

# WILLIAM BECKFORD

ITALY; WITH SKETCHES  
OF SPAIN AND  
PORTUGAL

**William Beckford**  
**Italy; with sketches of**  
**Spain and Portugal**

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*Italy; with sketches of Spain and Portugal:*

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# **William Beckford**

## **Italy; with sketches of Spain and Portugal**

### **ADVERTISEMENT**

SOME justly admired Authors having condescended to glean a few stray thoughts from these Letters, which have remained dormant a great many years; I have been at length emboldened to lay them before the public. Perhaps, as they happen to contain passages which persons of acknowledged taste have honoured with their notice, they may possibly be less unworthy of emerging from the shade into daylight than I imagined.

Most of these Letters were written in the bloom and heyday of youthful spirits and youthful confidence, at a period when the old order of things existed with all its picturesque pomps and absurdities; when Venice enjoyed her piombi and submarine dungeons; France her bastile; the Peninsula her holy Inquisition. To look back upon what is beginning to appear almost a fabulous era in the eyes of the modern children of light, is not unamusing or uninteresting; for, still better to appreciate the present, we should be led not unfrequently to recall the intellectual muzziness of the past.

But happily these pages are not crowded with such records: they are chiefly filled with delineations of landscape and those effects of natural phenomena which it is not in the power of revolutions or constitutions to alter or destroy.

A few moments snatched from the contemplation of political crimes, bloodshed, and treachery, are a few moments gained to all lovers of innocent illusion. Nor need the statesman or the scholar despise the occasional relaxation of light reading. When Jupiter and the great deities are represented by Homer as retiring from scenes of havoc and carnage to visit the blameless and quiet Ethiopians, who were the farthest removed of all nations, the Lord knows whither, at the very extremities of the ocean, – would they have given ear to manifestos or protocols? No, they would much rather have listened to the Tales of Mother Goose.

London, June 12th, 1834.

# THE LOW COUNTRIES AND GERMANY

## LETTER I

Passage to Ostend. – The Capuchin church. – Ghent. – Quiet and Content, the presiding deities of Flanders. – Antwerp. – The Place de Meir. – Silence and solitude of the town, contrasted with the tumult and uproar of London.

*Ostend, 21st June, 1780.*

WE had a rough passage, and arrived at this imperial haven in a piteous condition. Notwithstanding its renown and importance, it is but a scurvy place – preposterous Flemish roofs disgust your eyes when cast upwards – swaggering Dutch skippers and mongrel smugglers are the principal objects they meet with below; and then the whole atmosphere is impregnated with the fumes of tobacco, burnt peat, and garlick. I should esteem myself in luck, were the nuisances of this seaport confined only to two senses; but, alas! the apartment above my head proves a squalling brattery, and the sounds which proceed from it are so loud and frequent, that a person might think himself in limbo, without any extravagance.

In hope of some relief, I went to the Capuchin church, a

large solemn building, in search of silence and solitude; but here again was I disappointed. There happened to be an exposition of the holy wafer with ten thousand candles; and whilst half-a-dozen squeaking fiddles fugued and flourished away in the galleries, and as many paralytic monks gabbled before the altars, a whole posse of devotees, in long white hoods and flannels, were sweltering on either side.

This papal piety, in warm weather, was no very fragrant circumstance; so I sought the open air again as fast as I was able. The serenity of the evening – for the black huddle of clouds, which the late storms had accumulated, were all melted away – tempted me to the ramparts. There, at least, thought I to myself, I may range undisturbed, and talk with my old friends the breezes, and address my discourse to the waves, and be as romantic and fanciful as I please; but I had scarcely begun a poetic apostrophe, before out flaunted a whole rank of officers, with ladies and abbés and puppy dogs, singing, and flirting, and making such a hubbub, that I had not one peaceful moment to observe the bright tints of the western horizon, or enjoy those ideas of classic antiquity which a calm sunset never fails to bring before my imagination.

Finding, therefore, no quiet abroad, I returned to my inn, and should have gone immediately to bed, in hopes of relapsing into the bosom of dreams and delusions; but the limbo I mentioned before grew so very outrageous, that I was obliged to postpone my rest till sugarplums and nursery eloquence had hushed it to

repose. At length peace was restored, and about eleven o'clock I fell into a slumber. My dreams anticipated the classic scenes of Italy, the proposed term of my excursion.

Next morning I arose refreshed with these agreeable impressions. No ideas, but such as Nemi and Albano suggested, haunted me whilst travelling to Ghent. I neither heard the coarse dialect which was talking around me, nor noticed the formal avenues and marshy country which we passed. When we stopped to change horses, I closed my eyes upon the dull prospect, and was transported immediately to those Grecian solitudes which Theocritus so enchantingly describes.

To one so far gone in the poetic lore of ancient days, Ghent is not the most likely place to recall his attention; and I know nothing more about it, than that it is a large, ill-paved, plethoric, pompous-looking city, with a decent proportion of convents and chapels, monuments, brazen gates, and gilded marbles. In the great church were several pictures by Rubens, so striking, so masterly, as to hold me broad awake; though, I must own, there are moments when I could contentedly fall asleep in a Flemish cathedral, for the mere chance of beholding in vision the temple of Olympian Jupiter.

But I think I hear, at this moment, some grave and respectable personage chiding my enthusiasm – “Really, sir, you had better stay at home, and dream in your great chair, than give yourself the trouble of going post through Europe, in search of places where to fall asleep. If Flanders and Holland are to be dreamed

over at this rate, you had better take ship at once, and doze all the way to Italy." Upon my word, I should not have much objection to that scheme; and, if some enchanter would but transport me in an instant to the summit of Ætna, anybody might slop through the Low Countries that pleased.

Being, however, so far advanced, there is no retracting; and I am resolved to journey along with Quiet and Content for my companions. These two comfortable deities have, I believe, taken Flanders under their especial protection; every step one advances discovering some new proof of their influence. The neatness of the houses, and the universal cleanliness of the villages, show plainly that their inhabitants live in ease and good humour. All is still and peaceful in these fertile lowlands: the eye meets nothing but round unmeaning faces at every door, and harmless stupidity smiling at every window. The beasts, as placid as their masters, graze on without any disturbance; and I scarcely recollect to have heard one grunting swine or snarling mastiff during my whole progress. Before every village is a wealthy dunghill, not at all offensive, because but seldom disturbed; and there sows and porkers bask in the sun, and wallow at their ease, till the hour of death and bacon arrives.

But it is high time to lead you towards Antwerp. More rich pastures, more ample fields of grain, more flourishing willows! A boundless plain lies before this city, dotted with cows, and speckled with flowers; a level whence its spires and quaint roofs are seen to advantage! The pale colours of the sky, and a few

gleams of watery sunshine, gave a true Flemish cast to the scenery, and everything appeared so consistent, that I had not a shadow of pretence to think myself asleep.

After crossing a broad expanse of river, edged on one side by beds of osiers beautifully green, and on the other by gates and turrets preposterously ugly, we came through several streets of lofty houses to our inn. Its situation in the "Place de Meir," a vast open space surrounded by buildings above buildings, and roof above roof, has something striking and singular. A tall gilt crucifix of bronze, sculptured by Cortels of Malines,<sup>1</sup> adds to its splendour; and the tops of some tufted trees, seen above a line of magnificent hotels, add greatly to the effect of the perspective.

It was almost dusk when we arrived; and as I am very partial to new objects discovered by this dubious, visionary light, I went immediately a rambling. Not a sound disturbed my meditations: there were no groups of squabbling children or talkative old women. The whole town seemed retired into their inmost chambers; and I kept winding and turning about, from street to street, and from alley to alley, without meeting a single inhabitant. Now and then, indeed, one or two women in long cloaks and mantles glided by at a distance; but their dress was so shroud-like, and their whole appearance so ghostly, that I should have been afraid to accost them. As night approached, the ranges

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<sup>1</sup> This crucifix was made of the bronze which had formed the statue of the terrible Duke of Alva, swept in its first form from the citadel where it was proudly stationed, in a moment of popular fury.

of buildings grew more and more dim, and the silence which reigned amongst them more awful. The canals, which in some places intersect the streets, were likewise in perfect solitude, and there was just light sufficient for me to observe on the still waters the reflection of the structures above them. Except two or three tapers glimmering through the casements, no one circumstance indicated human existence. I might, without being thought very romantic, have imagined myself in the city of petrified people which Arabian fabulists are so fond of describing. Were any one to ask my advice upon the subject of retirement, I should tell him – By all means repair to Antwerp. No village amongst the Alps, or hermitage upon Mount Lebanon, is less disturbed: you may pass your days in this great city without being the least conscious of its sixty thousand inhabitants, unless you visit the churches. There, indeed, are to be heard a few devout whispers, and sometimes, to be sure, the bells make a little chiming; but, walk about, as I do, in the twilights of midsummer, and be assured your ears will be free from all molestation.

You can have no idea how many strange, amusing fancies played around me whilst I wandered along; nor how delighted I was with the novelty of my situation. But a few days ago, thought I within myself, I was in the midst of all the tumult and uproar of London: now, as if by some magic influence, I am transported to a city equally remarkable indeed for streets and edifices, but whose inhabitants seem cast into a profound repose. What a pity that we cannot borrow some small share of this soporific

disposition! It would temper that restless spirit which throws us sometimes into such dreadful convulsions. However, let us not be too precipitate in desiring so dead a calm; the time may arrive when, like Antwerp, we may sink into the arms of forgetfulness; when a fine verdure may carpet our Exchange, and passengers traverse the Strand without any danger of being smothered in crowds or crushed by carriages.

Reflecting, in this manner, upon the silence of the place, contrasted with the important bustle which formerly rendered it so famous, I insensibly drew near to the cathedral, and found myself, before I was aware, under its stupendous tower. It is difficult to conceive an object more solemn or more imposing than this edifice at the hour I first beheld it. Dark shades hindered my examining the lower galleries; their elaborate carved work was invisible; nothing but huge masses of building met my sight, and the tower, shooting up four hundred and sixty-six feet in the air, received an additional importance from the gloom which prevailed below. The sky being perfectly clear, several stars twinkled through the mosaic of the pinnacles, and increased the charm of their effect.

Whilst I was indulging my reveries, a ponderous bell struck ten, and such a peal of chimes succeeded, as shook the whole edifice, notwithstanding its bulk, and drove me away in a hurry. I need not say, no mob obstructed my passage. I ran through a succession of streets, free and unmolested, as if I had been skimming along over the downs of Wiltshire. The voices of my

servants conversing before the hotel were the only sounds which the great "Place de Meir" echoed.

This characteristic stillness was the more pleasing, when I looked back upon those scenes of outcry and horror which filled London but a week or two ago, when danger was not confined to night only, and to the environs of the capital, but haunted our streets at mid-day. Here, I could wander over an entire city; stray by the port, and venture through the most obscure alleys, without a single apprehension; without beholding a sky red and portentous with the light of houses on fire, or hearing the confusion of shouts and groans mingled with the reports of artillery. I can assure you, I think myself very fortunate to have escaped the possibility of another such week of desolation, and to be peaceably lulled at Antwerp.

## LETTER II

Visit to the cabinets of pictures in Antwerp. – Monsieur Van Lencren's collection. – The Canon Knyff's house and gallery of paintings. – The Canon himself. – His domestic felicity. – Revisit the cathedral. – Grand service in honour of St. John the Baptist. – Mynheer Van den Bosch, the organist's astonishing flashes of execution. – Evening service in the cathedral. – Magical effect of the music of Jomelli. – Blighted avenues. – Slow travelling. – Enter the United Provinces. – Level scenery. – Chinese prospects. – Reach Meerdyke. – Arrival at the Hague.

*Antwerp, 23rd June, 1780.*

AFTER breakfast this morning I began my pilgrimage to all the cabinets of pictures in Antwerp. First, I went to Monsieur Van Lencren's, who possesses a suite of apartments, lined, from the base to the cornice, with the rarest productions of the Flemish school. Heaven forbid I should enter into a detail of their niceties! I might as well count the dew-drops upon the most spangled of Van Huysum's flower-pieces, or the pimples on their possessor's countenance; a very good sort of man, indeed; but from whom I was not at all sorry to be delivered.

My joy was, however, of short duration, as a few minutes brought me into the court-yard of the Canon Knyff's habitation; a snug abode, well furnished with ample fauteuils and orthodox

couches. After viewing the rooms on the first floor, we mounted an easy staircase, and entered an ante-chamber, which they who delight in the imitations of art rather than of nature, in the likenesses of joint stools and the portraits of tankards, would esteem most capitally adorned: but it must be confessed, that amongst these uninteresting performances are dispersed a few striking Berghems and agreeable Polembergs. In the gallery adjoining, two or three Rosa de Tivolis merit observation; and a large Teniers, representing the Hermit St. Anthony surrounded by a malicious set of imps and leering devilleses, is well calculated to display the whimsical buffoonery of a Dutch imagination.

I was enjoying this strange medley, when the canon made his appearance; and a most prepossessing figure he has, according to Flemish ideas. In my humble opinion, his reverence looked a little muddled or so; and, to be sure, the description I afterwards heard of his style of living favours not a little my surmises. This worthy dignitary, what with his private fortune and the good things of the church, enjoys a spanking revenue, which he contrives to get rid of in the joys of the table and the encouragement of the pencil.

His servants, perhaps, assist not a little in the expenditure of so comfortable an income; the canon being upon a very social footing with them all. At four o'clock in the afternoon, a select party attend him in his coach to an ale-house about a league from the city; where a table, well spread with jugs of

beer and handsome cheeses, waits their arrival. After enjoying this rural fare, the same equipage conducts them back again, by all accounts, much faster than they came; which may well be conceived, as the coachman is one of the brightest wits of the entertainment.

My compliments, alas! were not much appreciated, you may suppose, by this jovial personage. I said a few favourable words of Polemberg, and offered up a small tribute of praise to the memory of Berghem; but, as I could not prevail upon Mynheer Knyff to expand, I made one of my best bows, and left him to the enjoyment of his domestic felicity.

In my way home, I looked into another cabinet, the greatest ornament of which was a most sublime thistle by Snyders, of the heroic size, and so faithfully imitated that I dare say no Ass could see it unmoved. At length, it was lawful to return home; and as I positively refused visiting any more cabinets in the afternoon, I sent for a harpsichord of Rucker, and played myself quite out of the Netherlands.

It was late before I finished my musical excursion, and I took advantage of this dusky moment to revisit the cathedral. A flight of starlings had just pitched on one of the pinnacles of the tower, whose faint chirpings were the only sounds that broke the evening stillness. Not a human form appeared at any of the windows around; no footsteps were audible in the opening before the grand entrance; and during the half hour I spent in walking to and fro, one solitary Franciscan was the only creature that accosted me.

From him I learned that a grand service was to be performed next day in honour of St. John the Baptist, and the best music in Flanders would be called forth on the occasion, so I determined to stay one day longer at Antwerp.

Having taken this resolution, I availed myself of a special invitation from Mynheer Van den Bosch, the first organist of the place, and sat next to him in his lofty perch during the celebration of high mass. The service ended, I strayed about the aisles, and examined the innumerable chapels which decorate them, whilst Mynheer Van den Bosch thundered and lightened away upon his huge organ with fifty stops.

When the first flashes of execution had a little subsided, I took an opportunity of surveying the celebrated Descent from the Cross. This has ever been esteemed the master-piece of Rubens, which, large as it is, they pretend here that Old Lewis Baboon<sup>2</sup> offered to cover with gold. A swingeing St. Christopher, fording a brook with a child on his shoulders, cannot fail of attracting attention. This colossal personage is painted on the folding-doors which defend the grand effort of art just mentioned from vulgar eyes; and here Rubens has selected a very proper subject to display the gigantic boldness of his pencil.

After I had most dutifully surveyed all his productions in this church, I walked half over Antwerp in quest of St. John's relics, which were moving about in procession. If my eyes were not much regaled by the saint's magnificence, my ears were

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<sup>2</sup> The History of John Bull explains this ridiculous appellation.

greatly affected in the evening by the music which sang forth his praises. The cathedral was crowded with devotees, and perfumed with incense. A motet, in the lofty style of Jomelli, performed with taste and feeling, transported me to Italian climates; and I grieved, when a cessation dissolved the charm, to think that I had still so many tramontane regions to pass before I could in effect reach that classic country. Finding it was in vain to expect preternatural interposition, and perceiving no conscious angel or Loretto-vehicle waiting in some dark consecrated corner to bear me away, I humbly returned to my hotel.

Monday, June 26th. – We were again upon the pavé, rattling and jumbling along between clipped hedges and blighted avenues. The plagues of Egypt have been renewed, one might almost imagine, in this country, by the appearance of the oak trees: not a leaf have the insects spared. After having had the displeasure of seeing no other objects for several hours but these blasted rows, the scene changed to vast tracts of level country, buried in sand and smothered with heath; the particular character of which I had but too good an opportunity of intimately knowing, as a tortoise might have kept pace with us without being once out of breath.

Towards evening, we entered the dominions of the United Provinces, and had all their glory of canals, treck-schuyts, and windmills, before us. The minute neatness of the villages, their red roofs, and the lively green of the willows which shade them, corresponded with the ideas I had formed of Chinese prospects;

a resemblance which was not diminished upon viewing on every side the level scenery of enamelled meadows, with stripes of clear water across them, and innumerable barges gliding busily along. Nothing could be finer than the weather; it improved each moment, as if propitious to my exotic fancies; and, at sun-set, not one single cloud obscured the horizon. Several storks were parading by the water-side, amongst flags and osiers; and, as far as the eye could reach, large herds of beautifully spotted cattle were enjoying the plenty of their pastures. I was perfectly in the environs of Canton, or Ning Po, till we reached Meerdyke. You know fumigations are always the current recipe in romance to break an enchantment; as soon, therefore, as I left my carriage and entered my inn, the clouds of tobacco which filled every one of its apartments dispersed my Chinese imaginations, and reduced me in an instant to Holland.

Why should I enlarge upon my adventures at Meerdyke? To tell you that its inhabitants are the most uncouth bipeds in the universe would be nothing very new or entertaining; so let me at once pass over the village, leave Rotterdam, and even Delft, that great parent of pottery, and transport you with a wave of my pen to the Hague.

As the evening was rather warm, I immediately walked out to enjoy the shade of the long avenue which leads to Scheveling, and proceeded to the village on the sea coast, which terminates the perspective. Almost every cottage door being open to catch the air, I had an opportunity of looking into their neat apartments.

Tables, shelves, earthenware, all glisten with cleanliness; the country people were drinking tea, after the fatigues of the day, and talking over its bargains and contrivances.

