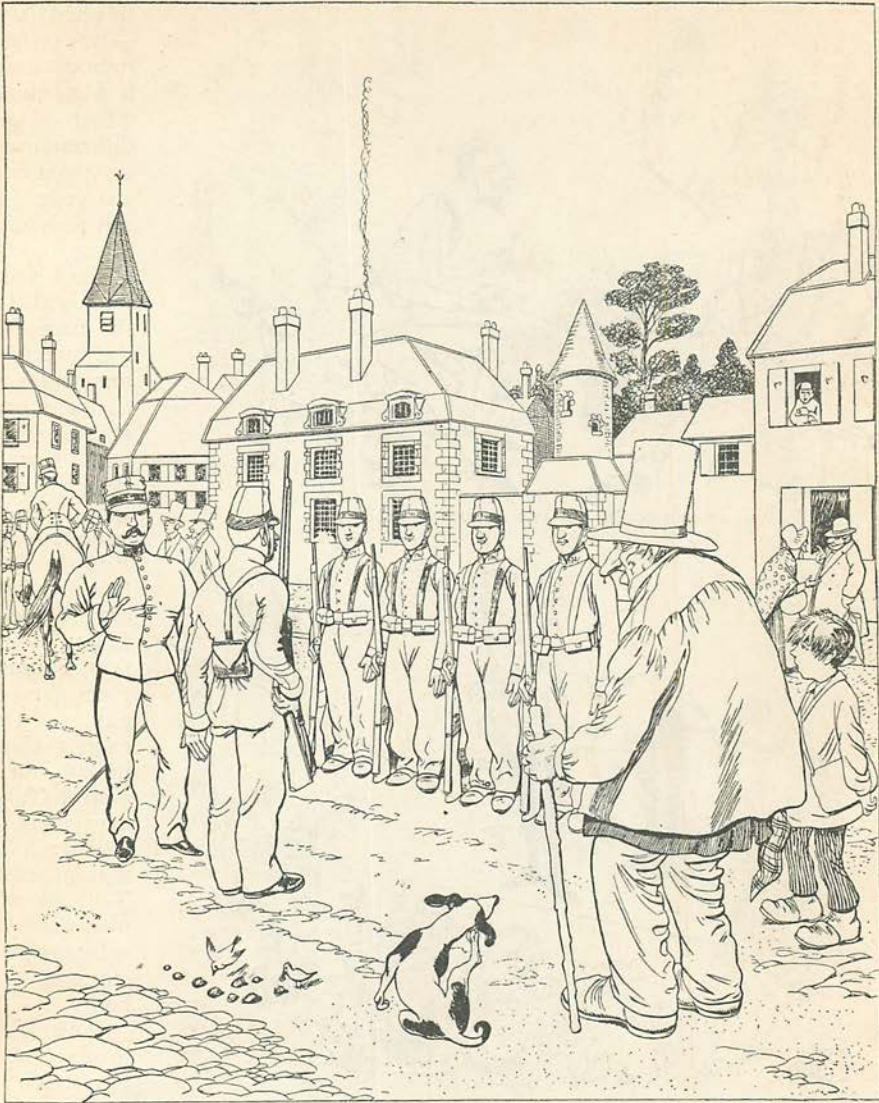
THE SINGING HORSE. III.—AT NIGHT, A CONCERT.

at all of the funerals, which, alas! play so great a part in our social life; when riding home on the top of an omnibus; walking, riding, cycling, impressions are stamped as it were on my brain. I do not entirely rely on memory, for I am fond of jotting down notes in a small memorandum-book if I hear a funny or original phrase, a joke that strikes me as really new, or anything that will suggest a new composition. I make use of a kind of artistic shorthand, which I will defy anyone but myself to understand; the signs are made very quickly, they over-lap one another; to me each is instinct with meaning, and even with form. But when it comes to the

finished drawing"—he paused a moment and took a long breath—"that is a very different matter, no pains can be too great; and I can truly say that at no time, even when I was very poor, did I allow the necessities of the moment, if I may use such an expression, to control my output. I am a believer in very careful and conscientious work. People imagine that my drawings are 'dashed off.' I bow down before those who can produce easily; alas! I cannot claim to imitate their example. Take one comparatively simple matter, that of costume. Tell me what a man wears, and I will tell you what manner of man he is."

