

IMPRESSIONS

OF A

RECENT TRIP THROUGH EUROPE.

This is not a lecture in the ordinary acceptation of that term, nor have I the slightest claim to the high-sounding title of a lecturer. I am old-fashioned enough—or old fogey enough, if you will—to associate with that title the idea of a public instructor; and although examples are not wanting of so called lectures that have little instruction in them, I don't think it would be advisable to add to the questionable list the observations of a very ordinary traveller as he took his holiday rambles in Europe. It was necessary, I suppose, in getting out a ticket to call this a lecture on "Impressions of a Recent Trip Through Europe," for tickets, like other forms of advertisement, must flaunt in exaggerated colours, and no one thinks of tying them down to the literal truth. This, however, is simply a quiet talk about objects of interest that would attract the attention of any man whose holiday rambles might take him to any of the cities of the Old World.

Dwellers on this side of the Atlantic have some pleasures that are comparatively unknown to their less fortunate brethren on the other side. Pleasures of hope, pleasures of memory, and pleasures of imagination they have in common with us; but in the exercise of these, as a holiday excursion to the other side of the water is planned, we have a decided advantage over them. Europeans may visit America, be impressed with its marvellous resources, or admire the beauty of its scenery; but how short-lived is the impression and how quickly the admiration fades away! We have nothing to aid the outward sense in fixing these impressions on the mind.—No rich colouring of historic association; and it is just this colouring that gives to European landscape its richest charm.

We have fairer landscapes than they. We have nobler rivers; our cities will compare favourably with the cities of the older world; but ours are peopled with a race of ordinary mortals like ourselves, while their cities have an added population in the long line of heroes who have made their names famous in the world's history—men whose fame has fired the imagination of our boyhood and has grown with our growth, until we have peopled most of these old cities with a race of giants taller than the tallest Anakim that ever frightened Israelite from the land of promise.

These phantom giants of the past, whether they be soldiers or statesmen, poets or preachers, are meeting you at every turn, and they are really the men with whom we most associate, and whose company gives us most pleasure as we visit the places made famous in song or story by their lives or by their deeds.

Fleet Street, in London, makes no great pretence to architectural beauty, and the crowds that jostle you on its sidewalks are ordinary men and women, whose rapid movements proclaim them solely intent on the everyday business of life. But the stranger visiting London for the first time sees but little of this ordinary traffic. If he be a man of any imagination at all, he is more likely to see Dr. Jonson swinging along with awkward stride, touching the posts that still, in imagination, obstruct the thoroughfare. Or he follows Charles Lamb as with idle step he saunters towards his office in that building near Temple Bar. Or, it may be that, with Goldsmith and Boswell, he crosses to the tavern opposite, where to the present day a very comfortable lunch may be had at a reasonable figure. He is as likely to meet Thackeray and Dickens, with their marvellous creations, as he is to meet Brown and Robinson of the present day. But, if he be too intent upon communing with Thackeray and Dickens, it is