I left them to walk on the beach, and was so charmed with the vast azure expanse of ocean, which opened suddenly upon me, that I remained there a full half hour. More than two hundred vessels of different sizes were in sight, the last sunbeam purpling their sails, and casting a path of innumerable brilliants athwart the waves. What would I not have given to follow this shining track! It might have conducted me straight to those fortunate western climates, those happy isles which you are so fond of painting, and I of dreaming about. But, unluckily, this passage was the only one my neighbours the Dutch were ignorant of. It is true they have islands rich in spices, and blessed with the sun's particular attention, but which their government, I am apt to imagine, renders by no means fortunate.

Abandoning therefore all hopes of this adventurous voyage, I returned towards the Hague, and looked into a country-house of the late Count Bentinck, with parterres and bosquets by no means resembling, one should conjecture, the gardens of the Hesperides. But, considering that the whole group of trees, terraces, and verdure were in a manner created out of hills of sand, the place may claim some portion of merit. The walks and alleys have all the stiffness and formality which our ancestors admired; but the intermediate spaces, being dotted with clumps and sprinkled with flowers, are imagined in Holland to be in the

English style. An Englishman ought certainly to behold it with partial eyes, since every possible attempt has been made to twist it into the taste of his country.

I need not say how liberally I bestowed my encomiums on Count Bentinck's tasteful intentions; nor how happy I was, when I had duly serpentized over his garden, to find myself once more in the grand avenue. All the way home, I reflected upon the unyielding perseverance of the Dutch, who raise gardens from heaps of sand, and cities out of the bosom of the waters. I had, almost at the same moment, a whimsical proof of the thrifty turn of this people; for just entering the town I met an unwieldy fellow – not ill clad – airing his carcase in a one-dog chair. The poor animal puffed and panted, Mynheer smoked, and gaped around him with the most blessed indifference.

## LETTER III

The Prince of Orange's cabinet of paintings. – Temptation of St. Anthony, by Breughel. – Exquisite pictures by Berghem and Wouvermans. – Mean garrets stored with inestimable productions of the Indies. – Enamelled flasks of oriental essences. – Vision of the wardrobe of Hecuba. – Disenchantment. – Cabinet of natural history. – A day dream. – A delicious morsel. – Dinner at Sir Joseph Yorke's. – Two honourable boobies. – The Great Wood. – Parterres of the Greffier Fagel. – Air poisoned by the sluggish canals. – Fishy locality of Dutch banquetting rooms. – Derivation of the inhabitants of Holland. – Origin and use of enormous galligaskins. – Escape from damp alleys and lazy waters.

*30th June, 1780.*

I DEDICATED the morning to the Prince of Orange's cabinet of paintings and curiosities both natural and artificial. Amongst the pictures which amused me the most is a temptation of the holy hermit St. Anthony, by Hell-fire Breughel, who has shown himself right worthy of the title; for a more diabolical variety of imps never entered the human imagination. Breughel has made his saint take refuge in a ditch filled with harpies and creeping things innumerable, whose malice, one should think, would have lost Job himself the reputation of patience. Castles

of steel and fiery turrets glare on every side, whence issue a band of junior devils. These seem highly entertained with pinking poor Anthony, and whispering, I warrant ye, filthy tales in his ear. Nothing can be more rueful than the patient's countenance; more forlorn than his beard; more piteous than his eye, forming a strong contrast to the pert winks and insidious glances of his persecutors; some of whom, I need not mention, are evidently of the female kind.

But really I am quite ashamed of having detained you in such bad company so long; and had I a moment to spare, you should be introduced to a better set in this gallery, where some of the most exquisite Berghems and Wouvermans I ever beheld would delight you for hours. I do not think you would look much at the Polembergs; there are but two, and one of them is very far from capital; in short, I am in a great hurry; so pardon me, Carlo Cignani! if I do not do justice to your merit; and forgive me, Potter! if I pass by your herds without leaving a tribute of admiration.

Mynheer Van Something was as eager to precipitate my step as I was to get out of the damps and perplexities of Sorgvliet yesterday evening; so, mounting a creaking staircase, he led me to a suite of garretlike apartments; which, considering the meanness of their exterior, I was rather surprised to find stored with some of the most valuable productions of the Indies. Gold cups enriched with gems, models of Chinese palaces in ivory, glittering armour of Hindostan, and Japan caskets, filled

every corner of this awkward treasury. The most pleasing of all its baubles in my estimation was a large coffer of most elaborate workmanship, containing enamelled flasks of oriental essences, enough to perfume a zennana. If disagreeable fumes, as I mentioned before, dissolve enchantments, such aromatic oils have doubtless the power of raising them; for, whilst I scented their fragrancy, I could have persuaded myself, I was in the wardrobe of Hecuba, —

“Where treasured odours breathed a costly scent.”

I saw, or seemed to see, the arched apartments, the procession of matrons, the consecrated vestments: the very temple began to rise upon my sight, when a sweltering Dutch porpoise approaching to make me a low bow, his complaisance proved full as notorious as Satan's, when, according to Catholic legends, he took leave of Luther, that disputatious heresiarch. No spell can resist a fumigation of this nature; away fled palace, Hecuba, matrons, temple, &c. I looked up, and lo! I was in a garret. As poetry is but too often connected with this lofty situation, you will not wonder much at my flight. Being a little recovered from it, I tottered down the staircase, entered the cabinets of natural history, and was soon restored to my sober senses. A grave hippopotamus contributed a good deal to their re-establishment.

The butterflies, I must needs confess, were very near leading me another dance: I thought of their native hills and beloved

flowers, on the summits of Haynang and Nan-Hoa;<sup>3</sup> but the jargon which was gabbling all around me prevented the excursion, and I summoned a decent share of attention for that ample chamber which has been appropriated to bottled snakes and pickled foetuses.

After having enjoyed the same spectacle in the British Museum, no very new or singular objects can be selected in this. One of the rarest articles it contains is the representation in wax of a human head, most dexterously flayed indeed! Rapturous encomiums have been bestowed by amateurs on this performance. A German professor could hardly believe it artificial; and, prompted by the love of truth, set his teeth in this delicious morsel to be convinced of its reality. My faith was less hazardously established; and I moved off, under the conviction that art had never produced anything more horridly natural.

It was one o'clock before I got through the mineral kingdom; and another hour passed before I could quit with decorum the regions of stuffed birds and marine productions. At length my departure was allowable; and I went to dine at Sir Joseph Yorke's, with all nations and languages. Amongst the company were two honourable boobies and their governor, all from Ireland. The youngest, after plying me with a succession of innocent questions, wished to be informed where I proposed spending the carnival. "At Tunis," was my answer. The questioner, not in the least surprised, then asked who was to sing there? To which I

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<sup>3</sup> Hills in the neighbourhood of Canton.

replied, "Farinelli."

This settled the business to our mutual satisfaction; so after coffee I strayed to the Great Wood, which, considering that it almost touches the town with its boughs, is wonderfully forest-like. Not a branch being ever permitted to be lopped, the oaks and beeches retain their natural luxuriance. In some places their straight boles rise sixty feet without a bough; in others, they are bent fantastically over the alleys, which turn and wind about just as a painter would desire. I followed them with eagerness and curiosity; sometimes deviating from my path amongst tufts of fern and herbage.

In these cool retreats I could not believe myself near canals and windmills; the Dutch formalities were all forgotten whilst contemplating the broad masses of foliage above, and the wild flowers and grasses below. Hares and rabbits scudded by me while I sat; and the birds were chirping their evening song. Their preservation does credit to the police of the country, which is so exact and well regulated as to suffer no outrage within the precincts of this extensive wood, the depth and thickness of which might otherwise seem calculated to favour half the sins of a capital.

Relying upon this comfortable security, I lingered unmolested amongst the beeches till late in the evening; then taking the nearest path, I suffered myself, though not without regret, to be conducted out of this fresh sylvan scene to the dusty, pompous parterres of the Greffier Fagel. Every flower that wealth can

purchase diffuses its perfume on one side; whilst every stench a canal can exhale poisons the air on the other. These sluggish puddles defy all the power of the United Provinces, and retain the freedom of stinking in spite of any endeavour to conquer their filthiness.

But perhaps I am too bold in my assertion; for I have no authority to mention any attempts to purify these noxious pools. Who knows but their odour is congenial to a Dutch constitution? One should be inclined to this supposition by the numerous banquetting-rooms and pleasure-houses which hang directly above their surface, and seem calculated on purpose to enjoy them. If frogs were not excluded from the magistrature of their country (and I cannot but think it a little hard that they are), one should not wonder at this choice. Such burgomasters might erect their pavilions in such situations; but, after all, I am not greatly surprised at the fishiness of their site, since very slight authority would persuade me there was a period when Holland was all water, and the ancestors of the present inhabitants fish. A certain oysterishness of eye and flabbiness of complexion, are almost proofs sufficient of this aquatic descent: and pray tell me for what purpose are such galligaskins as the Dutch burthen themselves with contrived, but to tuck up a flouncing tail, and thus cloak the deformity of a dolphinlike termination?

Having done penance for some time in the damp alleys which line the borders of these lazy waters, I was led through corkscrew sand-walks to a vast flat, sparingly scattered over with vegetation.

There was no temptation to puzzle myself in such a labyrinth; so taking advantage of the lateness of the hour, and muttering a few complimentary promises of returning at the first opportunity, I escaped the ennui of this endless scrubbery, and got home, with the determination of being wiser and less curious if ever my stars should bring me again to the Hague.

## LETTER IV

Leave the Hague. – Leyden. – Wood near Haerlem. – Waddling fishermen. – Enter the town. – The great fair. – Riot and uproar. – Confusion of tongues. – Mine hostess.

*Haerlem, July 1st, 1780.*

THE sky was clear and blue when we left the Hague, and we travelled along a shady road for about an hour, when down sunk the carriage into a sand-bed, and we were dragged along so slowly that I fell into a profound repose. How long it lasted is not material; but when I awoke, we were rumbling through Leyden. There is no need to write a syllable in honour of this illustrious city: its praises have already been sung and said by fifty professors, who have declaimed in its university, and smoked in its gardens. Let us get out of it as fast as we can, and breathe the cool air of the wood near Haerlem.

Here we arrived just as day declined: hay was making in the fields, and perfumed the country far and wide with its reviving fragrance. I promised myself a sentimental saunter in the groves, took up Gesner, and began to have pretty pastoral ideas as I walked forward; but instead of nymphs dispersed over the meadows, I met a gang of waddling fishermen. Letting fall the garlands I had wreathed for the shepherdesses, I jumped into the carriage, and was driven off to the town. Every avenue to

it swarmed with people, whose bustle and agitation seemed to announce that something extraordinary was going forward. Upon inquiry I found it was the great fair at Haerlem; and before we had advanced much farther, our carriage was surrounded by idlers and gingerbread-eaters of all denominations. Passing the gate, we came to a cluster of little illuminated booths beneath a grove, glittering with toys and looking-glasses. It was not without difficulty that we reached our inn, and then the plague was to procure chambers; at last we were accommodated, and the first moment I could call my own has been dedicated to you.

You will not be surprised at the nonsense I have written, since I tell you the scene of the riot and uproar from whence it bears date. At this very moment the confused murmur of voices and music stops all regular proceedings: old women and children tattling; apes, bears, and show-boxes under the windows; French rattling, English swearing, outrageous Italians, frisking minstrels; *tambours de basque* at every corner; myself distracted; a confounded squabble of cooks and haranguing German couriers just arrived, their masters following open-mouthed, nothing to eat, the steam of ham and flesh-pots all the while provoking their appetite; squeaking chambermaids in the galleries above, and mine hostess below, half inclined to receive the golden solicitations of certain beauties for admittance, but positively refusing them the moment some creditable personage appears; eleven o'clock strikes; half the lights in the fair are extinguished; scruples grow faint; and

mammon gains the victory.

## LETTER V

Amsterdam. – The road to Utrecht. – Country-houses and gardens. – Neat enclosures. – Comfortable parties. – Ladies and Lapdogs. – Arrival at Utrecht. – Moravian establishment – The woods. – Shops. – Celestial love. – Musical Sempstresses. – Return to Utrecht.

*Utrecht, 2d July, 1780.*

WELL, thank Heaven! Amsterdam is behind us; how I got thither signifies not one farthing; it was all along a canal, as usual. The weather was hot enough to broil an inhabitant of Bengal; and the odours, exhaling from every quarter, sufficiently powerful to regale the nose of a Hottentot.

Under these pungent circumstances we entered the great city. The Stadt-huys being the only cool place it contained, I repaired thither as fast as the heat permitted, and walked in a lofty marble hall, magnificently coved, till the dinner was ready at the inn. That despatched, we set off for Utrecht. Both sides of the way are lined with the country-houses and gardens of opulent citizens, as fine as gilt statues and clipped hedges can make them. Their number is quite astonishing: from Amsterdam to Utrecht, full thirty miles, we beheld no other objects than endless avenues and stiff parterres scrawled and flourished in patterns like the embroidery of an old maid's work-bag. Notwithstanding

this formal taste, I could not help admiring the neatness and arrangement of every inclosure, enlivened by a profusion of flowers, and decked with arbours, beneath which a vast number of consequential personages were solacing themselves after the heat of the day. Each lusthuys we passed contained some comfortable party dozing over their pipes, or angling in the muddy fish-ponds below. Scarce an avenue but swarmed with female josses; little squat pug-dogs waddling at their sides, the attributes, I suppose, of these fair divinities.

But let us leave them to loiter thus amiably in their Elysian groves, and arrive at Utrecht; which, as nothing very remarkable claimed my attention, I hastily quitted to visit a Moravian establishment at Ziest, in its neighbourhood. The chapel, a large house, late the habitation of Count Zinzendorf, and a range of apartments filled with the holy fraternity, are totally wrapped in dark groves, overgrown with weeds, amongst which some damsels were straggling, under the immediate protection of their pious brethren.

Traversing the woods, we found ourselves in a large court, built round with brick edifices, the grass-plats in a deplorable way, and one ragged goat, their only inhabitant, on a little expiatory scheme, perhaps, for the failings of the fraternity. I left this poor animal to ruminate in solitude, and followed my guide into a series of shops furnished with gew-gaws and trinkets said to be manufactured by the female part of the society. Much cannot be boasted of their handy-works: I expressed a wish to

see some of these industrious fair ones; but, upon receiving no answer, found this was a subject of which there was no discourse.

Consoling myself as well as I was able, I put myself under the guidance of another slovenly disciple, who showed me the chapel, and harangued very pathetically upon celestial love. In my way thither, I caught a glimpse of some pretty sempstresses, warbling melodious hymns as they sat needling and thimbling at their windows above. I had a great inclination to approach this busy group, but the roll of a brother's eye corrected me.

Reflecting upon my unworthiness, I retired from the consecrated buildings, and was driven back to Utrecht, not a little amused with my expedition. If you are as well disposed to be pleased as I was, I shall esteem myself very lucky, and not repent sending you so hasty a narrative.

## LETTER VI

Arrival at Aix-la-Chapelle. – Glimpse of a dingy grove. – Melancholy saunterers. – Dusseldorf Gallery. – Nocturnal depredators. – Arrival at Cologne. – Shrine of the Three Wise Sovereigns. – Peregrinations of their beatified bones. – Road to Bonn. – Delights of Catholicism. – Azure mountains. – Visionary palaces.

We arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle about ten at night, and saw the mouldering turrets of that once illustrious capital by the help of a candle and lantern. An old woman at the gate asked our names (for not a single soldier appeared); and after traversing a number of superannuated streets without perceiving the least trace of Charlemagne or his Paladins, we procured comfortable though not magnificent apartments, and slept most unheroically sound, till it was time to set forward for Dusseldorf.

July 8th. – As we were driven out of the town, I caught a glimpse of a grove, hemmed in by dingy buildings, where a few water-drinkers were sauntering along to the sound of some rueful French horns; the wan greenish light admitted through the foliage made them look like unhappy souls condemned to an eternal lounge for having trifled away their existence. It was not with much regret that I left such a party behind; and, after experiencing the vicissitudes of good roads and rumbling pavements, crossed the Rhine and travelled on to Dusseldorf.

Nothing but the famous gallery of paintings could invite strangers to stay a moment within its walls; more crooked streets, more indifferent houses, one seldom meets with; except soldiers, not a living creature moving about them; and at night a complete regiment of bugs “marked me for their own.” Thus I lay, at once the seat of war and the conquest of these detestable animals, till early in the morning (Sunday, July 9th), when Morpheus, compassionating my sufferings, opened the ivory gates of his empire, and freed his votary from the most unconscionable vermin ever engendered. In humble prose, I fell fast asleep; and remained quiet, in defiance of my adversaries, till it was time to survey the cabinet.

This collection is displayed in five large galleries, and contains some valuable productions of the Italian school; but the room most boasted of is that which Rubens has filled with no less than three enormous representations of the last day, where an innumerable host of sinners are exhibited as striving in vain to avoid the tangles of the devil’s tail. The woes of several fat luxurious souls are rendered in the highest gusto. Satan’s dispute with some brawny concubines, whom he is lugging off in spite of all their resistance, cannot be too much admired by those who approve this class of subjects, and think such strange embroglios in the least calculated to raise a sublime or a religious idea.

For my own part, I turned from them with disgust, and hastened to contemplate a holy family by Camillo Procaccini, in another apartment. The brightest imagination can never conceive

any figure more graceful than that of the young Jesus; and if ever I beheld an inspired countenance or celestial features, it was here: but to attempt conveying in words what the pencil alone can express, would be only reversing the absurdity of many a master in the gallery who aims to represent those ideas by the pencil which language alone is able to describe. Should you admit this opinion, you will not be surprised at my passing such a multitude of renowned pictures unnoticed; nor at my bringing you out of the cabinet without deluging ten pages with criticisms in the style of the ingenious Lady Miller.

As I had spent so much time in the gallery, the day was too far advanced to think of travelling to Cologne; I was therefore obliged to put myself once more under the dominion of the most inveterate bugs in the universe. This government, like many others, made but an indifferent use of its power, and the subject suffering accordingly was extremely rejoiced at flying from his persecutors to Cologne.

July 10th. – Clouds of dust hindered my making any remarks on the exterior of this celebrated city; but if its appearance be not more beautiful from without than within, I defy the most courteous compiler of geographical dictionaries to launch forth very warmly in its praise. But of what avail are stately palaces, broad streets, or airy markets, to a town which can boast of such a treasure as the bodies of those three wise sovereigns who were star-led to Bethlehem? Is not this circumstance enough to procure it every kind of respect? I really believe so, from the

pious and dignified contentment of its inhabitants. They care not a hair of an ass's ear whether their houses be gloomy and ill-contrived, their pavements overgrown with weeds, and their shops half choked up with filthiness, provided the carcasses of Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar might be preserved with proper decorum. Nothing, to be sure, can be richer than the shrine which contains these precious relics. I paid my devotions before it the moment I arrived; this step was inevitable: had I omitted it, not a soul in Cologne but would have cursed me for a Pagan.

