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Information of Travellers

Mariana Starke

Excerpt

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TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT.

CHAPTER I.

FRANCE.

*Calais—Best road to Paris—Abbey of S. Denis—Paris—
Most prominent improvements—Musée Royale des Arts—
Musée des Monumens Français—Public Libraries—
Musée d'Artillerie—Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et Jardin
du Roi—Académie Royale de Musique, and other The-
atres—Manufacture Royale des Glaces—Manufacture
Royale des Tapisseries aux Gobelins—Colonne de la
Place Vendôme—Arc de triomphe de l'Etoile—Port
S. Denis—Port S. Martin—Tribunal du Corps
Legislatif—Basilique de Notre-Dame—Basilique de la
Nouvelle S. Genevieve—Garde-meuble—Hôtel Royal
des Invalides—Institution Royale des Sourds-Muets—
Hospice de la Salpêtrière—Hôpital des Enfants
trouvés—Observatoire—Palais du Temple—Palais de
la Bourse—Greniers de réserve—Abattoirs—Halle au
Blé—Halle aux Vins—Marché à la Volaille et au Gibier
—Bridges—Fountains—Burial-places—S. Cloud—
Sèvres—Versailles—Present state of Society at Paris—
Passports.*

ON revisiting Calais, in May, 1817, after an absence of
twenty years, I discovered no apparent change, either in the
town or its inhabitants; except that the latter, at least the

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lower order of people, have acquired a habit of smoking incessantly, like the Germans; while the former boasts a larger number of good inns than it possessed under the government of Louis XVI; and has been ridded of all its conventual institutions, and likewise of the host of mendicants by whom travellers were formerly annoyed. Understanding that the route through Beauvais to Paris was smoother, less hilly, and shorter by three posts, than that through Amiens, I turned off at Abbeville, where the roads part, and pursued my way to Grandvilliers; passing near a mound which commands the adjacent country, and whose summit is denominated Cæsar's Camp. The entrenchments are well preserved; and medals, and other antiquities, have been found on this spot. Grandvilliers contains 3000 inhabitants: the road from Calais thither is excellent; and, owing to its great breadth and perfect straightness, possesses an appearance of grandeur, for the same reason common to most of the high roads in France. The country had hitherto presented nothing remarkable: but, after quitting Grandvilliers, I passed through fine sheets of corn, interspersed with churches and *chateaux* in ruins, and convents transformed into manufactories of various descriptions; objects frequently seen now, in the French territories, and generally speaking disadvantageous to a landscape: but this disadvantage is counterbalanced by the improved state of agriculture, the increase of towns and villages, and the air of comfort which pervades even the humblest peasant's cottage.

Beauvais, seated on the banks of the Therain, is celebrated on account of the siege it sustained, in 1472; when Jeanne Hachette headed the women of the place, and defended it against an army of 80,000 men, commanded by the Duke of Burgundy, whom she compelled to abandon

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his enterprise: and, in memory of this heroine, there is every year, at Beauvais, a procession, in which the ladies take precedence. The Hotel de Ville appears to be a fine modern edifice; and the Cathedral, though unfinished, merits notice: it contains the tomb of Cardinal Forbin, by Coustou, and some good specimens of the tapestry for which Beauvais has long been famous. The Church of S. Etienne contains fine painted glass, a monument in *rilievo*, supposed to be antique, and an admired picture of our Saviour bearing his cross.

From Beauvais I proceeded, through avenues of fruit-trees, and a country rich in vineyards and corn, to Beaumont, pleasantly situated on the left bank of the Oise: and from Beaumont, through avenues of fruit-trees and spacious plains well cultivated, to S. Denis; whose venerable abbey was the ancient burial-place of the kings of France: during the revolution, however, this abbey was bereaved of its treasures, its church unroofed, and every altar levelled with the dust; but the emperor Napoleon, having determined to restore it to its pristine use and splendor, repaired the royal vault, which he secured by doors of bronze gilt, erecting in the church, on the right-hand, two expiatory altars; the one dedicated to the race of Clovis, the other to that of Charlemagne (and between these altars were to have been placed statues of the six kings of France dignified with the title of Emperor); while, on the opposite side of the nave, he erected another expiatory altar, consecrated to the monarchs of the third dynasty; inscribing on a column the names of the princes of this house.

I was unable to examine the church, because I had omitted applying for a ticket of admission, either to the principal architect who resides at S. Denis, or to the Swiss

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guards stationed there; and without this ticket, strangers cannot pass beyond the commencement of the middle aisle. I observed, however, two old monuments on each side of the great door, and two others of less ancient date; one being (I believe) that of Louis XII: but Napoleon's additions, the bronze gates of the royal vault excepted, I could not discover.

The Abbey of S. Denis, compared with French churches in general, may be called a good piece of architecture, though very inferior to every Cathedral in England.

Between S. Denis and Paris (almost one continued street), the splendid dome of the *Hôtel des Invalides*, Mont Martre, Belleville, and S. Chaumont, are the most striking objects: the second exhibits marks of having made a desperate stand against the allied armies of Europe, when united to dethrone Napoleon; and the two last were bravely defended, on the 29th of March, 1814, by the pupils of the *Ecole Polytechnique*.

