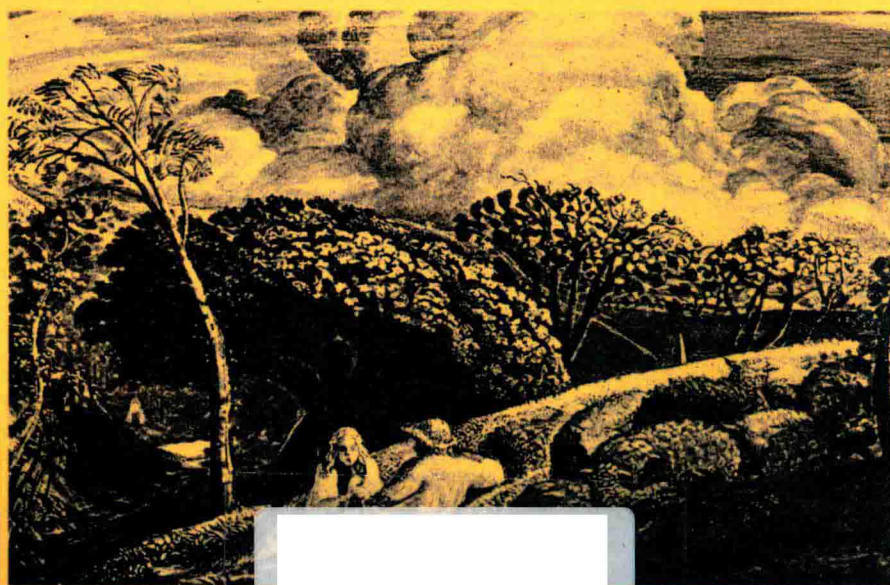


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A SPINSTER'S
TOUR IN FRANCE,
THE STATES OF
GENOA, &C.,
DURING THE
YEAR 1827

ELIZABETH STRUTT



CAMBRIDGE

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A Spinster's Tour in France, the States of Genoa, &C., During the Year 1827

Sensible, sensitive and observant, the romantic novelist Elizabeth Strutt (1783–c.1863) was ideally suited to the task she set herself when, in 1827, she wrote *A Spinster's Tour in France* (1828). Although she herself was married (to the artist Jacob George Strutt), her experiences convinced her of the urgent need for a guidebook designed specifically for the unaccompanied 'lady traveller'. Taking readers through every stage of a long and eventful journey from Southampton to Recco (near Genoa), Strutt combines poetic descriptions of picturesque landscapes with practical advice on lodgings, transport and social interaction. Of particular concern, claims Strutt, is the vulnerability of unchaperoned young women at the hands of 'zealous Roman Catholics' who might seek to convert a 'timid child' to their faith. Strutt's book provides an unusual perspective both on European customs and society, and on the mindset of the British travellers who witnessed them. For more information on this author, see http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=struel

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A
SPINSTER'S TOUR

IN
FRANCE,
THE STATES OF GENOA, &c.

DURING THE YEAR

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1828.

LONDON :
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

ADVERTISEMENT.

DURING a residence abroad for some months last year, the Writer of the following pages was accustomed to note down whatever pleased or interested her; and on her return she arranged these notes as well as peculiar circumstances, that prevented her instituting any enquiries which might have assisted her, would allow. These she put into the hands of valued friends, whose judgment could not but be authority to her; yet it was with no small consternation that she found herself engaged by, she fears, those much too partial friends, to commit this little Tour to the public. Entirely diffident of its possessing any other merit than that of faithful

description, she looks to no higher gratification than its encouraging other "Spinster Ladies" to an enterprise which terminated successfully to herself, and its assisting them to obtain substantial pleasure — that pleasure which is derived from the contemplation of nature's most beautiful scenes, and the conviction that kindness and hospitality are bounded neither by sea nor mountain. The "Lady Traveller," therefore, may begin her peregrinations, certain at their close of being able to reverse the "dicton" of Gresset, and to affirm,

Que l'on gagne *beaucoup* à courir le monde.

June 24. 1828.

ERRATUM.

Page 320. l. 20. for *til*, read *till*.

The reference to the Appendix at page 312. was made by mistake.

LONDON:

Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

A

SPINSTER'S TOUR.

Southampton, Friday, June 22. 1827.

WENT on board the Havre packet, St. David, a fine new vessel, of 76 or 8 horse power, built at Milford. An English lady and her maid, likewise English, accompanied me. The weather had been threatening throughout the morning, but it cleared after mid-day; and the sky, now six o'clock of the afternoon, wore a good aspect. We had chosen our berths in one of the deck cabins, which was very neatly fitted up, sofas being substituted for cots, and plenty of air admitted from large windows, which, with a door, formed the only partition from the deck. We found through the night that the smell of the oil, the working of the ship, and the noise