Do you not wonder at hearing of these venerable bodies so far from their native country? I thought them snug under some Arabian cupola ten feet deep in spice; but who can tell what is to become of one a few ages hence? Who knows but the Emperor of Morocco may be canonized some future day in Lapland? I asked, of course, how in the name of miracles they came hither? but found no story of a supernatural conveyance. It seems that great collectress of relics, the holy Empress Helena, first routed them out: then they were packed off to Rome. King Alaric, having no grace, bundled them down to Milan; where they remained till it pleased Heaven to inspire an ancient archbishop with the fervent wish of depositing them at Cologne; there these skeletons were taken into the most especial consideration, crowned with jewels and filigreed with gold. Never were skulls more elegantly mounted; and I doubt whether Odin's buffet could exhibit so fine an assortment. The chapel containing these beatified bones is placed in a dark extremity of the cathedral. Several golden

lamps gleam along the polished marbles with which it is adorned, and afford just light enough to read the following monkish inscription: —

**“CORPORA SANCTORUM RECUBANT HIC  
TERNA MAGORUM: EX HIS SUBLATUM  
NIHIL EST ALIBIVE LOCATUM.”**

After I had satisfied my curiosity with respect to the peregrinations of the consecrated skeletons, I examined their shrine; and was rather surprised to find it not only enriched with barbaric gold and pearl, but covered with cameos and intaglios of the best antique sculpture. Many an impious emperor and gross Silenus, many a wanton nymph and frantic bacchanal, figure in the same range with the statues of saints and evangelists. How St. Helena could tolerate such a mixed assembly (for the shrine, they say, was formed under her auspices) surpasses my comprehension. Perhaps you will say, it is no great matter; and give me a hint to move out of the chapel, lest the three kings and their star should lead me quite out of my way. Very well; I think I had better stop in time, to tell you, without further excursion, that we set off after dinner for Bonn.

Our road-side was lined with beggarly children, high convent walls, and scarecrow crucifixes, lubberly monks, dejected peasants, and all the delights of Catholicism. Such scenery not engaging a share of my attention, I kept gazing at the azure

irregular mountains which bounded our view, and in thought was already transported to their summits. Vast and wild were the prospects I surveyed from my imaginary exaltation, and innumerable the chimeras which trotted in my brain. Under their capricious influence my fancy built castles and capitols in the clouds with all the extravaganza of Piranesi. The magnificence and variety of my aërial structures hindered my thinking the way long. I was walking with a crowd of phantoms upon their terraces, when the carriage made a halt. Immediately descending the innumerable flights of steps which divide such lofty edifices from the lower world, I entered the inn at Bonn, and was shown into an apartment which commands the chief front of the Elector's residence. You may guess how contemptible it appeared to one just returned from palaces bedecked with all the pomp of visionary splendour. In other respects I saw it at a very favourable moment, for the twilight, shading the whole façade, concealed its plastered walls and painted columns.

## LETTER VII

Borders of the Rhine. – Richly picturesque road from Bonn to Andernach. – Scheme for a floating village. – Coblenz. – A winding valley. – The river Lahn. – Ems. – The planet. – A supposed Apparition. – A little sequestered Paradise.

*July 11, 1780.*

LET those who delight in picturesque country repair to the borders of the Rhine, and follow the road from Bonn to Coblenz. In some places it is suspended like a cornice above the waters; in others, it winds behind lofty steeps and broken acclivities, shaded by woods and clothed with an endless variety of plants and flowers. Several green paths lead amongst this vegetation to the summits of the rocks, which often serve as the foundation of abbeys and castles, whose lofty roofs and spires, rising above the cliffs, impress passengers with ideas of their grandeur, that might probably vanish upon a nearer approach. Not choosing to lose any prejudice in their favour, I kept a respectful distance whenever I left my carriage, and walked on the banks of the river.

Just before we came to Andernach, an antiquated town with strange morisco-looking towers, I spied a raft, at least three hundred feet in length, on which ten or twelve cottages were erected, and a great many people employed in sawing wood. The women sat spinning at their doors, whilst their children played

among the water-lilies that bloomed in abundance on the edge of the stream. A smoke, rising from one of these aquatic habitations, partially obscured the mountains beyond, and added not a little to their effect.

Altogether, the scene was so novel and amusing, that I sat half an hour contemplating it from an eminence under the shade of some leafy walnuts; and should like extremely to build a moveable village, people it with my friends, and so go floating about from island to island, and from one woody coast of the Rhine to another. Would you dislike such a party? I am much deceived, or you would be the first to explore the shady promontories beneath which we should be wafted along.

But I do not think you would find Coblenz, where we were obliged to take up our night's lodging, much to your taste. It is a mean, dirty assemblage of plastered houses, striped with paint, and set off with wooden galleries, in the delectable taste of old St. Giles's. Above, on a rock, stands the palace of the Elector, which seems to be remarkable for nothing except situation. I did not bestow many looks on this structure whilst ascending the mountain across which our road to Mayence conducted us.

July 12. – Having attained the summit, we discovered a vast, irregular range of country, and advancing, found ourselves amongst downs purpled with thyme and bounded by forests. This sort of prospect extending for several leagues, I walked on the turf, and inhaled with avidity the fresh gales that blew over its herbage, till I came to a steep slope overgrown with privet and a

variety of luxuriant shrubs in blossom. A cloudless sky and bright sunshine made me rather loth to move on; but the charms of the landscape, increasing every instant, drew me forward.

I had not gone far, before a winding valley discovered itself, inclosed by rocks and mountains clothed to their very summits with the thickest woods. A broad river, flowing at the base of the cliffs, reflected the impending vegetation, and looked so calm and glassy that I was determined to be better acquainted with it. For this purpose we descended by a zigzag path into the vale, and making the best of our way on the banks of the Lahn (for so is the river called) came suddenly upon the town of Ems, famous in mineral story; where, finding very good lodgings, we took up our abode, and led an Indian life amongst the wilds and mountains.

After supper I walked on a smooth lawn by the river, to observe the moon journeying through a world of silver clouds that lay dispersed over the face of the heavens. It was a mild genial evening; every mountain cast its broad shadow on the surface of the stream; lights twinkled afar off on the hills; they burnt in silence. All were asleep, except a female figure in white, with glow-worms shining in her hair. She kept moving disconsolately about; sometimes I heard her sigh; and if apparitions sigh, this must have been an apparition.

July 13. – The pure air of the morning invited me abroad at an early hour. Hiring a skiff, I rowed about a mile down the stream, and landed on a sloping meadow, level with the waters, and newly mown. Heaps of hay still lay dispersed under the

copses which hemmed in on every side this little sequestered paradise. What a spot for a tent! I could encamp here for months, and never be tired. Not a day would pass by without discovering some untrodden pasture, some unsuspected vale, where I might remain among woods and precipices lost and forgotten. I would give you, and two or three more, the clue of my labyrinth: nobody else should be conscious even of its entrance. Full of such agreeable dreams, I rambled about the meads, scarcely aware which way I was going; sometimes a spangled fly led me astray, and, oftener, my own strange fancies. Between both, I was perfectly bewildered, and should never have found my boat again, had not an old German naturalist, who was collecting fossils on the cliffs, directed me to it.

When I got home it was growing late, and I now began to perceive that I had taken no refreshment, except the perfume of the hay and a few wood strawberries; airy diet, you will observe, for one not yet received into the realms of Ginnistan.

## LETTER VIII

Inveterate Idlers. – The planet Orloff and his satellites. – A Storm – Scared women. – A dreary Forest. – Village of Wiesbaden. – Manheim. – Ulm. – The Danube – unlimited plains on its margin. – Augsburg. – Sketch of the Town. – Pomposities of the Town House.

*Ems, July 14.*

I HAVE just made a discovery, that this place is as full of idlers and water-drinkers as their Highnesses of Orange and Hesse Darmstadt can desire; for to them accrue all the profits of its salubrious fountains. I protest, I knew nothing of all this yesterday, so entirely was I taken up with the rocks and meadows; and conceived no chance of meeting either card or billiard players in their solitudes. Both however abound at Ems, unconscious of the bold scenery in their neighbourhood, and totally insensible to its charms. They had no notion, not they, of admiring barren crags and precipices, where even the Lord would lose his way, as a clumsy lubber decorated with stars and orders very ingeniously observed to me; nor could they form the least conception of any pleasure there was in climbing like a goat amongst the cliffs, and then diving into woods and recesses where the sun had never penetrated; where there were neither card-tables prepared nor sideboards garnished; no *jambon de Mayence*

in waiting; no supply of pipes, nor any of the commonest delights, to be met with in the commonest taverns.

To all this I acquiesced with most perfect submission, but immediately left the orator to entertain a circle of antiquated dames and weather-beaten officers who were gathering around him. Scarcely had I turned my back upon this polite assembly, when *Monsieur l'Administrateur des bains*, a fine pompous fellow, who had been *maitre d'hôtel* in a great German family, came forward purposely to acquaint me, I suppose, that their baths had the honour of possessing Prince Orloff, "*avec sa grande maidresse, son shamperlan, et guelgues tames donneur*:" moreover, that his Highness came hither to refresh himself after his laborious employments at the Court of St. Petersburg, and expected (*grace aux eaux!*) to return to the domains his august sovereign had lately bestowed upon him, perfectly regenerated.

Wishing Monsieur d'Orloff all possible success, I should have left the company at a greater distance, had not a violent shower stopped my career, and obliged me to return to my apartment. The rain growing heavier, intercepted the prospect of the mountains, and spread such a gloom over the vale as sank my spirits fifty degrees; to which a close foggy atmosphere not a little contributed. Towards night the clouds assumed a more formidable aspect; thunder rolled along the distant cliffs, and torrents began to run down the steeps. At intervals a blue flash of lightning discovered the agitated surface of the stream, and two or three scared women rushing through the storm, and calling all

the saints in Paradise to their assistance.

Things were in this state, when the orator who had harangued so brilliantly on the folly of ascending mountains, bounced into the room, and regaled my ears with a woeful narration of murders which had happened the other day on the precise road I was to follow the next morning.

“Sir,” said he, “your route is, to be sure, very perilous: on the left you have a chasm, down which, should your horses take the smallest alarm, you are infallibly precipitated; to the right hangs an impervious wood, and there, sir, I can assure you, are wolves enough to devour a regiment; a little farther on, you cross a desolate tract of forest land, the roads so deep and broken, that if you go ten paces in as many minutes you may think yourself fortunate. There lurk the most savage banditti in Europe, lately irritated by the Prince of Orange’s proscription; and so desperate, that if they make an attack, you can expect no mercy. Should you venture through this hazardous district to-morrow, you will, in all probability, meet a company of people who have just left the town to search for the mangled bodies of their relations; but, for Heaven’s sake, sir, if you value your life, do not suffer an idle curiosity to lead you over such dangerous regions, however picturesque their appearance.”

It was almost nine o’clock before my kind adviser ceased inspiring me with terrors; then, finding myself at liberty, I retired to bed, not under the most agreeable impressions.

Early in the morning we set forward; and proceeding along

the edge of the precipices I had been forewarned of, journeyed through the forest which had so recently been the scene of murders and depredations. At length, after winding several hours amongst its dreary avenues, we emerged into open daylight. A few minutes more brought us safe to the village of Wiesbaden, where we slept in peace and tranquillity.

July 16. – Our apprehensions being entirely dispersed, we rose much refreshed; and passing through Mayence, Oppenheim, and Worms, travelled gaily over the plain in which Manheim is situated. The sun set before we arrived there.

Numbers of well-dressed people were amusing themselves with music and fireworks in the squares and open spaces; other groups appeared conversing in circles before their doors, and enjoying the serenity of the evening. Almost every window bloomed with carnations; and we could hardly cross a street without hearing the sound of music. A scene of such happiness and refinement formed a most agreeable contrast to the dismalities we had left behind. All around was security and contentment in their most engaging attire.

July 20. – After travelling a post or two, we came in sight of a green moor, of vast extent, with insulated woods and villages; here and there the Danube sweeping majestically along, and the city of Ulm rising upon its banks. The fields in the neighbourhood of the town were overspread with cloths bleaching in the sun, and waiting for barks, which convey them down the great river in twelve days to Vienna, and thence,

through Hungary, into the midst of the Turkish empire.

You never saw a brighter sky nor more glowing clouds than those which gilded our horizon. For ten miles we beheld no other objects than smooth unlimited levels interspersed with thickets of oak, beyond which appeared a long series of mountains. Such were the very spots for youthful games and exercises, open spaces for the race, and spreading shades to skreen the spectators.

Father Lafiteau tells us, there are many such vast and flowery Savannahs in the interior of America, to which the roving tribes of Indians repair once or twice in a century to settle the rights of the chase, and lead their solemn dances; and so deep an impression do these assemblies leave on the minds of the savages, that the highest ideas they entertain of future felicity consist in the perpetual enjoyment of songs and dances upon the green boundless lawns of their elysium. In the midst of these visionary plains rises the abode of Ateantsic, encircled by choirs of departed chieftains leaping in cadence to the sound of spears as they ring on the shell of the tortoise. Their favourite attendants, long separated from them while on earth, are restored again in this ethereal region, and skim freely over the vast level space; now, hailing one group of beloved friends; and now, another. Mortals newly ushered by death into this world of pure blue sky and boundless meads, see the long-lost objects of their affection advancing to meet them, whilst flights of familiar birds, the purveyors of many an earthly chase, once more attend their progress, and the shades of their faithful dogs seem coursing each

other below. The whole region is filled with low murmurs and tinkling sounds, which increase in melody as its new denizens proceed, who, at length, unable to resist the thrilling music, spring forward in ecstasies to join the eternal round.

A share of this celestial transport seemed communicated to me whilst my eyes wandered over the plains, which imagination widened and extended in proportion as the twilight prevailed, and so fully abandoned was I to the illusion of the moment, that I did not for several minutes perceive our arrival at Günzburg; whence we proceeded the next morning (July 21) to Augsburg, and rambled about this renowned city till evening. The colossal paintings on the walls of almost every considerable building gave it a strange air, which pleases upon the score of novelty.

Having passed a number of streets decorated in this exotic manner, we found ourselves suddenly before the public hall, by a noble statue of Augustus; which way soever we turned, our eyes met some remarkable edifice, or marble basin into which several groups of sculptured river-gods pour a profusion of waters. These stately fountains and bronze statues, the extraordinary size and loftiness of the buildings, the towers rising in perspective, and the Doric portal of the town-house, answered in some measure the idea Montfaucon gives us of the scene of an ancient tragedy. Whenever a pompous Flemish painter attempts a representation of Troy or Babylon, and displays in his back-ground those streets of palaces described in the Iliad, Augsburg, or some such city, may easily be traced. Frequently a corner of Antwerp discovers

itself; and sometimes, above a Corinthian portico, rises a Gothic spire: just such a jumble may be viewed from the statue of Augustus, under which I remained till the concierge came, who was to open the gates of the town-house and show me its magnificent hall.

I wished for you exceedingly when ascending a flight of a hundred steps; I entered it through a portal, supported by tall pillars and crowned with a majestic pediment. Upon advancing, I discovered five more entrances equally grand, with golden figures of guardian genii leaning over the entablature; and saw, through a range of windows, each above thirty feet high, and nearly level with the marble pavement, the whole city, with all its roofs and spires, beneath my feet. The pillars, cornices, and panels of this striking apartment are uniformly tinged with brown and gold; and the ceiling, enriched with emblematical paintings and innumerable canopies and pendants of carved work, casts a very magisterial shade. Upon the whole, I should not be surprised at a burgomaster assuming a formidable dignity in such a room.

I must confess it had a somewhat similar effect upon me; and I descended the flight of steps with as much pomposity as if on the point of giving audience to the Queen of Sheba. It happened to be a high festival, and half the inhabitants of Augsburg were gathered together in the opening before their hall; the greatest numbers, especially the women, still exhibiting the very dresses which Hollar engraved. My lofty gait imposed upon this primitive assembly, which receded to give me passage with

as much silent respect as if I had really been the wise sovereign of Israel. When I got home, an execrable sourcroustish supper was served up to my majesty; I scolded in an unroyal style, and soon convinced myself I was no longer Solomon.

## LETTER IX

Extensive woods of fir in Bavaria. – Grand fair at Munich. – The Elector's country palace. – Court Ladies. – Fountains. – Costume. – Garden and tea-room. – Hoydening festivities there. – The Palace and Chapel. – Gorgeous riches of the latter. – St. Peter's thumb. – The Elector's collection of pictures. – The Churches. – Hubbub and confusion of the Fair. – Wild tract of country. – Village of Wolfrathshausen. – Perpetual forests. – A Tempest. – A night at a cottage.

*July 22.*

JOY to the Electors of Bavaria! for preserving such extensive woods of fir in their dominions as shade over the chief part of the road from Augsburg to Munich. Near the last-mentioned city, I cannot boast of the scenery changing to advantage. Instead of flourishing woods and verdure, we beheld a parched dreary flat, diversified by fields of withering barley, and stunted avenues drawn formally across them; now and then a stagnant pool, and sometimes a dunghill, by way of regale. However, the wild rocks of the Tyrol terminate the view, and to them imagination may fly, and ramble amidst springs and lilies of her own creation. I speak from authority, having had the delight of anticipating an evening in this romantic style.

Tuesday next is the grand fair at Munich, with horse-races and

junketings: a piece of news I was but too soon acquainted with; for the moment we entered the town, good-natured creatures from all quarters advised us to get out of it; since traders and harlequins had filled every corner of the place, and there was not a lodging to be procured. The inns, to be sure, were hives of industrious animals sorting their merchandise, and preparing their goods for sale. Yet, in spite of difficulties, we got possession of a quiet apartment.

July 23. – We were driven in the evening to Nymphenburg, the Elector's country palace, the bosquets, jets-d'eaux, and parterres of which are the pride of the Bavarians. The principal platform is all of a glitter with gilded Cupids and shining serpents spouting at every pore. Beds of poppies, hollyhocks, scarlet lychnis, and other flame-coloured flowers, border the edge of the walks, which extend till the perspective appears to meet and swarm with ladies and gentlemen in party-coloured raiment. The queen of Golconda's gardens in a French opera are scarcely more gaudy and artificial. Unluckily too, the evening was fine, and the sun so powerful that we were half roasted before we could cross the great avenue and enter the thickets, which barely conceal a very splendid hermitage, where we joined Mr. and Mrs. Trevor, and a party of fashionable Bavarians.

Amongst the ladies was Madame la Comtesse, I forget who, a production of the venerable Haslang, with her daughter, Madame de Baumgarten, who has the honour of leading the Elector in her chains. These goddesses stepping into a car, vulgarly called

a cariole, the mortals followed and explored alley after alley and pavilion after pavilion. Then, having viewed Pagodenburg, which is, as they told me, all Chinese; and Marienburg, which is most assuredly all tinsel; we paraded by a variety of fountains in full squirt, and though they certainly did their best (for many were set agoing on purpose) I cannot say I greatly admired them.

