

Punch magazine

The Opening Ceremony of the « Lowercase Exhibition »

Today, the 1st of May 1851, is the opening ceremony of Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations. Sorry for you, rich and snobbish wives of French engineers, but you will not have your “lily of the valley” today. Your husbands will be busy with their big machines and extravagant inventions! But you have much to do in your country houses anyway. Oh, no, nevermind, you have domestics to take care of it. Well, why not showcase your own selves at the Great Exhibition too? Yes, the French celebrate the value of Work today. Indeed, some people actually work to make a living; what a sad life. Aristocrats smoke to keep themselves busy, or they come up with events like this one to entertain themselves. While our paupers suffer starvation and thirst, the wealthy are busy taking care of their appearance and showing off their great looks to the world. While our paupers suffer exhaustion in workhouses, they strive to create futile inventions.

But let's focus on this Great ceremony. Here, at the Great Exhibition, the red carpet was unwind for a catwalk of the snooty, the uptight and the prim. They come and enter as if they were stars. But there is more to admire than themselves. There a lot of machines made of gold, silver, bronze, steel and other shiny metal. Inventions that are sparkly and magnificent. But what's inside... what do they do...? That remains to be seen. This reflects very well upon the society of today, doesn't it? The most beautiful thing which was made of gold, is not an invention, but only a fountain...

We must admit that we saw at least one useful invention. We think that it could change our lives - oh no sorry paupers, not your lives, but the ones of the people who have the means to pay, of course. This amazing object is a bicycle. It has two wheels of different sizes, handlebars, and a sort of saddle on which one can sit. The engineer has confirmed that this new invention would allow a much faster transportation than walking. But, I am not too sure of the look it could give rich people and if it wouldn't risk damaging their “oh so chic” and fashionable garments...

As goes the saying, don't judge a book by its cover.