

**TRAVELLING SKETCHES IN
THE NORTH OF
ITALY, THE TYROL,
AND ON THE RHINE**

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Travelling Sketches in the North of Italy, the Tyrol, and on the Rhine by Leitch Ritchie

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LEITCH RITCHIE

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A WORD PREFATORY.

MOST people understand that the word "sketch," in painting, means a hasty and imperfect drawing, containing merely a sort of outline of the artist's ideas. The present *literary* sketches, however, must be looked upon as subordinate, only with reference to the more finished works of other writers; for in reality they have been executed to the best of the author's ability. They are SKETCHES, however, whatever be their merit or demerit, because they are necessarily brief; and because, for evident reasons, they want the continuity and gravity of interest which might have entitled the book to the distinction of a TOUR.

In an age like this, when a taste for travel and a taste for the fine arts seem to grow together, it is not wonderful that to ransack the portfolio of an artist of genius, on his return from abroad, should be deemed a very fascinating employment. And perhaps, after all, when the drawings come to be

published, the most *useful* literary accompaniment would be a common guide-book. Such works, however, already exist in sufficient abundance; and, instead of having recourse to the common expedient—of reproducing, in a new form, the experience of former travellers, the author conceived the idea of presenting to the reader a set of *bona fide* sketches of his own, the result of impressions made upon his mind on the spot. The appearance in the midst of these, of relations which the profane will term *romances*, must be accounted for by the necessities of the ANNUAL—a plant, which, having been reared in an atmosphere of poetry and fiction, would, perhaps, run some risk of drooping if suddenly transplanted.

The present volume comprehends a Journey through the North of Italy, the Tyrol, and along the banks of the Rhine as far as Strasbourg. Next year, the route will be continued down the Rhine to the sea, and through the most interesting portions of Holland and the Netherlands.

London, October, 1831.

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TRAVELLING SKETCHES,

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THE RHINE.

CHAP. I.

PREPARATION.

It is nothing at all to write the account of a tour that has been made without reference to authorship. You may imagine that you are merely gratifying the curiosity of your friends; or, what is still better, that you are performing a public duty in disseminating a knowledge of certain memorabilia met with in your journey. You are like a man telling a story, either in answer to the questions of the company, or simply because he believes it to be worth telling. But to travel for the express purpose of writing your travels—to look about you, as it were, of malice prepense—and feel, every step you move, as if you had an ink-bottle dangling at your button, and a pen stuck behind your ear, is surely the most awkward thing in the world! One sits as stiffly in the coach as if he had been petrified into an attitude by the eye of a portrait-painter. A travelling

author may be recognised among a thousand tourists. There is an air of sheepish importance in his manner—a restlessness in the eye, and a twitching in the muscles, that proclaim an unquiet spirit. If he ever sleeps he is filled with remorse when he awakes. He is the curse of postillions, and the terror of travellers.

With a due sense of the absurdity of our position, we set out from London in the ominous month of April, and moreover on a Friday, to proceed to Geneva by the way of Paris—predetermining that till within sight of Lake Lemman, where our task was to commence, we should neither hear nor see any thing but what we chose. This, however, is as laborious a way of travelling as the other. It does not do away with either the idea or reality of constraint, but only changes its direction. The best of it is that it cannot last very long. The very jolting of a journey opens the imagination, and sets the moral faculties craving as well as those of the body. We observe as voraciously as we eat and drink; and it must be an unhealthy mind which does not wax plumper and stronger for the meal.

If, however, it were not a folly and a falsehood to say that there is any part of this goodly earth barren of the things which enter, like wholesome food, into the soul of the wayfarer, Calais and Paris might surely be named as the Dan and Beersheba. The former has been called a great inn, where travellers merely stop for a moment for refreshment; and in some sense it is so. It is the inn, however,

be it remembered; from which the vehicles start, and to which they return. On one hand all is confusion, and anxiety, and selfish hurry, and suspicion; and, on the other, weariness, repentance, and disgust. The host and waiters, knowing that they will not have time to get sufficiently well acquainted with their guests to feel ashamed of cheating, cheat without remorse; the shopkeepers and townsmen are in like manner eager to have a pluck at the passing pigeon; and thus the communication between the strangers and natives is full of strife and wrangling, or silent bitterness. The traveller should by all means avoid what are called the cheap *English* inns at Calais, and go direct to one of the dear ones. The expense of both will be pretty nearly alike; but at the former he will be ill lodged and ill fed, and have the additional mortification of being fleeced by the understrappers instead of the principals. Before going any where, however, let him personally, or by his own servants, take measures for the prosecution of his journey as early as circumstances will allow.

From Calais to Paris, with the exception of the approach to the royal fortress of Montreuil, and one or two other places, the road is as dreary and uninteresting as can well be imagined. This is particularly the case in early spring—a season in which Englishmen, if they have any love for the beautiful in inanimate nature, should stay at home. In a flat country, like the one over which we are now rumbling in the diligence, the vast tracks of ploughed ground,