"Then it is true, monsieur, that you attach an immense importance to clothes?"

"I will admit that the cut of a frock-coat is not indifferent to me," he observed; "and, personally, I cannot see why all the small elegancies of life should be left to the fairer half of creation. You will observe that Nature is exemplified in the nursemaid and the little child—both love a uniform; the craving is a thoroughly natural one; elegant and suitable habiliments react on the wearer, and there can be no doubt that the knight of old felt twice the man he really was when attired in his full coat of mail and riding out to do battle to an opponent armed *cap-à-pie*. Nowadays the dandy can only exercise his fancy on his bicycle costume.



A STENTORIAN VOICE. I.  
 CORPORAL: "ATTENTION! SHOULDER ARMS!"  
 LIEUTENANT: "THAT WON'T DO AT ALL. LOUDER, CORPORAL. LIKE THIS——"

More's the pity, say I; and I live in hopes of seeing not only the chimney-pot hat, but also the hundred-and-one modern inelegancies of masculine costume utterly banished, for they must have made our mid-century most painful to every man of taste."

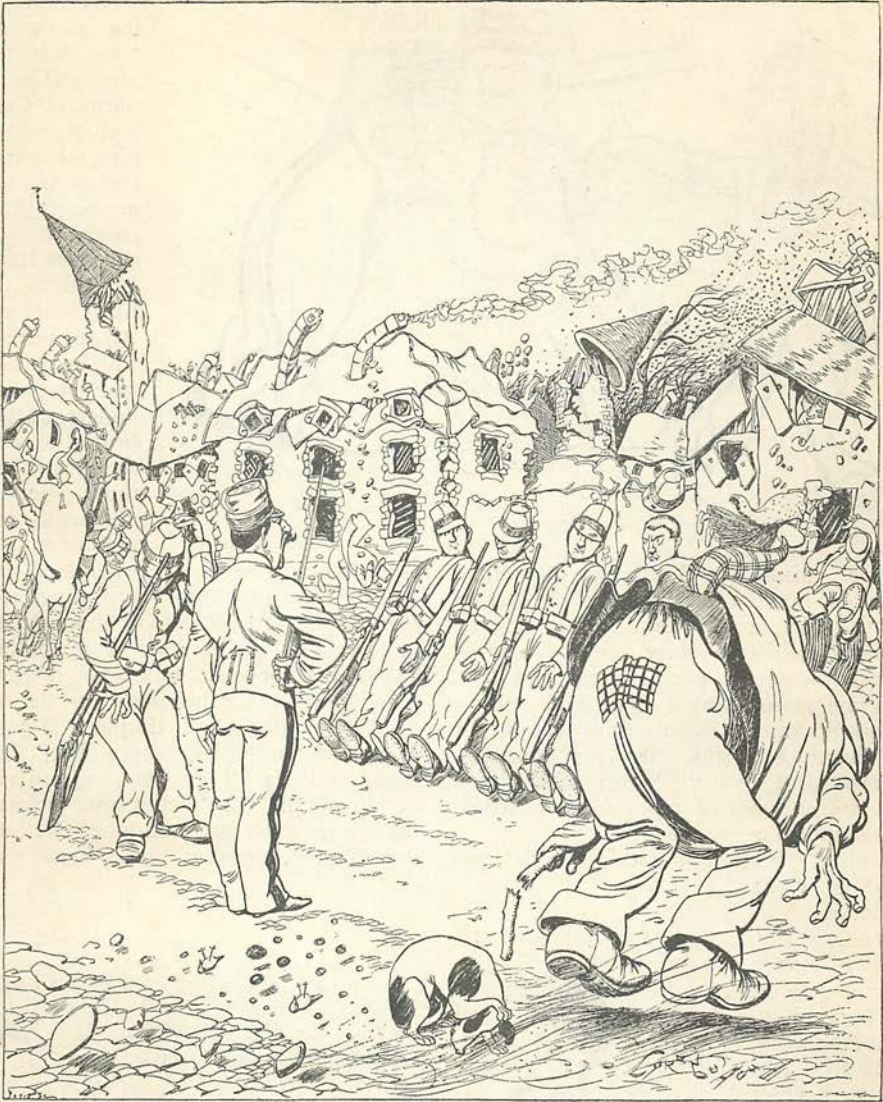
"I suppose I need hardly ask you if you regard photography as an aid to art?"