The ladies were very gaily attired, and the gentlemen, as smart as swords, bags, and pretty clothes could make them, looked exactly like the fine people one sees represented on Dresden porcelain. Thus we kept walking genteelly about the orangery, till the carriage drew up and conveyed us to Mr. Trevor's.

Immediately after supper, we drove once more out of town, to a garden and tea-room, where all degrees and ages dance jovially together till morning. Whilst one party wheel briskly away in the waltz, another amuse themselves in a corner with cold meat and rhenish. That despatched, out they whisk amongst the dancers, with an impetuosity and liveliness I little expected to have found in Bavaria. After turning round and round, with a rapidity that is quite astounding to an English dancer, the music changes to a slower movement, and then follows a succession of zig-zag minuets, performed by old and young, straight and crooked, noble and plebeian, all at once, from one end of the room to the other. Tallow candles snuffing and stinking, dishes changing at the risk of showering down upon you their savoury contents, heads scratching, and all sorts of performances going forward at the same moment; the flutes, oboes, and bassoons,

snorting, grunting, and whining with peculiar emphasis; now fast, now slow, just as Variety commands, who seems to rule the ceremonial of this motley assembly, where every distinction of rank and privilege is totally forgotten. Once a week, on Sundays that is to say, the rooms are open, and Monday is generally far advanced before they are deserted. If good humour and coarse merriment are all that people desire, here they are to be found in perfection.

July 24. – Custom condemned us to visit the palace, which glares with looking-glass, gilding, and furbelowed flounces of cut velvet, most sumptuously fringed and spangled. The chapel, though small, is richer than anything Cræsus ever possessed, let them say what they will. Not a corner but shines with gold, diamonds, and scraps of martyrdom studded with jewels. I had the delight of treading amethysts and the richest gems under foot, which, if you recollect, Apuleius<sup>4</sup> thinks such supreme felicity. Alas! I was quite unworthy of the honour, and had much rather have trodden the turf of the mountains. Mammon would never have taken his eyes off the pavement; mine soon left the contemplation of it and fixed on St. Peter's thumb, enshrined with a degree of elegance, and adorned by some malapert enthusiast with several of the most delicate antique cameos I ever beheld; the subjects, Ledas and sleeping Venuses, are a little too pagan, one should think, for an apostle's finger.

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<sup>4</sup> Apuleius Met: Lib. 5. Vehementer iterum ac sæpius beatos illos qui Super gemmas et monilia calcant!

From this precious repository we were conducted through the public garden to a large hall, where part of the Elector's collection is piled up, till a gallery can be finished for its reception. It was matter of great favour to view, in this state, the pieces that compose it, a very imperfect one too, since some of the best were under operation. But I would not upon any account have missed the sight of Rubens's Massacre of the Innocents. Such expressive horrors were never yet transferred to canvass. Moloch himself might have gazed at them with pleasure.

After dinner we were led round the churches; and if you are as much tired with reading my voluminous descriptions, as I was with the continual repetition of altars and reliquaries, the Lord have mercy upon you! However, your delivery draws near. The post is going out, and to-morrow we shall begin to mount the cliffs of the Tyrol; but, do not be afraid of any long-winded epistles from their summits: I shall be too well employed in ascending them.

July 25. – The noise of the people thronging to the fair did not allow me to slumber very long in the morning. When I got up, every street was crowded with Jews and mountebanks, holding forth and driving their bargains in all the guttural hoarseness of the Bavarian dialect. Vast quantities of rich merchandise glittered in the shops as we passed to the gates. Heaps of fruit and sweetmeats set half the grandams and infants in the place cackling with felicity.

Mighty glad was I to make my escape; and in about an hour

or two, we entered a wild tract of country, not unlike the skirts of a princely park. A little farther on stands a cluster of cottages, where we stopped to give our horses some refreshment, and were pestered with swarms of flies, most probably journeying to Munich fair, there to feast upon sugared tarts and honied gingerbread.

The next post brought us over hill and dale, grove and meadow, to a narrow plain, watered by rivulets and surrounded by cliffs, under which lies scattered the village of Wolfrathshausen, consisting of several remarkably large cottages, built entirely of fir, with strange galleries projecting from them. Nothing can be neater than the carpentry of these complicated edifices, nor more solid than their construction; many of them looked as if they had braved the torrents which fell from the mountains a century ago; and, if one may judge from the hoary appearance of the inhabitants, here are patriarchs coeval with their mansions. Orchards of cherry-trees cover the steeps above the village, which to our certain knowledge produce most admirable fruit.

Having refreshed ourselves with their cooling juice, we struck into a grove of pines, the tallest and most flourishing we had yet beheld. There seemed no end to these forests, except where little irregular spots of herbage, fed by cattle, intervened. Whenever we gained an eminence it was only to discover more ranges of dark wood, variegated with meadows and glittering streams. White clover and a profusion of sweet-scented flowers clothe

their banks; above, waves the mountain-ash, glowing with scarlet berries: and beyond, rise hills, rocks and mountains, piled upon one another, and fringed with fir to their topmost acclivities. Perhaps the Norwegian forests alone, equal these in grandeur and extent. Those which cover the Swiss highlands rarely convey such vast ideas. There, the woods climb only half way up their ascents, which then are circumscribed by snows: here no boundaries are set to their progress, and the mountains, from base to summit, display rich unbroken masses of vegetation.

As we were surveying this prospect, a thick cloud, fraught with thunder, obscured the horizon, whilst flashes of lightning startled our horses, whose snorts and stampings resounded through the woods. The impending tempests gave additional gloom to the firs, and we travelled several miles almost in total darkness. One moment the clouds began to fleet, and a faint gleam promised serener intervals, but the next was all blackness and terror; presently a deluge of rain poured down upon the valley, and in a short time the torrents beginning to swell, raged with such violence as to be forded with difficulty. Twilight drew on, just as we had passed the most terrible; then ascending a mountain, whose pines and birches rustled with the storm, we saw a little lake below. A deep azure haze veiled its eastern shore, and lowering vapours concealed the cliffs to the south; but over its western extremities hung a few transparent clouds; the rays of a struggling sunset streamed on the surface of the waters, tingeing the brow of a green promontory with tender pink.

I could not help fixing myself on the banks of the lake for several minutes, till this apparition faded away. Looking round, I shuddered at a craggy mountain, clothed with forests and almost perpendicular, that was absolutely to be surmounted before we could arrive at Walchen-see. No house, not even a shed appearing, we were forced to ascend the peak, and penetrate these awful groves. At length, after some perils but no adventure, we saw lights gleam upon the shore of the Walchen lake, which served to direct us to a cottage, where we passed the night, and were soon lulled to sleep by the fall of distant waters.

## LETTER X

Mittenwald. – Mountain chapels. – Saint Anna's young and fair worshippers. – Road to Inspruck. – Maximilian's tomb. – Vast range of prospects. – A mountain torrent. – Schönberg.

*July 26.*

THE sun rose many hours before me, and when I got up was spangling the surface of the lake, which spreads itself between steeps of wood, crowned by lofty crags and pinnacles. We had an opportunity of contemplating this bold assemblage as we travelled on the banks of the lake, where it forms a bay sheltered by impending forests; the water, tinged by their reflection with a deep cerulean, calm and tranquil. Mountains of pine and beech rising above, close every outlet; and, no village or spire peeping out of the foliage, impress an idea of more than European solitude.

From the shore of Walchen-see, our road led us straight through arching groves, which the axe seems never to have violated, to the summit of a rock covered with daphnes of various species, and worn by the course of torrents into innumerable craggy forms. Beneath, lay extended a chaos of shattered cliffs, with tall pines springing from their crevices, and rapid streams hurrying between their intermingled trunks and branches. As yet, no hut appeared, no mill, no bridge, no trace of human existence.

After a few hours' journey through the wilderness, we began to discover a wreath of smoke; and presently the cottage from whence it arose, composed of planks, and reared on the very brink of a precipice. Piles of cloven fir were dispersed before the entrance, on a little spot of verdure browsed by goats; near them sat an aged man with hoary whiskers, his white locks tucked under a fur cap. Two or three beautiful children with hair neatly braided, played around him; and a young woman dressed in a short robe and Polish-looking bonnet, peeped out of a wicket window.

I was so much struck with the appearance of this sequestered family, that, crossing a rivulet, I clambered up to their cottage and sought some refreshment. Immediately there was a contention amongst the children, who should be the first to oblige me. A little black-eyed girl succeeded, and brought me an earthen jug full of milk, with crumbled bread, and a platter of strawberries fresh picked from the bank. I reclined in the midst of my smiling hosts, and spread my repast on the turf: never could I be waited upon with more hospitable grace. The only thing I wanted was language to express my gratitude; and it was this deficiency which made me quit them so soon. The old man seemed visibly concerned at my departure; and his children followed me a long way down the rocks, talking in a dialect which passes all understanding, and waving their hands to bid me adieu.

I had hardly lost sight of them and regained my carriage before we entered a forest of pines, to all appearance without bounds,

of every age and figure; some, feathered to the ground with flourishing branches; others, decayed into shapes like Lapland idols. Even at noonday, I thought we should never have found our way out.

At last, having descended a long avenue, endless perspectives opening on either side, we emerged into a valley bounded by hills, divided into irregular inclosures, where many herds were grazing. A rivulet flows along the pastures beneath; and after winding through the village of Walgau, loses itself in a narrow pass amongst the cliffs and precipices which rise above the cultivated slopes and frame in this happy pastoral region. All the plain was in sunshine, the sky blue, the heights illuminated, except one rugged peak with spires of rock, shaped not unlike the views I have seen of Sinai, and wrapped, like that sacred mount, in clouds and darkness. At the base of this tremendous mass lies the hamlet of Mittenwald, surrounded by thickets and banks of verdure, and watered by frequent springs, whose sight and murmurs were so reviving in the midst of a sultry day, that we could not think of leaving their vicinity, but remained at Mittenwald the whole evening.

Our inn had long airy galleries, with pleasant balconies fronting the mountain; in one of these we dined upon trout fresh from the rills, and cherries just culled from the orchards that cover the slopes above. The clouds were dispersing, and the topmost peak half visible, before we ended our repast, every moment discovering some inaccessible cliff or summit, shining

through the mists, and tinted by the sun, with pale golden colours. These appearances filled me with such delight and with such a train of romantic associations, that I left the table and ran to an open field beyond the huts and gardens to gaze in solitude and catch the vision before it dissolved away. You, if any human being is able, may conceive true ideas of the glowing vapours sailing over the pointed rocks, and brightening them in their passage with amber light.

When all was faded and lost in the blue ether, I had time to look around me and notice the mead in which I was standing. Here, clover covered its surface; there, crops of grain; further on, beds of herbs and the sweetest flowers. An amphitheatre of hills and rocks, broken into a variety of glens and precipices, open a course for several clear rivulets, which, after gurgling amidst loose stones and fragments, fall down the steeps, and are concealed and quieted in the herbage of the vale.

A cottage or two peep out of the woods that hang over the waterfalls; and on the brow of the hills above, appears a series of eleven little chapels, uniformly built. I followed the narrow path that leads to them, on the edge of the eminences, and met a troop of beautiful peasants, all of the name of Anna (for it was St. Anna's day) going to pay their devotion, severally, at these neat white fanes. There were faces that Guercino would not have disdained copying, with braids of hair the softest and most luxuriant I ever beheld. Some had wreathed it simply with flowers, others with rolls of a thin linen (manufactured in the

neighbourhood), and disposed it with a degree of elegance one should not have expected on the cliffs of the Tyrol.

Being arrived, they knelt all together at the first chapel, on the steps, a minute or two, whispered a short prayer, and then dispersed each to her fane. Every little building had now its fair worshipper, and you may well conceive how much such figures, scattered about the landscape, increased its charms. Notwithstanding the fervour of their adorations (for at intervals they sighed and beat their white bosoms with energy), several bewitching profane glances were cast at me as I passed by. Do not be surprised, then, if I became a convert to idolatry in so amiable a form, and worshipped Saint Anna on the score of her namesakes.

When got beyond the last chapel, I began to hear the roar of a cascade in a thick wood of beech and chestnut that clothes the steeps of a wide fissure in the rock. My ear soon guided me to its entrance, which was marked by a shed encompassed with mossy fragments and almost concealed by bushes of rhododendron in full red bloom – amongst these I struggled, till reaching a goat-track, it conducted me, on the brink of the foaming waters, to the very depths of the cliff, whence issues a stream which, dashing impetuously down, strikes against a ledge of rocks, and sprinkles the impending thicket with dew. Big drops hung on every spray, and glittered on the leaves partially gilt by the rays of the declining sun, whose mellow hues softened the rugged summits, and diffused a repose, a divine calm, over this deep

retirement, which inclined me to imagine it the extremity of the earth – the portal of some other region of existence, – some happy world beyond the dark groves of pine, the caves and awful mountains, where the river takes its source! Impressed with this romantic idea, I hung eagerly over the gulph, and fancied I could distinguish a voice bubbling up with the waters; then looked into the abyss and strained my eyes to penetrate its gloom – but all was dark and unfathomable as futurity! Awakening from my reverie, I felt the damps of the water chill my forehead; and ran shivering out of the vale to avoid them. A warmer atmosphere, that reigned in the meads I had wandered across before, tempted me to remain a good while longer collecting dianthi freaked with beautifully varied colours, and a species of white thyme scented like myrrh. Whilst I was thus employed, a confused murmur struck my ear, and, on turning towards a cliff, backed by the woods from whence the sound seemed to proceed, forth issued a herd of goats, hundreds after hundreds, skipping down the steeps: then followed two shepherd boys, gamboling together as they drove their creatures along: soon after, the dog made his appearance, hunting a stray heifer which brought up the rear. I followed them with my eyes till lost in the windings of the valley, and heard the tinkling of their bells die gradually away. Now the last blush of crimson left the summit of *Sinai*, inferior mountains being long since cast in deep blue shade. The village was already hushed when I regained it, and in a few moments I followed its example.

July 27. – We pursued our journey to Inspruck, through the wildest scenes of wood and mountain, where the rocks were now beginning to assume a loftier and more majestic appearance, and to glisten with snows. I had proposed passing a day or two at Inspruck, visiting the castle of Embras, and examining Count Eysenberg's cabinet, enriched with the rarest productions of the mineral kingdom, and a complete collection of the moths and flies peculiar to the Tyrol; but, upon my arrival, the azure of the skies and the brightness of the sunshine inspired me with an irresistible wish of hastening to Italy. I was now too near the object of my journey, to delay possession any longer than absolutely necessary, so, casting a transient look on Maximilian's tomb, and the bronze statues of Tyrolese Counts, and worthies, solemnly ranged in the church of the Franciscans, set off immediately.

We crossed a broad noble street, terminated by a triumphal arch, and were driven along the road to the foot of a mountain waving with fields of corn, and variegated with wood and vineyards, encircling lawns of the finest verdure, scattered over with white houses. Upon ascending the mount, and beholding a vast range of prospects of a similar character, I almost repented my impatience, and looked down with regret upon the cupolas and steeples we were leaving behind. But the rapid succession of lovely and romantic scenes soon effaced the former from my memory.

Our road, the smoothest in the world (though hewn in the

bosom of rocks) by its sudden turns and windings, gave us, every instant, opportunities of discovering new villages, and forests rising beyond forests; green spots in the midst of wood, high above on the mountains, and cottages perched on the edge of promontories. Down, far below, in the chasm, amidst a confusion of pines and fragments of stone, rages the torrent Inn, which fills the country far and wide with a perpetual murmur. Sometimes we descended to its brink, and crossed over high bridges; sometimes mounted halfway up the cliffs, till its roar and agitation became, through distance, inconsiderable.

After a long ascent we reached Schönberg,<sup>5</sup> a village well worthy of its appellation: and then, twilight drawing over us, began to descend. We could now but faintly discover the opposite mountains, veined with silver rills, when we came once more to the banks of the Inn. This turbulent stream accompanied us all the way to Steinach, and broke by its continual roar the stillness of the night, half spent, before we retired to rest.

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<sup>5</sup> Schönberg, beautiful mountain.

## LETTER XI

Steinach. – Its torrent and gloomy strait. – Achievements of Industry. – A sleepy Region. – Beautiful country round Brixen.

*July 28.*

I ROSE early to enjoy the fragrance of the vegetation, bathed in a shower which had lately fallen, and looking around me, saw nothing but crags hanging over crags, and the rocky shores of the stream, still dark with the shade of the mountains. The small opening in which Steinach is situated, terminates in a gloomy strait, scarce leaving room for the road and the torrent, which does not understand being thwarted, and will force its way, let the pines grow ever so thick, or the rocks be ever so formidable.

Notwithstanding the forbidding air of this narrow dell, Industry has contrived to enliven its steeps with habitations, to raise water by means of a wheel, and to cover the surface of the rocks with soil. By this means large crops of oats and flax are produced, and most of the huts have gardens filled with poppies, which seem to thrive in this parched situation.

“Urit enim lini campum seges, urit avenæ,  
Urunt Lethæo perfusa papavera somno.”

The farther we advanced in the dell, the larger were the plantations which discovered themselves. For what specific

purpose these gaudy flowers meet with such encouragement, I had neither time nor language to enquire; the mountaineers stuttering a gibberish unintelligible even to Germans. Probably opium is extracted from them; or, perhaps, if you love a conjecture, Morpheus has transferred his abode from the Cimmerians to a cavern somewhere or other in the recesses of these endless mountains. Poppies, you know, in poetic travels, always denote the skirts of his soporific reign, and I do not remember a region better calculated for undisturbed repose than the narrow clefts and gullies which run up amongst these rocks, lost in vapours impervious to the sun, and moistened by rills and showers, whose continual trickling inspire a drowsiness not easily to be resisted. Add to these circumstances the waving of the pines, and the hum of bees seeking their food in the crevices, and you will have as sleepy a region as that in which Spenser and Ariosto have placed the nodding deity.

But we may as well keep our eyes open for the present, and look at the beautiful country round Brixen, where I arrived in the cool of the evening, and breathed the freshness of a garden immediately beneath my window. The thrushes, which nest amongst its shades, saluted me the moment I awoke next morning.

# ITALY

## LETTER I

Bolsano. – Indications of approaching Italy. – Fire-flies. – Appearance of the Peasantry. – A forest Lake. – Arrive at Borgo di Volsugano. – Prospect of Hills in the Venetian State. – Gorgeous Flies. – Fortress of Covalo. – Leave the country of crags and precipices and enter the territory of the Bassanese. – Groves of olives and vines. – Classic appearance of Bassano. – Happy groups. – Pachierotti, the celebrated singer. – Anecdote of him.