B

of the machinery, were very sensibly perceived here ; but we had the whole cabin to ourselves, and that was the chief consideration. The passengers were numerous but respectable, and we ran down to Portsmouth very contentedly. We stood off at the mouth of the harbour about twenty minutes for the remainder of our cargo, during which time tea was served in the cabin, after which we again took our stations on deck, and immediately our wheels dashed through the water in magnificent style. The evening was clear, but more like April than June. The beauty of the Isle of Wight coast, from the green heights of Ryde studded with villas, to the bold snowy cliffs of Culver, and the dark masses of black gang, are too well known to need remark. Ere my favourite island lessened in the distance, the roll of open sea had laid me prostrate on my sofa, whence I did not rise till near seven the next morning. Then, making a desperate effort, and assisted on the deck by the attentive Captain Weeks, I soon began to revive in the fresh morning air. Glorious was the expanse of waters under a cloudless sky, and cheering the numerous sails, from the lofty Indiaman to the fisher's skiff. The outline of

French coast now rose to view, and soon became clearly distinguishable. Its rocks and glens, its watch-towers and fortifications; villages perched on the hills, or snugly reposing in wooded valleys; and the opposite shore, which bounds the harbour on the Honfleur side, showing distant but equally pretty scenery. The works and buildings round the inner harbour have been constantly improving since the peace, and a fine stone bulwark enclosed our vessel, which had spread out its awning and hoisted its flags on nearing the port. We landed very commodiously on the pier, about nine o'clock, then went to the bureaux, where the operation of noting down each person's lineaments, as if they were conscripts, of rummaging their trunks till it requires the time of packing to smooth them, and of examining their dress piece-meal, are performed with a deliberate coolness quite provoking to the honest traveller. Certainly these scrutinies are more strict than at my last visit to France; and as it must be confessed that they do not seem to proceed from a spirit of vexation, it is to be feared that the nefarious spirit of smuggling is still active in English as well as French.

We had been instructed to take up our quarters at l'hôtel du Bienvenu, whence the Rouen diligences depart at five in the morning; and we had no reason to be dissatisfied with our accommodations. Good tea and a fresh egg were reviving after the voyage; and I soon returned to the business of the bureaux, which proceeded so slowly that I had ample leisure to explore the town. Havre has been much increased and beautified during the last ten years; its port, docks, and quays are commodious and handsome; the warehouses solidly built of stone; the theatre, restaurateurs' houses and cafés well situated and elegant; the great merchants' houses spacious; and every quarter much cleaner and more disencumbered. The new convent is a large building, in an airy situation, with a chapel and good garden: its windows are well placed for the recluses, as they not only give them free air, but command a view of Ingouville and the côte, from the north cells, while those of the south look to the garden. English children are received here; but I should imagine there must always be great risk to the parent who intrusts her young daughter to the inmates of Roman catholic religious houses. The children are

obliged to attend the services of the chapel, and it is very seldom that they are encouraged in free communication even with their own nearest relatives. If English ladies place themselves in a convent in France, I should judge it, in many respects, more eligible than taking their chance of boarding in a house or private family, because the estimation of nunneries is at present great in this country ; especially some at Paris, where French ladies often fix their abode, and thus give to a foreigner the further advantage of good society. But this is a totally different case : the one supposes a woman, whose principles and opinions are fixed, and who can, therefore, hold fast the profession of her own faith without wavering ; the other refers to a young, and, perhaps, timid child, who may easily be worked on by the different modes and instruments employed by the zealous Roman catholics to gain proselytes.

The air of Havre is subject to great and sudden variations. L'Abbé Dicquemare, a native of the town, and much celebrated for his experiments, says, " On peut assurer qu'au Havre le thermomètre fait peut-être plus de chemin dans quelques heures qu'à Paris en quelques

mois ; en sorte que la fourrure doit toujours être à côté du volant de taffetas. L'air, quoique dur et vif, est cependant frais, souvent renouvelé, et conséquemment fort sain. En un mot, pour le comparer à celui de Paris, je sentoie dans cette grande ville que la moitié de mon poumon ne me servait pas."

The streets are amusing ; every variety of France and its colonies is found ranged to advantage in the shops, and the people seem privileged always to hold market, which attracts the countrywomen, dressed in their neat and singular costumes. The laitages, for which Normandy is celebrated, the Pont d'Evreux cheeses, the flat Gruyère, and fine golden butter abound, and every variety of bread is excellent and cheap. A broad walk, well shaded by fine trees, is allotted to the flower-women, who range their beautiful plants with the effect of a conservatory ; while a number of droll French boys, playing as many tricks as the monkeys they offer for sale, guard the cages of every species of parrot and parroquet the groves of the Maranon produce.

Havre has a rich library, which the literati of the province consider inferior only to that of

Rouen: it contains about 15,000 volumes, amongst which are many valuable manuscripts of the middle ages. The books are ranged in three spacious rooms on the ground floor of "Le Palais de Justice." Bernardin de Saint Pierre was born at Havre; and his house, Rue de la Corderie, quartier Notre Dame, is still remembered.

The town itself might not be an agreeable residence, though many parts of it are now open and airy; but the immediate villages, and the whole range of the côte, would be eligible for those who do not wish to be far from England. Steam-packets, which bring letters, newspapers, &c., arrive twice a week; sailing vessels from all parts of the world every day, almost every hour; and the communication with Paris, Caen, &c. is regular and frequent. There is an English chapel, and a consul, who has been much respected during a long residence. The prices of every thing are much the same as at Paris, and the exchange of monies is always at the same rate. Few lodgings are let furnished; but there is a boarding-house at Ingouville, kept by respectable Scotch people, which is furnished with English comforts, has a good garden, and is at a