

The Saturday Evening Visitor ;

A Cheap Family Paper,

DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, EDUCATION, MORALITY, &c. &c.
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From Laing's Notes of a Traveller.

HOLLAND.

Holland, the land of cheese and butter, is to my eye no picturesque, uninteresting country. Flat it is; but it is so geometrically only, and in no other sense. Spires, church-towers, bright farm-houses, their windows glistening in the sun, long rows of willow-trees, their blueish foliage rustling up white in the breeze; grassy embankments of a tender vivid green, partly hiding the meadows behind, and crowded with glittering gaudily-painted gigs and stool-waggons, loaded with rosy-cheeked, laughing country-girls, decked out in ribands of many more colours than the rainbow, all as streaming in the wind; these are the objects which strike the eye of the traveller from seaward, and form a gay front view of Holland as he sails or streams along its coast and up its rivers. On shore, the long continuity of horizontal lines of country in the background, each line rising behind the other to a distant, level, unbroken horizon, gives the impressions of vastness and of novelty.

FRANCE.

The traveller in France finds much to observe, but little to describe. The landscape is a wearisome expanse of tillage-land, unvaried by hill and dale, stream and lake, rock and wood-land. The towns and villages are squatting in the plains, like strangers tired of wandering in an unknown land. No suburbs of connected rows of houses and gardens, and of lanes dotted with buildings, trees, and brick-walls, stretch, as in England, like feelers into the country, fastening the towns to it by so many lines that the traveller is in doubt where country ends and town begins. Here, the towns and villages are distinct, round, inhabited patches upon the face of the land, just as they are represented upon a map; and the flat, monotonous surface of the map is no uncharacteristic sketch of the appearance of the country. La belle France, in truth, is a Calmuc beauty; her flat face, destitute of feature, of projection or dimple, and not even furrowed with lines and cross-lines of hedges, walls, and ditches. This wide, unhedged expanse of corn-land on either hand, without divisions or enclosures, or pasture-fields, or old trees, single or in groups, is tiresome. The traveller at once admits that France has a natural claim to the word which all other countries have borrowed from her.

BERLIN.

Has the air of the metropolis of a kingdom of yesterday. No Gothic churches, narrow streets, fantastic gable-ends, no historical stone and lime, no remnants of the picturesque ages, recall the olden time. Voltaire in satin breeches and powdered peruke, Frederick the Great in jack-boots and pigtail, and the French classical age of Louis the Fourteenth, are the men and times Berlin calls up to the imagination of the traveller. A fine city, however, Berlin is—very like the age she represents—very fine and very nasty. Berlin is a city of palaces, that is, of huge barrack-like edifices,

with pillars, statues, and all the regular frippery of the tawdry school of classical French architecture—all in stucco, and frequently out at elbows, discovering the naked brick under the tattered yellow faded covering of plaster. The fixtures which strike the eye in the streets of Berlin are vast fronts of buildings, clumsy ornaments, clumsy statues, clumsy inscriptions, a profusion of gilding, guard-houses, sentry-boxes; the moveables are sentries presenting arms every minute, officers with feathers and orders passing unceasingly, hackney droskies rattling about, and numbers of well-dressed people. The streets are spacious and straight, with broad margins on each side for foot-passengers; and a band of plain flagstones on these margins make them much more walkable than the streets of most Continental towns. But these margins are divided from the spacious carriage-way in the middle by open kennels. These open kennels are boarded over only at the gateways of the palaces, to let the carriages cross them. Use reconciles people to nuisances which might be easily removed. A sluggish but considerable river, the Spree, stagnates through the town; and the money laid out in stucco-work and outside decoration of the houses would go far towards covering over their drains, raising the water by engines, and sending it in a purifying stream through every street and sewer.

ENGLISH AND GERMAN GENTLEMEN.

The want of self-respect in the German character, produced by the education and social system, and the undue importance in the German mind of rank, office, and conventional distinction, and undue weight of these in the social economy of Germany, are strongly marked by the profusion of orders, stars, crosses, ribands, and empty titles, with which the people, both of civil and military station, adorn and gratify themselves. Every third man you meet in the streets has a label in his button-hole, telling all the world, "I am a knight look at me." No very young man among the Continental military can have ever heard a bullet whistle in the field; so that even by this class no very profound prospect for the riband at the button-hole can be claimed, and none at all by the ordinary civil classes who trick themselves out with it *en militaire*. The feeling of personal worth—the pride it may be—seems unknown to them, which leads the British nobleman, gentleman of high station, or military officer, who may have been honoured with a British or foreign order, to wear it only on particular parade occasions. He feels that he is something without the external testimonial of it. The English gentleman would think it quite as inconsistent with his personal dignity to walk about on ordinary occasions, in the ordinary circles of society, with his stars, crosses, and ribbands plastered on his breast, as with the gazette of the actions in which he had won his distinctions plastered on his back. The German, again, ties his bit of red ribbon even to the button-hole of his dressing-gown, the merchant goes to his counting-house, the apothecary to the barber's shop to be shaved, the professor to his lecture-