*July 29, 1780.*

WE proceeded over fertile mountains to Bolsano. It was here first that I noticed the rocks cut into terraces, thick set with melons and Indian corn; fig-trees and pomegranates hanging over garden walls, clustered with fruit. In the evening we perceived several further indications of approaching Italy; and after sun-set the Adige, rolling its full tide between precipices, which looked terrific in the dusk. Myriads of fire-flies sparkled amongst the shrubs on the bank. I traced the course of these exotic insects by their blue light, now rising to the summits of the trees, now sinking to the ground, and associating with vulgar glow-worms.

We had opportunities enough to remark their progress, since we travelled all night; such being my impatience to reach the promised land!

Morning dawned just as we saw Trent dimly before us. I slept a few hours, then set out again (July 30th), after the heats were in some measure abated, and leaving Bergine, where the peasants were feasting before their doors, in their holiday dresses, with red pinks stuck in their ears instead of rings, and their necks surrounded with coral of the same colour, we came through a woody valley to the banks of a lake, filled with the purest and most transparent water, which loses itself in shady creeks, amongst hills entirely covered with shrubs and verdure.

The shores present one continual thicket, interspersed with knots of larches and slender almonds, starting from the underwood. A cornice of rock runs round the whole, except where the trees descend to the very brink, and dip their boughs in the water.

It was six o'clock when I caught the sight of this unsuspected lake, and the evening shadows stretched nearly across it. Gaining a very rapid ascent, we looked down upon its placid bosom, and saw several airy peaks rising above tufted foliage. I quitted the contemplation of them with regret, and, in a few hours, arrived at Borgo di Volsugano; the scene of the lake still present before the eye of my fancy.

July 31st. – My heart beat quick when I saw some hills, not very distant, which I was told lay in the Venetian State, and I

thought an age, at least, had elapsed before we were passing their base. The road was never formed to delight an impatient traveller; loose pebbles and rolling stones render it, in the highest degree, tedious and jolting. I should not have spared my execrations, had it not traversed a picturesque valley, overgrown with juniper, and strewed with fragments of rock, precipitated, long since, from the surrounding eminences, blooming with cyclamens.

I clambered up several of these crags, to gather the flowers I have just mentioned, and found them deliciously scented. *Fratillarias*, and the most gorgeous flies, many of which I here noticed for the first time, were fluttering about and expanding their wings to the sun. There is no describing the numbers I beheld, nor their gaily varied colouring. I could not find in my heart to destroy their felicity; to scatter their bright plumage and snatch them for ever from the realms of light and flowers. Had I been less compassionate, I should have gained credit with that respectable corps, the torturers of butterflies; and might, perhaps, have enriched their cabinets with some unknown captives. However, I left them imbibing the dews of heaven, in free possession of their native rights; and having changed horses at Tremolano, entered at length my long-desired Italy.

Fra gli odoriferi ginepri,<sup>6</sup>

The pass is rocky and tremendous, guarded by the fortress

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<sup>6</sup> Ariosto *Orlando Furioso*. — *Canto 7, stanza 32.*

of Covalo, in possession of the empress queen, and only fit, one should think, to be inhabited by her eagles. There is no attaining this exalted hold but by the means of a cord let down many fathoms by the soldiers, who live in dens and caverns, which serve also as arsenals, and magazines for powder; whose mysteries I declined prying into, their approach being a little too aërial for my earthly frame. A black vapour, tinging their entrance, completed the romance of the prospect, which I never shall forget.

For two or three leagues there was little variation in the scenery; cliffs, nearly perpendicular on both sides, and the Brenta foaming and thundering below. Beyond, the rocks began to be mantled with vines and gardens. Here and there a cottage shaded with mulberries, made its appearance, and we often discovered, on the banks of the river, ranges of white buildings, with courts and awnings, beneath which numbers of women and children were employed in manufacturing silk. As we advanced, the stream gradually widened, and the rocks receded; woods were more frequent and cottages thicker strown.

About five in the evening we left the country of crags and precipices, of mists and cataracts, and were entering the fertile territory of the Bassanese. It was now I beheld groves of olives, and vines clustering the summits of the tallest elms; pomegranates in every garden, and vases of citron and orange before almost every door. The softness and transparency of the air soon told me I was arrived in happier climates; and I

felt sensations of joy and novelty run through my veins, upon beholding this smiling land of groves and verdure stretched out before me. A few hazy vapours, I can hardly call them clouds, rested upon the extremities of the landscape; and, through their medium, the sun cast an oblique and dewy ray. Peasants were returning home, singing as they went, and calling to each other over the hills; whilst the women were milking goats before the wickets of the cottage, and preparing their country fare.

I left them enjoying it, and soon beheld the ancient ramparts and cypresses of Bassano; whose classic appearance recalled the memory of former times, and answered exactly the ideas I had pictured to myself of Italian edifices. Though encompassed by walls and turrets, neither soldiers nor custom-house officers start out from their concealment, to question and molest a weary traveller, for such is the happiness of the Venetian state, at least of the terra firma provinces, that it does not contain, I believe, above four regiments. Istria, Dalmatia, and the maritime frontiers, are more formidably guarded, as they touch, you know, the whiskers of the Turkish empire.

Passing under a Doric gateway, we crossed the chief part of the town in the way to our locanda, pleasantly situated, and commanding a level green, where people walk and take ices by moonlight. On the right, the Franciscan church, and convent, half hid in the religious gloom of pine and cypress; to the left, a perspective of walls and towers rising from the turf, and marking it, when I arrived, with long shadows, in front; where the lawn

terminates, meadow, wood, and garden run quite to the base of the mountains.

Twilight coming on, this beautiful spot swarmed with company, sitting in circles upon the grass, refreshing themselves with fruit and sherbets, or lounging upon the bank beneath the towers. They looked so free and happy that I longed to be acquainted with them; and, thanks to a warm-hearted old Venetian, (the Senator Querini,) was introduced to a group of the principal inhabitants. Our conversation ended in a promise to meet the next evening at the villa of La Contessa Roberti, about a league from Bassano, and then to return together and sing to the praise of Pachierotti, their idol, as well as mine.

You can have no idea what pleasure we mutually found in being of the same faith, and believing in one singer; nor can you imagine what effects that musical divinity produced at Padua, where he performed a few years ago, and threw his audience into such raptures, that it was some time before they recovered. One in particular, a lady of distinction, fainted away the instant she caught the pathetic accents of his voice, and was near dying a martyr to its melody. La Contessa, who sings in the truest taste, gave me a detail of the whole affair. "Egli ha fatto veramente un fanatismo a Padua," was her expression. I assured her we were not without idolatry in England, upon his account; but that in this, as well as in other articles of belief, there were many abominable heretics.

## LETTER II

Villa of Mosolente – The route to Venice. – First view of that city. – Striking prospect from the Leon Bianco. – Morning scene on the grand canal. – Church of Santa Maria della Salute. – Interesting group of stately buildings. – Convent of St. Giorgio Maggiore. – The Redentore. – Island of the Carthusians.

*August 1st, 1780.*

THE whole morning not a soul stirred who could avoid it. Those who were so active and lively the night before, were now stretched languidly upon their couches. Being to the full as idly disposed, I sat down and wrote some of this dreaming epistle; then feasted upon figs and melons; then got under the shade of the cypress, and slumbered till evening, only waking to dine, and take some ice.

The sun declining apace, I hastened to my engagement at Mosolente (for so is the villa called) placed on a verdant hill encircled by others as lovely, and consisting of three light pavilions connected by porticos; just such as we admire in the fairy scenes of an opera. A vast flight of steps leads to the summit, where Signora Roberti and her friends received me with a grace and politeness that can never want a place in my memory. We rambled over all the apartments of this agreeable edifice, characterised by airiness and simplicity. The pavement encrusted

with a composition as cool and polished as marble; the windows, doors, and balconies adorned with silver iron work, commanding scenes of meads and woodlands that extend to the shores of the Adriatic; slender towers and cypresses rising above the levels; and the hazy mountains beyond Padua, diversifying the expanse, form altogether a landscape which the elegant imagination of Horizonti never exceeded.

I gazed on this delightful view till it faded in the dusk; then returning to Bassano, repaired to an illuminated hall, and heard Signora Roberti sing the very air which had excited such transport at Padua. As soon as she had ended, a band of various instruments stationed in the open street began a lively symphony, which would have delighted me at any other time; but now, I wished them a thousand leagues away, so pleasingly melancholy an impression did the air I had been listening to leave on my mind.

At midnight I took leave of my obliging hosts, who were just setting out for Padua. They gave me a thousand kind invitations, and I hope some future day to accept them.

*August 2.*

OUR route to Venice lay winding about the variegated plains I had surveyed from Mosolente; and after dining at Treviso we came in two hours and a half to Mestre, between grand villas and gardens peopled with statues. Embarking our baggage at the last-mentioned place, we stepped into a gondola, whose even motion was very agreeable after the jolts of a chaise. We were soon out

of the canal of Mestre, terminated by an isle which contains a cell dedicated to the Holy Virgin, peeping out of a thicket, whence spire up two tall cypresses. Its bells tingled as we passed along and dropped some paolis into a net tied at the end of a pole stretched out to us for that purpose.

As soon as we had doubled the cape of this diminutive island, an expanse of sea opened to our view, the domes and towers of Venice rising from its bosom. Now we began to distinguish Murano, St. Michele, St. Giorgio in Alga, and several other islands, detached from the grand cluster, which I hailed as old acquaintances; innumerable prints and drawings having long since made their shapes familiar. Still gliding forward, we every moment distinguished some new church or palace in the city, suffused with the rays of the setting sun, and reflected with all their glow of colouring from the surface of the waters.

The air was calm; the sky cloudless; a faint wind just breathing upon the deep, lightly bore its surface against the steps of a chapel in the island of San Secondo, and waved the veil before its portal, as we rowed by and coasted the walls of its garden overhung with fig-trees and surmounted by spreading pines. The convent discovers itself through their branches, built in a style somewhat morisco, and level with the sea, except where the garden intervenes.

We were now drawing very near the city, and a confused hum began to interrupt the evening stillness; gondolas were continually passing and repassing, and the entrance of the Canal

Reggio, with all its stir and bustle, lay before us. Our gondoliers turned with much address through a crowd of boats and barges that blocked up the way, and rowed smoothly by the side of a broad pavement, covered with people in all dresses and of all nations.

Leaving the Palazzo Pesaro, a noble structure with two rows of arcades and a superb rustic, behind, we were soon landed before the Leon Bianco, which being situated in one of the broadest parts of the grand canal, commands a most striking assemblage of buildings. I have no terms to describe the variety of pillars, of pediments, of mouldings, and cornices, some Grecian, others Saracenic, that adorn these edifices, of which the pencil of Canaletti conveys so perfect an idea as to render all verbal description superfluous. At one end of this grand scene of perspective appears the Rialto; the sweep of the canal conceals the other.

The rooms of our hotel are spacious and cheerful; a lofty hall, or rather gallery, painted with grotesque in a very good style, perfectly clean, floored with a marbled stucco, divides the house, and admits a refreshing current of air. Several windows near the ceiling look into this vast apartment, which serves in lieu of a court, and is rendered perfectly luminous by a glazed arcade, thrown open to catch the breezes. Through it I passed to a balcony which impends over the canal, and is twined round with plants forming a green festoon springing from two large vases of orange trees placed at each end. Here I established myself to

enjoy the cool, and observe, as well as the dusk would permit, the variety of figures shooting by in their gondolas.

As night approached, innumerable tapers glimmered through the awnings before the windows. Every boat had its lantern, and the gondolas moving rapidly along were followed by tracks of light, which gleamed and played upon the waters. I was gazing at these dancing fires when the sounds of music were wafted along the canals, and as they grew louder and louder, an illuminated barge, filled with musicians, issued from the Rialto, and stopping under one of the palaces, began a serenade, which stilled every clamour and suspended all conversation in the galleries and porticos; till, rowing slowly away, it was heard no more. The gondoliers catching the air, imitated its cadences, and were answered by others at a distance, whose voices, echoed by the arch of the bridge, acquired a plaintive and interesting tone. I retired to rest, full of the sound; and long after I was asleep, the melody seemed to vibrate in my ear.

*August 3.*

IT was not five o'clock before I was aroused by a loud din of voices and splashing of water under my balcony. Looking out, I beheld the grand canal so entirely covered with fruits and vegetables, on rafts and in barges, that I could scarcely distinguish a wave. Loads of grapes, peaches and melons arrived, and disappeared in an instant, for every vessel was in motion; and the crowds of purchasers hurrying from boat to boat, formed a very lively picture. Amongst the multitudes, I remarked a good

many whose dress and carriage announced something above the common rank; and upon enquiry I found they were noble Venetians, just come from their casinos, and met to refresh themselves with fruit, before they retired to sleep for the day.

Whilst I was observing them, the sun began to colour the balustrades of the palaces, and the pure exhilarating air of the morning drawing me abroad, I procured a gondola, laid in my provision of bread and grapes, and was rowed under the Rialto, down the grand canal to the marble steps of S. Maria della Salute, erected by the Senate in performance of a vow to the Holy Virgin, who begged off a terrible pestilence in 1630. The great bronze portal opened whilst I was standing on the steps which lead to it, and discovered the interior of the dome, where I expatiated in solitude; no mortal appearing except an old priest who trimmed the lamps and muttered a prayer before the high altar, still wrapt in shadows. The sun-beams began to strike against the windows of the cupola, just as I left the church and was wafted across the waves to the spacious platform in front of St. Giorgio Maggiore, one of the most celebrated works of Palladio.

When my first transport was a little subsided, and I had examined the graceful design of each particular ornament, and united the just proportion and grand effect of the whole in my mind, I planted my umbrella on the margin of the sea, and viewed at my leisure the vast range of palaces, of porticos, of towers, opening on every side and extending out of sight. The Doge's palace and the tall columns at the entrance of the place of St.

Mark, form, together with the arcades of the public library, the lofty Campanile and the cupolas of the ducal church, one of the most striking groups of buildings that art can boast of. To behold at one glance these stately fabrics, so illustrious in the records of former ages, before which, in the flourishing times of the republic, so many valiant chiefs and princes have landed, loaded with oriental spoils, was a spectacle I had long and ardently desired. I thought of the days of Frederic Barbarossa, when looking up the piazza of St. Mark, along which he marched in solemn procession, to cast himself at the feet of Alexander the Third, and pay a tardy homage to St. Peter's successor. Here were no longer those splendid fleets that attended his progress; one solitary galeass was all I beheld, anchored opposite the palace of the Doge and surrounded by crowds of gondolas, whose sable hues contrasted strongly with its vermilion oars and shining ornaments. A party-coloured multitude was continually shifting from one side of the piazza to the other; whilst senators and magistrates in long black robes were already arriving to fill their respective offices.

I contemplated the busy scene from my peaceful platform, where nothing stirred but aged devotees creeping to their devotions, and, whilst I remained thus calm and tranquil, heard the distant buzz of the town. Fortunately some length of waves rolled between me and its tumults; so that I ate my grapes, and read Metastasio, undisturbed by officiousness or curiosity. When the sun became too powerful, I entered the nave.

After I had admired the masterly structure of the roof and the lightness of its arches, my eyes naturally directed themselves to the pavement of white and ruddy marble, polished, and reflecting like a mirror the columns which rise from it. Over this I walked to a door that admitted me into the principal quadrangle of the convent, surrounded by a cloister supported on Ionic pillars, beautifully proportioned. A flight of stairs opens into the court, adorned with balustrades and pedestals, sculptured with elegance truly Grecian. This brought me to the refectory, where the chef-d'œuvre of Paul Veronese, representing the marriage of Cana in Galilee, was the first object that presented itself. I never beheld so gorgeous a group of wedding-garments before; there is every variety of fold and plait that can possibly be imagined. The attitudes and countenances are more uniform, and the guests appear a very genteel, decent sort of people, well used to the mode of their times and accustomed to miracles.

Having examined this fictitious repast, I cast a look on a long range of tables covered with very excellent realities, which the monks were coming to devour with energy, if one might judge from their appearance. These sons of penitence and mortification possess one of the most spacious islands of the whole cluster, a princely habitation, with gardens and open porticos, that engross every breath of air; and, what adds not a little to the charms of their abode, is the facility of making excursions from it, whenever they have a mind.

The republic, jealous of ecclesiastical influence, connives

at these amusing rambles, and, by encouraging the liberty of monks and churchmen, prevents their appearing too sacred and important in the eyes of the people, who have frequent proofs of their being mere flesh and blood, and that of the frailest composition. Had the rest of Italy been of the same opinion, and profited as much by Fra Paolo's maxims, some of its fairest fields would not, at this moment, lie uncultivated, and its ancient spirit might have revived. However, I can scarcely think the moment far distant, when it will assert its natural prerogatives, and look back upon the tiara, with all its host of scaring phantoms, as the offspring of a feverish dream.

Full of prophecies and bodings, I moved slowly out of the cloisters; and, gaining my gondola, arrived, I know not how, at the flights of steps which lead to the Redentore, a structure so simple and elegant, that I thought myself entering an antique temple, and looked about for the statue of the God of Delphi, or some other graceful divinity. A huge crucifix of bronze soon brought me to times present.

The charm being thus dissolved, I began to perceive the shapes of rueful martyrs peeping out of the niches around, and the bushy beards of capuchin friars wagging before the altars. These good fathers had decorated the nave with orange and citron trees, placed between the pilasters of the arcades; and on grand festivals, it seems, they turn the whole church into a bower, strew the pavement with leaves, and festoon the dome with flowers.

I left them occupied with their plants and their devotions. It

was mid-day, and I begged to be rowed to some woody island, where I might dine in shade and tranquillity. My gondoliers shot off in an instant; but, though they went at a very rapid rate, I wished to advance still faster, and getting into a bark with six oars, swept along the waters, soon left the Zecca and San Marco behind; and, launching into the plains of shining sea, saw turret after turret, and isle after isle, fleeting before me. A pale greenish light ran along the shores of the distant continent, whose mountains seemed to catch the motion of my boat, and to fly with equal celerity.

I had not much time to contemplate the beautiful effects on the waters – the emerald and purple hues which gleamed along their surface. Our prow struck, foaming, against the walls of the Carthusian garden, before I recollected where I was, or could look attentively around me. Permission being obtained, I entered this cool retirement, and putting aside with my hands the boughs of figs and pomegranates, got under an ancient bay-tree on the summit of a little knoll, near which several tall pines lift themselves up to the breezes. I listened to the conversation they held, with a wind just flown from Greece, and charged, as well as I could understand this airy language, with many affectionate remembrances from their relations on Mount Ida.

I reposed amidst fragrant leaves, fanned by a constant air, till it pleased the fathers to send me some provisions, with a basket of fruit and wine. Two of them would wait upon me, and ask ten thousand questions about Lord George Gordon, and the

American war. I, who was deeply engaged with the winds, and a thousand agreeable associations excited by my Grecian fancies, wished my interrogators in purgatory, and pleaded ignorance of the Italian language. This circumstance extricated me from my embarrassment, and procured me a long interval of repose.

