

Correspondence.

BERNE, Switzerland,
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Editor Deseret News:

Dear Sir—It was with a feeling of pleasure, mixed with a certain nervousness, that I first caught a glimpse of France, the land I have loved so much, and for which I still entertain much interest, and, I confess it, a certain incurable partiality. When I left it, about five years ago, it had reached the highest degree of prosperity, influence and fame, and all travelers and writers, blind or indulgent, vied with one another in singing its praise, mentioning with admiration some of its institutions, the beauty of its cities, the wonderful development of its wealth, the artistic skill and taste displayed by its manufactures, and proclaiming it the undisputed leading nation in modern art and fashion, as well as the most influential one on the continent of Europe. The fearful contest of 1870-1, with an unprecedented series of disasters and humiliating defeats, the siege of Paris, and the horrors of the Commune, followed by the cruel, relentless reprisals of the soldiery, have brought that once proud nation to the very verge of ruin, and public opinion, too often hasty, unjust, and proverbially inconsistent, has all at once turned against it, and, forgetting the past, takes a curious delight in condemning without mercy, and even in insulting, the cruelly punished people of France.

These were the thoughts that filled my mind, as our vessel neared the romantic coast of Normandy. The passage from Southampton had been an unusually fine one. I may say, that, although I have traveled very frequently around the French and English coasts, I had never seen before, and never thought it possible, to see the channel so perfectly calm. The surface of the sea was literally as smooth as glass, and one might have supposed our vessel was motionless, but for the apparent gradual approach of the city of Havre, which seemed slowly to rise out of the still waters.

Though only a few miles lie between England and France, and the intercourse between the two nations has been very great for many years, yet how great the difference between them. In England, the commercial and manufacturing element predominates, and in spite of the pretty tidiness of its fields and hedges, in spite of its mammoth cities, of a certain number of fine public buildings, and some intelligent, noble efforts in the domain of the fine arts, the impression a visitor takes away with him is that it is, above all, the land of trade, the land of money. In France, although commerce is not neglected, nature and art have, for centuries, combined their efforts to give it peculiar attractions, which often induce travelers to overlook or ignore its more solid resources—the manner in which the cities are laid out, the character of the architecture, the strange, quaint costumes in certain localities, the elegance of the women, the varied and marked expression of the countenances, the picturesque grouping of the most opposed elements, all tend to surprise, bewilder and please one who comes from England or America, two nations so much alike in many respects, in spite of the breach made between them by time, circumstances and interest.

How vexing it is to one coming from the free land of America, to have one's admiration and pleasure at landing suddenly checked by the appearance of a formidable posse of mustachioed gendarmes, who very politely, but nevertheless firmly, request you to exhibit your passports, at the same time eyeing you steadfastly, and inquisitorially, as though they entertained well founded reasons for suspecting you full of revolutionary or petroline projects. This antiquated custom of requiring passports to enter France had been dead for several years, but the government of the Republic has thought it wise to restore a barbarous, useless, annoying usage. The Doctor and I, after the usual amount of nervous fumbling and searching, finally and fearlessly handed over our valuable slips of foolscap, and we were respectfully, and with a courteous bow, allowed to set foot upon the soil of the *Republique Francaise*.

We were famished by exposure to the healthy exhilarating sea air, our first duty was, naturally, to try the skill of a native cook, and after having convinced ourselves that the reputation of the French culinary artists is not a usurped one, we took a view of the city.

Havre has a population of about 100,000 inhabitants, and is in importance the third sea port of France. It did not suffer in consequence of the war, as the Prussians, after a vain attempt, gave up the idea of besieging it; the city owes that good fortune

to its maritime position and the impossibility of the Germans investing it, having no fleet to combine with their land forces. The Doctor was surprised to see the great activity and animation in the harbor, and we watched with delight the numerous vessels from all nations maneuvering carefully and surely, as they entered or cleared the narrow roadstead; but we painfully noticed that, as in Liverpool and London, American vessels were not numerous, while ships sailing under the Union Jack were in the majority.

