

This magnificent spectacle marked an epoch in our lives: it was the first glimpse we had seen of the Alps, and the peculiar and indescribable feeling which it excited continued with us for days, and still comes back on reflection with an imperishable poetic effect. It was as if we had suddenly had a peep into the mountain-land of heaven, or as if one of the planets had at once swept near the earth, giving us a view of its strange and unapproachable hills. For a grant part of the forenoon our way lay over a high tract of open country, from which this glorious scene became momentarily more and more distinct. If we turned our eyes away for a short time to the bleak country around us, when we lifted them again this silent and magnificent apparition was still there, stretching like a divine and unearthly dream along the southern sky.

Augsburgh, with its historical legends, interests us; but, perhaps, no place in the whole route is found so interesting as Munich; and in and around it, Howitt lingers as if loth to leave the home of the arts—the modern Greece; and the noble independence of his own character is shown in the unsparing hand with which he draws the contrast between what has been effected by the King of Bavaria, in his small dominions, and with his limited income, and the neglect of all these things by the Queen of England; he bends not the knee to worldly power, but true to his own principles, he shuns not to speak the truth to crowned heads, however unpalatable it may be. And it is to be wished, his few forcible words, might arouse an interest in the graceful and beautiful arts in England, and awaken the government to a sense of what they could do, to give an impulse to British art, which, as he says, needs but the breath of royal patronage to start into universal bloom; and yet, desirable as this is, there are other things more so; while the furnished manufacturers call for bread for themselves and their starving families, the Glyptothek and the Pinacothek had better be unbuilt, and the surplus funds of the kingdom, instead of being expended on fancy balls and royal pleasures, be applied to the relief of the suffering poor.

Vienna is a gay enticing place, which might well make one wish to remain there; the people live for pleasure, and in their constant round of enjoyments, musical entertainments, balls, drives, gardens, they keep up a perpetual course of dissipation, which, it seems, must enervate the mind; but as a balancing power, it is full of artistic wealth, galleries of exquisite statuary, paintings of the first masters, collections of ancient armour, and fine libraries, which show the existence of a refined and cultivated taste, and prove that the insatiate thirst for pleasure has not quite destroyed the love of the truly beautiful and enduring. The simplicity and warm heartedness of the Austrian; and the apparent freedom from those irksome restraints which are expected in a despotic government, strike one most agreeably; and

here again, Howitt, with a ready boldness which may possibly render him obnoxious at home, draws the contrast between the vaunted freedom of his own country, and the comparative ease of this notorious despotism:

The ideas, too, which we cherish at home, that Austria is a gloomy and severe despotism: that you cannot move without a spy or policeman at your elbow, disappear here entirely. In no city do you see so little palpable evidence of surveillance and police as in this. You are, after delivering your passport, as free and unsmacked in your motions as in London; and if you do not go out of your way to assail the government, the government will not interfere with you. The whole of this is, however, the result of a sagacious and worldly-wise political system. Everything is planned and calculated to divert the thoughts of the people from political matters. For this purpose public and social pleasures are promoted. If poverty cannot wholly be prevented, for the state has a large debt, and pauperism in 1836 was stated to be in the proportion of about four persons in the hundred, yet distress is alleviated; and in no country do you see less symptoms of it. The grand principle of despotic government is, indeed, and must be, to maintain its people in comfort, without which no government could long be popular. Austria, therefore, educates, and was amongst the first unions of Europe to educate its people, so far as is necessary to the conduct of human affairs. The administration of justice is cheap. Law, unlike what it is with us, is within the reach of every man's purse: if not, the poorest man can seek justice from the highest quarters. Even the Emperor devotes one day every week to the personal hearing of any complaints that individuals, however humble, desire to lay before him. What would be thought of such a paternal practice in our monarchs? Thus, even despotism has its sunny side. If a people can be content to leave the management of political affairs entirely in the hands of the government, and to eat, drink, and be merry, going through the world in great bodily comfort, Austria is an evidence that they may do this in the highest degree. Compared with the frightful and wholesale distress of our own country, Austria is a paradise. Nowhere in the world can such frightful masses of misery be found as in our manufacturing districts; and well may the Austrians ask us, what good does our liberty of speech do those who purchase it at such a cost?

Here the Imperial family is highly popular; the individual members of it, wherever seen, are most simple and unassuming in their manners; the government is mild and paternal in its treatment of its subjects, and the whole population is gay and good-humoured. I do not mean to say that such a state is what the powers, spiritual impulses, and destiny of man, render most desirable; but for the mass it may well be asked, is it not better than lying for ever under the hydraulic press of crushing anxiety and fearful starvation? There is no condition of ignominy so thoroughly ignominious as that of a people styling itself free, and yet living before the world in perpetual complaint of the wretchedness of its government, and in domestic misery which has no parallel. The argument is not for the preference of a despotism, but for a government like ours to rouse itself in diffusing comfort amid the multitude, while it offers to all men, as its additional and crowning recommendation, the glorious and precious privilege of unsmacked mind—of religious, political, and intellectual freedom.

We must pass over the visits to Prague, Saxony