Paris, anciently called *Parisi vel Lutetia*, is watered by the Seine, anciently *Sequana*; and previous to the dethronement of Louis XVI, was supposed to contain from seven to eight hundred thousand inhabitants; but, since that period, the number has been considerably diminished, and the population now does not amount to six hundred thousand. The improvements this city owes to Napoleon are innumerable: and on entering the *Place Vendôme*, adorned with a fine imitation of Trajan's Column; on advancing to the *Garde-meuble* and the Palace of the *Tuileries*, viewing that superb edifice, its princely gardens, and the magnificent façades of the *Louvre* (deemed one of the most perfect specimens of modern architecture); then contemplating,

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from the *Pont Louis XVI*, the *Palais Bourbon*, the front of the *Tribunal du Corps Legislatif*, the *Champs Elysées*, the stately dome of the *Hôtel des Invalides*, the noble quays of the Seine, and the many beautiful bridges thrown across that river (which traverses Paris from east to west), it is impossible not to think this metropolis the rival of ancient Rome: especially when we recollect that the vast and splendid apartments of the *Louvre*, though recently despoiled of many treasures, still boast one of the largest, and one of the finest collections in the world of paintings and sculpture.

At Paris, however, grandeur is more common than consistency: for ere the eye be satiated with gazing on the above described magnificent panorama, it discovers streets narrow, insignificant, and filthy, disgraceful in short to any capital.

Among the most prominent improvements made, during the late reign, are the noble Gallery intended to unite the immense Palaces of the *Louvre* and the *Tuileries*, and not yet finished—the triumphal Arch *de l'Etoile*, not yet finished—the *Hôtel du Ministère des relations exterieures*—the Exchange, not yet finished—the Establishment for the Orphans of the Legion of Honour—the Observatory—the Temple—the Fountain of the Elephant, on the site of the Bastille, unfinished, but worthy of the colossal mind by which it was projected—the Storehouses for grain, called *Greniers de réserve*—the five Slaughter-houses, called *Abattoirs*, magnificent in themselves, and particularly beneficial; as, previous to the reign of Napoleon, there was nothing of this kind at Paris—the Cupola of the Corn-Market—the general Magazine for wines—the Poultry and Game-Market—the great Market—the Market of S. Ger-

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main—of the *Place Maubert*—of *S. Jean*, and of *S. Martin*—the *Rue de la Paix*—the *Pont du Jardin du Roi*—the *Pont de la Cité*—the *Pont des Arts*—the *Pont des Invalides*—the new *Quays*—the Fountain of the *Espanade du Boulevard de Bondi*, and the before-mentioned bronze Column in the *Place Vendôme*.

The triumphal Arch, in the *Place de Carrousel*, also ranks among the embellishments of Paris; though strikingly devoid of that magnitude and simplicity which distinguish the Roman edifice it was meant to imitate.

But what especially charms the eyes of strangers in the French capital, is that beautiful belt, called the *Boulevards*, which encircles the town, and consists of drives and walks, bordered with forest-trees and gardens; and which from the number of shops, and the profusion of flowers whereby it is adorned, has a peculiar air of gaiety during winter; and possesses during summer a salubrious coolness, rarely met with in a vast metropolis. The circumstance of all others, however, most conducive to the healthfulness of Paris, is the purification of the water of the Seine; which, though now perfectly good and wholesome, was seldom drank with impunity twenty years ago.

Judging by appearances, I should think this fine city as much improved in wealth as in magnificence; the shops being far more numerous, and far better stocked, than in time past; the hotels, which amount, it is said, to three hundred, being furnished with an elegance heretofore unknown; the coffee-houses displaying every expensive decoration; the tables of *Restaurateurs* abounding with luxuries; and the opera-house exhibiting a splendour, with respect to stage decorations, which no other theatre in Europe can boast.

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Having enumerated the most striking changes in this metropolis, I will now enter into a few particulars respecting the objects best worth notice.

*Musée Royale des Arts, Place du Louvre**. This immense collection of sculpture and paintings is placed in the magnificent palace of the *Louvre*: eight rooms on the ground floor, princely in size, and rich in marbles and mosaics, being appropriated to the efforts of the chisel; and a suite of vast and splendid apartments up-stairs to those of the pencil. Among the sculpture are the choicest treasures of the Villa Borghese; and many other highly valued works of art, which once embellished Rome.

Vestibule†. The ceiling, painted in oil by Berthelemy, represents the origin of sculpture; namely, man, formed by Prometheus and animated by Minerva. The four medallions, executed in *basso-rilievo*, represent the four schools of sculpture, namely, France, pointing to the Milon of Pujet; Italy to the Moses of Buonaroti; Egypt to the colossal statue of Memnon; and Greece to the Pythian Apollo. Here are—a colossal bust of a vanquished province, numbered 1,—4, colossal bust of Domitian—6, statues of prisoners—7, colossal bust of Lucius Verus—9, colossal bust

* Engravings of a considerable number of the pictures in this Museum have been taken; and proof impressions are sold, for the benefit of the establishment, at the *Calcographie du Musée Royale*.