The Havre de Grace, as it used to be called in ancient days, is very beautiful to look at from the sea, its suburbs extending up the rising cliff at the back of the city. Like all French cities, it has its fine buildings, its legendary or historical ruins, its public edifices, squares and gardens. Its Hotel de Ville (City Hall) is a large magnificent edifice, closely resembling the Tuileries of Paris, destroyed by the Commune; the spacious gardens around it are very tastily arranged, and decorated with handsome fountains, all the houses about the square are very fine and harmonize with the peculiar style of the main building. I must not omit to mention the beautiful square in front of the exchange and Theatre buildings; it is planted with old trees, under which the gold exchange or commercial brokers meet to transact business; What a busy place it is! Its chief attraction however is the principal dock, with countless vessels advancing to the very centre of the square, as it were, so that the shipping, the omnibusses and hacks, the crowd of men of business, of sailors, porters and assistants, seem all confusion, and present a lively scene to those who lounge under the trees, from which the whole is seen at a glance.

The fortifications which protect Havre, by sea and land, are said to be formidable.

Our visit to France was an ill timed one, mid winter, the cold being unusually excessive, and the barometer lower than it had been for more than half a century, so Havre did not look its best; yet we enjoyed our short stay.

A few hours ride brought us to Rouen. In passing through the country, we were able to admire, in spite of the white sheet of snow covering everything, the lovely scenery of Normandy, with its gracefully undulated lands, carefully tilled, and frequently intersected with pretty, busy little streams, giving life to hundreds of factories. Nothing indicated that the enemy had only very recently evacuated that prosperous province, until we neared Rouen, the capital, when the frequent cautious relaxing of speed of the cars, reminded us that the bridges, which had been destroyed by the war, although hastily reconstructed, were considered unsafe.

We reached the Hotel de l'Europe by night, a comfortable house I had visited some ten or twelve years ago, a circumstance which the old waiter reminded me of. A curiosity, that waiter—he has been in that same Hotel de l'Europe for upwards of thirty-five years, never forgets a face he has once seen, and he delights to be spoken to, in order that he may have an opportunity to display his profound knowledge of mankind; he has seen many a great man in his lifetime, and conversed with many too, so that he has an inexhaustible fund of curious authentic anecdotes. He is of far more importance in the house than the proprietor, who would tremble to take any decision without first consulting his susceptible, trustworthy, but cross-grained old servant.

Before retiring to our *chambre*, I thought the doctor would like to take a look at old Rouen by gas light, so after having assured ourselves that beds were in readiness for us, we ventured into the curious old-fashioned streets.

It is an acknowledged fact that no country is so rich as France in gothic architecture. Nothing can surpass the stately magnificence of its cathedrals, and although the modern churches of Italy exceed in beauty and richness those of the same date in other lands, that country has not one fine gothic edifice. To see gothic architecture in its perfection one must go to France, where may be seen hundreds of cathedrals and churches, celebrated for their style and elegance of proportion. The ancient capital of Normandy possesses some of the finest specimens of gothic architecture, and it is replete with picturesque attractions. Some relic of antiquity here meets the eye at every turn, either in the form of a pointed arch, the mutilated statue of some saint or a gothic fountain. The door posts, window frames, beam ends and woodwork of almost every building, are chequered, intersected and ornamented with rich carvings, grotesque heads, flowers and other fanciful devices, while the mouldering magnificence of the cathedral, churches, *palais de justice* (court house), and other edifices, carries the traveler in imagination half a dozen centuries backward.

After following a narrow, crooked street we found ourselves at once in front of the splendid cathedral. We wandered through countless narrow, tortuous streets, into the glaring brilliancy of the modern part of the city, with streets built, as in Paris, straight as arrows, even sidewalks, lined with fine white carved stone houses and elegant stores.

On the following day we proceeded to the more detailed examination of the architectural treasures of Rouen. In this city of about 150,000 souls, there are no less than a dozen magnificent churches of

