

PARISIAN SKETCH.

THE BOULEVARDS.

Do you want, dear reader, to study character? If you do, visit the Boulevards of Paris; in that moving panorama you will find all the varieties of French character, mingled with a tolerable sample of sturdy John Bullism, and of the airs and graces of that most finical of all animals, an English dandy.

Begin we, then, with the *Boulevard de Gand*, or as it is also called *Boulevard des Italiens*. The houses are mostly shops, but interspersed here and there with some noble mansions *entre Cour et Jardin*. The shops are handsomely laid out; the *cafés*, from the extreme elegance and delicate cleanliness of their appearance, tempt you to enter; and certainly there is not one in which the most fastidious epicure would not be satisfied with the tea, coffee, or the substantial comforts of a *dejeuner a la Fourchette*. But here, as almost every where else in Paris, magnificence and misery are nearly allied; for this, the handsomest part of the Boulevards, is disgraced by a melange of paltry book stalls, old picture-dealers, pedlars, dog-fanciers, chair-menders, and stocking-grafters.

The company are generally elegant idlers, who either lounge up and down, or seat themselves in groups, and discuss the merits of the new play or novel, and above all of the last political pamphlet. The ladies take a decided part in these *conversations*, and contrive to make even politics subservient to the interests of coquetry. The English of distinction also figure there, and are easily distinguished from the French by the tranquil steadiness, or the listless indolence of their manner; I speak of the gentlemen. As to the ladies, they may be distinguished for two reasons, their superior beauty, and the generally bad taste of their dress; for the latter they have usually to thank their French milliners or dress-makers, who seem to make a point, perhaps out of regard to the national honour, of disfiguring foreigners as much as possible. Sometimes may be seen mingling with this elegant crowd, the honest provincial, who comes to satisfy his national pride with a view of the wonders of Paris; and the surly John Bull, who desires to satisfy his spleen by finding fault with every thing he sees, hears, eats, and drinks. He hates the French only because they are not English; wonders how the devil he ever could be such a fool as to come among such a set, and devoutly consigns himself all alive and in a lump to the infernal gods if ever he is caught in Paris again.

Here, too, all the most elegant equipages in Paris are exhibited in the drive, and it is but fair to say, that those of the English nobility and gentry bear away the palm. But, would you see the Boulevard to advantage, you must visit it between the hours of eight and ten on a summer evening, when the walk is literally filled with well-dressed groups, some sitting, others strolling up and down, but all talking at once, as for a wager.

Twenty minutes quick walking transports you to a scene of a totally different description. The Boulevard Saint Martin is the evening promenade of the rich cit and *Madame son épouse*, whose profusion of trinkets, cachemire shawl, and handsome English lace veil, draws many a longing glance from the pretty and simply attired *demoiselle de comptoir*, who, as she leans upon the arm of a smart shopman, indulges the hope that she too may one day sport a similar toilette. Here, too, may be seen industrious mechanics with their wives and children, released from the labours of the day, enjoying what the French all do with uncommon zest, an evening walk. These groups present as great a contrast in their dress as in their manners, to those you have just quitted. The cits consequential and over-dressed—the others vulgar and joyous.

Again the scene shifts, and the *Boulevard du Temple* presents you with a set of beings, the major part of whom belong to times long past. The small remains of the emigrant *noblesse*, the man, bending alike beneath the weight of years and poverty, yet preserving, in spite of an antiquated and often threadbare dress, an air of high breeding, and of that genuine urbanity, the characteristic of the old French. The ladies of those by-gone days are scarcely to be distinguished by their dress, for that is in general modern, but the dignity and grace, *l'air noble et imposant* which once heightened the lustre of their beauty, still remains when every other charm has flown. The republican soldier, who would willingly starve upon his own scanty pittance, could he but once more see the tricoloured flag wave over the conquered continent; the Bonapartist, whose principal enjoyment is to recount the glories of the Emperor's reign. These are the promenaders of the *Boulevard du Temple*, who regularly take their quiet evening stroll, or else sit conversing with a gravity, which would almost make you doubt of their being French, were it not for the eternal shrugs, and the abundance of gesticulation with which their discourse is seasoned.

What a contrast to this quiet scene does the next Boulevard, that of St. Denis, present. Before the *grande Semaine* it resembled a fair, that is to say, that merriest of all fairs—an Irish one—in every thing but drunkenness; for, to do the French justice, they were, before these glorious days, a temperate people. Fortune-tellers, tumblers, dancers, and quacks exerted themselves for the entertainment of the company, who consisted of market-women, corn-porters, and the lowest class of mechanics; well-clothed, apparently well fed, and bearing in their countenances every mark of contentment. I defy the crying philosopher himself to have witnessed their mirth, without joining in it. Now the company is indeed the same, but how different in appearance; clothed in rags, with famine in their faces, despair in their hearts, and execrations on their lips, intermingled here and there with the frantic mirth produced by inebriation, now too common a vice. And let them not be too severely blamed for indulging in it; without the prospect of employment, or the means of procuring food for themselves or families, the cheapness of liquor offers a temptation too powerful for those starving unfortunates always to resist. Oh! let us hope that happier times are at hand; that all civil dissensions will soon cease, and that France blest with peace and union, will see the humblest of her children in possession of bread earned by honest industry.

HEARING TO THE BLIND.

BLIND people have a peculiar method of presenting the ear, and in some cases acquire the power of moving it when much interested. The incessant use they make of it gives them an indescribable quickness: they judge of every thing by sound; a soft sonorous voice with them, is the sound of beauty; and so nice a discernor is a blind person of the accents of speech, that through the voice he fancies he can see the soul. From the idea, they form notions of character, that often lead them into erroneous conclusions. If you notice a string of horses upon travel, you will find that the first horse points his ear forward, and the last behind him, keeping watch; but the intermediate ones, who seem not to be called upon to do this duty, appear careless and perfectly at their ease.—(*Dr. Darwin's Zoonomia*.) Sir John Fielding possessed a great faculty of this sort; and he could recollect every thief that had been brought before him by the tone and accent of his voice for more than forty years.—*Gardiner's Music of Nature*.