## LETTER III

Church of St. Mark. – The Piazza. – Magnificent festivals formerly celebrated there. – Stately architecture of Sansovino. – The Campanile. – The Loggetta. – The Ducal Palace. – Colossal Statues. – Giants' Stairs. – Fit of enthusiasm. – Evening-scene in the great Square. – Venetian intrigue. – Confusion of languages. – Madame de Rosenberg. – Character of the Venetians.

The rustling of the pines had the same effect as the murmurs of other old story-tellers, and I dozed undisturbed till the people without, in the boat, (who wondered not a little, I dare say, what was become of me within,) began a sort of chorus in parts, full of such plaintive modulation, that I still thought myself under the influence of a dream, and, half in this world and half in the other, believed, like the heroes of Fingal, that I had caught the music of the spirits of the hill.

When I was thoroughly convinced of the reality of these sounds, I moved towards the shore whence they proceeded: a glassy sea lay before me; no gale ruffled the expanse; every breath had subsided, and I beheld the sun go down in all its sacred calm. You have experienced the sensations this moment inspires; imagine what they must have been in such a scene, and accompanied with a melody so simple and pathetic. I stepped into my boat, and now instead of encouraging the speed of

the gondoliers, begged them to abate their ardour, and row me lazily home. They complied, and we were near an hour reaching the platform in front of the ducal palace, thronged as usual with a variety of nations. I mixed a moment with the crowd; then directed my steps to the great mosque, I ought to say the church of St. Mark; but really its cupolas, slender pinnacles, and semicircular arches, have so oriental an appearance, as to excuse this appellation. I looked a moment at the four stately coursers of bronze and gold that adorn the chief portal, and then took in, at one glance, the whole extent of the piazza, with its towers and standards. A more noble assemblage was never exhibited by architecture. I envied the good fortune of Petrarch, who describes, in one of his letters, a tournament held in this princely opening.

Many are the festivals which have been here celebrated. When Henry the Third left Poland to mount the throne of France, he passed through Venice, and found the Senate waiting to receive him in their famous square, which by means of an awning stretched from the balustrades of opposite palaces, was metamorphosed into a vast saloon, sparkling with artificial stars, and spread with the richest carpets of the East. What a magnificent idea! The ancient Romans, in the zenith of power and luxury, never conceived a greater. It is to them, however, the Venetians are indebted for the hint, since we read of the Coliseo and Pompey's theatre being sometimes covered with transparent canvas, to defend the spectators from the heat or sudden rain, and

to tint the scene with soft agreeable colours.

Having enjoyed the general perspective of the piazza, I began to enter into particulars, and examine the bronze pedestals of the three standards before the great church, designed by Sansovino in the true spirit of the antique, and covered with relievos, at once bold and elegant. It is also to this celebrated architect we are indebted for the stately façade of the *Procuratie nuove*, which forms one side of the square, and presents an uninterrupted series of arcades and marble columns exquisitely wrought. Opposite this magnificent range appears another line of palaces, whose architecture, though far removed from the Grecian elegance of Sansovino, impresses veneration, and completes the pomp of the view.

There is something strange and singular in the Tower or Campanile, which rises distinct from the smooth pavement of the square, a little to the left as you stand before the chief entrance of St. Mark's. The design is barbarous, and terminates in uncouth and heavy pyramids; yet in spite of these defects it struck me with awe. A beautiful building called the Loggetta, and which serves as a guard-house during the convocation of the Grand Council, decorates its base. Nothing can be more enriched, more finished than this structure; which, though far from diminutive, is in a manner lost at the foot of the Campanile. This enormous fabric seems to promise a long duration, and will probably exhibit Saint Mark and his Lion to the latest posterity. Both appear in great state towards its summit, and have nothing superior, but an

archangel perched on the topmost pinnacle, and pointing to the skies. The dusk prevented my remarking the various sculptures with which the Loggetta is crowded.

Crossing the ample space between this graceful edifice and the ducal palace, I passed through a labyrinth of pillars and entered the principal court, of which nothing but the great outline was visible at so late an hour. Two reservoirs of bronze richly sculptured diversify the area. In front a magnificent flight of steps presents itself, by which the senators ascend through vast and solemn corridors, which lead to the interior of the edifice. The colossal statues of Mars and Neptune guard the entrance, and have given the appellation of *scala dei giganti* to the steps below, which I mounted not without respect; and, leaning against the balustrades, formed like the rest of the building of the rarest marbles, contemplated the tutelary divinities.

My admiration was shortly interrupted by one of the sbirri, or officers of police, who take their stands after sunset before the avenues of the palace, and who told me the gates were upon the point of being closed. So, hurrying down the steps, I left a million of delicate sculptures unexplored; for every pilaster, every frieze, every entablature, is encrusted with porphyry, verde antique, or some other precious marble, carved into as many grotesque wreaths of foliage as we admire in the loggie of Raphael. The various portals, the strange projections; in short, the striking irregularity of these stately piles, delighted me beyond idea; and I was sorry to be forced to abandon them so soon, especially as the

twilight, which bats and owls love not better than I do, enlarged every portico, lengthened every colonnade, and increased the dimensions of the whole, just as imagination desired. This faculty would have had full scope had I but remained an hour longer. The moon would then have gleamed upon the gigantic forms of Mars and Neptune, and discovered the statues of ancient heroes emerging from the gloom of their niches.

Such an interesting combination of objects, such regal scenery, with the reflection that many of their ornaments once contributed to the decoration of Athens, transported me beyond myself. The sbirri thought me distracted. True enough, I was stalking proudly about like an actor in an ancient Grecian tragedy, lifting up his hands to the consecrated fanes and images around, expecting the reply of his attendant chorus, and declaiming the first verses of *Œdipus Tyrannus*.

This fit of enthusiasm was hardly subsided, when I passed the gates of the palace into the great square, which received a faint gleam from its casinos and palaces, just beginning to be lighted up, and to become the resort of pleasure and dissipation. Numbers were walking in parties upon the pavement; some sought the convenient gloom of the porticoes with their favourites; others were earnestly engaged in conversation, and filled the gay illuminated apartments, where they resorted to drink coffee and sorbet, with laughter and merriment. A thoughtless giddy transport prevailed; for, at this hour, anything like restraint seems perfectly out of the question; and however

solemn a magistrate or senator may appear in the day, at night he lays up wig and robe and gravity to sleep together, runs intriguing about in his gondola, takes the reigning sultana under his arm, and so rambles half over the town, which grows gayer and gayer as the day declines.

Many of the noble Venetians have a little suite of apartments in some out-of-the-way corner, near the grand piazza, of which their families are totally ignorant. To these they skulk in the dusk, and revel undisturbed with the companions of their pleasures. Jealousy itself cannot discover the alleys, the winding passages, the unsuspected doors, by which these retreats are accessible. Many an unhappy lover, whose mistress disappears on a sudden with some fortunate rival, has searched for her haunts in vain. The gondoliers themselves, though the prime managers of intrigue, are often unacquainted with these interior cabinets. When a gallant has a mind to pursue his adventures with mystery, he rows to the piazza, orders his bark to wait, meets his goddess in the crowd, and vanishes from all beholders. Surely, Venice is the city in the universe best calculated for giving scope to the observations of a devil upon two sticks. What a variety of lurking-places would one stroke of his crutch uncover!

Whilst the higher ranks were solacing themselves in their casinos, the rabble were gathered in knots round the strollers and mountebanks, singing and scaramouching in the middle of the square. I observed a great number of Orientals amongst the crowd, and heard Turkish and Arabic muttering in every corner.

Here the Slavonian dialect predominated; there some Grecian jargon, almost unintelligible. Had Saint Mark's church been the wondrous tower, and its piazza the chief square, of the city of Babylon, there could scarcely have been a greater confusion of languages.

The novelty of the scene afforded me no small share of amusement, and I wandered about from group to group, and from one strange exotic to another, asking and being asked innumerable ridiculous questions, and settling the politics of London and Constantinople, almost in the same breath. This instant I found myself in a circle of grave Armenian priests and jewellers; the next amongst Greeks and Dalmatians, who accosted me with the smoothest compliments, and gave proof that their reputation for pliability and address was not ill-founded.

I was entering into a grand harum-scarum discourse with some Russian counts or princes, or whatever you please, just landed with dwarfs, and footmen, and governors, and staring like me, about them, when Madame de Rosenberg arrived, to whom I had the happiness of being recommended. She presented me to some of the most distinguished of the Venetian families at their great casino, which looks into the piazza, and consists of five or six rooms, fitted up in a gay flimsy taste, neither rich nor elegant, where were a great many lights, and a great many ladies negligently dressed, their hair falling very freely about them, and innumerable adventures written in their eyes. The gentlemen

were lolling upon the sofas, or lounging about the apartments.

The whole assembly seemed upon the verge of gaping, till coffee was carried round. This magic beverage diffused a temporary animation; and, for a moment or two, conversation moved on with a degree of pleasing extravagance; but the flash was soon dissipated, and nothing remained save cards and stupidity.

In the intervals of shuffling and dealing, some talked over the affairs of the grand council with less reserve than I expected; and two or three of them asked some feeble questions about the late tumults in London. It was one o'clock before all the company were assembled, and I left them at three, still dreaming over their coffee and card-tables. Trieze is their favourite game: *uno, due, tre, quatro, cinque, fante, cavallo re*, are eternally repeated; the apartments echoed no other sound.

I wonder a lively people can endure such monotony, for I have been told the Venetians are remarkably spirited; and so eager in the pursuit of amusement as hardly to allow themselves any sleep. Some, for instance, after declaiming in the Senate, walking an hour in the square, and fidgeting about from one casino to another till morning dawns, will get into a gondola, row across the Lagunes, take the post to Mestre or Fusina, and jumble over craggy pavements to Treviso, breakfast in haste, and rattle back again as if the Devil were charioteer: by eleven the party is restored to Venice, resumes robe and periwig, and goes to council.

This may be very true, and yet I will never cite the Venetians as examples of vivacity. Their nerves unstrung by early debaucheries, allow no natural flow of lively spirits, and at best but a few moments of a false and feverish activity. The approaches of sleep, forced back by an immoderate use of coffee, render them weak and listless, and the facility of being wafted from place to place in a gondola, adds not a little to their indolence. In short, I can scarcely regard their Eastern neighbours in a more lazy light; who, thanks to their opium and their harems, pass their lives in one perpetual doze.

## LETTER IV

Excessive heat. – The Devil and Senegal. – A dreary shore. – Scene of the Doge's nuptials with the sea. – Return to the Place of St. Mark. – Swarm of Lawyers. – Receptacles for anonymous accusations. – The Council of Ten. – Terrible punishments of its victims. – Statue of Neptune. – Fatal Waters. – Bridge of Sighs. – The Fondamenti Nuovi. – Conservatory of the Mendicanti. – An Oratorio. – Profound attention of the Audience.

*August 4th, 1780.*

THE heats were so excessive in the night, that I thought myself several times on the point of suffocation, tossed about like a wounded fish, and dreamt of the Devil and Senegal. Towards sunrise, a faint breeze restored me to life and reason. I slumbered till late in the day, and the moment I was fairly awake, ordered my gondolier to row out to the main ocean, that I might plunge into the waves, and hear and see nothing but waters around me.

We shot off, wound amongst a number of sheds, shops, churches, casinos, and palaces, growing immediately out of the canals, without any apparent foundation. No quay, no terrace, not even a slab is to be seen before the doors; one step brings you from the hall into the bark, and the vestibules of the stateliest structures lie open to the waters, and but just above their level. I observed several, as I glided along, supported by rows of well-

proportioned columns, adorned with terms and vases, beyond which the eye generally discovers a grand court, and sometimes a garden.

In about half an hour, we had left the thickest cluster of isles behind, and, coasting the Place of St. Mark opposite to San Giorgio Maggiore, whose elegant frontispiece was distinctly reflected by the calm waters, launched into the blue expanse of sea, from which rise the Carthusian and two or three other woody islands. I hailed the spot where I had passed such a happy visionary evening, and nodded to my friends the pines.

A few minutes more brought me to a dreary, sun-burnt shore, stalked over by a few Sclavonian soldiers, who inhabit a castle hard by, go regularly to an ugly unfinished church, and from thence, it is to be hoped, to paradise; as the air of their barracks is abominable, and kills them like blasted sheep.

Forlorn as this island appeared to me, I was told it was the scene of the Doge's pageantry at the feast of the Ascension; and the very spot to which he sails in the Bucentaur, previously to wedding the sea. You have heard enough, and if ever you looked into a show-box, seen full sufficient of this gaudy spectacle, without my enlarging upon the topic. I shall only say, that I was obliged to pursue, partly, the same road as the nuptial procession, in order to reach the beach, and was broiled and dazzled accordingly.

At last, after traversing some desert hillocks, all of a hop with toads and locusts (amongst which English heretics have the

honour of being interred), I passed under an arch, and suddenly the boundless plains of ocean opened to my view. I ran to the smooth sands, extending on both sides out of sight, and dashed into the waves, which were coursing one another with a gentle motion, and breaking lightly on the shores. The tide rolled over me as I lay floating about, buoyed up by the water, and carried me wheresoever it listed. It might have borne me far out into the main before I had been aware, so totally was I abandoned to the illusion of the moment. My ears were filled with murmuring undecided sounds; my limbs, stretched languidly on the surge, rose or sunk just as it swelled or subsided. In this passive state I remained, till the sun cast a less intolerable light, and the fishing-vessels, lying out in the bay at a great distance, spread their sails and were coming home.

Hastening back over the desert of locusts, I threw myself into the gondola; and, no wind or wave opposing, was soon wafted across to those venerable columns, so conspicuous in the Place of St. Mark. Directing my course immediately to the ducal palace, I entered the grand court, ascending the giants' stairs, and examined at my leisure its bas-reliefs. Then, taking the first guide that presented himself, I was shown along several cloisters and corridors, sustained by innumerable pillars, into the state apartments, which Tintoret and Paolo Veronese have covered with the triumphs of their country.

A swarm of lawyers filled the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, and one of the first advocates in the republic was pleading with all his

might, before a solemn row of senators. The eyes and ears of the assembly seemed equally affected. Clouds of powder, and volleys of execrations issuing every instant from the disputants, I got out of their way; and was led from hall to hall, and from picture to picture, with exemplary resignation. To be sure, I was heartily tired, but behaved with decency, having never once expressed how much I wished the chefs-d'œuvre I had been contemplating, less smoky and numerous.

At last, I reached once more the colonnades at the entrance, and caught the sea-breeze in the open porticoes which front San Giorgio Maggiore. The walls are covered in most places with grim visages sculptured in marble, whose mouths gape for accusations, and swallow every lie that malice and revenge can dictate. I wished for a few ears of the same kind, dispersed about the Doge's residence, to which one might apply one's own, and catch some account of the mysteries within; some little dialogue between the three Inquisitors, or debate in the Council of Ten.

This is the tribunal which holds the wealthy nobility in continual awe; before which they appear with trembling and terror; and whose summons they dare not disobey. Sometimes, by way of clemency, it condemns its victims to perpetual imprisonment, in close, stifling cells, between the leads and beams of the palace; or, unwilling to spill the blood of a fellow-citizen, generously sinks them into dungeons, deep under the canals which wash its foundations; so that, above and below, its majesty is contaminated by the abodes of punishment. What

other sovereign could endure the idea of having his immediate residence polluted with tears? or revel in his halls, conscious that many of his species were consuming their hours in lamentations above his head, and that but a few beams separated him from the scene of their tortures? However gaily disposed, could one dance with pleasure on a pavement, beneath which lie damp and gloomy caverns, whose inhabitants waste away by painful degrees, and feel themselves whole years a-dying? Impressed by these terrible ideas, I could not regard the palace without horror, and wished for the strength of a thousand antediluvians, to level it with the sea, lay open the secret recesses of punishment, and admit free gales and sunshine into every den.

When I had thus vented my indignation, I repaired to the statue of Neptune, whom twenty ages ago I should have invoked to second my enterprise. Once upon a time no deity had a freer hand at razing cities. His execution was renowned throughout all antiquity, and the proudest monarchs deprecated the wrath of ΚΡΕΙΩΝ ΕΝΟΣΙΧΘΩΝ. But, like the other mighty ones of ancient days, his reign is past and his trident disregarded. Formerly any wild spirit found favour in the eyes of fortune, and was led along the career of glory to the deliverance of captives and the extirpation of monsters; but, in our degenerate times, this easy road to fame is no longer open, and the means of producing such signal events are perplexed and difficult.

Abandoning therefore the sad tenants of the Piombi to their fate, I left the courts, and stepping into my bark, was rowed down

a canal overshadowed by the lofty walls of the palace. Beneath these fatal waters the dungeons I have also been speaking of are situated. There the wretches lie marking the sound of the oars, and counting the free passage of every gondola. Above, a marble bridge, of bold majestic architecture, joins the highest part of the prisons to the secret galleries of the palace; from whence criminals are conducted over the arch to a cruel and mysterious death. I shuddered whilst passing below; and believe it is not without cause, this structure is named PONTE DEI SOSPIRI. Horrors and dismal prospects haunted my fancy upon my return. I could not dine in peace, so strongly was my imagination affected; but snatching my pencil, I drew chasms and subterraneous hollows, the domain of fear and torture, with chains, racks, wheels, and dreadful engines in the style of Piranesi. About sunset I went and refreshed myself with the cool air and cheerful scenery of the Fondamenti nuovi, a vast quay or terrace of white marble, which commands the whole series of isles, from San Michele to Torcello,

“That rise and glitter o’er the ambient tide.”

Nothing can be more picturesque than the groups of towers and cupolas which they present, mixed with flat roofs and low buildings, and now and then a pine or cypress. Afar off, a little woody isle, called Il Deserto, swells from the ocean and diversifies its expanse.

When I had spent a delightful half-hour in viewing the distant isles, M. de Benincasa accompanied me to the Mendicanti, one of the four conservatorios, which give the best musical education conceivable to near one hundred young women. You may imagine how admirably those of the Mendicanti in particular are taught, since their establishment is under the direction of Bertoni, who breathes around him the very soul of harmony. The chapel in which we sat to hear the oratorio was dark and solemn; a screen of lofty pillars, formed of black marble and highly polished, reflected the lamps which burn perpetually before the altar. Every tribune was thronged with people, whose profound silence showed them worthy auditors of this master's music. Here were no cackling old women, or groaning Methodists, such as infest our English tabernacles, and scare one's ears with hoarse coughs accompanied by the naso obligato. All were still and attentive, imbibing the plaintive notes of the voices with eagerness; and scarce a countenance but seemed deeply affected with David's sorrows, the subject of the performance. I sat retired in a solitary tribune, and felt them as my own. Night came on before the last chorus was sung, and I still seem to hear its sacred melody.