the finest gothic, among which with the Cathedral, must be particularly noticed St. Owen, a perfect model, complete in all its parts, with not a fault that the most fastidious taste can discern; St. Maclou, with its famous and magnificent portal, the stone tracery and carvings of which resemble the finest lace; the cathedral-like church of St. Vincent, and the parish church of St. George Bocheville, one of the finest specimens of Norman gothic in Europe; the Palace of Justice is another jewel of elegance which claims the attention of travelers. I say nothing of the modern buildings, although very fine, of the Hotel de Ville, of the Zoological Gardens, of the enchanting, almost incomparable suburbs, or of the manufactures of Rouen, but I conclude my notes upon the interesting place, by stating that we ended our peregrinations through its curiosities, by visiting, in the very heart of the old town, the old market, call *Place de la Pucelle*, where the great heroine of France, Jeanne d'Arc, was burned to death by the English, then in possession of Rouen. Her statue is in the centre of the market place, on the very spot where she expired, praying for the salvation of her beloved France. We contemplated the mixed expression of heroic courage and resignation of the unfortunate maid of Orleans, and recalled to mind what she had done for her country and for her ungrateful king, who, with unpardonable negligence, to say the least, without an effort to save her, permitted the English to stain their flag with her generous, innocent blood.

From Rouen to Paris, the train carried us through the country which bore the unmistakable marks of the German invasion; ruined houses, burned or exploded bridges, woods destroyed, and a thousand other ugly scars, made by hideous war, met our glance on every side, as we approached the unfortunate city. It was shortly after dark that we entered Paris by the Western railroad, the weather was very cold, and we found the streets covered with snow. As severe winters are really an exception in Paris, the inhabitants, with unaccountable *insouciance*, we should say carelessness, are never provided against them; the consequence is more suffering than is found in the coldest countries, where the nations take precautions suggested by experience. The omnibusses had all ceased to run, and the thousands of hackney carriages or cabs labored uselessly with their heavy wheels through the deep snow. Doctor Park, with American practical views, at once wondered why the Parisians did not in such cases use sleighs. Sleighs! Why such outlandish things have perhaps been read of, but certainly have never been seen in Paris, and were an enterprising Frenchman to undertake to make one, the chances are the snow would thaw before he could use it, and years would pass away without a chance to see it run successfully. Each country has its customs, created by its peculiar climate, its geographical and geological conditions, and in traveling one must expect to see many strange things, which a little thought and observation will soon explain.

It is a pretty general opinion, that in consequence of the siege and civil war, Paris must be very much altered, and can no longer boast of its public buildings, or lay claim to be the most beautiful city of Europe. In all parts of Europe now, pictures of the ruins of Paris are loudly advertised and sold, and the very first thing a traveler does on reaching the French capital, is to ask for the ruins.

I must here assert that I found Paris very little changed outwardly, and people are, in my opinion, much mistaken, who imagine, because half a dozen or so of palaces, two or three fine theatres, and some houses have been burned, that the great metropolis has lost all its attractions. It has yet more public buildings, boulevards, fine streets, handsome gardens, rich museums and libraries, wealthy churches and public squares than any of its rivals in Europe.

Everybody knows that the Germans were not able to injure Paris with their artillery, although their heavy ordnance fired upon the Latin quarter, where the public buildings, colleges, libraries and museums are the most numerous. Paris was reduced by famine, and with the exception of a few slight mutilations here and there on some of its edifices, it surrendered undamaged. The Communists, however, or rather hordes of miscreants and villains, who falsely claimed a political title they had no right to, endeavored to destroy every vestige of what was for centuries the pride of the Parisians, and with the aid of petroleum, abundantly poured upon the walls, hangings and furniture of the doomed edifice, they hoped to secure the realization of their crazy dream, of destroying Paris, and perishing under its ruins and ashes.

It will remain an object of wonder that their efforts were vain. Though set on fire at many points simultaneously, the flames being fed by streams of coal oil, with which even the water tanks were filled, Paris did not perish, and only those buildings were consumed in which the conflagration commenced. It owes its preservation not to the fire department, which in Paris is unprovided with the marvelous steam fire engines so common in America, not to the efforts of the people, who thought of their own safety, but to the remarkable massiveness of its buildings, the thick stone walls of which served as barriers to check the rapid progress of the flames, Chicago

perished in spite of its so-called fire proof stone or marble houses, because the excessive heat generated by the burning of whole blocks of frame buildings, covering hundreds of acres, easily overcame the frail resistance offered by their showy but thin, unsubstantial edifices, which cracked, warped and tumbled down, even before the flames had penetrated to the interior, to say nothing of the wooden roofs, which of course helped to propagate the flames, and to which, in a great measure, Chicago owes the loss of its most beautiful quarter.