† For the benefit of persons restricted in point of time, I shall mark (as I have already mentioned) with one or more exclamation-points, according to the merit of the work in question, those productions of the chisel and the pencil which are generally deemed most deserving of notice, in the public and private galleries of the Continent.

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of Jupiter Serapis—14, vase adorned with bacchanalian emblems!—15, statue of Apollo, called *Sauroctone*, or lizard-killer, supposed to be one of the finest imitations extant of a bronze statue of Apollo by Praxiteles!!*.

Arcade, leading to the Hall of the Emperors. 15, statue of Apollo—18, Genius of eternal sleep †.

Hall of the Roman Emperors. The ceiling, painted by Meynier, represents the earth receiving from Adrian and Justinian, a code of laws, dictated by Nature, Justice, and Wisdom.—1, statue of Marcus Aurelius—21, a Barbarian prisoner—26, Nero—27, Trajan!! The *basso-rilievo* on the pedestal of this statue represents a husband and wife dining, and reposing on their couch; and is curious, as it exhibits ancient Roman costume—32, *basso-rilievo*, found at Rome, and representing a religious ceremony performed before the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; of which the three doors indicate the three naves consecrated to the three associated divinities, Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno—33, statue of Trajan!!

Hall of the Seasons; so called because the ceiling is painted by Romanelli, and represents the four Seasons, Apollo, Diana, &c.—35, statue of Venus—36, bust of Commodus—37, statue of a wounded Combatant—43, an Egyptian divinity, in alabaster!!! †—44, bust of Venus!!—48, statue of Euripides! §—55, ditto of a Nymph—56, statue of Bacchus—57, a Sarcophagus, representing the voyage of the good to Elysium!—59, *basso-rilievo* of Mithras (a

* From the Villa Borghese.

† This statue does not express the idea it is intended to convey.

‡ From the Villa Albani.

§ Ibid.

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Persian divinity), the Genius of the sun, accomplishing the mystic sacrifice of the bull!! Mithras was worshipped by the Romans, who erected altars to him; and this *bassorilievo* was found near the Forum Romanum—62, *bassorilievo*, taken from the temple of Minerva at Athens; it represents the Panathenæa*; and was composed by Phidias, and executed under his orders!!!

Hall of Peace; so named, because the ceiling, painted by Romanelli, represents Peace, Commerce, and the Arts—69, statue of Posidonius!!!—72, statue of Demosthenes!!!†—75, ditto Trajan!!!

Hall of the Romans. The ceiling, painted by Romanelli, represents History and Poetry, celebrating the success of Bellona; the deputies of the Roman Senate bringing the Dictator's robe to Cincinnatus; the rape of the Sabines; the story of Mutius Scævola; and the continence of Scipio—77, bust of Geta, very rare!—78, Inopus, a fragment found at Delos ‡—81, bust of a Roman warrior—82, statue of Rome—88, statue of Tiberius!—89, statue of Augustus!!§—91, colossal bust of Rome!—93, statue of Julia, the wife of Septimius Severus—95, group of Thetis, &c.; curious on account of the ancient galley on which the Goddess is placed—98, Chastity—100, bust of Antinous.

Hall of the Centaur. The fresco-painting, on the ceiling,

* The Panathenæa were festivals in honour of Minerva, the patroness of Athens.

† From the Vatican Museum.

‡ Inopus, a river of Delos, supposed by the inhabitants to be a branch of the Nile.

§ From the Vatican Museum.

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is by Romanelli, and represents the triumph of religion; the theological virtues, &c. Here likewise are other paintings by modern artists—102, statue of a Roman, name unknown—104, Alexander the Great—106, Group of the Centaur!!!! This master-piece is supposed, by the Chevalier Visconti, to have been executed in the time of Adrian, by Aristeeas and Papias, natives of Aphrodisias, in Caria—107, colossal head of Apollo—109, ditto of Marcus Aurelius—111, ditto of Lucius Verus—112, statue of Germanicus—113, statue of Claudius—115, statue of Achilles—120, statue of Sextius Pompeius, by Ophelion, a Greek artist!!—121, one of the largest and most beautiful candelabra of antiquity*.

Hall of Diana. 124, statue of Bacchus—129, statue of Minerva—130, bust of a Roman, name unknown—131, group of three nymphs, suspending their wet garments on a column!!—133, statue of Venus—135, bust of Rome—*basso-rilievo* of Hercules stealing the tripod of Delphos, and above this, Thalia—138, *basso-rilievo* of the Suovetaurilia, a solemn sacrifice, when a sow, *sus*, a lamb, *ovis*, and a bull, *taurus*, were immolated; and it appears that the name given to this religious ceremony is derived from the three last mentioned Latin words—139, *Diana à la Biche*, so called because the Goddess is represented at the moment when she has just snatched the celebrated Hind with golden horns from Hercules; and reprimanded him for molesting an animal sacred to her. This beautiful work (found between Genzano and Ariccia amidst the ruins of a temple consecrated to Diana) is of Parian marble, and stands upon a pedestal ornamented with fine *bassi-rilievi*: that part which represents three cities, personified by three

* From the Vatican Museum.