## LETTER V

M. de Viloison and his attendant Laplander. – Drawings of ancient Venetian costume in one of the Gradanigo palaces. – Titian's master-piece in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo. – The distant Euganean hills.

*August 18, 1780.*

IT rains; the air is refreshed and I have courage to resume my pen, which the sultry weather had forced to lie dormant so long. I like this odd town of Venice, and find every day some new amusement in rambling about its innumerable canals and alleys. Sometimes I pry about the great church of Saint Mark, and examine the variety of marbles and mazes of delicate sculpture with which it is covered. The cupola, glittering with gold, mosaic, and paintings of half the wonders in the Apocalypse, never fails to transport me to the period of the Eastern empire. I think myself in Constantinople, and expect Michael Paleologus with all his train. One circumstance alone prevents my observing half the treasures of the place, and holds down my fancy just springing into the air: I mean the vile stench which exhales from every recess and corner of the edifice, and which all the incense of the altars cannot subdue.

When no longer able to endure this noxious atmosphere, I run up the Campanile in the piazza, and seating myself amongst the

pillars of the gallery, breathe the fresh gales which blow from the Adriatic; survey at my leisure all Venice beneath me, with its azure sea, white sails, and long tracks of islands shining in the sun. Having thus laid in a provision of wholesome breezes, I brave the vapours of the canals, and venture into the most curious and murky quarters of the city, in search of Turks and Infidels, that I may ask as many questions as I please about Cairo and Damascus.

Asiatics find Venice very much to their taste, and all those I conversed with allowed its customs and style of living had a good deal of conformity to their own. The eternal lounging in coffee-houses and sipping of sorbets agree perfectly well with the inhabitants of the Ottoman empire, who stalk about here in their proper dresses, and smoke their own exotic pipes, without being stared and wondered at as in most other European capitals. Some few of these Orientals are communicative and enlightened; but, generally speaking, they know nothing beyond the rule of three, and the commonest transactions of mercantile affairs.

The Greeks are by far a more lively generation, still retaining their propensity to works of genius and imagination. Metastasio has been lately translated into their modern language, and some obliging papa or other has had the patience to put the long-winded romance of Clelia into a Grecian dress. I saw two or three of these volumes exposed on a stall, under the grand arcades of the public library, as I went one day to admire the antiques in its vestibules.

Whilst I was intent upon my occupation, a little door, I never should have suspected, flew open, and out popped Monsieur de Viloison, from a place where nothing, I believe, but broomsticks and certain other utensils were ever before deposited. This gentleman, the most active investigator of Homer since the days of the good bishop of Thessalonica, bespatters you with more learning in a minute than others communicate in half a year; quotes Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, &c. with formidable fluency; and drove me from one end of the room to the other with a storm of erudition. Syllables fell thicker than hail, and in an instant I found myself so weighed down and covered, that I prayed, for mercy's sake, to be introduced, by way of respite, to a Laplander whom he leads about as a curiosity; a poor harmless good sort of a soul, calm and indifferent, who has acquired the words of several Oriental languages to perfection: ideas he has in none.

We went all together to view a collection of medals in one of the Gradanigo palaces, and two or three inestimable volumes, filled with paintings that represent the dress of the ancient Venetians; so that I had an opportunity of observing to perfection all the Lapland nothingness of my companion. What a perfect void! Cold and silent as the polar regions, not one passion ever throbb'd in his bosom; not one bright ray of fancy ever glittered in his mind; without love or anger, pleasure or pain, his days fleet smoothly along: all things considered, I must confess I envied such comfortable apathy.

After having passed an instructive hour in examining the medals and drawings, M. de Viloison proposed conducting me to the Armenian convent, but I begged to be excused, and went to San Giovanni e Paolo, a church to be held most holy in the annals of painting, since it contains that masterpiece of Titian, the martyrdom of the hermits St. Paul and St. Peter.

In the evening I rowed out as usual to observe the effect of sunset on the tufted gardens of the Giudeca, and to contemplate the distant Euganean hills, once the happiest region of Italy; where wandering nations enjoyed the simplicity of a pastoral life, long before the arrival of Antenor. In these primeval days deep forests and extensive pastures covered the shores of the Adriatic, and innumerable flocks hung on the brow of the mountains. This golden period ended upon the incursion of the Trojans and Heneti; who, led by Antenor, drove away the unfortunate savages, and possessed themselves of their habitations.

“On the clear hyaline, the glassy sea,”

## LETTER VI

Isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazorbo. – The once populous city of Altina. – An excursion. – Effects of our music on the inhabitants of the Islands. – Solitary fields infested by serpents. – Remains of ancient sculpture. – Antique and fantastic ornaments of the Cathedral of Torcello. – San Lorenzo's chair. – Dine in a Convent. – The Nuns. – Oratorio of Sisera. – Remarks on the music. – Singing of the Marchetti. – A female orchestra.

I am just returned from visiting the isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazorbo, distant about five miles from Venice. To these amphibious spots the Romans, inhabitants of eastern Lombardy, fled from the rapine of Attila; and, if we may believe Cassiodorus, there was a time when they presented a beautiful appearance. Beyond them, on the coast of the Lagunes, rose the once populous city of Altina, with its six stately gates, which Dandolo mentions. Its neighbourhood was scattered with innumerable villas and temples, composing altogether a prospect which Martial compares to Baia:

*“Æmula Baianis Altini littora villis.”*

But this agreeable scene, like so many others, is passed entirely away, and has left nothing, except heaps of stones and mis-shapen fragments, to vouch for its former magnificence.

Two of the islands, Costanziaco and Amiano, that are imagined to have contained the bowers and gardens of the Altinatians, have sunk beneath the waters; those which remain are scarcely worthy to rise above their surface.

Though I was persuaded little was left to be seen above ground, I could not deny myself the imaginary pleasure of treading a corner of the earth once so adorned and cultivated; and of walking over the roofs, perhaps, of undiscovered palaces. M. de R. to whom I communicated my ideas, entered at once into the scheme; hiring therefore a *peiotte*, we took some provisions and music (to us equally necessities of life) and launched into the canal, between Saint Michael and Murano. Our instruments played several delightful airs, that called forth the inhabitants of every island, and held them in silence, as if spell-bound, on the edge of their quays and terraces, till we were out of hearing.

Leaving Murano far behind, Venice and its world of turrets began to sink on the horizon, and the low desert isles beyond Mazarbo to lie stretched out before us. Now we beheld vast wastes of purple flowers, and could distinguish the low hum of the insects which hover above them; such was the stillness of the place. Coasting these solitary fields, we wound amongst several serpentine canals, bordered by gardens of figs and pomegranates, with neat Indian-looking inclosures of cane and reed: an aromatic plant, which the people justly dignify with the title of marine incense, clothes the margin of the waters. It proved very serviceable in subduing a musky odour, which attacked us the

moment we landed, and which proceeds from serpents that lurk in the hedges. These animals, say the gondoliers, defend immense treasures which lie buried under the ruins. Woe to those who attempt to invade them, or to pry too cautiously about!

Not choosing to be devoured, we left many a mound of fragments unnoticed, and made the best of our way to a little green, bounded on one side by a miserable shed, decorated with the name of the Podesta's residence, and on the other by a circular church. Some remains of tolerable antique sculpture are enchased in the walls; and the dome, supported by pillars of a smooth Grecian marble, though uncouth and ill-proportioned, impresses a sort of veneration, and transports the fancy to the twilight glimmering period when it was raised.

Having surveyed what little was visible, and given as much career to our imaginations as the scene inspired, we walked over a soil composed of crumbling bricks and cement to the cathedral; whose arches, in the ancient Roman style, convinced us that it dates at least as high as the sixth or seventh century.

Nothing can well be more fantastic than the ornaments of this structure, formed from the ruins of the Pagan temples of Altina, and encrusted with a gilt mosaic, like that which covers our Edward the Confessor's tomb. The pavement, composed of various precious marbles, is richer and more beautiful than one could have expected, in a place where every other object savours of the grossest barbarism. At the farther end, beyond the altar, appears a semicircular niche, with seats like the gradines

of a diminutive amphitheatre; above rise the quaint forms of the apostles, in red, blue, green, and black mosaic, and in the midst of the group a sort of marble chair, cool and penitential enough, where Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani sat to hold a provincial council, the Lord knows how long ago! The fount for holy water stands by the principal entrance, fronting this curious recess, and seems to have belonged to some place of Gentile worship. The figures of horned imps clinging round its sides, more devilish, more Egyptian, than any I ever beheld. The dragons on old china are not more whimsical; filled with bats' blood it would have been an admirable present to the sabbath of witches, and have cut a capital figure in their orgies. The sculpture is not the most delicate, but I cannot say a great deal about it, as very little light reaches the spot where it is fixed: indeed, the whole church is far from luminous, its windows being narrow and near the roof, with shutters composed of blocks of marble, which nothing but the whirlwinds of the last day, one should think, would move from their hinges.

By the time we had examined every nook and corner of this singular edifice, and tried to catch some small portion of sanctity by sitting in San Lorenzo's chair, dinner was prepared in a neighbouring convent, and the nuns, allured by the sound of our flutes and oboes, peeped out of their cells and showed themselves by dozens at the grate. Some few agreeable faces and interesting eyes enlivened the dark sisterhood; all seemed to catch a gleam of pleasure from the music; two or three of them, probably the

last immured, let fall a tear, and suffered the recollection of the world and its profane joys to interrupt for a moment their sacred tranquillity.

We stayed till the sun was low, on purpose that they might listen as long as possible to a harmony which seemed to issue, as the old abbess expressed herself, from the gates of paradise ajar. A thousand benedictions consecrated our departure; twilight came on just as we entered the bark and rowed out upon the waves, agitated by a fresh gale, but fearing nothing under the protection of Santa Margherita, whose good wishes our music had secured.

In two hours we were safely landed at the Fondamenti nuovi, and went immediately to the Mendicanti, where they were performing the oratorio of Sisera. The composer, a young man, had displayed great fire and originality in this performance; and a knowledge of character seldom found in the most celebrated masters. The supplication of the thirsty chieftain, and Jael's insinuating arts and pious treachery, are admirably expressed; but the agitation and boding slumbers which precede his death, are imagined in the highest strain of genius. The terror and agony of his dreams made me start, more than once, from my seat; and all the horrors of his assassination seemed full before me.

Too much applause cannot be given to the Marchetti, who sang the part of Sisera, and seconded the composer's ideas by the most feeling and spirited execution. There are few things I shall regret more on leaving Venice, than this conservatorio.

Whenever I am musically given, I fly to it, and hear the most striking finales in Paesiello's and Anfossi's operas, as long and often as I please.

The sight of the orchestra still makes me smile. You know, I suppose, it is entirely of the feminine gender, and that nothing is more common than to see a delicate white hand journeying across an enormous double bass, or a pair of roseate cheeks puffing, with all their efforts, at a French horn. Some that are grown old and Amazonian, who have abandoned their fiddles and their lovers, take vigorously to the kettle-drum; and one poor limping lady, who had been crossed in love, now makes an admirable figure on the bassoon.

Good night! I am quite exhausted with composing a chorus for this angelic choir. The poetry I send you. The music takes up too much room to travel at present. One day or other, perhaps, we may hear it in some dark grove, when the moon is eclipsed and nature in alarm.

This is not the last letter you would receive from Venice, were I not hurrying to Lucca, where Pacchierotti sings next week, in Bertoni's opera of Quinto Fabio.

## LETTER VII

Coast of Fusina. – The Brenta. – A Village of Palaces. – Fiesso. – Exquisite singing of the Galuzzi. – Marietta Cornaro. – Scenes of enchantment and fascination.

I was sorry to leave Venice, and regretted my peaceful excursions upon the Adriatic. No bright rays illuminated my departure, the sun was concealed in clouds; but the coolness and perfume of the air made ample amends for his absence.

About an hour's rowing from the isle of Saint Giorgio in Alga, brought us to the coast of Fusina, right opposite the opening where the Brenta mixes with the sea. This river flows calmly between banks of verdure, crowned by poplars, with vines twining round every stalk, and depending from tree to tree in beautiful festoons. Beds of mint and iris clothe the brink of the stream, except where interrupted by a tall growth of reeds and osiers. The morning continued to lower as we advanced; scarce a wind ventured to breathe: all was still and placid as the surface of the river. No sound struck my ears except the bargemen hallooing to open the sluices, and deepen the water.

As yet I had not perceived an habitation, nor any other objects than green inclosures and fields of Turkish corn, shaded with vines and poplars. It grew late before we glided along by the Mira, a village of palaces, whose courts and gardens, as magnificent as statues, terraces, and vases can make them, are

far from composing a rural prospect.

Such artificial scenery not engaging much of my attention, we stayed no longer than our dinner required, and reached the Dolo an hour before sunset. Passing the great sluices, whose gates opened with a thundering noise, we continued our course along the peaceful Brenta, winding its broad full stream through impenetrable copses. Day was about to close when we reached Fiesso; and it being a misty evening, I could scarcely distinguish the pompous façade of the Pisani palace. That of Cornaro, where we were engaged to sup, looks upon a broad mass of foliage which I contemplated with pleasure as it sank in the dusk.

We walked a long while under a pavilion stretched before the entrance, breathing the freshness of the wood after a shower which had lately fallen. The Galuzzi sang some of her father Ferandini's compositions with surprising energy; her cheek was flushed, her eyes glistened; the whole tone of her countenance was that of a person rapt and inspired. I forgot both time and place while she was singing. The night stole imperceptibly away, before I awoke from my trance.

I do not recollect ever to have passed an evening, which every circumstance conspired to render so full of charm. In general, my musical pleasures suffer terrible abatements from the phlegm and stupidity of my neighbourhood; but here, every one seemed to catch the flame, and to listen with reciprocal delight. Marietta Cornaro, whose lively talents are the boast of the Venetians, threw quick around her the glancing fires of genius.

What with the song of the Galuzzi, and those intellectual meteors, I scarcely knew to what element I was transported, and doubted for several moments, whether I was not fallen into a celestial dream: to wake was painful, and it was not without much lingering reluctance I left these scenes of enchantment and fascination, repeating with melancholy earnestness that pathetic sonnet of Petrarch's —

O giorno, o ora, o ultimo momento,  
O stelle congiurate a' impoverirme!  
O fido sguardo, or che volei tu dirme,  
Partend' io, per non esser mai contento?

## LETTER VIII

Reveries. – Walls of Padua. – Confused Pile dedicated to Saint Anthony. – Devotion at his Shrine. – Penitential Worshippers. – Magnificent Altar. – Sculpture of Sansovino. – Colossal Chamber like Noah's Ark.

The splendour of the rising sun, for once in my life, drew little of my attention. I was too deeply plunged in my reveries, to notice the landscape which lay before me; and the walls of Padua presented themselves some time ere I was aware. At any other moment, how sensibly should I have been affected with their appearance! How many ideas of Antenor and his Trojans, would have thronged into my memory! but now I regarded the scene with indifference, and passed many a palace, and many a woody garden, with my eyes riveted to the ground. The first object that appeared upon lifting them up, was a confused pile of spires and cupolas, dedicated to blessed Saint Anthony, one of whose most eloquent sermons the great Addison has translated *con amore*, and in his very best manner.

You are too well apprised of the veneration I have always entertained for this inspired preacher, to doubt that I immediately repaired to his shrine. Mine was a disturbed spirit, and required all the balm of Saint Anthony's kindness to appease it. Perhaps you will say I had better have gone to bed, and applied myself to my sleepy friend, the pagan divinity. It is probable that you are in

the right; but I could not retire to rest without first venting some portion of effervescence in sighs and supplications. The nave was filled with decrepit women and feeble children, kneeling by baskets of vegetables and other provisions; which, by good Anthony's interposition, they hoped to sell advantageously in the course of the day. Beyond these, nearer the choir, and in a gloomier part of the edifice, knelt a row of rueful penitents, smiting their breasts, and lifting their eyes to heaven. Further on, in front of the dark recess, where the sacred relics are deposited, a few desperate, melancholy sinners lay prostrate.

To these I joined myself. The sunbeams had not yet penetrated into this religious quarter; and the only light it received proceeded from the golden lamps, which hang in clusters round the sanctuary. A lofty altar, decked with the most lavish magnificence, supports the shrine. Those who are profoundly touched with its sanctity, may approach, and walking round, look through the crevices of the tomb, which, it is observed, exude a balsamic odour. But supposing a traveller ever so heretical, I would advise him by no means to neglect this pilgrimage; since every part of the recess he visits is decorated with exquisite sculptures. Sansovino and other renowned artists have vied with each other in carving the alto relievos of the arcade, which, for design and execution, would do honour to the sculptors of antiquity.

Having observed these objects with less exactness than they merited, I hastened to the inn, luckily hard by, and one of the

best I am acquainted with. Here I soon fell asleep in defiance of sunshine. It is true my slumbers were not a little agitated. The saint had been deaf to my prayer, and I still found myself a frail, infatuated mortal.

At five I got up; we dined, and afterwards scarcely knowing, nor much caring, what became of us, we strolled to the great hall of the town; an enormous edifice, larger considerably than that of Westminster, but free from stalls, or shops, or nests of litigation. The roof, one spacious vault of brown timber, casts a solemn gloom, which was still increased by the lateness of the hour, and not diminished by the wan light, admitted through the windows of pale blue glass. The size and shape of this colossal chamber, the arching of the roof, with enormous rafters stretching across it, and, above all, the watery gleams that glanced through the dull casements, possessed my fancy with ideas of Noah's ark, and almost persuaded me I beheld that extraordinary vessel. The representation one sees of it in many an old Dutch Bible, seems to be formed upon this very model, and for several moments I indulged the chimera of imagining myself confined within its precincts. Could I but choose my companions, I should have no great objection to encounter a deluge, and to float away a few months upon the waves!

We remained till night walking to and fro in the ark; it was then full time to retire, as the guardian of the place was by no means formed to divine our diluvian ideas.

## LETTER IX

Church of St. Justina. – Tombs of remote antiquity. – Ridiculous attitudes of rheumatic devotees. – Turini's music. – Another excursion to Fiesso. – Journey to the Euganean hills. – Newly discovered ruins. – High Mass in the great Church of Saint Anthony. – A thunder-storm. – Palladio's Theatre at Vicenza. – Verona. – An aërial chamber. – Striking prospect from it. – The Amphitheatre. – Its interior. – Leave Verona. – Country between that town and Mantua. – German soldiers. – Remains of the palace of the Gonzagas. – Paintings of Julio Romano. – A ruined garden. – Subterranean apartments.