But to return to Paris, I say that outwardly, it is not changed. The Tuileries, the Hotel de Ville, the Palais de Justice, the Conseil d'Etat, and other magnificent palaces are in ruins, it is but too true. But what of that? The Louvre, with its splendid courts, pavilions, colonnades, galleries, pictures, statues, vases, gardens and fountains, is intact; the Luxembourg with its gorgeously decorated *salons*, its extensive, noble park and fine water works, is what it was before the war; the courts, colonnades, and principal square of the *Palais Royal*, are still preserved for the enjoyment of the Parisians, who love to lounge in this favorite place of resort; the Pantheon stands in all its severe but grand magnificence; the Palace of the Fine Arts is ever the artistic gem critics have pronounced it; the venerable old cathedral of Notre Dame, immortalized by Victor Hugo's poem, frowns down upon the puny, wretched madmen, who vainly attempted to ruin it; that Corinthian marvel, the Madeleine church has not a scar upon its fine, elegant, though immense pillars; that unrivaled public square, *Place de la Concorde*, with its fountains of unsurpassed beauty, its obelisk, Champs Elysees, Triumphant arch, Tuileries gardens, Legislative Palace, Admiralty office, and club houses, is yet and will long remain one of Paris' finest gems; the Fountain of St. Michael, victoriously crushing under foot the handsome but terror-stricken image of Satan, the Fountain of Moliere, of the Innocents, and a hundred others, continue to play as formerly, to the admiration of the public; the museums of art and science still hold safe their invaluable treasures; the National Library has saved every one of its three millions of volumes, and its thousands of precious manuscripts; the public gardens are still trimmed, cultivated, and profusely planted with flowers, shrubs or trees, the Boulevards are still the most perfect streets in Europe, their shops or stores being ever the most tastily arranged and most richly supplied; its cafes, concerts, theatres, will yet be the prosperous, lively, wonderful places they were in former days. Again I say, in its outward features, Paris is, as ever, the beautiful capital of elegance, of taste, and art, and its ruins are but another object of attraction.

It has been decreed by the National Assembly that all the edifices destroyed shall be rebuilt at public expense.

Of the suburbs of Paris, I dare not speak. They were once, is all I can say of them. The artillery and engineers of both German and French have destroyed everything. Those charming villages, extensive forests of old trees, palaces of ancient kings or princes, the elegant villas which by thousands studded the exquisite shores of the meandering Seine, the Bois de Boulogne, the Bois de Vincennes, and other famed gardens, parks and promenades, which girted the city, belong now to the history of the past, and time alone can restore them to their former beauty, for the works of nature, by far the most lovely, are not produced with the feverish rapidity of execution which is the characteristic of the 19th century.

It is in its moral aspect that Paris has momentarily ceased to be what it was. It is no longer that gay, smiling, joyful, enchanting place of former years. How great the contrast in this respect, between the Paris of 1867 and the Paris of 1872. Where are now the hundreds of thousands of wealthy, pleasure seeking foreigners, who met in its ball rooms, theatres, clubs and drives? Where the brilliant equipages, the endless stream of fashionable, rich, fascinating women and cavaliers who enlivened the avenues of the Champs Elysees? Where those crowned visitors, who, like King William of Prussia, for instance, fraternally rode side by side with his friend, the Emperor? (bitter irony! mocking hypocrisy of unprincipled autocrats!) Where that legion of ambassadors and court officials, glittering with gold lace and decorations? Where the flattering, elegant, refined, but corrupt courtiers, who crowded the resplendent halls of the Tuileries or Hotel de Ville? Where the fanciful, tasty, triumphal arches and festoons of flags and banners of all nations floating in the breeze from every window filled with eyes, eager to see the distinguished guests of the great Exposition of 1867? Where the innumerable artists, representing every branch of the Fine Arts in their beautiful capital? Where the smile which illumined every countenance? Where that sentiment of pride, which filled the breast of every Parisian at the tribute paid by the world to the taste, skill and power of Frenchmen? All that splendor, all that joy, all that glory is now past and gone.

The Parisians have now a capital without a capitol; the palaces saved from ruin are deserted; the prodigal pleasure-seekers have disappeared; the princes of Europe feign contempt; the courtiers, officials and sycophants, fearing the people they have helped to delude and ruin, have fled; the