

SCENES ABROAD.

NO VIII.

BY ONE OF US.

OPENING my Note-Book of Pencillings by the way-side, in travel over many lands; opening it, at random, I proceeded to sketch therefrom, for the amusement of the Provincial reader, and, mayhap, for his or her enlightenment, a scene or two in France, to place beside my Sketches of Barbary and Spain.

It was of a fine afternoon, in the genial month of May, I entered the Forest of Fontainebleau, distant about forty miles from Paris. The wild and savage scenery of this wilderness on a small scale, by its contrast with the highly cultivated and densely populated country around it, adorned by civilization and the arts, made a deep impression on my mind. Ranges of rock, piled into hills, frown upon the high road to the town, from amidst a magnificent forest of trees, whose lofty summits expand in the air, or whose trunks lie on the ground, in picturesque disorder. The broken and rugged country indicated by those appearances, is perhaps the chief reason, the forest exists at this day in populous and civilized France: but the sports of royalty were, doubtless, the original cause of preservation from the woodman's axe. The wild-boar once roamed within it, affording exercise and excitement to the brilliant courts of Phillip Augustus, and Francis, and the Henrys, and in those happy days, when "Responsible Government," was a thing unknown, (the wild-boars of the Forest being chief objects of solicitude to the monarch,) it may well be imagined, the Jacques Bon-Homme peasantry would have been voted, unanimously, very insufferable bores, had they asked for the Forest land for purposes of peaceful agriculture. The *Itineraire*, describing the scenery, says, "On one side are seen black and shapeless rocks; on another, strata of freestone, disposed with the utmost irregularity. One part exhibits nothing but barren sands, whilst another is covered with wood." The Forest of Fontainebleau covers no less a space than 34,000 acres.

A drive of a few miles in the sylvan shade, brought us to the town; situate, strange enough it is, in the very heart of the forest. Walk which way

one may, in whatever direction from the town, he comes upon it. During my brief sojourn at the *Hôtel de la Syrene*, I frequent, strolled miles into the unbragous solitudes, and, if I did not moralize as Jacques in the Forest of Ardennes, I nevertheless gave the loosest rein to the Pegasus of my Imagination; I fancied the enlivening scenes of the "long, long ago," peopling the forest glades with gay assemblages for the chase, of gallants and ladies fair; nobles on their neighing hunters, champing the bit in impatient ardour; with stately dames and beauteous *damosels* on palfreys, surrounded by page and menial marked by feudal badge, and foresters in Lincoln Green; and again, hearkening to the sylvan echoes ringing with the bustle and the noise of the pleasure-seeking throng, or the *tintamarre* of huntsmen's horns. Such the creative power of the imagination: such, its absorbing reveries.

The streets of Fontainebleau are broad and regular, but the houses are very plain and unpretending. It is but a small place, the population not exceeding 9,000. Every thing about it looked exceedingly dull: not the slightest appearance of bustle was there any where.

Promenading the streets and the public walks, methought I perceived in the style and air of the inhabitants, that indescribable *je ne sais quoi* which tells of proximity to Courts; that superiority in manners and address over provincial towns generally, which familiarity with elevated society invariably confers.

The "Chateau" is however the great object of curiosity at Fontainebleau, if not the sole. The Chateau created the town. Royalty came here to rest from affairs of state, or to exercise the hand with the boar-spear, and cause the blood that usually flows sluggishly in royal veins, to course rapidly in the ardour of the chase, and around clustered the bees of industry, and the poor that live on the crumbs from the tables of the rich. A town grew up.

The *comp d'il* of the Chateau is fine. It presents a magnificent though confused mass of buildings,