"Nay, that is indeed a superfluous question, not that I fail to admire much of the work turned out by the brilliant individuals who make photography a special study; but I absolutely deny that a sun-picture can be of the slightest real assistance to an artist. The

painter and designer must surely, above all, rely on imagination, and their own brains must contain far more sensitive plates than any yet placed in mechanical cameras."

"And have you any rules to your work, or do you only draw when you feel that the inspiration is on you?"

"I fear that, in common with most people, I leave that which has to be done to the last moment. I am a night bird, and my friends tell me that my best work is done at night. Sometimes, months pass without my putting pencil to paper, save, of course, for my own pleasure. From a business point of view,



A STENTORIAN VOICE. II.  
LIEUTENANT: "SHOULDER AR-R-MS!"

winter and spring are my productive seasons. In the summer I am lazy. In the autumn there seems so much to be done, and during the long days it seems sad to think of work.

"Yes, I am fond of travelling, and I have ransacked many sleepy towns in search of old uniforms and kindred objects. Unfortunately the mere amateur has begun to be interested in this class of relic, and whereas, not so very long ago, he who was inspired with a real love for such things could purchase a splendid old uniform for fifty francs, now his wealthy rival will willingly bid over him twenty times that sum. However, my friends are very

good to me, and make a point of telling me whenever they hear of any particularly interesting or characteristic *morceaux* for sale. Again, like my friend and master, M. Detaille, I have a passion for battle-fields, and I have carefully explored all those within immediate reach. Alas! that there should be so many near and about Paris."

"Do you ever illustrate the literary works of others?"

"I have done so. Thus, I illustrated a number of comic essays of Albert Millaud, also Rochefort's 'Fantasia,' but now I nearly always supply the *légendes* running under my





"OH! MAMMA!"

drawings. Mind you, I am not of opinion that words should ever play a great part in explaining humorous work. I am a great believer in telling a story silently, and by means of the pen or pencil alone. In fact, that is one reason why I draw and re-draw my work so often; the meaning should be quite clear. I do not care for obscurity in any form, and I need hardly add that I attach an enormous importance to backgrounds and to accessories."

"And is there any special work now occupying your attention?"

"Well, in one sense, I always have more to do than I seem to be able to accomplish, and once a week I contribute half a page of political sketches to the *Figaro*; but at present I am devoting a great deal of thought, to say nothing of time, to working out a scheme which will probably first see the light in a completed shape at the forthcoming Exhibition of

you will hardly believe me when I tell you that I have found working up this subject a matter of absorbing interest; I have literally hundreds of authorities, and the more I go on, the more absorbed I become. Of course, there will be many glimpses of the great Revolution, and the First and Second Empire will also play their part, and then there will be the grim Siege of Paris. I am avoiding any element of melodrama; but picturesque incidents are of course welcome, and one of the most important features of the scheme will be a

1900. I am thinking of calling it 'La Rue de Cent Ans,' 'The Street during a Century,' and it will be a kind of panorama embodying the life, movement, and poetry of the typical Paris thoroughfare during the last hundred years. Among other things will be shown the many modifications undergone by traffic from the days of the post-chaise to those which have ushered in the motor-car. Perhaps



"THE CUT DIRECT."

reconstruction of the historical Review held by Napoleon I. on the Place du Caroussel."