Immediately after breakfast we went to St. Justina's. Both extremities of the cross aisles are terminated by altar-tombs of very remote antiquity, adorned with uncouth sculptures of the evangelists, supported by wreathed columns of alabaster, round which, to my no small astonishment, four or five gawky fellows were waddling on their knees, persuaded, it seems, that this strange devotion would cure the rheumatism, or any other aches with which they were afflicted. You can have no conception of the ridiculous attitudes into which they threw themselves; nor the difficulty with which they squeezed along, between the middle column of the tomb and those which surround it. No criminal in the pillory ever exhibited a more rueful appearance, no swine ever scrubbed itself more fervently than these infatuated lubbers.

I left them hard at work, taking more exercise than had been their lot for many a day; and, mounting into the organ gallery, listened to Turini's<sup>7</sup> music with infinite satisfaction. The loud harmonious tones of the instrument filled the whole edifice; and, being repeated by the echoes of its lofty domes and arches, produced a wonderful effect. Turini, aware of this circumstance, adapts his compositions with great intelligence to the place. Nothing can be more original than his style. Deprived of sight by an unhappy accident, in the flower of his days, he gave up his entire soul to music, and can scarcely be said to exist, but from its mediums.

When we came out of St. Justina's, the azure of the sky and the softness of the air inclined us to think of some excursion. Where could I wish to go, but to the place in which I had been so delighted? Besides, it was proper to make the Cornaro another visit, and proper to see the Pisani palace, which happily I had before neglected. All these proprieties considered, Madame de R. accompanied me to Fiesso.

The sun was just sunk when we arrived. The whole ether in a glow, and the fragrance of the arched citron alleys delightful. Beneath them I walked in the cool, till the Galuzzi began once more her enchanting melody. She sang till the fineness of the weather tempted us to quit the palace for the banks of the Brenta. A profound calm reigned upon the woods and the waters, and moonlight added serenity to a scene naturally peaceful.

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<sup>7</sup> A nephew of Bertoni, the celebrated composer.

We supped late: before the Galuzzi had repeated the airs which had most affected me, morning began to dawn.

*September 8th.*

THE want of sound repose, after my return home, had thrown me into a feverish and impatient mood. I had scarcely snatched some slight refreshment, before I flew to the great organ at St. Justina's; but tried this time to compose myself, in vain.

Madame de Rosenberg, finding my endeavours unsuccessful, proposed, by way of diverting my attention, that we should set out immediately for one of the Euganean hills, about six or seven miles from Padua, at the foot of which some antique baths had been very lately discovered. I consented without hesitation, little concerned whither I went, or what happened to me, provided the scene was often shifted. The lanes and inclosures we passed, in our road to the hills, appeared in all the gaiety that verdure, flowers, and sunshine could give them. But my pleasures were overcast, and I beheld every object, however cheerful, through a dusky medium.

Deeply engaged in conversation, distance made no impression, and I found myself entering the meadow, over which the ruins are scattered, whilst I imagined myself several miles distant. No scene could be more smiling than this which here presented itself, or answer, in a fuller degree, the ideas I had always formed of Italy.

Leaving our carriage at the entrance of the meadow, we traversed its surface, and shortly perceived among the grass, an

oblong basin, incrusted with pure white marble. Most of the slabs are large and perfect, apparently brought from Greece, and still retaining their polished smoothness. The pipes to convey the waters are still perfectly discernible; in short, the whole ground-plan may be easily traced. Near the principal bath, we remarked the platforms of several circular apartments, paved with mosaic, in a neat simple taste, far from inelegant. Weeds have not yet sprung up amongst the crevices; and the freshness of the ruin everywhere shows that it has not long been exposed.

Theodoric is the prince to whom these structures are attributed; and Cassiodorus, the prime chronicler of the country, is quoted to maintain the supposition. My spirit was too much engaged to make any learned parade, or to dispute upon a subject, which I abandon, with all its importance, to calmer and less impatient minds.

Having taken a cursory view of the ruins, we ascended the hill just above them, and surveyed a prospect of the same nature, though in a more lovely and expanded style than that which I beheld from Mosolente. Padua crowns the landscape, with its towers and cupolas rising from a continued grove; and, from the drawings I have seen, I should conjecture that Damascus presents somewhat of a similar appearance.

Taking our eyes off this extensive prospect, we brought them home to the fragments beneath our feet. The walls exhibit the *opus reticulatum*, so common in the environs of Naples. A sort of terrace, with the remaining bases of columns which

encircle the hill, leads me to imagine here were formerly arcades and porticos, constructed for enjoying the view; for on the summit I could trace no vestiges of any considerable edifice, and am therefore inclined to conclude, that nothing more than a colonnade surrounded the hill, leading perhaps to some slight fane, or pavilion, for the recreation of the bathers below.

A profusion of aromatic flowers covered the slopes, and exhaled additional perfumes, as the sun declined, and the still hour approached, which was wont to spread over my mind a divine composure, and to restore the tranquillity I might have lost in the day. But now it diffused its reviving coolness in vain, and I remained, if possible, more sad and restless than before.

*September 9th.*

YOU may imagine how I felt when the hour of leaving Padua drew near. It happened to be a festival, and high mass was celebrated at the great church of Saint Anthony in all its splendour. The ceremony was about half over when such a peal of thunder reverberated through the vaults and cupolas, as I expected would have shaken them to their foundations. The principal dome appeared invested with a sheet of fire; and the effect of terror produced upon the majority of the congregation, by this sudden lighting up of the most gloomy recesses of the edifice, was so violent that they rushed out in the wildest confusion. Had my faith been less lively, I should have followed their example; but, absorbed in the thought of a separation from those to whom I felt fondly attached, I remained till the ceremony

ended; then took leave of Madame de R. with heartfelt regret, and was driven away to Vicenza.

*September 10th.*

THE morning being overcast, I went to Palladio's theatre. It is impossible to conceive a structure more truly classical, or to point out a single ornament which has not the best antique authority. I am not in the least surprised that the citizens of Vicenza enthusiastically gave in to this great architect's plan, and sacrificed large sums to erect so beautiful a model. When finished, they procured, at a vast expense, the representation of a Grecian tragedy, with its chorus and majestic decorations.

After I had mused a long while in the most retired recess of the edifice, fancying I had penetrated into a real and perfect monument of antiquity, which till this moment had remained undiscovered, we set out for Verona. The situation is striking and picturesque. A long line of battlemented walls, flanked by venerable towers, mounts the hill in a grand irregular sweep, and incloses the city with many a woody garden, and grove of slender cypress. Beyond rises a group of mountains; opposite to which a plain presents itself, decked with all the variety of meads and thickets, olive-grounds and vineyards.

Amongst these our road kept winding till we entered the city gate, and passed (the post knows how many streets and alleys in the way!) to the inn, a lofty handsome-looking building; but so full that we were obliged to take up with an apartment on its very summit, open to all the winds, like the magic chamber

Apuleius mentions, and commanding the roofs of half Verona. Here and there a pine shot up amongst them, and the shady hills, terminating the perspective of walls and turrets, formed a romantic scene.

Placing our table in a balcony, to enjoy the prospect with greater freedom, we feasted upon fish from the Lago di Guarda, and the delicious fruits of the country. Thus did I remain, solacing myself, breathing the cool air, and remarking the tints of the mountains. Neither paintings nor antiques could tempt me from my aërial situation; I refused hunting out the famous works of Paul Veronese scattered over the town, and sat like the owl in the Georgics,

*Solis et occasum servans de culmine summo.*

Twilight drawing on, I left my haunt, and stealing down stairs, enquired for a guide to conduct me to the amphitheatre, perhaps the most entire monument of Roman days. The people of the house, instead of bringing me a quiet peasant, officiously delivered me up to a professed antiquary, one of those precise plausible young men, to whom, God help me! I have so capital an aversion. This sweet spark displayed all his little erudition, and flourished away upon cloacas and vomitoriums with eternal fluency. He was very profound in the doctrine of conduits, and knew to admiration how the filthiness of all the amphitheatre was disposed of.

But perceiving my inattention, and having just grace enough to remark that I chose one side of the street when he preferred the other, and sometimes trotted through despair in the kennel, he made me a pretty bow, I threw him half-a-crown, and seeing the ruins before me, traversed a gloomy arcade and emerged alone into the arena. A smooth turf covers its surface, from which a spacious sweep of gradines rises to a majestic elevation. Four arches, with their simple Doric ornament, alone remain of the grand circular arcade which once crowned the highest seats of the amphitheatre; and, had it not been for Gothic violence, this part of the structure would have equally resisted the ravages of time. Nothing can be more exact than the preservation of the gradines; not a block has sunk from its place, and whatever trifling injuries they may have received have been carefully repaired. The two chief entrances are rebuilt with solidity and closed by portals, no passage being permitted through the amphitheatre except at public shows and representations, sometimes still given in the arena.

When I paced slowly across it, silence reigned undisturbed, and nothing moved, except the weeds and grasses which skirt the walls and tremble with the faintest breeze. Throwing myself upon the grass in the middle of the arena, I enjoyed the freedom of my situation, its profound stillness and solitude. How long I remained shut in by endless gradines on every side, wrapped as it were in the recollections of perished ages, is not worth noting down; but when I passed from the amphitheatre to the opening before it,

night was drawing on, and the grand outline of a terrific feudal fortress, once inhabited by the Scaligeri, alone dimly visible.

*September 11th.*

TRAVERSING once more the grand piazza, and casting a last glance upon the amphitheatre, we passed under a lofty arch which terminates the perspective, and left Verona by a wide, irregular, picturesque street, commanding, whenever you look back, a striking scene of towers, cypress, and mountains.

The country, between this beautiful town and Mantua, presents one continued grove of dwarfish mulberries, with here and there a knot of poplars, and sometimes a miserable shed. Mantua itself rises out of a morass formed by the Mincio, whose course, in most places, is so choked up with reeds as to be scarcely discernible. It requires a creative imagination to discover any charms in such a prospect, and a strong prepossession not to be disgusted with the scene where Virgil was born.

The beating of drums, and sight of German whiskers, finished what croaking frogs and stagnant ditches had begun. Every classic idea being scared by such sounds and such objects, I dined in dudgeon, and refused stirring out till late in the evening.

A few paces from the town stand the remains of the palace where the Gonzagas formerly resided. This I could not resist looking at, and was amply rewarded. Several of the apartments, adorned by the bold pencil of Julio Romano, merit the most exact attention; and the arabesques, with which the stucco ceilings are covered, equal those of the Vatican. Being painted in fresco upon

damp neglected walls, each year diminishes their number, and every winter moulders some beautiful figure away.

The subjects, mostly from antique fables, are treated with all the purity and gracefulness of Raphael; the story of Polypheme is very conspicuous. Acis appears, reclined with his beloved Galatea, on the shore of the ocean, whilst their gigantic enemy, seated above on the brow of Ætna, seems by the paleness and horrors of his countenance to meditate some terrible revenge.

When it was too late to examine the paintings any longer, I walked into a sort of court, or rather garden, which had been decorated with fountains and antique statues. Their fragments still remain amongst weeds and beds of flowers, for every corner of the place is smothered with vegetation. Here nettles grow thick and rampant; there, tuberoses and jessamine spring from mounds of ruins, which during the elegant reign of the Gonzagas led to grottoes and subterranean apartments, concealed from vulgar eyes, and sacred to the most refined enjoyments.

## LETTER X

Cross the Po. – A woody country. – The Vintage. – Reggio. – Ridge of the Apennines. – Romantic ideas connected with those mountains. – Arrive at Modena. – Road to Bologna. – Magnificent Convent of Madonna del Monte. – Natural and political commotions in Bologna. – Proceed towards the mountains. – Dreary prospects. – The scenery improves. – Herds of goats. – A run with them. – Return to the carriage. – Wretched hamlet. – Miserable repast.

*September 12th, 1780.*

A SHOWER, having fallen, the air was refreshed, and the drops still glittered upon the vines, through which our road conducted us. Three or four miles from Mantua the scene changed to extensive grounds of rice, and meads of the tenderest verdure watered by springs, whose frequent meanders gave to the whole prospect the appearance of a vast green carpet shot with silver. Further on we crossed the Po, and passing Guastalla, entered a woody country full of inclosures and villages; herds feeding in the meadows, and poultry parading before every wicket.

The peasants were busied in winnowing their corn; or, mounted upon the elms and poplars, gathering the rich clusters from the vines that hang streaming in braids from one branch to

another. I was surprised to find myself already in the midst of the vintage, and to see every road crowded with carts and baskets bringing it along; you cannot imagine a pleasanter scene.

Round Reggio it grew still more lively, and on the other side of that sketch-inviting little city, I remarked many a cottage that Tityrus might have inhabited, with its garden and willow hedge in flower, swarming with bees. Our road, the smoothest conceivable, enabled us to pass too rapidly through so cheerful a landscape. I caught glimpses of fields and copses as we were driven along, that could have afforded me amusement for hours, and orchards on gentle acclivities, beneath which I could have walked till evening. The trees literally bent under their loads of fruit, and innumerable ruddy apples lay scattered upon the ground.

Beyond these rich masses of foliage, to which the sun lent additional splendour, at the utmost extremity of the pastures, rose the irregular ridge of the Apennines, whose deep blue presented a striking contrast to the glowing colours of the foreground. I fixed my eyes on the chain of distant mountains, and indulged a thousand romantic conjectures of what was passing in their recesses – hermits absorbed in prayer – beautiful Contadine fetching water from springs, and banditti conveying their victims, perhaps at this very moment, to caves and fastnesses.

Such were the dreams that filled my fancy, and kept it incessantly employed till it was dusk, and the moon began to show herself; the same moon which but a few nights ago had seen

me so happy at Fiesso. I left the carriage, and running into the dim haze, abandoned myself to the recollections it excited...

At length, having wandered where chance or the wildness of my fancy led, till the lateness of the evening alarmed me, I regained the chaise as fast as I could, and arrived between twelve and one at Modena, the place of my destination.

*September 13th.*

WE traversed a champagne country in our way to Bologna, whose richness and fertility increased in proportion as we drew near that celebrated mart of lap-dogs and sausages. A chain of hills commands the city, variegated with green inclosures and villas innumerable. On the highest acclivity of this range appears the magnificent convent of Madonna del Monte, embosomed in wood and joined to the town by a corridor a league in length. This vast portico ascending the steeps and winding amongst the thickets, sometimes concealed and sometimes visible, produces an effect wonderfully grand and singular. I longed to have mounted the height by so extraordinary a passage; and hope on some future day to be better acquainted with Santa Maria del Monte.

At present I have very little indeed to say about Bologna (where I passed only two hours) except that it is sadly out of humour, an earthquake and Cardinal Buoncompagni having disarranged both land and people. For half-a-year the ground continued trembling; and for these last six months, the legate and senators have grumbled and scratched incessantly; so that,

between natural and political commotions, the Bolognese must have passed an agreeable summer.

Such a report of the situation of things, you may suppose, was not likely to retard my journey. I put off delivering my letters to another opportunity, and proceeded immediately after dinner towards the mountains. We were soon in the midst of crags and stony channels, that stream with ten thousand rills in the winter season, but during the summer months reflect every sunbeam, and harbour half the scorpions in the country.

For many a toilsome league our prospect consisted of nothing but dreary hillocks and intervening wastes, more barren and mournful than those to which Mary Magdalene retired. Sometimes a crucifix or chapel peeped out of the parched fern and grasses, with which these desolate fields are clothed; and now and then we met a goggle-eyed pilgrim trudging along, and staring about him as if he waited only for night and opportunity to have additional reasons for hurrying to Loretto.

During three or four hours that we continued ascending, the scene increased in sterility and desolation; but, at the end of our second post, the landscape began to alter for the better: little green valleys at the base of tremendous steeps, discovered themselves, scattered over with oaks, and freshened with running waters, which the nakedness of the impending rocks set off to advantage. The sides of the cliffs in general consist of rude misshapen masses; but their summits are smooth and verdant, and continually browsed by herds of white goats, which were

gambolling on the edge of the precipices as we passed beneath.

I joined one of these frisking assemblies, whose shadows were stretched by the setting sun along the level herbage. There I sat a few minutes whilst they shook their beards at me, and tried to scare me with all their horns. Being tired with skipping and butting at me in vain, the whole herd trotted away, and I after them. They led me a dance from crag to crag and from thicket to thicket.

It was growing dusky apace, and wreaths of smoke began to ascend from the mysterious depths of the valleys. I was ignorant what monster inhabited such retirements, so gave over my pursuit lest some Polypheme or other might make me repent it. I looked around, the carriage was out of sight; but hearing the neighing of horses at a distance, I soon came up with them, and mounted another rapid ascent, from whence an extensive tract of cliff and forest land was discernible.

A chill wind blew from the highest peak of the Apennines, and made a dismal rustle amongst the woods of chesnut that hung on the mountain's side, through which we were forced to pass. Walking out of the sound of the carriage, I began interpreting the language of the leaves, not greatly to my own advantage or that of any being in the universe. I was no prophet of good, and had I but commanded an oracle, as ancient visionaries were wont, I should have flung mischief about me.

How long I continued in this strange temper I cannot pretend to say, but believe it was midnight before we emerged from

the oracular forest, and saw faintly before us an assemblage of miserable huts, where we were to sleep. This wretched hamlet is suspended on the brow of a bleak mountain, and every gust that stirs, shakes the whole village to its foundations. At our approach two hags stalked forth with lanterns and invited us with a grin, which I shall always remember, to a dish of mustard and crows' gizzards, a dish I was more than half afraid of tasting, lest it should change me to some bird of darkness, condemned to mope eternally on the black rafters of the cottage.

After repeated supplications we procured a few eggs, and some faggots to make a fire. Pitching my bed in a warm corner I soon fell asleep, and forgot all my cares and inquietudes.

## LETTER XI

A sterile region. – Our descent into a milder landscape. – Distant view of Florence. – Moonlight effect. – Visit the Gallery. – Relics of ancient credulity. – Paintings. – A Medusa's head by Leonardo da Vinci. – Curious picture by Polemberg. – The Venus de Medicis. – Exquisitely sculptured figure of Morpheus. – Vast Cathedral. – Garden of Boboli. – Views from different parts of it. – Its resemblance to an antique Roman garden.

*September 14th, 1780.*

THE sun had not been long above the horizon, before we set forward upon a craggy pavement hewn out of rough cliffs and precipices. Scarcely a tree was visible, and the few that presented themselves began already to shed their leaves. The raw nipping air of this desert with difficulty spares a blade of vegetation; and in the whole range of these extensive eminences I could not discover a single corn-field or pasture. Inhabitants, you may guess, there were none. I would defy even a Scotch highlander to find means of subsistence in so rude a soil.

Towards mid-day, we had surmounted the dreariest part of our journey, and began to perceive a milder landscape. The climate improved as well as the prospect, and after a continual descent of several hours, we saw groves and villages in the dips of the hills,

and met a string of mules and horses laden with fruit. I purchased some figs and peaches from this little caravan, and spread my repast upon a bank, in the midst of lavender bushes in full bloom.

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