

SKETCHES OF PARIS.

THE "COMBATS DES ANIMAUX."

The excitement derived from the spectacle afforded in this amphitheatre, where animals are made to fight and tear each other to pieces, seems to be quite in character with the feelings of its patrons, the ferocious and blood-thirsty inhabitants of the remoter suburbs and outskirts of Paris.

The unfavorable epithets which I have assigned to the people, may seem undeserved to those who see in the order and force with which the law holds its supremacy during periods of tranquillity, a moral and willing subjection on their part to its ordinances, but on closer inspection, it will be found that order is only maintained by the unceasing and vigorous superintendence of a powerful police, backed by a large military force, who are of themselves, when so inclined, competent to maintain a larger body of men than the Parisians in complete, nay, abject submission to the ruling powers. The class that I particularly allude to, are now designated in the Parisian Journals *les ouvriers*, or working class, and they have, since the first revolution, received this appellation in lieu of the contemptuous one of *canaille* which was first applied to them by the haughty and degenerate nobility, before that period. To give a notion of the utter degradation meant to be conveyed by this word, it will suffice to explain the meaning. *Canaille* signifies the gutter or canal in the centre of the more ancient streets of Paris, which is constantly streaming with offals and liquid mud.

Although, politically speaking, they hold a higher rank in the constitution, their moral deportment remains the same, and by all who have any stake or interest in the permanence of the laws, they are regarded with horror and detestation. In the many conversations I have held concerning them, with respectable persons, whose opinions were unbiassed by the possession of either wealth or rank, they were invariably termed by the original appellation of *canaille*, and otherwise spoken of as being among the most fallen of our race.

The total decay of morals observable in their mode of life and sentiments, must be referred to the tremendous convulsions and unspeakable atrocities that marked the era of the first revolution; from the effects of these they have not yet recovered, nor can it be reasonably expected that any reformation will be effected, until the more than Pagan infidelity, unblushingly avowed, and licentiousness of every species, openly pursued, shall be replaced by the light of a pure religion, and the conduct of those to whom they naturally look up as examples, shall have removed from the capital of France the foul stain of corruption attached to its fame. If I have expressed myself thus vehemently, it is because the truth of every word laid down here, has been tested by actual observation.

After passing the *Barrière des Combats*, one of the outer gates of the city, which receives its name I believe, from the amphitheatre, erected immediately beyond, our steps were attracted towards a large wooden building, by the incessant yelpings and barkings of numberless dogs. The houses in the neighborhood were nearly all *cabarets* or wine-shops. This beverage is sold at a cheap rate here, as not having passed the *barrière*, the town tax is not levied on it; they were filled with persons who were busily employed in swallowing the stimulus, and discussing the delights to be soon afforded them in the approaching entertainment, and the space before the building was occupied by groups of men and women, whose general appearance, although picturesque, unequivocally demonstrated the small distance in point of humanity, that separated them from the savage animals within.

The tickets of admission were sold by a woman; and I may here mention, that in all places of public amusement, the box offices are attended by women, from the Grand French Opera down to the *Marionette*. You will find the fair sex occupying the above situation, as well as that of box openers.

The interior of the amphitheatre disclosed a large circular area, enclosed by a shed, the upper part arranged into boxes and the lower into cages, through the gratings of which we distinguished the wild beasts. One of these was a wild boar, an animal that it had long been my desire to see. At that time it was passing its long curved tusks upwards and downwards along the bars of its prison, and at the same time emitted from its mouth a prodigious quantity of white foam, which not only covered the bars, but even descended to the ground beneath. The colour of its hide was of a beautiful iron grey, and the bristles were long and collected into shaggy tufts. Its small fiery eye was a type of the indomitable spirit within—but its size was less than that of many of its civilized brethren.

Two men now appeared at the opposite sides of the arena, leading in a pair of white short legged and pink-eyed bull terriers. They were allowed to gaze at each other until thoroughly enraged, when they were let loose, and fought like incarnate devils.—Several other single pairs followed this, and the first part of the spectacle concluded with a general *melée*. In order to prevent fatal consequences, a man went about furnished with a long pole, having a flat piece of iron at the extremity, which was inserted as a lever into the dog's mouth when he held on too obstinately, or had seized his antagonist by the throat. This operation was in instance one quite necessary, and the animal, when released from the deadly gripe, lay for some time on his side with hardly any signs of life.

A wolf was brought in and secured to the centre of the ground by a thin rope, which, however, permitted a long run round. The gaunt and famished creature,