"And will each tableau be drawn?" I inquired, curiously.

Caran d'Aché smiled mysteriously. "I am keeping all the technical side of the affair a great secret. Of course, my one idea will be to make the presentment of my subject as vivid and convincing as possible; happily, with the help of contemporary prints and portraits, it has not been difficult to gather a very vivid idea of our immediate forebears, and of how they comported themselves."

"By the way, surely when composing this kind of work you find it necessary to make use of models?"

"No, indeed. I have very strong views concerning the professional model, and in

from my point of view, beasts are quite as interesting as human beings. Whenever I can spare the time, I enjoy an hour in the Jardin d'Acclimatation as much as any of the children whom I see there. Horses have always remained my favourites, but there are many creatures precious to the artist: elephants, for instance, are peculiarly picturesque, and lend themselves most happily to pen and pencil."

"By the way, do you yourself generally work with a pen or with a pencil?"

"At the present moment most of my drawings are done with pen and ink, or, which in some ways I like better, with a very fine brush. I have thousands of studies, for I so often modify my original conception, that these generally become very useful to me afterwards. When whatever drawing I am



NAPOLEON—A STUDY.

this matter I disagree with many of my most talented comrades. To my mind—perhaps it is an idiosyncrasy on my part—no professional sitter can give a true impression of life and movement. That a man or woman should be suddenly able to slip into the skin, as it were, of another character would argue on his or her part a very notable dramatic gift. Why should we expect to find a great actor or actress in every professional model? Now, animals make very good sitters, and every dog-lover will admit that no one can be a better *poseur* than our intelligent four-footed friend when he has a mind that way. Still,

engaged on approaches its final stage, I fasten it by its edges upon a large sheet of glass; this enables me to change or add such details as I think fit. Of course, as regards reproduction, I prefer the old-fashioned wood block; my editors, however, do not see eye to eye with me in this matter. By the way," he added, quickly, "I have never consented to work to order, that is to say, I must be quite free to choose my own subject."

"I suppose, monsieur, there is hardly time in your life for ordinary hobbies and amusements?"

"Indeed, there is. I should be sorry

were my work to turn into a kind of monomania with me. At one time I used to ride a great deal, but I have given it up to a certain extent in favour of cycling, for I not only consider that the latter is a more healthy form of exercise for an artist, but also that it gives one endless opportunities for seeing the picturesque and absurd side of life. During the last two years I have persuaded my wife to follow my example, and scarce a day passes without our taking long excursions, both in the Bois and beyond it, in those little-known corners of Seine-et-Oise, where the wheel is still looked upon with terror by the peasantry. Then again, as is surely fitting in my good old grandfather's descendant, I have always been specially devoted to fencing, and during the winter months I make it a point to attend a *salle d'armes* at least three times a week. But to tell you the truth, I pity the man who has not at least one hobby or amusement into which he can throw himself heart and soul. Even



A STUDY.

when for some reason or other I cannot indulge in any active form of physical exercise, I have plenty to amuse me at home. I delight in literature, especially in old literature, and there is always something new to be learnt about those periods in history with which I am specially concerned. I need hardly tell you what a boon to me has been the recent revival of

interest in Napoleon and his times." It may be added in conclusion that, though M. Caran d'Ache was very discreet as to his share in bringing about the Franco-Russian alliance, I came away with the firm conviction that, if my host had unfortunately never existed, the Czar and Czarina would not have been acclaimed with so much enthusiasm during their brilliant visit to Paris. Treaties of alliance between great nations are concluded in the *chancelleries* of Embassies and in the council chambers of Kings, but it rests with those who have the ear, and still more the eye, of the people to make them effective.



A STUDY.